

Lecture 24 Motives for Imperialism



Imperialism

“Empire is a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social, or cultural dependence. Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing an empire.”

– M. Doyle

IMPERIALISM:

the extraction of resources (natural, economic, human) from the periphery and relocation to the metropole (Rome)

“defensive imperialism”

that Romans didn't seek empire or expansion,
rather :

- result of threats to their own security
- Rome acquired her power over other states & peoples as a tangent result of defending itself or its allies
- honoring treaties

This was dominant view of Roman imperialism
until 1978 & Harris' book

War and Imperialism

Romanitas = roman-ness

- Term used by modern historians to discuss what it meant to be “Roman”
- The Roman ideal was encapsulated in a long list of virtues (*virtus*)
 - The citizen/soldier/farmer (C/F/S)
- The c/s/f was a hard working, frugal, practical man who worked the land with his own hands
- c/s/f was a courageous, strong man who obeyed orders and risked his own life in the name of Rome

VIRTUS = virtue

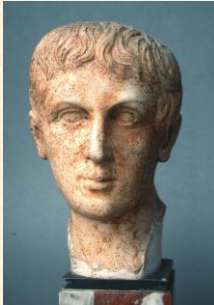
- means “manliness”
- from the Latin for man (*vir*)
- highest expression found in military victory
- seen as sign of favor from the gods but also was earned
- possessor of *virtus* benefitted family line and increased electability

Important virtues in Roman Society

- *pietas* = devotion
 - devotion to gods, family & country
 - obedience to pater familias
 - dedication of public improvements
- *fides* = faith (cognate w/the English “fidelity”)
 - adhering to sworn oaths
 - fulfilling obligations that one had agreed
- *gravitas* = seriousness of purpose & actions
 - in a social way it also meant one’s “presence” we might call it charisma
- *dignitas* = prestige, honor
 - one of the most important words in Roman vocabulary
- *auctoritas* = technically meant authority
 - wisdom, achievement, family tradition and honor status
 - could be held by a corporate body (Senate)

MOS MAIORUM

- means “customs of the ancestors”
 - abstract concept
- invoked during funerals, but always present
 - Ancestor “worship” central to Roman religion
- used by Romans to help explain the moral, social, political needs of the present
- What would an ‘American’ version of *mos maiorum* be?



VI.15.1 House of the Vettii entrance

Harris argues that continuous war can be explained by the structures of Roman society

- Continuous war was normal, desirable to aristocrats & cities intertwined w/ Roman political developments
 - *virtus*
 - *mos maiorum*
- deeply embedded in Roman cultural values
 - military service habituated from childhood
 - form of traditional “Roman” education

martial (military) aspects of Roman "elite" culture

- Warfare and command of soldiers central element of young noble's education
 - Starting in his 18th year, he went to war
- Important in political career
 - For 250 years (from 327-76 BCE) no one ran for office without at least 10 years army experience
 - Key to obtain prestige (*laus* and *gloria*)



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cRj01LshXN8&feature=related>

Triumph

Etruscan word from the Gk *thriambos* hymn to Dionysus





Competition in Art and Architecture

Hölscher argues that distinctive Roman art (as opposed to Etruscan or Greek art) was closely linked to political developments in the Republic

With the end of the patrician monopoly over power and with the formation of a patrician-plebeian nobility, there ensued a period of fierce competition for public office.

Aristocratic competition in war and politics

Rosenstein examines the limits of aristocratic values: *laus, virtus, gloria, dignitas, fama* were achieved through military victory

He investigates defeated generals in battle (*Imperatores Victi*) and discovered that nobles who lost on the battlefield did not suffer politically and indeed could go on to be elected to the highest offices

In other words defeat did NOT equate to social or political stigma.

Slavery vital to Roman way of life

- Keith Hopkins stresses the militaristic nature of Roman society was based on economics
 - continuous warfare and slavery was:
 - “a necessary condition of the social and economic structure of the last 200 years of the Republic.”
- Influx of booty (cash) and slaves became vital to perpetuate landed wealth of the 2nd C.
 - Lex Claudia circumscribed how a senator could obtain wealth

Rome's Foreign Wars

Date	Number	Location/People
262 BCE	25,000	Agrigentum
254 BCE	13,000	Panormus
209 BCE	30,000	Tarentum
204 BCE	8,000	Carthage
177 BCE	85,600	Sardinia
167 BCE	150,000	Eprius
146 BCE	55,000	Carthage
142 BCE	9,500	Lusitania
57 BCE	53,000	Gauls

Economic Motives:

Hard to assess

- Some say, (Gruen)
 - “Rome sought no major economic benefits.” that economic motives were, “a figment of modern anachronism, based on ancient anachronism.”
- William Harris however asks what counts as \$ motive,
 - “If a Roman aristocrat sought to accumulate wealth for its own sake, or for consumption, his motives are obviously ‘economic.’ But what if he sought to enrich himself for the sake of the prestige, to be gained by judicious distribution of the profits of war? Or if he did so in order to strengthen his political position?”

Religious Motives

- *ius fetiale*
- prayer at the lustrum during census:

“by which the immortal gods are asked to make the possessions of the Roman people better and more extensive.”

(res meliores ampliorque)

Defensive Imperialism

1. Fearful of threats to their security
2. protection of their allies and their interests
3. completely lacking in economic motive
 - anti-Marxist
4. Sense of honor (broken *fides*) especially their understanding of *amicitas*
5. Philhellenism (loving Greek culture)

Lack of Economic Motive

- As Gruen argues:
 - Roman taxation was created piecemeal and was not regularized until much later
 - head tax on Spanish cities was not for exploitation but only for grain supply to feed troops
 - The head tax on Macedonia and the rest of Greece after 3rd Macedonian War was ½ that asked by Perseus
 - Macedonia silver and gold mines were shut down

Lack of military occupation

Illyria and Pirate Queen Teuta: Rome contented itself with "bridgeheads" (229)

Greece: continual removal of troops

Flamininus' "freedom and *autonomia*"

Macedonia: Philip V in 197 or Perseus in 168: Rome could have annexed but did not do so until 146

Spain and fall of Barcine Empire: Rome could have conquered the entire peninsula but only did so in a piecemeal fashion

Africa: Rome could have annexed Carthage in 201, did not until 146

Egypt: could have annexed in 168, only after Actium (30 BCE)

Lack of Cohesive Decision Making

- Eckstein argues that the decision to go to war were really made by individual generals and NOT a cohesive policy of belligerence by the Senate
 - Flamininus in Greece
 - Scipio in Spain and Africa

Fides to treaties and allies

- Attempt to break or leave a treaty considered hostile act
 - Latins in 340
- network of friendships occasionally embroiled Rome
 - Thurii, Greek city asks for help from Lucanians
 - This cheats off Tarentum, protector of all Greek cities
 - Begins a war that draws Pyrrhus into Italy
- 2nd Illyrian War
 - going across the river Lissus
- Syrian War
 - Aetolians breaking their word with Rome, siding with Antiochus III
- Rude response by Corinth results in its sack

Defensive Arguments:

- 1) Romans perceived Rome or Italy threatened.
 - 2nd Punic War made the Roman jump in this way: Hannibal in Italy for 15 yrs
- 2) Rome perceived that it was defending an ally or a friend:
 - Seguntum in 2nd Punic
 - "freedom of the Greeks" in 2nd Mac War but this rationale dropped by 167.
- 3) Rome understood *amicitas* as punishing or correcting a disloyal ally/friend:
 - Rhodes and Achaean League in 167
 - Sack of Corinth in 146
 - assumption that "we will live by my custom, interpreted by me"

Roman forms of control

- Some states annexed
 - Veii 396
 - Citizenship (obligations)
- Forced into treaties
 - No troops
 - left to follow Roman orders (Achaean League)
- Client kingdoms subservient to Rome
 - Pergamum, bequeathed to Rome 133
 - Ptolemaic Kingdom
 - Delos "given" to Athens as a "free port" after war against Rhodes (166)

"Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and peoples require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination."

– Edward Said

- More simply put:
the practice, the theory, & the attitudes--- of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory