Arcana Imperii: Roman Political Intelligence, Counterintelligence, and Covert Action in the Mid-Republic

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of The Australian National University
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This thesis is solely the work of its author. No part of it has previously been submitted for any degree, or is currently being submitted for any other degree. To the best of my knowledge, any help received in preparing this thesis and all sources used have been duly acknowledged.

SARA PERLEY
24th November 2016
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Abstract

The general scholarly conception of Roman military and political intelligence is that it was so poor as to be virtually non-existent, that Roman armies and officials blundered through their affairs and their world with little understanding or appreciation of the utility and importance of intelligence about their friends, foes, and neighbours. Some scholars who address the growth of the Roman empire make assumptions about intelligence usage; those who investigate intelligence practices more closely tend to focus on military intelligence or intelligence over long periods of Roman history. The conclusion usually reached is that the Roman state valued and practiced intelligence very poorly. There are no studies that focus specifically on political intelligence, and none that focuses on a specific period of Roman history. This study aims to illuminate the realities of Roman political intelligence for the period of the mid-republic, and attempts to provide a more nuanced understanding of Rome’s appreciation for and use of intelligence techniques in their international relations. Analysis of ancient sources reveals that the Roman understanding of the intelligence was neither as dire nor unsophisticated as current scholarly consensus would have us believe. While political intelligence endeavours often failed or from hindsight might appear inadequate, when examined in their historical context intelligence efforts were in fact suitable for Roman needs. Roman officials protected their state through counterintelligence, developed preliminary cultural dossiers through foreknowledge, undertook concerted efforts to gain more specific intelligence prior to major international interactions, and on occasion engaged in covert activities to improve their position and ensure their national security. This is indicative of an attitude toward the broader Mediterranean world they inhabited, and their place in that world which was neither blindly aggressive nor defensive, that was neither passive nor opportunistic, but that was considered, sophisticated, and appreciative of the complexities of the Mediterranean international system.
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I – Introduction

Intelligence is the neglected child of international politics.\textsuperscript{1} If this is so, then Roman intelligence is the downtrodden stepchild of Roman studies, overshadowed by various (ugly) stepsiblings. There is little discussion about how and what Roman officials, whether senators or military commanders, knew about their friends and foes. But in the words of Robert Jervis, ‘even the most close-minded decision-maker eventually needs to understand the world in which he or she is operating’.\textsuperscript{2} Powers in the modern world have spent enormous amounts of time and money developing organisations to discover information about others to better understand them and make informed foreign policy decisions. As states do not exist in a vacuum, to undertake decisive action in relation to other powers, the leaders of one state need an understanding of the resources, abilities, intents, and beliefs of neighbouring states. Unless we are to believe that Roman officials simply blundered along, with no knowledge of anybody except themselves, then intelligence must have played a role in their success.

In the period between the First Punic War in 264 and the final conquest of Numantia in 133 Rome went from being a relatively small city-state to the dominant power in the Mediterranean world.\textsuperscript{3} The causes behind this have long been the subject of intense academic inquiry. Much ink has been spilled on debates about the nature of Rome’s expansion. Arguments centre on whether Roman ‘imperialism’ was essentially offensive or defensive, and most adopt a purely metrocentric viewpoint.\textsuperscript{4} It is only in recent years that ancient historians have begun to interpret the rise of the Roman Empire through modern International Relations theory.\textsuperscript{5} How, if, and to what extent Roman officials

\textsuperscript{1} Sir Alexander Cadogan referred to intelligence as the ‘missing dimension of most diplomatic history’. Cadogan and Dilks 1971: 21. The idea was popularised by Andrew and Dilks in 1984 and has since become something of a guiding assumption for intelligence theorists; Andrew and Dilks 1984.
\textsuperscript{2} Jervis 2009: 71.
\textsuperscript{3} All dates are B.C. unless otherwise indicated.
\textsuperscript{4} On which, see below.
\textsuperscript{5} Henceforth IR indicates the discipline of International Relations, whereas the lower case ‘international relations’ refers to the activities of states.
knew about their neighbours has never been linked to the growth of their
empire, their foreign policy, or their international affairs. While some scholars
have argued that Rome sought control of material resources and profit, there has
been no discussion about how they knew a specific conquest promised enough
booty to outweigh the costs of war. Scholars who advocate defensive imperialism
provide no discussion as to how the Romans knew or perceived that other states
were threats to themselves or their allies. Mid-republican Romans did not
indiscriminately destroy everybody they came across. They conquered,
annihilated, and enslaved; they also traded, made alliances and treaties, and
mediated foreign struggles. They did not do this blindly with no knowledge as to
the resources, abilities, intentions, and beliefs of those with whom they
interacted. This thesis seeks to investigate the understandings, modes, and
methods of intelligence, counterintelligence, and covert actions employed by the
Romans in the mid-republic as an aspect of their pursuit of foreign policy. It will
consider the relationship between international relations, intelligence studies,
and Rome’s rise to dominance in the Mediterranean.

The Literature

Roman Intelligence

Specific studies of intelligence in the ancient world are rare; studies
focusing explicitly on mid-republican intelligence more so. Certain aspects of
intelligence activity, primarily with a military focus, have been touched upon in
studies of ancient warfare. These studies mention activities that are classified as
intelligence. But they rarely include discussion of how intelligence was gathered
and analysed, or attempts at counterintelligence or covert action, let alone
political intelligence.

The earliest works that deal with aspects of intelligence with any degree of
specificity discuss the transport and communication of information in the

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6 For intelligence in ancient Greece see for example Starr 1974; Gerolymatos 1986;
Richmond 1998; Russell 1999.
7 The ways in which the term ‘intelligence’ will be used in this study will be discussed
in the next section.
ancient world. The most prominent is Wolfgang Riepl’s Das Nachrichtenwesen des Altertums, mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Römer, published in 1913. This study deals with the gathering of information, the potential modes of information transmission, and the use of fire signals. Other studies, for example those of Riencke and Pékary, provide basic overviews of communications systems in Rome and Greece. Giuseppina Pisani Sartorio’s Mezzi di trasporto e traffico examines civilian and military transportation along Roman roads. These works are useful in establishing how information could be transmitted in the ancient world. They are thus an important starting point for intelligence studies. But they often do not analyse the content or eventual use of the transported information.

Secondary sources that promise discussions of Roman intelligence more explicitly tend to fall into one of two groups: those that refer to modern intelligence theories as a guide, and those that largely ignore them. Most belong to the latter category. Francis Dvornik’s The Origins of Intelligence Services discusses intelligence services and the transmission of information in the premodern world. It defines intelligence as little more than information, and focusses on intelligence services rather than intelligence activities. Dvornik devotes a mere 25 pages to the Roman republic prior to Caesar’s civil war. Through anecdotal evidence, he concludes that the republic lacked a comprehensive intelligence service. Consequently, Dvornik dismisses Rome’s appreciation of and capacity for intelligence. This is contrasted with surrounding cultures, which developed systems for intelligence, or at least allegedly possessed a greater interest in it. Dvornik goes so far as to claim that an interest in intelligence was one of the ‘most striking characteristics of absolute power and a basis for successful political expansion’. This intriguing statement is not

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8 In addition to the items mentioned here, see Leighton 1969; Achard 1991; Kolb 2000; Woolliscroft 2001.
9 Riepl 1913.
10 Riepl’s work does also include some discussion about the use of codes, cyphers, and espionage.
developed further, nor is it discussed in relation to Rome’s apparent lack of interest in intelligence.

Giovanni Brizzi’s *I sistemi informativi dei Romani. Principi e realtà nell’età delle conquista oltremare (218-186 AC)* has a promising but misleading title.\(^\text{15}\) The majority of the book discusses military and diplomatic history and the role of *fides* in Roman international conduct. Brizzi argues that Roman intelligence before the Second Punic War was the result of personal and diplomatic links with their neighbours. Rome was a nation of *fides*. It indulged in neither trickery nor underhand acts until exposed to Carthaginian techniques. Wheeler’s 1988 work on stratagems, *Stratagem and the Vocabulary of Military Trickery*, contradicts this thesis entirely.\(^\text{16}\) Wheeler claims that tricks and stratagems had long been part of warfare, regardless of what certain sources attempt to suggest. This study, like Wheeler’s article ‘*Sapiens and Stratagems: the neglected meaning of a Cognomen*’, published in the same year, deals with etymology rather than an analysis of the use of stratagems themselves.\(^\text{17}\)

Not one of the previously mentioned studies provides much in the way of an analysis of the use of intelligence in the Roman republic. In contrast, this is the avowed purpose of part of Austin and Rankov’s *Exploratio: Military and Political Intelligence in the Roman World from the Second Punic War to the Battle of Adrianople*.\(^\text{18}\) The book shares the tendency to neglect modern understandings of intelligence and stratagems, despite paying lip service to the intelligence industry in its introduction. After introducing the notion of the intelligence cycle, and briefly (and overly simplistically) defining intelligence, the work proceeds to examine the collection and analysis of military intelligence in the Roman world. Like Brizzi’s, the title of Austin and Rankov’s work is somewhat misleading. This stems from the authors’ inherent bias that only those ancient authors with military experience are relevant to their subject.\(^\text{19}\) Accordingly, they dismiss out of hand large amounts of source material, and thus large swathes of republican evidence; they ignore Livy, except where he is

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\(^{15}\) Brizzi 1982.

\(^{16}\) Wheeler 1988b.

\(^{17}\) Wheeler 1988a.

\(^{18}\) Austin and Rankov 1995.

\(^{19}\) Austin and Rankov 1995: 1-6
reflecting Polybius, and most republican sources beyond Caesar and Cicero. Even the evidence of Polybius, whom they claim to admire, receives only passing mention in a short discussion of intelligence during the Second Punic War. The lion’s share of the study is thus devoted to the military intelligence methods in the second (Tacitus and Cassius Dio) and fourth centuries (Ammianus Marcellinus) A.D. The work is of limited practical value here.

Austin and Rankov’s understanding of intelligence is, furthermore, limited. They define intelligence simplistically, as either ‘good’ or ‘bad’ and ‘that which is accepted as fact, based on all available information about an actual or potential enemy or area of operations’. Intelligence is hardly ever so simple. Intelligence can prove to be wrong and still be ‘good’ in terms of how it was collected and analysed. Receivers of intelligence rarely accept it as unadorned fact, but as likelihood – a crucial difference. Nor does intelligence solely relate to enemies, as the leaks and resulting scandals of recent years attest. To define it thus negates the role of intelligence in times of peace, diplomacy, and its role in foreign policy decision-making. The authors’ definition of intelligence is undoubtedly a reason why political intelligence plays such a small role in their study, as do counterintelligence and covert action. Various factors influence the validity of intelligence, including the counterintelligence methods of the opposing side, the worldview and cultural biases of the state gathering and analysing intelligence, and the potential or unappreciated differences of culture and organisation in the opposing side.

Rose Mary Sheldon addressed some of these concerns in her 2005 work *Intelligence Activities in Ancient Rome.* This work is a compilation of previously published articles, aimed at both a scholarly audience and the general public. The mixture of target audiences yields mixed results. There are too many generalisations, for example. The study, however, has the virtue of being informed by modern intelligence research. That is not to say Sheldon

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20 Austin and Rankov 1995: 1.
21 At the time of writing, numerous scandals have broken, primarily through *WikiLeak*s, over surveillance, secrecy, and intelligence gathered throughout the world, on both allies and enemies. For the leaks themselves and books and articles reporting them, see for instance Leigh and Harding 2011; Sifry 2011; Wikileaks December 1, 2011; Greenwald 2014; Assange and Wikileaks 2015; Carrel et al. 9th July 2015.
22 Sheldon 2005.
anachronistically applies modern models of intelligence and the activities encompassed by modern intelligence services to ancient affairs. Rather, she shows an awareness of definitions of intelligence, the reasons behind intelligence failures, and the factors responsible for attenuating intelligence when presenting her analysis. Sheldon’s basic thesis is that Rome utilised intelligence in a recognisable fashion. Her focus is on presenting the idea that intelligence activity could and did exist in the absence of a bureaucratic, specialised service. Like Austin and Rankov’s, Sheldon’s work examines a vast period; the mid-republican period examined in her study is touched upon in three brief chapters.

Works that deal with intelligence for the most part conclude that there was no bureaucratic centralised intelligence service in the Roman world. Intelligence was used sparingly, often with limited success. There is a tendency to assume that a lack of dedicated service, and the occurrence of intelligence failures, is tantamount to a lack of understanding of and appreciation for political intelligence. The absence of an intelligence service is hardly surprising during the mid-republic. Political organisation and an anti-bureaucratic cultural predisposition neither allowed for nor required the development of such nonpartisan permanent organisations. Rome’s was a highly competitive political system in which aristocrats sought power and prestige by any means possible. This effectively guaranteed that policymaking was highly unstable and changeable, subject as it was to private personal motivations and competing factions. Naturally, no system was set up to develop permanent positions for spies, or even for a diplomatic corps at a state level. The deficiency does not necessarily mean that the state and individuals did not appreciate, understand, or utilise intelligence efficiently. Intelligence activity may have been ad hoc, but this does not mean it was not used, and that it did not have an impact on politics and political decision-making.

This overview of the literature on Roman intelligence highlights in particular the lack of attention paid to political intelligence and to counterintelligence and covert/overt operations. The focus of most intelligence studies is limited to military affairs, exclusive of diplomatic and political
activities. This study will attempt to close this gap. There is ample evidence to show that Rome took a holistic approach to intelligence and sought information about the political, military, social, and economic affairs of their neighbours, enemies, and allies, and made foreign policy decisions with at least some regard to this information. So too is there evidence that through covert action Roman officials attempted to manipulate affairs to their favour. Intelligence is and always has been a vital and constant part of statecraft. One state cannot function in international society without some degree of intelligence about the states that surround it. In modern intelligence studies, as was stated at the outset, intelligence is regarded as the ‘missing dimension’ of diplomatic history; this applies all the more to Roman diplomatic history.

**Roman Imperialism and International Relations**

There are few scholarly discussions that consider the relationships between contemporary international relations, imperialism, and intelligence studies, though they are inherently linked. There is certainly no body of literature that connects these areas for the mid-republican period. Imperialism is a narrative that explains the dynamics between imperial powers and within world empires. International Relations attempts to explain the relationships between powers in an international world. While rarely acknowledged, intelligence plays a fundamental role in determining the applicability of these approaches. To determine whether a state was aggressive in seeking territory, or defensively protected its holdings, requires a broader appreciation of its foreign policy in order to understand how, or indeed whether, it sought information or attempted to construct conceptions about other states. In a Roman context, either mid-republican officials acted in the international arena without thought or regard to the result of interventions, achieving success and suffering failure through luck, or they engaged with at least a minimal degree of political intelligence that might inform them about outcomes. If the latter is more likely, then to assert a defensive agenda on the part of Rome assumes all external parties were viewed

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23 This study will not ignore and neglect military affairs entirely; this is impossible due to the focus of surviving sources. But it not address tactical military intelligence regarding the movements of troops and strategies of battles. Chapter three in particular will demand some discussion of the military use and application of intelligence.
as threatening to Roman security in some manner; to assert an aggressive expansionist agenda suggests a conscious analysis was made about how and where to expand based on potential benefit and loss. Either scenario requires an interest in and appreciation for intelligence. Acknowledged or not, intelligence is inherently linked to imperialism and ought to be considered as one way of progressing the modern debate about Roman republican imperialism.

The nature of Roman imperialism has perhaps been over-studied in comparison to the subject matter of this study. The concept of imperialism has undergone numerous semantic shifts in its short history. The term entered English nomenclature in the mid-19th Century. Until the 1870s, it described the action and empire of Napoléon III. It referred to the populist tactics used to increase his appeal to the French by virtue of his foreign military actions. With the rise of Disraeli and his expansionistic aspirations, ‘imperialism’ came to be used by his liberal political opponents in Britain as a pejorative label against expansionist policies, the term freighted with implications of political self-interest and greed.\(^24\) This attitude was underpinned by the conception of western superiority. In the wake of colonial expansion, European powers came to refer to themselves as empires. Imperialism was divided by sloganeering politicians into ‘good’ imperialism - centred on the act of defending the social order and fulfilling a moral mission to bring civilisation to backward or primitive peoples,\(^25\)

\(^{24}\) Disraeli’s policy of invading and occupying overseas territories was not necessarily the result of expansionistic desires for their own sake, but his desire to maintain British strategic and commercial interests. To maintain the capitalistic social order of the West, politicians began to advocate expansion into Asia and Africa in order to open up new markets for western goods. For details and arguments about Disraeli’s politics see for example Harcourt 1980; Smith 1987; Parry 2000.

\(^{25}\) This can be considered an aspect of ‘cultural imperialism’. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, theories of ‘Romanisation’ of the provinces of the Roman Empire supported this view of civilising the barbarians, as do certain primary sources. The classic statement in English-language scholarship is Haverfield 1912. Recently, this view has been subject to criticism and revision. Acculturation is now argued to have been a bilateral process. Rome adopted and adapted certain cultural aspects of those native to the provinces, and introduced and enforced Roman policies. Simultaneously, some elements of provincial cultures (primarily the elite) voluntarily adapted and adopted Roman ways to curry favour with the hegemon and establish or solidify control over their communities. See Woolf 1998; MacMullen 2000.
- and ‘bad’ imperialism - nothing more than a policy of conquest to gain power and/or control resources.\textsuperscript{26}

The internment of ethnic Boers in concentration camps during the Boer War forced empire enthusiasts to backtrack. Imperialism underwent a change that saw it move beyond political sloganeering towards theorising. J. A. Hobson, a Boer war correspondent, returned to Britain and in 1902 wrote \textit{Imperialism: a study}.\textsuperscript{27} He attempted to show that imperialism was an unavoidable by-product of capitalism. Hobson argued that due to the low purchasing power of the average Briton, itself a consequence of the oligarchic distribution of wealth, British markets did not generate a satisfactory amount of demand, and hence profit. Domestic under-consumption resulted in the search for overseas opportunities for profitable investment. Essentially, imperialism and colonial expansion were methods to reduce costs and increase consumption. To avoid imperialism, and promote growth at home, the British government simply had to radically redistribute economic resources (purchasing power) domestically.

V. I. Lenin, while agreeing with Hobson that the blame of imperialism rested with capitalism, denied capitalism’s ability to reform itself without imperialism. Pursuit of profit is a human pathology, and so states’ pursuit of raw materials and markets is never ending. To the Marxist Lenin, imperialism constituted the highest stage of capitalism – its ultimate manifestation. Under capitalism, governments are commanded by their economies; they have no choice but to expand in order to continue the growth of these economies. Wars for hegemony are natural consequences. The transference of the controlling power of the bourgeoisie from the domestic to the international sphere heightens the exploitation of the workers, and speeds the collapse of capitalism.

Conversely, Joseph Schumpeter dismissed economics as the cause of imperialism.\textsuperscript{28} Instead, he argued that imperial behaviour was a throwback to a primitive form of human behaviour, an atavism. It is a result of militarism inherent in human nature, but fortunately these tendencies have been decreasing.

\textsuperscript{26} For a discussion of the development of the term ‘imperialism’ see Koebner and Schmidt 1964.
\textsuperscript{27} Hobson 1902.
\textsuperscript{28} Schumpeter 1955.
over time; only the European aristocracy continues to behave as their forebears had, pursuing an outmoded way of life based on irrational, ancient aristocratic value systems centred on shame and honour. Schumpeter’s thesis gives hope to society. It implies that war and imperialism might give way to a rational behaviour as man leaves his atavistic tendencies behind. He exonerates capitalism from blame for imperialistic wars of expansion.

These approaches to imperialism have a significant flaw; they are all metrocentric - focusing on the characteristics, dispositions, and capabilities of imperial states alone. Expansion is seen exclusively as a result of features of the metropolitan state. Additionally, though not an absolute for metrocentric theories, these arguments are pessimistic; imperialism is the consequence of human pathologies, such as humanity’s desire for more. An alternative approach focuses on the nature of the periphery, or the conquered states. This approach argues that the instability of these states brings them into contact with and eventually under the control of their powerful neighbours. When peripheral states have stable regimes, imperialists influence these states indirectly to exercise their will. Alternatively, when these peripheries have weak governments, imperial states have no choice but to intervene and create formal empires. J. Gallagher and R. Robinson, using the Victorian British Empire as a paradigm, argue that there has always been a general preference for indirect rule, with minimal metropolitan administration, and thus, expense.29 This pericentric view is dependent upon a specific definition of empire; empire is formal control.

The final dominant view of imperialism is built upon systemic theory; it accounts for imperialism by focusing on forces inherent in the international system. This approach explains imperialism through international politics and IR theories. Rather than focusing on the motivations of individuals or the circumstances of a specific metropole or peripheral state, systemic theory explains action based upon the structure of the international system. The prevalent school of thought in IR studies is systemic Realism. Realism dictates that in an anarchic world, states have no choice but to militarise in order to

29 Gallagher and Robinson 1953.
ensure their own survival.\textsuperscript{30} States that are too small or lack the resources to do this either align themselves with a powerful state or disappear. Most forms of Realism are materialistic theories that largely deny the causal role of social, political, or cultural factors. Realism is hardly the only systemic theory. It does, however, hold the status of orthodoxy in international politics.\textsuperscript{31}

The application of a single approach be it systemic, metrocentric, or pericentric, fails to account for the complexity of world affairs and the causal complexes that result in empire. Michael Doyle has attempted to adjust how we think of empire. He defined it as a system of effective control, be it formal or informal, over the domestic and foreign policy of one political entity - a peripheral state - by another political entity - the metropole.\textsuperscript{32} Imperialism is nothing more and nothing less than the process of establishing and maintaining an empire.\textsuperscript{33} Doyle’s work regards empire as the result of a combination of factors in the metropole, the periphery, and the international system. No monolithic theory can account for the phenomenon of empire.\textsuperscript{34} It is more accurate to say that imperial expansion is the result of a combination of Schumpeter-style uncontrollable impulses, a rational policy, and the overwhelming pressures of an anarchic international system.

Despite Doyle’s attempt to clarify and define methods of control by some states over others more precisely, his work has yet to penetrate ancient world studies,\textsuperscript{35} and debates about Roman imperialism persist, as is true of modern IR studies, political science departments and government policy making, in taking a

\textsuperscript{30} Anarchy, in the IR sense, means the absence of a centralised ruling body or group of ideas, such as international law.

\textsuperscript{31} Realism is not the international political theory that will be adopted in this thesis. The reasons for this, and the alternate theory advocated here, will be discussed in the following section.

\textsuperscript{32} These areas are not necessarily annexed territories; empire can include informal rule, that is, control through subjugated and collaborating elites.

\textsuperscript{33} Doyle 1986: 30.

\textsuperscript{34} Doyle’s work also includes an important typology of empire. When one political entity only constrains or influences domestic and foreign policy, it signifies a relationship of dependence rather than empire. If a nation controls only the foreign policy of another, this is hegemony. If it merely constrains the foreign policy, the peripheral nation is simply within the sphere of influence of the metropole. Doyle 1986: 44-6.

\textsuperscript{35} With the exception of Eckstein 2006; Eckstein 2008; Burton 2011.
monolithic approach. Until the late-twentieth century, the majority of Roman imperialism studies argued that Roman expansion was ‘accidental’, the unintended result of defending borders against external threats, or defending both their own and their allies’ interests. Annexation and influence over foreign territories were consequences of attacks from hostile people. This doctrine is the closest to what Roman sources themselves argue. They highlight their ‘just war’ policy, the *ius fetiale*, and their fetial priests. In *De Officiis*, Cicero argued the Romans had established a protectorate of the world, by fighting wars to defend allies and Roman provinces. He further asserted that the only reason war ought to be fought was to bring peace. The actions of war were justified as necessary to ensure said peace. Those who were barbarous in warfare were accorded no clemency; other more ‘civilised’ nations could be reasoned with. So, diplomatic agreements and treaties were made.

Theories of defensive imperialism have developed over time, and differ amongst themselves. Some of the earliest proponents of a defensive Rome were Theodor Mommsen, Tenney Frank, and Maurice Holleaux. None of these authors actually ascribed to or used the term ‘defensive imperialism’. Mommsen wrote the first three volumes of his *Römische Geschichte* before the word ‘imperialism’ (or *imperialismus*) was in wide circulation or had much meaning. However, Mommsen was the first to argue systematically that Rome acted defensively in the face of external pressures and threats, categorically denying Roman aggression, whether impulsive or rational - Rome acquired influence and territory reluctantly and through the unintended consequence of their

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36 Conquests were attempts to ensure that future attacks would not occur, or that potentially hostile peoples did not gain control over areas important to Rome or her allies.

37 *patrocinium orbis terrae*: Cic. *Off.* 2.27.

38 *bella aut pro sociis aut de imperio gerebantur … magistratus imperatoresque … studebant, is provincias si socios … defendissent*: Cic. *Off.* 2.27.

39 *quare suscipienda quidem bella sunt ob eam causam, ut sine iniuria in pace vivatur*: Cic. *Off.* 1.35.


41 Mommsen 1854-1856.
approaches to establishing and maintaining security. To Mommsen, Philip V of Macedon’s designs against Rome’s allies led to Roman interference in the Greek East from the late third century. Rome’s philhellenism prevented them from tolerating the fall of Greece to Macedonian control, as evidenced by the slogan and policy of the ‘freedom of the Greeks’ following the Second Macedonian War in 196.42

Mommsen’s influence was far reaching. Tenney Frank further developed the idea of inherent Roman defensive imperialism in his 1914 work, *Roman Imperialism*.43 He asserted that originally fetial law and the doctrine of *fides* ensured that Rome would never begin unjust or unsanctioned wars. Later in Roman history, their expansion was due to a series of circumstantial accidents resulting from Rome’s search for security. Philhellenism again ensured that even when drawn into eastern conflicts, Roma’s defeated foes became allies and friends rather than territorial acquisitions. It was only in the final days in the republic that a more aggressive approach was undertaken, primarily under Gnaeus Pompey and Julius Caesar.

In 1921, Maurice Holleaux enhanced the argument with regard to Rome’s lack of interest in the Greek East.44 Rome was driven to conquest out of alarm and fear of attack. There was no sense of philhellenism, of aiding Greece, or of territorial expansion; rather, the wars against Philip V and Antiochus III that followed were pre-emptive, that is, they were designed to prevent the kings from succeeding and then perhaps threatening Italy itself. The Romans defended their interests and tried to withdraw once these interests were secure. According to Holleaux, it was only after these wars that Rome began to embark upon a more imperialistic policy. Holleaux’s ideas were congenial to European apologists for empire at the time. They allowed European powers to identify

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42 For a discussion about the ideological aspects of both philhellenism and the ‘freedom of the Greeks’ see Ferrary 1988.
43 Frank 1914.
44 Holleaux 1921. He argued that the Roman state only entered into affairs as a result of fear and security concerns when it was announced that Philip V of Macedon and Antiochus III of the Seleucid Empire had formed a pact to destroy the boy-king of Egypt, Ptolemy V Epiphanes, and divide his kingdom and possessions between them. This thesis has recently been revived by Eckstein 2008: 121-381.
with Rome and at the same time critique the negative connotations of grasping, resource-hungry imperialism.\(^45\)

Ernst Badian altered the defensive imperialist idea in 1958.\(^46\) He asserted that philhellenism was never a Roman policy; nor did Rome ever realistically fear an invasion of the Italian peninsula by Philip V of Macedon. Instead, Rome extended its domestic patron-client system to incorporate international protectorates. Rome deemed these client states to be friends and allies only euphemistically. Rome did not desire to administer and gain responsibility over these areas, merely to influence them. A patron-client relationship allowed Rome to help states when it suited them, and ignore them when it did not, all the while expecting gratitude and deference. His thesis that Rome used doublespeak to make their policy more palatable is informed by the political manipulation of language and doublespeak surrounding diplomatic relationships during the Cold War.\(^7\) Badian’s thesis, while properly emphasising Roman desire for informal control over the East, assumes consistent senatorial policy (and application of language) across time, and fails to address the impact of Roman domestic politics on international relations.

Accidental or defensive imperialism continued to dominate theories of Roman imperialism, especially those published in English, until late in the 20\(^{th}\) century.\(^8\) The traditional arguments assumed a variety of forms, but the common thread was that Rome did not aggressively seek to conquer territory. The last major argument to support the concept was Erich Gruen’s 1984 response to William Harris’ sustained attack on the notion of accidental imperialism and his position that Rome was an exceptionally aggressive state

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\(^{45}\) Many criticisms of these early viewpoints focus on the notion that these scholars were writing as apologists for Rome and imperialism generally. They wrote in response to their own political leanings and their social context. They wanted to identify European expansion and particularly the colonisation of Africa (‘the Scramble for Africa’) with Roman expansion. Thus, they included notions of the ‘white man’s burden’ in their explanations of how Rome secured its position. For a summary of approaches to Roman imperialism, see Hoyos 2013: 4-14.

\(^{46}\) Badian 1958.

\(^{47}\) Burton 2011: 7.

\(^{48}\) For more examples of the ‘Defensive Imperialism’ thesis in various forms see Hammond 1948; Walbank 1963; Gruen 1970; Errington 1971a; Veyne 1975; Sherwin-White 1980; Sherwin-White 1983.
among its system rivals. Defensive theories after Harris have largely served to attempt to rebut him. Gruen’s work includes a pericentric account of why Rome found itself in a position of great influence in Greece by the mid-second century. He demonstrates at length that Roman action in the East reveals no sense of long-term policy. Roman involvement often followed Greek practices rather than attempted to impose their own. Greece drew Rome toward it; as a consequence, Rome eventually amalgamated it under their power. Like Badian, Gruen presents the image of a consistent Roman mentality (as opposed to policy) across time. Domestic political machinations are a secondary concern.

As mentioned above, William Harris’ 1979 War and Imperialism in Republican Rome 327-70 B.C. transformed the debate. Harris counters the defensive/accidental imperialism position by arguing that Roman expansionism was the result of Roman social structures breeding an aggressively militaristic state, which had a pathological need to expand to demonstrate power, achieve glory, and acquire material wealth. This theory is predominant in Roman imperialism studies. It is still the predominant English language text in this area. Outside of the Anglophone world, the thesis of Roman militarism was explored earlier. Gaetano de Sanctis was an advocate of this view. He maintained that while the Carthaginian motivation for the Second Punic War was revenge, the Romans desired to conquer Spain in order to seize silver mines and destroy Carthaginian trade. The conquests of M. Valerius Laevinus on Sicily after 210 marked the inevitable change from defensively offensive wars to aggressively imperialistic ones. Rome acted under a compulsion of militarism and materialism, stripping the state of its moral authority and eventually leading to its downfall.

49 Harris 1979; Gruen 1984.
50 Aside from Harris, there were numerous studies in the late 1970s which focussed on a more agressive Rome. Harris, however, was and remains the dominant voice of Roman aggression and materialism. See for example Brunt 1978; Hopkins 1978; Derow 1979; Jal 1982; and most recently Waterfield 2014. Harris 2016 is a restatement of Harris 1979, on a broader scale, thus ignoring the intervening thirty-five years of scholarship on Roman imperialism.
51 De Sanctis 1916: 425 For other examples of De Sanctis’ position see the other volumes in his Storia dei Romani.
52 De Sanctis 1916: 114.
Harris focused on the aggressive aspects of Roman culture through an examination of the political and social context of the Roman state. He identifies the importance of military success to Roman aristocrats for gaining *gloria* and thus establishing a reputation in the Roman state. Intense competition and fights for *gloria* ensured a sense of individualism.  

Individualism, in turn, combined with greed, resulted in the Roman state being almost continuously at war. According to Harris, in the 86 years after 327 Rome was at peace for only four or five of them. Harris further goes on to claim that while inevitable seasonal warfare began to decline in the third century it remained an ‘utterly normal feature of Roman public life’.  

Harris’ argument has its attractions. It is impossible to deny that Rome built an aggressive state where military prowess was necessary for honour and social status. But this does not have to equate to an excessively aggressive, empire-building nation. Each conflict, in Harris’ view, was the result of metrocentric forces in the Roman aristocracy. This ignores the complexities of international affairs and foreign policy motivations. It is impractical to claim that Rome was *always* the only aggressor, even if it can be accepted that Rome was an aggressive imperialistic power.  

It is difficult to accept that Rome was somehow exceptionally aggressive amidst the aggressive powers of the Hellenistic Mediterranean, as Eckstein has demonstrated.  

In general, the approaches discussed thus far above have two significant flaws. First, most scholars conceive empire as territorial acquisition. Harris provided reasons for why certain areas were never claimed by Rome. Defensive imperialists cite Roman withdrawal from regions and the granting of ‘freedom’ as evidence that empire was not a Roman goal. Ancient writers did not see things in these terms. In these texts, states and boundaries were of little concern; it was the individual enemies who mattered. The Latin term *imperium*, in the period discussed here, was a manifestation of the power of a commander over *provinciae*. It was not until the first century AD that *imperium* came to signify empire as a territorial entity. *Provincia*, while it eventually came to delineate a

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53 The idea of aristocratic competition in Rome is further investigated in Rosenstein 1990a; Rosenstein 1990b.  
54 Harris 1979: 10.  
55 Harris tries to demonstrate this in his fifth, and weakest, chapter.  
56 Eckstein 2006.
territorial province, originally meant the area over which a commander exercised *imperium*, or even more vaguely his assignment.\(^7\)

The second major problem with analyses of Roman imperialism is that, with the exception of Gruen’s, which argues from the pericentric perspective, they tend to view the expansion of Rome from a metrocentric standpoint. This is myopic. In this view, the causes of expansion, its motivations, and its results, are strictly the consequence of Roman dispositions, Roman desires, Roman institutions, and Roman beliefs; peripheries and the international system have no real effect on Roman action. Unfortunately, this attitude is not reflective of how international society works. As Doyle asserts, a historical empire cannot be explained by the actions of the metropole alone. Metropolitan ambitions or fears fail to explain why some peripheries resist conquest and colonisation, why some are annihilated, and why some are left largely ignored.\(^8\) Rome did not exist in a vacuum. All ancient states and peoples were affected either directly or indirectly by the actions of other states.

It is here that systemic IR theories enter the debate. These theories look to the international system and its structure in order to interpret historical events, make suppositions about the future, and put forward normative theories. In doing so, these theories provide a more well-rounded explanation of events. IR theory first began to be discussed in the aftermath of the First World War. The idea was to ensure that a similar war would never happen again. Consequently, the first theory to arise was optimistic and idealist. Since then, a variety of approaches to international relations has emerged.\(^9\) Ancient historians have been slow to adopt its ideas.

Arthur Eckstein was first to systematically apply IR theories to Roman imperialism.\(^60\) In two recent works, Mediterranean Anarchy, Interstate War, and

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\(^7\) For instance, Livy states that in 213 a *provincia* allocated was *bellum cum Hannibale* (Livy. 24.44). ‘War with Hannibal’ can hardly be deemed a physical territory over which the senate assigned power to a magistrate. For an in depth discussion of the adaptation of the language of empire see Richardson 2008.

\(^8\) Doyle 1986: 46-53.

\(^9\) For the development of International Relations as a discipline see any IR textbook, for instance Hollis and Smith 1990; Jørgensen 2010.

\(^60\) In 2007, Polly Low applied a post-positivist English School approach to Greek interstate affairs. Low 2007.
the Rise of Rome (2006) and Rome Enters the Greek East: From Anarchy to Hierarchy in the Hellenistic Mediterranean, 230-170 BC (2008), Eckstein has sought to explain Roman expansion and foreign policy through the application of neo-Realist theory.\(^61\) Kenneth Waltz’s neo-Realism arose in the ‘second great debate’ of International Relations in the 1970s.\(^62\) This methodological debate shifted the discipline of IR from the humanities to social science. In doing so, it introduced the new notions of positivism to Classical Realist theories.\(^63\) Positivist methods create verifiable hypotheses that test experience with quantitative data to create general laws and causal statements about social phenomena. For these tests to be valid, they must be reproducible. Such an approach implies that an objective reality exists independent of human perception. Those who follow this methodology argue that legitimate theories cannot be based upon unobservable phenomena such as human nature and morality. By adopting this approach, Waltz’s neo-Realism differs from the Classical Realism of Hans Morgenthau and E. H. Carr.\(^64\) Neo-Realism claims the only things of true importance when discussing international relations are the international system itself and the distribution of material resources across it. Although I am sceptical about neo-Realism as a viable explanatory political theory, especially in the Roman context, Eckstein’s arguments based upon it have revitalised the debate about Roman imperialism. He provides scholars a valuable opportunity to move beyond the aggressive/defensive dichotomy prevalent in Roman studies. In doing so, Eckstein permits an assessment of why Rome met with success when other states in similar situations did not. To Eckstein, this is largely due to Rome’s capacity to mobilise resources and its willingness to assimilate non-Romans into its hegemonic system via citizenship.

As Eckstein points out in his earlier work, the neo-Realist theoretical approach is based on three fundamental principles: 1) that the world is anarchic; 2) anarchy results in an unavoidable and grim self-help regime, which dictates states’ actions regardless of their desires; 3) the international system is either

\(^{61}\) Eckstein 2006; Eckstein 2008.

\(^{62}\) Waltz 1979.

\(^{63}\) Positivistic social science argues that social sciences have the same capabilities as natural sciences - that is, it is possible to explain and understand the world through empirical observation. There is no dichotomy between appearance and reality.

\(^{64}\) Carr 1939; Morgenthau 1948.
stable or unstable, a result of the balance of power. As Eckstein presents it, before 146 the Mediterranean was a multipolar anarchy. According to neo-Realism, multipolarity is dangerous. There are too many threats to watch and make judgements about in order to maintain national security. All states are forced to act as if war may break out at any second. Thus, all states automatically treat all others with suspicion. They militarise; they prepare themselves for inevitable war. A state’s foremost concern becomes its survival; security is the primary objective. Without an international authority or cooperative attitudes to mitigate anxiety, security is defined as possessing superior material resources; a secure state has a greater military, and resources to fund and maintain it.

For Eckstein, Waltz’s description of multipolarity roughly matches the eastern Mediterranean system Rome was drawn into in the late third century. The resulting analysis is something of an amalgamation of the descriptions of Roman imperialism. Systemically based theories suggest that although Rome was bellicose and aggressive, it was hardly unique. Roman bellicosity was the result of an anarchic state system. Rome militarised in order to achieve security and to ensure survival in an anarchic world, populated by powers equally or indeed more belligerent than itself. In such an environment, all actions coincide with the security interests of the state. Hence, while there may sometimes be diplomatic agreements and moral constraints within the state restraining bellicose behaviour, these will be ignored wherever and whenever a threat is observed. As the material capabilities of other states are often hard to gauge, states assume the worst about each other, perpetuating the grim self-help system.

A key component of neo-Realist theories, and adopted by Eckstein, is that agency is not created at the state level – referred to as the ‘unit level’. States and individuals are largely irrelevant. The system forces stereotypical state behaviour regardless of the beliefs and values of its members. In such a system, all states are reduced to ‘functionally similar units’. Unit-level differences in culture, belief, or level of political development make little difference to the state of

\[65\] See Waltz 1979: 161-2; Eckstein 2006: 12. It is important to note that ‘stability’ for Waltz, rather than being the absence of war, is instead a situation where anarchy prevails and the number of polarities that dominate the system remains unchanged.

\[66\] Multipolarity signifies that more than two states have equal or near equal amounts of military, economic, and cultural influence.
affairs in an anarchic system. It is through this reasoning that neo-Realism argues that the world will never change. There will perpetually be an anarchic system readying itself for war. Stephen Walt built upon this form of neo-Realism. He asserted that in this system states either bandwagon – join a powerful state to ensure survival, and to benefit from the destruction of others - or balance – combine forces so that together the group of states makes up for deficiencies, becoming equal or superior to a powerful state. They do this in order to create a ‘balance of power’.\(^{67}\)

Neo-Realist theory is overly reductionist and deterministic. It fully credits as science social science positivism. Positivism advocates that what is real is what can be experienced (\textit{esse est percepri}). This denies the validity of things that cannot be experienced through sensory perception. Moreover, neo-Realism advocates the use of the scientific method in social sciences. All hypotheses must be verifiable and testable against an objective reality of truth. Hypotheses based upon subjective ideas are thus invalid and unsound. In neo-Realism, language, beliefs, culture, and cognition are subordinated to the idea of \textit{survival}. The obsession that positivism has with parsimony and testability is helpful in natural sciences. It allows scientists to create general laws about natural phenomena. Human beings, both our culture and our actions, are not reducible to ‘general laws’. Human beings are not pure rationalists. In general humans do not act, as Waltz would have us believe, in terms of rational choice, based on material capabilities alone. In times of stress, shock, or fear humans react based upon emotions and perceptions, rather than coldly waiting to analyse whichever action is in their own long-term best interest. Nor are small everyday decisions made in light of ‘rational best interest’. States, as aggregations of people, do not do so either.\(^{68}\)

Rational choice theory can be applied to neo-Realism because it restricts analysis to the systemic structural level. Waltz differentiates between studies of foreign policy and international politics.\(^{69}\) The rationale for this is that in a polar

\(^{67}\) Walt 1987.

\(^{68}\) For a critique of the rational man fallacy see Bourdieu 1990: 61-3; Patomäki 2002: 24-6.

\(^{69}\) Elman 1996; Waltz 1996. It is important to note that this is questioned by other neo-Realist scholars. See Telbami 2002.
system, the external realities of the system limit any choice of state behaviour. In a multipolar world, there are too many threats to do anything other than attempt to remove them; in a bipolar world - the most stable world - the two main contenders balance against each other and ensure that nothing happens that would risk the survival of either. In a unipolar system, the foreign policy of a state can have more of an effect. There is nothing to balance against it and thus despotism arises. Structures rule agents. But, as the social constructivist Alexander Wendt claimed ‘it is impossible for structures to have effects apart from the attributes and interactions of agents’.

As an alternative, Paul Burton recently applied Wendt’s constructivist theory to Roman international relations. Focusing on the role of discourse in constructing an international reality, Burton challenged the thesis put forth by Ernst Badian in 1958. Instead of euphemistic doublespeak masking the transference of patronage to the international realm, Burton asserts that the ancient sources preserve evidence of constitutive reality in that international relationships really were ones of genuine friendship, complete with the social obligations these necessitated. Burton goes on to argue that it was through this friendship, coupled with diplomatic and decision-making flexibility, that Rome managed to transform a largely anarchic, violent world into one of relative hegemonic stability, albeit with Roman interests at the fore. Burton asserts that his approach to Roman imperialism adopts the discursive aspects of constructivism as well as the factors such as self-interest and fear in the construction of the international system. He maintains, however, that he views these features as discursive rather than descriptive phenomena. They cannot exist or influence that systemic international structure in the absence of discourse about them.

Constructivism entails a group of post-positivist theories about international relations, some closer to realism, and others verging upon pure

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70 Waltz 2004.
71 Wendt 1999: 12.
72 Burton 2011.
73 Burton 2011: 22.
post-modernism. Alexander Wendt is a weak constructivist. He remains closer to a realist methodology than a true post-positivist one. The basic tenet of his constructivism attacks neo-Realist assumptions. This tenet claims that core aspects of international relations are socially constructed rather than exogenously determined – they are determined more by shared ideas and discourse than by irresistible natural and material forces. In spite of this, Wendt maintains that the international system is anarchic. The social construction of these interests ensures that the anarchy of the international system ‘is what states make of it’. It is argued that if one removes the realist assumptions about the exogenously given nature of interests and identities in the international system, and the meaning that social institutions hold for such actors – that is, the inevitability of self-help systems and realpolitik - then neo-Realist ‘structure’ means nothing. Anarchy alone does not have the determinative or causal power to explain why some states are friends and others foes, or if a state recognises the sovereignty of another or not. The construction of the particular anarchy requires an investigation into the socially constructed interests and identities of actors.

Wendt’s key point is that a state’s interests are the dependent variable. In Humean causation, the dependent variable (X) inevitably leads to the independent variable (Y). To Wendt, the international system, be it embodied

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74 Pure forms of constructivism are subject to the same criticisms of radical post-positivist theories, that is, they deny the rationalist viewpoint that what is real is what can be perceived, instead assuming that what is real is what is said (esse est dictum esse). While they do not deny the existence of material reality, they believe it cannot be known independently of discourse. While discourse and language have important roles, they do not explain the world or the entirety of international affairs. For an explanation of the three approaches to ontological and epistemological debate about the reality of ideas including the reflectivist, the constitutivist, and the mediative see Woolgar 1983.

75 Wendt’s approach attempts to find a middle ground between the positivist/rationalist and the relativist/post-positivist theories. His ontology asserts that there is a mind-independent world (ontological realism). This reality is affected by our knowledge, ideas, and societies. Hence, it is not purely physically determined. Wendt 1992; Wendt 1999.

76 Wendt 1992; Wednt 1999. Identity and interests are socially constructed, and thus exist only in relation to others. Identities presuppose interests; something cannot know what it wants before it knows what it is. Identities in relation to the other states in the system determine the nature of the anarchy.


78 The term ‘Humean’ is used in this thesis to delineate the assumptions commonly attributed to Hume’s philosophy of causation. The term should not be taken as a
by rivalry, cooperation, or enmity is the direct result of various states’ identities and interests. People act differently toward objects depending on the meaning objects hold. Hence, ‘states act differently toward enemies than they do friends because enemies are threatening and friends are not’. The theory is not radically reflectivist. Material forces still matter. Wendt’s middle ground approach dictates that the manner in which the material world shapes humanity, and is shaped by humanity in turn, depends upon the shared ideas and interpretations about the material. In a simple sense, gold is valued by our society. But gold is not valued to the same extent by everyone – it has no objective worth. It is our society and our discourse that dictates what value we place upon it.

None of the foregoing discussions about Roman imperialism or IR theories address the role of intelligence in international affairs. Nor do any of the few discussions of intelligence previously mentioned relate it to empire building. Instead, imperialism and international relations studies focus on why the empires or powers come to be; imperialist scholars analyse the motivations and circumstances that led to Roman control. Normally, they attempt to impose uniform explanations and motivations onto centuries of historical evolution. IR theorists do much the same. My intention here is to explain how Rome used one particular tool – intelligence – in the course of gaining influence over vast areas of the Mediterranean in the 3rd and 2nd centuries, before focusing on what this means. There are many factors that undoubtedly contributed to the rise of Roman power, including geo-spatial, political, and military elements. The inclusion of intelligence in this debate, thus an acknowledgement of how the Roman people attempted or did not attempt to know about others, their resources, and their territories, and what perceptions they constructed about their neighbours, is vital to understanding their motivations and social conceptions – and hence their interest (or not) in acquiring an empire.

80 Wendt 1992: 397.
81 Wendt 1999: ch. 4.
Approach

International Relations

This study accepts the basic tenets of Wendt’s constructivism. It acknowledges the social construction of identity and interest, the international anarchic structure, and how material forces, while not as important as Waltz would have us believe, are causally potent. The approach is a means to escape the dominant Realist paradigms. Two aspects of Wendt’s theory are problematic. The most important of these is the attachment to Humean causation, as he defines it. Humean causation is perfectly valid in the positivistic world of natural science. Through the observation of events, it is possible for scientists to discover general patterns. Empiricist philosophy determines these patterns to be causal laws. In deterministic closed systems where all variables can be isolated and controlled, it is possible to prove that X invariably leads to Y. Under this theory, X and Y must be independent; X must occur before Y; but for X, Y would not have occurred. The social world is more complex than this: people, social identities, and structures change; various facets of the social world are not directly observable. There is no unique combination of factors that always leads to a specific predictable outcome. Reality is complex. Part of what creates this complexity is that human agents and structures possess causal power. Human agency and discourse is unpredictable in a given set of circumstances, no matter how similar those circumstances may be to those that have occurred in the past. Parsimonious theories attempt to think away this complexity as epiphenomena in order to create broad generalisations that can explain the phenomena of international relations and politics outside of historical and social context.

As social systems are open rather than closed, and it is impossible to isolate and control unit-level variables, I believe that a Critical Realist approach to causation can reveal a better understanding of the reasons behind certain

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Critical Realism is in no way related to political or IR Realism. A critical realist philosophy of causation allows us to escape the arbitrary simplicity of positivistic causal explanations. Critical Realism does not equate causality merely with constant observable conjunctions. Rather, causes are structured powers that can result in a multitude of events if activated by other causes. The core assumptions are that:

1. Causes exist as ontologically real forces in the world around us.
2. Nothing comes from nothing.
3. Many causes are unobservable.
4. Causes exist in complex contexts where multiple causes interact with each other, rather than in a mechanistic $X$ leads to $Y$ scenario.

There are many kinds of social causes, from reasons and norms to discourses and social structures. There are varieties of variables that in combination result in an action. Different combinations may lead to the same effect; or the same variable, but under different circumstances, may lead to a different effect. This notion of causation is known as INUS causation. Cause is an Insufficient but Non-redundant element of a complex, which is itself Unnecessary but Sufficient for the production of a result. Mackie provides a graphic example to elucidate this concept. Experts have decided that the cause for a fire, which partially destroyed a house, was a short circuit.

Clearly they are not saying that the short-circuit was a necessary condition for this house’s catching fire at this time; they know perfectly well that a short-circuit somewhere else, or the overturning of a lighted oil stove, or any one of a number of other things might, if it had occurred, have set the house on fire. Equally, they are not saying that the short-circuit was a sufficient condition for this house’s catching fire; for if the short-circuit had occurred, but there had been no inflammable material nearby, the fire would not have broken out; and

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83 For a different criticism of Humean causation see Suganami 1997; for detailed examinations of Critical Realism as an alternative philosophy see Patomäki and Wight 2000; Patomäki 2002; Wight 2004; Wight 2006; Wight 2012.
84 Kurki 2007: 364.
even given both the short-circuit and the inflammable material, the fire would not have occurred if, say, there had been an efficient automatic sprinkler at just the right spot.\textsuperscript{85}

Mackie implies that there were a number of conditions that by themselves were unnecessary for the fire to occur. The existence of these conditions in that specific combination was sufficient to produce the fire. The fire could still have occurred under completely different conditions. And the fire may not have occurred even under the stated conditions if another condition also existed. This type of causation allows for a better analysis of social complexities. Rather than searching for one general law that can explain the outbreak of war in general, for instance, we can examine the causal nexus that resulted in the outbreak of a specific war in its particular socio-historical context.

The second criticism of Wendt, and of other IR scholars, follows on from the first. There is an arbitrary distinction in IR studies between ‘levels-of-analysis’ and a debate about whether to focus on agency or structure. As Hudson asserts ‘most contemporary theoretical work in IR gives the impression that its ground lies in states, or in slightly alternative language, that whatever decision-making unit is involved, be it a state or a human being or a group, that this unit can be approximated as a unitary rational actor and therefore be made equivalent to the state.’\textsuperscript{86} Waltz’s theory focuses analysis on the structure of the international system. Wendt’s focus is on the identities and interests of states as agents in the structure. Both essentially remove the role of human agency. For Wendt, the state is real; for Waltz, conflict is inevitable regardless of human action. It is not possible to separate agency from structure, the influences of people upon the state, the state upon the international system and its citizens, or the system upon both the states and their inhabitants. The distinctions are leftovers from positivism’s influence and appeals to parsimony. But states, structures, and human beings possess causal agency. Agents and structures are inextricably

\textsuperscript{85} Mackie 1976: 308-9.
\textsuperscript{86} Hudson 2005: 2.
linked. To separate them for the purposes of parsimonious theorising seems arbitrary and no longer useful. There are three main reasons for this.

Material and ideational structures presuppose social activity. All activity takes place in context. This context is created by the conditions, relations, and ideas inherited from the past. These inherited characteristics are established antecedent social entities. The contexts constitute and influence all social action, the ideas and beliefs of actors, and what these actors believe to be possible actions. They inspire certain ways of thinking, while discouraging others. In doing so, as Wendt correctly asserts, they allow for change, but certainly do not make change easy or fast. Structure thus influences agency. Human beings, as social actors, cannot be separated from this social context. Human beings are creatures of our environment. Our beliefs, perceptions, ideas, conceptions of ourselves and of our countries, and cognitive biases are the result of our upbringing inside a particular historically and politically contingent social system. This social system is integral to explaining human action, and is a cause of it. This does not mean that inside our social structures people do not have individual thoughts and beliefs, that they do not challenge the status quo, but that in general our thoughts and beliefs are conditioned by the social structure into which we were born. It is in the realm of agency that creativity, change, variation, and surprise exist. Human actions cannot be ignored when explaining social activity. Structural analysis cannot explain change, creativity, or unexpected actions. The decisions made by individuals, and by individuals gathered together as groups, thus have an influence on both state and international structural affairs. Even if all material and structural conditions remain the same, different groups will make different decisions. Human action cannot be reduced to the Waltzian unitary rational decision maker.

States are dependent upon individuals. A state is a structure in which human activity can take place. Without structure, activity would not occur. Wendt, unlike other IR theorists, does not treat states ‘as if’ they were real. They

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87 Patomäki and Wight 2000: 231.
88 Patomäki and Wight 2000.
are real. Further, shifting the focus away from human agency, he ascribes human properties to states—rationality, intentionality, identity, interest, and belief.\textsuperscript{92} Nonetheless, Wendt accepts that states are structures. They are, however, specific kinds of structures that emerge as corporate agents.\textsuperscript{93} They can do this only because the individuals and groups of individuals inside them possess the idea of corporate agency. The shared ideas of individuals and groups become the state. State activity is consequently the activity of individuals acting within a particular structural context. It is only in this context that individuals can have an effect on the international system. Agency cannot be explained in the absence of structure, nor can structure be explained in the absence of human agency.

Despite the necessity of structure, it cannot fully explain the decisions and effects of human agency. As Patomäki and Wight explain, in the social world there are things with causal powers. These include structures and agents. Exercise of these causal powers requires intentionality. International systemic structures have causal powers, but no intentionality. Wendt ascribes intentionality to states, but as discussed above, the state is simply the shared idea of a group or groups of individuals, of whom the state cannot act independently. Agents have intentionality, although they may not be aware of the structurally constructed reasons for these intentions. Agents, their intentions, and their rationales for these intentions are not enough to affect cause. They need a structure in which to act. Both structure and agency are needed for events to occur.\textsuperscript{94} Hence, in any social explanation or analysis there must be room for both agentic and structural forces, and material and ideational influences.

In light of this, I advocate a form of pluralism: rather than reducing elements of international society to specific fundamentals, we should consider all of them to be distinct and valuable. This study will take a more Critical Realist approach to international relations. There cannot be one overarching theory that explains all international activity regardless of the socio-political or historical context. World affairs are created by events, sets of circumstances, experiences, identities, ideas, and discourses but are also composed of structures, powers,

\textsuperscript{92} Wendt 2004.
\textsuperscript{93} Wendt 1999: 216-7.
\textsuperscript{94} Patomäki and Wight 2000: 232.
and tendencies, whether or not these are acknowledged or indeed recognised. These things are interrelated. It is impossible to explain the complex social world through an exclusive focus on just one element. Both positivist and post-positivist theories have valid points. But it is impossible to reduce ideational or empirical levels of reality into one. Both exist. Both have causal potency.

**Intelligence**

Michael Fry and Miles Hochstein observed there has been a noticeable ‘failure to integrate intelligence studies, even in a primitive way, into the mainstream of research in international relations’. This is largely because intelligence, both as a discipline and as an organised national service, is the product of the 20th century. Its formation and its definitional focus, especially in the United States of America, were heavily influenced by the prevalent IR theories of the time. Most definitions of intelligence rest inside Realist paradigms of international relations and positivist epistemologies. This is problematic in that it makes prejudicial assumptions about what intelligence is and its purpose(s). Intelligence is defined as ‘protecting national security’, fuelling the notion that national security is constantly at risk. This in turn influences how any intelligence data is collected and analysed.

A large majority of intelligence scholars never acknowledge their meta-theoretical assumptions. Yet definitions and attempts at theoretical construction rely on these assumptions. As stated by Rathmell, ‘scholars and practitioners of intelligence tend to be wedded to the robust paradigms of realism, with little time for the generalities and perceived vacuities of social theorists’. David Kahn, when seeking a theory of intelligence, asserted that all theories must fit inside a positivist epistemology, even when one is dealing with unquantifiable social phenomena. He declared that, ‘no one has proposed concepts that can be tested’. He seeks a theory of intelligence that has verifiable or falsifiable propositions. Theorists look for ideas about intelligence in light of what they deem intelligence agencies are for – namely security and survival in an anarchic

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world. Wheaton and Beerbower, for instance, define intelligence essentially as a tool. It reduces uncertainty about foreign action in order to ensure advantage in a competitive world.99 Sims is more explicit: ‘intelligence is best understood as the collection, analysis, and dissemination of information by parties in conflict or competition.’ 100 The distinction between intelligence and information for Sims is that intelligence has the sole purpose of gaining competitive advantage over others. 101 Lowenthal states that intelligence refers to issues and activities relating to a state’s national security, for instance, the investigating and observation of the actions, policies, and capabilities of other nations and non-state groups, be they enemies, allies, or neutral parties, in order to secure knowledge of any potential action that may affect said state. 102 The idea presented is simple enough. If the world is anarchic and dangerous and states are constantly at risk of war, then intelligence serves to protect states. But to constantly look for threats and insecurities in the world creates threats and insecurity, as Constructivists would argue. Realist theory might inform intelligence definitions, but Realism largely deprives intelligence systems of human agency. Realist theorists pay little attention to intelligence, nor do they particularly appreciate it. It is understandable, given that IR Realism is the dominant foreign policy paradigm in the states where IR scholars live, that none of them, as far as I know, has successfully integrated IR and intelligence.

To route intelligence into doctrines such as a ‘national security paradigm’ or a ‘rational choice paradigm’ detracts from the reality of the highly subjective nature of analysis. Rational choice theory interprets events as if all action is designed to maximise personal advantage in light of an objective cost-benefit analysis. Ethics, emotions, societal beliefs, and psychological pressures are ignored as the basis of action. Rational choice, as mentioned earlier, is rarely typical of humanity. It is even less typical of intelligence. The mind of an interpreter is never a tabula rasa, despite efforts to reduce cognitive bias. It always contains beliefs, values, attitudes, experiences, emotions, memories, personality traits, and national and self-conceptions. Many of these go

99 Wheaton and Beerbower 2006.
100 Sims 2007: 40.
101 Sims 2007: 40.
102 Lowenthal 2006: 5-6.
unacknowledged. To resist them is almost impossible. Having accepted the notion of epistemological relativism - that our knowledge and truths are social constructions rather than objective realities - it becomes possible to reinterpret intelligence’s relation to IR in a non-realist manner. Fundamentally, intelligence requires the presentation of an interpretation of events based on, at best, imperfect but accurate information. It is hardly a stretch to claim that the resultant interpretations and images are socially constructed. Before constructing a case about intelligence’s relation to IR based on this, it is necessary to assess and redefine intelligence upon neutral rather than Realist determined grounds.

It is an implausible goal to attempt to understand the methods and modes of intelligence utilised by mid-republican Rome through the strict application of modern understandings of intelligence organisations and methods. The large majority of intelligence literature assesses the role of intelligence in the past fifty years in the United States of America: they discuss the development, organisation, and activities of groups such as the FBI, the CIA, and the NSA, and their relationship with policy makers. Alternatively, they discuss issues such as the oversight and monitoring of intelligence activities to ensure they comply with legal and ethical mores. Most theories that arise are normative and address how reform ought to be possible to avoid repeated intelligence failure, or to improve intelligence systems. These definitions are not readily transferable from their historical and socio-political context. They thus have little direct relevance to this study. The mid-republican Roman government lacked bureaucratic intelligence organisations; their government and magisterial roles were not divided into the same rigorously defined and compartmentalised functions found in modern western institutions. Positions, roles, and duties in government were far more ad hoc, overlapping, temporary, and influenced by personal motives than modern bureaucratic organisations. Many aspects of modern definitions need to be abandoned. In spite of this, some aspects of modern practices can be used to help interpret and elucidate the intelligence activity involved in events and actions as they are described in our ancient primary sources.

103 There are calls to develop an overarching theory of intelligence. For an overview of the current debate see Gill, Marrin, and Phythian 2009.
Most scholarly intelligence works include at least one section or chapter devoted to defining ‘intelligence’ and the theoretical approach of the work. These definitions and explanations often pay no regard to those of other authors, something lamented by scholars. There is no consensus in intelligence studies as to what ‘intelligence’ means. Traditionally, there is a tripartite definition: it is a process, a product, and an activity. Intelligence as a process claims that intelligence encompasses all the activities in the ‘intelligence cycle’; that is, everything needed to request, collect, analyse, and disseminate intelligence. As a product, intelligence is simply that final information presented to decision makers. Intelligence as activity traditionally includes all activities relating to intelligence. This consists of not only the activities required for the ‘process’ but also any action needed to ensure others cannot gain intelligence about you, and any covert or overt action taken to facilitate or implement decisions. This tripartite structure is based on the definition given by Sherman Kent in 1949.

Neither the process embodied in the intelligence cycle nor the inclusion of counterintelligence and covert action in a definition provide knowledge of what constitutes intelligence. At its most basic level, intelligence is simply a form of information, information about the world, states, and peoples around you. But intelligence has to be more than simply information. As Gill and Phythian assert, intelligence has an ultimate purpose; it is but a means to an end. In terms of ancient societies, especially Rome, this end is an open question. In the absence of governmental organisations dedicated solely to monitoring the actions of suspicious domestic and foreign forces, and of a centralised, bureaucratic government, it is unlikely the end goal of intelligence was ‘national security’ in the manner that many modern definitions assert. National security is a long-term plan. It is developed with foresight and a belief, based on inductive reasoning, about what will happen in the international arena in the future. Intelligence serves to inform this conception of the future. It allows for the better creation of processes and plans to ensure safety. Roman government lacked this long-term outlook. While security concerns played a part in some decisions and

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104 For example Warner 2002: 15; Wheaton and Beerbower 2006: 319-20; Betts 2009: 87.
105 Kent 1949: ix.
106 Gill and Phythian 2012: 10.
reactions, it was not the immediate sole motivating factor or cause for intelligence gathering and action.

Secrecy is another element often used to reduce the concept of information to intelligence; it builds on the notion of national security threats.\textsuperscript{107} Shulsky and Schmitt go so far as to claim that secrecy is the most necessary characteristic in intelligence officers and organisations.\textsuperscript{108} Secrecy, or at least a covert guise, is essential in certain aspects of intelligence gathering, namely espionage. But it is hardly a necessary component. To define intelligence based upon secrecy implies that it is about gathering information about enemies and threats that they do not wish you to know about. Intelligence is needed about neutral parties, friends, and foes, about culture and economy, as well as military and political affairs. It is not all about discovering threats, but gauging reactions, learning how to better manipulate or respond to others to ensure peace, and to promote trade and friendship. Moreover, in modern intelligence-gathering, a vast majority of intelligence is developed through the analysis of readily available public information such as newspapers and internet sources. Secrecy and plots were common enough in the ancient world. And secrecy was and is required in gathering certain information. But the gathering of data and information about the geo-political circumstances and intentions of neighbours was largely open activity sanctioned by governments and occurred in the realm of public diplomacy.

The most reasonable and accessible definition of an ‘end purpose’ given to intelligence is to facilitate decision-making. In a basic sense, intelligence is sought about both domestic and foreign peoples, in both military and political contexts, in order to make better decisions. For intelligent, coherent, purposeful action in relation to others, leaders must have accurate information as to the strengths, weaknesses, and intentions of others, be they friends, foes, neutral parties, or domestic citizens. Robert Jervis’ interpretation claims that intelligence serves to ‘provide an understanding of the world on which foreign policy can be based and to support instruments to influence and possibly deceive others’.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{108} Shulsky and Schmitt 2002: 1-3.
\textsuperscript{109} Jervis 2009: 70.
This definition is too simplistic for modern intelligence activities; it is, however, suitable for ancient studies. Technically, it confounds all governmental information with intelligence, including diplomatic information. As it will be discussed here, diplomacy was intimately related to intelligence during the period under study. The problem is that in talking of foreign policy, Jervis refers only to foreign political intelligence. In light of this, this definition needs to be tweaked slightly to apply to this study. I define intelligence as the gathering and analysis of any information, be it military, political, economic, or cultural, that aids one nation or group in understanding another, for the purposes of facilitating decision-making, both politically and in military situations.

Such a definition of intelligence is easily amalgamated into the IR approach taken in this study. Adopting the approach to IR that human agency, structure, and the international system are linked and influence each other, and that both material and ideational factors are important, intelligence becomes vital to interpreting events in international affairs. Intelligence informs policy decisions based on information that is collected and analysed. This information is created from the subjective social context in which the individual gatherer exists. Any information collected or analysed is automatically subject to bias. The people who choose which information is relevant, and those who then analyse this information so chosen do so based upon their social context. An awareness of these biases can allow some to be mitigated. There are deeply embedded cultural conceptions of the world, predispositions, which are nearly impossible to remove. As Fry and Hochstein assert, ‘intelligence is not merely the ‘eye’ which perceives the objective international reality of power politics and describes it, but is in fact one of the primary locations of international relations practice’.\footnote{Fry and Hochstein 1994: 25.} As intelligence presents a subjective reality, distorted by social contexts, it participates in the creation and reproductions of international political reality.

Intelligence presents information. This information is knowledge. Knowledge is a form of power. By accepting or denying this information - which may or may not be accurate - the state constructs, changes, or reinforces ideas about and an identification of external states or their domestic civilians. As
Wendt discussed, socially constructed identities are hard to change. Having conceived or inherited the idea that one group or nation is a threat or an ally, there is a natural bias in both intelligence-gatherers and policy-makers to decide that all action confirms that viewpoint. Policy decisions are then made based upon these ideas and identities. In the absence of intelligence, these ideas and identities are still created, changed, and reinforced. Decision-makers lack the same level of power in their constructed relationship. The role of intelligence is to attempt to clarify the reality of societal ideas and identities by elucidating the intentions of others. By doing so, it contributes to the change or maintenance of these identities, and thus facilitates decision-making in potentially turbulent circumstances.

**IR, Intelligence, and Rome**

The use of intelligence, and subsequent decisions based upon it, by the Roman state can tell us about how the Romans viewed themselves, their neighbours, their relations with their neighbours, and how these impressions were constructed and altered (or not) over time. This can help us determine whether Roman international action in an anarchic world was aggressively imperialistic (exceptionally so), a result of a paranoid national mentality, or was driven by a desire for security, stability, and cooperation. To fully understand the complex causal nexus of any particular situation, it is necessary to take into account all the particular levels of agency involved in it. This includes the material and the ideational, but more than that, it includes the actions of humans in international affairs - their construction of domestic and foreign policy, the actions of states, and the influence of the international system. At its heart, this study will focus on the role that intelligence played in constructing Rome’s policy in the third and second centuries at the level of human and state agency, and how this policy could and did influence events that resulted in a hegemonic international structure with Rome at its core. To understand the causes of this, it is first necessary to understand what intelligence activities were undertaken and understood in the Roman state, and the existing contingent ideas, perceptions, and identities held by social actors in the ancient Mediterranean world, and how these identities were affected by intelligence. From this, it will be possible to reconstruct episodes involving international interactions within the wider
structural context to better elucidate cause. Thus, the primary subject of this thesis is not to provide an account of interstate relations during the third and second centuries. Rather, the focus will be on the conceptions, ideas, and motivations that underlay these events. It will investigate the conventions of Roman intelligence, the prevalent beliefs about intelligence in primarily political situations (although military affairs are inevitably mentioned, true to the nature of Rome), and the impact these predominantly social beliefs have on behaviours at the individual, state, and systemic level.

This study will investigate these ideas through the critical reading of extant historical narrative with the addition of, where helpful, archaeological and epigraphic evidence. The investigation will where possible present events from a holistic rather than a Romanocentric perspective. This is naturally limited by the nature of our sources. Many of the surviving texts are separated by vast periods from those they describe and that are covered by this study. Their reconstructions of events are littered with invented rhetorical speeches, political biases, anachronism, and - most especially in the case of Livy - blatant moralising. Ancient historians suffer from many of the same faults. All had one agenda or another. Nonetheless, it is not only the information presented that is of use. How it is presented, what is included, what is not, along with the perceptions and ideas offered by these historians are of particular value in understanding the cultural conceptions of the ancient world. It would be naïve to accept everything stated in ancient texts without cross-comparison or historiographical analysis. The reading of texts while remaining alert to their limitations highlights how ancient authors conceived events. Their biases and rhetoric reveal what they believed to be the thought, ideas, and identities of those involved. Therefore, they are valid representations of ancient mentalities and should be interpreted as such.

**Chapter Outline**

This study’s ultimate aim is to elucidate the thinking about intelligence activity and international relations in the Roman world, and how these conceptions influenced decision-making and actions at the individual, state, and
systemic levels. In general, I do not subscribe to the traditionally bleak assessment for a study of intelligence in the Roman world, and an aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that the absence of a specific intelligence service and associated officers and analysis does not entail the absence of a complex thinking about and appreciation of it.

Chapter 2 contextualises Roman intelligence. There is a tendency to judge Roman efforts by modern intelligence goals. It is necessary to consider the technical capabilities of gathering and transporting intelligence and information in the third and second centuries before such judgements can be made. Any analysis of intelligence and international activity must have a situating background, lest unfair expectations are placed upon Roman intelligence. The chapter examines the technological and societal limitations of intelligence capabilities throughout the mid-republic and establishes what can reasonably have been expected from Roman intelligence efforts.

Chapter 3 investigates the role of counterintelligence in political settings. It scrutinises how denial and deception counterintelligence techniques were used to defend Rome against insurgency and threats. The mid-republic’s system relied primarily on ensuring accurate information and denying access to significant intelligence about the state of Rome. Developed counterintelligence measures are the most significant indication of an understanding of intelligence’s role in international affairs. Counterintelligence measures are not developed by states that are unaware of how information travels and the efforts used to attain it.

Chapter 4 explores the starting point of mid-republican Rome’s active engagement with intelligence information. It examines the pathways through which foreknowledge, that is cultural and geographic information, was amassed by Rome, and the subconscious and conscious adoption of this knowledge in future decision-making and actions. Foreknowledge is largely static knowledge; it is often erroneous and dubiously sourced. Basic cultural understandings are fundamental in an international arena. Sources are more prone to comment on a specific individual’s lack of foreknowledge rather than the remarkable employment of the intelligence, which may suggest a widespread cultural understanding of its value among Romans.
Chapter 5 is divided into 3 subchapters and addresses Roman methods and conceptions of political intelligence. The first subchapter discusses the gathering and collation of intelligence data; the second investigates efforts to verify and act on the information; and the third presents the build up to the Third Macedonian War as a case study embodying this process. The chapter presents the case that the use of diplomacy to gather intelligence and the reliance on allies and neighbours was part of a system of information sharing in the ancient Mediterranean. While the system had limitations, the Roman acceptance but subsequent verification of information provided to them as beneficia by their friends and allies reveals the Roman appreciation of ‘accurate’ knowledge in making policy decisions and in the construction of their own identity vis-à-vis others.

Chapter 6 addresses the use of covert action to alter political circumstances. These actions relate to the implementation of policy made after the reception of intelligence about friends, enemies, and neutral parties. Through case studies, it will be shown how various covert techniques were employed to manipulate affairs to favour Rome. These include political manipulation, espionage, and assassination. It will consider the motivations behind the use of covert and overt action to manipulate or influence events in the absence of war, and what these mean for Rome’s perception of the international arena, linking Rome’s use of this type of action to imperialism. It will subsequently make suggestions about Roman attitudes regarding empire, control, and their conceptions of foreign states and people in an anarchic international system.
II - Contextualising Roman Intelligence

In the twenty-first century, strategic intelligence conjures images of spies and deception, complemented, and augmented, by modern technology. We tend to think of the use of phones, computers, the internet, tapping, and satellites as fundamental to intelligence activities. With this technology, it is possible to amass, analyse, and share intelligence virtually instantaneously. It can actively interfere in events as they occur. This has only been the case for the last fifty years. The twentieth century witnessed great improvements in technology. Intelligence, however, is not a child of this technology. Intelligence activities have always existed outside of the technological capabilities of a society that make it easier to gather, and arguably more useful. It is in one state’s best interest to gather all possible information about the intended or potential activities, geography, topography, weather, military capabilities, economic resources, political affairs, and communications systems of neighbours, allies, and enemies. With this knowledge, decision-makers have historically been able to make the best decisions necessary to reach their foreign policy goals.

The Roman state required the same information. But Roman intelligence procedures and methods were very different from those of their modern counterparts, and thus cannot be measured against modern intelligence standards and expectations. This is primarily due to differences in available ancient technology and constraints on its development, and in social and cultural characteristics and assumptions. When investigating Roman intelligence, it is crucial that their efforts and techniques are not judged by what modern societies conceive to be appropriate and practical intelligence use. By these measures, Roman efforts will always fall short. This is not to say that modern understandings of intelligence do not have their use in analysing Roman intelligence practices, but that Roman intelligence must be analysed in a Roman context.
Problems affecting the usefulness of information were logistical and socio-cultural. Because technological limitations were shared by Rome’s state peers, the Romans did not suffer a comparative disadvantage on this score. The sluggishness of information transfer affected all states equally. This slow pace and the questionable accuracy of ethnographic and geographic knowledge have always vitiated the usefulness of intelligence. Today it is difficult to envisage a world without maps and birds’ eye views of geographic space. It is hard to imagine how sophisticated connections could have formed between distant entities and how knowledge could travel with any degree of speed through the system in antiquity in the absence of what the modern world has deemed is minimally essential technology. Until the invention of telecommunications, motorised transport, and sophisticated cartography, these limitations were dealt with, indeed without anyone conceiving of them as limitations. After all, one cannot miss what one has never had. People developed systems to exploit their environment to meet their needs. In the pre-modern world, information transfers were always slow, ensuring that intelligence was never a tool for real-time interference in events. Thus, pre-emptive strikes, for instance, were a pre-modern impossibility. Intelligence only aided in planning for short-term military encounters and long-term political goals, and sought above all to create or take advantage of delays and distractions.

Unique to the Roman state were problems arising from their social structure and associated cultural phenomena. The republican system was above all an aristocratic competitive environment. There were advantages to this politically. Ideally, competition and a lack of permanent political positions limited dangerous concentrations of power. Although it was successful to a degree in accomplishing this, it fostered a sense of individualism where personal interests could come to trump those of the state.¹ From an intelligence standpoint, individualism, combined with a lack of specialisation among senatorial personnel and a standing public service, caused serious problems. Without highly trained individuals devoted to analysis of intelligence, this task was reserved for the most part for aristocratic competitive politicians; and

¹ The effects of a system of aristocratic competition are well studied. See for instance, Wiseman 1985; North 1990; Rosenstein 1990a; Rosenstein 1993; Farney 2007.
personal biases and politicisation by individual politicians affected interpretation. Relying on private individuals to interpret, analyse, and report pertinent intelligence to the senate ensured that information received was subjective and more likely to be erroneous or deliberately skewed.

As noted in the introduction, existing studies of Roman intelligence tend to make questionable assumptions about their subject. The Romans are assessed in terms of modern intelligence expectations. Modern scholars, moreover, tend to make sweeping statements covering vast, and vastly different, periods. Sheldon recognises the effect that different social and political environments have on the development of intelligence. Yet she ultimately dismisses the importance of intelligence to the Roman state because Roman officials did not rely on strategic surprise or speed to conquer. “That Rome did not use intelligence assets better,” she claims, “had nothing to do with ‘moral scruples’ about the rules of war, and had everything to do with an orthodox mentality and the absence of any great vision or long-term planning in the intelligence field.” Austin and Rankov claim that ‘the presence of literary evidence as a whole strongly suggests that the Romans did not usually initiate action in response to strategic intelligence, such as would be demonstrated by pre-emptive strikes against the enemy’. There remains an implicit assumption in all of this that intelligence is a tool for conquest and victory. These scholars assume that the Romans had no capacity for intelligence and that intelligence’s primary purpose is the same as modern intelligence’s. The suggestion that the Romans ought to have gathered information and performed pre-emptive strikes against potential enemies presumes the capability to gather, transfer, and verify information quickly, then to mobilise forces in such a way that avoids detection by foreign

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2 Dvornik 1974: 48-74; Champion 2008: 532-4 both regard the Romans as being indifferent to intelligence because they had no service devoted solely to intelligence.
3 Sheldon 2005: 3-4. Whether or not surprise is a fundamental feature of intelligence is one of the contentious issues in developing a cohesive theoretical approach to intelligence. See Gill, Marrin, and Phythian 2009.
4 Sheldon 2005: 62.
5 Austin and Rankov 1995: 12. This assumption is shared by Mattern, who, citing examples of border crossings and invasions during the imperial period, and of instances when Rome did not prevent first strikes or meet threats at the frontier, claims that ‘the Romans had no real way to obtain political and military information on foreign territories systematically and objectively…’ See Mattern 1999: 69.
agents. It assumes that the sole intention of intelligence was to secure strategic victory to avoid Roman losses. This assumption is myopic. The technological and military limitations of the mid-republic ensure that these kinds of activities were simply unattainable. As argued in the introduction, modern expectations are wedded to a Realist worldview; scholars of Roman intelligence, guided by Realist approaches, simply assume that the Romans of the mid-republic thought everyone was out to get them, and that their primary focus was seeking security and gaining control of resources and territory. By these measures, Roman intelligence efforts will always appear to fall short—and will always be easily dismissed. As will be argued here, the assumptions of scholars, driven by modern expectations, should not result in a dismissal of Roman intelligence, either the Roman appreciation and understanding of it or their attempts to use such intelligence techniques as were available to ancient peoples. The Roman purpose and understanding of intelligence differed from our conception of it, as did their socio-cultural outlook. It is therefore necessary to construct a Roman context in which to consider intelligence activities taking mid-republican technology, political and social structures, and their attendant cultural phenomena into account. This chapter seeks to establish this contextual framework in order to make it possible to examine the realities of Roman intelligence on their own merits.

Logistical Problems

Limitations in transmitting intelligence were systemic problems for all Mediterranean states in antiquity. Different states addressed these limitations in a variety of ways. While it was desirable for one state to know about the events

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6 The ability to achieve this would require not only a standing professional army, but also the justification for agents in foreign territories, and the ability to secure information transferral in a predictable and timely manner. During the mid-republic, this was simply impossible.

7 See above, pp. 17-25, for a discussion of the link between modern intelligence studies and neo-realist IR theory. While it may be possible for scholars to make a case for Realist interpretations of Roman history it is dangerous to assume that was the case based on modern interpretations of affairs. For arguments supporting a Realist interpretation see Eckstein 2006; Eckstein 2008. Contra Gruen 1984; Burton 2011.
and affairs of others, they relied on a combination of oral and written communication in an environment where such communication was unpredictable and vulnerable to corruption.\textsuperscript{8} Some developed postal systems in order to introduce a degree of predictability into the system. Herodotus would have us believe the Persian system was so reliable no weather would affect it.\textsuperscript{9} According to Xenophon, this was established by Cyrus to ensure he could remain informed in a timely manner about the affairs of his far-flung empire no matter where he happened to be within it. He set up postal stations one day’s journey apart.\textsuperscript{10} The Ptolemaic system was based on the earlier Persian one. Every station housed an administrative system to record the couriers’ comings and goings, and to protect against lost or corrupted communications.\textsuperscript{11} Under the Persian and Ptolemaic systems, a timely delivery was ensured via the establishment of a series of postal stations, where messages would be transferred to fresh couriers.

Unlike both the Persian and the later Ptolemaic empires, the Romans of the mid-republic never developed a sophisticated and organised postal service, for either domestic or military purposes. There is in fact no suggestion that any existed in surviving literary accounts.\textsuperscript{12} Telephonic modes of communication were not often attempted, although there are suggestions of the short-range use of trumpet signalling. Fire signals were also used, as described in theoretical terms by Aeneas Tacticus and Polybius; these systems are very poorly understood.\textsuperscript{13} The lack of an organised postal service limited the transmission of

\textsuperscript{8} The prevalence of written communication during the mid-republic is difficult to determine. Later historical sources certainly suggest that they were commonplace, though this could easily be back-projection based on their authors’ own times.
\textsuperscript{9} Hdt. 8.98.
\textsuperscript{10} Xen. \textit{Cyr.} 8.6.17.
\textsuperscript{11} Remijsen 2007: 130. For general information about ‘postal services’ in antiquity see Kornemann 1953.
\textsuperscript{12} Ramsay made an argument for a later republican postal service, possibly set up as part of the Gracchan reforms. The argument is controversial, and relies on a questionable interpretation of a single inscription. Ramsay 1920; \textit{contra} Cary 1936.
\textsuperscript{13} Polyb. 10.43-47. Fire signalling was certainly known and used in the Mediterranean world, especially by the Greeks. It is mentioned, for example, in the \textit{Iliad} (18.207-213). See also Hdt. 7.183; Aesch. \textit{Agr.} 281-311. There is little evidence for its use by the mid-republican Roman army. See Livy 28.5.16-17; Veg. 3.5. For Roman imperial signalling see Woolfiscroft 2001; Sheldon 2005: 199-249.
Information transferral was ad hoc, unorganised, and reliant upon private individuals. But any knowledge that individuals or the senate deemed to be important nevertheless had to be transmitted somehow, despite the absence of a formalised service. Whether information was transmitted depended on what was deemed worthy of transmission, a willingness to transmit, and the ability to procure a trustworthy courier. In peaceful circumstances, information flows to the senate and private individuals were largely reliable, as the panic that ensued when information pathways were blocked and delayed by warfare by inverse implication suggests. Roman despondence at a lack of reliable news suggests that, at least while conflict was limited to the Italian peninsula, there was an expectation the senate would remain well informed. During the Hannibalic war, the senate appointed Fabius Maximus dictator in part because of confused information coming in from the field, and an inability to securely send directives to the Roman armies. Desperation forced extraordinary measures. The lack of a formal postal system did not control the flow of information; geopolitical conditions—war and peace—did. The existence of a formal postal system would not have solved transmission problems. Nor would it have solved the perennial difficulties surrounding the security of communications; these would still have been vulnerable to tampering, and would have been difficult to track.

To be efficient and useful, communications had to arrive in a timely manner. Transportation was generally slow in the ancient world, as noted above. And, as also noted before, the Romans were not the only people to have to live with such limitations. Various uncontrollable factors influenced the ability for

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14 The later Roman imperial system appears to have preferred reliability over speed. In contrast to other Mediterranean systems, the posts provided fresh horses and lodgings rather than new couriers. Both systems had their advantages and disadvantages. The timely transferral of knowledge is vital to military intelligence, but using one rider increases security and offers the chance to supplement written communications with eyewitness information.

15 After the period investigated here, the near constant stream of letters to and from Cicero indicates that neither the cost nor the lack of a centralised courier system prevented the flow of letters. The content of many letters was frivolous rather than necessary, highlighting an ease of communication. See for instance Cic. Att. 6.22.1, 8.114.11, 12.42.1. For more on the circulation of information in Cicero see Pittia 2002.

16 Plut. Fab. 3; Livy 22.7-8.
couriers to transmit information. There are only a few indications of land transportation speeds in antiquity. Attempts to determine a general average speed of movement are doomed to fail since recorded speeds tend to be exceptional. For instance, Suetonius records that Julius Caesar could travel 100 miles a day in hired carriages and typically arrived before messengers sent to announce his coming. Livy records a messenger taking four days to travel on horseback from Luni to Rome in 181, a distance of 93 kilometres per day. Plutarch claims that an average speed of 115 kilometres per day could be achieved on a journey from Brundisium to Rome, a speed supported by Appian’s account of a journey from Ravenna to Rome during the civil wars. Speeds were affected by numerous uncontrollable factors including weather, terrain, the season, infrastructure, and state of security. These variables limited the usefulness of intelligence. Any information received via land routes was potentially out of date and of limited use, especially if it contained time-sensitive tactical information. Intelligence of events and actions gained by chance that needed an immediate response could only be put into action if it pertained to events in the immediate vicinity of Roman military forces or of Rome itself. Preemptive strikes based on intelligence gathered in the field were, of course, out of the question.

17 For examples of the unreliability of transport speed see Bérenger-Badel 2002; Pittia 2002.
19 Livy 39.21.5.
21 App. B Civ. 2.32.
22 Our understanding of seaborne travel speeds is little better. Ancient sources disagree on almost all matters relating to seaborne travel, as do modern interpretations of them. See for instance Semple 1932; Casson 1951; Reddé 1979; Reddé 1986; Romm 1992; Horden and Purcell 2000; De Souza 2002; Beresford 2013. Even the length and time of the ideal sailing seasons is disputed. Modern sources base the sailing season on excerpts from Hesiod, who admits to knowing nothing about the sea, but advises a highly restricted period: Works and Days, 663-669; the late fourth-century AD military handbook of Vegetius, who advocated a limited sailing season between March and November for merchant vessels, and between late May and September for military ships: 4.39; and the fourth-century AD edict of Gratian, which restricted the sailing of state-owned navicularii cargo shipping from Roman Africa: Codex Theodosianus, 13.9.3. Hesiod’s restricted season of 50 days is, however, often taken out of context and ignores the other references in his poem to sailing during both the spring and the autumn: Works and Days, 618-683.
Even if communiqués were sent under urgency in perfect conditions, the intelligence they contained was vulnerable to interception. Little is known about the use of written ciphers and codes in the mid-republic, especially by Roman forces. It is possible that secure communication existed but failed to become known to surviving commentators. Among the extant sources, Aeneas Tacticus devotes the fullest attention to cryptography and communication security. He presents eighteen different methods regarding both cryptography and steganography, which takes up approximately twelve percent of his treatise. These techniques were devoted to keeping the contents of a message hidden from any potential interceptor. Aeneas’ discussion indicates that interception was a matter of great concern in antiquity. His cryptographical methods relied on prearranged keys. The receiver needed to know how to solve the cipher for them to be of any use. For anticipated communications, this could be arranged beforehand. Ciphers are less helpful in unplanned and urgent intelligence scenarios. Steganographic systems may have reduced the seizure of intelligence, especially against an unsuspecting or naïve enemy, who did not thoroughly search the messenger, his baggage, and his equipment. Attempts to hide information acknowledge and assume interception attempts would take place. Although there are few examples of this in extant Roman sources, or descriptions of security measures, fear of interception certainly existed.

Mitigating the security risks, in a context where human transportation was the only option, was extremely difficult. There was no alternative but to use

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23 There is evidence in surviving Egyptian papyri of Greek cryptography in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. See Gardthausen 1911: II, 305.
24 For a current translation and commentary on Aeneas see Whitehead 2001. Leighton 1969 provides an overview of suggested secret communication techniques among Greek and Roman forces.
26 Even with ciphers, the capture of a messenger posed a threat. Pertinent tactical information could be extracted about enemy movements, numbers, and morale.
27 Austin and Rankov allege that the paucity of evidence for written communication in the earlier periods of Roman history makes it clear that almost all intelligence gathered from across Roman frontiers was oral communication – autopsy and hearsay were only committed to writing if it were necessary. Austin and Rankov 1995: 35-6. It is possible that written communication is an anachronism from later Roman history. But the same security problems exist in oral communication. Removing a letter from a messenger could easily become removing the messenger. Further, the lack of physical evidence from the mid-republic does mean written communication was not used.
reliable couriers to convey intelligence and to develop contingency plans that did not rely on information being received. Interception and forgery are common counterintelligence and covert activities. They allow an enemy state or army to gain information about what the other side knows and is planning, and to actively interfere and deceive. The fear of interception is more prevalent in the Roman historical record than successful attempts at seizing intelligence. Of the latter, only two detailed mid-Republican examples exist, both dating to the Second Punic War. In 207, the consul Claudius Nero intercepted a communiqué from Hasdrubal to Hannibal announcing his presence in Italy, and reportedly advising that they meet in Umbria. Roman forces were already aware of Hasdrubal’s crossing the Alps from their own monitoring efforts. The interception of these letters gave insight into Hasdrubal’s plans and allowed Nero and his colleague Livius Salinator to join forces. This interception was not planned, of course, but was due to luck. The Numidian riders sent by Hasdrubal became lost in Italy. Nero captured and interrogated them. He deceived Hannibal by sneaking out of camp, while maintaining the illusion the camp was strongly garrisoned. Taking advantage of Hasdrubal’s ignorance of his lost communiqué, the two consuls deceived Hasdrubal about the size of their forces. Ultimately, the interception led to the defeat of Hasdrubal at the battle of Metaurus. Without the information, the two Roman armies may never have joined forces before Hasdrubal succeeded in meeting with Hannibal.

The other noteworthy case involved two distinct interceptions. In 215, the Roman fleet intercepted Xenophanes, an agent of Philip V of Macedon, as he was returning from meetings with the Carthaginians. He was arrested and detained. The Romans learned that Xenophanes had been negotiating a treaty with the Carthaginian senate. He had already been intercepted once before but had talked his way out of Roman detention. Livy claims that Xenophanes and

Everyday records were not destined to survive antiquity. If the chance finds at Vindolanda are indicative of common practice, military reports and communications were destroyed. For more on the Vindolanda tablets see Bowman 2003. Cases of deception and interference will be discussed in the following chapters. Also worthy of note is the removal of the hands of some Capuan messengers intercepted by the Romans attempting to send a letter to Hannibal. See Zonar. 9.6. Livy 27.43-51; Polyb. 11.1-3; Cic. Brut. 73; App. Hann. 52-54. For further references to the battle see MRR I.294. For the details of the treaty, see Polyb. 7.9
his colleagues, on their way to their first stop to visit Hannibal in Capua, had bypassed Roman patrols by avoiding Tarentum and Brundisium as their disembarkation point. By chance, Roman patrols intercepted them in Apulia and escorted the embassy to the praetor Valerius Laevinus. Xenophanes convinced the praetor he was there on behalf of Philip to seek an alliance with Rome. Laevinus provided Xenophanes with hospitality and openly furnished him with intelligence. Philip’s agent learnt of routes across Italy, and of areas held by Carthaginians and by Romans. He manipulated Laevinus and succeeded in reaching Hannibal.

It is perhaps unfair to condemn Laevinus as foolish in hindsight. That the Macedonians knew of the Roman presence at certain ports suggests their own intelligence and contingency planning, which presumably included a convincing lie to report to the Romans if they were caught. That this interception occurred at all indicates a Roman appreciation of intelligence and information control. The choice to believe the information presented by Xenophanes or not was subjective and Laevinus cannot be condemned for it. He misinterpreted affairs, and risked damaging Roman chances in the war. If the interception and subsequent questioning were more successful, valuable information would have been kept from Hannibal. In any event, on the return journey Xenophanes was caught, with a Carthaginian entourage, and placed under arrest. The interception here has two significant implications for Roman intelligence. One was that Roman forces were actively attempting to investigate their surroundings; the other, more important point, is that interceptions existed and introduced a level of uncertainty into any widespread intelligence communication. Without

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32 The envoys, incidentally, clearly knew that Roman forces controlled these ports, suggesting a level of reconnaissance on Philip’s part. Whether the patrols were attempting to prevent enemy manoeuvres or simply monitoring and attempting to avoid surprise is unknown. But that there were Roman patrols actively monitoring the area, presumably for Carthaginian forces, indicates that at least some commanders sought and valued current intelligence in military situations. The Romans were not simply waiting for Carthaginian forces to surprise them.

33 Livy 23.33-34; App. Mac. 1.

34 An investigation into the military use of intelligence and counterintelligence, that is the use of intelligence by armies in the field such as security measures taken against deserters and the planting of false information by fake deserters, is not discussed in this thesis. In general, it is a poorly explored area that would benefit from further
the ability to communicate with Xenophanes, Philip had no choice but to wait in ignorance, having no idea of whether his communiqué had been delivered or not. This uncertainty effectively meant that while commanders and foreign officials could provide information about tactical and strategic affairs, assuming they were not intercepted, they could not rely on information, or an active response to information, being returned to them.

The fear of interception is more pronounced in the sources than interception because the lack of instantaneous communication meant that dispatchers of intelligence could not be reassured that their communications had been received. Commanders in the field especially had to maintain a healthy scepticism about the fate of their dispatches. Help they requested might arrive, but there was no guarantee that their messengers had not been delayed, disappeared, or captured. In 181, the Ligurian Inguani besieged the proconsul Aemilius Paullus. After he was attacked, he sent two riders to the proconsul Baebius Tamphilus at Pisa with dispatches requesting immediate aid.\textsuperscript{35} Baebius had passed control of his forces to the praetor Pinarius Rusca to take to Sardinia, and was not in a position to help. He did inform the senate, via another dispatch, that Paullus was under siege. He also wrote to the proconsul Claudius Marcellus informing him of the matter, and asked if it were possible for him to take his army into Liguria.\textsuperscript{36} But Marcellus had also handed over control of his army to the praetor Fabius Buteo who was campaigning against the Istrians.\textsuperscript{37} Again, this was of no help to Paullus. These missives were received without interception or corruption. There was nothing stopping Marcellus, Baebius, or the senate from informing Paullus about their receipt of his request, or indeed, communicating their movements to each other. Instead, there was a debate and relative panic in the senate about what to do. Emergency troops were raised, but had little hope of reaching Paullus in time to aid him. Paullus had originally chosen to defend and delay without relying too much on the hope that

\footnote{For deserters in during the mid-republic and the Roman reaction to them, see Wolff 2009.}

\footnote{Livy 40.25.7. Frontinus suggests that Paullus feigned his fear to drive the Ligurians into a false sense of security: \textit{Strat.} 3.17.2. There is no support for this in Livy’s account.}

\footnote{Livy 40.25.8-9.}

\footnote{Livy 40.26.2-4.}
relief would arrive. Eventually, believing his messengers had been intercepted, he had little choice but to adopt a different plan. He marched against and routed the Ligurians. According to Livy’s account, there were at least four dispatches between Roman commanders and the senate in this scenario. None were intercepted. Paullus assumed, from the lack of any response, that they had been. Arguably, the lack of response was practical. To avoid the dispatching of numerous messengers with differing instructions, it was deemed more efficient to wait until a coherent plan was made at the senatorial level. The lack of communication placed commanders in the position where they had to assume missives would be lost, largely defeating the purpose of requesting anything in the first place. This suggests that commanders rarely relied upon intelligence to seek information about how they should proceed to inform action or to request aid from the senate. Their dispatches served to inform; they acknowledged that aid would likely not be forthcoming, and thus recognised the inherent logistical problems in their system.

**Roman solutions**

Concern for lost communications is good evidence for the frequency of their occurrence. This frequency, in turn, indicates that it must have been fairly commonplace for a commander or representative to send information from the field, either to the senate itself, or to other Roman officials (generals and diplomats) in the field. Dispatches must also have frequently failed to arrive at their intended destination or to be met with a response. That Rome failed to solve interception problems is not extraordinary. Interception continues to plague intelligence transmissions in the modern world. Until recently, it involved

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38 Livy 40.25.10.
39 Aemilius, postquam nihil usquam auxilii ostendebatur, *interceptos credens equites*, non ultra differendum ratus quin per se fortunam temptaret, priusquam hostes venirent, qui segnius socordiusque oppugnabant, ad quattuor portas exercitum instruxit ut signo dato simul ex omnibus partibus eruptionem facerent: Livy 40.27.1-3 (emphasis added).
40 Livy 40.28.
41 See n. 39. Hannibal also feared the interception of his plans. He refused to write any letters in case they were intercepted and plans disclosed. See Livy 34.61-2.
42 The capturing of letters could serve as an excuse for the senate not to respond. In the passage discussed earlier, however, Livy presents the senate as scrambling to find a way to help Paullus. His messages were received at the most inopportune time.
43 The attitude extends to intelligence as a whole. While it was helpful for decision-making, it was not vital to it.
the physical seizure of information and agents. Now it involves the interception of electronic transmissions and devices as well. It was impossible in a Roman context to eliminate the possibility of physical interception of intelligence. At best, the threat could be mitigated by ciphers, codes, and secret communications designed to mislead if they were intercepted, and to attempt to use seals to authenticate and verify information and avoid deception.\footnote{There is no extant evidence or information about the use of codes and ciphers in the mid-republic. It is impossible to arrive at a conclusion about their effectiveness or use.}

The image created by the evidence is that information transfers in the mid-republican Mediterranean world were unreliable and subject to risks from a variety of quarters. The constraints of pre-modern communications and travel were exacerbated by the inability to guarantee security. The lack of reliability makes it highly likely that in times of war (almost every year in the mid-Republican period) contingency plans had to be made, by both senate and general. It was impossible for a commander in the field to adhere to a fixed plan, and hope and trust that the arrival of reinforcements and supplies according to that plan would materialise on cue. It was also unreasonable to await further instructions from Rome after significant action had been taken.\footnote{For more on the individual powers of commanders see for example Eckstein 1987; Rosenstein 1990b; Rosenstein 2007.}

The slowness of communications created a situation where it was impractical for the senate to be informed of all pertinent information concerning field operations. Speed was further affected by various uncontrollable factors. Messages could be sent long distances; vital, time-sensitive intelligence could not. Couriers sent under urgency would relay information that would likely be useless by the time it arrived, and would certainly be useless by the time a decision was formulated and dispatched in light of the intelligence.

Roman practice as it emerges from the evidence suggests the senate was aware of these limitations. Perforce, urgent military decision-making was therefore placed in the hands of commanders in the field. Army commanders and officers were provided with general mandates about expected actions or outcomes prior to engaging an enemy, and were apprised of what information was available about a region. The choice to allow individual commanders the freedom to make decisions about how to conduct their operations increased the
likelihood that available information would be utilised to the greatest advantage possible. Intelligence sent to a commander by a scout was hard to verify and impossible to action only after seeking senatorial advice without it getting stale; it was certainly more practical and potentially advantageous to act on it immediately than to send numerous messengers back and forth to Rome.

Limitations of and risks to intelligence were mitigated in other ways, both for military dispatches and political communiqués. These took the form of methods of communication verification and techniques of authentication. The use of seals was the most common. There are numerous archaeological examples of seals that survive, and the papyrological evidence shows that sealed documents of a personal and legal nature were commonplace. The evidence for intelligence communications, however, is mostly literary. It typically highlights particular skills or the deceptive personalities of foreigners, and the success of counterintelligence at defeating attempts at forgery, rather than describing the routine authentication procedures of Roman commanders. A major Roman victory over this kind of covert act resulted from Hannibal’s attempt to manipulate the Salapians. In 208, the consul Claudius Marcellus, when engaged in the Hannibalic War, foolishly found himself in an ambush while reconnoitring. He was killed, and Hannibal seized his signet ring. The other consul, Quintius Crispinus, feared what Hannibal would do with this ring. He sent messengers around to nearby communities, telling them to disregard any missive received bearing Marcellus’ mark. Hannibal did indeed send a deceptive letter, claiming that Marcellus would arrive in Salapia that night, and that the

46 Although well after the period examined in this study, papyrological records indeed suggest that multiple seals were affixed to documents. See for instance P. Ryl 12 for an account a sacrifice that the writer wished to be certified. It was signed and sealed by three separate parties. The practice was presumably implemented in order to make it more difficult to forge. For more of Romano-Egyptian practices see Vandrope 2014. As an attempt to secure information, papyri records reveal that some documents were recorded in triplicate or affixed with copies of other missives so that there would be a traceable account of them. This is likely to have happened far less in messages sent between army commanders in the field than in political arrangements. It is interesting to note the recognition of the possibility of forgeries and lost documents. It suggests letters were not assumed to be secure, legitimate, or valid, and that seals were the best way to protect against their purposeful destruction. There is no extant evidence to show that these same procedures applied to political or military communications in mid-republican Rome. See for example P. Oxy. 2125; P. Oxy. 2131; P. Amh. 3, 77, 11.11-33; P. Ryl. 116; P. Giess. 41.
town should be ready to receive him and his soldiers. The communication would have passed identification checks, if not for Crispinus’ forethought. The Salapians were prepared. Although Hannibal cleverly used Roman deserters as a cloak for the Carthaginian army, the Salapians were not deceived. Taking advantage of the inability of Hannibal to determine whether his communiqué was received or accepted, they admitted the complacent soldiers and slaughtered them. The message here was in relation to orders regarding future action; the same verification protocols could have been used for the transmission of written intelligence by Roman personnel that was designed to inform rather than put a plan of action in place.

Hostile forces also engaged in counterfeiting in order to breach Roman security. When the heir apparent to the Macedonian throne Perseus was trying to denounce his brother Demetrius, he accused Demetrius of plotting against their father Philip. Philip sent messengers to Rome inquiring into Perseus’ allegations. Unfortunately, the men Philip sent were agents of Perseus who, so the sources allege, forged a letter and sealed it with a counterfeit seal of Flamininus. The letter apologised for any part Flamininus might have played in stoking Demetrius’ ambitious behaviour, and assured Philip that the last thing the Romans wanted to do was destabilise the Macedonian ruling house. The forgery protected the Roman alliance with Philip – it ensured that the king would not take offence at Roman action – but also validated Perseus’ concerns about Demetrius. The forged seal lent legitimacy to the letter; it allowed Philip to identify and believe that it came from Roman sources rather than those that would seek to manipulate him.

While there is no surviving evidence to suggest that this happened in a Roman context, counterfeiting enables letters to be intercepted and resealed, giving the illusion that information is secret and private. This is especially

47 Livy 27.27-28; App. Hann. 50-51.
48 Zonar. 9.22.1; Just. 32.2; Livy 40.20-24.
49 Whether this missive was an actual forgery as Livy claims is debatable. Roman interference in the Macedonian succession and presenting Demetrius as a more viable heir will be discussed in chapter 5. See Briscoe 1972; Gruen 1974a; Newey 2009.
50 Livy 40.23-24.
51 There was the additional problem that seals could simply be removed from letters. There is a scene in Plautus’ Trinummus where two men are conspiring to write a false
dangerous in the transmission of intelligence, when secrecy is paramount. This
goes to the heart of the intelligence dilemma: there is always a need to transmit
sensitive information, but the risk of interception is always a possibility. Neither
written nor oral communication through a messenger was fully secure. As the
following chapters will address, Rome sought to fight against these inherent
weaknesses through focussing on counterintelligence, autopsy, and a personal
verification of information. Communication problems effectively limited the
capacity for the senate to stay apprised of military circumstances as they
developed, and, importantly for considerations of Roman intelligence practices,
removed the general’s capacity for mounting effective pre-emptive strikes, and
thus constrained his personal freedom of action in the field.

A commander was expected not to overstep his mandate excessively, and
to keep the senate informed of his activity. Austin and Rankov argue that
senatorial isolation from military intelligence was indicative of the republic’s
intelligence weakness. While it is true that there were instances where the
senate was uninformed about a commander’s actions, the prevailing tendency
among the senate and people was to have confidence in the wisdom and
integrity of commanders, to whom they had entrusted the waging of war in the
first place. So there was little need for a centralisation of knowledge prior to

letter and suggest that the opening of a letter by a portitor could be used as
justification for why it was not sealed: ...lepida est illa causa, ut commemoravi, dicere
apud portitores esse inspectas: 794. Presumably, the actors here could not acquire a
counterfeit seal that appeared legitimate. They instead chose to manipulate Roman
inspection processes. A similar statement regarding the forgery of letters is mentioned
in a fragment of Caecilius Statius’ Synephebi. There is a suggestion that an actor ought
to get revenge by misappropriating an item with a forged document: ...aut tu illum
fructu fallas aut per litteras advertas aliquod nomen aut per servolum percutias pavidum: 188-
194.

While it is only deceptions involving Rome during the mid-republic that are of
interest here, it is important to note that such behaviour was known throughout the
Mediterranean. For some Greek examples see Thu. 1.129-132 (Pausanius and Xerxes),
Plut. Dem. 22.2 (Philip II and Olympias). The assumption that such letters were
private and did not include valuable information opened avenues for deception,
whether they were exploited or not. The sealing of letters as a form of identification
and authentication was not unknown or unusual. It could therefore easily be
exploited.

Austin and Rankov 1995: 93.

See for example Livy 44.18.1-5; 44.20.
military decision-making in the field. Considering the risks surrounding information transmission there was little alternative than to trust military commanders. The time for vetting had to take place prior to their despatch; and it did — three times: through election, conferral of imperium, and the taking of the auspices. There was an inherent weakness in giving commanders almost unfettered control in the field, of course — one that arguably brought down the Republic in the end. Entrusting commanders to deal with matters of great significance in the field when it was logistically difficult for the central government to be informed was built around the social conventions of appropriate behaviour. The state and its best interests were more important, ideally, than the individual and his personal ambitions.

Commanders, despite their relative freedom, were expected to provide dispatches recording their activities and providing a generalised picture of the situation in their provinces, which served a useful political intelligence purpose. These dispatches allowed the senate to consider the situation as a whole, and to plan future action accordingly. That the senate allowed commanders freedom of action indicates an understanding of the importance of tactical intelligence and the contingencies of waging war, rather than an underappreciation of the power of intelligence. It was impractical to require constant requests from commanders for how to proceed in light of the technology available. The conduct of commanders was not completely unconstrained, however. Specific mandates given to commanders before they departed and the necessity to account for their actions upon their return ideally ensured that the freedom afforded them in the field was not abused unduly. The looseness of command and control between senate and general meant that the general was obliged to keep the senate informed of his activity in only a vague and non-strategically important manner, which served to mitigate the danger should the communications be intercepted. The report commissioned by the consul Aemilius Paullus prior to taking command during the Third Macedonian War is a good example. The report is vague and contains unverified information and errors of fact; it was clearly designed to elevate Paullus over his predecessor in

56 The use of dispatches and briefings as a building block for cultural intelligence and foreknowledge will be examined in chapter 4.
the Macedonian command.\footnote{Livy 44.20-21. Briscoe takes the falsehoods as an invention of Livy or his source, assuming that there was no reliable evidence in the legate’s report. Briscoe 2012: 527-8. Some of this could be the fault of Livy and his sources, but the errors regarding the size of the army suggest the investigators reported what they had been told rather than discovered, and that the intelligence was constructed in such a way that it set Aemilius Paullus up as superior to his predecessor. Politicisation like this will be discussed in the following section.} If these sorts of missives were captured and read, their benefit to the enemy would be less than the interception of detailed tactical and strategic plans.\footnote{Their interception would nevertheless reveal attitudes of commanders toward their enemies and the morale of armies, as well as indicate the relationship between the senate and the commander.} Whether conscious or not, the Roman system of command and control, albeit imperfect, introduced techniques that were rather congenial to their technologically insecure world.

The technological environment in which Roman intelligence had to exist ensured that the expectations of modern intelligence would serve no purpose, and indeed may have worsened the utility of intelligence information. Modern scholars are critical of the Romans for lacking a bureaucratic agency for intelligence.\footnote{Dvornik 1974; Sheldon 2005.} To develop a devoted bureaucratic service for intelligence analysis would have delayed the transmission of intelligence further, something the Romans could ill afford when time, due to systemic factors, was already working against operationalising acquired information. In a military setting, intelligence specialists could have been instituted as part of army structure, but this would have required the creation of a professional army in the mid-republic and thus a fundamental change in the social fabric of the Roman state. Intelligence was never conceived as fundamental for military policy decisions or victory, making it supplementary, and subordinate, to other systems perceived to be more important.

To summarise, problems of security and speed of communications were systemic in the ancient Mediterranean. Rome was not unique in having to rely on relatively slow transport, or the general lack of effective and quick communications technology. They were in effect on a level playing field with their foes in this regard, especially as concerns military intelligence. Intelligence in the military sphere could, at best, contribute to success, not secure it, since its
timely interception and actionability were matters of pure luck. It would rarely help a militarily weaker foe defeat a stronger and better-equipped enemy. The interception and use of intelligence cannot be credited to better technology or superior skill. The dependence on chance divorced the planning of action from military intelligence. Without a secure and predictable length of time in which to determine how best to use knowledge, intelligence was a tool rather than a basis of success. It aided decision-making and military success when it was available. But decision-makers could act without it. There were no successful pre-emptive military strikes, but there were no attempts at them either. When verified intelligence was available there were attempts at covert and clandestine action in order to take advantage of superior knowledge. For military intelligence, this effectively ensured that commanders could provide intelligence though would rarely benefit from it. In political intelligence, where intelligence of a less sensitive and urgently actionable nature was provided largely through foreign sources and diplomats, the security of messengers and communications was less of a problem. As will be shown throughout this study, intelligence had more success in the political sphere, where urgent decisions were less common. When time permitted full investigations and reports, intelligence allowed the senate to actively interfere in international affairs.

**Socio-Cultural Constraints**

Modern intelligence exists to serve decision-makers in making foreign and domestic policy decisions; for intelligence to do anything else is considered at best wasteful and at worst illegal.\(^60\) The idea of Roman ‘foreign policy’ is an anachronism. There are no records of a state ‘policy’ or indications of long-term forward planning.\(^61\) This is not to say that decisions were made without consideration of past practice or potential consequences based on ‘known knowns’, as a former US Secretary of Defense once put it. But decisions were

\(^{60}\) Lowenthal 2006: 2. Intelligence’s true function in modern decision-making is controversial. While it is theoretically designed to provide analysis of political and security situations, thereby improving policy makers’ decisions, in reality it is often ignored or faulty. Leslau 2010.

usually made strictly according to a Roman understanding of the world, with little consideration for cultural differences and their own interpretative bias. The constantly changing Roman executive personnel and the disparate political environments of the surrounding states made it difficult to form a uniform and consistent policy. In the place of consistent long-term policy, underpinned by political theory and relatively constant domestic political ideology, reasonably immune to individual obligations and ambitions, Roman ‘foreign policy’ decision-making was, by necessity, ad hoc and reactive.

Most modern nations consider policy in terms of state self-interest and how others will understand their actions. The Romans paid a certain amount of attention to how their acts were interpreted by others. Fides had long been a fundamental self-defining attribute of the Roman ruling aristocracy. The senate of Rome spent time and effort in creating the image that the Roman state was the embodiment of fides - that is, that its actions in the international arena could be trusted and that its representatives meant what they said. During the period

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62 Foreknowledge, that is, intelligence about foreign culture and geography prior to engagement, was available during the mid-republic, and there was some expectation of its use. But the interpretation of this knowledge was still subject to Roman interpretative bias. Foreknowledge will be discussed in chapter 4.

63 Modern western liberal nations place great importance on looking at actions they take from the perspective of outsiders. Events such as the deditto of the Aetolians and the interpretations of the Gracchan agreements in Spain (discussed below) reveal what could be interpreted by non-Romans as arrogance. Instead of spending time ensuring that all parties understood what Roman terms and conditions meant, Roman forces assumed they were understood as they interpreted them. The Aetolians did not understand (or pretended not to understand) that a deditto agreement placed them entirely at Roman mercy until after the agreement was made. The Gracchan treaties put an initial end to conflict in Celtiberia in 178. However, in 153 the Belli and the Titthi began fortifying and enlarging the town of Segeda. Roman forces reacted to this, calling it a breach of the agreement: App. Hisp. 44; cf. Diod. 31.39. The Celtiberians understood that their agreement forbade the settlement of new cities, not the fortification of an existing one. The Roman understanding was (or was alleged to be) that the Celtiberians could essentially do nothing without Roman permission, and so they sent a consular army to raze the town. MRR 1.452.

64 For more on fides see Fraenkel 1916; Heinze 1928; Hellegouarch 1963; Boyancé 1964a; Boyancé 1964b; Boyancé 1972a; Boyancé 1972b; Hampl 1973; Freyburger 1982; Freyburger 1986.

65 Diodorus Siculus refers to the public dissemination of the idea in his account of the build up to the First Punic War, when he has Hiero reply to Roman envoys who are attempting to maintain peace that the Romans, harping on about fides as they did, should surely not attempt to defend murderous brigands, the Mamertines. ὁ δὲ Τέρσων ἀπεκρίνετο διότι Μαμερτίνου Καμάριναν καὶ Γέλαν ἁναστάτους πεποιηκότες,
of Roman expansion, the principle became the cornerstone of Roman interactions with external parties. There is a growing consensus that the focus on fides in this era shifted Mediterranean international relations away from endless conflict and toward a more stable system of long-term diplomacy and alliances.\textsuperscript{66} The principle of fides and a devotion to what Rome conceived to be its duty toward friends and allies was for the most part authentic. People do not make appeals to moral standards that they have no intention of keeping. Roman power and influence in the Mediterranean would have quickly evaporated if the Romans were regarded as blatant hypocrites; naked force would have succeeded in keeping Rome in control for only so long.\textsuperscript{67} The senate punished or at least called into question the perfidious actions of commanders abroad.\textsuperscript{68} But fides was interpreted through a Roman lens. Foreign interpretations of Roman actions were important, but the Romans projected others’ interpretations based on their own cultural assumptions, with little concerted effort to ensure that all parties understood them in the same manner. Rome was not alone in this of course.

The shame/honour nature of ancient societies and states may account for a general self-centredness and inward-focus among all states in the Mediterranean system, Rome included. Not to push generalisation too far, but ancient peoples and states tended to be less empathetic and other-regarding than their modern counterparts.\textsuperscript{69}

\begin{quote}
Μεσσήνην δὲ ἀσεβέστατα κατειλήφοτες, δυκαίως πολιορκοῦντες, Ῥωμαίοι δὲ, θρυλλοῦντες τὸ τῆς πίστεως ὀνόμα, παντελῶς οὐκ ὀφείλουσι τοὺς μισθούντο, μᾶλλον πίστεως καταφεύγοντας, ὑπερασπίζοντες εἰ δὲ ὑπὲρ ἀσεβεστῶν τηλικοῦτον ἐπανασχέονται πόλεμον, φανεροῦς ἐσεθαί πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ὅτι τῆς ἰδίας πλεονεξίας πρόφασιν ποιοῦντα τὸν τῶν κινδυνευόντων ἔλεον, τὸ δὲ ἀληθῆς Συκελίας ἐπιθυμούσιν: Diod. 23.1.4. For the historicity of fides and the conception of fidelis behaviour see Livy 1.24.4–5, 42.47; cf. Dion. Hal. 2.75.3; Plut. Num. 16.1; Flor. 1.2.3; Plaut. Mil. 1369, Capt. 346-349, 439-445; Enn. Ann. frs. 268-286 S.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{66} Eckstein 2008: 342-81; Madden 2008; Burton 2011: 22-3.
\textsuperscript{67} This is not to say fides was not used as a tool of propaganda, but space constraints prevent discussion of this important topic here. See items listed in n. 64.
\textsuperscript{68} Perhaps the most famous example is the senatorial prosecution of Servius Sulpicius Galba. His massacre of 8000 Lusitians after disarming them in 150 resulted in an attempted prosecution in Rome. See App. Hisp. 59-61; cf. Cic. Brut. 89; Nep. Cato 3.4; Livy Per. 49; Val. Max. 8.1.2, 8.7.1, 9.6.2; Suet. Galba 3.2; MRR 1.456, 1.459.
\textsuperscript{69} Eckstein 2006 and 2008 would suggest this was due to the inescapable and tragic pressures of the ancient international system that compelled all states toward self-centredness.
The inward focus of the Roman aristocracy exacerbated not only this self-centredness, but the ad hoc character of decision-making as well. The concept of Rome as an entity separate from, although connected to, other Mediterranean peoples and cultures did exist, but the competitive nature of Roman aristocratic social and political life ensured that an individual’s personal and family glory was always in tension with the community’s. This created an internally focussed aristocracy, and, on the macro level, the conception of Rome as the centre of the universe. An individual’s reputation was linked to the performance of Rome as a whole, but this could also be in tension with the ultimate personal goal, which was almost always reputation - *fama*. That an individual put personal ambition ahead of the needs of the state was presumably not true of all commanders and officials.

There are plenty of examples of commanders managing the information they provided the senate and manipulating affairs and diplomatic agreements to benefit themselves that the pursuit of private ambitions should be taken as indicative of a pervasive mentality. Appian records instances of such behaviour during the campaigns in the Iberian Peninsula. After sending communications and Celtiberian ambassadors to Rome and receiving notification that only a *deditio* agreement with the Belli, Titthi, and Arevaci would be acceptable, Marcellus discussed the state of affairs with the Celtiberian ambassadors. He reportedly induced the tribes to surrender, and allowed them to go free. He pre-emptively made arrangements contrary to the protocol of *deditio* arrangements. Appian alleges that Marcellus was motivated by a desire to win

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70 Glory and triumphs were not necessarily tied to success. A discussion of *gloria* is beyond the scope of this thesis. See Harris 1979; Rosenstein 1990b; Beard 2007; Clark 2014.


the glory of ending the war rather than leave it up to a successor. Licinius Lucullus, upon discovering that his consular army would not gain victory over these Celtiberian tribes, set out to find new avenues for glory. He attacked the Vaccaei and Cantabri unprovoked. Appian says these acts were motivated by greed and a hunger for glory. The reality was undoubtedly more complicated. As mentioned above, prior to taking command in the Third Macedonian War, Aemilius Paullus sent an embassy to investigate both the Roman and Macedonian armies in the winter of 169/8. The report, as presented in Livy, is vague and filled with half-truths and unverifiable statements that were designed to represent his predecessors as incompetent. Such manipulation was all part of Paullus’ build-up to a glorious campaign that would end a war that most regarded as having gone on long enough, either through Roman incompetence or reliance on rumours. As if to highlight his deception, Paullus warned the people in a contio not to trust rumour or armchair generals. Seeking glory was an important facet the Roman aristocratic lifestyle and self-identity. But it tended to work against any urge toward long-term planning based on objectively developed intelligence. Realistically, the actions of individuals were often unproductive and inefficient. It was also deeply problematic, as discussed above,

73 ἐβούλετο γὰρ ἐφ’ ἑαυτῷ τὸν πόλεμον ἐκλυθῆναι, δόξαν οἱ χρηστὴν καὶ ἀπὸ τούτων νομίζων ἔσεσθαι: App. Hisp. 49.
74 App. Hisp. 51.
75 To take a later example, Pompey ordered Quintus Caecilius Metellus to stop his attacks against the pirates when he held the provincia of Crete in 67. Pompey evidently desired to rid the Mediterranean of pirates himself. To further his aims, and to counter the possibility that Caecilius might refuse to acquiesce, Pompey sent Lucius Octavius to bolster the pirate resistance. While subject to criticism, this action was tolerated. Plut. Pomp. 29.4-6; Dio 36.19.1-2.
76 Livy 44.18.1-5. Paullus also delayed his report to the senate regarding the war until the envoys returned with suspicious claims about their misadventures. He alleged they only landed at Brundisium, after having been blown back twice to Dyrrachium. There is no feasible way for Paullus to have known this. Livy 44.19.1-3.
77 Livy 44.20.
78 The envoys claimed that the army was led through risky dangerous paths; that the army had reached Pieria, which was held by Perseus; that the two armies were separated by only the Elpeüs River, but that neither side offered battle. Winter was afflicting the campaign, and supplies were running out. The navy was underfed and undersupplied, and that if the legate Appius Claudius had sufficient forces he could have distracted Perseus, but was instead in grave danger. Aspects of the report were valid, but were exaggerated and unexplained. Livy’s report is part of an ongoing theme throughout books 44-45 on reliable information versus rumours, and of competent and incompetent generalship.
that systemic logistical difficulties forced the senate to rely on these glory-seeking individuals for information, be it of a diplomatic or military nature. The effect of the competitive nature of the Roman aristocracy had the potential to be disastrous in circumstances where accurate intelligence was crucial.

Competition, however, was necessary for the Roman republican system to continue. The relationship between competition and the system was symbiotic: a fear of autocracy ensured opportunities for the consolidation of power were restricted; the opportunity to attain a limited number of high offices led to competition. It is easy to see how the desire for a limited number of honours, dangled before everybody in the upper echelons of society, could create a volatile system. Checks and balances had to be introduced in order to control unbridled ambition.79 These could of course be manipulated, though ‘[n]o oligarchy could survive if its members refused to abide by the rules’.80 There had to be a consensus about the rules of conduct and how far these rules could be stretched. Popular consent revealed itself in appeals to abstract virtues and concrete legal sanctions.81 Glory was important to an individual, but one way to gain this glory was to ignore (or pretend to ignore) what would obviously be in one’s own self-interest, and instead do something to benefit the res publica as a whole.82 A system where personal reputation and state success were intertwined ensured mere personal ambition did not overcome all other motivations. Existing checks controlled the system well in terms of internal politics. These checks left intelligence open to manipulation. The senate required transfers of information from officials and commanders in the field; diplomatic commissioners required additional information from the senate about how to proceed. Picking and choosing what to say, how to say it, and whom to say it to was a behaviour that individuals could control, thereby manipulating the circumstances to their own advantage without significantly affecting how the system functioned.

79 Checks against ambition and the concentration of power were legal and traditional. They developed in response to problems as they occurred. See Astin 1958; Beck 2005; Bergk 2011. For more about the restrictions on the consulship see Lintott 1999.
82 Polybius discusses the personal reputation gained in placing oneself in personal danger for the sake of the state, rather than dishonourably avoiding it: Polyb. 6.39.
The primary consequence for intelligence in this system was a lack of specialisation or development of expertise. Competition and a pseudo-egalitarian idea that any member of the senatorial class could attain high office detracted from the development of permanent positions. Specialisation would ruin the competitive system that was predicated on the notion that positions were open to everyone if they proved themselves, and it would violate the principle of annuality, the annual rotation of magistrates into and out of office—a vital hedge against tyranny. This is one of the most difficult problems for scholars of ancient intelligence to grapple with, as mentioned above. The implicit assumption is that good intelligence cannot occur without a devoted intelligence service. Modern intelligence studies suggest that only with an intelligence service can strategic surprise be avoided, that long-term expertise can be gained, that policy can be aided, and that secrecy can be maintained. These assumptions are strongly linked to modern conceptions and presumptions about intelligence’s principal functions in modern states.

The Romans of the mid-republic were so far from even thinking about a bureaucratic service devoted to intelligence that they did not even value or exploit individual expertise in specific foreign policy areas. To expect otherwise is to fail to appreciate the nature of Roman politics, society, and mentality. There is no evidence to suggest that officials were regularly chosen because of their previous experience or interest in particular foreign peoples. Rather, the choice to send ambassadors who had failed previously, or who were considered incompetent disproves the belief that foreign policy expertise was valued or affected policy choices in Rome. This is a natural extension of the Roman wariness of autocracy. Specialisation increases the risk that power could be concentrated in the hands of certain individuals and families. Neither

83 Later developments in Roman intelligence resulted in dedicated intelligence-related officers, such as the *frumentarii*. See Sinnigen 1959; Sinnigen 1961; Sinnigen 1962; Gichon 1989; Bertrand 1997.
84 Lowenthal 2006: 2.
85 Brizzi and Badian attempt to argue that in the conquest of the East, Rome used officials who had developed ‘expertise’ in the area in order to guide policy. Badian 1958: 63-6; Brizzi 1982. Badian goes so far as to deem P. Sulpicius Galba (cos. 200) to be a ‘Macedonian expert’. The position is extensively challenged by Gruen 1984: 203-49, who analyses extant evidence and reveals that there is little upon which to base the doctrine of Roman diplomatic experts.
diplomacy, intelligence, nor foreign and domestic policy benefited from experts. The failure to place value on and exploit expertise in particular foreign policy areas is not as short-sighted as it might seem. Knowledge about foreign peoples and governments was widely available and easily accessible, and at times officials with prior experience of an area (rather than expertise) could be sent to discuss matters. The consul Marcius Philippus’ assignment to the command against Perseus in 169 is a good example. Philippus was elected because of his long experience as a general (he had been consul once before, in 186), and he was chosen for the Macedonian command by lot, not because of any particular ‘expertise’. His social ties with the Antigonids may have influenced his selection to be an ambassador to Greece in the run-up to the war against Perseus, but in that case, a visit to Macedon was not initially on the agenda; that was a later improvisation, at Perseus’ request. Expertise is linked with secrecy and restricting information to a select few. As will be discussed, the control of information was important. The number of those ‘in the know’ was larger than our intelligence agencies would deem necessary. Informing the senate of affairs was only a negligibly larger security risk than informing only a select few in the senate, and in the context of Rome’s competitive and fluctuating system, served policy makers better than intense secrecy.

The avoidance of expertise was not pathological or self-defeating, of course. There were occasions where command was prorogued beyond the traditional campaigning season. This was done occasionally in the mid-republic and for pragmatic reasons rather than out of an appreciation for specialism or expertise. If the latter were the main concern, then magistrates who served in their youth as soldiers and lower officials in one region would be assigned to the same region as much as possible in future commands. This did not occur. As

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86 Livy 43.12.1, 43.15.3; Polyb. 28.1.9. Marcius Philippus had previously headed an embassy to Greece and Macedon in 183: Polyb. 23.4.16, 24.8.1-7; Livy 39.47.11, 39.48.5-6, 39.53.1-11, and on a mission to solicit support in 172: Livy 42.38.1-47 (see below). Aemilius Paullus, chosen by lot to lead in 168, had previously served as part of a mission to settle the Antiochene War in 189: Livy 37.55.7, 38.38-40, 38.44-49; Polyb. 21.24.9, 21.16.17. See Gruen 198: 211-2.

87 Perseus appealed to the social ties between his father, Philip, and Marcius in the discussions in 172. Marcius referred to this relationship at the beginning of the parley: Livy 42.38. There is some confusion as to the nature of this relationship. See Briscoe 2012: 279-80.
Gruen observes, there was an assumption that those elected consul had enough basic military competence to complete military assignments no matter where they were posted. Prorogation was used very sparingly as a result. In some cases, however, especially during the Hannibalic war, prorogued command was common — the result of desperation and a recognition that it was not sensible to replace commanders in dire situations. In times of grave national emergency, a change in command could adversely affect strategic, tactical, and relevant cultural intelligence, that is, cause a reduction in knowledge of the theatre of operations, in troop morale, and in understanding of the enemy. In these circumstances expertise and specialisation, especially regarding a particular geographic area or foe, was not a requirement, but could be an advantage. The long service of the Scipios in Spain is a good example. In normal circumstances, given that the reception of intelligence about the enemy was a chance thing anyway, and commanders were sceptical about the effectiveness of and security their own communiqués, which discouraged their use, intelligence expertise was not the default position in making military assignments; strategic nous and military experience were what mattered. And, after all, the lot decided military assignments; a basic military competence on the part of all who had imperium conferred on them was assumed.

There can be advantages to non-specialist based intelligence systems such as Rome’s. Expertise can create problems for intelligence, especially in societies that lack modern standards of objectivity. It has been suggested that modern centralisation and specialisation have a corrupting effect on intelligence. Institutional hierarchies introduce constraining bureaucratic requirements and expectations about intelligence analysis, and force intelligence practitioners to justify their existence. Expertise also colours the expert’s interpretation of

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89 See for instance Livy 27.6 where there was a call for proven commanders to take on Hannibal. The Hannibalic war was an extraordinary instance of an existential threat to Rome. Practicality necessitated the use of proven generals. Clark 2014: 82-4. The impression by 170 that the Third Macedonian War was taking too long and riddled with Roman failures under first-time consuls (Licinius Crassus cos. 171, Hostilius Mancinus cos. 170) led to a shift in preference for experienced generals (Marcius Philippus, cos. II 169, Aemilius Paullus, cos. II. 168).
information, leading to a paradox: the more information an expert has about a specific area, the more she believes she understands it; the more she thinks she understands it, the less flexible and open-minded she becomes about contrary evidence; when faced with contrary evidence, she often either dismisses it, or interprets it in a manner that supports her initial conclusions or assumptions about her area of expertise. Experts filter information and tag what is important and relevant. Often what is perceived to be relevant supports a predetermined hypothesis. Experts assume knowledge when there are gaps, because they are experts and understand the ‘reality’ of the situation. Essentially, they reduce complex situations to simple and easily understandable scenarios. Roman intelligence practices avoided this problem. The republican system’s constant turnover of commanders and officials, and entrusting them with the control of most intelligence activities, mitigated personal confirmation bias. It of course does not eliminate it, as people naturally create perceptions that are hard to change. Without the rigidities of expertise, however, ideas change more easily when faced with evidence, as do reactions.

In Rome’s technological environment moreover expert analysts would only serve to limit intelligence. Specialist analysis consumes valuable time, but those who learn on the go from a variety of sources have access to better information than experts with all of their confirmation biases. The lack of trained analysts in the Roman context had a significant impact on the reliability of information, not the appreciation for it. Most intelligence knowledge is open-source. Anyone can collate and make a judgment about such information. In the Roman context, without officials trained in intelligence analysis, or an officer training programme, it became the responsibility of an individual to investigate all available and useful knowledge. Roman officials generally did not enter into situations in complete ignorance. Ethnographic preconceptions, impressions from traders and travellers, and experience from previous encounters all served

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For more on the paradox of expertise see Hankins 1987; Christensen 2008; Dror 2011; Kapur 2011.


Kneebone 2009.

On open source intelligence see for instance Friedman 1998; Best and Cumming 2008.
to build a database of knowledge about others. This information may not have been accurate or correct, but it was available, and it influenced the conception of those with whom Roman officials might interact. Trained officials do not create intelligence; they gather and interpret it. In the absence of such a service, Roman officials were responsible for analysing collected intelligence based on a combination of their pre-existing understandings and beliefs. It is possible that this information sharing countered the introduction of individual biases. With more perspectives and discussion, it is possible to arrive at a more accurate picture of affairs. This, however, assumes critical and penetrating discussions between officials and their staffs and the senate about other peoples and their customs and tendencies.

Without experts, problems of interpretation must have arisen frequently, reducing the chance of success. Some of these problems were no doubt minor; others would have resulted in potentially dangerous decisions. It is important to note that none of these problems necessarily undermined the mid-republican understanding and appreciation of intelligence. The prevailing social biases against expertise increased the chance of intelligence failure. As intelligence failure is inevitable even in the modern world, with techniques devoted to

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95 The availability and use of foreknowledge will be discussed in chapter 4.
96 There are debates in intelligence studies about the practicality and usefulness of secrecy in intelligence and the effect of limiting information. Lowenthal 2006: 191-219; Hastedt and Skelley 2009; Gill and Phythian 2012, especially chapter 8.
97 The Romans engaged in discussions about how to proceed against foreign forces and peoples. These discussions allowed for the presentation of a variety of opinions about how to proceed. By doing this, the risks of politicisation and bias in Roman decision making were reduced. To take a few examples, Fabius Maximus, having received command during the Second Punic War introduced discussions about how to proceed against Hannibal: *tum de bello reque [de] publica dictator rettulit quibus quotue legionibus victori hosti obviam eundum esse patres censerent*: Livy 22.11.1. Fabius Maximus was initially criticised for his policies, but compelled everyone to agree with his opinion eventually: τὰς μὲν οὖν ἀρχὰς κατεφρονεῖτο καὶ παρείχε λόγον ὡς ἀποδεικνύας καὶ καταστεπθηγμένοι τῶν κίνδυνων, τῷ τέρμα δὲ τὸ πάντας ἡνάγκασε παρομολογήσαι καὶ συγχωρεῖν ὡς ὡσ τὸν νομολόγησεν ὁποτέ φρονιμωτέρον συνὲν τοὺς δυνατοὺς ἡμᾶς τὸν χρήσθαι τοῖς τὸς περιστούς καυχοῖς: Polyb. 3.89.3. Later in the war there were senatorial discussions about how to approach the Sicilians’ demands, with presentations of different opinions: *consul alter de postulatis Siculorum ad patres rettulit. ibi cum diu sententiis certatum esset, et magna pars senatus, princi peius sententiae T. Manlio Torquato, cum tyrannis bellum gerendum fuisse censerent, hostibus et Syracusanorum et populi Romani, et urbem recipi, non capi, et receptam legibus antiquis et libertate stabiliri, non fessam miseranda servitute bello adfligi*: Livy 26.32.1-2.
intelligence gathering and analysis, the Romans should not be condemned on this score. Their intelligence was without a doubt biased, inaccurate, and slow. The senate had to rely on a combination of military dispatches, rumour, and information transmitted via camp followers and travellers such as traders and prostitutes. Because of the competitive mentality of the aristocratic ethos, what these dispatches contained would vary, as would their interpretation. Accurate information in the Roman world had to compete with technological failings and the effects of their political system. A lack of consensus and groupings of people with different levels of knowledge result in differences in perception. Without a centralised bureaucracy that was responsible for briefing commanders on the cultural peculiarities, it was difficult to ensure that understanding and expectations were uniform across the entire senate. And of course a commander or members of a diplomatic commission could limit the information the senate gained by making choices about what to include in reports and dispatches.

The Bystander Effect, Cognitive Biases, and the Politicisation of Intelligence

Of the socio-cultural problems associated with intelligence practices generally, the least problematic for the Romans was the bystander effect, although this did occasionally occur, as will be seen. More problematic was the lack of compensating for various cognitive biases and cultural opinions. The most dangerous was the introduction, through individual ambition and the pursuit of individual glory, of politicised information from sources the senate had no choice but to trust. There was some recognition of these biases, as will be seen throughout this study, but there was no rigorous attempt to eliminate them. Many of the intelligence problems arising from the nature of Rome’s political system are, necessarily, speculative. And there is not enough information available to say with any conclusiveness that cognitive biases and personal motivations influenced intelligence as a matter of course. There are no autobiographies written by intelligence seekers from antiquity, nor would political biographies dwell on their subjects’ collection of intelligence or attempts to twist it to their benefit. It is possible to suggest that these issues influenced the gathering and reception of information, in part because they are inevitable by-
products of human cognition and affect modern intelligence too, despite an open recognition of and attempts to correct for them.

The bystander effect is known from social psychology as a consequence of the failure of an individual to take personal responsibility. When someone observes something happen to another, she will generally reach out to help. When there is a group of observers, people are more likely to stand and do nothing, assuming and expecting that others will deal with the problem. While the Roman political system gave responsibility to individuals within particular spheres of command (provinciae), collateral incidents were rarely contained within such boundaries, and during the period under discussion in this study, these boundaries often overlapped. In such situations, it was difficult to know whose responsibility it was to inform the senate about affairs unfolding outside Rome. Involving the senate excessively risked making a commander look incompetent; involving them too little could backfire upon a commander’s return. Without a regimented structure of expectations and consistently patterned behaviour, the choice to provide the senate with intelligence was fraught with complications. It is impossible to say how the bystander effect might have affected Roman commanders during the mid-republic because evidence is lacking. In the late republic, Cicero reveals in personal correspondence, on more than one occasion, his conscious choice not to inform the senate about something, because someone else should do so. The most telling example is contained in his letter to Cato in Rome in 51 from his camp in Iconium. He informs Cato that an ambassador came to him from Commagene and told him that Pacorus, son of the Parthian king, had crossed the Euphrates with a large army. Cicero informs Cato because of their close connection; he chooses not to inform the senate officially because he was told that the king of Commagene had already sent a dispatch to the senate to this effect, and he presumed that Marcus Bibulus would send a dispatch with more information. In another

98 Darley and Latane 1968; Rutkowski, Gruder, and Romer 1983; Garcia et al. 2002; Chekroun and Brauer 2002; Fischer et al. 2011.
99 Richardson 2008 provides a cogent discussion about the meaning of the terms provincia and imperium, including during the period under discussion here.
100 Fam. 15.3.1.
101 Publice propter duas causas nihil scripsi; quod et ipsum Commagenum legati dicebant ad senatum statim nuntios litterasque misisse, et exstimabam, M. Bibulum proconsulem, … iam
letter, to Marcus Marcellus, Cicero is afraid to include information about
the movements of the Parthians. He evidently did not want information to be the
subject of an official report with his name attached.\textsuperscript{102} Considering the lack of
security in written communication, Cicero’s choice to inform private individuals
and not the senate seems, at least on the surface, odd. But Cicero apparently
prioritised avoiding personal responsibility for the failure of security on the
eastern frontier over any potential intelligence corruption. It is difficult to
determine whether the avoidance and transference of responsibility was unique
to Cicero.\textsuperscript{103} It may be a consequence of a competitive system and the absence of
strict guidelines for transferring valuable intelligence information. On this
interpretation, a commander reporting sensitive information to the senate,
revealing his knowledge of an affair, could provide fodder for his political
opponents if some misfortune arose related to the intelligence he provided. If he
stayed quiet, he would be less likely to be implicated in disgrace to the state and
would avoid any political blowback from such an event.\textsuperscript{104}

Even if the bystander effect were common, its practical impact on Roman
intelligence seems to have been relatively minor. As discussed earlier, security
was at a premium, there was no guarantee that information would arrive in a
timely manner, and intelligence was never intended to be pre-emptive. Cicero’s
attempt to pre-empt criticism of his role in the security failure on the eastern
frontier may have been subject to politically motivated criticism in the senate,
but all senators knew security breaches could not be prevented since intelligence
travelled so slowly. As will be discussed in the following chapters, Roman

\textit{in provinciam suam pervenisse; cuius litteris omnia certiora perlatum iri ad senatum
putabam: Fam. 15.3.2.} Another reason emerges at the letter’s close: Cicero wants Cato
to surreptitiously defend him in the senate, presumably against those who might
blame him for the Parthian incursion when they learn from the king of Commagene’s
envoys that this had occurred; \textit{tu velim, ut consuesti, nos absentis diligas et defendas.}
\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Fam. 15.9.3.}

\textsuperscript{103} It is also hard to know whether this occurred in our period. The political situation
in the latter half of the first century differed markedly from the period discussed in
this study. There is little direct evidence of commanders during the third and second
centuries engaging in bystander behaviour. But it is not beyond the realm of
possibility that it occurred, given the competitive environment of mid-republican
politics.

\textsuperscript{104} The tendency for this behaviour in modern agencies is avoided due to intelligence
services having well-defined briefs and reporting requirements.
intelligence was primarily a political tool to gather knowledge about the system of which they were a part so they could make decisions with as much information as possible. It was not necessary for developing foreign policy, and was not implemented as a method to prevent conflict and war. Pre-emptive strikes were not feasible in a system where there was no standing army, and no capability of quick remote deployment. While a commander’s avoidance of personal responsibility for events in his provincia was problematic, the senate would eventually be informed of these events, whether it was from Roman officials, allies (as in the Cicero case), clients, or traders. The Mediterranean system was interconnected. The bystander effect introduced inefficient and avoidable delays. These delays existed regardless. And there were deeper systemic problems with Roman intelligence.

The numerous cognitive biases that affect human thought are harder to control than any potential problems with misperception between representatives of two different cultures. In politics and intelligence, cognitive biases lead to miscommunications and misinterpretations. The practice of politics is inherently subjective: biases are impossible to avoid, and recognition of this fact does not necessarily produce a more objective outcome. It is probable that Roman views of the world were affected by as many if not more cognitive biases as modern societies are. As will be seen shortly, there is some indication that the Romans were aware of their own biases in international affairs. Such biases naturally limit the usefulness of intelligence information and analysis. The most problematic cognitive biases include confirmation bias, anchoring bias, stereotyping, and mirror-imaging. Space constraints prevent a full discussion of these, and so two points briefly follow: the likely impact of cognitive bias on the Romans’

105 Heuer 1999: 111-72; Davis 2008: 159.
106 For more on cognitive biases and their effects see Chan 1979; Heuer 1980; Heuer 1981; Betts 2009; Arceneaux 2012.
107 Confirmation Bias: when information is interpreted in a manner which supports a predetermined theory. Anchoring Bias: when an attachment is made to the primary piece of information, and any subsequent information is measured against this anchor. It is similar to conservatism, where earlier evidence is preferred even in the face of new data. Stereotyping: ignoring or distorting intelligence about certain peoples because of presumptions made about their society, culture, and capabilities. Mirror Imaging: the assumption that other states and leaders have motivations, perceptions, and thought patterns that mirror the analysts’. For more on these biases and their effects see Heuer 1999.
preferred intelligence gathering technique, and the most prominent Roman cognitive bias that emerges from the sources, that of mirror-imaging.

The human brain creates neural pathways, shortcuts or heuristics, in order to rationalise, simplify, interpret, and categorise the vast complexity of the surrounding environment. Mental heuristics make it easier to comprehend events and actions as they unfold. They increase efficiency and speed of decision making but also lead individuals to see what they expect to see, making autopsy a problematic evidence gathering technique. The Romans were of course unaware of the theory of heuristics, or its impact on their preferred method of intelligence gathering — autopsy. Nevertheless, the Roman tendency to send commissions of ten staff rather than individuals on diplomatic and investigative missions is perhaps a reflection of the desire to correct for the problems associated with individual autopsy. Thus although autopsy was particularly susceptible to cognitive bias, collegial checking of individual cognitive bias was perhaps a conscious method by Roman officials to reduce the scope for corrupting information. This may indeed reflect a Roman socio-cultural preference for checks and balances as a hedge against tyranny. As was seen earlier, aversion to expertise in particular policy areas likely arose from the same instinct.

To the second point: the most dangerous bias is mirror-imaging, where analysts assume that other states and leaders have motivations, perceptions, and thought patterns that mirror their own. It is an ongoing problem, even when acknowledged in modern intelligence analysis, and evidence suggests it was one of the most powerful biases in Roman practice. How individuals initially view the world and events happens with little cognitive awareness.

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108 Studies of eyewitness testimony are primarily related to the identification of alleged criminals. For discussions about the reliability of such testimony see Brigham, Wasserman, and Meissner 1999; Meissner, Sporer, and Schooler 2007; Malpass et al. 2009.

109 The use of diplomats as intelligence officers will be addressed in more detail in chapter 4.


111 Howe-Ransom 2008: 193-204.
knowledge of the internal culture of other states and peoples, and how they might view and react to Roman behaviour. Roman self-identity trumped other-identification. So, for example, *maiestas* and *fides* exerted a powerful influence in the subconscious of the Roman people.112 Throughout the Romans’ difficult relationship with the Aetolian League, Roman officials failed to communicate to League statesmen that their various violations of *fides* (in Roman eyes, at least) reduced their status in their relationship with Rome. Their continual pretensions to equality with Rome proved irksome, and it took a special clause, the ‘*maiestas* clause’ in the peace treaty with the League in 188, to make the status disparity explicit. Such clauses in Roman treaties could be construed as an example of the final stage of Roman mirror-imaging cognitive bias. All along there had been an implicit assumption by the Romans that the Aetolians would understand their status in the relationship. In the end, because of the Aetolian failure to think like the Romans, and the Roman failure to correct for mirror-imaging cognitive bias, the order to maintain Roman *maiestas* had to be made explicit.113

The most important example of confusion arising from Roman mirror-imaging about *fides* is the miscommunication and misinterpretation of the meaning of *fides* and *πίστις* between Aetolian and Roman officials in 191. The Aetolians surrendered into Roman *fides*, expecting the same clemency that their interpretation of *πίστις* would bring. The consul Acilius Glabrio responded to their outrage by informing the Aetolians that surrendering into Roman *fides* meant that the Romans were free to do as they wished.114 Polybius presents this

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112 A discussion of mid-republican virtues is beyond the scope of this thesis. For discussions of *fides*, see above, n. 64. For *maiestas*, see Bauman 1967; Bauman 1976; Ferrary 1983; Alexander 1990; Harries 2007.


114 Gruen argues that the disagreement was not the result of a misunderstanding but rather a power struggle between Glabrio and Phaeneas. Gruen 1982: 53-4; 7-8. While his suggestion that there was a general understanding of what surrendering into the *fides*/ *πίστις* of another meant regardless of language is probably correct, the small nuances of what was expected could have easily been misconstrued. Understanding a general concept, and internalising the very specific cultural expectations of a concept are different. For more on this episode see Freyburger 1982; Freyburger 1986; Eckstein 1995a; Burton 2009. As Burton claims, it is possible that the misunderstanding here was a result confusion over Glabrio’s *attitude* rather than the terms used. Even if this is so, it does not affect the basic argument presented here since there was an implicit
as a case of cultural misunderstanding.\footnote{Polyb. 20.9.10; cf. Livy 39.54.7; Val. Max. 6.5.1.} Indeed, Polybius appears to use the incident to explain the subtle differences between \textit{fides} and \textit{πίστις} to his audience.\footnote{Dmitriev 2011: 239-40.} Each side assumed what it could expect from the other, imposing their own cultural interpretations on the situation.\footnote{Livy and Polybius provide other examples in which Roman \textit{fides} is misconstrued. Conversations between Nabis and Flamininus suggest a Spartan misinterpretation of \textit{fides}: Livy 31.34.3-4. Lombardi 1961; Brizzi 1982: 58. A similar event occurred at the final surrender of the Carthaginians to Rome: Polyb. 36.4.4-5.}

Another, less controversial example, without the potential misunderstanding based upon terminology, is available. There is no indication that Celtiberian culture had diplomatic procedures similar to Rome’s. As mentioned earlier,\footnote{Above, n. 63.} the Celtiberian War broke out due to an apparent misunderstanding of the Gracchan treaty between Rome and the Spanish tribes. In 153, the Belli and Titthi began enlarging and fortifying the town of Segeda. The Romans ordered them to stop since their activity violated the Gracchan treaty. The Celtiberians argued that it did not, as the treaty forbade them from founding new cities, not enlarging pre-existing settlements.\footnote{ἡ δὲ συγκλήτως πυθομένη τὸ τε τείχους ἀπηγόρευε τειχίζειν… οἱ δὲ πει μὲν τοῦ τείχους ἐλεγον ἀπηγορεοῦσακ Κελτίβρισθεν ὑπὸ Ζοναρίδας ὑπαρχούσας: App. Hisp. 44; cf. Diod. 31.39.} The Romans and Celtiberians had different assumptions about the nuances of diplomatic agreements. It is possible that the misunderstandings on both sides were mere pretence: for the Romans, an excuse for intervention, and for the Celtiberians, feigned surprise and appeal to reason to delay war. It is nevertheless likely that at the time of the striking of the Gracchan treaties in 179, due to the vast cultural gulf that separated the Romans and Celtiberians, in the discussions made prior to the treaty arrangements some miscommunications occurred, or a lack of understanding as to the intentions of the other party.\footnote{After all, Spanish tribesmen only a generation before thought Scipio Africanus was a king, and that when he departed Spain, they could return to their former independence: Polyb. 10.38.3, 40.2-3; Livy 27.19.2-6; Zonar. 9.8; Livy 29.1.19–3.5; App. Hisp. 38. This is an excellent example of Spanish mirror-imaging.} These were not clarified due to the assumption that everything was understood in the same way. These
examples of mirror-imaging in intelligence efforts in the extant sources suggest that it was a feature of Roman foreign policy assumptions and spilled over into intelligence planning as well.

Finally, Roman individuals’ preoccupation with their personal reputations, and the collective concern for the reputation of the Roman state in the minds of Romans as well as foreign states, resulted in the politicisation of information. Politicisation is, unlike implicit biases, a conscious act about how to select and present information. Politicisation suggests information is presented deliberately or subconsciously to support a particular political agenda.\textsuperscript{121} It tends against the modern intelligence ideal that information ought to be analysed as objectively as possible, with the active disassociation from politicians, policy, and personal interpretations.\textsuperscript{122} In the Roman context, intelligence gained through the formal use of diplomacy would at least be reported to the senate, but other more informal intelligence sent to the senate through governors, friends, allies, and personal spies was reliant upon the individual magistrate who received that information. The competitive environment of Roman political life influenced whom they decided to send relevant information to, when they decided to do it, and what exactly they chose to include. Marius, discontented with the consul Caecilius Metellus, encouraged citizens of equestrian rank on the spot in North Africa – both traders and those in the army – to write to their friends in Rome criticising Metellus and arguing for Marius to take command.\textsuperscript{123} The information contained in these letters was the newest information that the senate could have received. This politicisation vindicated the senate’s general policy of not accepting the word of even Roman citizens, of certain rank, without question.

The Marius example shows that the politicising of intelligence was not necessarily aimed at supporting a particular political agenda \textit{per se}, but at increasing or protecting the reputation and thus political trajectory of individuals and families. So in the period under discussion here, after the Roman defeat at the battle of Trebia in 218, the consul Tiberius Sempronius Longus sent messengers to the senate claiming that a battle had taken place, but that it was

\textsuperscript{121} Johnson and Wirtz 2008: 189-92.
\textsuperscript{122} For problems arising from politicisation in modern intelligence efforts, see Gormley 2004; Scott and Jackson 2004; Johnson and Wirtz 2008: 189-231.
\textsuperscript{123} Sall. \textit{Iug}. 65.
interrupted by a storm. The senate initially believed these reports, because they came from the consul. Subsequent news revealed a different story. Contrary sources soon informed the senate that the Carthaginian forces were in control of their camp; that the Celts had defected to the Carthaginians; that their own forces had abandoned their camp and retreated to various cities. Sempronius here was attempting to avoid responsibility for failures. In doing so, he manipulated the information provided to the senate so it did not reflect poorly upon him: all he did was acknowledge that a battle had taken place and omitted to mention the result, that is, that the Romans had been defeated. There is naturally a limit to the ability to manipulate information in formal dispatches; irreconcilable information from other sources as it becomes available sows doubt. But, for a time, rank may trump plausibility, in terms of how intelligence is evaluated.

Politicisation of intelligence in Rome was intimately linked with aristocratic competition. Without bureaucratic walls between intelligence providers, decision and policy makers, indeed, when these were one and the same men, any intelligence provided was likely to have been framed in a manner that benefitted an individual and his political allies for the purpose of furthering their reputations and those of their families, or at least limiting any damage to them.

Conclusion

Effectively these socio-cultural problems, when combined with the technological limitations prevalent in antiquity, ensure that what modern

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124 Ὅ δὲ Τεβέριος, εἰδὼς μὲν τὰ συμβεβηκότα, βουλόμενος δὲ κατὰ δύναμιν ἐπικύρωσε τοὺς ἐν τῇ Ρώμῃ τὸ γεγονός, ἔπεμψε τούς ἀπαγγελούντας ὅτι μάχης γενομένης τὴν νίκην αὐτῶν ὁ χειμῶν ἀφείλετο: Polyb. 3.75.1.
125 Livy does not include this anecdote in his account, as it is an example of blatant manipulation by a Roman commander. Cf. Livy 21.57.
126 οἱ δὲ Ρωμαίοι παρατιθέασιν μὲν ἐπιστευον τοὺς προσπίπτουσι μετ’ οὐ πολὺ δὲ πυθάνομεν τοὺς μὲν Καρχηδονίους καὶ τὴν παρεμβολὴν τὴν αὐτῶν τηρεῖν καὶ τοὺς Κελταῖς πάντας ἀποπνευκέναι πρὸς τὴν ἐκείνων φιλίαν, τοὺς δὲ παρ’ αὐτῶν ἀπολελυμένης τὴν παρεμβολὴν ἐκ τῆς μάχης ἀνακεχωρηκέναι καὶ συνηθροισθαί πάντας εἰς τὰς πόλεις, καὶ χορηγεῖσθαι δὲ τοῖς ἀναγκαίοις ἐκ διαλίττης ἀνά τὸν Πάδον ποταμὸν, καὶ λιῶν σαφῶς ἐγνωσαν τὰ γεγονότα περὶ τὸν κίνδυνον: Polyb. 3.75.2-4.
organisations would call ‘intelligence failures’ occurred in mid-republican history. Without an intelligence bureaucracy and modern modes of information transfer, pre-emptive intelligence was impossible. The gulf between modern conceptions of intelligence and Roman intelligence capabilities was vast. Most moderns cannot conceive intelligence as existing without bureaucratic structures. The absence of these in Rome is thus interpreted as fatal to their appreciation of intelligence. Modern bureaucratic intelligence structures are creations of foreign-policy positivist Realist thinking, which prioritises objective analysis. The Roman worldview and socio-cultural systems, and thus the nature of Roman intelligence, were entirely different.

The case of Casilinum during the Hannibalic war serves to highlight the effects of the ad hoc intelligence system. Information was not disseminated through organised and official channels, or at the very least not alongside staggered or subsequent orders that considered new information. A levy raised among Praenestini were dispatched to the front later than expected. These troops arrived in Casilinum before the rumours of the defeat at Cannae. After they set out from Casilinum, other Roman and allied soldiers, who seem to have been without any specific orders joined them. Not knowing what else to do the men returned to Casilinum when they heard rumours of the Cannae defeat. After receiving certified information about the defection of Capua, they took the town. The Livian story presents an organisational failure, with orders failing to conform to rapidly changing circumstances. Soldiers were left to wander aimlessly at a time when the Roman state required all the men that they could gather for the common defence of the city. Here messengers and messages were clearly getting through, via both official and unofficial channels – albeit

127 … Hi, non confecto Praeneste ad diem dilectu, serius profecti domo cum Casilinum ante famam adversae pugnae venissent…: Livy 23.17.9. Livy uses the term fama here, which suggests he is referring to the unofficial accounts of the defeat no doubt spreading around the Italian countryside.
128 … et, aliis adgregantibus sese Romanis sociisque, profecti a Casilino cum satis magno agmine irent, avertit eos retro Casilinum nuntius Cannensis pugnae: Livy 23.17.9. Livy here uses the term nuntius indicating a more official report.
129 Ibi cum dies aliquot, suspecti Campanis timentesque, cavendis ac struendis in vicem insidiis traduxissent, ut de Capuae defectione agi accipisse Hannibalem satis pro certo habuerent, interfectis nocte oppidanis partem urbis, quae cis Voltturnum est—eo enim dividitur amnī—occupaverent, idque praesidii Casilini habebant Romani: Livy 23.17.10.
unavoidably at disparate times. What made matters even more confusing is that the official order did not provide any command as to where the soldiers ought to go next. This lack of consistent orders is further demonstrated in the aftermath. Hannibal besieged Casilinum until starvation forced a negotiated surrender. Roman forces came to aid the town. The camp was under the nominal command of Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, after the dictator Junius Pera had returned to Rome to take the auspices. Rather than provide orders to his inferiors to aid the town, Junius ordered that no initiative be undertaken in his absence. Whoever saved Casilinum and its garrison, thwarting Hannibal in the process, would gain gloria. Rome was in desperate need of soldiers, so much so that slaves were being armed. Yet Gracchus sat and watched as the town, and the Roman soldiers in it, starved, because he dared not begin hostilities without the dictator’s authorisation. Messages were able to get through providing basic intelligence about necessities. Gracchus devised a plan to transport grain to the inhabitants by sending it down river. While intelligence about the state of affairs was forthcoming, nothing could be done with ease because of the orders of the Roman dictator. These orders were counterproductive in the long run, myopic, and willfully ignorant of the best available information. This is fairly typical of Roman experiences with military intelligence. The problem was rarely the availability of intelligence itself, but the use of information gained and the dissemination of it to create uniform and rational plans of action. In order for intelligence to be useful, commanders’ orders had be flexible and reasonable enough to cover contingencies of all kinds, instead of being politicised in the ways described here.

Both technological limitations and socio-cultural and political realities shaped intelligence use in mid-republican Rome. Military intelligence was highly contingent and actionable in the short term; the man on the spot could not possibly refer his intelligence back to the senate for deliberation and advice. Rarely could a commander gain information that would allow for a pre-emptive strike. At best military intelligence might be able to pass information about enemy plans quickly enough so that commanders could capitalise on enemy

130 Livy 23.19.
131 Livy 22.57.
132 Livy 23.19.
movements or defend against enemy attacks. Certainly the Roman senate, which lacked the bureaucracy and the technology to receive information from frontiers and overseas operations, could not plan for and mobilise attempts to counter threats before they materialised.

Compared to modern western expectations, Roman intelligence was weak. It does not fit into the modern rubrics of what is acceptable or conceivable in avoiding risk. But modern ideals of intelligence were not Roman ideals of intelligence. The limit on Roman intelligence abilities shift the focus away from modern conceptions of intelligence. Strategic intelligence in antiquity was not motivated by a desire to know everything about everyone at all times. Such a focus is a luxury that has only been available in the last fifty years, and was generated by relatively static alliance systems and understanding of intentions and motivations. There are very few examples of focused political intelligence of this type in antiquity; the Roman-Parthian standoff of later antiquity springs to mind. Hence the focus of the chapters that follow: political intelligence. The Roman socio-cultural and political context, to say nothing of the technological limitations of the ancient world, ensured intelligence served a more general role in informing decision-making. Political intelligence efforts served to build upon the general cultural understanding of others, and could be used to construct more or less accurate impressions of affairs or peoples prior to the official outbreak of wars or diplomatic upheavals. This does not mean that Rome disregarded the use of intelligence and counterintelligence in their planning and execution of foreign policy activities. Rather their methods of intelligence gathering and analysis indicate much more than a passing concern with what was unfolding in the international system of which they were a part. It could be utilised in defence, long-term planning, investigations, and aiding diplomatic efforts. The following chapters will examine and assess the Roman utilisation of intelligence in these aspects. They will assess mid-republican use and application of intelligence not according to modern standards but in terms of what the Romans needed intelligence to do for them: to ensure they had whatever information they could gather, how they operationalised this, and to defend against the similar efforts of their neighbours.
The clearest evidence that the Romans of the mid-republican acknowledged and understood the importance of intelligence is the senate’s adoption of counterintelligence measures. Political counterintelligence remains one of the most important tools of national security. It enables one state to protect against the intelligence activities of others. That is, it serves to protect against espionage, sabotage, and assassination attempts conducted by other states or on their behalf. Throughout the third and second centuries, Roman political and military institutions and leadership engaged in counterintelligence. To protect themselves and their information from foreign intelligence agents, Roman officials engaged in denial and deception. Extant sources record both successful and unsuccessful attempts of both Romans and others to thwart enemy intelligence, mislead hostile forces, and manipulate the morale of their adversaries through psychological warfare. Counterintelligence’s role in republican statecraft has been poorly understood and little explored. Intelligence studies focus primarily on active intelligence in the military sphere, dismissing Roman efforts as unsophisticated and naïve. The present exploration of Roman engagement with counterintelligence challenges this impression.

That sources record counterintelligence incidents and comment on its use, success, and failure indicates a greater appreciation for intelligence than most modern scholars are willing to grant officials of the mid-republic. Counterintelligence activities would not have taken place or been recorded without an appreciation of the effectiveness of intelligence in international affairs. Counterintelligence efforts presuppose an understanding of intelligence methods. There would be little motivation to protect Rome against infiltration by foreign agents, to expel certain groups of foreigners, or to spread disinformation – all of which, as will be seen, the Romans did – without an understanding as to how information may be spread among foreign communities in Rome and back.

1 Sheldon’s PhD thesis went so far as to claim that ‘a naïve attitude toward the importance of intelligence prevailed during the Republic and it was never entirely shaken off’. Sheldon 1987: viii. See also Dvornik 1974; Austin and Rankov 1995; Fournie 2004; Sheldon 2005.
to foreign states. A disregard and underappreciation of the power of information does not inspire the creation of measures to protect against it.

The use of counterintelligence and counterinsurgency differs in practice between military and political spheres. While military counterintelligence is important in developing an understanding of Roman intelligence practices generally, since that is where it is most visible in the evidence, political counterintelligence highlights the Romans’ sophisticated commitment to intelligence at a state level rather than at the level of the individual commander. This chapter will address the efforts taken to protect the Roman state through information control, designed to stop pertinent information from falling into enemy hands, and the intentional misleading of dissidents and foreigners with false and manipulated information.

Counterintelligence sadly lacks a theoretical basis and a uniformly accepted definition. According to Lowenthal, there are at least three types of counterintelligence: collection, that is, efforts to gain information about others’ intelligence capabilities; defensive counterintelligence, which consists of actions taken to thwart hostile intelligence; and offensive counterintelligence, strategies employed that manipulate identified agents and their information. To simplify, counterintelligence actions tend to revolve around protection, deception, denial, and psychological manipulation. During the period discussed here, efforts were largely limited to protecting the city of Rome and denial efforts focused on the management of sensitive information. The senate took active measures to verify incoming intelligence and to control the flow of information available to both the public and to foreign agents in Rome, who arrived under the guise of traders, immigrants, or diplomats. Political censorship defended against internal insurgencies, subversive behaviour, and the presence of spies or residents with divided loyalties. Once external events were verified, the senate and magistrates actively set about controlling what foreigners and citizens could know, comprehend, and disseminate about them, at least insofar as they concerned Rome.

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Roman procedures highlight the republican recognition of potential destabilising elements among their domestic population, the use of intelligence by their enemies, allies, and neighbours, the importance of accurate intelligence in international affairs, and the need to control the information in an attempt to maintain and consolidate influence and control. Once identified, foreign agents could be manipulated. The main counterintelligence method was the simplest—denial. Denial aims to block access to information. It is easier to censor and control sensitive information than it is to control the presence of foreigners and domestic citizens who might desire it. In pre-modern as in modern states, it is impossible to keep all information from those who might want it. Any counterintelligence system reliant on denial alone is doomed to failure. The less access one has to a desired thing, the more assiduously one tries to access it. Deception, therefore, must be used to supplement denial. Deception involves attempting to shape perception by manipulating interpretation—in other words, the spreading of disinformation and dissimulation. Successful deceptions are subtle; they have to remain as close to the truth as possible to seem viable. Success relies on understanding how deceptions might be interpreted. As was seen in the previous chapter, cognitive heuristics ideally make decision-making easier. In intelligence, they often lend themselves to faulty analysis and poor reasoning. People see what they want and expect to see, read too much from too little information, and fill the blanks according to preconceived notions. To successfully deceive, the biases and tendencies of those the deceiver wishes to manipulate must be considered. Deception is not something that can be achieved or even attempted without an appreciation of foreign social contexts and cultural assumptions.

3 Johnson 2007: 74.
5 Social context colours how the world is interpreted; it is very difficult to manipulate and change the cultural assumptions of others. Considering the lack of Roman appreciation for biases as discussed in the previous chapter, deceptions during the mid-republic were more prone to failure than modern attempts, and are rarely attested in a political setting.
The control of information was the basis for political counterintelligence. It is important to note that not all information management is designed to counter intelligence gathering by outside forces. In Rome, military commanders, senators, and even historical authors were invested in managing the reception of events by their intended audiences. The limits on the speed of information flows ensured that it could be managed with more flexibility than modern attempts at information control. There is a distinct divide in modern intelligence practice between efforts to censor information for counterintelligence purposes and the exertion of political control, aimed at withholding information to maintain the public’s confidence. In the Roman context, there is no such distinction. In part, this is a consequence of a lack of specialised intelligence service. Most strategies served the dual purpose of controlling the domestic and foreign perception of Rome’s power. Further, the domestic population were founts of open-source intelligence and an exploitable avenue for opportunistic foreign intelligence efforts. As many denial strategies had their beginnings in controlling the perception of domestic individuals, it could be argued that counterintelligence denial efforts, which affected the international perception of Rome, could be dismissed as the unintended consequence of domestic control. The extension of these strategies toward the manipulation and control of foreign individuals, however, places them within the realm of counterintelligence.

Before it was possible to handle the information available to the public, it was first necessary to ensure the accuracy of intelligence. Rumours existed and were impossible to control, often arriving faster than official information. The limitations discussed in the previous chapter made this inevitable. Rumours travelled through a variety of sources; in many cases, even in modern societies, there are numerous versions of events and incidents people believe before a

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6 Clark 2014: 9. Clark’s work discusses the management of Roman military defeat from a senatorial and narrative perspective.

7 The politics of information management are linked to organisational power. For the senate’s control of the perception of their military encounters see Clark 2014: 94-133.
clear picture emerges. There is little extant evidence for the impact of gossip and unverified information in the mid-republic. A letter to Cicero from Caelius Rufus, however, indicates the turmoil caused by rumour during the final decades of the republic. He claims that in Rome there were numerous rumours, spread by whisperers, or susurratores, about Julius Caesar, some saying that he had lost his cavalry, another that his seventh legion had been defeated, another that he was personally being besieged by the Bellovaci with only a small portion of his army. These rumours were contained, says Caelius, but discussed as open secrets among certain groups. Nothing was verified. No one was actually aware of Caesar’s situation. In this case, the rumours were restricted, but during this period there was a degree of rumour mongering by private citizens. The same letter attests to the presence of subrostrani – literally those who lingered under the rostra to gather information. The subrostrani were allegedly spreading the report that Pompeius Rufus had murdered Cicero; Caelius Rufus presumably considered this amusing considering his intended recipient. Such gossip cannot have been unique to the late republic. It must have been common in the mid-republic as well, as indeed is indicated, as was seen in the previous chapter, by Aemilius Paullus’ admonition to a contio in 168 to pay no attention to rumours about the state of the war against Perseus. Unfortunately, the impact of these rumours is unknown.

Ambiguity in available information increases rumour circulation. This is especially true in contexts of danger and potential threats, as information aids in managing risk. The idea that individuals spent time gossiping and spreading

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8 ...quod ad Caesarrem, crebri et non belli de eo rumores, sed susurratores dumtaxat, veniunt. Alius equitem perdidisse, quod, opinor, certe factum est, alius septimam legionem vapulasse, ipsum apud Bellovacos circumsederi interclusum ab reliquo exercitu; neque adiuic certi quicquam est, neque haec incerta tamen vulgo iactantur, sed inter paucos quos tu nosti palam secreto narrantur at Domitius, cum manus ad os apposuit....: Cic. Fam. 8.1.4.

9 The terms subrostrani and susurratores were probably coined by Caelius. Aside from a reference in the Latin Vulgate, this letter contains their only extant usage (Fam. 8.1). For more on the role of rumours in the Late Republic and their spread see Pina Polo 2010; Ripat 2012.

10 Cic. Fam. 8.1.5.

11 Knapp 1944; Nkpa 1975.

12 DiFonzo and Bordia 2007.
tales with little or no evidence is not unusual given human nature. People want to understand what is happening, especially if it has the potential to directly affect their well-being. With limited access to information, endured generally by ancient societies, it is understandable that rumours would take hold among the general population of Rome, making it of vital importance that the senate attempt to manage perception and reduce the risk of general panic. The highly competitive domestic political system of Rome encouraged the dissemination of information, verifiable or no. Gossip is considered a psychological adaptation to increase social capital. Possessing more information than someone else, and sharing it, creates status for the possessor/sharer, and thus elevates her above others. People possess a psychological need to know, and others are often willing to fill that need with potentially false information. In the Roman context, the actions and perceptions of domestic citizens had the potential to destabilise senatorial policy, and decrease the senate’s control over foreign affairs. This is readily apparent in Sallust’s account of the Jugurthine war, where the senate was moved to act out of fear of public opinion. In this case, the breakdown of consensus among the ruling class and an upsurge in individual glory-seeking between commanders resulted in the manipulation of intelligence to the benefit of some commanders against others. Willing and ambitious tribunes were found to hand the adjudication of these disputes to the people via arbitrary commissions of inquiry. Controlling the people’s interpretation of information was important for the ongoing stability of the republican system, as the Jugurthine example negatively shows. Hence, the senate and military

13 Conversation is a human phenomenon. Psychologists have suggested that approximately two thirds of conversation time is devoted to social topics, generically labelled gossip. See Dunbar, Marriott, and Duncan 1997; Percival 2000; Dunbar 2004; DiFonzo and Bordia 2007; McAndrew, Bell, and Garcia 2007; Anderson et al. 2011.
14 Regardless of whether it was the specific goal of people to spread rumours, any information that was reported to the public would spread and be distorted. This is not only a potential irritant to the public but also gives both valid and distorted information to allies and enemies – something highly problematic in an anarchic international system.
15 Dunbar 2004; McAndrew, Bell, and Garcia 2007.
17 This is not quite censorship, but the manipulation of perception. Access to managed information was needed to make informed decisions on matters that required public
commanders needed to not only verify information for themselves, but had to attempt to control the information available to the public as a whole. But this depended on consensus and keeping power-seeking behaviour by individual aristocrats in check.

If a state lacks the ability to verify information, it is better to have numerous educated guesses and hypotheses than one erroneous ‘fact’ – a lone rumour, believed by many, can become a constructed reality regarding which action must be taken. This distortion of fact can lead to inappropriate actions. This, coupled with the shared and acknowledged limitations of information transmission in antiquity was consciously manipulated by Rome’s enemies in attempts at covert action designed to take advantage of Rome’s occasional failure to take counterintelligence measures. In 193, according to Livy, Hannibal advised Antiochus to take his troops to Greece and encamp somewhere that would indicate that he intended to cross to Italy. This would create the impression, and spread rumours, that that was Antiochus’ intention. Unless there was evidence to the contrary, the senate would have no choice but to react to the impending invasion of the Italian peninsula and mobilise efforts to stop it, allowing Antiochus to take advantage of his dissimulation. There is no evidence to suggest that Antiochus ever did this; the historicity of the tale itself may be doubted. Livy’s inclusion of the story, however, indicates an understanding of the power of false and misleading intelligence. Through highlighting the dangers of accepting faulty information, Livy implies that information was an acknowledged requirement of international action, and that the lack of information could pose a problem. This point is relatively obvious; information was one of the fundamental pathways to secure power in antiquity, as it is in the modern world. Military and diplomatic skill count for little if a state was unaware of where these skills were needed, and the potential for misdirection was inherent in any information sourced outside (and, often, inside) the state. The inability to accurately and quickly check any information gained meant that the

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input. For the public’s ability to make informed decisions during the later republic see Gruen 1974b: 539-40; Morstein-Marx 2004.

18 Regem cum ceteris omnibus transtre in Europam debere et in aliqua parte Graeciae copias continere neque traicientem et, quod in speciem famamque belli satis sit, paratum traicere: Livy 34.60.6.
The potential for manipulation or false reasoning was high. The starting point of Roman counterintelligence efforts, therefore, was to verify the accuracy of information.

The senate countered the destabilising potential of rumours by refusing to accept them without collating evidence. While the attitude is observable in numerous anecdotes, usually pertaining to war, it is most clearly expressed in the Livian episode regarding the appropriate response to unverified information in 193. Roman control in the Iberian Peninsula was evidently collapsing. The praetor Gaius Flaminius attempted to force the senate to grant him command of an urban legion so he could reinforce Roman control. The response of the older members of the senate, those presumably with more experience reacting to rumour, was that they would not act on rumours concocted by private citizens, but would only regard information sent from in situ praetors directly or through their legates as credible. Flaminius desired glory and status. He suggested action that was contrary to the usual protocols. The senate dismissed his glory- and rumour-mongering by stating that even if they were to raise forces to interfere in the Iberian Peninsula, it would not be with an urban legion. Their response indicated both an understanding of the need for knowledge before the undertaking of rash action, and the motivation of their members to politicise information for their own purposes. In reality, the situation was less serious than rumour suggested. There had indeed been a hostile coalition of Spanish tribes including the Carpetani, Vaccaei, Vettones, and Celtiberians, but they were defeated by the consul Marcus Fulvius near Toletum in 193. The senate’s position was vindicated.

Other indications of a wary attitude toward unverified sources, and the quality of their information, occurred in times of serious conflict. This attitude is evidenced by the standard procedure of receiving information. Without verification the information that filtered through official channels could be detrimental, regardless of whether it was good or bad news. This is most apparent in the account of the Battle of Metaurus in 207. Prior to the conflict,

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19 Seniores negare ad rumores a privatis temere in gratiam magistratum convictos senatus consulta facienda esse; nisi quod aut praetores ex provinciis scriberent aut legati renuntiarent, nihil ratum haberis debere…. Livy 35.2.6-7.
20 Livy 35.7.6-8.
the consul Gaius Claudius Nero had sent news of his plans, which were based upon captured intelligence. The senate informed the people and retired to the senate house, presumably to discuss what to do in the event of a Roman victory or defeat. There was a general state of anxiety in Rome. Rumours of the outcome of the battle then arrived in the city. First, two cavalry riders from Narnia announced a Roman victory. Their account was given little credence. A letter from the praetorian legate Lucius Manlius Acidinus followed. This report was taken through the forum to the curia. The people were so desperate for news they wanted it read from the rostra before the senate deliberated its contents. In keeping with attempts to manage the reaction of the people, the information was withheld. To publicise unverified information was considered counter-productive. Even after this report was received and digested, members of the senate still refused to accept and announce it. They would wait until word was received from a consul.²¹ Manlius was a mere ex-praetor; rank, as in much else, determined the acceptability of information in Rome. Then rumour came that emissaries from the consuls were arriving, followed by their arrival. Again, the report was discussed in the senate, despite the people’s pressure for the announcement of news immediately. Considering the recent losses of Roman forces, it is unsurprising that news of victory was questioned. It was only after more messengers arrived with the same news and with verification from trusted sources, complete with added detail, that the senate accepted the victory as fact. The emissaries were then taken to the rostra to announce the results of the Battle of Metaurus to the people. This only occurred after the senate had determined the true state of affairs and what they ought to reveal.²² The joyous reaction to the news in Livy’s account - the attitude that the war was over, the celebrations, and the financial surge - highlight the danger that the premature announcement of this news based on rumour could have had.²³ If information

²¹ The recognition of the power of rumour does not mean that the Roman state was never manipulated by it for any length of time, or that it had the power to verify it. There is a limit to the strength of most to hold out against rumour, especially if it is loudly and commonly proclaimed. The longer it takes for contrary evidence to arrive, the more rumours become facts. In light of this, some rumours were taken as true until proven otherwise. See for instance, Livy 29.21, 37.48; Zonar. 9.19.

²² Polyb. 11.3.4-6; Livy 27.50-51.

²³ Even news from official sources was not believed without question. Given Sempronius’ politicisation of his report of the battle of Trebia, deflecting all
received was erroneous, the despondency of the people, who had already begun to celebrate, could have been worse than it was originally.\textsuperscript{24} The senate, accepting the potential consequences of mismanaged information, protected the public, public morale, and the resilience of their state by attempting to verify the accuracy of information.\textsuperscript{25}

The general wariness surrounding unverified or mistrusted information does not mean that the senate in effect buried its head in the sand until verifiable information arrived. To have done so given the realities of ancient information transmission would have been unwise. During the Second Punic War, Marcus Valerius Messalla was sent by the consul Marcus Valerius Laevinus to conduct raids and gather intelligence about the plans of the Carthaginians along the African coast.\textsuperscript{26} Messalla raided the coast and captured some Carthaginians. He then returned to Sicily and interrogated the captives. His transcript of the intelligence was sent to Laevinus. Reportedly, 5000 Numidians were in Carthage, Masinissa and other mercenaries were being hired and shipped to Hasdrubal in Spain, and Carthaginian forces were building an armada to retake Sicily. The senate was informed of this. They took it seriously enough that a dictator was appointed.\textsuperscript{27} Further, in response to the threat Laevinus was sent to Sicily as proconsul.\textsuperscript{28} Messala’s information was procured under torture without responsibility for the loss from himself, this was appropriate: Polyb. 3.75, and previous chapter. Considering that the senate consisted of members deeply involved in the competitive system that led to politicisation, it is unsurprising that reports were not trusted unquestioningly. On the other hand, as the Metaurus example reveals, the inherent hierarchical bias of the Romans shows that rank was equated with trustworthiness. As will be seen in chapter 5, reports from foreign allies required greater verification before they were accepted, indicating a further level in the hierarchy of sources of information.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{24} Cf. Livy 36.12.

\textsuperscript{25} The consul Lucius Salinator exploited rumour and information pathways in the field. In Livy’s account of the battle, Salinator ordered that the enemy Ligurian and Celtiberian forces be allowed to escape and return home to spread the news of Hasdrubal’s defeat: 27.49.9. He exploited the psychological damage and fear that would be inflicted by such stories, which would be elaborated as they spread, to gain power and influence for Rome in an environment where peoples had been defecting from or collaborating against the Romans.

\textsuperscript{26} Livy does not record any resistance to Valerius’ operations, suggesting that the Roman fleet was able to sail relatively unhindered.

\textsuperscript{27} Livy 27.5.

\textsuperscript{28} Livy 27.7-12-13.
further corroboration. But the intelligence posed enough of a threat that the
potential pitfalls of assuming its veracity were outweighed by the potential
disasters caused by ignoring it. Later on Gaius Laelius, Scipio’s legate from
Spain, confirmed before the senate Messalla’s earlier account of Carthaginian
plans with information provided by captives under interrogation.\(^\text{29}\) The
Carthaginian naval attack on Sicily never took place, perhaps because of Roman
intervention. Carthaginian forces did launch an attack on Sardinia, which was
successful in ravaging the area.\(^\text{30}\) There was enough awareness among the
Romans regarding their information system, both its advantages and its faults,
that decisions could consciously be made about when to act and when to seek
more intelligence.\(^\text{31}\) This is not bumbling, hyper-cautious - much less, self-
defeating - conduct.

Control was not only focused on the population’s panic, but also on the
reduction of information available to spies and people of disparate loyalties. The
reactions of citizens to military circumstances and the state of domestic morale
are as important as troop numbers and field strategies in wartime. Ancient states,
like modern states, hoarded information about certain activities and kept it from
its domestic population as much as from its rival states. This indicates that
ancient states recognised the power of public opinion to disrupt high-level
political activity of a sensitive and secret nature, and to destabilise international
affairs through domestic turmoil. Further, it implies an awareness of the
pathways along which information travels, the presence of spies, and the need
for information security. Polybius claims that after the Roman defeat at the battle
of Trasimene, the senate determined there was no way they could soften or
conceal the results of battle since the extent of the disaster was too great. After

\(^\text{29}\) Exitu anni huius C. Laelius legatus Scipionis die quarto et tricensimo quam a Tarraco
profectus erat Romam venit; isque cum agmine captivorum ingressus urbem magnum
concursum hominum fecit. Postero die in senatum introductus captam Carthaginem, caput
Hispaniae, uno die, receptasque aliquot urbes quae defecissent novasque in societatem adscitas
exposuit. Ex captivis comperta iis fere congruentia quae in litteris fuerant M. Valerii

\(^\text{30}\) Livy 27.6.13f. There was a hint that Carthage might attack Sardinia again in 208. A
praetor was given 50 of Scipio’s ships to monitor the island, but the attack never
came: Livy 27.22.8; 29.7.

\(^\text{31}\) For another example of Roman practicality see Plut. Fab. 3; Livy 22.7-8. The senate
elected Fabius a dictator due to confused intelligence from the field.
the official announcement – ‘we have been defeated in a great battle’ - people panicked while the senate remained in control. The public panic was inspired by the general good news that they had received previously.32 Roman armies had been defeated at the battles of Ticinus and Trebia the previous year. News of these defeats was manipulated so as not to represent them as such. According to Polybius, the Romans convinced themselves that the routing of the cavalry at Ticinus was not a defeat: it was unimportant, a result of the consul Scipio’s incompetence and the cowardice of the Celtic cavalry, who fled. All it took to fend off Roman panic was for the consul Sempronius to march his unimpaired infantry legions through the city: public opinion, according to Polybius, was that the legions had only to show themselves to win the war.33 Here rising panic and a potentially severe morale problem – Polybius also says the people were shocked by the loss at first – were quashed by simple public manipulation, or political counterintelligence. The defeat of Trebia simply redoubled senatorial efforts, no doubt inspiring confidence in the people.34 Here the senate acted wisely. By choosing to withhold and manipulate intelligence when Rome was faced by a serious external threat, the senate attempted to maintain public order by managing the reactions of Roman citizens. The alternative – panic and surrender to fear – would have compounded the recent disasters. Internal control is essential during times of external pressure if a government is to survive. This was especially so in an ancient state that was reliant on civilian recruitment to staff its military forces.

The power of information and the need to control it are further revealed in the Roman treatment of what the senate perceived as a domestic insurgency – the Bacchanalian ‘conspiracy’.35 In response to information provided by Publius Aebutius, the consul Spurius Postumius undertook investigations into the worship of Bacchus.36 He presented the senate with an account of his investigations. Their response was to fear the cult in case it precipitated covert

32 This implies the senate had been withholding information.
33 Polyb. 3.68.9-12.
34 Polyb. 3.75.1-4. Cf. the senate’s actions in the aftermath of the battle of Cannae: Polyb. 3.118.7; App. Hann. 29.
35 Livy 39.8-19. The Bacchanalian conspiracy has been well studied. See for example Tierney 1945; Bauman 1990; Takács 2000; Nousek 2010; Pagán 2013: 50-67.
36 Livy 39.9-10.
sedition.\textsuperscript{37} It was then decided to gather more information and to detain Bacchic priests. Instead of suppressing this information and acting in secret, the senate attempted to calm the population with a public pronouncement – there was no purpose to the public meeting other than to announce information. The speech Livy places in the mouths of the consuls advocated traditional gods and values, and openly discussed the thought process behind what to tell the people and what to suppress to provoke the desired reaction.\textsuperscript{38} It culminated in a statement that there would be an investigation, and that magistrates would be present at night providing surveillance. The announcement had two effects: it prevented mass panic, since it satisfied the public’s need to know why some were being questioned and detained, and explained the surveillance; it also created panic in those involved in the cult, encouraging them to attempt to flee and escape – ironically making them easier to detect. The speech suggests a developed awareness of multiple uses of public information. Some information has to be released in order to stop idle speculation, but some had to be withheld to avoid panic and the risk of mob justice.\textsuperscript{39} The senate and consuls masterfully managed the situation; events played out as they desired them to. The people maintained their relative trust in their government, and potentially seditious domestic activity was suppressed. The cult had been threat to security, the maintenance of senatorial power, and the cultural values of Rome. Its suppression, aided by counterintelligence action, reaffirmed the status quo.\textsuperscript{40}

Counterintelligence is not limited to mitigating domestic and foreign threats. It also aims to control beliefs. Mid-republican power structures relied on the continued acceptance of republican values and beliefs. To survive in an anarchic international system, regardless of desires to expand or consolidate power, strong domestic cohesion is necessary. Internal divisions are breeding grounds for insurgency. In the early second century, the Romans were engaged in numerous international conflicts and could not allow dissidence in domestic affairs to interfere with their focus on the tumultuous Mediterranean situation.

\textsuperscript{37} Livy 39.14.
\textsuperscript{38} Livy 39.15-16.
\textsuperscript{39} Equidem nec quid tacem nec quatenus proloquar invento. Si aliquid ignorabis, ne locum neglegentiae dem, si omnia nudaveris, ne nimium terroris offundam vobis vereor: Livy 39.15.4-5.
\textsuperscript{40} Gruen 1990: 75-8.
As Aeneas Tacticus states, a disaffected citizenry is no less dangerous than external threats to national security.\footnote{Aen. Tac. 11.1.} It is necessary to control beliefs so that the reactions of citizens in given circumstances can be predicted. Control requires not only accurate information but also the restriction of access to it.

In addition to assuring the accuracy of intelligence, the senate protected itself, the people, and the position of Rome in the international system by controlling the dissemination of information. Information about military affairs, declarations of war, and diplomatic events was carefully managed. The evidence for this censorship in the modern sense is limited in the mid-republic. It does not equate to excluding the public from access to information, but to the ability to maintain secrecy if it was deemed necessary. Censorship existed at a variety of levels, the most basic being the ban on senators discussing what occurred in senatorial meetings with non-members.\footnote{Harris 1979: 6-7, 255 makes reference to historians' and the Roman public's lack of access and to senatorial discussions.} In an incident of dubious historicity, only recorded in Valerius Maximus, Quintus Fabius Maximus told his friend Publius Crassus in 149 about classified discussions in the senate regarding the potential declaration of the Third Punic War.\footnote{Quintus Fabius Maximus is thought to be Servilianus, who became consul in 142.} Fabius apparently had a lapse of judgement. He discussed secret events with someone whose official standing he was unaware of. He ought to have assumed the worst, that is, that the censors had not enrolled Crassus in the senatorial order, despite knowing he was quaestor in 152. The consuls severely reprimanded Fabius. To them, silence was the most secure bond against future contingencies.\footnote{Numquam enim taciturnitatem, optimum ac tutissimum administrandarum rerum vinculum, labefactari volebant: Val. Max. 2.2.1a.} This is the clearest and most explicit evidence for political censorship in our period. Secrecy would best be maintained, and the Roman position made secure, if fewer people knew about senatorial policy and planning. Statements in Appian and Polybius attest to senatorial secrecy surrounding the planning for the Third Punic War.\footnote{In a similar situation, Livy suggests that Africa was never publicly declared a provincia in 204 to ensure that the Carthaginians remained unaware the Romans intended to move the theatre of war from Italy. See Livy 29.14.} Appian has the senate amass an army after receiving intelligence about Punic activities, and intentionally spread the story that it was being prepared for...
any future contingencies, not for a Carthaginian war. Polybius claims that the senate determined their course of action long before they declared war, but were seeking a viable pretext. He does not explicitly claim the decision was kept secret, but the public dissemination of the intent to declare war would have defeated the purpose of seeking a justifiable pretext. Both suggest that discussions in the senate and plans could be kept secret. It is more than likely that these secrets were kept from the general Roman public as well due to the presence in Rome of foreign entities and spies.

Secrets generally only remain so if few people know them, a fact well understood in Rome. The story of Papirius Praetextus, originally discussed by Cato, reveals the danger of revealing information to even a single unauthorised person. Papirius Praetextus’ son had accompanied him to the senate. When he came home, his mother asked what had occurred. He replied that it was a secret, only increasing his mother’s desire to know. She questioned him further, and the boy told a lie. He claimed the senate had discussed whether it was more expedient that a man have one wife or two. His mother ran, panic-stricken, to tell the other women. The next day, the senate questioned this bizarre behaviour, and were told the story by the young Papirius. He was praised for his cleverness. His actions revealed the dangers of gossip and mismanaged information. So afterwards, young boys were barred from accompanying their fathers, on the off-chance they were not able to withstand the pressure from their curious mothers. The moral of the tale is that important matters - even falsehoods - could not be prematurely revealed to the public, lest they cause uncontrollable panic and dismay. Best not to provide opportunities for potential leaks in the first place.

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46 ὃν οὐδέτερον κακῶς ύπενόουν· αὐτίκα γὰρ οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι πυθόμενοι στρατὸν ἐπηγγέλλον ἐς ὁλην τὴν Ἰταλίαν, τὴν μὲν χρείαν σοι λέγοντες, ὡς δὲ ἄν ἰδέας ἔχοιν ἐς τὰ παραγγελλόμενα χρήσιμα: App. Pun. 74.
47 Πάλαι δὲ τούτου κεκυρωμένον βεβαιῶς ἐν ταῖς ἐκάστων γνώμαις καρφὸν ἔζητον επιτῆδεόν καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἐκτὸς: Polyb. 36.2.1
48 Gell. NA. 1.23. The story and the principle of secrecy in general is discussed in Plut. Mor. 507.
49 Gell. NA. 1.23.
50 The anecdote says as much about Roman attitudes toward women as it does unverified information.
The same dynamic is apparent in an episode reported by Zonaras regarding Roman aid given to the Volsinii in 265. The free Volsinii had placed too much of their administration into the hands of their slaves, who subsequently rose to power. The older citizens sent secret envoys to Rome to ask for aid in remedying the shameful situation. Zonaras claims the envoys urged the senate to meet secretly by night, in a senator’s private house in order to prevent information leaks. The senators did so, without apparent question or concern – there is nothing to suggest that the request was considered unusual. The house they chose, however, was temporarily housing a Samnite, who overheard their discussion. He informed the slaves about the meeting of the Volsinii. The slaves killed the envoys on their return. Zonaras’ account of the security of this meeting is somewhat problematic. The choice to move to a private house suggests that a senatorial meeting by night would have raised questions even if the discussion were kept private, especially if spies were suspected. The amassing of the entire body in one house would have been equally suspicious, albeit perhaps more ambiguous. A meeting in the curia would be perceived as a discussion of political affairs, while a meeting in a private house may not have been. The curia may not have been considered more secure than a private house. But this assumes a level of security consciousness that is contradicted by their particular choice of house. This particular house was surely not the only available one; there were 299 other senators’ houses to choose from, presumably, without a potential Samnite spy in them. Zonaras explains that the senators dismissed the Samnite as a security threat because he was ill. This is a strange explanation. Illness does not preclude one from gathering pertinent information, and is clearly a flimsy reason for dismissing the Samnite as a security threat, especially given the sensitivity of discussion. The fact that there needed to be an explanation suggests that some degree of secrecy and the control of information was indeed the norm. It would be unheard of for any modern state involved in international politics not to manage access to information better than this. The anarchic Mediterranean

51 Cf. Oros. 4.5.3.
52 οὖν ἐντὸς σφαίρας οἱ χρηματικοὶ πολίτες τῷ ἐν τῇ Ρώμῃ ἀπόστειλαν: Zonar. 8.7.
53 οἱ καὶ δὲ ἀποστολὰς νυκτὸς τὴν γεγονότητα εἰς ἱδιωτικῆς οἰκίας ἐλθεῖν, ἵνα μηδὲν ἐξαγγείλατον, παρεκάλεσαν καὶ ἔτυχον: Zonar. 8.7.
system was no different. This anecdote was noteworthy precisely for its unusual lapse in security, which led to its particularly unfortunate outcome.

Rome was not unique. Other Mediterranean states censored political discussions. On one occasion, in the early 140s, the pro-Roman politician Stratius of Tritaea was accused of conveying state secrets to the Roman legate Gnaeus Papirius. Stratius claimed that they were friends and their discussions never included politics. Continuous discussion with the legate, however, whose purpose was to investigate the commotion in the Peloponnesse, does seem suspicious. Diplomats were a primary source of intelligence, which was often derived from citizens of foreign states. Stratius was likely one of these agents. The chance that discussions between a Roman representative and a pro-Roman figure avoided politics are slim. There is evidence to suggest that Carthaginian political discussions were kept secret as well. Roman ambassadors sent to Africa in 174 returned to Rome in 173. They had visited Masinissa and Carthage and came bearing reports of secret Carthaginian meetings with Macedonian envoys. They claimed that Carthaginian leaders had met with envoys from Perseus at night in the temple of Asclepius. This was presented as fact. It is unknown whether they saw this with their own eyes, or chose to accept Masinissa’s words as truth over the Carthaginians’. They knew nothing about what was said. But Masinissa claimed Carthage sent envoys to Macedon. Secret meetings, innocent or otherwise, are always an object of suspicion in international politics —

54 καὶ τοῖς πάσιν ἔφερεν ἐφή γὰρ Ἐὐαγόραν τὸν Αἰγιέα καὶ τὸν Τριταιέα Στρατίον πάντα τά λεγόμενα δὲ ἀπορηθητῶν ἐν ταῖς συναρχίαις διάσωφεν τοῖς περί τὸν Γνάιον. τοῦ δὲ Στρατίου συμμεμιχέναι μὲν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ὁμολογοῦντος καὶ μετὰ ταύτα συμμίσειν φάσκοντος φίλοις οὕσι καὶ συμμάχοις, ἀνηγελκέναι δὲ ὥρκαξωμένου μηδὲν τῶν ἐν ταῖς συναρχίαις εἰρημένων, οἳ δὲ πλείους προσεδέχοντο τὰς διαβολὰς: Polyb. 38.12.4-5. Stratius had been a political hostage, who was released along with Polybius after 150, and Roman influence in Greek states had stabilised: Polyb. 28.6; 32.3.14-17; Deininger 1968: 1257-56
56 As will be addressed in following chapters, the supporting of pro-Roman groups under whatever guise is an example of covert action, aimed at ensuring the senate maintained access to information and a sense of control over affairs.
57 Compertum tamen affirmaverunt legatos ab rege Perseo venisse, iisque noctu senatum in aede Aesculapi datum esse: Livy 41.22.2.
58 Ab Carthagine legatos in Macedoniam missos et rex affirmaverat et ipsi parum constantem negaverant: Livy 41.22.3.
especially if they take place under cover of darkness. The other side always wants to know what is happening. Secrecy inspires suspicion. But suspicion on these grounds is not in evidence here. In Carthage’s case, historical relations with Rome and Roman ethnocentric stereotypes would always drive Romans to question their behaviour.

A second incident of Carthaginian secrecy reveals the recognised potential that information had on the balance of power and alliances in the anarchic Mediterranean. The Romans again could not gain information about what was discussed by the Carthaginian government in 172. Gulassa, Masinissa’s son, sought to gain favour by providing information about Carthaginian activities to the Roman senate. According to Livy, the Carthaginian senators had sequestered themselves in the temple of Aesculapius. No information about the specifics of the discussion had leaked, except that ambassadors were to be sent to Rome. The Numidians presumed discussions related to their ongoing border struggles, and Carthaginian complaints about Numidian behaviour. It was because Masinissa could not infiltrate or discover what went on in the meeting that he sent his son to Rome. He had to pre-empt whatever the Carthaginians were to say about him. Arriving first gave Numidia the upper hand. Masinissa provided the Romans with intelligence, spun in a way that made Carthaginian activity appear suspicious, and he could gain favour as a whistle-blower. Here, activity, similar to that the Romans participated in, is manipulated and presented in a manner that suggests threatening behaviour. A similar accusation was levelled against Perseus in early 171. There is no indication he was conducting himself any differently than he had in the past, but he blocked Roman access to information. He was accused of holding secret meetings at Samothrace with delegations from various Asian cities. The Roman envoys did not report what

59 Take the scandals about US surveillance on allies and enemies leaked by Edward Snowden in 2013. Another notorious instance is the tapping of the US ally German Chancellor Angela Merkell and her ministers by the NSA. Carrel et al. 9th July 2015.
60 In aede Aesculapii clandestinum eos per aliquot noctes consilium principum habuisse, unde nihil emanasse praeterquam legatos occultis cum mandatis Romam mitti: Livy 42.24.3.
61 Eam causam fuisse patri mittendi se Romam, qui deprecaretur senatum ne quid communibus inimicis criminantibus se crederent, quem ob niillam aliam causam nisi propter constantem fidem erga populum Romanum odissent: Livy 42.24.4.
62 Samothracae praeterea per multos dies occultum consilium cum legationibus civitatum Asiae regem habuisse: Livy 42.45.6.
these meetings were about because they could not access them. Their report to
the senate attempted to present the secret meetings as an indication of seditious
activity, rather than an admission of their inability to overcome Perseus’
counterintelligence.

It is impossible to live in a state where all information is kept from the
government. The Roman aristocracy never tried to do this. They censored important
information and tried to control belief in rumours. Censorship served multiple
purposes. It controlled the domestic population and their beliefs, maintaining
the power of the government. It restricted the ability of foreign agents to discover
plans and plots. In a technologically limited world, dealing with agents among
the domestic population is difficult. It is easier to withhold information from the
populace as a whole than it is to police the population and discover spies and
subversive factions. Spies were present in Rome. They mingled with citizens,
foreign inhabitants, visitors, and officials. Whether identified or no, the general
dome was a sensible
picture is that Roman officials assumed they were there. This was a sensible
assumption. During the Second Punic War, a Carthaginian spy was caught after
two years of providing intelligence to the enemy. His punishment, the removal
of his hands, was a normal punishment for Roman defectors, suggesting that he
was a turned Roman citizen. Macedonian agents were recognised in the city
prior to the outbreak of the Third Macedonian War. When the consul Marcus
Philippus addressed Perseus prior to the war, he assumed these agents, along
with official ambassadors, had informed Perseus about what was going on in
Rome. The more that was publicly known, the more likely it was that this
information might find its way throughout the Mediterranean. When Livy has
Philippus discuss the presence of Macedonian agents there is no sense of
censure, or even the identification of these agents, just the acceptance and
assumption that they were there. By securing the available verifiable information,
Roman plans and decisions could be protected from premature exposure.

63 Livy 22.33.1, Zonar. 9.1. Tactical and strategic military counterintelligence and
control will not feature in this thesis, but for the typical treatment of defectors and
deserters see Wolff 2009; Gueye 2013.
64 …certum habeo et scripta tibi omnia ab Roma esse et legatos renuntiasse tuos: Livy 42.40.9.
While it was comparatively difficult to monitor the presence of spies already present in the city, incoming foreign agents were easier to police and manage. The most practical method for ensuring a limited amount of information travelled beyond the *pomerium* was to limit access to information. Aeneas Tacticus suggests that all foreigners should be kept inside during military exercises, and they should all be registered and disarmed; there ought to be restrictions on who may talk to foreign ambassadors; and all embassies should be monitored and escorted by trustworthy individuals.\(^65\) The Romans may not have gone so far in the mid-republic as to build a register of foreign inhabitants, but they were aware of their presence and undertook measures to remove them if necessary. Diplomatic procedures too were put in place to restrict embassies’ access to both people and information, prior to their arrival, during their visit, and while on Italian soil.

The appointment of intelligence officers in embassies and diplomatic missions is a politely ignored open secret today. In recent years there have been growing reports and public acknowledgement of embassies either housing spies or serving as the base for intelligence operations, wittingly or not.\(^66\) Reportedly, one third of members of the Russian embassy in Stockholm are intelligence officers posing as diplomats and officials – a number that remains constant.\(^67\) It is often claimed that legitimate diplomatic officials are unaware of the presence of intelligence agents. Whether this is true or not is debatable, but the statement allows for the maintenance of plausible deniability – something of utmost importance for clandestine diplomacy and covert action. It is important to note for studies of intelligence that it is only with the development of permanent consular legations that a distinct separation between the realms of diplomacy and

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\(^{65}\) Aen. Tac. 10.8-13. See especially, ...οἵμορος δὲ ἢ κατὰ παῖδευσιν ἢ κατ’ ἄλλην τινὰ χρείαν ἐπιθημοῦντας ἀπογράφεσθαι. ταῖς δὲ δημοσίαις ἀφικνουμέναις προβείεις ἀπὸ πόλεων ἢ τυράννων ἢ στρατεύσεων ὥς χρη ἐν αὐτοῖς τὸν ἐθέλοντα διαλέγεσθαι, ἀλλ’ ἀεὶ παρεῖναι τινὰς τῶν πολιτῶν τοὺς πιστοτάτους, οἱ μετ’ αὐτῶν συνδιατελουσμέχρις ἀν ἐνδημῶσιν οἱ πρεσβεῖς...: Aen. Tac. 10.10-12.

\(^{66}\) AFP 2013; Jabour 2013.

\(^{67}\) AFP 2015.
intelligence activities has developed. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century diplomats served a dual purpose, as what modern international practices would deem both diplomats and intelligence officials. Before the separation of the two fields of international interaction, diplomats were part of the intelligence process; they recruited their own secret agents while information gathering and acted in an overt and covert capacity. Delegations of envoys in antiquity, especially those from Hellenistic states and Rome, did the same. The existence of spies in ambassadorial parties in antiquity is not questioned by extant sources, nor is it condemned. Livy, despite his tendency towards moralism, does not censure the envoys that came to see Lucius Aemilius in Liguria, ostensibly for diplomacy but in truth to gather information. Instead, the presence of intelligence gatherers in embassies, be they the ambassadors themselves or their attendants, was expected and protected against.

The anonymous Byzantine military handbook, *Peri Strategikes*, provides advice on how to deal with these incognito, but implicitly acknowledged, agents. Envoys themselves should be treated with dignity and respect, but their attendants must be kept under surveillance to stop them gathering information by talking to locals. The author goes on to discuss the relative importance of this surveillance depending on who the people are and where they are from. Those from far away are less of a risk and can be exposed to more information; those from powerful and close nations cannot be allowed to see the political and military situation or true extent of the resources of the nation. This attitude

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68 Livy 40.25.2. The links between diplomacy and intelligence in antiquity will be examined in more detail in chapter 4.

69 Herman 1998: 2. What makes this difficult to understand for most moderns is the widespread belief that intelligence is covert and involves secrecy. But, as has been seen, secrecy, while an important factor in some intelligence activity, is not a defining attribute of intelligence. To reiterate, intelligence is defined in this thesis as the gathering and analysis of any information, be it military, political, economic, or cultural, that aids one nation or group in understanding another, for the purposes of facilitating decision-making, both politically and in military situations. See above, p. 34.

70 *legati ad eum per speciem pacis petendae speculatum venerunt*: Livy 42.46; cf. App. Ill. 9.

71 Ἑπέσβεις ἢ παρ᾽ ἡμοῖς ἢ πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀποστέλλονται. ἐάν μὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀποστέλλονται, χρὴ φιλοτίμως τε καὶ δαράλως τούτους ὑποδέχεσθαι καὶ γὰρ τιμῶσι πάντες αὐτούς. Τούς δὲ ὑπηρετουμένους αὐτούς δι᾽ ἀσφαλείας ἔχειν εἰς τὸ μηδὲν τὸ διδάσκειν ἐπερωταμένους αὐτούς. Κἂν μὲν τῶν λιῶν ἀφεστηκότων οἱ
reveals many things about Byzantine world knowledge. To know from whom to hide things and to whom it was safe to reveal information requires an understanding of their position and capabilities. To allow information to be given more freely simply because of the distance between Byzantium and their homelands is dangerous, although distance does mitigate the practical threat that such people could pose. The excerpt implies that Byzantine sources had what they conceived to be up to date and accurate information about visiting peoples. It also implies a perceived knowledge of how one people will react to certain revelations, that is, their susceptibility to psychological manipulation. While there is nothing so explicit relating to the Roman republic, there remain indications of a wary attitude toward embassy members and accusations, denied or not, of ambassadorial espionage, by both Romans and foreigners. The mid-republican senate sought to hinder potential spies by limiting their access to the city itself, and its inhabitants.

The disparate treatment of allied and hostile embassies reveals the counterintelligence motive. Those who were considered hostile were refused entry into the city itself and traditionally housed in state villas—a form of house arrest. Some were refused entrance into any Roman held territory. Allies were admitted to the city proper and treated as guests. They were entertained and put up in public accommodation—a lighter form of house arrest. Part of this can be construed as a power play—it placed the Romans in the superior position.

72 See for example App. Pun. 69, Ill. 9; Diod. Sic. 33.28; Livy 33.24, 40.25, 42.25, 42.26.

73 There are occasions where non-friendly forces were allowed inside the city walls, with access to senatorial houses. The Rhodian embassy presented itself in 168, but was denied hospitality and a meeting with the senate, as it had not gained the right to be considered either a friend or an ally with Rome. In consequence, the envoys began to beseech senators in their homes (Livy 45.20).

74 For other examples see Dio fr. 79.1; Livy 29.17-19, 33.24.5, Per. 46; cf. Festus 470L. See Bonnefond-Coudry 2004.

75 Cf. App. Hisp. 49 - Τῶν δὲ πρέσβεων οἱ μὲν ἐκ τῆς φιλίας ἐς τὴν πόλιν ἐσελθόντες ἐξενίκοντο, οἱ δὲ ἐκ τῶν πολεμίων, ὡς ἐθος ἐστίν, ἐξω τειχῶν ἐστάθμευον.
But they used their power to deny access to information. To be cut off from this effectively results in the failure of one of the purposes of a foreign mission. The Romans’ denial of free access to the city bought time to discover what the embassy might want, its personnel, and to determine if the embassy was legitimate. According to Livy, when Carthaginian ambassadors were sent to the city for peace negotiations in 203, letters were sent to Rome, claiming that the embassy had been sighted at Puteoli. The timing of the Carthaginian embassy was unfortunate. Earlier that year, Saguntine envoys had arrived in Rome bringing captured Carthaginians who had been sent to Spain to hire mercenaries. Even before the embassy sighted at Puteoli reached Rome, it was decided that they would be forbidden access to the city. Quintus Fulvius Gillo was sent to escort them to Rome. This embassy was determined to be, in reality, a group of spies; they were all young, strong men, who had little knowledge of previous negotiations or treaties with Rome. The senate deemed it a case of Punic duplicity. It was suggested that the embassy be removed and guided by guards until they reached their ships. Most scholars have questioned this episode’s authenticity. Neither Appian’s, Polybius’, nor a fragmentary papyrus account can be reconciled with Livy’s. The veracity of the treaty arrangements, however, is not of concern here but rather the procedures in place for counterintelligence. Livy has the Carthaginians escorted across Italian

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76 Cf. App. Pun. 69; Polyb. 28.1.7; Diod. Sic. 33.28a.1-3; Dio 36.45.4-8. See Brennan 2009: 179-82.
77 Livy 30.21.11. The use of allied cities and states was a fundamental part of Roman political intelligence gathering. It will be discussed in later sections.
78 Livy 30.20.3-5.
79 Quibus vetitis ingredi urbem hospitium in villa publica, senatus ad aedem Bellonae datus est: Livy 30.21.12. To remain outside the walls in this context essentially corresponds with the Campus Martius. Bonnefond-Coudry 2004: 531. Refusing foreign envoys admission to the city was analogous to refusing legates access to military camps in the field. Carthaginian envoys who came to visit the Roman camp at Utica in the initial stages of the Third Punic War found their access blocked by a rope: App. Pun. 78.
80 Livy 30.21.11.
81 M. Valerius Laevinus, qui bis consul fuerat, speculatores, non legatos venisse arguebat, iubendosque Italia excedere et custodes cum iis usque ad naves mittendos, Scipionique scribendum ne bellum remitteret: Livy 30.23.5; cf. Livy 30.22.5-6.
82 Livy 30.23.5. Aetolian and Macedonian envoys were also escorted from Roman territory once they were deemed to be hostile: Livy 30.23.5. Livy uses the term custodes here, implying watchmen or guardsmen rather than benign guides.
84 Cf. Polyb. 15.1.2, 8.8; App. Pun. 31-35; P. Ryl. 491.
soil, observed and reported upon as they made their way to Rome, and housed outside the city under guard, indicating the potential intelligence opportunities available as a matter of course to diplomatic officials. Polybius’ retrospective allusions to the peace negotiations, not surprisingly, make no mention of any of this, but Appian mentions the housing outside Rome. In any case, the escorting of diplomatic officials under guard is highlighted in numerous other episodes.\footnote{Cf. Polyb. 27.6.3; Diod. 30.1; App. Mac. 11.1; Livy 42.48.4. Bonnefond-Coudry 2004: 544f.; Naco del Hoyo 2014: 403.}

In 201, Carthaginian ambassadors returned to Rome. They were again housed outside the city, and received an audience in the temple of Bellona. The senate observed their ages and ranks and determined that they were a genuine embassy. The most conspicuous member was Hasdrubal Haedus, who was a known proponent of peace and opponent of the Barca faction. For all his supposed long opposition to war, this is the first time Livy mentions Hasdrubal Haedus. Appian has him escorting Scipio’s envoys to Carthage in 202,\footnote{App. Pun. 34.} then leading ambassadors to Scipio following the battle of Zama.\footnote{App. Pun. 49-54.} Livy has Haedus place the blame for the war entirely on the Barcids, and praise the glory the Rome. It was only after this embassy and the ratification of peace that Carthaginians were granted leave to enter the city and to talk to any Carthaginian prisoners of war who were present.\footnote{Livy 30.42-43.8.} There were some 200 individuals whom the Carthaginian envoys told the senate they wished to ransom. These were not all the prisoners. The presence of these people in the city of Rome, and the access granted to them, serves as an example as to why foreign dignitaries were not permitted into the city. Prisoners of war or not, the simple fact of residing in a city furnishes one with information that those kept beyond the walls cannot access. Knowledge of rumours, attitudes, decrees, and the general beliefs about the continuing state of war could have been gained by the false embassies if they had been admitted. The use of guards and territorial restrictions suggests a preoccupation with infiltration by foreign spies under cover of diplomatic
missions, and a perception that these missions might represent a threat to
Roman security.\textsuperscript{89}

To balance the potential threat the senate followed a standard protocol in
admitting ambassadorial parties.\textsuperscript{90} All embassies had to state the purpose of their
visit before a magistrate. Depending on the ostensible reason for their visit, they
may have been granted an audience before the senate.\textsuperscript{91} Servius’ early fifth
century commentary on the Aeneid claims this was the standard procedure.\textsuperscript{92}

Livy elaborates. He has the senate accuse an Illyrian ‘embassy’ in 172 of being
spies because they did not follow accepted protocol, and could not provide an
excuse for so doing.\textsuperscript{93} They did not present themselves to a magistrate and follow
diplomatic protocol of requesting lodging and entertainment. It was especially
suspicious when those claiming to be an embassy did not request admission to
the senate.\textsuperscript{94} A foreign embassy that had no desire to be presented to the senate
had no excuse to be in Rome. Embassies that attempted to gain an audience
with the senate were less suspicious, but could be, and probably were, attempting
to gather information as well. While ambassadors had to present a reason for
their presence, the ostensible rationale was fluid and subject to change. The
Rhodian embassy that came to mediate the war between Perseus and the
Romans in 168 quickly changed its mandate when they discovered the war had

\textsuperscript{89} Naco del Hoyo 2014: 403.
\textsuperscript{90} Bonnefond-Coudry 2004.
\textsuperscript{91} Ferrary 2009: 123.
\textsuperscript{92} Intra tecta vocari dissentit hoc loco a Romana consuetudine. nam legati si quando incogniti
venire nuntiantur, primo quid vellent ab exploratoribus requirebatur, post ad eos
egradiabantur magistratus minores, et tunc denuo senatus ab eis extra urbe postulata
nascebat, et ita si visum fuisse, in urbe admittebantur. sed hoc Vergilius non sine ratione
praetermissit: Latinum namque memorem vult esse responsi et avidum satis ad externos
videndos, per quos ei promittebatur felicitas: Serv. A. 7.168.
\textsuperscript{93} …communi consilio parare Romanis bellum; et specie legatorum Illyrios speculatores Romae
esse Perse auctore missos ut quid ageretur, scirent. Illyrii vocati in senatum; qui cum legatos
se esse missos ab rege dicerent ad purganda crimina, si qua de rege Issaei deferent, quaestitum
est, quid ita non adissent magistratum, ut ex instituto loca, lautia acciperent, sciretur denique
venisse eos et super qua re venissent? Haesitantibus in respone, ut curia excederent dictum;
responsum tamquam legatis qui ut adirent senatum non postulassent, dari non placuit:…:
Livy 42.26.2-7.
\textsuperscript{94} In the case of the Illyrian embassy of 172, the Illyrian king Gentius, who dispatched
it, was wavering as to which side to back in the impending Third Macedonian War.
\textit{Cf.} Livy 42.29.11, 42.37.2. The embassy probably was spying, attempting to determine
which side it would be better to back. See below, chapter 5, p. 232.
abruptly ended, and instead offered congratulations for the Pydna victory.\footnote{Polyb. 29.19.} An embassy from Ptolemy came to mediate the same war, but was advised by Aemilius Lepidus not to announce this as its purpose for being in Rome, as it would be not be appreciated. Instead, they renewed declarations of friendship.\footnote{Polyb. 28.1.}

In light of this fluidity, the reason given for a visit was not necessarily as important as appearing to follow protocol and give a foreign diplomatic presence legitimacy. If the senate was not aware of the presence of foreigners, they could not control what they could see and access. Roman control over the movements of ambassadors thus had the potential to be both defensive and offensive in terms of counterintelligence. Embassies could be provided with accommodation and entertainment, which served to create the perception of Roman power and hospitality. Presenting the Romans in a favourable light had the persuasive power to induce wavering peoples to side with them. Their admission, in contrast to enemy embassies’ exclusion, was a public acknowledgement of the Romans’ appreciation for their neutrality or allegiance. The downside of this procedure for intelligence agents was that the declaration before the magistrate allowed the senate to place the embassy under surveillance and monitor their access to information and people.

Approved guests and ambassadors, admitted to the city with lodging and entertainment, were, of course, closely monitored and chaperoned; this is what lodging and entertainment was designed to achieve. They were housed as guests of the Romans, escorted wherever they went by senators, whether in Rome itself or in exurban territory, and dined with senators at prearranged meals. Extant sources rarely mention the conditions of housing of the envoys.\footnote{That numerous embassies were sent and received by the senate in the republican period is not contentious. How the senate received them is somewhat more ambiguous. See for example Bonnefond-Coudry 1989: 291-310; Canali de Rossi 1997; Canali de Rossi 2004; Auliard 2006a.} The few examples regularly have envoys under guard, or the senate expressing disapproval that they were not. Prusias came to Rome in 167. He was allowed entrance, and was escorted everywhere by Lucius Cornelius Scipio. Prusias explicitly wanted to visit temples, the city itself, his friends, and his guest friends.\footnote{Livy 45.44.7; cf. Livy 45.13.}
It was a sign of trust that the senate allowed him to do this even under escort. Visiting his friends provided him an opportunity to discuss politics and thoughts about current events. While some may read the providing of an escort as a sign of honour, it of course had another, more important role. Escorts judge what a visitor may see, how long he may examine things for, guide his interpretation of these things, and dictate how long he may remain with his friends. This provides ample opportunity for both psychological manipulation of the guest, and the opportunity to learn his beliefs, opinions, and goals. Controlling ambassadors’ movements kept them safe, but also restricted their access to sensitive information and manipulated their opinions. The Saguntine embassy of 205 was escorted around Italy at their request. At the time, the Italian peninsula had been a battleground for a decade. What the Saguntine ambassadors desired to see is unknown. But the envoys were escorted by guides, and letters were sent to Italian towns with instructions to give the ambassadors a warm welcome.

These are the only attested letters regarding the movement of embassies in Italy. It is probable that they contained instructions as to what to show the ambassadors and what to hide in order to display Rome as a powerful state. Coudry suggests that these escorts were assigned purely for the sake of safety during a time of war. While it is true that the Second Punic War was not yet over and their safety was not guaranteed, it is idealistic to think that the senate did not guide ambassadors away from certain areas and toward certain people, presumably those with no hint of anti-Roman sentiment. The Roman lack of attention to the plight of Saguntum in the late 220s/early 210s would have bred such a sentiment among some Saguntines. The town had been a valuable

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99 Livy employs different terminology depending on the Roman attitude toward those who are being escorted. The Saguntine ambassadors (28.39.21-22), King Masinissa’s son (45.13.12), and Prusias (45.44.7) are guided or escorted as allies. Livy employs the terms duces, perducere, circumducere. In contrast, when ambassadors are removed from Rome on the breakdown of discussions, Livy has them monitored and guarded until they leave Roman territory, utilising the terms custodes and custodire. Cf. 30.23.5; 37.49.8; 42.36.7.

100 Et petentibus Saguntinis ut, quatenus tuto possent, Italiam spectatum irent, duces dati litteraeque per oppida missae ut Hispanos comiter acciperent. Tum de re publica, de exercitibus scribendis, de provinciis relatum: Livy 28.39.21-22.

101 Bonnefond-Coudry 2004: 547.

102 For the Romans’ slow reaction to Saguntine requests for aid see Polyb. 3.15.1; 3.20.6. Polybius tries to deny the Roman delay, and to deny that there was any debate in Rome as to whether to help the Saguntine people or not. His attempts to deflect
source of information about the Iberian Peninsula. Their loyalty was useful. If
the Saguntine ambassadors witnessed a disheartened Italian population, with
limited resources and widespread devastation and destruction of cities and lands,
their faith that the Roman state could and might protect them in the future might
have been challenged.

Counterintelligence attempts had to balance the threat of manipulation
and access to information with the importance of maintaining alliances. In the
anarchic Mediterranean world of the third and second centuries, for the sake of
containing first-tier states that could challenge Roman power, allied and neutral
states had to be managed just as hostile states had to be monitored. Relationships in international systems are never static, and intelligence is not
only important in times of war. Knowledge about allies, enemies, and neutral
parties was power even in peacetime. Roman actions suggest they knew this, and
their choices reveal their awareness of its importance for protecting Rome’s
position. When relationships with powerful states were stable, the presence of
foreigners in Rome was acceptable, albeit monitored to some degree. On the
outbreak of hostilities with a particular state, their nationals and their freedom of
access to potential sources of intelligence (the city’s population, for example),
were removed. Mandates that forbade or monitored foreign presences in Italy
further acknowledges the potential of foreigners to serve as agents. There is no
extant information regarding how the senate monitored the presence of foreign
people in Rome. As mentioned earlier, Aeneas Tacticus suggested that
foreigners ought to be registered. It is unknown if the Romans ever adopted a
comparable system. But there are suggestions that their presence was monitored
to the extent that they could be banished at short notice. These banishments
served as an open declaration of Roman intentions toward the external state.
After the battle of Cannae, for instance, Hannibal sent ten cavalrymen as
representatives, along with Carthalo, to offer terms. Carthalo was met and told to

responsibility away from Rome are admirable, but it is difficult to reconcile his
attitude that the senate was always going to send aid with their lengthy delay and the
general lack of attention given to Saguntine messages. Cf. App. Hisp. 11-12; Livy 21.6-
21.

Aen. Tac. 10.8-12.
leave Roman territory before nightfall. The Roman refusal to allow entry was also a method for limiting access to intelligence in areas where an escort could not always be provided.

At various points during the mid-republic, the senate declared that it would not admit any future ambassadors from Perseus, Aetolia, and Carthage. In 190, Aetolian embassies were told to leave Rome within the day and Italy within fifteen days. They had refused to enter into a deditio arrangement, pay 1000 talents, and become the socii of Rome. The senate allegedly took offence at their attempts to clarify what the terms of these arrangements would be. The Aetolians were given the same time frame to leave in 189. In this incident, they were escorted on their journey by Aulus Terentius Varro, ostensibly to provide them with protection. The provision of an escort in the second banishment, while possibly designed for their protection in part, suggests the Aetolians were not trusted to transport themselves from Italy. What they saw on their journey, what routes they took, and with whom they interacted, required active monitoring. The relationship between the Romans and Aetolians had devolved into one where the senate felt the need to restrict their access. A similar order was given to Macedonian envoys in 171. They were told not to send any further embassies as they would not be permitted in Italy. They were to leave within 15 days, and were to be kept under observation until they boarded ship. Polybius claims the citizens and envoys had 30 days in which to depart Italy, but only one

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104 Livy 22.58.9. For the banishment of other ambassadors see for example App. Hann. 31; Polyb. 31.20.3, 33.11.5.
105 Livy 37.1.6.
106 Livy 37.1.5. In 191, the Aetolians had clashed with the Romans over the socio-cultural expectations and assumptions surrounding surrenders: Livy 36.27-29; Polyb. 20.9-10. See Gruen 1982; Eckstein 1995a; Burton 2009; Eckstein 2009; above, chapter 2.
107 Livy 37.49.8. When Jugurtha sent his son to Rome after the massacre of Cirta, his son’s request to be seen within the walls was met with indignation. He was told that unless the envoys were there to surrender the kingdom of Numidia, and Jugurtha himself, the envoys had 10 days to leave Italian soil: Qui postquam Romam adventabant, senatus a Bestia consultus est placetne legatos Iugurthae recipi moenibus, eique decrevere, nisi regnum ipsumque deditum venissent, uti in diebus proxumis decem Italia decedent: Sall. Iug. 28.2.
108 Romam quod praeterea mitteret non esse; nemini enim eorum per Italiam ire licuitum. Ita dimissis P. Licinio consuli mandatum intra undecimun diem iuberet eos Italia excedere, et Sp. Carvilium mitteret qui donec navem conscendissent custodiret: Livy 42.36.7.
to leave Rome. Livy does not mention the banishment of Macedonian citizens, focusing instead on the removal of ambassadors. In Appian’s version, the mandate for all Macedonian residents to remove themselves within a day caused consternation, as there was simply not enough time to gather belongings or animals, or to travel far enough to find decent lodgings. If Appian is to be believed, the rush suggests a large contingent of Macedonian residents in Rome. If this were so, it reinforces the need for the censorship of political information. Because of the hasty departures, it seems likely that these residents were identifiable to authorities and feared reprisals if they did not obey. It would be unsurprising if foreign communities were monitored, considering the acknowledgement and awareness of spies in the city. There is, however, no extant evidence that explicitly claims as much. Foreign citizens posed the most obvious espionage threat, whether inadvertently or not. It is difficult to determine with any accuracy whether immigrants from the same ethno-cultural backgrounds tended to reside in the same neighbourhoods in mid-republican Rome, but there is a tendency in modern immigration movements to live around people who have similar native tongues and cultural values. If this were the case in antiquity, the presence of distinct ethnic groups would be relatively easy to detect and monitor. The senate’s blanket removal of Macedonian inhabitants sent a powerful message internationally that their relations with

109 Polyb. 27.6; cf. Livy 42.48.3; Diod. Sic. 30.1; App. Mac. 11.5-9.
110 App. Mac. 11.9.
111 Juvenal makes reference to the Jewish community of Rome, mocking them for their habits: Sat. 14.96-106, and the poverty of their slums: Sat. 3.10-16. Many were settled in Rome during the Late Republic, presumably those brought there as slaves and prisoners of Pompey’s war: Philo Embassy 156-158. For modern immigration studies see for instance Alba 1999; Myles and Hou 2004; Ibraimovic and Masiero 2013. Aeneas Tacticus suggests the presence of passports and visas at 10.9, something supported by Aristophanes’ Birds vv. 1212-15, and by Plautus’ Poenulus (see below, chapter 4, n. 9). There is little evidence to draw firm conclusions about the identification of foreigners in antiquity. See further Moatti 2004; Moatti 2006; Bauzon 2007; Moatti and Kaiser 2007; Depauw and Coussement 2014.
112 In 187, at the request of embassies from Latin colonies the Roman senate ordered Quintus Terentius Culleo to find migrants from these Latin colonies and force them to return to whatever place they or their fathers had been registered in or after the censorship of C. Claudius and M. Livius: Livy 39.3.4-6. Another embassy came complaining of immigration in 177: Livy 41.8.6-12. In these cases due to the census lists it would have been easier to identify these people. Macedonians and other foreigners lacking citizenship rights would have to be identified by other means.
Macedon had devolved, and that they regarded no Macedonians as trustworthy. The senate was clearly aware of expatriate communities, of the power they could wield through intelligence gathering, and the power that manipulating them could provide the Romans.\(^{113}\)

The banishment is in stark contrast with the treatment of the Saguntine embassy. The envoys’ tour under escort implies that the senate thought they had nothing to fear from Saguntum. Even if what they saw was controlled, allowing them to view Italy when still ravaged by war was a risk to security by any measure. Any information gleaned about anti-Roman sentiment or weakness could have been manipulated. There was never any indication, however, that the people of Saguntum were remotely a threat to the Romans. As suggested in the *Peri Strategikes*, the embassy from a small and comparatively unimportant town in the politically unorganised Iberian Peninsula posed little threat, especially when they harboured a well-known enmity toward Carthage. Nevertheless, they were only allowed to see what the Romans wanted them to see, to interpret what they saw in the way the Romans wanted them to interpret it. This reduced their capacity for gathering data about Italian sentiment and their situations. By thus manipulating the Saguntines, the senate limited potentially hostile parties’ access to open source intelligence. In ordering ambassadorial staff and foreign inhabitants to leave Rome, the senate imposed the same restrictions. In times of war and degraded relations with external states, these inhabitants posed a major risk to Roman plans and Roman security. Their banishment from the city of Rome, and then Italy was a reflection of the breakdown of diplomatic relations. The short time period granted to them to leave suggests an effort to protect against last minute intelligence gathering and the lobbying of senators.\(^{114}\)

The expulsion of ambassadors and foreign citizens influenced the perception of Rome in the international arena. These actions were designed to

\(^{113}\) Their removal is mirrored in the banishment of camp followers and traders in military contexts.

\(^{114}\) As will be discussed, the Aetolians were told to never send embassies to Rome again without the support of a Roman governor and the accompaniment of a Roman legate in 189: Livy 37.49.8, and a similar order was imposed on Macedonian ambassadors after the declaration of the Third Macedonian War: Livy 42.36.7. Carthage was forbidden from sending embassies to Rome after the official declaration of the Third Punic War. The decree led to lamentation and riots: App. *Pun.* 83-92.
send messages to the wider international system, which shows a Roman awareness of how information travelled and how it was interpreted. By publicly banishing or rewarding the ambassadors, the Romans revealed their plans and position to the entire system. The different ways in which the senate banished embassies underline the conscious manipulation of these channels. A general picture of disagreement and a breakdown in relations can be formed through the removal of ambassadors. The length of time given to them to depart, while not necessarily actively monitored, reveals the depths of Roman antipathy. The faster they were expected to leave, removing their ability to travel at leisure, or with regular rest stops, or with their property, indicates how much the senate wished to cease all friendly relations with a particular state or people. Ambassadors certainly could not be harmed, but as representatives of now hostile states, they could be inconvenienced to a lesser or greater degree. To publicly announce such a policy, even when it was not strictly necessary from a national security perspective, presented Rome as being in the position of power; it attempted to construct the image that the Roman state had nothing to fear from the external party. As Coudry argues, the treatment of ambassadors and foreigners in Rome was a public declaration of how the senate was feeling toward whatever state had sent the embassy. The choice of whom to admit and whom to block based on the alleged purpose of a visit and the perceived threat levels posed by the represented state leaves room for manipulation and deceit. It is a manifestation of the perception of power. While not always a form of counterintelligence deception, the perception and the projection of a powerful image are themselves a form of power. If external states believe you to be powerful, then you will be treated as if you are.\[116\]

**Political Deception**

The counterintelligence strategies discussed above are for the most part based in the simplest method, denial. They are attempts to protect the Roman

\[115\] Bonnefond-Coudry 2004.  
\[116\] For modern studies regarding the perception of power see for instance Bacharach and Lawler 1976; Rouhana and Fiske 1995.
state by blocking access to information. These might be read as something other than counterintelligence.¹¹⁷ The efforts to censor information and to monitor the presence of foreign entities in a city have the consequence of protecting information. It is difficult to determine if it was a conscious policy of the senate or not. Taking only information denial to representatives of other states into account, Roman political counterintelligence could be nothing more than an unintended consequence of security seeking, as is natural of state actors in anarchic systems. The next level of counterintelligence is dissimulation and deception. It moves beyond simple information denial and consciously manipulates the perceptions of spies and agents to suit one’s purposes. Evidence of Roman political deception, as will be discussed in this section, is confirmation of a knowledge and active pursuit of counterintelligence. Successful deceptions are subtle; they have to remain as close to the truth and predictable behaviour as possible to seem viable.¹¹⁸ Success also relies on an understanding of how disinformation might be interpreted. Social context colours the interpretation the world; it is very difficult to manipulate and change the cultural assumptions of others. To reiterate: cognitive heuristics ideally make decision making easier,¹¹⁹ but in an intelligence setting they lend themselves to faulty analysis and reasoning. There is a tendency to see what one wants and expects to see, and to read too much from a little information. For disinformation to be successful, it has to consider the biases and tendencies of those one wishes to manipulate. Deceptions are challenging to perform in modern society due to the prevalence of modern technology, which reduces plausible deniability and increases the chance of exposure. In Roman society, they were challenging due to the technological inability to be flexible, and the ancient tendency toward mirror-imaging cognitive bias. The political counterintelligence deceptions of the mid-republic are basic deceptions that play on natural human curiosity and rely on psychological manipulation.

When dealing with internationally important events the senate chose to publicise or withhold information in order to manipulate intelligence gatherers.

¹¹⁷ For instance, censorship may be regarded as domestic control and policy, and the treatment of embassies, merely diplomatic procedure, safekeeping, and ritual.
¹¹⁹ Marsh, Todd, and Gigerenzer 2004, and above, chapter 2.
Both Livy and Polybius refer to the public announcement of plans when the senate believed these to be appropriate, the refusal to announce plans when senators thought it to be inappropriate, as well as the dissemination of official accounts of events in order to dispel rumours. The decision to choose what and when to announce information and when to keep it secret suggests an understanding of the ramifications and effects of the release of information, and the impact on those who would hear about it. In 204, the decision to declare Africa a provincia was not announced, despite senatorial discussion over attempting to shift the war with Hannibal out of Italy. According to Livy, this was done for the explicit purpose of ensuring that any potential Carthaginian spies could not discover Roman plans before they were ready.\footnote{Quamquam nondum aperte Africa provincia decreta erat, occultantibus id, credo, patribus, ne praesciscerent Carthaginieneses, tamen in eam spem erecta civitas erat in Africa eo anno bellatum iri finemque bello Punico adesse: Livy 29.14.1.} The same is true of the raising of an army for the Third Punic War. In order, rather unconvincingly, to counter suspicion that the Romans were preparing for war,\footnote{App. Pun. 74.} the senate declared they were raising an army to prepare for contingencies. Refusing to publicise intentions makes it difficult for foreign states to predict what is happening. Their agents cannot confirm or deny their suspicions, lengthening the period of time the other state has to prepare for and decide upon action.

The same benefit could be gained by publicising responses to foreign embassies, in contrast to the usual senatorial practice, which was to deliver the response \textit{in cura} and send the ambassadors on their way without any public pronouncements on the matter being made.\footnote{For a discussion about the standard practice of diplomatic reports and information conveyance see Ferrary 2009.} For instance, the Roman response to envoys from the Achaean League asking for Roman aid against Messene simply ignored the Achaean request for military support and a ban on aid from Italy reaching Messene, but announced that the League should not be surprised if it was a matter of complete indifference to them if any of the other states of the League revolted from Achaean rule.\footnote{Polyb. 23.9.14. See further below, chapter 5, pp. 222-23.} The response given to the Achaean ambassadors implied that the senate did not care about the continued existence of the Achaean league. By publicly pronouncing their response to the Achaecans,
the senators knew the information would spread throughout the Mediterranean world. The effect would be to legitimise the anti-Achaean factions and give power to pro-Roman groups. This reveals the senate’s depth of understanding about the power of manipulation via diplomatic pronouncements. More importantly, the declaration ensured that trouble would continue to preoccupy the league, thus perhaps stemming the flow of embassies to Rome. The true intention of the Romans, however, is not so clear. The choice to temporarily detain the envoys and await the response to the Messenian revolt suggests that their position was not predetermined and absolute. It implies that the senate was waiting on events instead of encouraging further embassies by engaging diplomatically in trying to resolve the conflict, or assist one side or the other. The announcement that they would not interfere gave them time to determine who should receive future support.

A similar concealment of information, but with enough publicity to encourage curiosity, occurred prior to the Third Macedonian War. Eumenes came to the senate and provided intelligence about what Perseus was planning. The senate refused to issue any kind of proclamation about what went on in the curia. All anyone knew was that Eumenes was in Rome and had met with the senate in a closed-door session. It was only when the war was over that any knowledge of Eumenes’ statements, and the senate’s subsequent reply, were leaked. According to Appian, the senate had decided that war with Perseus was necessary after gaining intelligence about the state of affairs in Macedonia, but used Eumenes’ statements as justification. This decision was kept secret. Eumenes’ presence was not. The king’s appearance in Rome was leaked to various Greek and Asian states, most of whom allegedly sent envoys. According to Livy these envoys were sent with a variety of justifications for their presence. They were spies. They knew that Eumenes’ presence meant something, but did not have enough access to information determine what it was. They could

124 Briscoe 1964: 66-7. Briscoe has the senate actively pursuing a policy of ambiguity and deception. This perhaps takes senatorial intent to deceive too far. The action reflects indecision about whom to support. Gruen 1984: 481-96.
125 Eumenes’ visit: Livy 42.11-14; App. Mac. 11.1-3; cf. Val. Max. 2.2.1b; Diod. 29.34.1; Plut. Cat. Mai. 8.12-13. Secrecy and leak: Livy 42.14.1.
126 App. Mac. 11.3.
127 Livy 42.14.5.
not act until they knew the state of affairs between Pergamum and Rome. This gave the Romans power. In order to determine future action, other, especially weaker states, had to discover what was likely to happen. If the senate were attempting to maintain secrecy, they should have announced something innocuous, though plausible, to explain Eumenes’ presence. To declare no information was itself suspicious – and tantalising to Rome’s allies, particularly Eumenes’ arch-rivals, the Rhodians, who assumed Eumenes’ audience had been directed at them, and viciously attacked the Pergamene king, declaring him more oppressive to Asia than Antiochus the Great had ever been.\textsuperscript{128} The Romans’ action was consciously manipulative, and a delaying tactic. By sowing suspicion, the Romans inspired curiosity and questioning behaviour, and made it necessary that other states come forward and perhaps offer information, while trying to discern what Eumenes had said, and what the Romans intended to do. They had no way to confirm this from Roman sources. Yet Roman attitudes were what they sought intelligence about. The manipulation bought time for the senate to investigate Eumenes’ claims.\textsuperscript{129} It delayed the decision making of other peoples. Both this example of withholding information and the earlier example of publicising it were attempts to control other states’ access to information and their reactions until the Romans were ready for them to know their intentions.

**Conclusion**

Counterintelligence activity is implicit evidence for the presence of foreign intelligence agents in Rome, the senate’s awareness of them and their activities, and the inevitability that news about Roman political actions would find its way throughout the Mediterranean. The choice by the senate to publicly announce certain plans and to conceal others is an acknowledgement of the presence of informers in their midst. There is no point in deliberating whether to conceal or disseminate information if there is no known risk of it falling into the wrong hands. This suggests that the mid-republican senate was well aware of how

\textsuperscript{128} Livy 42.14.6-8.
\textsuperscript{129} The senate’s investigative actions prior to the Third Macedonian War will be examined as a case study in chapter 5.3.
intelligence could be transmitted from its borders, and took deliberate steps to control it in order to acquire and maintain influence and control in the international sphere. 130 Roman counterintelligence - the protection and manipulation of information, and of the agents trying to access it - does not support the standard scholarly view the Romans as bumbling naïfs who knew nothing of underhand action, deceitful thinking, or the power of information. The Romans appeared to be very wary of information falling into the wrong hands. The mid-republican state may have lacked an intelligence service, but it does not follow that republican senators did not understand the importance of intelligence in protecting national security. Roman actions were much the same as political counterintelligence actions in the modern world. The primary defensive measure is to restrict public access to information and provide only as much as is necessary, acknowledging that those who harbour loyalties to other states and peoples, and that their own public cannot be trusted with full information - or sometimes any information at all until a crisis had passed.

Mid-republican counterintelligence was as successful at mitigating the chance of information leaks as any counterintelligence system can be. Attempts focussed on denying information rather than on stopping the introduction of hostile agents as long-term spies, although these are poorly attested in ancient sources. Regardless, their potential and probable presence was acknowledged and accounted for. By acknowledging their existence, the state removed some of their power. The primary focus on denying information served a two-fold purpose. It ensured that the Romans did not require a service or official body of staff to patrol the city and monitor foreign groups and activities. Spies were present in Rome, and their access to important political information had to be restricted. Information denial did not stop open source intelligence from leaving Rome through agents. To control it completely would require the refusal to admit traders, travellers, and allies. In part, the pattern of alliances and their maintenance ensured that access to open source intelligence was necessary. By allowing allied states and traders entrance to the city, but controlling what they saw and what information they could access, the Romans ensured that the

130 For other examples of senatorial secrecy see App. Pun. 69; Gell. 1.23; Plut. Mor. 507b-f.
information that was inevitably going to travel abroad was such that did as little harm as possible to their interests, and perhaps even to further them. The same is true of allowing spies to continue to reside in the city even after they were identified. By controlling the flow of information, the Romans ensured that the intelligence that flowed back to other lands was manipulated. As in military counterintelligence, in political counterintelligence disinformation and dissimulation are extremely powerful. People act on their perceptions of reality. If the senate could control the perception of others, they could leverage this to their advantage in the international arena.

No counterintelligence system is without failure; perfectly successful counterintelligence is an unachievable goal. To believe that counterintelligence always ought to be successful is based on numerous assumptions and fallacies. It relies on what one party perceives to be the rational reaction of another. More importantly, it relies on the erroneous belief in linear causation, that is, that A will always result in B. Such causation can only exist in a vacuum with tightly controlled variables. The reality of intelligence plans cannot take into account and control all such variables. The acknowledgement that plans often fail despite all the best efforts by agents and states is well-known in modern counterintelligence strategy. It was well-known in antiquity as well. Polybius recognised this likelihood. He claimed that while many plans seem plausible in theory, they fail to live up to initial expectations, like false coins exposed to fire. It is undeniable that there were some monumental failures of Roman counterintelligence during the mid-republic. But the recognition of the potential failures of deceptions highlights the awareness of how deception and counterintelligence were supposed to work.

131 There is no indication that the senate identified and allowed the presence of spies in the city so much as acknowledged their inevitable presence.

132 ὃτι πολλὰ τῶν ἐπινοημάτων κατὰ μὲν τὸν λόγον φαίνεται πιθανὰ καὶ δύνατα, παραγενόμενα δ᾽ εἰς τὴν χρείαν, καθάπερ τὰ κίβδηλα τῶν νομισμάτων εἰς τὸ πῦρ, οὐκέτι ποιεῖ τάκτων ὁταίς πρώταις ἐπινοίας: Polyb. 29.17.2; cf. Polyb. 9.9.1-10; 11.2.4-7; 15.1.12.

133 This is especially true in a military context. See for instance the failure to contain Hamilcar the Rhodian. Roman forces were aware of his presence and yet he succeeded in gaining information and evading patrols: Polyb. 1.46.4. As was seen earlier (above, 59-61), Roman patrols caught Macedonian envoys en route to Hannibal in 215. These men lied to Roman forces and were escorted on their way: Livy 23.33.
What is telling about Roman methods is that there was no one blanket policy applied either to diplomatic procedures or to the release of information. Rather, information was recognised as powerful. Its role in formulating decisions about future actions and relationships with the Roman state was recognised. Decisions were made according to circumstances, depending on the constructed conception of events, a pattern that existed in active Roman political intelligence as well. Hence, the senate allowed entrance into the city to some, and not to others. And they chose to reveal information publicly on occasion or hide it as it was deemed necessary in an attempt to protect the influence and control they exercised abroad, and to leverage their power in the international system. The practices put in place to control intelligence leaving Rome contradicts the image of a naïve Roman underappreciation of its power. Roman methods of political counterintelligence suggest a conscious awareness of the potential reactions to information and the manner in which this information would be disseminated. Without this knowledge, the senate’s deliberation over whether to announce certain diplomatic events and restrict knowledge of others is difficult to explain. As the following chapters will show, the senate’s appreciation and understanding of political intelligence are indicated by its active efforts to acquire it prior to decision-making.
The counterintelligence practices, seen in the previous chapter, indicate a Roman appreciation of the importance and utility of intelligence, but reveal little about the Romans’ active pursuit of intelligence for their own benefit. Active intelligence measures involve various degrees of complexity, the simplest and most common of which is attaining foreknowledge. A fundamental activity of any nation or people that wishes to involve itself in international politics is to build an understanding of those states with which they are to interact. It is unassuming and relatively uninspired intelligence, but it is easy to obtain. Such intelligence is openly sourced. The conceptions built about neighbours, allies, and foes from ethnographic and geographic data are valuable assets prior to the commencement of military or international political activities. While not a prerequisite for the acquisition of further intelligence or the initiation of military action, understanding other states’ cultural and geographic idiosyncrasies can be predictive and increase the chances of strategic success, diplomatically or militarily.¹ There is no guarantee that success will follow, but building a cultural picture of another state facilitates making informed decisions and predicting reactions.²

Foreknowledge builds a conception, accurate or not, of the cultural values and practices of those who live in different ideological worlds and environments. It is pre-emptive intelligence about language, culture, topography, and geography that is not limited as time-bound or circumstance-specific.³ Foreknowledge

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¹ For the importance of cultural intelligence in modern intelligence and warfare see Delp 2008; Spencer 2010a; Spencer 2010b. Bathurst highlights the necessity of understanding culture to comprehend and predict the strategic actions of an enemy. He argues that language and culture in intelligence agencies and organisations define what intelligence is accepted as real and what is dismissed. Bathurst 1993.

² It could be argued that Roman divination and religious practices served as a form of foreknowledge. The use of religion in intelligence cannot be discussed here. For an introduction to the idea, see Sheldon 2005: 11-26.

³ According to Austin and Rankov, strategic intelligence, be it military or diplomatic, seeks information about potential and actual actions of one particular army or government before interaction takes place. Tactical intelligence is largely a military affair and involves immediate investigations about how to deal with one particular army or, for example, how to besiege a town in a particular moment and in a given circumstance. Austin and Rankov 1995: 6-7.
provides information about another state’s military tendencies and geographical phenomena that are unlikely to change drastically over time. Some parts of the Mediterranean world were inaccessible to the Romans prior to their exploration and conquest. But it is this very mysteriousness that inspires research. During World War II, national character research came to be highly valued and relevant to intelligence agencies. The general inaccessibility of other nations meant that research was needed to investigate different cultural mores in order to predict actions and reactions. Character research aims to predict the type of people a given society will produce, based on its culture and social structure. Then it aims to demonstrate how national character affects the culture and social structures that produced it. The data used to construct these images is taken from formal and informal interviews, a knowledge of history, arts, and religion, and from personal observation.

Ancient methods may not have been as highly developed or sophisticated as their modern counterparts, but studies of foreign societies, their cultures, practices, and social structures certainly took place and were accessible to mid-republican Romans. The idea of gaining foreknowledge of a potential enemy and his territory had been advocated since the sixth century in Sun Tzu’s *Art of War.* There are no such explicit statements in a Roman source. While there is little indication of a sustained effort to learn about other cultures and areas to

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4 Bruce 2008: 171-172. Foreknowledge is used by multinational corporations and military officials to increase the chances of success in culturally and geographically diverse areas, an acknowledgement that to achieve desired ends often requires adapting plans and procedures to fit individual circumstances.

5 In the 21st century, national character research is losing popularity. It constructs essentialising archetypes that can lead to faulty reasoning. For examples of character research, see Benedict 1946; Patai 1973.

6 Sun Tzu claimed that a lack of knowledge could be disastrous. ‘One ignorant of the plans of neighbouring states cannot prepare alliances in good time; if ignorant of the conditions of mountains, forests, dangerous defiles, swamps and marshes he cannot conduct the march of an army; if he fails to make use of native guides he cannot gain the advantages of the ground. A general ignorant of even one of these three matters is unfit to command the armies of a hegemonic king’: XI.51 (Translated by Griffith 2005). Knowing the enemy and yourself would lead to success; knowing only yourself (including your weaknesses and strengths) gives an equal chance of victory or loss; knowing neither results in peril: III.31-33. Sun Tzu claims that to defeat enemies one needs ‘foreknowledge’. Foreknowledge cannot be gained through gods, spirits, or analogies to past events, or calculations. It must be obtained from people who understand and know the enemy: XIII.3-6. Sun Tzu and McNeilly 2001: 62.
consciously reduce ignorance in order to make better future decisions, there are indications that some Romans sought information about the outside world when chance or opportunity presented, and that they considered such curiosity to have pragmatic applications. More importantly, there was an understanding and acknowledgement of the usefulness of such knowledge, and scorn for those who ignored it.

Austin and Rankov suggest that Roman ignorance of the world around them was characteristic of the policy makers of the republic. This chapter, and those following, challenge this idea. Although formal state archives containing information on other states' internal culture and geography, 'cultural dossiers,' as it were, did not exist during the republic, such information was readily accessible, either in literary texts or from stereotyped conceptions of others, deeply ingrained in Roman consciousness and passed down the generations. Foreknowledge did not need to be amassed by an intelligence service, academics, or government officials in order to inform political and military decision-making. Information, whatever its origin, whether consciously or subconsciously collated for another purpose, could all be transformed into intelligence. Some cultural information was explicitly gathered for political and military purposes. Most of it simply entered the Roman consciousness through day-to-day interaction; some was gained through trade, some via inherited knowledge, circulated throughout the Mediterranean, and some through military expeditions and conquest.

The practical application of foreknowledge to active intelligence is more problematic. It was not that there was a lack of understanding or accessibility of foreknowledge. The Romans had a preconceived knowledge base — foreknowledge — of geographic spaces and peoples. As discussed in chapter 2, Roman socio-cultural constraints and pre-modern technological limitations adversely affected their ability to utilise acquired intelligence in circumstances demanding it. Aristocratic competition and a lack of uniform training of officials ensured that some individuals were more appreciative and inclined to use

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7 Austin and Rankov 1995: 108. They are more sympathetic to Roman foreknowledge during the early imperial period and discuss the role of mapping and geographic knowledge providing emperors with basic knowledge. See Austin and Rankov 1995: 112-120.
intelligence than others. And the subjectivity of individual analysis and a tendency toward stereotyping negatively affected the interpretation of information, and thus the quality of intelligence, particularly when it came to foreknowledge. Roman conceptions of the other and the world were built on incomplete knowledge and influenced by a myriad of factors. As in the modern world, the self’s construction of the other will never truly reflect reality. In any case, the concern here is not so much with the Roman construction of the other or the consequences of it — that is, the veracity of foreknowledge and the outcomes of its use; rather, it is more important for investigations of intelligence in the mid-republic to examine the Romans’ attempted use of available information. This chapter seeks to gather the extant evidence for the Romans’ recognition of foreknowledge’s power and use of it through an examination of the availability, accessibility, and above all Roman interest in ethnographic, geographic, and cultural intelligence about foreign states and peoples in the Mediterranean system, and indications of its conscious or subconscious application by Rome in its international interactions.

**Sources of Foreknowledge**

There are no specific Greek or Latin terms relating to foreknowledge in the intelligence sense or specialised accounts of it. Despite this, it was accessible and constantly improving in Rome. It could be actively sought out but more commonly basic conceptions were picked up at random through traders and inherited from other cultures. As with other forms of knowledge, foreknowledge filtered both across and down. It was shared, consciously or not, with contemporaries and was inherited by those that followed. Rome rose to power

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8 The superiority of ethnographic information amassed by one’s own people is explicitly acknowledged in Pliny. See Plin. *HN*. 6.141.

9 The interconnectivity of the Mediterranean world in this period, the period of what Polybius called the *symplokē*, or the ‘intertwining’ or ‘weaving together’ of world affairs (e.g. 1.3.4), encouraged the movement of such information. In the *Poenulus* Plautus has the Carthaginian Hanno travel the Mediterranean in search of his daughter. He is equipped with documents to prove his identity. For his Roman audience to comprehend the play, regardless of the extent to which it was based on a Greek original, long-distance travel and proofs of identity cannot have been uncommon. Currently, the study of globalisation in the Roman world is a growth area. See Pitts and Versluys 2014.
in a Mediterranean international system as a successor to the numerous hegemonic powers and empires that had risen and fallen before. Not all cultural knowledge established under those earlier conditions survived, and both additions to and deletions from the knowledge base occurred over time. Thus, the Romans did not enter the international arena free of preconceptions about others. They contributed to this pool of knowledge through military expeditions and ethnographic explorations that were the inevitable by-product of their ever-expanding international horizons.

Exploration for the sake of exploration was rare in antiquity, which was understandable due to the dangers, real and imagined, inherent in travelling into the unknown. But it was undertaken by various Mediterranean peoples searching for land, resources, and trade routes. There is a long literary tradition of such journeys in antiquity. The earliest accounts are mythical, but often include veristic details of land and sea travels, and these eventually became part of the ethnographic tradition. These details reflect the cultural and geographic conceptions of those who compiled and eventually recorded the epic traditions. Homer’s catalogue of ships, for instance, includes topographical information about various places. These statements suggest an understanding of the

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10 By inheriting cultural intelligence there was a chance that the Romans could inherit inaccurate cultural stereotypes as well. Once such things are internalised, it becomes difficult to change them; see chapter 2 on cultural biases in interpretation and decision-making.

11 There is no semantic equivalent in Latin or Greek for the English term exploration, in the sense of investigating unknown places and expanding knowledge of the world, nor was it something the Romans seemed particularly interested in. The Latin term *explorare* refers to investigation in a military context: spies or scouts sent out to scope possible campsites, or to find out what the enemy was up to. Turnus, for example, sent *exploratores* to spy on Aeneas. *Aeneas, ut fama fidem missique reportant exploratores, equitum levia improbus arma praemisit, quaerent campos; ipse ardua montis per deserta iugo superans adventat ad urbem:* Vir. *Aen.* 11.511-14. Its restricted meaning in terms of intelligence gathering is indicated by the title of Austin and Rankov’s 1995 book. In the Greek context, exploration is dominated by the language of sailing; thus (although it is a translation of a Punic text), the *periplus* of Hanno describes him as sailing – παλιν (Hanno, *Peripl.* 1), and Herodotus records Kolaios of Samos as being ‘driven off course’ - ἀπηνείχθη (4.152) – to Platea, an island off the coast of Cyrene.

12 For more detailed accounts of early explorations see Romm 1992; Ellis and Kidner 2004; Roller 2006; Dueck and Brodersen 2012.


physical, demographic, and political layout of Achaea. Beyond mythic tales, the earliest records of journeys come from Egyptian, and Phoenician and Persian explorers, who ventured into the unknown for the purposes of trade and military exploration to increase and maintain their dominance in the late Bronze Age and Archaic Period, respectively. Many of these have come down to us in the work of Herodotus, where they joined the common pool of Greek geographical and ethnographical knowledge. Some discoveries must have occurred accidentally while traders searched for resources or better routes to access them, such as would avoid blockades or port duties on the customary routes, for example. In a competitive economic and political environment, attempting to maintain a degree of secrecy about these discoveries was only natural.

### Merchants

Exploration may have opened up new lands, but it was trade that built intelligence about people, culture, and resources. It was one of the major pathways for information about distant lands and peoples to enter the general consciousness of the people in the merchants’ home states. The ability of traders, as neutral non-combatants and nomads, to gain pertinent information and access sensitive news in times of peace and war was unparalleled. Their ubiquity, as a result, is manifest in the trade networks that criss-crossed the

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15 Dueck and Brodersen 2012: 21.

16 For instance, he records the explorations ordered in the seventh century by Necho II of Egypt, who proved that Africa was surrounded by water. The Phoenician sailors he sponsored were to circumnavigate Libya, re-enter the Mediterranean through the Straits of Gibraltar, and return to Egypt: Hdt. 4.42.

17 Massilia was particularly good at maintaining secrecy, which gave them access to and control over economic resources. Strabo claims that Massilia, along with Rhodes and Cyzicus, undertook efforts to protect sensitive information to a greater extent than other cities. See 14.2.5. In Massilia’s case, rumours of their explorations existed but actual proof did not. Polybius, when visiting Massilia, could find no information about the explorer Pytheas, or specifics about his journeys north: Polyb. 34.6-10. Nor could Poseidonius find reference to another Massilian explorer, Euthymenes: Strab. 3.4.13; 4.1.7. While records of these journeys may have passed into obscurity, it is equally plausible that they were hidden from investigators known to be friendly with Rome. Massilia was a crucial political ally during the mid-republic, but as Carthage was defeated and the Iberian Peninsula brought under relative control, its importance for Rome waned. Hoarding knowledge about the West was perhaps an attempt to maintain some semblance of its former importance.

Mediterranean long before Rome attained international power.\(^{19}\) When Roman power began expanding, foreign traders were already operating well beyond the reach of Roman power and in areas of strategic importance and interest to Rome. By the mid-third century, Italian traders began operating in the Hellenic East, and slowly spread into Gaul and Spain.\(^{20}\)

The ubiquity of traders and their non-combatant status meant they could provide topographical, cultural, military, and political information prior to and during wars. Their very ubiquity, however, means they are rarely mentioned in historical sources except when they are victims of violence in such contexts. For example, Roman traders were accused of being spies while buying grain from southern Italy in the fifth century.\(^{21}\) The Romans went to war against the Illyrian Ardiaei and their queen, Teuta, in 229 because of the Illyrians' piratical harassment of Italian traders.\(^{22}\) Scipio Africanus famously drove out all the merchants, prostitutes, and other camp followers when he took command of his army in the Iberian Peninsula.\(^{23}\) Traders were also questioned, restricted, and sometimes banished during times of conflict or rising tension because of their considerably powerful ability to procure supplies, coupled with their ability to operate outside the framework of military, political, and diplomatic struggles. Both Appian and Polybius claim that prior to the outbreak of the Second Punic War traders from Italy were captured by the Carthaginians, brought into Carthage, and then released through Roman diplomacy. These traders continued to trade with Carthage with Roman acquiescence.\(^{24}\) While there was no formal state of war between Rome and Carthage at this time, the political situation in the western Mediterranean was tense. Carthage was facing a rebellion by its unpaid mercenaries; there were appeals to Rome to occupy Sardinia.

\(^{19}\) Greeks exchanged Silphium juice mixed with bran for Punic wine along the Syrtic coast: Strab. 17.3.20. Archaeological discoveries continually reinforce the exchange between the Hellenic world and Etruria from the sixth century. Remains from Euesperides in Cyrenaica reveal extensive trade between Magna Graecia and Punic territories.


\(^{21}\) Dion. Hal. 7.2; cf. Livy 2.34.

\(^{22}\) Polyb. 2.8.2. See also Cic. *Man.* 5.11; Cic. 2 *Verr.* 5.58.149.

\(^{23}\) App. *Hisp.* 85. For more on the identity of camp followers see Vishnia 2002.

\(^{24}\) Polyb. 1.83.7-10; App. *Pun.* 5.
Polybius claims these Italian traders were supplying the mercenaries. Through providing supplies, the traders would have knowledge of what the Carthaginians lacked - from which the Romans could extrapolate such things as Carthaginian troop numbers and morale. If it were shared with the appropriate people, this information could be advantageous to Rome.

From trade networks came not just the trade in physical goods but the trade in information, and the growth of cultural understanding. The information merchants could provide ranged from the banal and stereotypical to the specific and crucial. At the former end of the scale was the cultural knowledge generated by the influx of foreign goods or the export of locally produced goods. What was sold and what was purchased generated knowledge about trading partners. The trade of copious amounts of wine into Gaul for instance, as evidenced in the archaeological record by Dressel 1 amphorae, influenced the later ethnographic trope that the Celts were drunkards. Diodorus Siculus claims that the Celts were addicted to wine, and drank it without reason or moderation. To take an example from the other end of the scale, Mithridates learnt of Sertorius’ actions in Spain through sailors and pirates, who were disseminating information about his acts as if they were foreign wares. Here the value of information, transformed into intelligence via foreknowledge, is made explicit by being compared to exotic trade goods. Access to cultural information was enhanced by the eventual existence of expatriate communities of merchants and other groups. Members of these communities had the ability to gain insider information about the area in which they lived and to transport it, along with their trade goods, back to their homelands. Whether any information that was disseminated was

25 ... τῶν Καρχηδονίων τοὺς πλέοντας ἐξ Ἰταλίας εἰς Λιβύην καὶ χορηγοῦντας τοῖς πολεμίοις καταγόντων ὡς αὐτούς, καὶ σχεδὸν ἄθροισθέντων τούτων...: Polyb. 1.83.7.
26 Some of these examples, incidentally, indicate that the Romans knew traders were a source of information from early on in the Republic. Austin and Rankov 1995: 94 briefly suggest traders were used as source of information with examples only from the late republic.
27 Diod. 5.26-28.
28 μέγα δὲ ἦρα τὸ Σερτορίου κλέος ἐφοίτα πανταχόσε καὶ τῶν περὶ αὐτοῦ λόγων ὀστείρ Φορτίων ἕννεκών οἱ πλέοντες ἀπὸ τῆς ἔσπερας ἀναπέληκεσαν τὸν Πόντον: Plut. Sert. 23.1.
accurate is largely irrelevant. Any information would generate cultural knowledge of others back home.\textsuperscript{29}

Unfortunately, clear evidence for the Romans actively trying to gather intelligence from traders of a political, cultural, or geographical nature for its own sake is rather thin on the ground. The evidence seems to indicate that such information was usually sought in the context of military campaigns, but this could be distorted by the historians’ selection bias. During the Third Macedonian War, just before the Battle of Pydna in 168, Aemilius Paullus summoned two Perrhaebian merchants, Coenus and Menophilus, and asked them about the passes into their native territory. They told the consul that Perseus had garrisoned the Petra pass at Petra and Pythium. Acting on this intelligence, Paullus decided to lure the Macedonians out of the pass by executing a flanking movement around Olympus (for which Coenus and Menophilus were to act as guides), which was one of the strategic keys to success in the battle that followed.\textsuperscript{30} A century later, Caesar questioned traders in an attempt to source information about the largely unknown land of Britain. They were singularly unhelpful: they knew nothing about the interior or ports suitable for large warships on the coast, and they knew nothing about the inhabitants of the interior, their customs, their style of warfare, or their institutions.\textsuperscript{31} Over a century after this, according to Tacitus, Agricola used traders’ knowledge, as well as a deserter’s, to learn about Ireland prior to determining whether an invasion would be profitable.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{29} Expatriate communities can be difficult to identify, but their presence is suggested in areas with extensive trading links. The Carthaginians set up a trading community in Syracuse prior to 406, which was plundered by the Syracusans on the outbreak of Carthage’s war with the tyrant Dionysius: Diod. 14.46. There was a community of Italiotes or Romans in Cirta during Jugurtha’s war with Adherbal: Sall. Iug. 26, and another in Utica, with whom Marius discussed the war: Sall. Iug. 64. There is also some evidence of a community of Italian metal traders in Magdalensburg in Austria. See Woolf 2011: 18; Fentress 2013: 157-60. And, of course, 80,000 Romans and Italians were available for those responding positively to Mithridates’ call to slaughter them in Asia in 88: Val. Max. 9.2.4 ext. 3.

\textsuperscript{30} Livy 44.35.6-8.

\textsuperscript{31} Caes. BGall. 4.20.

\textsuperscript{32} Tac. Agr. 24.
The evidence for Romans actively gathering intelligence using merchants is thus limited. There are only three clear examples, one of those from the mid-republic, while some described earlier (fifth century Romans in southern Italy, Italians trading with Carthage) show counterintelligence manoeuvres designed to shut down foreknowledge. Scipio’s expulsion of merchants, along with other camp-followers when he entered the Iberian peninsula, also mentioned earlier, indicates a Roman awareness of the importance of foreknowledge—and the need to defend against it, that is, to deploy counterintelligence. It is therefore plausible to suggest that Romans participated in the same information gathering techniques as they defended against. The reason the positive evidence for this is so slim is that the sources’ focus, when it deals with intelligence at all, tends to be on strategic intelligence provision rather than foreknowledge, which, as said at the outset, is unassuming and relatively uninspired than active intelligence gathering.

If Rome recognised the value of foreknowledge and the need to deploy counterintelligence against it during times of crisis and conflict, rival states must have as well. Unfortunately, once again, there is no clear evidence from the mid-republic of counterintelligence efforts against Roman agents specifically. One significant example comes from the later republic. Before the outbreak of his war with Rome, Mithridates VI, king of Pontus, allegedly undertook intelligence activity that indicates his understanding that the Romans (and everyone else in the international system) made use of expatriates and merchants as sources of foreknowledge, and that he needed to seize control of these assets. The Pontic king undertook a covert mission into Asia where he familiarised himself with all the cities and the geography of the area. When relations with Rome

33 Above chapter 3.
34 Measures taken by Carthage and Rome in regard to Italian traders, discussed earlier, were pre-emptive measures.
35 For the use of intelligence in general by Mithridates and the Romans see Ñaco del Hoyo 2014.
36 Just. 37.3.4-5. For an overview of arguments about Mithridates’ actions here see Ñaco del Hoyo 2014: 405-7. Ñaco del Hoyo highlights Mithridates’ presence in the investigative mission, which was technically unnecessary, and perhaps unwise considering his lack of political control beyond Pontus. Autopsy is, however, preferred by military commanders in Roman sources and is the best manner in which to remove various secondary biases in the absence of technological observation and
deteriorated, Mithridates ordered the massacre of Roman and Italian citizens throughout Anatolia in 88. Mithridates had foreknowledge about the dire circumstances of the Social and Civil Wars in Italy through a delegation of Italian insurgents, and took advantage of this in terms of the timing of his massacre, so he must have been aware of the potential of Italians resident in Asia to inform the Romans of the massacre. Memnon states explicitly that Mithridates issued his order because he determined Roman citizens were an ‘obstacle’ to his plans. He does not explicitly say that the threat was that intelligence might leak back to Rome about his activities. But the genocide of Italians was as good a way as any to remove any potential for them to inform the senate. The presence of Romans and Italians in Asia could have led to the senate accessing strategic, cultural, and topographical information. The conscious choice to remove them when vital information regarding Mithridates’ political ambitions and plans was available is significant. It indicates a recognition that they were a potential threat to his plans, and, in general terms, highlights the potential power of expatriates and foreign merchants to provide crucial intelligence against a foreign state.

In light of the technological and socio-cultural problems discussed in chapter 2, the semi-permanent presence of traders and expatriates was of great importance.

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37 App. Mith. 22-24; cf. Val. Max. 9.2.4.3 (the number); Plut. Sul. 24.4 (who puts the number at 150,000). Scholarly debate about the motivations behind this atrocity continues. A bibliography of recent debates is provided in Ñaco del Hoyo 2014: n. 53.

38 Poseidonius reports that Mithridates received a delegation from Italian insurgents. See Poseidon. FGrH 36 J = Ath. 5.212f-213d.

39 μετὰ δὲ ταύτα μαθὼν Μιθριδάτης ὡς οἱ κατὰ τὰς πόλεις σποράδες Ὑἱομαίοι τῶν παρ’ αὐτοῦ διανοομένων ἐμποδὸν ἵστανται, γράφει πρὸς πάντας ὑπὸ μίαν ἡμέραν τοὺς παρ’ αὐτών Ὑἱομαίοις φονεύειν: FGrH 424 F 22.9 (emphasis added).

40 As discussed earlier pre-emptive strikes were never viable, but any reduction in the time taken to learn of action was helpful. The Romans committed similar acts to reduce the information available to Macedon prior to the Third Macedonian War.

41 A similar case could be made for Jugurtha’s massacre of Italiote inhabitants and traders at Cirta. See Sall. Iug. 26. The removal of Roman agents, potential or actual, placed the Roman decision-makers in a delicate strategic position. Without a source of information about Jugurtha’s activity, there was no way of tracking his plans and the threat he posed to Roman arrangements in Africa.
value in Roman intelligence networks. They could provide information that standard political intelligence sources probably could not.\textsuperscript{42} The intelligence they provided would have been a compromise between private commercial and state interests. While states sought advantage in the international sphere, private merchants sought access to resources and markets for their own gain.\textsuperscript{43} Carthage is presented as being particularly adept at balancing these two desires, defending both their political and economic intelligence through trade sanctions and diplomatic treaties. Two of the ancient treaties between Rome and Carthage as recorded by Polybius serve this dual counterintelligence purpose. The first treaty barred Roman ships from waters and ports beyond the ‘fair promontory’, nor could Roman merchants buy or sell goods without being in the presence of a town clerk when in Sardinia or Libya.\textsuperscript{44} The only land in which Romans were permitted unfettered access was Sicily.\textsuperscript{45} As Sheldon asserts, the treaty protects against the gathering of economic intelligence and consequently political and military intelligence.\textsuperscript{46} Unexpected trade or unusual transactions can provide hints about the internal conditions of another state. Traders given free rein in communities can access and develop information about a state’s available and needed supplies. Sharing this information allows another state to determine such things as the condition of a rival state’s economy (has a downturn taken place?) and future intentions (are they laying in supplies for a major war?). Polybius explicitly claims, in this case, that Carthage restricted access so that the Romans would not discover and develop an understanding of the coast near Byzacium.\textsuperscript{47}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{42} Political intelligence techniques will be discussed in the following chapters.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Harris 1979: chapter 2; Roselaar 2012.
\item \textsuperscript{44} The identification of the ‘fair promontory’ (Καλὸν ἀκρωτήριον) is subject to discussion. It is identified by some scholars as Cape Bon to the northeast of Carthage. Petzold 1976; Serrati 2006. Others identify it as Cape Farina to the northwest of Carthage. Colozier 1953; Capogrossi Colognesi 1971; Werner 1975. It is important to note that the treaty allowed free access to the Carthaginian ports in Sicily. If the treaty dates to 510, the trade access was important to Rome. They required Sicilian grain to counter the famine of 508: Livy. 2.9.6. Serrati asserts that the Romans may have tried to purchase grain in Sicily before the agreement was ratified, which prompted the arrangement and allowed Carthage to limit Roman trade and navigation. See Serrati 2006: 118.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Polyb. 3.22.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Sheldon 2005: 74.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Τὸ μὲν οὖν Καλὸν ἀκρωτήριον ἐστι τὸ προκείμενον αὐτῆς τῆς Καρχηδόνος ὡς πρὸς τὰς ἀρκτοὺς· οὐ καθάπαξ ἐκέκειν πλεῖν ὡς πρὸς μεσημβρίαν οὐκ οἴονται δεῖν οἱ Καρχηδόνιοι τοὺς Ῥωμαίους μικρὰς ναύοι διὰ τὸ μὴ βουλεύσατο γινώσκειν
\end{itemize}
The second treaty had similar goals. Although it allowed trade in Carthage, it barred the Romans even from travelling (in addition to marauding and founding cities) through the waters east of the fair promontory, or Tarseium and Mastia.\textsuperscript{48} Traders were forbidden from Sardinia and Libya, but were allowed to gather necessary supplies there.\textsuperscript{49} By barring Roman traders and travellers from their lands and restricting access, the Carthaginians ensured that knowledge about resources, capabilities, and the disposition of natives toward the Carthaginians was tightly controlled.

As with political counterintelligence, denial only goes so far in aiding the intelligence process. There are few episodes of active deception with foreknowledge involving commercial activity. The most well-known has a Carthaginian captain purposefully running his ship aground to defend the location of Carthage’s tin and lead sources. After multiple attempts, and some degree of spite, some Romans finally found the trade depot and announced it to the public.\textsuperscript{50} By publicly announcing it, they revealed the source not only to their own merchants but also to any potential foreign merchants currently in Rome – effectively destroying Carthage’s monopoly on these resources. The need to protect mercantile interests affected domestic relationships as well, however: protectionist or monopolistic behaviour by the state might limit merchants’ desire to share information with the state. They nevertheless remained important sources of information of a cultural or geographical nature, which could alter conceptions of others in the Mediterranean world over the long term.

Perhaps more damaging to merchants’ value as a source of information than their hoarding of trade information, and certainly more common in public

\textsuperscript{48} Polyb. 3.24.
\textsuperscript{49} Strab. 3.5.
\textsuperscript{50} Strab. 14.2.5.
perception, is their reputation for misinformation and trickery. Plautus uses the trope of misleading merchants in the *Trinummus*. The trickster spins a tale about his adventure up the river into the realm of the gods, which he apparently reached by sailing straight upstream in a small fishing vessel. The parody is reinforced by the trickster’s statement earlier in the play that ‘I’ve hired out my labour for the arts of deception...today I’m coming from Seleucia, Macedonia, Asia, and Arabia which I’ve never set foot in...’ For the comedy of Plautus to work, it must fit with the social preconceptions of his audience, that is, that merchants were often disingenuous.

The wariness of knowledge derived from merchants ensured it was not blindly accepted. It is difficult to consolidate a knowledge base grounded solely in information gleaned from a group against whom such deep, structural prejudices exist. Even the more practical aspects of foreknowledge had to be reconciled with ‘known’ fact. Polybius doubts the word of traders and travellers in their descriptions of the currents in the Black Sea. He scorns the traders’ rationale for the flow of the currents and instead declares his answer to be better,

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51 Misleading merchants were common enough that their tales were mocked by Lucian in the *True History*. They were also given the Greek epithet of *Βεργαῖον*: Strab. 1.3.1, named after Antiphanes of Berga who told of lands so cold that one’s words froze in mid-air. Romm 1992: 197. Such tales include stories about small men, likely pygmies who were observed by Sataspes (Hdt. 4.43), and the beings covered in hair, discovered by Hanno, and known as gorillas by his guides (Hanno, *Peripl.* 18). Hanno’s journey also refers to rivers of flame and phantom music (Hanno, *Peripl.* 14-17). The scepticism shown toward Pytheas is the most famous example. His account included notions far removed from the Mediterranean experience – the mysterious sea lung, frozen lands, and the northern midsummer sun for example: Polyb. 34.5.3-4 = Strab. 2.4.1; 2.5.8. Strabo’s distaste for Pytheas is renowned: 1.4.3-5. Polybius supports Euhemerus over Pytheas, as Pytheas talked of many discoveries, to Euhemerus’ one: Polyb. 34.5.7. For further discussion of geographic fictions see Romm 1992: 172-214.

52 Plaut. *Trin.* 930-945.


54 A general distrust and distaste for merchants and traders, especially small-scale traders, is widespread throughout Roman sources. Dionysius of Halicarnassus has grain merchants accused of espionage in early Roman history – their exiled Roman compatriots accuse them of this, suggesting at the very least that traders were known to report findings on their return: 7.2; cf. Livy 2.34. Cicero goes so far as to claim that the Carthaginians are given to lies and deceit because of their coastal location. As a consequence, they are constantly exposed to merchants, foreign goods, and tongues: *De Agr.* 2.95. Pliny the Elder remarks on their manipulation of prices to gain advantage based on their understanding of astronomy: *Plin. HN.* 18.225-226.
being based on the most accurate measure of truth - scientific reasoning.\footnote{Polyb. 4.39.11.}
Polybius here is not dismissing the usefulness of traders’ information in other contexts, but advising that care must be taken before believing tales without further verification, which is a sensible approach to any form of intelligence and one, as discussed later, adopted by the senate. While merchants were considered acceptable as sources, the intelligence they provided was not considered to be particularly reliable. Nevertheless, verified information is not the only information that constructs an image of reality. That there was a degree of scepticism toward such intelligence suggests that the consequences of accepting all information were known. Without verification, the information was construed as mere hearsay. But for decision making at a military and political level, merchants’ and explorers’ information, whether circulated throughout the general population in the form of cultural stereotypes or provided to an official, augments other available sources and influences decisions. Outlandish tales are unlikely to have influenced political decision making in normal circumstances, but any information that was accepted and entered the public consciousness fed conceptions about geographic spaces and peoples, thus affecting judgements about them. The trope of untrustworthy Carthaginians, part of Roman ethnographic consciousness from at least the time of Plautus, is likely to have influenced the Roman treatment of Carthage in all future interactions.\footnote{Poen. 112, 890, 1034. There are suggestions that both Ennius (Ann 474Sk; 274V) and Cato (Ori. Frag. 84P) expressed disdain at Punic perfidy. See Prandi 1979; Dubuisson 1983; \textit{contra} Gruen 2011.}  

\textbf{Ethnography}

A more reliable and accessible source of foreknowledge was derived from ethnographers. Their motivation for writing may not have been to serve a political need for cultural intelligence, but the information included in their writing was suitable for building cultural dossiers. Ethnography was an established form of geographical and cultural writing in the Greek world from at least the sixth century.\footnote{Momigliano 1975: 74. Tierney identifies ethnographic features in Homer, and asserts the likelihood of earlier ethnographies. Tierney 1959: 189. There is little surviving evidence for them. There are hints of ethnographic details in early records of foreign places, like those of an unnamed Massilian ethnographer recorded in Aveinus' \textit{Ora}}
works, either intentionally or as a matter of chance, created concepts of Greek selves and others. The Greek, and later Roman desire for this knowledge explains the tendency of non-Greek ethnographers from an early date to write their texts Greek and for Greeks and Romans to have foreign texts translated. Evidence suggests that while the Romans appreciated foreknowledge in this form, it was not a dedicated Roman intellectual pursuit. They inherited the practice of recording knowledge about foreigners and pre-existing information after they began to engage more closely with the Greek world in the fourth century. They had little need to investigate areas that were already perceived as well-known, largely through Greek literature. They exploited knowledge they inherited; later Roman officials sponsored and supported further investigations and intellectual production by others. They entrusted such investigations mostly to Greeks.

Maritima, or Scylax and Pseudo-Scylax, but they are not true ethnography. Hecataeus’ true value for the development of ethnographic writing is difficult to determine since his work survives only in fragments. See for instance FGrH 1 F 154; 284; 287; 323a. The first true surviving ethnographies are in Herodotus. His descriptions of Egyptians and Scythians include a demarcation of territory, the topography and geography of the land, a detailed commentary on the people and a selection of oddities and wonders: 2.2-182; 4.1-82. As international interaction increased, ethnographies came to include details of the political structures and social phenomena of particular areas. Ethnographic information arose from conversations and encounters. See Woolf 2011: 18-9.

58 Xanthus the Lydian wrote in Greek about Lydian customs, as did the Egyptian Manetho, perhaps in response to Herodotus, and the Babylonian Berossus and the Roman Fabius Pictor both wrote in Greek. Momigliano 1975: 91-113. Translation of non-ethnographic documents was also common, which further attests to the interconnectivity of the Mediterranean world. Pliny the Elder records that the senate ordered a translation of the 30 books on agriculture by the Carthaginian Mago into Latin: HN. 18.22. Sallust claims to have used Carthaginian books for his digression on North Africa: Sall. Iug. 17.

59 Momigliano 1975: 14-5.

60 This section relates to formal ethnography as a subject, rather than titbits of cultural information that were included in the works of Roman military officials such as Cato and Julius Caesar.

61 The Romans’ reliance on Greek originals is explicitly stated by Strabo at 3.4.19. Sherk claims that Roman commanders attempted to emulate Alexander the Great in bringing intellectuals (geographers, historians, etc.) on campaign; on this, see below. They thus displayed an appreciation for and engaged in foreknowledge intelligence gathering. See Sherk 1974.
The Roman contribution to cultural and geographical intelligence was primarily a consequence of their military campaigns.\textsuperscript{62} Knowledge had a practical use; ignorance and necessity rather than curiosity forced the gathering of cultural and geographical information.\textsuperscript{62} Each military expedition added to the body of knowledge about inhabitants and regions. The oldest surviving Roman ethnographic excerpts are found in the fragments of Cato’s \textit{Origines}. Cato dealt with founding legends, physical geography, climatic factors, flora and fauna, agriculture and local produce, social customs and political, military, and legal institutions of various Italiote peoples, and advised an investigation on the Celts.\textsuperscript{64} His information was sourced through autopsy, and his purpose was apparently pragmatic.\textsuperscript{63} Much later, Roman campaigns in the north and west opened up areas that were hitherto relatively unknown.\textsuperscript{66} Cornelius Balbus mounted an expedition into the Sahara in 19, but his is one of the few Roman expeditions into relatively unexplored lands. These discoveries were disseminated to the public. Balbus’ mission made the names of at least 30 previously unknown tribes available to the people.\textsuperscript{67} Geographical information was connected to political power and control through its commemoration in military triumphs and the naming traditions of returning conquerors.\textsuperscript{68} As with the campaigns of Alexander the Great, Roman military conquest potentially

\textsuperscript{62} Cadiou 2006: 136.
\textsuperscript{63} Dueck and Brodersen 2012: 15.
\textsuperscript{64} For the surviving fragments of Cato’s writings along with a commentary and introduction, see Cornell 2013a: 191-218; Cornell 2013b: 134-243; Cornell 2013c: 63-159.
\textsuperscript{65} There is a suggestion his work was intended to prove that Italians were the equals of Greeks. Cornell 2013a: 210-1. There is too little surviving evidence to conclusively argue Cato’s intention. The pragmatic aspect of his work may have been in its advice on how to deal politically with the Italiote peoples.
\textsuperscript{66} Dueck and Brodersen 2012: 17-20. This is not to say that Roman armies in these circumstances blundered into areas in ignorance of what they might find, but that their intelligence was gathered by \textit{an in situ} military force rather than collated from known information. Syme suggests that Roman defeats in such areas were not due to geographic ignorance, but to a combination of other factors. Syme 1988.
\textsuperscript{67} Plin. \textit{HN}. 5.37. Reports were not necessarily of new towns, but also introduced new information that could be capitalised on in the future. Pliny the Younger includes an account of the water supply around the town of Sinope, and announces that he has ordered further investigations and surveys into the area: 10.40.
\textsuperscript{68} See for instance the list of geographical territories announced at Pompey’s triumph: Plut. \textit{Pom.} 45. Various names were granted to conquerors or their sons – Africanus, Ponticus, Macedonicus, Asiaticus etc. Dueck and Brodersen 2012.
opened up new lands for autopsy, allowing information to be updated and corrected.\textsuperscript{69}

In most sources, there is little direct evidence for the pathways through which this intelligence was transferred from commanders to the senate. Such facts did not interest historians. It is well known that commanders sent dispatches to the senate from the field.\textsuperscript{70} Even if dispatches were lost or neglected, commanders had to account for their actions upon their return, and were likely to have made note of interesting features.\textsuperscript{71} Extant fragments from military commanders do include ethnographic details.\textsuperscript{72} While Roman sources may not have contributed to stores of information strictly for knowledge’s sake, their actions and practicality did increase the pool of intelligence available for future use, through either their own reports or the reports of those who accompanied them.\textsuperscript{71} The fragments of Cato include various anecdotes concerning behaviour and social structure. He records that the river Ebro was filled with fish,\textsuperscript{74} and that on the eastern side of the river there were iron and silver mines, and great amounts of salt, but one had to beware of the wind, which could blow so strongly that it knocked down a loaded cart.\textsuperscript{75} Considering Cato returned to Rome in 194 with vast quantities of metal, it is likely such anecdotes were based on autopsy.\textsuperscript{70} The same is true of the ethnographic details recorded

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\textsuperscript{69} Prior to Alexander’s campaigns the Greeks had knowledge of Egypt, Persia, Babylon, and India, but it was vague and outdated. Momigliano 1975: 77, 83.

\textsuperscript{70} Sherk 1974: 536. See for example the supposed receipt of dispatches from Camillus: Livy 5.20.2; 5.22.1, from Publius and Gneaus Scipio in Spain: Livy 23.48.4, and from Titus Quinctius Flamininus in Macedonia: Livy 33.24.3. Cadiou 2006 provides a list of dispatches, legates, and reports from officials in Spain.

\textsuperscript{71} Austin and Rankov perhaps over-cynically claim the main purpose of published dispatches was to cast the leading figure in an attractive light rather than to inform. The motive behind publication is unknown, but considering the competitive nature of the republican aristocracy, it is not an outlandish suggestion. On the other hand, published or unpublished dispatches would provide ethnographic and geographic material that would affect senatorial impressions of places and peoples mentioned in them. Austin and Rankov 1995: 89.

\textsuperscript{72} Sherk suggests that military dispatches contained only bare facts. Livy records dispatches sparingly and with little cultural or geographical information. Sherk 1974: 537-40.

\textsuperscript{73} Sherk 1974: 543.

\textsuperscript{74} F. 110P.

\textsuperscript{75} F. 93P; cf. Gell. 2.22.28-9.

\textsuperscript{76} Livy 34.46.2. Cadiou 2006: 137.
in Julius Caesar’s accounts of Gaul and the Vindolanda tablets. Caesar claims that in cavalry battles Germans dismount and fight on foot, and avoid the use of the saddles; they are somewhat tempestuous and engage with other cavalry forces regardless of their size or equipment. A Vindolanda tablet reads as an intelligence report. It highlights how the Britons fought, to better prepare Roman forces when they encountered them. It condescendingly claims that British cavalry do not use swords, and that the ‘Brittunculi’ do not mount horses to throw javelins. Legates and lieutenants played an active role in informing their commanders and the senate of basic data that they came across in relatively unexplored land. So Sextus Digitius, who happened to return to Rome from the Macedonian war in 169 to perform a sacrifice, informed the senate of a Roman defeat at the Illyrian city of Uscana the previous year due to his commander’s lack of advance scouting. But he also told the senators of the population, situation, and fortifications of this distant and hitherto unknown stronghold. Ethnographic and geographic information such as this is far more useful than strategic information, which quickly becomes obsolete. More general comments such as those enumerated here allow dossiers to be constructed about such things as the military courage and battle tactics of other peoples, and the

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77 Strabo claims Tiberius’ campaigns in central Europe discovered the source of the Danube: Strab. 7.1.5; Corbulo, Nero’s great general, sent diagrams of the Caucasus to Rome: Plin. HN. 5.83; and Aelius Gallus returned from Arabia with the information that nomads live on milk and hunting, and that others extracted sesame oil, and a kind of wine from palm-trees: Plin. HN. 6.160. For more examples see Nicolet 1988: 97-101.

78 ...equestribus proeliis saepe ex equis desiliunt ac pedibus proeliantur, equos eodem remanere vestigio adsuefecerunt, ad quos se celeriter, cum usus est, recipient: neque eorum moribus turpium aut inertius habetur quam ephippiis uti. Itaque ad quemvis numerum ephippiatorum equitum quamvis pauci adire audent: Caes. BGall. 4.2. See also 1.48.4-7, on the special light-armed troops who accompany the German cavalry, and at times of flight or advance, hold onto the horses’ manes.

79 Bauman 1990 tablet 164.

80 Livy 43.10-11.1. Note the vagueness of Livy’s introduction of the town. It was generally thought to be part of the borderlands of Perseus’ kingdom: haud procul inde Uscana oppidum finium plerumque Persei erat: 43.10.1. Messengers from Uscana repeatedly came in secret to talk with Appius Claudius. They offered to betray the city, and encouraged Claudius with promises of booty. Livy claims that Claudius’ greed forced him to dispense with the normal procedure; he neither detained any of those who approached him, nor did he require hostages as a guarantee against treachery, nor did he send someone to reconnoitre the city, nor did he obtain any oaths of good faith.

81 Caesar calls these genus pugnae (e.g., 1.48.4) or consuetudo (1.52.4).
disadvantages and advantages of their fighting techniques. Theoretically, every exposure to another state’s forces in battle built upon pre-existing knowledge, meaning only the first group of soldiers, such as those Sextus Digitius reported on, blundered in with little or no foreknowledge to guide them. The next time the Romans attacked Uscana, they had learned from their previous lack of knowledge and took the town. But as will be discussed in the following section, the access to foreknowledge is not synonymous with its use.

Authors and ethnographers, perhaps in emulation of the campaigns of Alexander the Great, at times accompanied expeditions. Most examples are late, and an argument can certainly be made that the primary intention of their presence was not so much to increase foreknowledge as to glorify the campaigns’ commanders. In the mid-republic, Ennius travelled with Fulvius Nobilior on his victorious campaign against the Aetolian League; later Theophanes travelled with Pompey, documenting the great man’s anabasis in the East; Dellius accompanied Marcus Antonius in the same areas a generation later. Woolf cautions against believing that the intellectual campaign documentarian was a frequent accompaniment to Roman military campaigns. He claims the motivation behind these scholarly endeavours derived from aristocratic competition, and the idea of Roman maiestas. Regardless of the intention, however, glorified accounts of journeys into distant lands had an important role in increasing the cultural and geographical foreknowledge base. Further, while some explorers may not have accompanied campaigns themselves, they did take advantage of Roman conquests after the fact. Poseidonius, the younger Eratosthenes, Varro, the Younger Callisthenes, and Artemidorus may have all travelled deep into the Celtic lands at the behest of, or at least with the assistance of, Roman officials, and investigated ethnographic and geographical information that those confined to the coasts may never have discovered.

82 The capture is not recorded in the highly fragmentary Book 43 of Livy, but the Romans are in possession of Uscana at Livy 43.18.5-11 when Perseus attacks and retakes it. 
83 Cic. Tusc. Dis. 1.3. 
84 Strab. 11.5.1. 
85 Strab. 11.13.3. 
86 Woolf 2011: 59. 
Military officials’ ability to add to potential foreknowledge was limited, most of it related purely to their own campaigns, but some contained information that could be of use for future endeavours. There is evidence to suggest that Roman authorities commissioned the advance collection of foreknowledge when they determined a need; they were, as always, not interested in gaining this knowledge for knowledge’s sake. The most explicit example of this is when Augustus ordered the ethnographer Dionysius of Charax to conduct an investigation of the East so that his grandson Gaius would have the most accurate information available in advance of his expeditions against the Parthians and Arabians. ⁸⁸ It is possible that Juba II of Mauretania produced something similar. ⁸⁹ These missions were not covert, but neither are many intelligence missions. Nor were they conducted under the guise of diplomacy. They were pre-emptive collations of open-source information about people and territory. Most of our evidence for such investigations indicates they took place in the aftermath of conflict. Scipio Aemilianus famously supplied Polybius with ships to explore the coast of Africa. He returned after making a voyage west of the Atlas Mountains and reported on forestland and numerous African animals. ⁹⁰ He is known to have travelled over the Alps into Gaul and Spain. ⁹¹ He claims to have taken the opportunity provided by the opening up of the world through Roman wars to correct and enhance earlier information. ⁹² His histories contain various ethnographic details designed to be useful for future endeavours, many of which he learnt through personal experience. Most of this material was contained in the now fragmentary Book 34. That Roman campaigns opened up opportunities for exploration and information gathering is certainly supported by Strabo and Pliny, who both state that nothing can be known about certain areas because the Romans had never been there. Strabo talks of unknown Germanic tribes beyond the river Elbe, ⁹³ whereas Pliny the Elder implies that knowledge is limited to Roman dominions or those touched

⁸⁹ Juba FGrH. 275.
⁹⁰ Plin. HN. 5.9-10.
⁹¹ Polyb. 3.48.12.
⁹² Polyb. 3.59.7.
⁹³ Strab. 7.2.4.
by Roman arms.\textsuperscript{94} This becomes increasingly true in the era in which both Strabo and Pliny write. The known world had already been conquered. Everything else was mysterious, and dangerous to explore.

Information about the world was available and constantly evolving.\textsuperscript{95} Despite attempts at secrecy, and successes for a time, information about the wider Mediterranean was eventually disseminated. The pathways for this dissemination are hardly well attested. But Carthaginian explorers, likewise Phoenicians and Egyptians, were available for Herodotus to access. Alexander the Great and his successors improved knowledge about the East. Information was likely traded as any other commodity, and hidden information could be gained through conquest.\textsuperscript{96} Pre-existing knowledge was shared through networks; Roman sources had access to these traditions.\textsuperscript{97} Each journey or military expedition into an area added to the knowledge base and updated and improved understanding. Ideas and conceptions about people and places filtered into the everyday consciousness; early Roman comic texts demonstrate a shared understanding of cultural stereotypes thus generated through the use of such phrases as \textit{suo ritu, more eorum, more gallicum}, and \textit{su o more}.\textsuperscript{98} These same texts also show that Ultima Thule was synonymous with the far north, saying someone was from Kelsos implied they were imbeciles from the back of beyond, and so on. Personal experience of a place is not necessary to create ideas about it.\textsuperscript{99} The improved understanding of other peoples was not necessarily sound, but based on Roman viewpoints of them. Their accuracy is

\textsuperscript{94} For instance, Pliny mentions that the knowledge of the circumference of Britain has increased through the presence of the Roman army: \textit{HN}. 4.102. The source of the Nile is unknown because Roman wars, which have opened up other lands, have never progressed so far: \textit{HN}. 5.51.
\textsuperscript{95} For more on the cumulative evolution of the known world see Nicolet 1988.
\textsuperscript{96} Hanno’s journey was better known. And his account was translated from Punic into Greek, possibly from a commemorative inscription at an early date during the fifth century. Blomqvist and Hanno 1979. For later references to the journey see Plin. \textit{HN}. 2.67; Mela 3.90; Arr. \textit{Indika} 43.
\textsuperscript{97} Later adventurers achieved recognition, if not acceptance, throughout the Mediterranean. A number of sources including Dicaearchus, Timaeus, Eratosthenes, Artemidorus, and Polybius knew Pytheas. The majority of these references survive through Strabo. See for instance 1.4.2-5; 2.4.1-2; 3.2.11; 4.2.1. Also Plin. \textit{HN}. 4.95.
\textsuperscript{98} Garcia Riaza 2015.
\textsuperscript{99} Otto and Häussler 1890: 340, 8; Dueck and Brodersen 2012: 120.
not important. Roman administrators and commanders conceived the world and others in it with these, potentially erroneous, viewpoints and made foreign policy decisions partly based upon them.

**Accessibility and Employment of Foreknowledge**

Individuals could access this accumulated information through a variety of mediums. One of the easiest was through personal experience and personal communication with others who had been exposed to certain places or people; the alternatives were archives of literary and pictorial collections. There are no known mid-republican public libraries; there were no archives with collated cultural dossiers. In Rome, private collections of wealthy individuals, and written accounts of historical events and ethnographic facts certainly existed.¹⁰ There are no direct references to accessing written records prior to Polybius’ statements, in the midst of his attack on Timaeus, and concerning his personal autopsy of official treaties. Polybius’ statements imply that access to official records was relatively easy to obtain, at least for those of a certain class, or for those who had highly placed Roman friends. He attacks historians who spend their time in libraries becoming experts in written memoirs. These memoirs are helpful in learning the views of those who came before and the notions they held about people and places – in other words, earlier conceptions of cultural intelligence – but they are insufficient for full understanding of these topics.¹⁰ Polybius declares Timaeus’ book-learning is inferior, a safe, easy option that lacks the

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¹⁰ The first library of Rome, the Atrium Libertatis, was built by Gaius Asinius Pollio between 36 and 27: Plin. *HN*. 35.9. Libraries existed in some Hellenistic centres during the third and second centuries. According to Aulus Gellius, the Athenian tyrant Pisistratus was the first to establish a library in the sixth century; Gell. 7.17. This library then inspired the creation of the Ptolemaic library of Alexandria: Ter. 18.5.

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danger of international travel, but he never claims such research is not necessary so long as one had access to a town that was rich in documents or in possession of a decent library.\textsuperscript{102} Libraries and book collecting only arise within societies that are able to use them, and appreciate them.\textsuperscript{103} Aemilius Paulus is credited with bringing the first library to Rome.\textsuperscript{104} After the battle of Pydna in 168, he looted the royal Macedonian library and gifted it to his sons.\textsuperscript{105} Sulla and Lucullus continued the practice of taking books as booty, despoiling Athens and Pergamum of their libraries.\textsuperscript{106} These libraries were not public in the sense that they were accessible to all who wanted to use them, but any information they contained was accessible to the intellectual and personal circles of the owners.\textsuperscript{107} There is no evidence to suggest that it was difficult to access written records during the mid-republic. The availability of published works and level of access to them, however, is not within the bounds of this study.\textsuperscript{108} What matters here are the indications of cultural intelligence in written works. Their existence

\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{102} τὸ δὲ περὶ τὰς ἀνακώσεις ὁμορμοῖς ἀνεστράφη, καθάπερ ἐν τοῖς ἀνώτερον ἡμῖν δεδήλωσαν. δι’ ἔν δὲ αὐτῶν ταύτην ἐσχῆ τὴν ἀἴρεσιν εὐχερεῖς καταμαθεῖν· ὥστε τὰ μὲν ἐκ τῶν βυβλίων δύναται πολυπραγμονευόντας χωρὶς κινδύνου καὶ κακοπαθεῖαις, ἐὰν τις ἀυτὸ τοῦτο προνοηθεὶ μόνον ὡστε λαβεῖν ἢ πάλιν ἐχουσιν ὑπομνήματα πλήθος ἢ βυβλιοθήκην που γειτνιώσαν: Polyb. 12.27.4.
\item\textsuperscript{103} Makowiecka 1978: 8.
\item\textsuperscript{104} Prior to 168, there are only circumstantial pieces of evidence to suggest accessible written information. It is, however, unlikely that Aemilius Paulus came to appreciate collections of books without previous exposure to them.
\item\textsuperscript{105} Plut. Aem. 28. Macedon’s library may have existed in some form from the third century. The scholar Aratus is known to have lived in the court of Antigonus Gonatas and spent some time in Antioch. Suda s.v. Aratus (A 3745 Adler).
\item\textsuperscript{106} Sulla seized the collection of Apellicon of Teos, a man who built his collection by stealing documents from archives in Greece: Ath. 5.214d-215b. The collection contained works not well known to the public. They were disseminated as a result of their seizure. See Strab. 13.609; Plut. Sil. 26. Lucullus seized the library of Pergamum, thought to have been established in the reign of Eumenes II. See Plut. Luc. 42.1-2; Strab. 13.4.2.
\item\textsuperscript{107} Plutarch specifically notes that Lucullus made his library open to all: Plut. Luc. 42.1. For most Romans, accessing this material prior to the rise of the so-called Scipionic circle, with their intellectual interest in Greek philosophy and literature, was probably for practical reasons. It is reflected in the accounts of Cato’s use of written texts and early Roman historical records. Astin 1967: 294-306.
\item\textsuperscript{108} Numerous investigations have been carried out into libraries, book sellers, and public access in Rome. See for instance Casson 2001; Ellis and Kidner 2004; Johnson and Parker 2009; Too 2010; Depauw and Coussement 2014; Houston 2014.
\end{enumerate}
supports the idea of a literate and informed culture that was likely participating in the Mediterranean network prior to the age of transmarine expansion.

Accessibility is, of course, no guarantee of accuracy or use. The lack of appreciation for bias and potential misconceptions creates tension between established and stereotypical views of foreigners and fresh investigative information. Ideas about foreigners became stereotypical paradigms. Stereotypes, in turn, calcified into the default standpoint for interpretation. Cato’s attacks on Carthage, coupled with the stereotype and previous experience with Carthage, aided in the construction of the idea that Carthage was a threat that needed to be removed prior to the Third Punic War. Without an intelligence service to subject past experience and stereotypes to critical analysis and update foreknowledge, Roman decision-makers were more likely to labour under faulty preconceptions and misjudge enemy actions and capabilities. Any discovered cultural intelligence was reconciled with and interpreted through pre-existing ideas about the enemy. Gaps in practical knowledge were simply filled with preconceived notions. This increased the chances that faulty ethnographic conceptions would prevail. Cato’s figs, regardless of where they came from, served to feed senatorial prejudices that Carthage was wealthy (through grubby trade, naturally), deceitful, and therefore, a threat. Preconceived ideas and failures arising from them do not discount the Romans’ appreciation for cultural intelligence, only their failure to recognise their biased worldview. Foreknowledge, however, inaccurate, was still of use. As discussed above, the Roman approach to building a pool of foreknowledge was laissez-faire. They

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109 While geographic determinism is downplayed in Roman ethnographic texts, which focus more on information of practical application, the belief that climatic zones influenced personality was common. Climatic theory suggested that people living outside their birth region and mixing with other races resulted in deterioration. Livy has Gnaeus Manlius invigorate his troops in 189 by claiming that the Gallogrecians – that is, the Celts who have migrated and mixed with Greeks – are degenerate. Thus, they should not be considered as terrifying as true Gauls: Livy 38.17.9-10. To take another example, Pliny describes the Chauci as particularly primitive and barbaric. They live on fish and rainwater, as they are too uncivilised to hunt, let alone domesticate animals; they have no tools, nor do they practice agriculture: HN. 16.3-4. The Chauci here are more barbaric than Germanic peoples closer to Rome. The idea is that attempting to grow plants or raise animals outside their intended climate results in stagnation and a failure to thrive.

110 Plut. Cat. Mai. 27.1; Plin. HN. 15.74. Meijer 1984 believes the figs were taken from Cato’s own estates.
could be fairly passive about it since others were interested in actively pursuing such information as part of their intellectual studies. This does not mean that their appreciation of the information can be dismissed. The use of available knowledge by individuals in the field was similarly ad hoc. While foreknowledge was usually available, individual military commanders could make use of it or not, according to temperament.

Some historical sources occasionally advocate the use of foreknowledge. Sallust’s statements prior to his ethnographic digression, mentioned earlier, suggest a general advocacy for foreknowledge. More explicit is Strabo, who stresses the value of geographical and historical knowledge by claiming that knowledge of various lands and oceans, of animals and plants, leads one on the way to complete understanding. Geography, and thus geographical knowledge, serves the state, because the natural world is the scene in which all state affairs must take place. Great deeds are impossible without a basic understanding of the world. The greatest generals are those who can hold sway over land and sea, and unite nations and peoples. Geographic knowledge is thus vital for commanders. Without it, they cannot know the size of nations or the people and creatures that inhabit them. They cannot perform their duties in a satisfactory manner. Strabo goes on to say that it is only with a geographical knowledge of the surrounds that an appropriate spot can be chosen for a camp or ambush. The ulterior motive in Strabo’s justification is clear; he links geography with the needs of rulers. Military commanders needed proper understanding of geographic details as foreknowledge to ensure that avoidable disasters did not occur. The idea of the utility of geographic and cultural knowledge is later restricted with Strabo claiming there is no advantage for leaders having knowledge about countries and their inhabitants if they pose no threat or cannot provide aid due to isolation. He limits the purpose of

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111 Sall. Iug. 17.
112 Strab. 1.1.16.
113 Strab. 1.1.17.
114 Πρός τε τάς ἁγεμονικὰς χρείας οὐδὲν ἂν εἴη πλεονέκτημα τάς τοιαύτας γνωρίζειν χώρας καὶ τοὺς ἑνοκοῦντας, καὶ μάλιστα εἰ νήσους οἰκοῖς τοιαύτας, αἱ μὴ τυπεῖσιν μὴ’ ἄφθελεν ἡμᾶς δύνανται μηδὲν διὰ τὸ ἀνεπίπλεκτον: Strab. 2.5.8. Strabo’s thesis claims the world can be divided into two areas – that worth having (that possessed by Rome) and that not worth having (that Rome does not bother to
foreknowledge to areas directly within the potential sphere of influence of the Roman Empire; in this, he shares the practical viewpoint of his Romanised predecessors rather than the sense of wonder of the earlier Greek ethnographers. But by dismissing those in lands further afield he implies that knowing as much information as possible only about those close to you could be advantageous. It is possible to infer from appeals to foreknowledge that such information was acknowledged as important among the intellectual elite.

Advice provided in a more military or a practical context suggests the same. Closest in time to the events discussed in the remainder of this thesis are the exhortations of Polybius, who advocated training in tactics, geometry, and astronomy. He claimed that a general could develop his skills via three methods - the instruction of history, the lessons of others more experienced than oneself, and practical personal experience. The best thing a general can do is to acquaint himself with the geography of where he is to be deployed ahead of time, the route he is to travel, and the nature of the people with whom he is to interact upon his arrival. Polybius also advises that strategy and tactics achieve more than open force. If possible, a personal understanding of the landscape and topographical features, as well as people or the area, ought to be gathered. In addition to historiographical texts, military manuals written by generals with field experience in certain areas could assist generals heading out into areas unfamiliar to them. There are no extant examples of such manuals from the republic. But Polybius’ descriptions of the layout of a ‘normal’ Roman military camp are thought to have been sourced from a military handbook or

possess). The thesis is a function of Augustan propaganda. Whatever the Romans have not or have failed to lay claim to is the result of a rational choice that it is not worth conquering, not of the fact that they are unable to conquer it.

The sentiment that people from faraway places were benign is shared by the Peri Strategikes in its advice about how to treat foreign ambassadors as discussed in the previous chapter (above, pp. 100-101).


116 Polyb. 11.8. In the absence of a formal officer training programme, there was little alternative. See Campbell 1987.

117 καλλιστον μεν ουν το γινοσκειν αυτων και τας οδους και των τοπων, εφ ον δει παραγενεσθαι, και την φυσιν του τοπου, προς δε τουτως, δι ων μελλει και μεθ’ ων προστεθει: Polyb. 9.14.

118 Polyb. 9.12.

commentary rather than from his own personal experience due to the wording of the passage and certain of its features, which cannot be pinned down to the second century. In the Greek world handbooks existed from the fourth century as compilations of exempla. Roman examples are late, the most obvious being Vegetius’ *De Re Militari*. Vegetius recommends that conscientious generals have detailed itineraries, which include distances between settlements, remarks on the condition of roads, and inspections of potential shortcuts, bypasses, mountains, and rivers. Such information would allow commanders to plan routes in advance, provide opportunities for scouting, and predict the placement of ambushes. There are few examples, due to the nature of the surviving sources, of this advice being put into practice prior to campaigns.

According to Cicero, Lucius Lucullus, upon being given a commission to fight Mithridates in Asia, spent his entire journey crossing over land and sea questioning experts and reading military history. Hence, he arrived in Asia a ‘made’ general, despite starting off from Rome ignorant of military matters.

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121 Polyb. 6.27-42. There is some suggestion that his description is at some remove even from camp organisation in his own era, and reflects an antiquarian source. Polybius’ descriptions are subject to debate in secondary sources. An overview of some opinions is provided in Walbank’s commentary. Walbank 1957: 709-25. See also Rawson 1971; Dobson 2008: 54-58; Dobson 2013a; Dobson 2013b.


123 Vegetius’ work is dated to the fourth-fifth centuries AD, but is usually considered to have used republican materials as sources. Milner 1993: xiv-xviii.

124 Veg. 3.6. Vegetius advocates that these itineraries be ‘drawn’ and not only annotated. This raises questions about the construction of maps in the ancient world. Sketched itineraries could refer to the small drawings on our surviving itineraries such as the *notitia dignitatum* or something grander like the *Tabula Peutingeriana*. He may be referring to topographical maps, examples of which have not survived. It is usually thought that ‘maps’ in the modern sense were unknown in antiquity. However, some ancient sources imply their existence. See Sherk 1974; Bertrand 1997. As to whether maps were commonly used, this is also controversial; there are certainly references to decorative hand-drawn and painted maps in poetic and literary sources. See Livy 41.28.8-9; Ov. *Her.* 1.31-32; Prop. 4.3.35; Plin. *HN* 6.40; Tib. 1.10.29. For more on maps see Miller 1916; Gottschalk 1972; Sherk 1974; Dilke 1985; Brodersen 2001; Brodersen 2004; Cadiou 2006.

125 Cic. *Acad.* 2.1.2. Campbell 1987. Cicero provided his brother Quintus with some ethnographic foreknowledge. When Quintus received the province of Asia, Cicero advised him on how to treat the inhabitants based upon ethnographic stereotypes. Quintus must exhibit gentle caution, for his province is inhabited by Greeks, who have degenerated through servitude to the extent that they are deceitful, undependable, and schooled in obsequious compliance, though they are the most civilised in the world: Cic. *Q. Fr.* 1.1. It is unknown whether Quintus took the advice, but his tendency toward cruelty and rashness (cf. *Q. Fr.* 1.2 for his desire to mete out
Lucullus studied the military history of the area, and presumably as much as he
could about the region he was to command in, because he recognised that
ignorance would likely lead to failure. The anecdote shows that it was part of
Roman expectations that generals would make use of all available intelligence to
equip themselves with foreknowledge, and that not doing so was considered
imprudent.

The same recognition emerges from a Livian anecdote. During the
Second Punic War, a centurion called Marcus Centenius asked the senate to be
assigned 5,000 men. He alleged that because he knew the enemy’s route and the
local terrain, that is, he had foreknowledge, he could turn Carthaginian tactics
against them. The senate was persuaded by his argument and accepted his
proposal. Livy judges that the suggestion was foolish, and that the senators were
all the more so for acquiescing to it. But his judgement amounts not to a
dismissal of the value of foreknowledge, but to the senate’s belief that the skills
of a mere centurion might match those of a commander. Now it is not unusual
for commanders in the field to give centurions command responsibilities; what
makes this case unusual is that the senate did so. The fight that followed the
decision appears odd and is possibly an invention to prove Livy’s point that
centurions make poor commanders. There is little discussion of Centenius’
actions or intentions in the sequel. He simply marches against Hannibal’s army
and dies in a pitched battle. There is no discussion of his employment of his
allegedly superior foreknowledge. Livy’s cultural prejudice has caused him to
downplay Centenius’ foreknowledge along with his rank; he has tossed the baby
out with the bathwater, in other words. The senate’s extraordinary acceptance of
his suggestion, however, is significant. The senate understood and appreciated
the value of foreknowledge in crises. In the end, Centenius’ foreknowledge,
exaggerated or not, was simply not enough to counter the skill of Hannibal. This
is not surprising. Centenius and his troops were outfoxed and outnumbered.

to two Mysians the traditional Roman punishment for parricide – beating them and
then sewing them up in a leather sack with a dog, a snake, a rooster, and a monkey,
and throwing them into the sea) suggests not. For further examples of Roman
stereotypes of Greeks see Cic. Fron. 9-12; 23; Cic. Qfr. 1.2.4; Plaut. Most. 960.
\footnote{Livy 25.19.}
\footnote{Cf. Livy 25.1; 27.12.}
Hannibal was a skilled opponent with deep knowledge of intelligence-based deception techniques.\textsuperscript{128}

Ideally, foreknowledge taught individuals how to react in certain circumstances. In Polybius, these circumstances did not have to recur in the same geographical space, but under roughly similar conditions. Building a knowledge base of where conditions were geographically similar or where one would face broadly similar peoples served a valid military and political purpose. It is for this reason that attempts to discover more about the world are praised and future research is encouraged. Polybius claims that almost all authors attempt to describe the peculiarities and the situations of places at the edges of the world. Most of them, he alleges, were mistaken.\textsuperscript{129} But he praises individuals who record events and conditions with a sound knowledge of tactics and with descriptive power, because it is through these descriptions that intelligence can be used in future scenarios.\textsuperscript{130} Even those whose records are found to be inaccurate later ought to be valued for attempting to bring parts of the world previously unknown into the public consciousness.\textsuperscript{131} Distant lands were difficult to explore owing to desolate landscapes, the wildness of the inhabitants, or lack of communications.\textsuperscript{132} But these authors ought not to be criticised for their false information because they ascertained something about the lands and increased available knowledge.\textsuperscript{133} There is a clear recognition that cultural intelligence was not only valuable but that its accuracy was important. Foreknowledge is the only

\textsuperscript{128} There were occasions during the Second Punic War when Hannibal was deceived by Roman military counterintelligence efforts. Most prominently, he was outwitted by Salinator’s and Nero’s counterintelligence efforts before the battle of Metaurus. Livy 27.48-51; Polyb. 11.1-3; App. Hann. 52-54, and above, 47.

\textsuperscript{129} Polyb. 3.58.

\textsuperscript{130} ...δαυμαξειν τον συγγαφεα και κατα την δυναμιν και κατα την εμπειριαν εικος και πολλα των χρησιμων απενεγκασθαι προς τας ομοιας περιστασεις: Polyb. 12.25f.2.

\textsuperscript{131} A lot of geographical information was certainly misleading. Even if accurate information were available it may not have been the information that was accessible or preferred. These failures are not indicative of a lack of care or appreciation, but poor practice. Modern scholars debate the accuracy of Polybius’, Livy’s, and Appian’s geographical knowledge of Spain, for instance, especially with regard to the location of Saguntum and the Ebro River. See Richardson 1986: 23-30.

\textsuperscript{132} Polyb. 3.58.5-9.

\textsuperscript{133} αλλ’ έδικον γνωσαν και προεβαίσαν την εμπειριαν την περι των έν τοιουτως καιροις, επαινεν και δαυμαξειν αυτως δικαιον: Polyb. 3.59.2.
source of intelligence that can remain helpful over the long term. Strategic and tactical intelligence quickly becomes obsolete. Polybius suggests that because Greek ‘men of action’ have been relieved of their military or political ambitions, through Roman domination, they now had ample opportunity to increase available knowledge further through inquiry and study – something Polybius himself set out to do. Polybius’ statements here reflect an acknowledgement of the constantly evolving understanding of the known world and its inhabitants. Unlike Strabo, Polybius does not dismiss the importance of knowing about certain peoples and places because they are far away. Instead, he suggests that everything ought to be investigated if possible, and men should take advantage of the relative safety of the age so that later individuals who find themselves in similar environments or circumstances may make use of the ‘complete and accurate’ database of information.

While authors advocate the use of foreknowledge, their accounts include few examples of practical employment of it. More often, they describe foreknowledge failures. Foreknowledge failures, however, suggest that foreknowledge use was routine behaviour. It is always more noteworthy for historians when failure to comply with expected behaviour occurs, leading to disaster. This is especially true of Roman authors who lacked military experience, whose focus was on ‘big picture history,’ rather than on the minute details of what caused a specific military or diplomatic victory, or disaster. The absence of specific references to the employment of foreknowledge in decision-making is thus not an adequate argument against the Roman appreciation for it. As was mentioned earlier, there are few surviving accounts of mid-republican dispatches and histories written by Roman military officials. Surviving fragments of military dispatches reveal that generals did gather and send cultural information about various regions. Stray statements in the historical record reinforce the idea that the Romans appreciated the value of cultural

134 Austin and Rankov 1995: 93.
135 Polyb. 3.59.4-9.
foreknowledge. Livy includes such information in the speeches he puts in the mouths of his historical figures. He has Nabis warn Quinctius Flamininus in 195 that actions in Sparta ought not to be judged by Roman norms, as this would only lead to misinterpretations. Sulpicius Galba’s defence for massacring the Lusitanians in 150 is another possible example. He defended himself by alleging that the Lusitanians in question had sacrificed a horse and a man, which was an indication that they were preparing for war. Galba’s massacre, as presented in Appian, was not an abrupt decision, but was based on cultural foreknowledge. His method of slaughter, moreover, was based on an appreciation of counterintelligence. Galba divided the surrendered Lusitanians into groups and set them apart from each other across a plain, reducing the chance they could overpower Roman soldiers and escape. He then surrounded the first group with a ditch and sent soldiers in to massacre them. Galba must have set the groups far apart enough for the second and third groups not to hear the screams of the first, for Appian says he ordered the slaughter of the others before they knew of the fate of the first. Maintaining secrecy required counterintelligence and planning.

Galba’s treatment of the Lusitanians in the context of the vicious campaigns in Spain is perhaps understandable. It was simply easier, though perhaps morally and politically risky, as the sequel indicates, to refuse to allow the dedi tio to take its usual course and allow the Lusitanian community to be restored. The sources for this incident moreover are confused and difficult to reconcile. Appian does not refer to the war ritual. If Livy’s account is accepted,

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137 At a state level foreknowledge is harder to detect. There are no surviving sources discussing policy motivations. To some extent, this is revealed in political intelligence measures, covert action, and clandestine diplomacy. These measures require a sophisticated understanding of culture as will be discussed in the following chapters.
138 Livy 34.31.17-19.
139 Livy Per. 49.
140 What follows is based on App. Hisp. 59-60; cf. Oros. 4.21.10.
141 The most complete surviving source for the Lusitanian and Celtiberian wars is the somewhat confused account of Appian. For critical discussions and interpretations of these campaigns see Knapp 1977; Richardson 1986; Richardson 2000.
142 It is difficult to locate the alleged Lusitanian war ritual in Appian’s narrative. He suggests Galba’s initial agreement to a truce was a farce, and that because the Lusitanians had broken the treaty, and thus Galba repaid treachery with treachery, this must mean the ritual had taken place prior to their engagement with Galba and
it suggests Galba was knowledgeable about Lusitanian practices, and used them to interpret their actions. According to Livy, Galba allegedly received intelligence that the Lusitanians were planning an attack; he learnt that they had performed a ritual reserved for war; so he planned his deceit and massacre to anticipate them.\textsuperscript{143} Galba, of course, could have been lying about the war ritual in his defence before the senate. The significance of his use of this argument, however, is that he regarded it as sufficiently credible as a justification of his action in the eyes of a majority of senators. He thought they would agree with him on the importance of foreknowledge and the ability of the commander in the field to act on it to prevent disaster to Roman arms.

Another example, perhaps subject to post-factum self-interested exaggeration, survives in the epistolion of Scipio Nasica.\textsuperscript{144} What survives of the account (mostly in Plutarch) reads like it originated in a dispatch, and while not explicit about the gathering and assessment of foreknowledge, implies a good deal about Roman strategic appreciation for this kind of intelligence. When the consul Aemilius Paullus entered the Pierian plain in 168, he knew, or had been informed, that Macedonian forces, already amassed across the Elpeus, were highly skilled in artillery and accurate with missile weapons. He could not risk an attempt to cross the Elpeus against such resistance and the works built on the farther bank.\textsuperscript{145} So, as mentioned earlier, in part because of his lack of topographical intelligence about the region, Paullus summoned two trusted Perrhaebian traders, Coenus and Menophilus, to discuss potential routes through Perrhaebia which lacked Macedonian garrisons in an attempt to draw the Macedonians away from their position by outflanking them from the rear.\textsuperscript{146}

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Lucullus. If this were the case, however, this would mean the ritual took place even before Galba arrived in command. On the other hand, Galba may have made the whole thing up.

\textsuperscript{143} Archaeological evidence suggests that the Lusitanian sacrifice was actually performed. See Santos 2007b; Santos 2007a; Garcia Riaza 2015: 20.

\textsuperscript{144} Scholars have taken a variety of positions on the accuracy of Nasica’s account and how it may be reconciled with other sources, the most recent assessment, with an overview of earlier opinions, being Burton forthcoming.

\textsuperscript{145} \textit{Ipsi natura et operibus inexsuperabilis ripa videbatur, et praeterquam quod tormenta ubique disposita essent, missilibus etiam melius et certiore ictu hostis uti audierat}: Livy 44.35.6.

\textsuperscript{146} Livy 44.35.6-7; for Coenus and Menophilus, see above, p. 127.
Plutarch says that the unguarded routes were left unprotected because the terrain was particularly treacherous.\textsuperscript{147} The plan for the flanking manoeuvre around Mt. Olympus completed, Paullus gave public orders that Octavius should bring up the fleet with rations, and that Nasica and Fabius Maximus should gather some men and pillage the coastline.\textsuperscript{148} It is here the account of Nasica reveals an understanding and collation of foreknowledge. Nasica set out on the road toward the sea and encamped at Heracleum, implying that he was to rendezvous with the fleet, embark his men, and sail to and surround the Macedonian camp.\textsuperscript{149} Instead, he waited until nightfall, told his officers his true plans, and marched in the opposite direction toward Olympus. This episode contains two points of interest for the present purpose: the use of locals to gain geographical foreknowledge, and Paullus' brilliant counterintelligence operation, that is, the feint to Heracleum. Paullus not only informed himself about the local geography to gain a strategic advantage over the Macedonians, but also made judgements about how Roman actions would be interpreted in order to mislead any Macedonian agents or spies. Knowledge of Macedonian techniques and strategic assumptions were thus manipulated to Rome’s advantage. Ultimately, the use of foreknowledge failed to achieve total strategic victory because a Cretan deserter from the Roman ranks revealed what he knew of the plot to Perseus.\textsuperscript{150} This failure, however, does not discount the attempt to use foreknowledge to secure an advantage. And, in the event, the flanking manoeuvre was successful.

A state-level example of foreknowledge emerges from the First Punic War. Rome was primarily a land power at the war’s outset.\textsuperscript{151} They found themselves in an unfamiliar naval conflict with Carthaginians who were superior

\textsuperscript{147} Plut. Aem. 15.
\textsuperscript{148} Livy 44.35.8.
\textsuperscript{149} Plut. Aem. 15.5-8.
\textsuperscript{150} Both Polybius and Plutarch mention the Cretan deserter. How this deserter gained information about the flanking manoeuvre since it was discussed only with Nasica and Fabius is unknown. If he were a member of their carefully picked forces, they would presumably have noticed his absence. He may simply be a fabrication to explain why Macedonian forces, for whatever reason, appeared where they had not been expected. Plut. Aem. 16.1.
\textsuperscript{151} For example of a lack of naval skill and power see Livy 7.25.3-15, 9.28.2-3, Per. 12; App. Sam. 7. For modern studies of Roman seafaring see Thiel 1954; Meijer 1986; Workman-Davies 2006.
Recognising this, Roman forces sought to level the playing field, so to speak, by reducing their limitations in naval technology and warfare. The Romans famously constructed their navy modelled on a captured quinquereme. Using Carthaginian ships as models, however, could not turn Roman soldiers into accomplished sailors with the skill necessary to execute complicated naval manoeuvres. To counter this disadvantage and capitalise on their own skills, they developed the *corvus*, which allowed their soldiers to board Carthaginian ships and force a style of military encounter more familiar to the Romans. In this situation, it is clear that the Romans acknowledged and identified their technological and practical weaknesses. They compared their skills with knowledge they had gathered of the weaknesses and strengths of their enemy and fought to overcome and exploit them. The collection of technological intelligence was not necessarily actively investigated, but adopted when passively acquired. The initial use of the *corvus* succeeded in confusing Carthaginian forces which had not anticipated such methods in their planning. Roman methods were disruptive: they upset Carthaginians assumptions about the nature of naval warfare and forced Carthaginian ships into styles of battle they were ill-prepared for. The Carthaginians were the masters of the western Mediterranean sea, and past masters at ramming tactics. The Romans removed the advantage by flipping the battlefield, overcoming their well-known inadequacies in ground combat.

The use of foreknowledge is most visible in the evidence when commanders in military situations are either blamed or forgiven for foreknowledge failure, or praised for employing it successfully. The argument between Aemilius Paullus and the consul Terentius Varro in 216 is a good example of the first type. Terentius Varro, having rebelled against Fabian tactics, returned to the previously unsuccessful policy of pitched battles, with little

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152 Polybius describes the Roman abandonment of coastal cities in fear of the Carthaginian fleet. See 1.20.6-7.
153 Polyb. 1.20.13-16.
154 There is some academic debate about the reliability of Polybius’ account see Workman-Davies 2006: 22-4.
155 Polyb. 1.22-23.
156 As Polybius asserts, the Romans, contrary to all expectation, gained some measure of success at sea. See Polyb. 1.24.1.
regard for the potential of intelligence and counterintelligence. He tried to
determine how he would deal with Hannibal without an understanding of the
nature of the theatre of operations, the quality of his troops, or that of
Hannibal’s men to the extent he could simply set the day that he would engage
the Carthaginians in battle. The attitude was naive and bumbling. It relied purely
on luck, ignorance, and an inflated sense of his own superiority and that of his
troops. In contrast, the commander that is praised in the tradition, Aemilius
Paullus, denounced Varro’s arrogance. He scorned his lack of understanding of
the need for intelligence. He openly expressed surprise that Varro was blind
enough to attempt to form a tactical plan with no understanding of or
appreciation for the actual situation he faced. Paullus claimed that Varro did
not understand the land, the geographical features, his own troops, or those of
his enemy. It was thus astounding that Varro could possibly know what tactics he
would employ and be able to predict the day he would meet the Carthaginians in
battle. Paullus would never devise a plan, and certainly not announce one before
he had gathered as much foreknowledge as possible. Paullus was warned on
his departure by Fabius Maximus that he should watch out for Varro – a poor,
inautious commander who may indeed cause more problems for Rome than
Hannibal. He appealed to the audience to take advantage of fighting on home
soil, where allies, greater expertise, judgement, and perseverance aided them, in
stark contrast to Hannibal who was in a strange and hostile land. Rash
commanders take no account of the situation before them and attempt to fight

157 …qui dux, priusquam aut suum aut hostium exercitum, locorum situm, naturam regionis
nosset, iam nunc togatus in urbe scaret quae sibi agenda armato forent, et diem quoque
praedicere posset qua cum hoste signis collatis esset dimicaturus. Se, quae consilia magis res
dent hominibus quam homines rebus, ea ante tempus immatura non praecepturum…: Livy
22.38.8-13.

158 Collegae eius Pauli una, pridie quam ab urbe proficisceretur, contio fuit, verior quam gratior
populo, qua nihil inclementer in Varronem dictum nisi id modo, mirari se, qui dux,
priusquam aut suum aut hostium exercitum, locorum situm, naturam regionis nosset, iam nunc
togatus in urbe scaret quae sibi agenda armato forent, et diem quoque praedicere posset qua cum
hoste signis collatis esset dimicaturus. Se, quae consilia magis res dent hominibus quam homines
rebus, ea ante tempus immatura non praecepturum: Livy 22.38.8-11.

159 In Italia bellum gerimus, in sede ac solo nostro; omnia circa plena civium ac sociorum sunt;
armis viris equis commutabitis iuvant iuvabantque—id iam fidei documentum in adversis rebus
nostris dederunt; meliores, prudentiores constantiores nos tempus diesque facit. Hannibal contra
in aliena, in hostili est terra, inter omnia inimica infestaque, procul ab domo ac patria…: Livy
with preconceived notions. Caution and intelligence techniques become conflated in Livy’s narrative. Livy’s presentation of commanders’ behaviour is not necessarily nuanced. He lacked a sophisticated knowledge of military tactics, but he could recognise what Roman society and pragmatism determined to be arrogant and foolish behaviour. Once again, his critique is a reflection of normative behaviour: the Romans appreciated and understood the value of foreknowledge.

Polybius’ advice when it came to censuring generals who were ambushed or subject to some other intelligence failure was to examine their individual circumstances before determining if they were to be blamed or pardoned. Commanders who ought to be censured include those who incautiously place themselves in the hands of an enemy - that is, those who fail to collate as much intelligence as possible. Cultural and geographical information used in these circumstances is not necessarily gained prior to an expedition, but prior to engagement. Available knowledge was always, vitally, augmented by information in situ. Polybius has the consul of 260, Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio, rashly try to take the city of Lipara through treachery. He failed to conduct pre-emptive intelligence operations, and failed to protect himself. Scipio was blockaded in the harbour by a Carthaginian fleet, and quickly surrendered. Scipio deserved the scorn poured upon him for rushing to action without a solid plan and without consideration for contingencies: he earned the nickname ‘Asina’, or ‘the Ass’, for his stupidity. Livy pours similar scorn on the legate Appius Claudius Cento in his account of the Third Macedonian War. Messengers from Uscana secretly arrived to talk with Claudius, offering to betray the city and promising much loot. Livy claims that Claudius’ greed compelled him to forgo the usual

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160 For a detailed discussion on the contrast between rash and cautious commanders see Catin 1944: 42-53.
161 περὶ δὲ τῶν ταυτῶν περιπετειῶν, πότερα χρή τοῖς πάσχουσιν ἐπιτιμᾶν ἢ συγγνώμην ἔχειν, καθόλου μὲν οὐκ ἀσφαλές ἀποφήγησθαι διὰ τὸ καὶ πλεῖος τὰ κατὰ λόγον πάντα πράξαντας, ὡμοὶ υποχειρίους γεγονέναι τοῖς ἐτοίμως τὰ παρ’ ἀνθρώπους ὑφαρμένα δίκαια παραβαινοῦσιν· οὐ μὴν οὖδ’ αὐτόθεν ἀποστατεύν τῆς ἀποφάσεως ἅργης, ἀλλὰ βλέποντα πρὸς τοὺς καιροὺς καὶ τὰς περιστάσεις οίς μὲν ἐπιτιμητέον τῶν ἦγεμόνων, οῖς δὲ συγγνώμην δοτέοιν: Polyb. 8.35.1-2.
162 Διό καὶ τοῖς μὲν ἀσκέταις ἔαυτοις ἐγκειμέομαι τοῖς ὑπεναντίοις ἐπιτιμητέοις, τοῖς δὲ τὴν ἐνδεχομένην πρόνοιαν ποιομένους οὐκ ἐγκλητέοι: Polyb. 8.36.1.
163 Polyb. 1.21.4-7.
precautions of taking hostages as a guarantee against treachery or sending scouts to reconnoitre the city, nor did he obtain any oaths of good faith. Claudius can be reproached due to incautious actions, as indeed he was in the senate by the soldier Sextus Digitius; his report resulted in a senatorial delegation to investigate Claudius’ conduct—and no doubt to reproach his conduct.  

It is a lack of foresight, not intelligence failure after taking precautions, that brings disgrace. Hence, according to Polybius, one should not rely entirely on local guides, but should only use them if one’s basic knowledge of the area or security measures are enough to ensure deception does not occur. Polybius scoffs at the idea that Hannibal would have attempted to find a path through the Alps without collating as much information as possible prior to his expedition. He dismisses historians who would have their audience believe that Hannibal would do what no general, even a desperate one, would do, that is, march into unknown country, with no information. Reliance on the fortuitous appearance of heroes and gods to show the way, and eschewing pre-emptive intelligence are inconceivable to Polybius. He does not dismiss the use of local guides, which are relatively common and necessary, but mocks the trope of commanders being at a loss until a mysterious person saves them from their folly. Further, he highlights the importance of ensuring information was still sound, claiming that it was foolish to blindly follow one’s predecessors’ information without checking topographical and geographical information and interpreting it via one’s own

164 See Livy 43.10, and above, pp. 137-38.
165 Polyb. 11.2.4-7; cf. Polyb. 9.9.1-10; 29.17.2; Livy 44.41.4.
166 Polyb. 9.14.
167 ἀλλ` ὅπερ οἱ τοῖς ἄλοις ἐπτακότες καὶ κατὰ πάντα τρόπον ἐξαποροῦντες οὐχ ὑπομένουσιν, ὡστ` εἰς ἀπρονοήτους καθιέναι τόπους μετὰ δυνάμεως, τοῦτο περιτώθεασιν οἱ συγγραφεῖς Ἀννίβα τῷ τὰς μεγάλτας ἐλπίδας ἀκεραίους ἔχοντει πεί τοις καθ` αὐτῶν πραγμάτων: Polyb. 3.48.1-12.
168 Appian, to take another example, mentions a shepherd appearing and promising to guide a Roman army through a little used path in Macedonia: Mac. 6. The fragmentary nature of Appian’s history of the Macedonian wars makes it difficult to determine much from the statement. The provision of guides to Roman armies is connected to duties of amicitia with the Roman state. Burton 2011: 191-2. Isaac argues that claims of being misled by guides are simply excuses and that the reliance on local guides reinforces the impression that the Roman army could not or simply did not gather enough geographical information prior to embarking on campaigns. Isaac 1992: 401-7. But as the criticisms of commanders who fail to reconnoitre properly, and the praise of those who do, indicate that such foreknowledge was expected.
political and military experience. And he emphasises the moral and psychological aspects of one’s opponents; he mentions in the context of Hannibal taking advantage of the Roman general Flaminius’ character flaws, that these can be manipulated and turned to the one’s own advantage. 

A good commander in Polybius’ view is one who collates all available information prior to taking action. The preeminent example in Polybius’ work is of course Scipio Africanus at New Carthage. Prior to engaging or attempting a siege of the city, Africanus set out to learn everything about the area that may have been helpful. He decided that New Carthage was a strategically important city to the Carthaginians, and spent the winter making detailed inquiries about it. He constructed a plan to take it based on observation and interrogation before he left Tarraco. Fishermen had told him about the shallow tides of the bordering lagoon. When he arrived in New Carthage, this foreknowledge, gained from an outsider, was verified. Keeping the plan from the soldiers, Africanus only revealed it after he had determined that it might work. The plan worked and New Carthage fell. Five hundred men equipped with ladders were led by guides and scaled the walls at the fall of the tide. It was thanks to preemptive investigation and the employment of geographical foreknowledge that Africanus succeeded.

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169 Polyb. 10.9.3.  
170 Polyb. 3.81.  
171 Silenus claims the plan was made not through foresight, but from divine intervention. Polybius refutes this. Polyb. 10.9.2-3.  
172 Polyb. 10.8.  
173 Polyb. 10.11.5ff. If low sea levels were a daily occurrence it is unusual that the Carthaginians did not take precautions against it. Appian says they were careless because the wall was low at the point it met the sea: Hisp. 20, but the low wall combined with a well known low tide suggests there was a greater reason to guard it rather than an excuse to neglect it. Appian erroneously claims that the drop was normal due to Mediterranean tides, but says that Scipio did not plan his attack on the sea wall until after he saw the levels vary, which brings into question what his secret original plan was: App. Hisp. 21. Livy claims there was an unusually strong wind that dropped levels more than normal. Scipio allegedly discovered this through observation but claimed some kind of divine intervention had occurred, drawing the lagoon out for him, in order to convince his troops he was divinely favoured: 26.45.  
174 Polyb. 10.9.1. An awareness of the power of information serves as part of Polybius’ glorification of Scipio. He is an outstanding military commander because he knows to censor information.  
175 Polyb. 10.14.
This employment of foreknowledge is contrasted with the actions of commanders who are criticised in the sources. Sources describe situations where commanders and armies are slaughtered and misled when they enter areas with little foreknowledge. While well after the period covered in this study, Quinctilius Varus’ disastrous campaign in Germany in AD 9 is the classic example. According to Velleius Patertculus, Varus entered Germany with the faulty opinion that Germans could be pacified by law; he acted as though he were a praetor entering a civilised city. Romans with experience or knowledge of the people knew that the Germans were a lying, deceitful race. Varus deceived himself. This self-deception ultimately resulted not only in his death, but the destruction of his army. Strabo further reinforces the idea that the failure to pay attention to foreknowledge can lead to disaster. In his rationale for the study of geography, he hopes foreknowledge will ensure armies are not massacred in the future, as in Parthia – presumably referring to the destruction of Crassus’ army in 54 – or against the Germans and Celts where these peoples and their guerrilla warfare in forests, swamps, and deserts allowed ignorant and poorly prepared Romans to be killed, tricked, or starved of provisions.

That commanders’ failures were blamed on a misunderstanding of terrain and people - a personal lack of appreciation for foreknowledge - highlights the expectation of its use. In reality, there are numerous contributing factors to and causes of military loss and success, but it is a natural human tendency to place blame on a single factor. What is significant is the choice of what to blame. Strabo had a stake in advocating for geographical knowledge. Everybody may not have shared his opinions about the lack of foreknowledge and consideration. But they cannot, however, be regarded as quixotic or peculiar. Authors appeal to justifications and beliefs that their audiences will view as acceptable and normative. Once again, as was seen earlier, in the case of the Quinctilius Varus disaster, Strabo blamed the general’s lack of geographical knowledge. Cassius

176 Vell. Pat. 2.117-119; cf. Caes. BGall. 4.2-3; 6.11-28.
177 Strab. 1.1.17.
178 This attitude was not only Roman. Thucydides is the earliest known source to explicitly link victory with foreknowledge. He notes that most Athenians were ignorant of the topography of Sicily and miscalculated due to this during their invasion of the island. Ignorance of topography influenced political and military decisions. See Thuc. 6.1.2; 7.44.
Dio, moreover, says Varus was deceived by the false friendship of the German leaders into failing to reconnoitre the unknown lands into which he was being lured; indeed, Varus chastised those who advised him to gather intelligence. When news of a distant, prearranged German uprising came, Varus’ treacherous allies escorted him deeper into the unknown, and then turned on him and destroyed his legions.\textsuperscript{179} Forested areas had long plagued Roman armies. The authors’ choice to blame Varus’ lack of foresight indicates a recognition that ignorantly wandering into areas was unwise, and that commanders ought to prepare themselves.

A mid-republican example indicates the importance of foreknowledge on both the geographical and cultural levels. In preparation for the battle of Cynoscephalae in 197, Quinctius Flamininus dispatched some cavalry squadrons to perform some cautious topographical investigation.\textsuperscript{180} He reminded his troops to be wary of ambushes, which even in daylight could be hidden by the terrain;\textsuperscript{181} he also reminded them that they were facing forces that understood mountainous terrain and knew how to exploit it, but that the Romans had previously defeated these same troops in similar circumstances in the gorges of Epirus.\textsuperscript{182} Despite Flamininus’ careful concern for geographical foreknowledge, his consideration of Macedonian cultural practices was remarkably deficient. He did not understand the signifiers of Macedonian surrender. When the Macedonians, leaderless and in disorder, were being cut down by the Romans, they held up their spears in the traditional Macedonian sign of surrender. As they were being slaughtered in this position, Flamininus had no idea what the sign meant, and allowed his troops to continue their attack before being told what the sign meant.\textsuperscript{183} That Macedonians were killed after they surrendered is to be blamed not on warmongering or aggressive Roman tendencies, or on the disobedience of soldiers, but squarely on a lack of proper foreknowledge, resulting in confusion.\textsuperscript{184}

\textsuperscript{179} Dio 56.18.5-19.  
\textsuperscript{180} Polyb. 18.21.1.  
\textsuperscript{181} Livy 33.7.  
\textsuperscript{182} Polyb. 18.23; Livy 33.8.  
\textsuperscript{183} Polyb. 18.26.9-10; Livy 33.10.  
\textsuperscript{184} This is not to say Flamininus completely lacked strategic foreknowledge of a cultural sort. He exposes his understanding of the geopolitics of the Balkans in
Livy has a tendency to divide commanders into the cautious and the rash or crude.\textsuperscript{185} Those he scorns fail to consider pre-emptive knowledge and/or to add to existing knowledge before making decisions about how to proceed. In general, each rash commander is presented like other rash commanders, and each cautious one acts like other cautious commanders. Livy consistently portrays rational generals as those who are most effective. Success and failure depend on a whether careful prior assessment of a situation took place. Those who rush into action with an incomplete understanding of affairs generally suffer defeat.\textsuperscript{186} Part of the contrast between the two types of general relates to intelligence.\textsuperscript{187} Crude commanders do not engage in reconnaissance, only to find themselves ambushed and suffering the consequences of their lack of foresight. Cautious commanders are generals who show a higher awareness of intelligence processes. The epitome of the cautious commander, Fabius Maximus, advocated reason, observation, and intelligence use in general during the Second Punic War. He built up an awareness of Hannibal’s movements and habits, and determined to fight a war of attrition. Despite reportedly facing some criticism from many of his contemporaries, one of these, the poet Ennius, credited him with saving Rome.\textsuperscript{187} The sentiment is echoed in Livy.\textsuperscript{189} In 216 Fabius advised, when back in Rome, that the senate send out young cavalrymen to locate Hannibal, discover what he was doing, and what he was likely to do.\textsuperscript{190} He recognised the need for foreknowledge prior to decision-making.

As would be expected, therefore, rash behaviour, embodied by a lack of foreknowledge, was met with shock and outrage. In 171, when the senate was

\textsuperscript{185} Catin points out the tendency of Livy to present plebeian consuls as rash and those of patrician birth as cautious. See Catin 1944: 42-53.
\textsuperscript{186} Podes 1990.
\textsuperscript{187} Recall, however, that Livy’s main criterion for success or failure is morality. Nevertheless, a failure to appreciate and pursue intelligence is regarded by him as part of an overall moral failing on the part of a general.
\textsuperscript{188} Enn. Ann. 363-365.
\textsuperscript{189} Livy 30.26. Polybius does not echo the sentiment, in part because of the enmity between the Fabii and the Scipiones.
\textsuperscript{190} Livy 22.55.4-6. For a similar attempt to learn the status of an enemy prior to engagement see Livy 44.18-20.
informed that Cassius Longinus had led his army out of his province, along an untried and unexplored route, with only local guides who knew the roads from Aquileia into Macedonia to show him the way, they were shocked. Cassius took a grave risk venturing into a war zone using locals as guides who were probably not properly vetted and thus could not be trusted. Initially, the story was dismissed as being unbelievable.\(^\text{191}\) It was beyond what the senate could conceive as rational behaviour. The outrage came not only because Cassius had left his province without authorisation, not deigning to inform the senate of his actions, but also as a result of his failure to use the standard Roman sea route from Brundisium to the Illyrian coast. It can only be assumed he did this because he did not want the senate to be informed of his actions, probably because he had coveted the Macedonian command, and was still angry that he had lost it to Licinius Crassus.\(^\text{192}\) In the senate’s eyes, Cassius’ lack of caution in regard to intelligence measures was as offensive as his abandoning his post. He risked his men by pursuing an unnecessary path through inhospitable terrain.

This is not the only instance during the mid-republic when venturing along unknown and unscouted paths was met with scorn. In 169, during Marcius Philippus’ campaign against Perseus, Philippus risked disasters by failing to properly reconnoitre. Livy tells us that he started his campaign against Perseus well. He initially attempted to attain a sense of potential pathways into Macedonia. He summoned guides for various routes, and had them explain the options. Then he questioned his advisors about their opinions. But he lacked the ability to make a decision in a timely fashion. When Philippus finally got underway he advanced until the routes diverged, and Perseus took advantage of his indecision by occupying all the viable passes into Macedonia. Eventually Philippus decided to use the pass around Lake Ascuris.\(^\text{193}\) Through his dithering and indecision, Philippus had made a crucial strategic error. If he had determined from the outset to use this route, scouts could have been sent ahead to investigate and ensure it was suitable and advance forces could have been set in place. It is difficult to determine whether the guides Philippus had questioned

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\(^{191}\) Livy 43.1.8.
\(^{192}\) Livy 42.32.1-5.
\(^{193}\) Livy 44.2.
had given him faulty information. He does have to be credited with trying to
gather foreknowledge, and with consulting others about his plan. The problem
was his inability to act on the intelligence in a timely fashion. In the event,
Philippus sent 4000 men ahead to secure the pass around Lake Ascuris. They
struggled to advance due to the ruggedness of the terrain and poor conditions of
the route.\textsuperscript{194} The scouting party found 12,000 Macedonian troops already in
position there. The advance party nevertheless sent a message to the consul
bidding him advance with his entire army.\textsuperscript{195} Philippus was worrying about his
choice of route at this point, due to its difficulty, but the message inspired him to
advance. The campsite, while ‘safe’, occupied a hill that offered good aspect of
the surrounds, but the mountain pass was unsuitable for Roman style combat.
Philippus was basically trapped. He could not retreat honourably or safely, so he
was stuck in a difficult position in unknown land in perfect conditions for
ambuscades. In Livy’s words, he had no option but to counteract the impudent
enterprise with determined impudence. The historian does soften his criticism
by adding that sometimes such behaviour works out for the best in the end.\textsuperscript{196}
The subsequent struggles and damage to the soldiers and their baggage defied
description.\textsuperscript{197} Soldiers had no choice but to venture through pathless terrain,
and descended the defiles into Macedonia largely by scrambling down with no
fixed order. Eventually they reached safe ground.\textsuperscript{198} Livy’s account is no doubt
overdramatised, especially with regard to speculative statements about the
potential consequences of Philippus’ action. Livy claims that had the Romans
been faced with a greater Macedonian ruler, there would have been great
disaster.

Philippus is presented as an indecisive commander, though one who
understood the need for foreknowledge before taking action. Perhaps he had
learned the value of foreknowledge from an earlier disaster. In 186, he had been

\textsuperscript{194} Ceterum adeo ardua et aspera et confragosa fuit via, ut praemissi expediti biduo quindecim
militum passuum aegre itinere confection castra posuerint: Livy 44.3.3.

\textsuperscript{195} Livy 44.3. For the topography of the region see Meloni 1953: 295-6; Pritchett 1969:
171-4; Pritchett 1982.

\textsuperscript{196} ..nec alius restabat quam audacter commissum pertinaci audacia, quae prudens interdum in
exitu est, corrigere: Livy 44.4.8.

\textsuperscript{197} Inenarrabilis labor descendentibus cum ruina iumentorum sarcinarumque: Livy 44.5.1.

\textsuperscript{198} Livy 44.4-5.
badly defeated by the Ligurians due to reconnaissance failure. While on campaign against the Ligurian Apuani, he followed them blindly into an ambush. He was led into a glade, which had always been their secret retreat and hiding place. Surrounded on an occupied narrow pass, his army was defeated in battle. Philippus then disbanded what was left of his army in order to hide the losses. Philippus’ actions may have been excusable if Liguria, and the tendencies of its people, were completely unknown. But Ligurians were not new to Romans in the second century, and his army had been in Liguria for two years, having been assigned to the area in 187/186. Philippus ought to have known something about their practices, and had that wariness Polybius claims was common to the Romans when in forested, unknown land. That Philippus failed to appreciate the value of foreknowledge in the Ligurian case, when it was so obviously and readily available, and that he later carefully gathered it in Macedonia before (unfortunately too slowly) taking action show that the Romans learned from their mistakes and added material to their individual cultural dossiers.

While the use of foreknowledge is apparent in individual actions, it is more difficult to detect at a state level. There is a clear desire on the part of the senate for more information as is apparent in mandated investigatory missions after military defeats. Evidence for these comes largely from the later republic and early empire. They suggest that geographical and cultural intelligence could ensure that disaster was not repeated in particular areas. Crassus’ defeat at Carrhae serves as a good example of this pattern. He entered the region unprepared and seemingly focused on winning a victory for his own political ends. He failed to appreciate and consider the environment into which he was headed and the people with whom he was to fight. Crassus’ failures were a result of his disregard for foreknowledge. He assumed the Parthians were like the wealthy Armenians. But the campaigns of previous commanders, such as

199 Livy 39.20.5-10.
200 Livy 38.42.
201 Polybius states that Romans had a healthy wariness of forests due to their history with Gallic ambushes: 3.71. Marcus Philippus does not seem to have shared this fear.
202 Other military mishaps in Livy due to a lack of geographical knowledge include Manlius Vulso’s disastrous expedition through unknown wooded countryside in his haste to lift the siege of Mutina in 218.
Lucullus, Gabinus, and Pompey, would have introduced information about the
topography, the weather, the weapons, and fighting techniques of the Parthians
into available pools of foreknowledge. Crassus chose to ignore this
information, blinded as he was by his desire to compete with Pompey and Julius
Caesar. His lack of consideration and intelligence resulted in disaster. But the
aftermath of his actions resulted in ethnographers and geographers writing about
the area, increasing the knowledge available to those who desired to use the
intelligence. Gabba refers to various lost works, including that of Julius
Polyaenus of Sardis who wrote on Ventidius’ campaigns, and the writings of
Dellius, who travelled with Antony in the East. None of these sources of
information survive. Mattern suggests the growth in a desire to know about
others largely revolved around a desire to know about their military
capabilities. Surviving fragments and episodes discuss weapons and tactics
more than social structures. In a militaristic society, such a focus makes sense.
As stated above, Roman investigations were not fuelled by curiosity about the
world, but by the pragmatic desire for useful information. Literary investigations
were a result of new military contacts or military failure. Reporting on military
capabilities filled gaps in knowledge to improve chances of success in future
interactions.

To summarise, geographic and cultural foreknowledge was available to the
Romans and appreciated by them at both the state and individual level. The
sources place a high value on foreknowledge and often describe its failures
rather than its successes. Commanders who sought and used foreknowledge

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203 Pompey had made an arrangement with the Parthian king, either amicitia or
through a foedus. For amicitia see Just. 42.4.6; Livy Per. 100. Presumably this opened up
sources of cultural and geographic information about the Parthians, perhaps made
available by Pompey’s personal historian Theophanes.
204 Ancient sources assume Crassus’ motive was greed. See Plut. Crass. 1.2.2-8, 14.4;
App. B Civ. 2.18; Plin. HN. 33.134.
205 For more on Crassus’ conflict with the Parthians see Sheldon 2005: 86-99.
206 Gabba 1966: 53-7. To take another example, Dio records that Parthians tended to
rely on cavalry and archers. Because of their reliance on archers, they could not fight
in winter. They were nearly invincible in their own territory, but fairly weak outside it: Dio. 40.14-16. Their inability to fight in unfamiliar territory means they limited
themselves to certain styles of fighting. Such information could easily be utilised, if
Roman forces took the time to consider it.
rationally and effectively were praised not just by the sources but by their contemporaries. Those who failed to appreciate and utilise foreknowledge were routinely mocked and vilified in the sources and by their peers. The plethora of negative examples in the sources of commanders failing to use or appreciate foreknowledge when it was readily available and obtainable indicates there was an expectation of the opposite - commanders ought to gather what information they could and consider it before proceeding. The use of intelligence failure as an explanation for military failure is far more informative of the Romans’ appreciation for intelligence than the sources’ failure to inform us about intelligence successes. They rarely say anything about the latter because the successful use of intelligence was expected and routine, and therefore unremarkable.

Conclusion

While foreknowledge was available and on occasion employed by Roman officials, there were no conscious efforts to gather and analyse it for the sake of building an intelligence database. The gathering of foreknowledge intelligence was accidental, ad hoc, and rarely deliberate. Yet where information was available, especially geographic information, there was an expectation it would be taken into account. Collated information could influence decision-making, but there is little evidence of it doing so at a state level during the mid-republic. This laissez-faire attitude toward foreknowledge, however, is not indicative of a disregard for it. Military officials were heavily involved in political life and senatorial discussions. Those who wrote about ethnographic affairs, the proper use of foreknowledge in action, the foolishness of those who ignored its information, and those who determined that more knowledge was needed prior to interaction with other states were equally as involved in military affairs. Lack of training apparently was never an excuse for a lack of appreciation of foreknowledge. Available cultural and geographic knowledge was always growing and was accessible. It is true that prior to conflicts and interactions in certain areas specific information may not have been available, and if it were it may have been considered outdated or outlandish. This excuses some intelligence failures,
but foreknowledge can be obtained at any time prior to engagement with hostile or allied forces. Intelligence was not always accessible prior to an expedition itself, but could be gained by an army prior to engagement in most circumstances through scouting, for example. The choice not to engage with foreknowledge was conscious and made by individuals.

Ancient literary sources indicate that an understanding of foreknowledge existed. The nature of the Mediterranean ensured that information about foreign peoples and areas was available to access, as either part of subconscious beliefs or as written and oral reports from explorers and visitors. The use of this kind of intelligence prior to decision-making during the mid-republic sometimes depends on speculation. Authors infer it when they choose to scorn military commanders who failed to acquaint themselves with their enemy and terrain, and blame military failures on this failure to use intelligence. A lack of foreknowledge increased the chances of Roman armies being deceived, something that occasionally happened, but was not a very common occurrence. The growth of the Roman Empire would not have been possible without the active effort to secure the most basic intelligence.

Foreknowledge provides a framework within which to analyse further information. It is not enough on its own for a state to succeed in an anarchic competitive world. It is a starting point, and, consciously or not, had a place in the construction of societal viewpoints and decision-making. Other active intelligence measures were built upon this base. Political intelligence and counterintelligence missions in order to be successful required an understanding of different geographical regions and peoples. The acknowledgement of the importance of foreknowledge by the Romans shows that their intelligence capabilities and appreciation of intelligence were not as thin as those who cling to the notion of the significance of the absence of a formalised Roman intelligence service would have us believe. The issue was not, as Austin and Rankov assert, that there was a general state of ignorance about intelligence during the mid-republic, but that social factors arising from the nature of the

208 Foreknowledge is rarely mentioned in correlation with political intelligence, but this is a result of different intelligence methods and the focus of authors when discussing such missions, as will be seen in the following chapters.
Roman aristocracy and technological limitations limited the gathering and use of intelligence, including foreknowledge.\textsuperscript{209}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{209} Austin and Rankov conclude that it was ‘ignorance not knowledge of the world that was most characteristic of Republican Rome’. Austin and Rankov 1995: 108.}
V - Trust but Verify: The Roman Intelligence Cycle

The previous chapters of this study have situated the Roman appreciation for and understanding of intelligence in their historical context in the mid-republic. Roman political counterintelligence techniques are an implicit acknowledgement that the Romans recognised the importance of intelligence, that they understood the potential of gaining information about others, and that they knew others wanted it. Counterintelligence, however, is only part of the intelligence process. It is only a defensive measure. It does not reveal the Roman use of or desire for active intelligence, that is, intelligence gathered with the specific intention of determining the foreign policy goals of other, potential or actual, rival states. The collation and use of foreknowledge, as has been seen, reveals a Roman interest in this sort of cultural and geographical information. But the gathering of political foreknowledge was mostly passive, while the active gathering of military foreknowledge was largely restricted to theatres of conflict.

Foreknowledge was not the limit of Roman political intelligence gathering activity. Political intelligence gathering moved beyond this basic level and sought to attain verified intelligence regarding the decision-making, actions, intentions, and capabilities of neighbouring states prior to undertaking international action – especially concerning those states in the Hellenistic East. The information, complemented by foreknowledge, constructed an image of the facts on the ground in a timely manner, and was used to facilitate international and domestic decision-making in as close to real time as possible. But it must be acknowledged that, as stated by Grainger, having knowledge about the actions of various states is not synonymous with understanding these states.¹

The following sections investigate different aspects of the Roman political intelligence cycle as it pertained to international affairs, and provide a case study that reveals the cycle in action in its entirety. It will be argued that while the

intelligence procedures of the mid-republic emphasise its use as a tool for political decision-making, intelligence was supplementary to other decision-making factors. Given the limitations on the timely transference of information, discussed in chapter 2, policies were most often necessarily decided upon prior to the receipt of intelligence. The acquisition of intelligence served to modify or confirm these predetermined decisions. A pattern of behaviour was established to suit these purposes. During the mid-republic, due to the absence of political offices devoted to intelligence gathering and interpretation, and to long-term foreign policy planning, the Roman intelligence cycle does not match that of modern agencies. The modern intelligence cycle has five elements: the request for information; the gathering of information; the processing of gathered knowledge; the interpretation and analysis of this information; and finally the dissemination of it. The intelligence process, however, is rarely so simple and linear. Lowenthal deems it simultaneously linear, circular, and open ended.² The cycle nevertheless simplifies and reduces the processes to an assessable pattern.³ This study reveals that the Roman intelligence cycle had four elements: information provision; verification; analysis; and action.⁴

Although usually regarded as being engaged on strictly diplomatic activities by modern scholars, the actions of ambassadors in antiquity were not limited to diplomacy. It is a truism of modern definitions of international relations that foreign policy employs diplomacy, but diplomacy is not enough for countries and states to determine relations with other states. Using diplomacy implies that one state recognises an international system of states, the (nominal) sovereignty of other member states in the system, and the effect that decisions make on the system as a whole.⁵ Diplomacy assumes the implicit acceptance by states of a world of independent states. The purpose of diplomacy is to investigate what other governments want and what they will object to. It attempts to create pathways to acknowledging the differences and points of dispute between

³ For more on the intelligence cycle and its problems see Johnson 1986; Hulnick 2006; Johnson 2007.
⁴ Processing in modern intelligence agencies involves the transformation of intelligence from technical and electronic data into an interpretable form. It is irrelevant in the Roman context.
⁵ Watson 1982: 15.
nations and reconciling them without resorting to armed conflict. Diplomacy typically does not exist in order to acquire dossiers of information about the capabilities, motivations, and intentions of foreign nations, or to discover information about their topography and resources. ‘Diplomatic’ activity is restricted to resident embassies, whose purpose is specifically related to holding conversations about how to manage potential disputes and conflict, and whose personnel do not concern themselves with information-gathering designed to identify potential points of dispute and conflict. In a mid-republican context, diplomatic missions included those sent to negotiate with kings and commanders at the end of wars and to discuss accusations about warmongering or interference in an attempt to reconcile parties. But legates during the third and second centuries undertook missions that fell outside these parameters. Common features of their ‘diplomatic’ ventures included the presentation of information, either in a legitimate attempt to inform, or as a bargaining tool to influence policy, and the gathering of information in order to verify that which had been provided by others, in order to assess threats and future contingencies. That is to say, diplomatic missions were engaged in political intelligence.

Under the guise of diplomatic missions, Roman representatives investigated their neighbours. The link between intelligence gathering and diplomacy is revealed in the request of Lucius Aemilius Paullus in 169, prior to taking command in the Third Macedonian War, that the senate send a

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6 Watson defines diplomacy as the ‘process of dialogue and negotiation by which states in a system conduct their relations and pursue their purposes by means short of war’. Watson 1982: 11; cf. 20.

7 To repeat, intelligence is defined in this thesis as the gathering and analysis of any information, be it military, political, economic, or cultural, that aids one nation or group in understanding another, for the purposes of facilitating decision-making, both politically and in military situations. See above, p. 34. There are numerous other conflicting definitions of intelligence in modern studies. The most problematic with relation to intelligence and diplomacy are those predicated on the idea that intelligence is covert and involves secrecy. Secrecy, while an important factor in some intelligence activity, is not a defining attribute of intelligence. If only secret or hidden information were gathered, and if it were only done so by covert operatives, chances are one state would miss opportunities to exploit the ignorance of others nations. It would also expose them to manipulation by foreign intelligence operatives and make them vulnerable to surprise. See Sims 2013: 249.

8 Romans were investigated by their neighbours too, of course. See for instance Livy 44.32.1-2 (Roman ambassadors arrested as spies by Gentius of Illyria freed after the king’s defeat). Simonet 2008: 53.
commission to Macedon with the purpose of inspecting the Macedonian army and the fleet. The commission was to investigate Perseus’ forces; to discover the respective positions of the Roman and Macedonian forces; to visit the Roman army; to inspect the loyalties of allies in order to determine who could be trusted and who seemed to be wavering; and lastly to discover what supplies were stockpiled, where they were located, and how they could be transported. According to Paullus, it was only with this up to date knowledge that he could construct plans for the ongoing conflict. He refused to present a plan to the senate without intelligence. As was seen in chapter 2, Paullus’ report (that is, his analysis of the intelligence) was clearly falsified in the senate, and the entire process was little more than a propaganda gambit by Paullus to make himself and his upcoming campaign look better by comparison to his predecessors and their efforts. Paullus’ investigation nevertheless also served the very practical purpose of gathering intelligence about dispositions, morale, and troop numbers with a view to seeing what was required from the senate for his upcoming campaign. The episode implies an unwillingness, on the part of some Roman commanders at least, to embark on a campaign without gathering as much information as possible about the state of the battlefield.

Livy uses the term legati to describe the officials who perform these investigative actions - the same term as used for envoys. Under Roman conceptions of international relations, diplomacy and information gathering fell under the brief of the same kind of official. In the case of Paullus’ commission, in a time of active conflict, the protection afforded by diplomatic status was paramount to the successful acquisition of information. The only way the commission could inspect Macedonian forces was under diplomatic cover.

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9 Iam omnium primum a senatu petit, ut legatos in Macedoniam mitterent ad exercitus visendos classemanque et comperta referenda, quid aut terestribus aut navalibus copiis opus esset; praeterea ut explorarent copias regias quantum possent, qua provincia nostra, qua hostium foret; utrum intra saltus castra Romani habesent, an iam omnes angustiae exsperatae, et in aqua loca percreissent; qui fideles nobis socii, qui dubii suspensaeque ex fortuna fidei, qui certi hostes videreport; quanti praeparati commenatus, et unde terrestri itinere, unde navibus subportarentur; quid ea aestate terra marique rerum gestum esset: ex his bene cognitis certa in futurum consilia capi posse. Senatus Cn. Servilio consuli negotium dedit ut tris in Macedoniam quos L. Aemilio videretur, legaret. Legati biduo post profecti Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus, A. Licinius Nerva, L. Baebius: Livy 44.18.2-6.

10 …nihil se habere Paulus quod referret, cum nondum legati redissent, dixit: Livy 44.19.1.
may be surprising to moderns that they did not do so covertly, but the vast majority of intelligence gathering in antiquity was not undertaken in this way. In the event, the legates returned the following year. They reported that the unexplored route undertaken by the Roman army in the previous year under Marcius Philippus’ command had been more dangerous than advantageous; the army had reached the Macedonian controlled coastal area of Pieria; Perseus did not offer battle, despite his vast army and advantageous position; Roman forces could not force a battle due to their low numbers since Marcius had granted leave very liberally in pursuit of popularity. Further, the Roman forces were idle and difficult to control; they were about to run out of supplies; men in the navy had succumbed to illness, and had neither money nor clothing; allies had begun to desert. Eumenes and his fleet came and went as they pleased. This information was vital. For Paullus to make plans without it would have been extraordinarily difficult. It was with this information that determinations were made regarding how many reinforcements he had to bring. As a further exhortation based on intelligence gathered, Paullus reminded a popular audience at a contio not to listen to and make judgements based on rumours as if they had full information about affairs. They should trust only his official reports, rather than the idle rumours that constantly circulated.

Intelligence gathering missions were not normally covert. The modern romanticised image of intelligence involves clandestine activity and spies discovering things that another, typically hostile and dangerous party is attempting to keep secret. The reality is that most intelligence is publicly available information. This was even more the case during the Roman Republic, but a representative of one state usually had to visit the ‘public’ of another people or state in order to retrieve it. Missions, deemed diplomatic, enabled legitimate and official visitors from external states to acquire information. It is known for instance that Scipio Africanus the Younger, Spurius Mummius, and Lucius Metellus visited Egypt as part of a commission of the senate to ‘inspect’

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11 Livy 44.20.
12 Livy 44.21.
13 Livy 44.21-22, and above, chapter 2. As noted there, the contrast between verified information and rumour is a constant theme throughout the final extant books of Livy; cf. Polyb. 29.1.
the domains of their Eastern allies. Justin’s choice of verb, *inspicio*, suggests that the commission was seeking information. Diodorus’ account supports the motive. Diodorus has the envoys investigate what was worth seeing, that is, the situation and strength of the city of Alexandria, the unique features of Pharos, and the fertility of the land around the Nile. They investigated the number of Egyptian cities, taking note of the natural defensive placement of Egypt, the numbers of Egyptian inhabitants, and the general excellence of the country. They took note that the country was well suited to security and the greatness of empire, if it had strong leadership. The ambassadors created a dossier about Egypt, with the Romans taking advantage of their alliance to discover Egyptian abilities and potential, in order to prepare itself and make decisions about how to act in the future. The same embassy, after surveying Egypt, moved on to examine Cyprus and Syria. The expeditions into Syria and Cyprus are covered in less detail, though it seems probable that they had the same brief – to gather as much information as possible about these ‘allied’ states, and to ensure that there was no anti-Roman sentiment. The envoys served as little more than overt intelligence agents. Foreign states were obliged to hide information they did not want known.

The typical Roman process of gathering intelligence was twofold: allies or those requesting aid would provide information; commissioners from Rome then questioned and verified it. The reliance on an initial external source placed the obligation on foreigners to provide Rome with what they thought to be important. The subjective nature of the process meant that the senate was not necessarily apprised of all information in time for it to affect their decision-making. There were intelligence failures. But no intelligence will ever be

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14 *Quibus confluentibus obuius legatis Romanorum, Scipioni Africano et Spurio Mummio et L. Metello, qui ad inspicienda sociorum regna venebant, procedit*: Just. 38.8. The exact date of the embassy is a matter of dispute. Cf. MRR 1. 481.
15 Diod. 33.28b.1-3.
16 Diod. 33.28b.3.
17 This is consistent with the policy observed in Roman counterintelligence that only information that is obtained through specific Roman sources ought to be given credence. See chapter 3.
18 There were of course instances where Roman representatives gathered initial intelligence themselves. But this was often down to chance. Intelligence was collected as a consequence of their presence in an area of significance. It was usually not the ostensible or stated purpose of their visit.
universally successful; failures do not indicate a failure to understand the process. It cannot be denied that a system reliant on the biased perspective of others was an imperfect system. Nor can it be denied that the reliance on this did not always lend itself to timely information transfers. The ability to gather political intelligence about others does not depend on timeliness for its effective implementation to the same extent as military intelligence. A delay of days or weeks in receiving information about the growth of anti-Roman forces, while having an effect on planning, does not affect outcomes to the same degree as a delay in intelligence about a hostile force planning an attack.

As discussed in chapter 2, all the limitations to which the Romans were subject affected all in the system equally. A lack of bureaucratic procedures and of permanent diplomatic and representative posts was typical of all states throughout the ancient Mediterranean. The risks and limitations of technology, and cultural prejudices against large government bureaucracies, explain the lack of permanent diplomatic missions in antiquity, and of the development of a permanent bureaucratic intelligence service. Their existence would have served little purpose if information could not be accurately transmitted back to Rome in a timely manner. The use of manpower and resources to place permanent staff in foreign territories would result for the most part in out of date information that was only relevant or pertinent to Rome in rare instances. These limits shift the focus of intelligence away from modern conceptions of it. The strategic intelligence motivations of antiquity amounted not to a desire to know everything about everyone at all times. Such a focus is a luxury that has only been available in the last fifty years, and was generated by relatively static alliance systems and understanding of intentions and motivations. There are very few examples of focused political intelligence of this type in antiquity; the Roman-Parthian standoff of later antiquity springs to mind. What Rome did with its amassed information about external peoples highlights the sophistication of Roman policies and consideration given to international relations. The system worked better than most modern scholars credit. The Romans learnt of pertinent information, and investigated it to ensure its accuracy. This was not an excuse to not involve themselves, or an indication of laziness or indifference to the outside world. Rather their methods of intelligence gathering and analysis were the best available given the limits imposed by society, resources, and telecommunications.
technology, and indicate much more than a passing concern with what was unfolding in the international system of which they were a part.

In what follows the Roman intelligence cycle will be tracked through analyses of how intelligence was collected, largely via diplomatic missions both to and from the city of Rome; how that intelligence was analysed by Roman agents (senators and magistrates, primarily), including some discussion of how cultural biases and assumptions crept into the process, and the results of this for the interpretation of intelligence; the circumstances under which intelligence was actioned - or not - and what this means for the Roman appreciation for and understanding of intelligence; and, finally, a case study of the intelligence process in (slow motion) action: the build-up to the Third Macedonian War (179-171).
Political intelligence truly began to play an important role for the Romans during the second century, coinciding with increased diplomatic activity. The explosion of both occurred when Rome began to interact more closely with the Hellenistic East. Although there was no diplomatic service, there was a constant stream of embassies between Rome and other states. According to Livy, in the 461 years between 752 and 291, there were less than twenty diplomatic exchanges between Rome and her neighbours, and only a few more between 218 and 202. There were, however, 22 despatched in the 18 years between 201 and 183, and 26 between 182 and 167.\textsuperscript{19} In light of this the emphasis of the following chapters will be on those Roman intelligence activities that primarily occurred after the beginning the second century. Not all diplomatic missions involved intelligence gathering. But diplomacy is the starting point for strategic political intelligence.\textsuperscript{20} By convention, diplomacy involves the sharing of information, whether explicit and intentional or not. Every statement and justification made for, and even the personnel of an embassy, reveal both information about the sender and the perception of the receiver. It is important to note for studies of intelligence that it is only with the development of permanent services that a distinct separation between the realms of diplomacy and intelligence activities has developed. Before the mid-nineteenth century, diplomats served both purposes. Prior to the separation of the two fields of international interaction, diplomats were part of the intelligence process; they managed their own agents and acted in an overt and covert capacity.\textsuperscript{21} In modern political settings, governments prefer to divide these tools of statecraft into independent services. This can lead to a lack of communication and sharing of pertinent information.\textsuperscript{22} Roman officials were not hindered by such bureaucratic

\textsuperscript{19} Simonet 2008: 52. Simonet alleges quite correctly that this growth has two possible explanations, viz. that belligerents and alliances multiplied and that there was a pre-existing diplomatic tradition in Hellenistic states that Rome had little choice but to adopt. For an examination of earlier diplomatic activity, see Auliard 2006a; Auliard 2006b; Caire and Pittia 2006.

\textsuperscript{20} Austin and Rankov 1995: 16-7.

\textsuperscript{21} Herman 1998: 2.

\textsuperscript{22} Sims 2013: 245.
strictures. Legates, embassies, and commissions were both the users and creators of intelligence.

Prior to discussing the patterns of intelligence collection, it ought to be stressed that in antiquity intelligence was often gained passively and by chance.\textsuperscript{23} The most famous case of this is the Roman interception of the treaty between Philip V of Macedon and Carthage in 215 discussed above.\textsuperscript{24} Roman troops intercepted a Macedonian embassy led by Xenophanes as it was making its way to Hannibal in Italy. When the embassy was brought to the praetor Marcus Valerius Laevinus, Xenophanes talked his way out of Laevinus’ control by claiming Philip wished to align himself with Rome.\textsuperscript{25} He was given extensive intelligence about the state of affairs in Italy, and what routes to travel to avoid conflict – essentially the exact location of Hannibal’s army.\textsuperscript{26} Sheldon calls Laevinus’ action gullible.\textsuperscript{27} Hindsight suggests so. Xenophanes could have been searched and questioned with more care. But to treat someone who came seeking an alliance poorly with no basis for suspicion may have blackened Xenophanes’ subsequent report to Philip, whom the Roman commander thought was the potential ally. Worse, it could have damaged the perception of Roman hospitality and their appreciation for the immunity of ambassadors. It was perhaps unwise to have given away vital strategic information about the state of play in Italy, but this was probably intended as a pledge of good faith, and in any case there was no reason for Roman officials to be suspicious of Macedon at this point. Rome’s main concern at this point was with Carthage, and if they could ally themselves to a major Hellenistic power — or at least keep Macedon out of the conflict altogether — so much the better.\textsuperscript{28} If Xenophanes could

\textsuperscript{23} Chance plays a large role in most intelligence activities. Understanding theoretical intelligence processes means little if others do not act in the predicted manner or fail to receive disinformation, for example.
\textsuperscript{24} Chapter 2 pp. 47-49.
\textsuperscript{25} Livy 23.33.6.
\textsuperscript{26} Livy 23.33.6-10.
\textsuperscript{27} Sheldon 2005: 54.
\textsuperscript{28} While the treaty suggests military cooperation, it is unlikely that even if a treaty were ratified between Carthage and Macedon Philip’s assistance in and around Italy would have been expected or even welcome. Hannibal was winning at this point, and the treaty more clearly looks forward to the evacuation of Roman interests in Illyria (Polyb. 7.9.6; cf. Livy 23.33.12) and post-war Carthaginian sole possession of Italy, with the promise of their support for Philip’s future wars in Greece (Livy 23.33.11-12).
provide a plausible account of his intentions, there was little reason to automatically regard his presence with suspicion.

Rather incredibly, Xenophanes was intercepted again on his return journey, and this was again largely due to chance. There was no active attempt at the time to monitor the Italian peninsula for insurgents or foreign agents. On the second occasion, the presence of Carthaginian representatives in his party raised suspicion. A search uncovered documents in his possession and Xenophanes was questioned. After capturing these documents, the senate reacted quickly. There was a legitimate fear that if Hannibal and Philip joined forces Rome would fall. As a pre-emptive security measure, the fleet was reinforced at Tarentum. Eastern activities were now worthy of close surveillance. Following what now became standard intelligence procedure in the East for the Romans, the senate ordered further investigation into Philip’s motives and intentions to verify the potential for action and the extent to which Macedon might pose a threat. The prefect, Publius Valerius Flaccus, as commander of the fleet, was ordered to investigate the possibility of war with Macedon; Laevinus was to monitor the movements of Philip with care. If they confirmed Philip’s intention to join the war, Laevinus was to cross the Adriatic and keep Philip in Macedonia. The choice to delay action until confirmation of his intentions was wise. While the threat of an Italian invasion by Philip was serious, Roman forces

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29 As discussed in the chapter 2, informing commanders in the field of senatorial affairs and decisions was considered neither practical nor important. It is possible that Xenophanes, if he were travelling with less conspicuous friends, could have talked his way out of Roman hands again by claiming to have been to Rome and spoken with the senate.
30 Livy 23.38.7; Polyb. 7.9.
31 App. Mac. 1; Zonar. 9.4.
32 This procedure will be discussed in the following chapter.
33 Non fueri modo Italici oram sed explorare de Macedonico bello: Livy 23.38.9.
34 Ad Brundisium orae maritimae, intentus adversus omnes motus Philippi, Macedonum regis praesest...: Livy 24.10.4.
35 M. Valerium praetorem litteris certiorum faceret, ... profectus primo quoque tempore in Macedoniam transmitteret daretque operam, ut Philippum in regno contineret: Livy 23.38.11. Providing a full narrative of the so-called ‘First Macedonian War’ is beyond the scope of this study. In 212, Laevinus was asked by Oricum to help lift the Macedonian siege. He went on to attack Philip at Apollonia and to enter into an alliance with Aetolia. By 211, Roman diplomatic efforts encouraged trouble for Philip on the Greek mainland, distracting him from contemplating aiding Hannibal in Italy. See Livy 24.40.1-17; 25.23.9; 26.24.1-16.
were already dealing with an ongoing, and now existential threat in Italy itself. Rather than act impulsively, weakening by division the forces available to counter the Carthaginian threat, the senate determined it needed more intelligence before a plan of action could be made. Laevinus’ initial lack of suspicion was regrettable, but the episode as a whole, and the intelligence cycle it manifests, do not deserve the condemnation they have received in the scholarship. In terms of Laevinus’ purported ‘gullibility’ in letting Xenophanes go and revealing important intelligence to him, he simply manifested a degree of trust without which it is impossible to conduct good-faith diplomatic relations.

Receiving intelligence through chance, though less compelling than active intelligence gathering, certainly shows a Roman appreciation for it. The Roman reaction to Xenophanes’ purpose, once it was properly understood and a rational assessment of the threat level was undertaken, was pragmatic and realistic. What bears notice here is that the senate’s reaction was to seek more intelligence prior to decision-making. The initial interception saved Rome from strategic surprise. It is perhaps a testament to their intelligence collection techniques that there are no known examples of Rome suffering political losses or defeat on account of true strategic surprise. This may indicate that the senate attempted to actively gain intelligence when faced with serious ignorance more often than the sources indicate. Intelligence deficits usually occurred in the disruptive context of warfare within the Italian peninsula. Roman collection activities aimed at preliminary information gathering were largely in response to augmenting or validating dangerous rumours before the senate could accept them as valid.

36 Without this interception, there was a chance that Philip could have entered the war and surprised Rome. The Romans’ contacts in the East were poorly developed at the time, notwithstanding some Illyrian friends on the Adriatic coast who might be able to keep their eye on developments in the East. But as noted earlier (n. 28), the conditions of the treaty between Hannibal and Philip do not suggest that an active Macedonian participation in Italy itself was expected (the highly compressed version of the treaty in Livy 23.33.10 envisions Philip ravaging the Italian coast and waging war on land and sea, but this is not in Polybius’ version, which is probably the original text).

37 It could be suggested that Viriathus’ stunning early successes in the Lusitanian War amounted to a significant strategic surprise (see below, pp. 317-321). But Roman foreknowledge about regions and peoples (see chapter 3) ensured the bellicosity of Gallic and Spanish tribes was an expected reality.
One revealing example occurred in the aftermath of the Battle of Cannae. Ignorance here was particularly dangerous due to the proximity of the battle site to Rome itself. Without adequate intelligence, there was a risk the city could be surprised by Carthaginian armies. There were rumours, but no verifiable intelligence, that both consular armies had been annihilated, leaving no citizen or allied soldier alive. These rumours soon became public knowledge in Rome. The senate decided that they lacked any intelligence about the matter, and that the panic of the populace needed to be controlled. The rumours were strengthened by the senate’s silence; they would neither confirm nor deny the rumours. The people mourned the living and dead alike, assuming disaster for Rome. To build an accurate picture of affairs, the senate proposed that cavalry troops be sent along the Appian and Latin Ways to discover what had happened and whether there were any survivors. This suggests that there was typically a waiting period for news to arrive in Rome, after the passage of which other means had to be found to verify rumours, which usually anticipated the arrival and verification of what became the official account of events. In this case, the riders were to gather what intelligence they could about Hannibal’s plans, his whereabouts, what he was doing, and what he seemed likely to do. Not only did the senate recognise the dangers of a lack of intelligence for their planning, they also acknowledged the dangers it was causing to the populace. In the meantime, to control the escalating panic in the city, women were forced to remain in their homes, family mourning was to be restricted until news arrived, any news would be brought to the praetors immediately, and the people should remain in their homes for an official announcement. To ensure that panic did not drive citizens

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38 Livy 22.54.7.
39 This is an instance where the attempts to control the spread of rumours evidently failed in Rome. The senate was usually fairly successful at shielding the urban populace from panic-inducing rumours; see above, chapter 2. On this occasion, however, the extent of the disaster makes the failure to contain the rumour somewhat understandable.
40 Cum in malis sicuti ingentibus ita ignotis ne consilium quidem satis expedirent, obstrepere et clamor lamentantium mulierum et nondum palam facto vivi mortuique et per omnes paene domos promiscue complorarentur…: Livy 22.55.3.
41 tum Q. Fabius Maximus censuit equites expeditos et Appia et Latina via mittendos, qui obvios perconcertando—aliquos profecto ex fuga passim dissipatos fore—referant quae fortuna consulum atque exercituum sit, et si quid di immortales, miseriti imperii, reliquum Romani nominis fecerint, ubi eae copiae sint; quo se Hannibal post proelium contulerit, quid paret, quid agat acturusque sit: Livy 22.55.4-6.
or resident aliens to flee the city sentinels were posted at the gates. The senate intended to avoid further discussions until the panic in the city was contained. Before the intelligence mission amounted to anything, a report arrived from the consul Gaius Terentius reporting the death of Lucius Aemilius and the destruction of his army. The letter confirmed that some soldiers survived, and provided intelligence about the actions of Hannibal. Hannibal remained at Cannae haggling over ransoms and plunder. With the arrival of official information, intelligence that negated the potential dangers expressed in the rumours, the panic regarding the imminent siege of Rome abated, and the senate could move on and prepare for future action. The choice to actively seek information here, instead of waiting for intelligence to arrive, based on the need for knowledge both for future planning and for immediate domestic control, was motivated by a direct threat to Rome itself.

More often, however, Roman intelligence collection, processing, and reporting was reactive, that is, in response to rumours about potentially dangerous situations within Italy. In 186, for instance, Transalpine Gauls crossed into Venetia. They were acting oddly, their movements apparently undertaken neither for the purposes of raiding nor to begin hostilities. Because their behaviour could not be reconciled with Roman expectations of them, based on foreknowledge and cultural dossiers, an investigation was conducted with a view to updating current intelligence on them. This was not an attempt to put a stop to their movements or to create alliances. Its sole purpose was to understand why the migrations were occurring. The disappointing response received by the investigators was that migrants had set out without authorisation and they had no idea what their intentions were in Italy. This is classic reactive intelligence collection, pattern behaviour on the part of the republic and senate. So, to take an example from the same year, the consul Spurius Postumius returned to Rome.

42 Livy 22.55.7-8.
43 As discussed in chapter 2, the senate only accepted information from commanders in the field without question.
44 Livy 22.56.1-3.
45 To wait and do nothing to acquire this information was too much of a risk. The longer the senate was seen to do nothing, the higher the chance of riots and despair in the city. The longer they waited to prepare for a siege, the lower the chance of the inhabitants surviving it.
46 Livy 39.22.
after being sent to investigate the growth of the Bacchanalian cult. He provided the senate with the relatively benign (and mysterious) information that his investigations revealed that two colonies had been abandoned. Intelligence discoveries of this kind were not overly important in terms of national security, but their low threat level, coupled with Roman curiosity about them, clearly indicates that Roman officials were trained to discover and report information to add to the pool of available cultural intelligence, whether as part of a formal embassy or an ad hoc fact-finding mission.

Intelligence in antiquity was less paranoid about the outside world than intelligence today. Modern intelligence aims to gather all information about all states to feel in control so that state security will not be undermined. Some nations hold others under extensive permanent scrutiny to ensure that nothing that may be construed as threatening, dangerous, or controversial escapes their notice. The only ancient evidence for this sort of activity is in Appian’s account of the opening of the Syrian War, when Rome allegedly sent praetorian armies to monitor the actions of Philip of Macedon, Carthage, and their other ‘subjects’ to ensure none defected to the charismatic and powerful Syrian king. They were to monitor activity without provoking hostility. There is no evidence for this, however, in Livy’s parallel account. There praetors are ordered to defend the Italian coast around Brundisium and Tarentum, and the southern and eastern coasts of Sicily; ambassadors are despatched to Carthage and Numidia to requisition grain, which is duly supplied; and ambassadors arrive from Philip promising grain and money for the Roman war effort. If Appian is correct and surveillance of the Italians, Sicilians, and even the Carthaginians and Macedonians took place, it was an extreme action and one that was never

47 Livy 29.16-20.
48 Livy 29.23.
49 ... φίλιππόν τε τὸν Μακεδόνα δι’ ὑποψίας εἶχον, ἄρτι ὑπὸ σφῶν καταπεπολεμημένον, καὶ Καρχηδόνιους, μὴ οὐ πιστοὶ σφίσιν ὑπὲρ ταῖς συνθήκαις, Ἀννίβοι συνόντος Ἀντιόχω. τοῦς τε ἄλλους σφῶν υπηκόους ὑπονοοῦντες, μὴ καὶ παρὰ τούτων τι νέωτερον ἐς τὴν Ἀντιόχου δόξαν γένοιτο, στρατιών ἐς ἀπαντάς, ἐφεδρεύειν ἑρμηνευκός αὐτοῖς, καὶ στρατηγοὺς ἐπὶ τῇ στρατιᾷ, περιέπεμπον: App. Syr. 15.
50 Livy 36.2.7 (Italian coast), 11 (Sicily), 3.1, 4.5-9 (Carthaginian and Numidian embassies), 4.1-4 (Macedonian embassy).
repeated as a long-term solution due to manpower restrictions. The Romans were never in a position to maintain surveillance on an ongoing basis.

**Diplomacy and Intelligence Provision**

Without a general ability or desire to monitor all activities by foreign states all the time, there was no need for Roman officials to deliberate what intelligence might be necessary to deal with specific situations as they arose. To know what is necessary intelligence requires a preliminary knowledge of world events at all times. Therefore, the starting point of the Roman intelligence cycle was the collection or rather the provision of information. Most intelligence during the mid-republic relied on external sources. Allies, neighbours, friends and aspiring friends, and neutral parties who viewed Rome as a lesser evil to its other system competitors provided intelligence usually under the guise of diplomatic interaction. Complaints about the conduct of other states provide intelligence about the activities, intentions, perceptions of power, alliance structures, political stability, and capabilities of both the complainants and the states they are complaining about. Any information presented to the senate, regardless of the motivation for doing so, was valuable intelligence. The motivations for informing were varied and inevitably of little consequence for intelligence information itself. Any appeal came with the expectation that the Romans could help; any circumstance that required Roman intervention suggested a potential destabilising threat to Roman influence and power. The result was that the senate received intelligence about events taking place elsewhere, which built upon pre-existing foreknowledge and constructed a reasonably accurate and up-to-date picture of international affairs. This process did not occur without Roman complicity. The senate was not involuntarily bombarded with intelligence — and their friends and allies knew it. The senate wanted this intelligence, and on rare occasions when it was not forthcoming, they actively sought it. Roman intelligence was not concerned with knowing everything about everyone at all times, but with knowing about actions and intentions that might affect the Roman state. Intelligence, for the Romans,

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51 Some were expected to inform as informal or formal requirements of alliances and international friendship; others informed out of a desire to further their standing in the eyes of the senate.
therefore had a limited function. Its provision, its collection, in other words, took place only at the level necessary for them to avoid strategic surprise, that is, emerging threats to their international influence and power in the interconnected Mediterranean world.

The political relationships of the early second century created the Roman intelligence system. Information was constantly moving. The Romans knew about events to the same extent as other peoples. As Flamininus saw envoys from Antiochus during his visit to Aetolian cities in 192, Attalus, brother of Eumenes II, king of Pergamum, was telling the senate about the same events.\(^{52}\) Intelligence was shared intentionally or unintentionally throughout the Mediterranean as it travelled along a limited number of well-known roads and sea-lanes. At a very basic level, Macedon knew Rome was at war with Carthage during the Second Punic War; Syria and Egypt knew Rome was at war with Macedon during the Macedonian wars; Macedon knew Syria was at war with Egypt during the wars over Coele-Syria. The dispatch of embassies from one state to another was often known, and their actions and grounds for complaint predictable.\(^{53}\) Information moved throughout the Mediterranean system more easily than modern studies give it credit for. The sending of embassies to pre-empt other embassies or to counter accusations highlights the prevalence of information proliferation and the need to verify and control it. It is not through pure chance that competing envoys often found themselves in Rome at the same time. It is true that the majority of embassies travelled to Rome during the winter, but there were occasions when the timing of a particular state’s embassy was determined by the need to defend itself against the presumed accusations of another state, which the defending state’s own intelligence presumably showed, had just dispatched an embassy to Rome. Throughout the 160s and 150s, Masinissa sent envoys to Rome after learning Carthage had sent representatives.\(^{54}\)

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\(^{52}\) Flamininus: Livy 35.32.5; Attalus: Livy 35.23.10.

\(^{53}\) Counter embassies sent to counter rumours are also known. Prior to the Third Macedonian War, when Rhodes was accused of wavering loyalty, they sent a delegation to Rome with the explicit purpose of countering fictitious accusations. See Livy 42.26.8-9, cf. 42.45.6. When Eumenes held his closed-door meeting with the senate in late 172 to complain about Perseus, the Rhodians (wrongly) assumed he was complaining about themselves. See Livy 42.14.6, and below.

\(^{54}\) See for example the fragments of books 36 and 38 of Polybius and App. Pun. 67-74.
Before the outbreak of the Second Macedonian War, Philip V was aware that embassies from Rhodes, Athens, and Attalus of Pergamum had visited Rome to denounce him and inform about his actions. Polybius uses Philip’s knowledge of these envoys to explain his suspicions about what they were saying and how he should respond. Philip was aware of accusations against him, and sent his son Demetrius to defend him. The Achaean league battled against envoys from Sparta, and the two sides laid out their internal divisions in full in Rome.

During the first half of the second century, there was a constant stream of embassies entering Rome. Each had the opportunity to raise grievances or defend against the grievance claims of others. All could monitor the Romans’ public attitude toward themselves and others, based on the reception provided to all sides. The Romans could in turn observe their behaviour and gather intelligence about what was going on in the eastern Mediterranean.

A more specific example of this convoluted flow of information occurred close to the outbreak of the sixth Syrian War between Antiochus IV and Ptolemy VI in approximately 170. Both Antiochus and Ptolemy sent envoys to Rome. They provided intelligence, attempted to gain intelligence about Rome’s attitude toward them, and each monitored Rome’s attitude toward the other. Antiochus sent an embassy to claim that war preparations were underway in Alexandria and that Ptolemy was entirely unjust in any attack upon him. His ambassadors were sent with the explicit purpose of informing Rome about these hostile actions, in the hope of manipulating Roman action. Ptolemy’s counter-embassy had the ostensible purpose of renewing the kingdom’s friendly relations with Rome. More importantly, the embassy was to spy on the reception given to

55 Polyb. 16.24.3. Livy claims that the embassies from Athens came to entreat for Roman assistance: 31.1.10. Rhodes and Attalus provided more detail about Philip’s activities. They claimed that city-states in Asia were under pressure by Philip and that something ought to be done: 31.2.1. In Livy’s account, the desire to recommence hostilities with Macedon was already growing in Rome, as the Second Punic War had ended, and Macedon was known to have provided financial assistance to Hannibal and because of the treacherous peace Philip had made with the Aetolians: 31.1. The senate’s response to the envoys was that they would investigate the situation: 31.2.1.
56 Polyb. 23.1-4; App. Mac. 9.6.
57 For more on this see Gruen 1984: 471-98.
58 Polyb. 27.19, 28.1.
59 They were to offer to arbitrate the war between Rome and Perseus, but were advised against this.
Antiochus’ envoys, Ptolemy was to use this information to determine whom the Romans favoured. If the Polybian account is accepted, Ptolemy must have known, through his own intelligence gathering, that a Seleucid embassy was heading for Rome, and presumably made the assumption it was to attack him. Both embassies tried to manipulate the Romans to act. Antiochus appealed to Egyptian war preparations with no cause; Ptolemy appealed to friendly relations.

Ptolemy’s envoys succeeded in renewing friendly relations and were dismissed with favourable responses to their requests. The Ptolemaic envoys were not explicitly asked to counter Antiochus’ claims or to make excuses for Ptolemy’s actions, suggesting that the Romans did not believe Seleucid allegations or they simply did not care to act in response to the situation. That the Romans had no interest in entering a conflict that had reoccurred after every Ptolemaic and Syrian succession is predictable. The Romans were preoccupied with Perseus, and neither Syria nor Egypt was a threat to Rome after their loyalty had been confirmed before the Third Macedonian War began. The answer to Antiochus suggests neither appeal was enough to draw Rome to take any robust action; instead, Marcius Philippus, the consul currently engaged with Perseus, would write Ptolemy a letter. There was no reason for the Romans to risk offending one party or the other, and upsetting future relationships at the same time. The appropriate (and predictable) response to Antiochus’ and Ptolemy’s envoys was a dismissal, with no Roman interference. The kings’ choice to inform the senate at all about affairs in the Seleucid and Egyptian realms was a recognition and acknowledgement of Roman influence and power, as well as a defence against future accusations. In this case, intelligence was gathered on all three sides. Ptolemy learnt of Antiochus’ desires through his accusations, as did Antiochus through Ptolemy’s. Both learnt of Roman attitudes toward

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60 μάλιστα δὲ παρατηρεῖν τὰς τῶν περὶ τὸν Μελέαγρον ἐντεύξεις: Polyb. 28.1.7; cf. Diod. 30.2.
61 Livy 42.45.8; App. Mac. 11.4.
62 Polyb. 28.9.
63 The two fought their war to the point where Antiochus almost conquered Egypt. The Seleucid king was famously told by the Roman envoy Popillius Laenas to depart Ptolemy’s kingdom. Antiochus later sent another envoy to Rome with a gift of fifty talents.
64
themselves. And the Romans had the opportunity to assess the state of affairs in the East from two competing perspectives.

There is an observable pattern of intelligence gathering during the mid-republic, which is more common than searches motivated through desperation or intelligence stumbled upon by chance. Foreign states provided Rome with intelligence as part of diplomatic exchanges. There are numerous extant examples of states either sending letters or an ambassador to report on significant events taking place abroad. What emerges from the evidence is that the Romans did not regard intelligence or its use as a means of exerting control. Requests for and passive receipt of information served to determine whether circumstances demanded action in order to defend Roman power and reputation. This information provided basic intelligence about affairs that the senate could choose to accept, neglect, or investigate further. Intelligence flows to Rome proliferated the more involved the Romans became in eastern affairs. For the second-tier powers and small players in the East, the Romans provided an alternative focus to the endlessly warring Hellenistic powers, and they were highly motivated to convey intelligence to Rome. These second-tier informers were not agents in the sense that they were formally bound to the Romans to supply information. Rather, intelligence was provided with the expectation of reward or action, the intent to manipulate, or the desire for protection. As has been well argued by Gruen, there is little to support the idea that the senate wanted to actively monitor and make policy decisions for external states and peoples during the second century. But the Romans did desire to receive information, and those wishing to please them knew it.

This desire grew to a high point in the 180s, where, in the opinion of Polybius, the senate made it clear to all that they would be displeased if all matters were not submitted to them for consideration, and their decisions not carried out. At face value, the Polybian statement suggests that Rome was actively interfering in independent foreign policy. This is not the case. Later

\[\text{Gruen 1984.}\]

\[\text{ἐξ οὗ καταβάνεις ἁπάσιν ἐγενήθησαν ὁτι τοσούτων ἀπέχοισιν τοῦ τα μὴ λίαν ἀναγκαία τῶν ἀποστράφων ἀποστράφως καὶ παρορμήσως, ὡς τούτον καὶ δυσχεραινοῦσιν ἐπὶ τοῦ μὴ πάντων τὴν ἀναφορὰν ἐφ᾽ ἐαυτοὺς γίνεσθαι καὶ πάντα πράττεσθαι μετὰ τῆς αὐτῶν γνώμης: Polyb. 23.17.4.}\]
events suggest that it was not ‘clear to all’, or at least that some refused to accept the Roman position.” Public Roman actions in this period do little to validate Polybius’ opinion.” Even if the statement is accepted, Rome’s tendency was not toward interference. The senate rarely gave orders in response to ambassadorial reports; they instead insisted at best that they be provided with significant intelligence. After Polybius’ assertion, cited above, he writes that when the Achaean League decided to admit Sparta, largely of its own will, they sent Bippus as an ambassador to Rome. He went not to ask for permission or advice, but to inform Rome about Sparta’s absorption into the League.” The senate received the news of the restoration amicably. In response to more pleas from exiles, they asked that the Achaean League permit the exiles’ return.” The Achaean did nothing in response to the senatorial request.” Bippus returned and told the League that he interpreted the request as nothing more than a meaningless gesture for the exiles’ benefit. The League chose to ignore it. The Romans did nothing. The extent of their political involvement in eastern affairs during the early stage of their hegemony was that of an informed, but unenthusiastic, arbiter. The Romans expressed little concern for what happened in the Achaean League except for a desire to remain minimally informed of events. The attitude prevails in Rome’s interactions with many other states.

**Motivations**

There were many motivations behind other states keeping the Romans informed of affairs taking place elsewhere. In the aggregate, they suggest a belief that the Roman state was a legitimate and important power. Individual states,
however, were motivated by less than political or military strategic reasons. Intelligence was provided as a requirement or expectation of alliances or friendships, or through simple fear or a desire for aid. The reliability of the intelligence provided reflected the motivation. But as will be discussed below, the Romans were not passive partners in their intelligence process. Intelligence provided for the sake of intelligence was a necessary part of Rome’s friendship structures. Intelligence provided through fear had the potential to be either accurate or subversive. Any information provided under these conditions was an attempt either to apologise for, distract, or distance the provider from an act. That delivered out of a desire for aid of some kind was skewed to present the provider as a victim of someone else’s aggression. It will be argued here, however, that the motivations for the provision of intelligence are minor factors. That intelligence reached Rome at all is what matters.

There are few examples in the extant mid-republican evidence of intelligence provision through allies and friends, without being directly motivated by the desire for aid or reward. The Massilians, for instance, provided the Romans with intelligence about the movements of Carthaginians, Gauls, and Spanish for years. In 208, they informed the Romans that Hasdrubal had crossed the Pyrenees. This preliminary information facilitated Roman efforts to prevent Hasdrubal from meeting Hannibal and to thwart him at the Battle of the Metaurus. The intelligence did not directly or materially benefit Massilia – it was simply an ally informing the Romans of pertinent activities in their territory. There was no request for intelligence, nor was intelligence provided as a bargaining chip. It was provided because pro-Roman forces thought the Romans ought to know, with the intended or unintended psychological consequence of softening and maintaining a positive Roman attitude toward Massilia.

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72 For the duties of international friendship see Burton 2011: 161-245.
73 Massilia informed Rome when Hannibal crossed the Ebro in 218: Livy 21.25.1; when Ligurian incursions began in northern Italy: Polyb. 23.8.1-2; and when a praetor died on route to Spain on two occasions: Livy 37.57.1-3; 42.4.2. For more on the Roman reliance on Massilia see DeWitt 1940; Kramer 1948; Fournie 2004; cf. above, chapter 4, n. 17 on Massilia’s attempts to maintain its importance to Rome in the mid-republic.
74 Livy 27.36.1-2.
75 Livy 27.48-51; Polyb. 11.1-3; App. Hann. 52-54.
76 Years earlier the Romans did something quite similar. After Rome’s defeat of Teuta and her Illyrian pirates, ambassadors were sent to announce the Roman victory to the
provision of information with no overt ulterior motive - that is no apparent desire for reward or need for Roman interference - was essential to friendship and alliance structures.

Criticism of the Roman intelligence system claims the senate would only learn of information that an external source deemed important or wanted them to know. The criticism is valid up to a point. But fear and the interconnected Mediterranean system compelled foreign states to share information. If one state did not inform the Romans of pertinent information in a timely manner, another state could. If the risks of not informing the Romans were deemed too high, whether through fear of Rome or a reduction in one’s own position, intelligence would be shared one way or another. The chance of detection, especially when faced with personal enemies who may have informed in one’s stead, was too high. This is especially apparent in relations between Numidia and Carthage in the years between the Second and Third Punic Wars. In 193, after rumours had driven Hannibal to find refuge at Antiochus’ court, he arranged for information to be sent to his allies in Carthage about potential war with Rome. Because he feared the interception of the communiqués, he had them delivered through an agent known as Aristo. To verify Hannibal’s identity with his

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Aetolian and Achaean leagues – the main victims of Illyrian piracy: Polyb. 2.16.3. The Romans must have known who the main victims of Illyria were, and sought to gain their favour by advertising that it was they who had freed the Greeks from that menace. At the time, Rome was not particularly active in the East. Their attention was primarily focussed on the West. The decision to send envoys also to Athens and Corinth, the primary diplomatic centres of Greece, indicate the Roman understanding of Greek East, even before they became deeply engaged with it: Polyb. 2.11.8. For a discussion about early Roman understanding and connections with the Hellenistic world see Grainger 2002: 5-29.

Sheldon 2005: 68-85. Sheldon claims intelligence activity that relied on foreign sources was tenuous at best, and that it may have worked in times of peace, but during war could easily result in no intelligence at all. Intelligence provision during war was always tenuous in the ancient context. As discussed in chapter 2, the security of communications was precarious. But embassies were nearly constant in wartime, and thus the flow of intelligence, while somewhat reduced, would have continued.

In general, Austin and Rankov’s two page explanation of intelligence collection as sourced through foreign embassies supports the argument that will be presented here. That is, that Rome was in a position to be reliably informed by delegations from other states. The suggestion that the system was limited because of the potential for manipulation – highlighting Masinissa’s ‘exploitation’ of Rome – presents the senate as naïve and easily led by their allies, which is not supported by typical Roman actions and their tendency to verify any intelligence received, as will be discussed below. See Austin and Rankov 1995: 89-91.
Carthaginian allies, he gave Aristo secret codes.79 Aristo’s arrival in Carthage was not kept a secret, and his presence was questioned. Rumours concerning why he was in Carthage spread quickly. Aristo’s mission was discussed in dinner parties and social gatherings, quickly becoming the subject of common gossip.80 In Livy’s account, the Carthaginian senate discussed his presence and planned to detain him. If he could provide a good excuse for his presence, he would be released; if not, he would be sent to Rome. As there was no evidence for his being an agent of Hannibal, and since he could not provide a valid reason for his presence the Carthaginian senate held a fractious debate over what to do with him. The issue was not resolved, and Aristo was released.81 Aristo revealed Hannibal’s intentions publicly, secretly posting his plans in front of the senate house at night – to avoid implicating Hannibal’s friends or suggesting Hannibal was inciting all the Carthaginians to action. The letters called for them to save their country by allying themselves with Antiochus and taking advantage of their knowledge of Italy. The public pronouncement implied there was, at least, a significant minority of Carthaginian senators who held anti-Roman sentiments.82 Whether true or not, public advertisement ensured the Romans could be informed, with more evidence than rumour and dinner party gossip. Aristo then fled, having realised that those favouring Hannibal could or would not protect him.83

Aristo’s actions placed anti-Barcid Carthaginians in a difficult position. The public declaration of Hannibal’s intent to drive Carthage to war encouraged the Romans to regard not just Hannibal, but the Carthaginians as a whole with suspicion. To counter this, the Carthaginian senate decided to send a deputation

79 Livy 34.61.2-4. Justin claims this agent was a companion of Hannibal rather than an agent. See Just. 31.4.1.
80 Livy 34.61.4-5.
81 Livy 34.61.10-14. Justin has him captured by Hannibal’s enemies. Just. 31.4.2.
82 It is unlikely the Carthaginian senate was as uniformly anti-Barcid as Livy presents it. Hannibal must have had powerful allies in Carthage. He believed they could be easily drawn into a war, suggesting that he had intelligence that at least some of these supporters maintained political power (see next n.). Aristo’s release may have been influenced by these factions.
83 Appian’s and Justin’s accounts of the event differ in small details, but the basic story remains consistent. Hannibal’s agent suggested that all the inhabitants of Carthage were open to war with Rome. App. Syr. 8; Just. 31.41-10.

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to Rome to inform them of the actions of Hannibal, Aristo, and Antiochus.\footnote{Livy 34.61.16.} The deputation claimed Carthage intended to arrest Aristo and send him to Rome. In Livy’s chronology, Aristo escaped before the deputation was sent, and previous Carthaginian senate deliberations had proved inconclusive. The ambassadors’ claim thus reads like an excuse, and was interpreted as such by the Romans.\footnote{Livy 34.62.6–7.} If Aristo was considered a legitimate threat, he ought to have been escorted or at the least barred from leaving. This decision to inform the Roman senate was not motivated by a need for senatorial support or driven by a sense of loyalty to Rome. It was done out of fear. The Carthaginians needed to deflect Rome’s attention away from their state while they continued to reform and rebuild after the Second Punic War. Intelligence was provided here as a pre-emptive defensive measure. The fear and pre-emptive provision of intelligence was well founded. If the story were to reach Rome by other means or agents, the consequences for the Carthaginians not informing would do further damage to Carthage’s position.\footnote{Livy 34.62.1–5.}

The choice to attempt to protect against accusations of treachery was wise; the fear that Carthage could draw negative Roman attention to itself was legitimate. When Masinissa learnt of these actions, he took the earliest opportunity to send representatives to Rome as well, with a report of events at Carthage.\footnote{Livy 34.62.1–5.} If Masinissa were the only source of this information, that is, if the Carthaginians had not pre-emptively informed the senate of the Aristo affair, they would have appeared more suspicious of being implicated in Hannibal’s
plot. Their innocence would have been harder to claim if they had tried to cover up the affair. The choice to inform Rome acknowledges that Rome was a powerful threat to Carthage, and a recognition that Rome was unlikely to give them the benefit of the doubt. Their deputation blocked Masinissa’s attempt at enhancing anti-Carthaginian sentiment over the matter. The senate seems to have accepted that Carthage was unlikely to join a war with Antiochus. To be safe, the Romans accepted the intelligence of Antiochus’ plots and dispatched investigators to determine his actions and manipulate Hannibal’s reception at his court. Eventually both Carthage and Masinissa offered to aid Roman efforts against Antiochus. The Romans were not held hostage to one party providing intelligence on the other.

The most common motivation for providing intelligence was as an inducement to convince Rome to provide aid or protection, or to arbitrate their disputes with other states. This was especially true in the East, where appealing to larger and more powerful states had ample precedent. From 200 to 133 numerous embassies visited Rome with appeals for aid. The sources reveal the basic protocols: an embassy would arrive in Rome, approach a magistrate (typically a praetor) and account for its purpose, request lodging and entertainment, and either be admitted into the city and granted an audience with

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88 Masinissa had other avenues to exploit and enhance anti-Carthaginian sentiments in Rome. See below, chapter 6, pp. 297-303.
89 MRR I.343f. The covert actions of these Roman agents will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 6.
90 Livy 36.4.5-9.
92 For a list of embassies see Bonnefond-Coudry 1989: 294-320; Canali de Rossi 1997. Prior to this period embassies did arrive, often from western peoples, offering information and asking for protection, albeit at a slower and more intermittent rate. Prior to the outbreak of the Second Punic War, Saguntum for instance sent numerous embassies to Rome asking for aid. Some of these embassies were also clearly designed to furnish Rome with information about what was happening. According to Polybius, Saguntum sent embassies to Rome for a trifold purpose: because they could foresee a major war with Carthage – and presumably wanted to maintain Rome’s friendship; because they feared for their own existence and wanted help; and, most important for our purposes, because they wanted Rome to be fully aware of Carthaginian actions in Spain. οί δὲ Ζακανθιαίοι συνεχῶς ἐπέμπουν εἰς τὴν Ρώμην, ἀμα μὲν ἀγωνιζόντες περὶ σφόν καὶ προορόμενοι τὸ μέλλον ἀμα δὲ βουλόμενοι μὴ λανθάνειν Ἐρωμαίοις τὴν γινομένην εὐριαν Καρχηδονίοις τῶν κατ’ Ἰβηριαν πραγμάτων: Polyb. 3.15.1.
the senate, or not. Most embassies that arrived requesting aid represented secondary or even tertiary powers. Their information represented the accuser as the victim of another state—whether a Roman ally and friend or not. The choice of whom to appeal to often acted as a catalyst for war. The senate had the choice to accept information, reject it as unimportant, or to seek more of it prior to making a decision about how to act.

One of the most prevalent informers of the second century was the ruling house of Pergamum. Information was provided as part of the symbiotic friendship, established during the First Macedonian War. Rome relied on Pergamum as an ally in the East to provide information, while Pergamum used Rome to balance Macedonian power, among others. Pergamene kings appealed to Rome on numerous occasions for protection against the kings of both Macedon and of Syria. Each of these diplomatic visits provided Rome with an up-to-date account of the state of affairs. To take a few examples, Pergamum led the anti-Macedonian coalition after Rome’s withdrawal from the East in 205. In 201, after Macedonian raids in Pergamum and other areas, Attalus led an embassy of anti-Macedonian forces asking for protection. They provided an account of the aggressive actions of Macedon, and their reliance on Seleucid protection. Investigation supported and verified the provided intelligence. The Romans seriously considered intervention. This intervention was only investigated because Rome had received enough verifiable intelligence that favourable conditions for war could be met. The same behaviour occurred

93 For more on this procedure see Ferrary 2007; Brennan 2009.
94 For more on the role of catalysts see Lebow 2001; Lebow 2006.
95 Livy 29.11.2 with Burton 2011: 84-87.
97 Livy 31.2.2; App. Mac. 4.2. Appeals to Rome at this stage included those from Aetolia, Rhodes, and Athens. Livy 31.1.10-31.2.1; App. Mac. 4.2.
98 Polyb. 16.1; cf. Polyb. 16.24.6.
99 The procedure of provision and verification will be discussed in the case study below.
100 Livy 31.3. Roman motives for declaring war on Philip in 200 have been extensively studied. See for instance Bickerman 1945; Errington 1971b; Meadows 1993; Eckstein 2005; Eckstein 2010.
101 The embassies gave intelligence about Greek support alongside aggressive Macedonian action. Without allies in Greece granting stages for attacks on Macedon, the scope for Roman success was limited.
prior to the Third Macedonian War, with Eumenes presenting Perseus as a threat to the stability of the Hellenistic world, and included the important intelligence fact – true or not – that the Greek East as a whole was turning away from Rome and towards the Macedonian king. As for Syria, in 192 when rumours about Antiochus, his actions, and intentions were rife and there were few verified and understood facts, Attalus, the brother of Eumenes II, arrived in Rome. He reported that Antiochus had crossed the Hellespont. He also reported that the Aetolians would be under arms by the time Antiochus arrived. This was the first piece of intelligence about Antiochus’ actions that was not simply rumour about his intentions. Pergamum’s recent dealings with the Aetolians would have given them an appreciable understanding of their capabilities. Pergamum was well positioned to provide information about both Syrian and Macedonian action, and served in this capacity throughout Roman struggles with other major powers.

Constructing a method of intelligence gathering and interpretation that relies on foreign sources introduces significant problems. In the context of the mid-republic, it was not feasible to have Roman officials spread throughout the known world waiting to inform the senate of affairs in peace or war; there was no diplomatic service in Rome or permanent embassies throughout the Mediterranean world to house intelligence officials and diplomats. Intelligence could only work within the constraints of the international system that existed. The Romans and their informers did not exist in a vacuum. Nor were alliances and relationships static and unambiguous. The various motivations of informers ensured that if someone chose not to inform the Romans of events of interest to them, one of their neighbours would. Any intelligence provided was subjective and often designed to manipulate. But the senate was not unaware of this potential and had policies of receiving information that countered many of these flaws. Their counterintelligence and established policies of treating unverified information as rumour, especially where there were contradictions in accounts,

102 Livy 42.13; App. Mac. 11.2.
103 Livy 35.23.10-11
104 In response to this intelligence, Rome recalled the consul so consular elections could be undertaken: Livy 35.24.1.
105 For Pergamum’s relationship with Aetolia see McShane 1964: 105-16.
ensured that the collection of information was not the end of the intelligence process. While it is possible that more sophisticated systems could feasibly have existed, there was no need to develop a different intelligence collection protocol. The system that existed was efficient and effective in terms of what it was meant to achieve. Smaller states turned to Rome for aid, protection, revenge, or alliances. In doing so, they kept Rome apprised of events that might need Roman monitoring or interaction. In the circumstances, it was a powerful method to mitigate the problem of uncertainty – that is, the inevitability that one can only guess at the capabilities and intentions of others.106

**Avenues for Manipulation**

Discussed above are but a few examples that highlight the extent to which unverified and unconfirmed impressions of foreign affairs were available to the Romans. It is inevitable that rumours would spread about activities and that various peoples would attempt to inform Rome of their sides of a given story. It was in the best interests of all states to know what was happening around the Mediterranean in order to make the best possible predictions about affairs. The motivation behind informing naturally depended on the perception of Roman power and how it balanced with the informing state’s desires. There would be no purpose for another state to present the Romans with intelligence without the belief that in was in its best interest to do so, that the senate could do something about it, and might be inclined to do so. Appeals are not made to the powerless. After Rome became the hub for Greek complaints, it was natural that embassies flocked there not only to provide the Romans with information, but to gather intelligence for themselves. In effect, this ensured that the Romans did not have to play the same intelligence and diplomatic games to gather preliminary intelligence. It came to them voluntarily. But without devoted analysts to interpret and cross check the intelligence provided in complaints and requests, there was an inherent possibility of manipulation.

Manipulation is possible due to the natural biases in interpretation. Intelligence decisions are inevitably made with limited information. The Romans relied on previous experiences and conceptions grounded in

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106 For more on the problem of uncertainty in intelligence see Turner 2006: 1-16; Betts 2009. For its realist application to ancient history, see Eckstein 2008: 242-4.
foreknowledge as anchoring points to judge any new intelligence. All embassies were attempting to gain favour, and to attempt to discover as much as they could about the Roman attitude toward them at any given time. Sheldon makes the point that the reliance on foreigners was tenuous because ‘these contacts were still, after all, foreigners who might put their self-interest over Rome’s at any time’. Of course, this is true. But the senate was not naïve. Any engagement in international affairs requires the recognition that different people have different foreign policy agendas. Austin and Rankov claim that the possibility of manipulation was a downfall of relying on foreigners for information. This assumes that manipulations were successful and the Roman senate was easily swayed into inadvertently choosing one side over another. There are few instances where attempts at manipulation succeeded. As an example, Austin and Rankov claim Masinissa exploited the Roman reliance on Numidian reports to encroach on Carthaginian territory. Allegedly, Masinissa was exploiting Roman fear of Carthage. A reliance on initial information provided by outsiders does restrict the available knowledge. While Masinissa’s information was certainly skewed to support his own ambitions, he did not manipulate the Roman perception of events. As discussed in the following chapter, the senate was only too happy to have Masinissa and Carthage at odds with each other. Masinissa’s envoys, while secretly supported, were sometimes met with vague non-committal statements by Rome. The Numidian’s so-called manipulations might have encouraged anti-Carthaginian sentiment, if he were the only source of information. But he was not. As discussed above, Rome did not rely solely on Masinissa for information about Carthage any more than Pergamum was the sole source of information about Macedon. It was in Carthage’s best interest to supply that information for themselves, to counter anti-Carthaginian sentiment germinating in senatorial minds and the potential manipulation of their enemies. Rome’s picture of affairs between Carthage and Numidia was based on conflicting stories between the two. The senate repeatedly dispatched investigators to both places in response to intelligence but

110 Gruen 1984: 130 n.70.
for a long time maintained an ambiguous stance, overtly favouring Numidia while not actively taking steps against Carthage.\textsuperscript{111} There is no indication that they were a state held to ransom by Masinissa’s intelligence. The power to manipulate relied on being the sole blindly trusted provider of information, something that the senate never allowed to occur. The Romans were not naive passive players in international affairs who trusted one friendly state in a given area above all others and without question.\textsuperscript{112}

The Romans were fully aware of the potential for manipulation through intelligence provision. Manipulation relies on appeals to emotion. Through foreknowledge, as discussed above, and personal interactions, other states developed conceptions of Roman beliefs and attitudes. Any attempt at such manipulation required an understanding, or perceived understanding, of potential Roman reactions. The persuasive strategy was then employed to force emotional and abrupt decisions based on dislike or fear. If successful, appeals to cultural perceptions and beliefs can add strength to arguments for support. But any such attempt at influence in antiquity was not committed against a Roman state that blindly accepted whatever it might be told. Unsophisticated attempts were dismissed. In 197, as Quinctius Flamininus was holding a meeting between Philip V of Macedon and the Aetolian and Achaean representatives, Philip asked for a delay and time to send a deputation to the senate in Rome. The Aetolians and Achaeans attempted to block this by saying the delay was a cover for the gathering of forces. Flamininus saw through this weak appeal to anti-Macedonian sentiment, and claimed that it might have been sound if it were summer. As winter was coming, there was no harm in Philip sending a commission to Rome.\textsuperscript{113} In response, the allied leaders sent deputations to Rome to provide intelligence about Philip’s actions to ensure that the senate was not manipulated by his eloquent deceptions.\textsuperscript{114} Masinissa emphasised Carthaginian duplicity; Rome’s Greek allies and friends highlighted the ambitions of Syria and Macedon. All human intelligence is biased in one way or another because it is all

\textsuperscript{111} Livy 41.22.1-3, 42.23-24, 43.3.5-7.
\textsuperscript{112} As Green 1990: 427.
\textsuperscript{113} Livy 32.35-36.
\textsuperscript{114} \textit{In hanc sententiam et ceteri sociorum principes concesserunt; indutiisque datis in duos menses, et ipsos mittere singulos legatos ad senatum edocendum, ne fraude regis caperetur, placuit}: Livy 32.36.8.
driven by agendas. Most unsophisticated attempts, such as those by the enemies of Carthage and Philip discussed here, fail to cause intended reactions. The Romans were not deceived precisely because they participated in the same covert activity themselves.115 In political intelligence, it is relatively easy to correct for the bias of intelligence providers, and to an extent under the Roman system, this was self-regulated.116 Presentations of information supported the presenter. But as discussed above, the presence of counter-embassies fighting against the presentation of a rival state or states was not uncommon. Appealing to Roman sentiments garnered attention at best, not instantaneous decisions based on emotion.

The Romans did not allow themselves to be manipulated even when information had the potential to be more damaging. After the second Punic War, for instance, it would have been relatively easy to assume that Rome was deeply hostile toward and suspicious of Hannibal. Thus, when domestic disputes over Hannibal’s reforms arose in Carthage, anti-Barcid forces informed Rome. In 195, Hannibal’s rivals sent reports to Rome accusing Hannibal of secretly communicating with Antiochus, of restlessness, and of harbouring an open distaste for peace.117 Whether the recipients of these reports took the information as ‘true’ or were simply cautious about Hannibal because of past behaviour, is largely irrelevant.118 The point is that Carthaginian politicians tried to appeal to a suspicion of and hostility toward Hannibal, hoping that the Romans would take the bait, so to speak, and remove him, solving their internal political problems. The gamble here was that the Carthaginians were hoping the

115 Roman attempts at covert action will be discussed in chapter 6.
116 As Sheldon asserts, a reliance on foreign information in a military scenario, when it was not feasible to cross check with other military sources, was a severe limitation of Roman intelligence. Sheldon 2005: 81. The utility of tactical military intelligence is, however, not about conceptions of behaviour and emotional appeals, but involves more practical and immediate concerns. In political situations, Rome, as a centre of power, had the luxury of determining the urgency of each situation and sourcing more intelligence as they saw fit.
117 Just. 31.1; Dio. 19; Livy 33.45-9; cf. App. Syr. 4; Nepos, Hann. 7; Val. Max. 4.1.6; Zonar. 9.18.
118 Livy expresses a clear uncertainty about the truth of the claims, and suggests Scipio Africanus dismissed them outright: 33.47. Justin claims that the reports were false, but that most senators, due to the growing problems with Antiochus and their previous relations with Hannibal, accepted them at face value: Just. 31.1. The episode contains similarities to the Thucydidean account of the flight of Themistocles: Thuc. 1.135-8.
senate would determine that Hannibal was a greater threat than Carthage itself, and more untrustworthy than their generalised inclination to distrust all Carthaginians. When Hannibal’s history and skill were considered, it would have been foolish for the senate to dismiss any accusations of suspicious behaviour — especially if it appeared he would align himself with a powerful eastern state and re-emerge as a threat with superior understanding of Roman techniques and geography. As will be seen, typical verification processes followed. Roman ambassadors were sent to determine the reality of the situation. They did not thoughtlessly accept the intelligence provided, but were to covertly determine its validity.\footnote{Livy asserts they were to investigate the situation under the guise of arbitrating the differences between Carthage and Numidia: Livy 33.47; App. Syr. 4. The false pretence of the Roman diplomats here constitutes clandestine diplomacy at best or covert action. Such activities will be examined in the following chapter. If Livy is taken at face value, however, this deception was the idea of Hannibal’s enemies. Justin’s suggestion that they were to attempt to arrange Hannibal’s assassination is unlikely. There was no reason at this stage to suggest Hannibal’s death was necessary, nor was Antiochus yet considered a particularly significant threat to Rome: Just. 31.2.}

The covert orders here are not an indication that the senate accepted Hannibal’s dangerousness to Rome, but that they understood the delicate situation. The arrival in Carthage of Roman ambassadors with a public pronouncement that they were investigating seditious activity had a significant effect on the Carthaginian political climate. The charges against Hannibal were weak. But after learning of the presence of Roman ambassadors, he fled. His choice to flee is not necessarily an admission of guilt so much as an acknowledgement that he probably could not win a contest of good faith with the Romans. Hannibal neither knew where Antiochus was at the time, nor was he welcomed in an official capacity as the king’s war advisor until 193. Roman ambassadors resorted to a public declaration in the Carthaginian senate to state their intentions and beliefs. It was now claimed that they had evidence of Hannibal’s communication with Antiochus. He was driving Antiochus to war, as he had done with Philip of Macedon. He intended to have Carthage rebel against Rome. The announcement was necessary because Hannibal’s flight had taken place. Without it, it may have given power to anti-Roman forces, who saw the Romans’ lack of ability to control Hannibal as a sign of weakness. It placed
the onus on Carthage to prove to Rome that no one sanctioned Hannibal’s actions. While the outcome may have differed in detail to the intentions of anti-Barcid forces, they achieved their purpose of driving Hannibal out of Carthage through their provision of intelligence to Rome. Whether Rome accepted the information or not, it was dangerous enough that it needed to be investigated. The attempted manipulation here highlights a problem with the Roman intelligence methods; doing nothing in the face of blatant manipulation by others could have unintended consequences internationally. But as will be discussed presently, the Romans rarely took action on the word of others alone. In this instance, the Romans took charge of the situation in a way that blindsided the anti-Barcid faction, and was congenial to their own interests, at least insofar as concerned internal Carthaginian politics.

There are suggestions of more nefarious attempts to manipulate through intelligence, playing on both Roman foreknowledge and intelligence methods. Perseus’ manipulation of the Roman perception of their ally Eumenes of Pergamum in 168 relied on the understanding that someone would inform the senate that ambassadors were travelling between Pergamum and Macedon.\(^{120}\) Allegedly, the two kings were communicating. The official information concerned a prisoner exchange, but the secrecy of meetings was questioned and raised suspicions about Eumenes’ loyalty to Rome. Perhaps trying to cast Eumenes as villainous, Polybius has Eumenes begin the process, sending messengers to Perseus at Amphipolis and Demetrias through a Cretan serving in Perseus’ army.\(^{121}\) Perseus then sent an envoy to Eumenes’ court.\(^{122}\) There is also a story, shrouded in secrecy, of a letter of Perseus to Eumenes proposing an alliance.\(^{123}\) The story is confusing and possibly an invention. Polybius himself could not believe it until he had confirmation from (possibly self-interested and biased) Macedonian sources after the war with Perseus was over. He believed

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\(^{120}\) Polyb. 29.5-9.  
\(^{121}\) Polyb. 29.6.1, 29.7.8; cf. Livy 44.13.9, 44.24.9. Polybius sourced the tale from ‘friends of Perseus’ (see below), who in presenting the actions as being initiated by Eumenes served to discredit his continued alliance with Rome: Polyb. 30.8.10. Livy has Perseus as the instigator: Livy 44.24.9-11.  
\(^{122}\) Polyb. 29.4.8, 29.6.2; cf. Livy 44.24.10.  
\(^{123}\) Diodorus Siculus argues that correspondence between Perseus and Eumenes arranging a συμμαχία came to light after the war: Diod. 31.7.2. This contrasts with the general image of rumours and uncertainty expressed in other sources.
the story explained Rome’s treatment of Eumenes after the war ended. The Pergamene king, however, was never openly accused or punished for consorting with Perseus. Ancient sources agree that Eumenes had no desire to see Rome defeated. Pergamum relied on its reputation as a friend of Rome to have a free hand in Asia Minor, and the destruction of Rome would have destroyed the protection they enjoyed against their victims. Though, Eumenes may have genuinely wanted the war with Perseus to end in 168.

From an intelligence provision standpoint, it is Appian’s fragmented account of the incident that is particularly interesting. Appian suggests that Perseus was communicating with Eumenes, fully aware he would never side with him, knowing that Rome would hear about it. He suggests that Perseus was well aware of Roman intelligence pathways and indeed sought to exploit them. All he wanted was for Rome to lose faith in him, knowing that Rome would hear about it. Polybius questions why Perseus did not take advantage of this, allow Eumenes to take the bait, and then publicise the information, it being in his power to make the transaction public, and thus verifiable. If Perseus had acted in the way Polybius suggests, his declaration would have detracted from Roman suspicions. The Romans were clever enough to question why Perseus would publicise such information. Rumours did leak out at the time, says Polybius, and Rome was informed of their interaction. Appian’s account, while plausible, is perhaps not to be preferred to the Polybian tradition. But, Polybius'
Macedonian informants may have deceived the historian by trying to whitewash the king’s role in the whole affair.\(^{130}\)

The confused tradition about the transaction between Eumenes and Perseus may go back to the contacts themselves; they were all shrouded in mystery, even to the contemporary Polybius.\(^{131}\) There was no verifiable information about what the intentions or actions of the parties were. From an outside perspective, communication with the enemy always looks suspicious. Without objective analysis to rationalise what might have been happening, suspicion easily clouds judgement. The mere presence of Macedonians raised questions as to how hostile Eumenes was to Macedon and how loyal he was to Rome.\(^{132}\) According to Polybius, the senate was convinced that Eumenes continued communicating with Perseus, and was monitoring the situation in order to be ready to defect if Rome appeared to be losing.\(^{133}\) Perseus’ manipulation of Roman intelligence procedures was successful in raising suspicions of Eumenes. In this instance, even if Rome had their own espionage agents, the chance of one accessing these negotiations is unknowable. The point is that the senate did not remain in ignorance of Pergamum’s or Perseus’ actions. The choice of when to send pertinent information to Rome and what exactly to say was politically motivated. It may have included blatant falsehoods. It was a dangerous game. While there were pathways for manipulation, international networks offered inherent protections against manipulation.

\(^{130}\) See above and n. 121.
\(^{131}\) Livy’s account, based on Polybius, offers little clarification. Eumenes is presented as a greedy and fickle individual, Perseus a miser. The discussions were ‘secret’ but Eumenes predicted that neither Rome nor Macedon truly wanted the war to continue, and set out to gain as much money as possible. There is no account of how Roman officials discovered the discussions, but the Macedonians alleged their conversations related to prisoners of war, and Eumenes agreed with them to avoid suspicion. See Livy 44.24.9-28.1.
\(^{132}\) This was an important and well known signifier for the Romans since their standard behaviour for signifying hostile intent and protecting themselves from hostile intelligence was to expel foreigners from Rome. See above, chapter 3.
\(^{133}\) Polyb. 30.1.6-7. Eumenes’ time-serving is arguably sensible, albeit offensive to an ally. Eumenes appears to have become suspicious of his brother – perhaps because he cautioned against Eumenes’ acts during the Third Macedonian War. When Attalus was sent to Rome, a doctor known as Stratius accompanied him, allegedly to monitor his acts and words and to ensure he remained loyal to his brother: Livy 45.19; Polyb. 30.2; and below, chapter 6.
Conclusions: Roman Access to Intelligence

The intelligence provided by ambassadors and foreign sources was as fraught with bias and manipulation as that sourced through traders and explorers. This did not abrogate its usefulness. All information serves to construct an image of international affairs. Intelligence is information that is value-neutral, neither good nor bad, neither true nor false. Intelligence analysis would be unnecessary if information could be determined to be objectively ‘true’. Intelligence is an attempt to collate all possible information in order to develop an understanding of what is going on in any given situation, and what is likely to happen in the future.\(^\text{134}\) Perception is more important to human decision-making than reality. Intelligence serves as a protective measure, one that is used to generate an informed image of the wider world in order for a state to pursue its best interests and achieve its foreign policy goals.

As Rome became one of three first-tier powers in the Mediterranean during the second century (the other two being the Seleucid empire and Macedon), large numbers of embassies came to Rome from smaller and weaker eastern states for aid, protection, or alliances. The information they provided was rarely information provided for intelligence’s sake. Ulterior motives abounded. Beyond claims that were blatantly designed to manipulate, it was often difficult to determine what information provided was legitimate, what was based on legitimate claims before being augmented, and what was used simply to attack neighbours or rivals but which rested on meagre foundations that were difficult to validate. These embassies provided a constant, if often contradictory source, of intelligence about world events. The overall impression that Rome was reliant on embassies for information about foreign affairs in areas where no Roman personnel was present is not inaccurate. If one state was not particularly forthcoming about its activities, the interconnected system as a whole ensured that other states would push this information along intelligence pathways to Rome.\(^\text{135}\) It is true that Antiochus chose not to keep Rome informed of his

\(^{134}\) Lowenthal 2006: 7.

\(^{135}\) Austin and Rankov claim that Rome conquered the Mediterranean from a state of ignorance rather than knowledge. See Austin and Rankov 1995: 87-108. As discussed in chapter 4, Roman geographic knowledge was not perfect by any means, but it was not entirely lacking. And the sheer number of embassies that sought to inform Rome of what another state was doing ensured that little could be hidden completely.
activities, but news of these still reached Rome, if filtered through the self-interest of those reporting it.

In recognition of the politicisation and the biases that intelligence provided by foreign sources was subject to, whenever necessary the senate attempted to validate, verify, and augment data with that gained through more reliable sources - that is through Romans themselves. It was only when intelligence coming from a foreign source confirmed pre-existing ideas that it was used, unfiltered, as the motivation for action. Any information provided was never completely reliable, and always had the potential to manipulate the Romans through faulty or highly subjective accounts of other states’ activities. But as will be discussed in the following section, which takes up the theme, discussed in earlier chapters, of the Roman political counterintelligence policy, any information received was verified. As Polybius explains, information provided by foreign representatives had little effect on Roman decision-making. The Romans chose instead to value the word of their own investigators.\textsuperscript{136} This was a sensible choice. It removed the potential for overt manipulation and naïve decision-making, and reveals Roman senatorial awareness that information presented from outside sources, even from trusted friends, could be biased. The Roman tendency toward intelligence verification disputes the notion that Rome’s reliance on foreign states for the gathering and presentation of intelligence was somehow limiting in terms of their appreciation of political intelligence, and the suggestion that their collection methods indicate a lack of nuanced understanding of how international relations worked. The most telling success of the system is that there are no recorded cases of disastrous, political strategic surprise during the mid-republic. The Roman collection system, existing as it did in a highly connected and diplomatically active world, provided efficient sources of preliminary intelligence that met Roman needs. There was no need to develop a devoted service for intelligence or specially trained intelligence agents. Intelligence provided by foreigners was used in conjunction with foreknowledge to establish a foundational understanding of world events and characteristics at any given moment, which could be continually built upon. The limitations of this type of intelligence were recognised and accounted for.

\textsuperscript{136} Polyb. 23.9.4-5, 31.11.10-12.
The reliance on foreigners to provide preliminary intelligence kept the senate informed about international affairs reasonably efficiently. But foreign intelligence was not a sufficient basis for the decision to act. As was seen in the previous section, the provision of information was often driven by the foreign policy agendas of the providers, and so verification was necessary. The senate typically appointed Roman officials, usually in the form of diplomatic fact-finding commissions, to investigate and verify external intelligence and determine if further action was necessary. Senatorial commissions returned to Rome and reported their findings. It was only when this process was complete that decisions were made about potential reactions. The decisions made may not have been sensible or successful. Foreign parties were active agents in international affairs; they could and did influence the interpretation of Roman commissioners. Regardless, the number of commissions dispatched to 'investigate' affairs points to the Roman desire to know what was going on in the world around them, and a foreign policy rationale of not trusting foreign sources of information, even friends, without verification. It is indicative of the Roman appreciation for the high incentives for manipulation in intelligence sharing; after all, they themselves did this. The Roman verification system of course had problems with bias control and accessibility to intelligence, but when taken into consideration alongside the provision of intelligence from foreign sources, it created an intelligence procedure that was efficient and, while not perfect, was at least suited to mid-republican intelligence needs.

Roman Indifference to Intelligence

After foreigners presented intelligence in the senate, as discussed above, it was common for the Romans to dispatch return embassies or commissions -

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137 When decisions were made based solely upon intelligence provided by foreign embassies without verification, they were taken only if the senate were looking for a pretext and justification for action and interference in foreign affairs, or they already had an established idea of what was occurring and what needed to be done to maintain their position or that of their allies.
legati - ‘to look into affairs’. These embassies were not always indicative that sincere Roman attempts at intelligence verification would follow. They were often mere token gestures designed to gratify friends and allies. Gruen has gone so far as to argue that they were most often simply excuses to avoid more robust Roman involvement and responsibility, while maintaining the pretence of active participation in international affairs.  

138 Allies could not claim that Rome did nothing about their warnings, complaints, and requests, and Rome could avoid exerting any great efforts beyond dispatching ambassadors/commissions of inquiry.  

This was true in some cases. There were instances where the senate was clearly not interested in affairs, and their responses were deliberately vague, non-committal, and sometimes cryptic. Carthaginian ambassadors sent to Rome after their conflicts with Masinissa were told that they needed to satisfy the Roman people.  

Unable to decide what exactly this meant, Carthage sent another embassy, which was told that the Carthaginians knew perfectly well what was required.  

Appian claims these cryptic comments were Rome’s attempt at misdirection, forcing action that the senate could later deem was inappropriate and in which to find a legitimate pretext for war. His interpretation has merit, but it is also possible that the senate simply did not know how best to deal with the situation nor did it care for the border disputes while Carthage remained subservient.

To take another example, in 188 after representations from the Achaean League and Sparta, Rome provided the ambiguous order that nothing ought to change with regard to the Spartans. Neither the Achaean ambassadors nor the Spartans knew what this meant, each interpreting it to suit themselves.  

After the Third Macedonian War, having been punished for perceived disloyalty during that war, the Rhodians were given an ambivalent reply about their future by the senate.  

These ambiguous pronouncements were designed to absolve

138 Gruen 1984: passim.
139 Gruen 1984: 129.
141 Οἱ δὲ αὐθικῶς ἐφασαν εἰδέναι Καρχηδονίους καλῶς, καὶ εἰπόντες ἀπέπεμψαν: App. Pun. 74.
142 Livy 38.25.
143 Οἷς ἀπασίν οἰκείως ἀπῆντησε καὶ φιλανθρώπως πλῆν τῶν Ῥωμαίων. Τούτους δὲ παρέπεμπε ποικίλας ἐμφάσεις ποιοῦσα περὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος: Polyb. 30.19.16-17.
Rome from taking any responsibility or action in the short term. As Gruen argues, the senate wanted little to do with them, or considered them unworthy of Roman intervention. Ambiguous responses were usually delivered to embassies that sought arbitration or interference in minor matters of remote concern to Rome. It was different with those that provided pertinent intelligence about affairs that might affect Roman security arrangements, or those that were follow-up embassies from parties whose complaints had already been investigated and dismissed. When embassies arrived with more important concerns, especially concerns that highlighted systemic problems in an area where Roman security arrangements or ambitions were in place, the senate paid more attention. Commissioners were sent out not as ‘a courtesy to appellants without a commitment for Rome’ but in an attempt to determine to what extent the warnings and complaints were legitimate, and, more importantly, how these events might affect the Roman position or arrangements in the area. Simply because there was no immediate military response to situations or an attempt to force parties to refrain from certain behaviour or actions does not imply that Rome was actively avoiding engagement when it was necessary. Rather, it is clear that the Roman tendency was to try to gain as much information as possible before they committed themselves to actions that may have been unwarranted or unwise at any given time due to more pressing issues elsewhere, or that may have required a stronger case for costly and potentially risky military intervention.

The same Roman lack of concern, not to say contempt, for matters of fairly remote interest can be seen in their attempts to manipulate the diplomatic process. Expertise was and is not necessary for investigation; competence is. Inept officials were knowingly sent to investigate and deal with the conflict between Bithynia and Pergamum in 149. Some background is necessary: in 154, Prusias allegedly began to ravage Attalus II’s Pergamene territory. Attalus’ initial complaints to the senate were ignored, the senate thinking he was attempting to manipulate them and set up a pretext for action. It was only after more information arrived in Rome that the senate decided to devote more attention to

the affair.\textsuperscript{146} The senate told Prusias to make a treaty with Attalus and cease his activities.\textsuperscript{147} The order must have been relatively weak. Prusias was slow to respond. It was only after a second embassy arrived with a threat to revoke Prusias’ status as a friend and ally of the Roman people that he agreed.\textsuperscript{148} Attalus later claimed that Prusias had broken his treaty with Pergamum.\textsuperscript{149} Because of the fragmentary state of our sources after Livy runs out in 167, what Prusias did to break this treaty is unclear. The senate appears to have decided that Attalus, while perhaps being worthy of suspicion himself, was a more important ally than Prusias.\textsuperscript{150} In any event, probably at Roman instigation, Prusias ceased his aggression against Eumenes. But in 149, his son Nicomedes, supported by Attalus, attempted to depose him. To investigate this, Marcus Licinius, Aulus Mancinus, and Lucius Malleolus were dispatched. Their mandate to look into affairs in Asia came with a further instruction: they were to stop Attalus declaring war on Prusias, presuming his intentions, based on foreknowledge, from their previous interactions with him, and to check the aggression of Nicomedes. The mandate for this mission was standard. The Romans had a stake in maintaining the (divided) status quo in Asia Minor and allowing Prusias and Attalus to strike a balance between themselves. It limited the power of both kingdoms and provided the senate with two alternative intelligence sources. The conflict needed to end without Roman military involvement.

Equally significant is the personnel involved in the Roman embassy of 149. According to Polybius, Licinius was a weak and gouty man. Because people were judged by appearance, the sending of a lame ambassador carried implications for the mission’s importance. It was not designed to send the message that Rome felt the need to resort to compellence and overawing prestige to force either Attalus or Nicomedes to behave; a lame Roman would do well enough to keep these two creatures from each other’s throats. The other envoys were equally, if not more incompetent. Mancinus had suffered from numerous head injuries, and it was a wonder he was still alive. Malleolus was

\textsuperscript{146} Polyb. 32.16.
\textsuperscript{147} App. Mith. 3.
\textsuperscript{148} App. Mith. 3; Polyb. 33.7, 36.14.
\textsuperscript{149} OGIS 327, 328.
\textsuperscript{150} Polyb. 32.16.3; 33.7.12.
thought to be the stupidest man in Rome. Why these men were chosen as ambassadors is perplexing for Polybius. The historian claims the matter required expedient and bold action – not something to be entrusted to incompetent officials.\[151\] He professes his bemusement at the selection.\[152\] The bemusement arises from the perception that the senate should have viewed the situation as a legitimate problem. But it seems fairly clear that the mere personnel of the embassy was a message in and of itself about how the senate regarded the Bithynian and Pergamene royals and their petty machinations. The embassy was an expression of the senate’s view that it was not interested in helping Prusias or investigating the rights and wrongs of the issue, or even in using the embassy as an excuse to generate fresh intelligence about the capabilities of Pergamum and Bithynia. Instead, the Roman delegation was specifically designed to demonstrate that Prusias had little hope of Roman favour or intervention. The senators had determined upon action (there would be none from Rome) and policy (the situation in Asia Minor was of little concern to them) prior to the dispatch of the embassy. They had evidently assessed the threat level to Rome of the situation is Asia Minor long before they dispatched the embassy of incompetents.

This kind of behaviour lends credence to the idea that the Romans used diplomacy as an excuse for inaction. The timing of the dispatch and the personnel of the embassy were precisely the appropriate and necessary response to the crisis facing their friend Prusias. It reduced the ability of Rome’s friends to complain legitimately about any potential Roman breaches of good faith or negligence. The embassy cannot have appeared to Prusias or Attalus to be as insulting or incompetent as hindsight, or Polybius, suggests. The embassy was not in a position to make competent or quick decisions about what was going on in Asia because it did not have to: the senate had already decided the situation was of no concern to them, and a token effort was all that was needed. Such an approach was probably unusual, as even the fragmentary evidence shows. If the proud but now fairly marginalised states of the Hellenistic East were not taken seriously by the Romans, respect for Roman power would probably have waned,

\[151\] Polyb. 36.14.

\[152\] Cato, an enemy of Pergamum in the senate, announced the envoys were reportedly too slow and incompetent to accomplish anything (Polyb. 36.14; Plut. Cat. Mai. 9).
as belief in Rome’s good faith diplomacy withered. It is true that, according to the usual pattern, the Romans dithered and delayed when they did not want to get involved in distant affairs, but to suggest that embassies of the kind sent to Asia in 149 were common wrongly suggests that the states of the East were both more desperate and self-effacing than could possibly have been the case even after Roman hegemony had been firmly established.

The senate limited their investigations to matters they considered interesting, controversial, or important in a given set of circumstances. This is one of the fundamental distinctions between the foci of modern intelligence and those of ancient Rome. Modern intelligence is expansive in scope, and a worst-case construction would characterise it as paranoid. Everything from everywhere is vacuumed up and subject to some form of analysis, whether it seems important or not. The Roman focus on only short-term threats rather than long-term strategic problems explains why, for example, intelligence from Saguntum regarding Carthaginian actions was neglected in the 220s.\textsuperscript{153} The Iberian Peninsula was too distant from Rome to be of immediate concern, and the actions of Carthage were as of yet unthreatening to Rome itself, or at least less threatening than that posed by the Celts. It was Saguntum’s choice to fight Carthage’s Spanish allies while Carthaginian forces were in the vicinity.\textsuperscript{154} Carthage could not afford to neglect the affront, lest their allied tribes change their allegiance. Saguntine complaints reaching initially fell on deaf ears perhaps because Saguntum was regarded as the aggressor in its conflicts with the Spanish tribes, and besides, as all in the system knew, friends and allies were not bound to come to their partners’ aid if they were otherwise preoccupied, as Rome was with the Celtic threat. Moreover, Carthaginian actions in Iberia were of little concern to Rome—especially because the Romans believed they were covered by treaties with Carthage, protecting Roman friends and allies from Carthaginian violence. It was only in 220, after the Celtic War was over, that commissions were sent to Carthage and to Hannibal to seek verification about what was going on in Spain.\textsuperscript{155} Even after the siege of Saguntum began, Rome did little in

\textsuperscript{153} Polyb. 3.15.2-5; Livy 21.6.2-3.
\textsuperscript{154} Polyb. 3.15.8.
\textsuperscript{155} Polyb. 3.15.2-12; Livy 21.6.3-8, 21.9-11; cf. App. Hisp. 37.
response.\textsuperscript{156} The Roman decision to ignore Hannibal’s aggression is controversial, and subject to much academic debate.\textsuperscript{157} It is possible that the Romans, still reeling from its five-year existential conflict with the Celts, wanted to avoid a war with Carthage at all costs, especially in an area so far removed from its own national security sphere.\textsuperscript{158} While Saguntum’s fall was regrettable, it was not reason enough to risk a major war with Carthage, especially because the First Punic War had been a gruelling twenty-four-year ordeal. Hindsight suggests that the senate ought to have acted on intelligence when it was received, and thwarted Carthaginian expansionist attempts, but politico-strategic decisions are rarely so simple.

In a similar scenario, in 172 Eumenes could legitimately claim that Roman international negligence led to Hellenistic city-states turning to Perseus. There was little active Roman interest in Greek affairs between 188 and the outbreak of the Third Macedonian War; no important Roman embassy visited Macedonia in the decade after 183.\textsuperscript{159} This was despite reports from Pergamum and various Greek states, and suggestions from 182 from Roman ambassadors, that Philip’s allegiance to Rome was slipping.\textsuperscript{160} Philip’s actions may have been dismissed as relatively unimportant due to his growing paranoia, dissent within his kingdom, and the dissension in his own family caused by the pro-Roman tendencies of his

\textsuperscript{156} Polyb. 3.15-17, 3.20-21, 3.30; Livy 21.2, 21.6, 21.14-18; App. Hisp. 7; Zonar. 8.21.
\textsuperscript{157} See most recently with a full bibliography Hoyos 1998: 174-232; Burton 2011: 238-42.
\textsuperscript{158} Sheldon asserts that the Roman embassy arrived in Carthage so ‘poorly briefed about local sentiments’ that the envoys naively asked the Carthaginian senate to turn Hannibal over to them to avoid war. This was not a matter of being poorly briefed about sentiment, but part of a diplomatic strategy. To declare war without consideration or consultation, and to do so without attempts to avoid large scale conflict would be foolish. There is no indication that the Roman senate had a predetermined expected outcome of the request. The embassy was a measure taken to cause delay, investigate sentiment, and attempt to avoid war with Carthage if possible. That Carthage was given the opportunity to divorce themselves from Hannibal’s actions was not an unreasonable tactic in the circumstances. See Sheldon 2005: 43-4.
\textsuperscript{159} In 183, envoys were sent to Macedon in response to the discussions of Pergamum and Greek ambassadors against Demetrius to ensure that Roman conditions were being met: Livy 39.47.8-11. Another was not sent until 177, as a side-trip to an embassy to the Bastarnae: App. Mac. 11.1; cf. Livy 41.19.4. For more on this embassy, see below, pp. 214-216.
\textsuperscript{160} 182: Livy 40.2.7. 181: Livy 40.20.1-4. 178: Livy 41.6.
son Demetrius. Regardless, after Philip’s death, and Perseus’ growth in power and charm offensive toward the Greeks, anti-Macedonian reports were consistently ignored in Rome. Complainants turned to Eumenes rather than Rome as more and more Greeks turned to Perseus.\(^{161}\) Intelligence provided by states that remained loyal to Rome was dismissed as unimportant.\(^{162}\) But valuable intelligence and diplomatic opportunities were wasted as a consequence.

**Roman Investigative Responses to Intelligence**

When intelligence was provided that the senate deemed interesting or concerning, there was a standard pattern of further investigation. Diplomatic commissions were dispatched with a specific mandate to verify and augment available knowledge. This response most commonly concerned potentially dangerous threats, that is, in the period discussed here, intelligence pertaining to the first-tier states of Macedon, Syria, and Carthage. This was perfectly rational behaviour. The bickering of small states had little effect, real or imagined, on Rome, although these were still investigated when non-standard intelligence was received. Once intelligence was verified abroad, Roman commissions returned and presented reports, sometimes with foreign ambassadors or witnesses in tow.\(^{163}\) In conjunction with foreign intelligence presented by envoys from other states, these reports determined future courses of action. Explicit references to ambassadorial reports are made only occasionally in the extant sources, but it is reasonable to assume that all *legati* who survived their missions returned to Rome and announced what they had discovered to the senate as a matter of routine.\(^{164}\) The senate’s reaction to this information either resulted in the

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\(^{161}\) Polyb. 25.3.1-8; Livy 41.22.5, 42.12.1, 42.14.5; Plut. Aem. 7.3, 13.3. For more on Perseus’ actions see Hammond and Walbank 1988: 488-504.

\(^{162}\) Livy 42.13.

\(^{163}\) Thus C. Valerius Laevinus, one of the ambassadors sent to Greece in 172 to drum up support for Rome in its upcoming war against Perseus, returned to Rome with Praxo of Delphi, the woman who housed the alleged assassins of Eumenes, and Rammius of Brundisium, the man Perseus allegedly suborned to kill Roman magistrates passing through his city. See Livy 42.17.

\(^{164}\) We know, for example, that Roman commissions were commonly sent on investigative missions to the East after 167, but because of the loss of Livy after that year, in most instances, we know little of the reporting that followed these missions. So, for example, Gneaus Octavius, Spurius Lucretius, and Lucius Aurelius were sent as legates not only to disarm Syria in 163, but also to look into the affairs of Macedonia, Galatia, and Cappodocia. We know that Octavius was killed in Syria by Leptines of Laodiceia: Polyb. 31.11.1. But there is little mention of the outcome of the
questioning of foreign embassies (if they were still present in the city) to
determine their motivations and judge the truth of what they said, the
determination of a plan of action to address whatever problem existed, or the
sending of further senatorial embassies to continue the investigation and seek
more information.\textsuperscript{165} It was reasonable for the senate to hold in higher regard the
information reported by their own ambassadors that coming from foreign
sources. The need to verify information was not indicative of a lack of
intelligence comprehension, but of a vital secondary part of the Roman
intelligence cycle. It is an extension of the political counterintelligence policy not
to trust information from self-interested sources. Relationships with other states
ensured that the Romans were well-informed about affairs, whether these were
considered important or not. Their verification procedures allowed them to
determine which of them required their attention, and how much.

Perceived threats were answered with a more active interest and often
numerous investigative missions. The Dardanians, traditional enemies of
Macedon, informed the senate in 177 of the arrival in their territory of the
Barstanae in large numbers, and presented them as a threat to Rome. The threat
was due to their size and valour, the general acceptance that they were Celts,\textsuperscript{166}
and their collusion with Perseus. It was Perseus rather than the Barstanae that

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mission, what information was reported to the senate, or what decisions were made in
light of this intelligence. Cf. Polyb. 31.12.4, 31.33.5, 32.2-3; App. Syr. 46-47; Diod. 31.29.
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165 Thus, after Pharnaces of Pontus had seized Sinope in 183, leading to war with
Eumenes, Prusias of Bithynia, and Ariarathes of Cappadocia, in 182 envoys from
Rhodes reported on the matter before the senate, and Eumenes and Pharnaces
presented their grievances with each other to the senate, apparently unable to deal
with them without external arbitration. Rome sent an otherwise unknown legate,
Marcus, to investigate affairs: Polyb. 23.9. The next year Marcus presented his report –
stating that Eumenes was behaving moderately in all things. Rather than debate who
was right in this instance, the senate determined to send yet more ambassadors
allegedly to fully explore the differences between Pharnaces and Eumenes: Polyb.
24.1; Livy 40.20. What is interesting about this episode is that more information was
deemed to be required. Marcus’ investigation had either failed to acquire enough
information – something that is unlikely considering he was able to make a report
advocating Eumenes’ position – or he had learnt something that the senate wanted to
know more about. The situation here did not begin as one of intelligence gathering for
its own sake. Rome was drawn into the dispute. But the Roman diplomatic response
allowed Rome to use the situation to gather more information about a region they
were still relatively unfamiliar with.
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166 Polybius conflates the Barstanae and the Galatians in this episode.
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posed a threat, but the suggestion of conspiracy was deeply worrying.\textsuperscript{167} Envoys from Thessaly then arrived, supporting the information provided by the Dardanians.\textsuperscript{168} The collusion between Perseus and the Barstanae is difficult to prove, but a historical relationship with the Macedonians was known to exist.\textsuperscript{169} Regardless, the senate considered the information and decided that they ought to send commissioners, led by Aulus Postumius, to determine the legitimacy of the threat.\textsuperscript{170} The embassy reached the Barstanae, somewhere in the lower Danube region, and returned to Rome in 175. The ambassadorial report stated that Macedonia was strongly fortified, had abundant war material, and had engaged in vigorous military training of its youth.\textsuperscript{171} They further claimed that war had broken out in Dardania.\textsuperscript{172} The Dardanians had resorted to arms when the Barstanae failed to leave Dardanian territory and instead became more aggressive.\textsuperscript{173} Perseus, presumably having heard of the Roman embassy to the Bastarnae, sent an embassy to Rome to deny involvement, defending himself against any accusation of instigating their movements.\textsuperscript{174} In this instance, the senate received vital national security intelligence from a foreign source, but refused to act on suspicion alone. The allegation that Perseus instigated the movements of the Bastarnae aroused suspicion, but the senate needed to know more, and needed a trustworthy, that is, a Roman, source. The Roman ambassadors’ report added to the dossier of known Macedonian activity. Macedonian mobilisation and militarisation may have appeared to be a threat to Rome to some senators now or in the future, but it was hardly an unusual activity, nor was fortification. Besides, the ambassadors had no intelligence about whom the Macedonian militarisation was aimed at. Information gained may

\begin{enumerate}
\item Polyb. 25.6.2-3.
\item Polyb. 25.6.4.
\item Livy 41.19 claims that Perseus was explicitly attempting to stir up trouble between the Dardanians and Barstanae, perhaps as a distraction from his own preparations for war with Rome. It is possible these Barstanae are the 30,000 under Clondicus who reached Dardania in 179. These Barstanae had received promises of safe passage from Philip, with the intention of destroying the Dardanians and opening a passage to Italy, as part of the king’s alleged plans for war on Rome at the time of his death: Livy 40.57-58.
\item Polyb. 25.6.5-6, App. Mac. 11.1.
\item App. Mac. 11.1.
\item Livy 41.19.1.
\item Livy 41.19.3.
\item Livy 41.19.2.
\end{enumerate}
have been worrisome on an intellectual level, but there was no indication as of yet that the Romans had to interfere pre-emptively. Rome had no specific complaint against Perseus — yet. Hard evidence for his involvement in the Bastarnian war was lacking. And so, without enough conclusive intelligence to act one way or another, the senate resolved to continue monitoring the situation, warning Perseus that he should remain true to his treaty with Rome, providing a warning that Rome would intervene if reasonable cause were given.

Not all reports were earth-shattering in the information they provided. In 192, the consul Gnaeus Domitius was forbidden from leaving Rome because the senate expected that the embassy sent to Antiochus was about to return with important information.\textsuperscript{175} The senate had presumably been informed that the embassy was on its way back to Rome, but had not heard the specifics about what information it was carrying.\textsuperscript{176} This embassy had been sent to both Eumenes and Antiochus to look into affairs in the East and attempt to clarify the situation there. Along with information about both kings, the envoys also seemingly picked up ancillary information about Nabis. Nothing in their report could justify a war with Syria at the time, and mentioned only that Nabis was attacking the coastline in breach of a treaty — something that had been earlier reported by Achaean envoys to Rome.\textsuperscript{177} In other words, the embassy discovered that the Syrian problem was not worthy of Roman intervention at the time, but had verified what the Achaeans had told them about Nabis. What is significant here is that the senate awaited the results of the investigation about a potentially dangerous situation prior to allowing the consul to carry out his business. The report was necessary before final decisions about action were undertaken because of the growing threat from Antiochus. Because the threat had not seemed to escalate, and no pretext for war had been presented, the decision was made not to alter the status quo.

\textsuperscript{175} Livy 35.20.14.
\textsuperscript{176} It is interesting that the senate succeeded in gaining knowledge that the expedition was on its way back. This implies either that a letter had been sent ahead or that verifiable rumours had reached the city. If it were dispatched in a letter, it probably did not contain an investigative report, indicating a Roman understanding that the risks of interception were too high (see chapter 2).
\textsuperscript{177} Livy 35.22.
To take a further example, in 184 the senate heard the report of Quintus Caecilius, Marcus Baebius, and Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus. These commissioners had been sent to look into disputes between Thessalian city-states, Eumenes, and Philip, who had all sent embassies to Rome in 186/5.\textsuperscript{178} The commission was designed to put an end to the near constant complaints about Philip flowing from the eastern states, and to determine his attitude toward Rome. The commission listened to Philip’s arguments that it was unfair that Eumenes be granted control of Thessalian cities; the Thessalians complained of Philip’s occupation; Eumenes complained about the seizure of Greek cities on the Thracian coast. There was nothing that needed further investigation beyond the initial complaints, assuming they were accepted as valid. They were differences of opinion based on hazy precedents and earlier decisions, and requests for Roman help against a perceived aggressor. Philip’s envoys defended the king by saying that the cities belonged to him by right of war.\textsuperscript{179} This embassy reported to Rome, essentially summarising the facts of the initial complaints. But the commissioners introduced intelligence about Philip, making judgements about Philip’s response to their presence. The speech is a Livian invention, but the report of Philip’s aggressive stance toward Rome was likely accurate.\textsuperscript{180} The senate’s response indicates the ambassadors’ concern regarding Philip’s intentions, motivations, and attitude. Philip’s actions inspired suspicion. The senate dispatched another commission to attain more intelligence. This commission was to see whether Roman orders were followed.\textsuperscript{181} That is, they were to confirm whether their suspicions of Philip’s attitude were accurate or overly suspicious. Philip’s response was to arrange for the massacre of some Maroneans, and attempt to cover this up by lying to the Roman commissioners. His deception was easily detected and easy to prove. All that was required, as correctly highlighted by Livy, was for the commissioners to question the Maroneans themselves. Philip was told that if he wished to defend himself he was free to send Cassander and Onomastus, the perpetrators of the massacre, to

\textsuperscript{178} Polyb. 22.6.1-6; Zonar. 9.21.5; Livy 39.24.5-14.
\textsuperscript{179} Livy 39.25-27; cf. Diod. Sic. 29.16.
\textsuperscript{180} Livy 39.28. The Polybian account of these affairs has Greek embassies accuse Caecilius of misrepresentation. The situation was complicated. The senate’s response was to gather more information before it could make decisions: Polyb. 22.10-12.
\textsuperscript{181} Livy 39.33.
be interrogated in Rome. Philip protected Onomastus; Cassander was poisoned en route. Roman officials on this occasion developed further intelligence that merely reinforced their pre-existing suspicions of an anti-Roman attitude on the part of Philip. That they chose not to act at this moment but stored up this information, added it to their dossier of information on Macedon, as it were, is not a source of criticism of their appreciation of intelligence. To act at this moment would be unnecessarily pre-emptive. Philip disliked the Romans, but, according to Polybius, he lacked the forces he needed to carry out his plans. As will be seen shortly, he also apparently complied—eventually—with all of the commissioners’ orders up to this point. So the senate quite sensibly welcomed Philip’s son Demetrius when he came to Rome to defend his father. Philip’s removal was not required at this time, and better options still existed, as well as better ways to foster pro-Roman attitudes, such as the promotion of Demetrius as heir to Philip.

Monitoring was one option, but intelligence also resulted in action when crisis points approached. Rome’s declaration of war against the Illyrians in 157 uses the treatment of Roman envoys as a pretext for war, which Polybius clearly states was not the true motivation. Gaius Fannius led a commission to the Dalmatians in response to numerous complaints. He was to inquire into the state of affairs in Illyria and especially into the conduct of the Dalmatians. The Dalmatians refused to address the complaints laid against them, and denied any sense of common custom with Rome, including evidently a respect for diplomatic solutions to problems. Worse still, the Dalmatians denied them what was common protocol demanded was appropriate for ambassadors. They were provided with neither food nor lodging, and their mounts were forcibly removed from them. Further, they had few qualms about harming the ambassadors.

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182 Livy 39.34, Polyb. 22.13-14. The poisoning of Cassander, if true, was convenient for Rome’s growing suspicions about Philip for it presented the king as nefarious and plotting.
184 The Roman involvement in Demetrius’ position in Macedonian succession will be discussed in the following chapter.
185 Polyb. 32.13; cf. App. Ill. 11.
186 Polyb. 32.9.
themselves. Fannius and his commission eventually decided to leave rather than submit themselves to more indignities or risk their lives.\footnote{Polyb. 32.13; cf. App. Ill. 11.}

Polybius claims the senate was indignant at the treatment of their envoys. But while the treatment of these ambassadors was reprehensible by international norms, the Roman reaction can be more clearly linked to their intelligence discoveries. From their behaviour, it was clear the Dalmatians clearly harboured intense anti-Roman sentiment (shades of Teuta’s treatment of Roman ambassadors in 230). Judging by the Romans ambassadors’ outrage, this was unknown to Roman sources — it was not in the Dalmatian cultural dossier, as it were. This scenario could be read as strategic surprise; it was a failure of Rome’s usual intelligence procedures. But the Dalmatians were a minor, insignificant player in international affairs. Ignorance regarding their attitude was excusable, though not optimal. It was the report of Fannius that sparked war with the Dalmatians. The pretext for this was the treatment of ambassadors, but it was due to the newfound intelligence about the extent and violence of anti-Roman sentiment among the Dalmatians that compelled the senate to action. Their envoys had simply been investigating the state of affairs, entirely innocently, on behalf of their allies. An investigation gave the Dalmatians the benefit of the doubt. The senate was willing to listen to their side of the dispute and make a decision only once they had fuller information. Intelligence, however, revealed Rome’s friends not only to be correct, but to have understated the sheer perversity and bellicosity of Dalmatian international conduct, which was something that could not be allowed to continue if Rome was to maintain security on its eastern flank. It was through a Roman assessment of the sentiment and consideration of the importance of Illyria for the security of the Balkans, the eastern bulwark of Italy, and Rome’s access to the East that the decision was made.

Polybius’ supposed true explanation for the decision to declare war on the Dalmatians—that the Roman army was out of practice because of the relative state of peace since the Third Macedonian War—must be taken with a grain of salt. There had not been complete peace. In 166 there were campaigns in
northern Italy against (and two consular triumphs over) the Ligurians;¹⁸⁸ in 163 there was conflict in Corsica;¹ eighty and conflict in northern Italy probably continued without interruption until at least 158.¹⁹⁰ Spain, while pacified, was not yet consolidated. Polybius’ explanation ignores these events, which may or may not have stood in his original text. Illyria was strategically important for Roman access, via land, to the East. To leave anti-Roman sentiment to grow to the east of Illyria would not have been wise. If the Dalmatians succeeded in cutting Rome off from the East, the flow of intelligence from there might have been seriously jeopardised. Immediate action was necessary following receipt of disturbing intelligence in this instance, and for perfectly reasonable geostrategic reasons, rather than the overly cynical reason Polybius provides. And besides, no small barbarian state should be allowed to comport itself like a first-tier equal power to Rome.

The Report of Q. Marcius Philippus (183)

Most examples of intelligence are summarily presented in the sources, and do not fully explain the decision to search for intelligence, the presentation of the report, or the decisions made in light of the verification. There are a few extended accounts, however, that reveal the procedure more closely, and emphasise that the senate was inclined to believe Roman sources of information over any other. Polybius records the return of Q. Marcius Philippus from Greece, in 183, with a detailed intelligence report regarding Macedonian and Greek action. Philippus must have engaged in extensive intelligence gathering and consideration of affairs. First he had to discover what Philip had done, what the public interpretation of this action was, and then interpret Philip’s actions for himself. He then had to assess the situation of the Achaean league, and make predictions about future activity. He acts here as a combination of an intelligence officer, ambassador, and policy analyst. The senate dispatched him to discover verified information that they could act on.

At the beginning of the consular year of 183, the senate was inundated with envoys from the Hellenistic East. Representatives from Philip, Eumenes,

¹⁸⁸ Livy Per. 46.
¹⁸⁹ Val. Max. 9.12.3; Plin. HN. 7.182.
¹⁹⁰ Under that year the Fasti triumphales records a triumph by the proconsul M. Fulvius Nobilior over the Ligurians. See Walbank 1979: 534-6; and now Rich 2015: 231, 250.
Pharnaces of Pontus, the Rhodians, the exiled Spartans and those who occupied Sparta, members of the Achaean League, Thessaly, Perrhaebia, Athamania, Epirus, and Illyria.\textsuperscript{191} The senate held audiences to hear their concerns and to listen to the information they provided.\textsuperscript{190} Much of the information about the state of affairs in Greece and Asia presented by one party contradicted that of another. As mentioned above, the senate relied on the presentation of such information, but knew better than to trust it without question, especially when contradictions emerged, as they were bound to do. Marcius Philippus was dispatched to verify the real state of affairs in Greece.\textsuperscript{195} Upon his return he reported what he had discovered, clearly presenting his own analysis of the situation. Maintaining the pretense common in even modern diplomacy, the senate summoned the ambassadors from the states concerned, and allowed them to present their cases as if they had not already made up their minds based entirely on Marcius’ report. Marcius presented them with a scenario in which Philip had obeyed Roman commands, but grudgingly and without conviction, leading to the belief that his compliance was temporary at best, and he awaited the opportunity to do as he wished.\textsuperscript{194} The senate’s response was to praise Philip, but to warn him that their suspicion remained. He was told to take care not to appear to be opposing Rome. The investigative mission allowed Rome to measure Philip’s known actions against their perception of his intentions and attitude.

In regards to the Peloponnese, Marcius claimed he had discovered that the Achaecans wanted to control their own affairs and were arrogant about their position. He advised that the best way to undermine them and to assert Roman power was to refuse to respond to their current request to force Messene back into the League. Sparta would soon come to an understanding with Messene, which had seceded from the confederacy, and join them in independence. This would force the Achaecans to ask for Roman aid, placing them in Roman power, and reducing their arrogance.\textsuperscript{195} The Achaecans had arrived in Rome with the

\textsuperscript{191} Polyb. 23.1; Livy 39.46.6.  
\textsuperscript{192} Polyb. 23.2-4.  
\textsuperscript{193} Polyb. 23.4.16.  
\textsuperscript{194} Polyb. 23.8-9.  
\textsuperscript{195} Polyb. 23.9.1-10.
request that Rome aid them in dealing with the mutinous Messene, if it were possible, or at least forbid anyone in Italy from importing grain or arms into Messene. There was no clause in the agreement between the Achaean League and Rome that incontrovertibly forced Rome to support the League in all things at all times, as was typical of all such ancient covenants. The senate chose to respond in accordance with Marcius’ advice and analysis. His suggestions aimed to destabilise Achaean power while allowing Rome to follow the technical requirements of their agreement with the Achaean League. Rome would also gain the upper hand by humbling an ally that was behaving arrogantly. The senate publicly proclaimed that they would not interfere with the members of the Achaean league; at present, it was not a matter of concern to them if Sparta, Corinth, or Argos abandoned the League.

Gruen takes this to be indicative that the Roman senate was simply exasperated, tired of the constant requests for intervention into the political minutiae of the Peloponnese. The requests may have been bothersome, but here Roman action was inspired by intelligence and Marcius’ assessment of it. The senate decided that picking a side was unnecessary, and besides, leaving the Peloponneseans to fight it out among themselves would probably benefit Rome. Achaean arrogance and independent behaviour were genuine threats; the League could not be allowed to be left completely to its own devices. They may have recalled how, ten years earlier, the Aetolian League had turned to Antiochus when the Romans refused to address their grievances. The senate calculated that the League would not turn to, say, Macedon for help since this might violate the spirit, if not the letter of their treaty with Rome. But there were other powers and the possibility of coalitions to balance Rome to worry about. In the circumstances, the senate, using the intelligence provided and analysed by Marcius, made the best decision possible given the information (and its analysis) they had in order to solidify Roman influence in the Peloponnese without the need for military intervention. Marcius’ report was laid out in detail, with

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196 Polyb. 23.9.12.
197 See Gruen 1984: 35 for the Hellenistic precedents.
198 Polyb. 23.9.11-15.
199 Gruen 1984: 481-96; Ferrary 2009 suggests that Rome was relatively powerless to do anything in this situation.
explanations of his analysis. This detail is only summarised in the surviving source material. Polybius’ account shows the senate listening to the advice of their intelligence officer, and using his information to their advantage when it came to decision-making. The senate purposely leaked their decision to deny any help to the Achaean League since, indeed, they predicted that soon it would be a spent force. This move was something of a gamble. Rome was relying on the League subsequently turning to Rome for aid, but from a more subservient position. Marcius’ analysis of the situation, however, turned out to be wrong. The League went to war with Messene and won, driving them to surrender.²⁰⁰

The Romans saved face and issued a decree affirming what they had refused to guarantee before: while the war was on the senate had ensured that no one had imported grain or arms into Messene. This decree slightly favoured the Achaeans.²⁰¹

Following the Achaean war on Messene, Sparta was readmitted to the League. Ambassadors were then sent to Rome to inform them of what had occurred. The Achaeans’ apparent lack of need for Roman aid cannot have helped redress what Marcius had earlier perceived as Achaean arrogance and independent-mindedness. Rather it probably achieved the opposite. The failure in this instance does not signify the Romans’ lack of appreciation for intelligence or lack of sophistication in handling it—quite the opposite: the episode demonstrates the senators paying great and careful attention to the intelligence of embassies and that of their agent, and his analysis, right down the line. If the senate, as a rule, did not allow the intelligence cycle to unfold to the extent revealed in this episode, the events outlined here may have unfolded quite differently, that is, with Roman embassies issuing demands and eventually legions taking the field. Marcius’ intelligence advice and his prediction of the outcome were erroneous. His analysis was probably influenced by the Achaeans’ dismissal of his advice: he advised them to wait for the desires of Rome to be known before taking action against Messene.²⁰² Surely such arrogance could be countered effectively by implying that Rome intended to break up the League. Marcius’ advice, however, was deemed the best by the senate since he was

²⁰⁰ Polyb. 23.16-17.
²⁰¹ Polyb. 23.17.3-4.
²⁰² Polyb. 24.9.12 (retrospective).
regarded as the best informed and most trustworthy expert on the situation. He had access to pertinent intelligence, and the opportunity to analyse this intelligence. Roman policy in this situation was determined by his intelligence. That Rome took the advice and used intelligence verified and analysed by a Roman source suggests a developed appreciation for intelligence, and a sophisticated informal system of gaining that intelligence when there was a perception that it was needed.

**Antiochus III and Rome**

The same verification and diplomatic investigative behaviour was repeated throughout the preliminary stages of the Syrian war.²⁰³ In the early 190s, Rome had yet to make a significant impact in Asia Minor and the Near East. After the conclusion of the Second Punic War in 201, Rome became inordinately more important as a Mediterranean power. The decision to jump into the convoluted and ancient network of relationships of the eastern Hellenistic kingdoms was not something to be taken lightly. The Romans had diplomatically engaged with Egypt since the early third century.²⁰⁴ The Illyrian and First Macedonian Wars had brought Rome into contact with Macedon and some marginal Greek city-states, as well as the Aetolian League and Pergamum. Further, Philip’s actions during the Second Punic War raised suspicions and resentment. After this, intelligence regarding the activities of the great powers played a significant role in drawing Roman attention, and eventually intervention, eastward. As usual, the Roman methodology was trust, but verify: the senate had to listen to the intelligence of representatives of foreign states and their assertions about the motivations and capabilities of their foes, but also to investigate these things for themselves as quickly as possible, and to develop what they perceived of as a less biased, less self-interested understanding of affairs, before determining how to proceed.

²⁰³ There are numerous controversies surrounding the build up to the Syrian War. The intention here is not to account for why the war occurred, but to examine the Roman intelligence measures during this time. For accounts of the causes of war see for instance Holleaux 1921: 320-30; Badian 1959; Harris 1979: 219-23; Gruen 1984: 620-36; Ferrary 1988: 141-47; Ma 1999: 94-102; Grainger 2002; Pfeilschifter 2005: 111-8; Eckstein 2006: 292-306; Eckstein 2008: 306-41; Burton 2011: 339-45.

²⁰⁴ Diplomatic relations are attested as early as 273. See Eutrop. 2.15; Val. Max. 4.3.9; Livy Per. 14.
In 201 embassies from Rhodes, Pergamum, and Egypt were in Rome to inform them about a pact between Antiochus III and Philip V, who aimed to take advantage of the turmoil surrounding Egypt’s new child king, Ptolemy V.²⁰⁵ The embassies informed the senate of what they knew about the pact and asked for Roman aid.²⁰⁶ Philip had mobilised against Ptolemaic outposts in the Hellespont and Rhodes. After defeating Rhodian forces at sea, he began to harass Pergamum, raiding and pillaging the countryside.²⁰⁷ Attalus appealed to the Aetolian League for aid, but was rebuffed.²⁰⁸ Philip benefitted from his alliance with Antiochus, receiving supplies that enabled him to attack Rhodes once more. Despite early successes, Philip was blockaded in the winter of 201, and fled back to Macedonia in the spring.²⁰⁹ Antiochus attacked Ptolemaic outposts in Coele-Syria in 202, before moving further south into Palestine. Allied embassies took the opportunity to skew intelligence, appealing to Roman suspicions, and suggested the collusion was a threat to Rome. This intelligence was provided in the hopes that the new first-tier power in the Mediterranean could and would do something to ameliorate the situation of the smaller states caught up in the conflicts of the great Hellenistic powers. The reality of the pact between Antiochus and Philip is heavily debated, though Eckstein argues convincingly for its existence.²¹⁰ As suggested by Grainger, their alliance was presumably not a secret, as both Philip and Antiochus had attacked Ptolemaic holdings.²¹¹ But the secrecy surrounding the actual details of the pact was menacing to the Romans. A successful Macedonian-Seleucid destruction of the Ptolemaic regime could destroy the delicate balance of power in the eastern Mediterranean that had roughly held since the death of Alexander. This required investigation.

²⁰⁵ Polyb. 3.2.8; Just. 30.2-3; Livy 31.2.1-2, 31.14.5.
²⁰⁷ Polyb. 16.1.
²⁰⁸ Livy 31.46.4.
²⁰⁹ Livy 33.18.6.
²¹⁰ The existence of this pact is well argued in Holleaux 1921: 306-22; Eckstein 2008: 129-80. For other accounts see, Walbank 1967: 114-8; Gruen 1973; Eckstein 2008: 130 nn. 34-38.
The presentation of this intelligence suggested to the Romans that they needed to adjust their impression of eastern Mediterranean affairs and prepare to defend their growing interests there. Rather than accept the biased suggestions of foreign representatives, the senate promptly dispatched Claudius Nero, Sempronius Tuditanus, and Aemilius Lepidus to investigate, and considering nearby Macedonia more of a direct threat than Syria, named it a *provincia* for the year 200. The Roman ambassadors of course knew about the activities of both Antiochus and Philip in the preceding years. They knew the facts, but did not know the motivations and capabilities of these potential foes. This commission toured Egypt, Epirus, Athamania, the Achaean League, and Athens. It attempted to discover attitudes toward Rome, Macedon, and the idea of a Roman war with Macedon, as well as to collect charges against Philip so that they could make an informed estimate of his capabilities and intentions, and determine their own capabilities, in terms of alliances they could rely on during a potential war. Prior to this mission, the suggestion of war with Macedon had been raised, and by Roman actions, tentatively prepared for. But the suggestion that Macedonian collusion or even a formal alliance with Antiochus may have been underway required extensive investigation. Rome could not fight a war against the combined forces of Syria and Macedon.

The commission ventured to Egypt and Syria. They probably interviewed both Ptolemy and Antiochus, or their representatives, regarding each other’s actions and motivations. These investigations revealed that while Antiochus could not afford war with Egypt and Rome at this time, he was winning his struggles in Syria, and while they would be over soon, there was little reason to fear his potential collusion with Macedon. He had no immediate motivations to interfere in affairs in Greece. The investigators had been briefed with the idea that collusion between Philip and Antiochus would pose a direct threat to Rome. Their new knowledge that Antiochus was currently distracted removed a sense of urgency, allowing the senate further time to investigate and

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212 Livy 31.18.1, Polyb. 16.25-27; App. Mac. 4. Athens had complained to Rome when Philip’s army ravaged Attica. See Livy 31.1.10; Paus. 1.36.5. The Aetolians, despite maintaining their peace of 206 with Macedon, complained to Rome when Philip conquered Aetolian holdings in the Hellespont as early as 202. See Livy 31.29.4; App. Mac. 4.2.

213 Polyb. 16.27; Livy 31.2.3; App. Mac. 4.2; Just. 30.3.
prepare for future contingencies. They could dismiss the fear mongering of their foreign sources of intelligence, and inform the senate that they could focus on Philip without fear. The wise Roman response to initial information was to verify it and to discover what they could about both Philip and Antiochus, and to send diplomatic complaints about rumoured activity. Rome could not avoid interaction with eastern powers as a first-tier power in the Mediterranean system, and to maintain this position required the continuous acquisition and verification of intelligence. The initial conclusions about Syrian activities, that they were not a current threat to Roman interests, did not allay Roman suspicions completely. Antiochus’ success in his wars revealed more than his current motivations to the ambassadors. He may have been preoccupied, but was clearly in an expansionist mood. He must have convinced the Roman legates that he had no intention to invade Egypt, despite what rumours of the pact claimed. But he was never to be considered a benign and weak player.

This mindset ensured that investigations were sent in response to rumours or unverified information about his activities, and those connected to him. Whatever information arrived in Rome was not enough for a full picture of affairs unfolding overseas to be created. In 198, Antiochus had seemingly kept his word to Roman ambassadors and moved away from Egypt after conquering Gaza, embarking on a relationship of amicitia with Rome. This act inspired a degree of Roman trust, and Antiochus had so far done little to inspire Roman

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214 Diplomatic activity such as this is not diplomacy as we would see it in the modern world. It is rather a form of soft power, attempting to compel others into giving in to Roman demands rather than face war. Similar acts such as demanding that Antiochus IV leave Egypt in 168 is technically diplomatic action as an ambassador was the one to present the demand. Cf. Livy 45.12; Polyb. 29.27.1. See Jehne 1999: 147. Eckstein 2006: 58-72, etc., calls this ‘compellence diplomacy’.

215 The arrival of foreign envoys and the threatening information they provided was a catalyst that drew Roman attention to and interaction with the Greek East. Prior to this intelligence, the underlying conditions for future Roman involvement had been set. Lebow defines a catalyst as information or an event that reshapes the thinking of decision-making bodies about external affairs so that the risks of inaction outweigh the risks of action. Lebow 2001. Eckstein applies this notion to the situation prior to the Second Macedonian War and claims that the intelligence provided by the envoys forced Rome to consider that doing nothing would ultimately be more dangerous for them than acting. Eckstein 2008: 238.


217 Livy 32.8, 33.20.
suspicion. But while fighting on the Roman side in the Second Macedonian War, Attalus of Pergamum sent information to Rome that Antiochus was moving north into his territory, presumably to attack the Ptolemic territories Philip had had to abandon.\textsuperscript{218} Attalus’ appeal and the truth about Antiochus’ actions have been doubted.\textsuperscript{219} But there is nothing particularly odd about Attalus’ behaviour. According to Livy, Rome denied him aid, claiming they would not help one ally and friend against another ally and friend of the Roman people.\textsuperscript{220} Attalus knew that Rome was not so naïve that they would dismiss the accusation. They would investigate whether they could trust what Attalus said because they needed to be certain of Antiochus’ activities – saving Pergamum from a potential threat in the process. Attalus thus appealed to Roman foreknowledge about Antiochus’ previous activities.

The senate, after permitting Attalus to withdraw from the Macedonian war, sent Claudius Nero again as an ambassador to investigate affairs in Asia. Livy claims this was to announce Roman displeasure with Antiochus’ actions.\textsuperscript{221} The mission sought intelligence too. Antiochus’ intentions could no longer be determined by current intelligence. His war in Coele-Syria was complete. The Romans knew this. But they did not know what he intended to do next. Intelligence suggested his intentions were to expand into areas of Roman interest, avoiding Egypt as he had been asked to do. What these ambassadors learnt in 198 is unrecorded, but they returned with a Syrian envoy who succeeded in convincing the senate that the intentions of Antiochus were not threatening to Rome.\textsuperscript{222} The Romans were preoccupied with their war with

\textsuperscript{218} Livy 32.8.9. The Rhodians interpreted Antiochus’ westward expansion as an attempt to bring aid to Philip. But it was in Antiochus’ interests to avoid becoming involved in Rome’s war with Philip and take advantage of Roman and Macedonian distractions. Livy takes the Rhodian interpretation to be valid. See Livy 33.19; Polyb. 18.41a. Antiochus was attacking Ptolemaic territory in Asia Minor, and there is little reason to believe his westward movements at this time were anything more than a continuation of this policy. Eckstein 2008: 184-8.

\textsuperscript{219} For the debate, see Leuze 1923: 190-201; Badian 1959: 82-4; Schmitt 1964: 269-76; Errington 1971b: 156-7; Briscoe 1973: 183; Rawlings 1976: 3-5; Gruen 1984: 538-9; Ma 1999: 279-81; Grainger 2002: 31-5; Eckstein 2008: 186 n. 14. Grainger suggests that Attalus’ complaint was a lie, but he tends to regard the Pergamene kings as meddling, manipulative shirkers. Grainger 2002: 32-5.

\textsuperscript{220} Livy 32.8.13.

\textsuperscript{221} Livy 32.8.15-16.

\textsuperscript{222} Livy 33.20.
Philip; they did not have the resources to simultaneously fight another large-scale war with a powerful Hellenistic monarch, and had little reason to fear that Antiochus posed a direct threat to themselves. The truth about Antiochus’ intentions and capabilities was important to Rome’s future policy. But the Romans welcomed the distraction until the Second Macedonian War was complete, then addressed the conflicting impressions created by Antiochus’ claims and Pergamene intelligence. They did not use foreign sourced intelligence to encourage or undertake any pre-emptive measures against Antiochus because the intelligence they sourced for themselves suggested for all the world that for the moment Antiochus was happy to remain a friend of Rome. Antiochus did not use his intelligence about the Romans to act against them either. Just as the Romans knew of his capabilities, Antiochus was fully aware that Rome was preoccupied with Philip, and could do little if he chose to act more aggressively against Ptolemaic holdings. But he chose not to. Roman confidence that Antiochus was for the moment content to behave as a Roman friend did not, however, mean that they judged him an innocent; their dossier on the Seleucid king was still open and suggested otherwise.

In 196, Roman suspicions of Antiochus’ intentions grew. Lucius Cornelius Lentulus, Publius Cornelius Lentulus, Publius Villius, and Lucius Terentius were sent to Antiochus in an attempt to discover the truth in light of complaints

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224 On the nature of Rome’s relationship with Antiochus III see Gruen 1984: 83-6; Burton 2011: 105-7. Gruen suggests that Rome was unaware of the gains Antiochus made in 197. Gruen 1984: 620-2. They may have been unaware of the specifics of the gains, for Rome was reliant on smaller powers to inform them. But Roman suspicions of Antiochus’ activity were active prior to this time. It may be true that the Romans did not consider Antiochus to be a major threat to themselves or their interests, but to suggest that they were unaware of his expansionary activities goes too far. His actions against Pergamum during the Second Macedonian War were not forgotten, nor his pact with Philip. While amicitia may have resulted from the diplomacy over his dispute with Attalus, to claim that Rome ignored and forgot this behaviour, rather than absorbing this knowledge of Antiochus into conceptions of his intentions and capabilities is difficult to accept. Rome cannot be expected to have interfered in Syrian activity prior to their peace with Macedon in the spring of 196. Their informants in Greece and Asia Minor likely chose not to inform Rome of affairs during the war since they knew little would arise from it due to Roman preoccupation with Philip. This situation changed the instant that war was over. See App. Syr. 2, Syll. 3591 (a decree of Lampsacus recording an encounter between Hegesias and L. Flamininus as the former was heading west).
and rumours. Upon the arrival of ambassadors at Antiochus’ court, unofficial conversations were reportedly friendly until Roman pressure was placed on Antiochus to stop his aggressions against the cities of Asia, and questioned his justifications for crossing to Thrace. Gruen claims this embassy sought to keep peace between Antiochus and Ptolemy; Eckstein has it designed to impose strict boundaries on what the Romans would consider acceptable behaviour by the king. Both are perhaps too prescriptive. And if either of these was the major purpose of the commission, they both failed. The senate was too unaware of the intentions and capabilities of Antiochus at this point to make any convincing statement of demands concerning his behaviour. The commission was designed primarily to investigate his activities and intentions. The Romans wanted to discover what was happening in Asia and, if anything could be known, to make judgements about Antiochus’ plans. They were in no position to dictate behaviour, and had yet to determine what they would do because they lacked current intelligence about the circumstances there. This is shown by Antiochus’ response, which was news to the Romans: the king was not attacking Thrace, he was rebuilding Lysimachea for the Lysimacheans; and as for his relations with Ptolemy, he was currently negotiating a marriage alliance with him.

Initial investigations of Syrian affairs were interrupted by the arrival of unverified rumours. It was reported that Ptolemy V had died. Diplomatic discussions ceased; both parties scrambled to find out if it were true. Livy claims that the rumour could not be verified and both parties pretended that the breakdown of discussions had nothing to do with the rumour. Both rushed to reach Egypt in order to fulfil their own agendas. Lucius Cornelius claimed that he had to go and meet Ptolemy, as part of his original mandate, and subsequently requested a recess. This was perhaps not a wise move. While it

225 Polyb. 18.48.3, 49.2-3; Livy 33.35.2, 39.1-2.
226 Polyb. 18.50; Livy 33.39.
227 Gruen 1984: 622.
229 Polyb. 18.51; Livy 33.40.
230 Livy 33.41. The Polybian account of this meeting is lost, although Appian’s, which may be drawn from Polybius, includes reference to the rumour: Syr. 4.14. Grainger 2002: 98-101.
231 That said, Roman policy required a knowledge of Egyptian affairs, and besides, part of Cornelius’ agenda was to sort out Seleucid – Ptolemaic relations. Hindsight
was important to verify the reality of the Egyptian situation - the death of Ptolemy could have had a significant impact on Roman policy - the breakdown of diplomatic discussions allowed Antiochus to set sail for Alexandria in an attempt to take advantage of perceived Egyptian weakness. Lucius ought to have sent someone to verify the truth and delayed Antiochus. The diplomatic dispute between Rome and Antiochus arose in the first place because of the king’s continual raiding of Ptolemaic possessions in the aftermath of the Fifth Syrian war. If Antiochus gained control over Egyptian harbours, he could alter the balance of power in the eastern Mediterranean entirely, especially with Philip now weakened as a result of the Roman victory in the Second Macedonian War, and thus be in a position to threaten Roman power more easily. In the event, on the way to Alexandria, Antiochus receiving intelligence that Ptolemy was still alive, and so he returned home for the winter.

The commissioners returned to Rome in 195 and informed the senate about what they had discovered. The ambassadors’ report presented by Villius reveals the depths of investigation. He asserted that the good relations between Antiochus and Rome were crumbling. The king had returned to Europe with a larger military and naval force. Why this was done was raised during discussions with Antiochus. When considered alongside new information about his numbers, suspicions of his intentions, and intelligence from Attalus and Rhodes, it is easy to see how all this was interpreted as a threat to Rome. The report was presented in the same year that Carthaginian forces claimed Hannibal was colluding with Antiochus, and the Aetolians were found to be inciting anti-Roman sentiment, especially with Nabis. It is not surprising that Antiochus was regarded with growing suspicion.

The threat needed to be addressed – initial rumours of Seleucid expansionary activity westward had now been verified and analysed by Roman

suggests the Romans should not have broken up the conference, giving Antiochus an excuse to sail to Alexandria, but it would have been hard to prevent him or his agents from doing so in any case.

232 Livy 33.41.
233 Livy 33.41.5.
234 Livy 34.35.
235 Polyb. 18.50.8-9.
236 Aetolia and Nabis: Livy 33.43.6, 34.37.5. Hannibal: Livy 33.45.5-6.
autopsy. In this, standard Roman intelligence protocols had been followed to the letter. Carthaginian information and that of Attalus and Rhodes kept Rome apprised of possible future moves, but these all required verification as well.\footnote{And, as was seen in the case of the Saguntine complaints about Carthage (above, p. 211), this was done.} Because of their friends in Asia keeping them apprised of the situation there, Antiochus’ actions were never completely unknown to the Romans. But it was not until these were verified and analysed by Roman intelligence officials that the senate could downgrade their perception of the king from friendly to suspicious. That verification was required is not indicative of a dismissal of foreign intelligence, but a recognition of the ulterior motives of others. They had finally heard the information, not from allies and rumours, but from the mouths of authoritative witnesses, as Livy says, men whose reports were based on their own inquiries.\footnote{Haec cum ab tam gravibus auctoribus tum qui omnia per se ipsos explorata adferrent, audirentur, maior res, quod ad Antiochum attineret, maturanda magis, quoniam rex quacumque de causa in Syriam concessisset, de tyranno consultatio visa est: Livy 33.45.1.} The intelligence collated suggested that Roman direct military intervention in Asia was unnecessary as of yet. While Antiochus’ actions suggested he had ambitions in Europe, but in 195, he had done nothing that forced Rome to take action. Peace, while weak, held. The senate determined their policy position at this time through the haze of fearmongering foreign intelligence due to their policy of verification.

Most extant cases of intelligence gathering and analysis naturally are not as complete as those discussed above. But from those few that are, it is clear that intelligence about foreign opinions, capabilities, and desires were considered in the process. This is not surprising. It would be remarkable for a state that extended its influence as widely as Rome did if it had done so without a developed acknowledgement of the use of information about foreign states and peoples. The notion that the Roman state could blunder along and accidentally defeat other states and extend their power without consideration of, for example, how and when to declare war in order to ensure their best advantage, is illusory. The examples Marcius Philippus’ Greek commission in 183 and Rome’s interactions with Antiochus III between 198 and 195 reveal a Roman desire to understand the facts on the ground as best they could before jumping into action.
and potentially committing acts that drove others to war, or destroyed the efforts of diplomacy. It is true that the vast majority of knowledge about what was occurring overseas relied on external sources of information, rather than knowledge acquired by the Romans themselves. But the concern shown by the senate and magistrates of Rome to verify the information that foreign states provided reveals that during the mid-republic the Romans were not indifferent to their position in the interconnected Mediterranean system. The Romans were not exceptionally or unthinkingly impulsive, militaristic, or aggressive toward the rest of their world. They carefully investigated what was needed in order to maintain and perpetuate Roman power, influence, and reputation in the international system. Decision making, where possible and time permitting, was based on information provided by intelligence reports from their diplomats. Apparent delays and dithering in Roman decision-making, which can present as passivity or indifference to the wider world in the sources, were often caused by a desire to obtain more information or the verification of existing intelligence. It is only with intelligence that reasonably accurate forecasts of the outcomes of possible Roman actions could be made.

**Verification Failure**

Not all attempts to verify intelligence were successful. Failures are inevitable. As Roman counterintelligence defended against foreign insurgents, so too were other states aware of the intelligence gathering intentions of Roman ambassadors, and these were guarded against. As discussed above, the distinction between diplomatic and intelligence activities was virtually non-existent until quite recently. Everyone knew this, and so it is with disingenuous moral outrage that Roman ambassadors were sometimes accused of espionage. These ambassadors responded, naturally, with equally disingenuous moral outrage that Roman embassies engaged in nothing of the sort. The suspicion that ambassadors might be spies sometimes arose from a difficulty to account for their presence. In 172, ambassadors sent to investigate the validity of Eumenes’ accusations against Perseus reported to the senate all that they had observed and seen in Macedon, including the mobilisation of every Macedonian town. When finally admitted into Perseus’ presence, they reported, Perseus angrily denounced the envoys who, he alleged, came for no purpose other than to spy.
on his words and deeds, as if Rome had a right to know everything that was going on, and the power to demand that others act in accordance with Roman desires. After giving a written response to the envoys, Perseus demanded that they leave his kingdom within three days – akin to the public ritual that Rome used to show its displeasure and the end of cordial diplomatic relations. In 168, Gentius, the king of the Illyrian Ardiaei, made an alliance with Perseus. When Roman envoys came to visit him to follow up on some intelligence they received about this, he accused them of being spies and bound them in chains. The act resulted in a war with Rome that lasted some twenty or thirty days. The ambassadors here were indeed spies, as all ambassadors were. Ambassadors made good intelligence officials due to their inviolate status. Gentius cannot have thought he would escape punishment for detaining them precisely because he violated their diplomatic immunity. It was indeed a calculated act of war: he did this, according to Livy, at Perseus’ behest in order to provoke the Romans. These examples show that an ambassador being accused of spying does not represent an intelligence failure, but was simply a consequence of one of the normal functions of ambassadorial business, that is, intelligence gathering. The very accusation of espionage reveals an awareness and expectation that intelligence moved through diplomatic channels.

More consequential failures resulted from foreign deceptions. Ideally, foreknowledge and preliminary information ought to have prepared Roman intelligence officers for such manipulation. Sadly, that commissioners were supposed to notice everything does not mean they could not be manipulated. Roman legates were not the only participants in diplomatic and intelligence games. Representatives of other states invested as much effort into hiding information as Roman personnel did. One of the clearest examples of this involves Antiochus IV. In 168, the senate became concerned when they heard that Antiochus had essentially conquered Egypt – and was indeed advancing toward Alexandria itself. They sent Popillius Laenas in response to try to end

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239 Livy 42.25. The veracity of this story is controversial. See Burton forthcoming: Appendix A.
240 App. ill. 9; cf. Livy 44.27.11, 44.30.11, 44.32.1-4; Plut. Aem. 13.1-2; App. Mac. 18; IG 9.2.258.
241 Torregaray Pagola 2009: 133.
242 Livy 44.27.11.
the war, but more importantly, as Polybius says explicitly, to observe what the
exact state of affairs actually was. The rumour was concerning, and in light of
Rome’s victory over Macedon and growing suspicion of Eumenes, complaints
about Syrian action needed investigation. Rome also encouraged the Achaean
League to be mindful of the needs of Egypt. They were asked to follow Roman
policy and attempt to make peace between the kingdoms. Popillius, who
possessed a senatus consultum demanding the evacuation of Syrian troops from
Egyptian land, met with Antiochus at Eleusis just outside Alexandria. Antiochus chose to respond favourably to Roman requests. He was not ready to
have a war with Rome, especially given the result of the Battle of Pydna. Roman
intervention tamped down Seleucid ambitions, but this was only temporary.
Later in 166, Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus arrived at the head of an
ambassadorial commission at Antiochus’ court. The commission had been sent
on a tour of the East, with the mandate to investigate the attitudes of the kings
and states of Cappadocia, Rhodes, Pergamum, and Syria toward Rome.
Antiochus, knowing or presuming the intention of the Roman representatives,
presented himself as being acquiescent and compliant with Roman policies. He
treated the commission with such care and consideration that the Roman legates
could detect not a hint of intrigue or anti-Roman sentiment, which could have
reasonably been expected after the Egyptian episode. But, according to
Polybius, Antiochus’ peaceful intentions were contrary to his real attitude.
Upon their return to Rome, Tiberius and his companions were unable to report

243 Κατέστησε πρεσβευτάς τούς περὶ Γάιον Ποπίλιον, τὸν τε πόλεμον λύσοντας
καὶ καθόλου θεασμένους τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων διάθεσιν ποιὰ τις ἐστὶν: Polyb. 29.2.1-4. Livy has Alexandrian ambassadors request Roman intervention, and the
Roman ambassadors dispatched with a mandate to stop the war, rather than
investigate the nature of affairs: 44.19.13-14. Popillius was later beseeched by
Rhodians to investigate affairs in Rhodes and to refuse to listen to circulating
rumours: pertinere id ad famam salutemque civitatis, noscere ipsos omnia quae acta essent
quaque agerentur Rhodi, et comperta per se, non volgata fama Romam referre: Livy 45.10.5.
244 Polyb. 29.23-25.
245 Polyb. 29.2.1-4, Livy 44.19.13, 45.10-12.8, 45.13.1. cf. Cic. Phil. 8.23; Vell. 1.10.1-2; Val. Max. 6.4.3; Zonar. 9.25.
246 Polyb. 29.27.1-9; Livy 44.23.
247 Polyb. 30.27; cf. Diod. 31.17.
248 ἀλλὰ τούναντιον (ἀλλοτριώτατα διακείμενος πρὸς Ῥωμαίους): Polyb. 30.27.4; cf.
Diod. 31.17.
anything about either Eumenes or Antiochus that differed from or added to previously held beliefs.\textsuperscript{249}

The commission gathered no new intelligence about the state of affairs, nor could the commissioners provide an updated picture of how the Roman state was viewed by either king. Their mission was a failure in this regard, not because Roman efforts were inadequate or due to predetermined policy, but because Antiochus predicted their intentions and desires and moulded his self-representation to discourage Roman suspicion. It is doubtful, however, that Antiochus was as Machiavellian and Tiberius as simple as Polybius represents them. This misrepresents the rituals of diplomatic and intelligence activity. Polybius goes so far as to suggest that Antiochus was close to offering his crown to the Roman officials in order to appease them.\textsuperscript{250} Obsequious pro-Roman behaviour from a powerful independent king would have been regarded as suspicious by any official who was aware of complaints and intelligence about the aggrandizing behaviour of the Seleucid king. Rome’s failure to gain any new or useful information about either king on this occasion does not necessarily mean that Tiberius and his colleagues were outfoxed by the kings, only that they learned nothing new about them that they did not already know.\textsuperscript{251}

Gruen claims that the purpose of the embassy was, precisely, to confirm current intelligence. Not only was ‘the ever congenial’ Tiberius no expert on eastern affairs, but he wilfully and consciously undertook his mission and report to support a pre-determined senatorial policy – that Rome had no need to

\textsuperscript{249} Polyb. 30.31.19-20.

\textsuperscript{250} ὡς γε πρὸς τοὺς ἀλλοὺς καὶ τῆς αὐλῆς παρεχώρησε τοῖς πρεσβευταῖς, μικροῦ δὲ καὶ τοῦ διαδήματος κατὰ τὴν ἐπίφασιν, καὶ τοῖς οὐκ ὡς τῇ προαμφέτει τοιοῦτος, ἀλλὰ τούτων: Polyb. 30.27.3-4.

\textsuperscript{251} Tiberius’ mission was not entirely lacking in results either. The Cappadocian King Ariarathes was new to the throne, and now Rome had some intelligence on him. Polybius claims that the senate listened to the speech of Ariarathes’ envoys and their desire to renew ties of friendship and alliance. How they chose to proceed was owed chiefly to Tiberius’ account of the king’s father and the state of the kingdom when he visited: Polyb. 31.3. Despite Tiberius’ failure to learn anything new about Antiochus and Eumenes, this was certainly not damaging to his career, political or diplomatic. He was elected consul in 163, and in 162, he was sent along with Lucius Lentulus and Servilius Glauca to examine affairs in Greece, to investigate what the escaped Demetrius I Soter was planning to do in Asia, and to discover the sentiments of those kings who were having problems with the Galatians – that is, Eumenes and Ariarathes – and to attempt to arbitrate between them: Polyb. 31.15.9-11.
interfere in the petty squabbles of eastern kings. Gruen claims that the embassy simply saw and reported what the Roman senate wanted it to – that is, that there was no reason for Roman intervention in the area.232 The notion that the Romans did not interfere when there was no need for them to should be accepted. But to suggest that the senate went through the effort of dispatching legates with a mandate merely to confirm current information suggests not a policy of defensive imperialism, but a policy of burying one’s head in the sand. To say that Tiberius toured the East with the intention of dismissing complainants who wanted Roman intervention denies agency to Antiochus as well as his rivals. It also assumes that an awareness of the true intentions of kings would have forced the Romans to take military action. But updated intelligence suggesting a deteriorating situation in terms of Rome’s best interests would not have automatically triggered military intervention as the only alternative. For the senate to maintain a policy of military non-interference, the legates did not have to return and state that there were no problems. Nothing forced the Romans to take up arms. Intelligence does not compel military action – it is a tool that allows policy-makers to make informed decisions. Decisions were made by senators, not by intelligence or its interpretation. To concede a point, there is a tendency to see what one wants to see when examining any situation. Human cognition is naturally programmed to fill in gaps or clarify ambiguities with something that supports what is already known or desired.233 Nonetheless, equipped with intelligence or not, the senate always reserved (and most often resorted to) the option of maintaining the status quo. The Romans were not diplomatically more skilled than others in the Mediterranean system. If they could engage in manipulation, in compellence diplomacy, and in both intelligence and counterintelligence, then so could Antiochus and Eumenes. Antiochus knew it was in his best interests to appear favourable to Rome. This is what he convinced the commission to believe (or to profess to believe). The Seleucids were currently dealing with the Maccabean revolt; the Third Macedonian War had recently ended. Little was preventing the Romans from acting, if given a reason. Hence, Antiochus worked to give the commission a reason not to interfere. The Romans doubtless easily saw through his

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233 Witlin 2008. On cognitive biases, see above, chapter 2.
obsequious pantomime, flattered as they may have appeared on the surface. But
the point is that the Seleucid king gave them no valid cause to change diplomatic
course at this stage.

Complaints about Syrian behaviour continued, however. For the Romans
to wilfully ignore the anti-Roman sentiment would have gone beyond
maintaining the status quo. Disregarding anti-Roman sentiment increased the
likelihood of later, more muscular Roman involvement in the area. Tiberius and
his companions did not report that things were fine. They reported that they
could not form an attitude different than the one previously held in Rome – that
is, the obsequious nature of their reception ensured that there was no justifiable
cause for apprehension or confidence in the assertions about Antiochus or
Eumenes, despite complaints and rumours. Rome continued to keep an open
mind about Syrian intentions. Rather than insisting that the matter had been
looked into and concluded, the senate investigated the matter again in 164
attempting to reconcile conflicting reports and conceptions. Polybius claims the
new envoys were to diligently inquire into the activity of both Eumenes and
Antiochus to ensure that there were no preparations or anti-Roman
collaborations underway. They wisely chose not to trust the word of either
king. This was not avoidance, nor was the earlier intelligence mission of Tiberius
used to close the book on eastern affairs. The senate continued to try to form an
accurate impression, through intelligence, of the possible emergence of threats
to Rome from the East. Hellenistic states had been playing diplomatic and
intelligence games for longer than the Roman state; they were equally, if not
more capable of deceiving and denying intelligence officials information. A
failure to achieve intelligence objectives is not indicative of a failure of
intelligence in general. As counterintelligence measures sometimes fail, so do
intelligence gathering attempts. As this section has tried to show, Roman

254 Polyb. 30.30.
255 μάλιστα δὲ πολυσκαμονήσοντας τὰ κατὰ τὸν Ἀντίοχον καὶ τὰ κατὰ τὸν
Εὐμένην, μὴ τις ἐξ αὐτῶν παρασκευὴ γίνεται καὶ κοινοπραγία κατὰ Ῥωμαίων:
Polyb. 31.1.8. It is possible to interpret πολυσκαμονέω as ‘to meddle’, but as an
accusative participle it also implies close inquiry into the state of affairs, that is, an
investigation. In this context, an investigation to determine any collusion between
Syria and Pergamum seems more viable than a mandate to meddle in affairs.
Meddling, as covert action, primarily occurs after knowledge of its occurring has been
gained.
appreciation and understanding of intelligence are often demonstrated in the breach, that is, when intelligence operations are not entirely successful.

**Conclusion: The Roman Intelligence Cycle**

There were limitations to the quality of information available to the Romans at any given time. As discussed in chapter 2, the timeliness of information could never be predicted. Certain scenarios required information faster than it could be provided. Both Austin and Rankov and Sheldon use Rome’s reliance on foreign information and verification as reasons to claim that the Roman intelligence system was dysfunctional. But modern states are equally as unlikely to interpret matters of international importance based on the information of outsiders alone. While informers and ambassadors, in the Roman context, provided information, preconceived notions about foreign states - built upon open-sourced ‘intelligence’ such as the information from ethnographers and traders - augmented it. Then this intelligence was judged and verified using information from Roman ambassadors. The Romans had to wait for information to reach them from foreign sources, and then wait for a commission to investigate it and return. It was not a fast process. The system was subject to bias. Information received was incomplete. But the risks and problems associated with its gathering and analysis do not make the Roman use of intelligence less sophisticated than the modern, save for the technology involved. They simply increased the chance that intelligence may contribute to erroneous or untimely decision-making. This would not have unduly harmed the international political position of Rome. It is no better to make decisions based upon no information and pure supposition or emotion than it is to make them based upon faulty or manipulated information.

Intelligence is but one tool of statecraft. Rome was active in intelligence gathering, especially in the East, and used this information along with diplomatic discussions as part of the decision making process. Decisions may have been ad hoc and perhaps poorly thought out, but there was a concerted effort to discover all necessary information. What is clear from political intelligence gathering is that the Roman attitude toward the Mediterranean and international affairs was

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one of wariness and recognition of risk. Roman policies reflect an understanding of the Mediterranean system in which Rome found itself and a need to make any potential decision in as well informed a manner as possible. Gathering intelligence enabled Roman officials to make informed decisions about how to proceed. In international affairs there were and generally still are three options: a declaration of war; diplomacy; or the undertaking of covert action. Rome may have seemed fairly passive, if not neglectful of eastern affairs at times during the second century, but this does not equate to a lack of awareness of what was going on. Their intelligence procedures relied on foreigners informing Rome of affairs, but this was no problem. Information that was considered reliable or relevant to Roman national interest was followed up and investigated, and if events were determined to be harmless or to have little potential impact on Roman security, they were allowed to continue to unfold as they would. Roman investigations of these matters were not admissions of impotence, but a conscious decision to acquire intelligence prior to decision-making.

Despite potential flaws, the Roman system of waiting for intelligence to arrive, and setting out to verify and augment the intelligence that was deemed significant and pertinent to Roman policy worked well. There are no indications of disastrous strategic surprise that the intelligence system itself could not overcome or that other approaches and methods could not. It is certainly true that the senate was not in a position to undertake everything at all times. But this was not the purpose of mid-republican intelligence. The senate of the mid-republic received and verified intelligence as it was required. The system as it functioned served Roman purposes well enough.

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257 The Roman participation in the third option, as it is part of intelligence in a broad sense, will be examined in the next chapter.
5.3 - Intelligence and the Build up to the Third Macedonian War

It is easier to fully appreciate the Roman political intelligence cycle when it is examined through a case study. The build up to the Third Macedonian War is a good mid-republican example. The case for war here was not clear-cut. Despite cordial relations between Rome and Macedonia during the decade after the Second Macedonian War, in the 180s the relationship began to falter. Perseus’ ascension to the throne was accompanied by attempts to inspire pro-Macedonian sentiment and alliances throughout the Mediterranean. The Romans ignored most of this behaviour, and continued to send investigative missions in response to intelligence and complaints. For a long time, no investigation suggested the need for intervention.²⁵⁸ It was only after suspicions were raised about Macedon’s new role, as a focal point of attention for lesser powers, that active Roman interference and investigation were undertaken. The Roman intelligence system had been keeping the senate well informed of Macedonian activities. Many were investigated. The senate was never misinformed or misled about Macedonian affairs, but they interpreted Perseus’ activity to be not greatly threatening to Roman influence and power in the East. In 172, Eumenes of Pergamum came to Rome detailing numerous complaints about Perseus’ current and past behaviour, of most of which the Romans were already well aware. Eumenes attempted to play on the Romans’ fear of their own ignorance; his analysis that Rome was quickly losing its hegemonic status in the East sparked a concerted effort by the senate to fully investigate the intentions and capabilities of Macedon, to launch a campaign to blacken Perseus’ reputation, and to investigate the loyalties of other eastern states. Preliminary intelligence had kept the Romans in the loop, so to speak, but when the threat grew beyond what the Romans were comfortable with, they reacted.

Once Eumenes’ accusations were made and neighbouring states heard the senate was re-examining past charges against Perseus, these states sent

representatives to Rome to support the initial accusations. Hindsight suggests that the Romans dithered and delayed in the build up to this war, before determining that the situation with Macedon needed to be addressed. Even after this determination, the Romans were slow to commit forces to confront the Macedonian threat. But these delays can only be understood through an appreciation of Roman intelligence processes and the transmission of information across the Mediterranean. Prior to the formal outbreak of the war, the processes of gathering information from foreign sources, determining whether the information was important and viable, subjecting it to verification and independent analysis, and then forming policy under the influence of such political intelligence — the intelligence cycle, in other words — were all necessary, and are evident in the sources. The senate made a concerted effort to discover who would support Rome voluntarily and who could be persuaded to do so. It then undertook efforts to remove Macedonian allies and neutral parties, and began a smear campaign against Perseus accompanied by clandestine diplomacy and covert action. There was no thoughtless drive to war, but a careful and considered preparation to remove a threat to Roman security through intelligence, diplomacy, and eventually military activity. Eumenes’ actions reveal the Roman reliance on foreign intelligence; Perseus’ manipulations highlight the presence of other Roman agents in the area and natural Roman suspicion; and the senate’s reaction to the information provided reveals their preference for verified Roman information before plans of action were created. Despite Polybius’ attempt to lead his audience to believe that Rome decided to wage war against Macedon long before the declaration, the opening of hostilities did not occur, quite rightly, until Roman policy makers evaluated available intelligence and deemed the circumstances optimal for war. The potential for military intervention at earlier stages had been dismissed as intelligence was gathered, verified, and analysed, but when circumstances changed, and the intelligence became more alarming, intervention became more and more viable, if not necessary. To understand the Roman decision for war in 171 it is necessary to envisage the circumstances as they stood throughout the entire Mediterranean in late 172/early 171. It was only after the senate had been informed of affairs

259 Livy 39.46-47. For more on this see Gruen 1974a; Gruen 1984: 402.
260 Polyb. 26.6.3.
throughout the system that their perception of the need to intervene developed. The eventual mobilisation was in response to an updated and current picture of the eastern Mediterranean as it developed through an extensive use of intelligence.

179-172: Macedonian Growth

In the final years of Philip V’s life and the early years of Perseus’ reign, the kings were careful to behave in a manner that appeared supportive of Rome. Roman investigations into complaints against Macedon continuously turned up nothing overtly suspicious. Philip complied with Roman wishes without complaint. When Perseus succeeded to the Macedonian throne, one of his first major acts was to renew his father’s friendship with Rome. He then set about repairing his relationships with the Greek states and burningish the image of the Antigonids. The pro-Roman forces in these various Greek states are likely to have informed Rome of Macedonian interactions, either to inform on the king or to ask for advice about his offers. There is little extant evidence of specific provisions of intelligence, however. The earliest recorded case was that of the

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263 Polybius’ suggestion that Philip was biding his time and planning for a war of revenge against Rome that was inherited by his son is improbable. Polyb. 22.18.10. 262 Livy 40.5.10, 40.58.8. Diodorus Siculus interprets this act as subversive on both Perseus’ and Rome’s parts. Perseus renewed the alliance to deceive Rome about his true intentions, but Rome was aware of this and only accepted the renewal to deceive Perseus, and make him believe Rome thought him to be innocent. Diodorus is following Polybius in attributing the cause of the Third Macedonian War to Philip (see previous n.), and reviewing the actions from hindsight. At the time that Perseus sent the embassy to Rome, the senate had no reason to be suspicious of his motives or intentions. Further, while covert actions and manipulation, as will be discussed in the following chapter, were not unknown to Rome, the depths of deception and manipulation ascribed to the two parties here is excessive. See Diod. 29.30: Ὅτι Περσεὺς τὴν αὐτήν ἐξόν προαιρέσειν τῷ πατϊ καὶ ταυτὴν σπεύδων ὑπὸ Ρωμαίων ἀγνοεῖσθαι προσβεντας ἀπὸ της Ρώμης τους ἀνενωπισμένης τὴν πατρικὴν φιλίαν, ἢ ὡς συγκλήτος ἡν πλείστα τῶν πραγμάτων αἰσθανομένη τὴν φιλίαν ὁμως ἀνενωώσας, τὸν ἐξαιταπώντα ὁμοίως ἐξαιτατώσας.

265 Perseus cultivated his status as a philhellen. He cancelled debts, released prisoners and returned exiles: Polyb. 25.3; Livy 41.24.11; App. Mac. 11.1. He succeeded in placing or at least taking advantage of the appointment of two Macedonian members in the Amphictyonic council, swinging sympathy away from Rome: SIG 636. He attempted to sway the loyalty of Rhodes: Polyb. 25.4.10; supported the democrats and federalists in the Boeotian League: Livy 42.12.5; gained the friendship of both Ptolemy VI and Antiochus IV: Livy 42.26.8; but his attempt to foster pro-Macedonian feeling in the Achaean league failed, and resulted in an intensification of anti-Macedonian sentiment: Livy 41.23-4; 42.12.6.
Dardanians informing Rome of the army of the Barstanae invading its territory, allegedly at the instigation of Perseus, in 177. As discussed in the previous section, the intelligence was augmented by Thessalian sources. Suspicions about Macedonian intentions were raised, but no action was undertaken. The Roman envoys sent to investigate returned in 175 with news that the Dardanians and Barstanae were at war. Perseus was quick to reassure the Romans that this had nothing to do with him. As affairs to the north of Macedonia were largely ignored, conforming to Roman patterns of behaviour whereby events far beyond their reach were of little direct concern. This pattern of investigation continued. Rome was aware of Macedonian actions, informed through their intelligence networks, but regularly chose to do little to counteract Perseus’ actions after conducting investigations.

Between 174 and 171, as collated by Colin, the Romans dispatched thirteen embassies under the guise of one mission or another to collect as much information about the eastern Mediterranean situation as they could. It was only after information was collated about who was likely to be on Rome’s side or Perseus’ side and what resources and advantages these would bring that serious moves toward military action were undertaken. Perseus represented himself as a supporter of Greek freedom in traditional Antigonid fashion. His interventions appear to have fed the growth of resentment toward Rome. The Roman desire for information was clear. The providers of initial anti-Perseus intelligence are rarely mentioned. But it is not unlikely to assume the informers were members of pro-Roman factions in various Greek states who were upset at their potential loss of influence. In general, the Romans appeared complacent during these years. Macedonian interference in Carthage sparked greater interest. In 174, ambassadors returned from Africa and claimed that Perseus had sent ambassadors to Carthage and that Carthage had sent counter-embassies. There is no record in the extant texts about the dispatch of these envoys, but considering the ambassadors interviewed both Carthaginian senators and Masinissa, it was presumably an investigative mission sent in response to their

264 Livy 41.19; cf. App. Mac. 11.1; Polyb. 25.6; Oros. 4.20.34-5.
265 Colin 1905: 390-405. These embassies undoubtedly also attempted to sway people to their cause. Such acts will be discussed in the following chapter.
266 Livy 41.22.1-2.
numerous border complaints, with Masinissa suggesting suspicious Carthaginian intentions to gain favour. Masinissa’s assertions were self-serving, and never substantiated. Rome’s response to this intelligence was cautious. They dispatched embassies to Macedon to investigate whether there was any truth to the rumours of collusion. Whether the senate believed the accusation or not, it was not in their best interests to ignore it altogether. At the same time, Perseus was in Delphi with an army of perhaps 43,000 men, his sudden appearance causing emergency embassies to be sent to Eumenes. Whether Rome was aware of Perseus’ specific actions in Greece in 174 is unknown. Livy makes no mention of a report to Rome, only to Eumenes. Perseus returned to Macedon in the same year; Roman ambassadors sent to question him regarding Carthage and his intentions failed to gain an audience. Perseus dismissed the ambassadors with various excuses; they returned to Rome with tales of Macedonian preparations for war. The dismissal of ambassadors sparked no Roman retaliation. But their dismissal, along with the observation of Macedonian war preparations, if accurate, would have done nothing to quell the suspicion that Perseus’ potential collusion with Carthage raised. The report did nothing more than raise suspicion. The Romans had no intelligence about Macedon’s intentions to act upon. For now, there was no clear threat to Roman power. Rome’s lack of significant concern at this stage is reasonable. Diplomatic options were still open: Perseus and the Carthaginians could still explain themselves.

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267 Livy 41.22.3.
268 Cum in media repente Graecia apparuisset, magnum non finitimis modo urbis terorem praebuit, sed in Asian quoque ad regem Eumenen tumultuosos misit: Livy 41.22.5-6. It was his unexpected appearance that caused alarm, suggesting a lack of spies in his camp and deserters to inform others of his actions.
269 This act, if accurate, gives credence to Eumenes’ claim in 172 that Rome was losing its reputation in Greece. Why would Rome not have known about or ignored this action? That Perseus’ enemies turned to Eumenes, not Rome, is significant. Cf. Gruen 1984: 406.
270 Livy 42.2.1-2.
271 Gruen suggests it is unlikely that ambassadors would be denied an audience but permitted to see intensive military preparation. If the ambassadors were shown these preparations as if it were a tour, his point is undeniable. But preparations for war could be seen as Roman ambassadors journeyed to and from Perseus’ court. War preparations are not only about the drilling of troops, but the collection of resources and mobilisation of forces. It is extraordinarily difficult to hide all evidence of this. Gruen 1984: 407.
There was a degree of suspicion about Macedonian activities in Greece, but the Romans were content to watch rather than act. In 174, Perseus attacked the Dolopians.\textsuperscript{272} According to Perseus, the Dolopians killed their Macedonian governor.\textsuperscript{273} Whether Perseus was technically permitted to act against the Dolopians is debatable. The Romans gave vague orders in 185 about the Macedonian kingdom being confined to its historical boundaries.\textsuperscript{274} Whether this covered the Dolopians, who had been restored to Macedonian control in 188 after being liberated in 196,\textsuperscript{275} they had nevertheless been referring legal conflicts to Rome for arbitration rather than to Perseus.\textsuperscript{276} Perseus’ justification was that he was crushing internal sedition. The Romans did nothing in response. Perseus’ adventure to Delphi went unremarked upon by Rome as well, in part because there was nothing to remark upon. Perseus conducted a public tour through the Greek mainland. He committed no military atrocities, ravaged no land, and did nothing anybody could take offence at.\textsuperscript{277} There was no perception that Perseus was an immediate threat. But his activities raised questions; marching with his entire army through Greece was certainly provocative.\textsuperscript{278} While Perseus did nothing that could indisputably be taken as hostile against Rome and its allies, the motivations behind his behaviour were unclear.

In response, the Romans changed their behaviour. Prior to the mid-170s, they had largely been ignoring Macedonian activities and most affairs in the Greek mainland. Now, beginning in 174, there was a drastic increase in the dispatch of investigative missions to the East. The senate wanted more intelligence about the situation. There was a recognition that while their intelligence system kept them informed of each domestic and small-scale action, it would never provide enough intelligence about the overall state of affairs or

\textsuperscript{272} Polyb. 22.18.4; Livy 42.13.8.
\textsuperscript{273} App. Mac. 11.6; Livy 42.41.13. The charge of attacking the Dolopians was raised in the senate by Eumenes in 172. Marcius Philippus raised it with Perseus in 172, and Perseus responded, claiming it was a justified response to the assassination of his governor: Livy 42.40-8-41.13; cf. App. Mac. 11.6.
\textsuperscript{275} Polyb. 18.47.6 (removal of Dolopians from Macedonian control); Livy 36.33.7 (returned to Macedonian control).
\textsuperscript{276} Livy 41.22.4; cf. Livy 41.23.13, 24.8.
\textsuperscript{277} Livy 41.22.6.
\textsuperscript{278} Errington 1971a: 204-5.
create a reliable picture of Perseus’ intentions, or clarify whether Rome needed to intervene more robustly in the East. In 174, Rome dispatched investigative missions to Aetolia and the Aegean Islands. Pro-Roman parties in faction-riven Aetolia sent requests to Rome for help and to Perseus as well.\textsuperscript{279} By appealing to both Macedon and Rome, the pro-Romans in Aetolia increased their chances that help would arrive. It is likely that in making their requests for aid, they mentioned that appeals had been made to the both parties. For the Romans, this must have been a wakeup call. Why would they appeal to someone other than Rome? Concern was raised because Crete suffered from the same kind of internal discontent. Rhodes, moreover, was harassing the Lycians.\textsuperscript{280} Agents informed the Romans about affairs, and the latter sought to verify the intelligence.

In 173, ambassadors returned and reported that they had been kept from seeing Perseus, being given a myriad of excuses for the delay. They did nonetheless note his preparations for war. They reported too that strife in Aetolia was growing by the day.\textsuperscript{281} The East was destabilised by the ascension of Antiochus IV to the Syrian throne, with the predictable reaction that another war was brewing with Egypt over Coele-Syria.\textsuperscript{282} The Roman ambassadors to Aetolia had given up trying to arbitrate, calling the factions there mad.\textsuperscript{283} Factionalism intensified by the day, and the Romans had no power to control it.\textsuperscript{284} Roman ambassadors ventured to Achaea and praised the League for refusing Perseus’ overtures to repeal anti-Macedonian legislation.\textsuperscript{285} The Cretans were pacified through Roman intervention for a time.\textsuperscript{286} Roman agents informed the senate of further civil strife in Thessaly and Perrhaebia in 173. They immediately sent ambassadors to investigate it. Appius Claudius, the Roman envoy, rebuked the leaders of all Thessalian factions, and in an attempt to mitigate the problem,

\textsuperscript{279} See Livy 41.25.2, 42.12.7, 42.42.4; App. Mac. 11.6.
\textsuperscript{280} Livy 41.25. Livy sees no reason to detail the internal dissent and the causes of their political struggles. They are, too, of little significance to this discussion.
\textsuperscript{281} Livy 42.2.
\textsuperscript{282} Livy 42.6.4-5.
\textsuperscript{283} Livy 41.27.4.
\textsuperscript{284} Livy 42.2.2; cf. Livy 42.4.5.
\textsuperscript{285} Livy 42.6.2.
\textsuperscript{286} Livy 41.25.7.
reduced debts; the same was done in Perrhaebia. Claudius tried to create some enduring stability in the region.

By 173, therefore, the senate was well aware of the troubles in several Greek states. They were aware that part of the turmoil was caused by conflict between pro-Roman and anti-Roman factions. They could not have been unaware of the possibilities for war in light of the turmoil, and were unlikely to have been so blind that they did not realise that if pro-Roman factions appealed to Rome, antagonistic factions might be likely to appeal to Rome’s system competitors. Many of these missions seem ineffectual in terms of their ostensible primary purposes: they advised compromise that simply was not forthcoming. But they were successful in terms of their real purpose: they gathered intelligence. The missions here were not mainly concerned with solving domestic political problems. They were dispatched primarily to provide Rome with verified Roman sourced intelligence, and secondarily to create pro-Roman stability if possible. Destabilising civil strife within Rome’s allied and friendly states could not be ignored. Roman influence relied upon the security of pro-Roman factions and forces. If these crumbled, Roman access to intelligence and, should they be necessary, bases for military campaigns, would fail. Each mission to verify rumours and reports of instability forced Rome to acknowledge the problems in the region, and to recognise the potential destabilisation of Rome’s position. The picture that emerged in the late 170s was one of turmoil and strife.

287 Livy 42.5.

288 Gruen suggests that this was because Rome had no desire to interfere. Gruen 1984: 403-8. Gruen’s interpretation of Roman ambassadorial activity during this time follows his general argument that ambassadors were sent to appease appellants. While an aspect of this is true, as discussed above, Roman investigators were needed to verify and identify pertinent intelligence to aid Rome in making security decisions.

289 There is no mention of a mandate for the ambassadors sent to Aetolia; Livy simply records their dispatch. C. Valerius Læcinus et Ap. Claudius Pulcher et C. Menmius et M. Popilius et L. Canuleius missi ab senatu venerant: 41.25.5. In Crete, Minucius was sent to calm their dispute. Adventu deinde Q. Minuci legati, qui cum decem navibus missus ad sedanda eorum certamina erat, ad spem pacis venerat: 41.25.7. Upon the return of Gaius Valerius Livy claims he was sent to investigate Greece and discover Perseus’ plans. Sub idem tempus C. Valerius ex Graecia, qui legatus ad visendum statum regionis eius speculandaque consilia Persei regis ierat, redit, congruentiaque omnia criminibus ab Eumene adlatis referebat: Livy 42.17.1.
This, in addition to questions about Perseus’ activities, ensured that Rome would have to act, somehow, to control the situation.

Perseus’ dispatch of embassies and letters asking for friendly relations with the Greek states exacerbated the civil strife.\textsuperscript{290} Intentional or not, the concept of renewed amicable relations with Macedon forced political debate, as it evidently did in Achaea.\textsuperscript{291} Perseus was reportedly charismatic, powerful, and a philhellene, publicising himself as the friend of exiles and the neglected.\textsuperscript{292} Rome, by contrast, was a remote, inconsistent power that preferred not to intervene in civil disputes.\textsuperscript{293} Perseus became a viable option to protect smaller states and leagues from Roman neglect. Perseus manipulated and damaged aspects of Rome’s reputation and power in Greece in his attempts to reclaim Macedonian glory as patron of the Greeks. A more sympathetic interpretation of Perseus’ actions suggests that he had no intention to provoke Rome to war, but that Rome was the aggressor by attempting to stir the Greeks against Perseus.\textsuperscript{294} This position assumes the Roman state was more aggressive by nature than Macedon, something that has been demonstrated as most unlikely.\textsuperscript{295} By the end of 173, Rome had done nothing to mobilise the Greeks against Perseus directly. The Roman embassies could be construed as provocative, but then the same must be said of the earlier Macedonian efforts.

The patterns of intelligence collection and analysis in these years are vague in terms of detail but familiar nevertheless. As discussed in previous sections, agents informed Rome to gain advantages or out of need, and Rome investigated to verify and determine how affairs might affect Rome. Acting on the word of pro-Roman forces and agents alone would have created a distorted impression and skewed information in a way that one particular faction in a given state thought fit. Assessments of interstate behaviour to this point suggested that in the event of conflict, Egypt and Syria would side with Rome over Macedon. Closer

\textsuperscript{290} Livy 41.22.8.

\textsuperscript{291} Livy 41.23-24. This debate was likely to have occurred in other regions as well. For more on the alleged class struggle in Greece, see Gruen 1976; Mendels 1978; Walsh 2000; Champion 2007.

\textsuperscript{292} Livy 42.13.8-9, 30.1-4, 38.5, 43.10; Polyb. 24.9.2, 25.3.1-4.

\textsuperscript{293} Polyb. 24.13, 27.10-11; Livy 39.37.9-15, 42.12.2.

\textsuperscript{294} Waterfield 2014: 167.

\textsuperscript{295} For the lack of Roman exceptionalism in this regard see Eckstein 2006: passim.
to Macedon, Roman attempts to isolate the kingdom had begun, implying that the intelligence collated by late 173 and early 172 regarding the conditions of the Greek mainland and the Aegean was designed toward this end, perhaps ultimately leading to a diplomatic or military conflict. The senate was investigating affairs out of a need for intelligence prior to decision-making. The intelligence that reached Rome through traditional information pathways was worrying, and verification added to suspicion. But the Romans were not yet certain that Macedon was an immediate threat to Rome or that Perseus had done irreparable damage to Roman interests. Roman diplomatic activity in these years was not designed to drive matters toward war, but to gather intelligence in order to understand what was behind the destabilisation of the East, to identify the culprits (if there were any), and to attempt to maintain their position. While informed of the instability, the Roman intelligence system was not able to provide pre-emptive intelligence about every minor Macedonian activity and Perseus’ intentions in undertaking these activities. As was discussed in chapter 2, ancient intelligence cannot have been expected to do this. The intelligence system ensured that Rome was informed of what was happening in the present so it could be investigated, solved, and used to clarify potential threats to Rome as they materialised. Methods of controlling and monitoring the entire system were non-existent. Intelligence was not designed to pre-emptively avoid conflict. It was reactive, providing enough time to prepare before anti-Roman activities could lead to disaster. In the case of the lead up to the Third Macedonian War, each action as it occurred allowed the senate to construct an idea about Perseus’ future intentions and his capabilities as they affected Rome directly. As the 170s reached their end, Rome approached the conclusion that Perseus’ actions challenged Rome’s dominance in the East, whether this was his intention or not. After all, Rome’s cultural dossier on Macedon was thick with reports of suspicious Antigonid behaviour since the Second Macedonian War. That Rome’s suspicions had grown to a point in 173 that something needed to be done is clear. The relationship between Rome and Macedon could not continue as it was. As of yet, however, there was no indication that only war could provide the necessary adjustment.
172: Eumenes in Rome

Eumenes II and his kingdom had always been ideally positioned to monitor and learn about eastern activities, and report these to Rome. Ever since his father, Attalus I, joined friendship with Rome in 209/8, Pergamum was an indispensable source of intelligence for Rome about the Greek East and the Hellenistic kingdoms. Just before Eumenes inherited the throne from his father, Antiochus had advanced into Anatolia and Gallic forces raided from the north, reducing Pergamene territory significantly. Polybius, seemingly citing an obituary, claims that Eumenes inherited a kingdom restricted to nothing more than a few insignificant towns. There was little to draw Rome’s attention to Asia Minor when Eumenes took control in 197. Antiochus’ power in Asia Minor was expanding, but this was not a significant Roman concern until Eumenes began to make use of his foreknowledge about Rome, and claim that Antiochus was a threat to Roman power in the East. In 193, various envoys arrived in Rome to report about what was going on in Asia. Eumenes was not one of them. Lampsacus, Smyrna, and Alexandria Troas all sent embassies to Rome. Not coincidentally, these were all were part of the Attalid alliance. Eumenes probably influenced them to go to Rome since if he went himself or sent Pergamene representatives, these would appear less credible since the senators would know they were highly motivated to skew the intelligence they brought before them. The information provided by the Attalids reinforced the image of an ambitious Antiochus, ultimately leading to a Roman investigation of Antiochus III and activities in Asia. Now, in 172, Eumenes aimed to play the same role in leading Rome to war with Perseus, collating and presenting intelligence that Rome was already aware of in such a way that constructed Perseus as a threat to Rome’s security arrangements in the East.

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296 On the establishment of Attalus I’s Roman amicitia, see Polyb. 21.20.3; Livy 29.11.2.  
297 Polyb. 32.8.3; cf. TAM V 486b; Polyb. 23.11.7; Livy 40.8; Strabo 13.4.2. The claims about Eumenes’ inheritance are clearly exaggerated, as are the heights of power to which he allegedly raised Pergamum at the time of his death. The obituary of Attalus, recorded in Livy 33.21, claims that Attalus left his kingdom on a firm and solid footing.  
Eumenes arrived late in 173 with a report about Perseus’ military preparations, confirming Roman suspicions about Perseus’ activities.\(^{299}\) His report verified the conclusions drawn by earlier Roman commissions in 177 and 174 that had observed the same things going on in Macedon.\(^{300}\) In early 172, the king was allowed to address a closed-door session of the senate listing everything Perseus had done wrong and against Rome’s best interests since before the death of his father Philip V, starting with the murder of his pro-Roman brother, Demetrius.\(^{301}\) It is naïve to think that his complaints to the senate were the actual cause of the war.\(^{302}\) What is important for the present purposes is Eumenes’ attempt to manipulate the senate through the provision of politicised intelligence. Eumenes had clear ulterior motives in this case. He had recently made an alliance with Antiochus IV, removing one of the threats to his domains in Asia Minor. The remaining threat was that of the encroaching and expanding Macedon. In the aftermath of the Second Macedonian War, the domains and fortunes of Macedon had been increasing to the East, unchecked by Rome. Many of Eumenes’ accusations were simply irrelevant or referred to events that had happened years beforehand, and which the Romans had ignored at the time. But the senate paid attention to Eumenes’ intelligence about the current resources and manpower available to Macedon, and about the strategic skills of Perseus, as Eumenes transformed in the senators’ minds the king’s arrangements from idle rumour to facts.\(^{303}\) He claimed Perseus had amassed enough food to supply an army of 30,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry for ten years without needing to purchase additional supplies; he had the means to supplement the army with the paid service of 10,000 mercenaries for ten years;

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\(^{299}\) *Eumenes rex commentarium ferens secum, quod de apparatibus belli omnia inquirens fecerat, Romam venit*: Livy 42.6.3. This places the arrival of Eumenes in 173, but does not have him received in the senate until 172. Livy’s chronology here is likely confused; it is not helped by the fact that the Roman calendar was far out of synch with the solar year at this point.

\(^{300}\) App. *Mac*. 11.1 (177); Livy 42.2.2 (174).

\(^{301}\) Eumenes’ speech, as recorded in Livy 42.11-14, follows Polybius with some degree of blending with annalistic material. See Briscoe 2012: 186-7. Cf. App. *Mac*. 11.1-9. Livy mentions a different tradition recorded in Valerius Antias, where Attalus was sent on Eumenes’ behalf. Livy chose to follow Polybius instead: 42.11.1.

\(^{302}\) The outbreak of the Third Macedonian War has been extensively studied. The actual causes are of little concern here. See Harris 1979: 227-33; Gruen 1984: 408-18; Eckstein 2010: 237-46; Rosenstein 2012: 212-8; Burton forthcoming.

\(^{303}\) Livy 42.11.5-7, Livy 13.1-2.
he had stockpiled enormous quantities of weapons; and he had access to a never-ending supply of troops in the youth of Thrace.\textsuperscript{304} The Romans had known about Macedon’s military build-up since 177, but this was fresh and detailed intelligence, updating the information they had from two years before. Such information can change dramatically over time. Without a permanent embassy or agents inside the kingdom’s borders, Rome had to rely on such accounts. The return of Roman ambassadors from Macedon later in 172 supported Eumenes’ assessment, and added intelligence about Perseus’ secret meetings in Samothrace with representatives from Asian Greek communities.\textsuperscript{305} Perseus’ stockpiling of weapons, supplies, and resources, however, did not prove that the king intended to attack Rome, or at least not yet. Eumenes’ intelligence and Roman verification of it were still not enough to drive the Romans to war with Macedon in 172.

Another aspect of Eumenes’ intelligence that was truly disturbing, as was seen earlier, was the suggestion that Roman power was slipping away in the East. Eumenes’ intelligence included information about Rome’s reputation. He claimed that all the cities of Greece and Asia revered Perseus; he highlighted, among other events, the celebrations that occurred with the marriage of Perseus to Laodice and his sister to Prusias: countless communities sent delegations and escorts to the celebrations. The Aetolians, moreover, sought aid from Perseus rather than Rome in their internal conflicts because of Roman passivity.\textsuperscript{306} Eumenes’ reference to events known to the Romans was used to reinforce the alarming picture he was constructing - that is, the notion that rather than look to Rome as the most powerful and helpful state in the region—their liberators, after all—the Greek states now preferred to look to Macedon. Perseus appeared willing, indeed eager to act on behalf of other states, in stark contrast to the relative detachment of Rome. In an anarchic state system the perception of and reputation for power is as, if not more important than actual power. The perception of power ensures security. It inspires both fear from hostile forces, and hope in allies.\textsuperscript{307} The threat of the destruction of the perception of Roman

\textsuperscript{304} Livy 42.12.8-10.  
\textsuperscript{305} Livy 42.25.1-7.  
\textsuperscript{306} Livy 42.12.3-7; App. Mac. 11.2.  
power exposed Rome to attack on multiple fronts. Roman power in the East relied, in part, on their extensive alliance system and network of friends. It is unlikely that Rome would have an easy time confronting Perseus either diplomatically or militarily without its Greek allies. Maintaining its reputation was crucial in the meantime. Eumenes’ intelligence suggested to the senate that Macedon was a clear and growing threat to their security, and to their dominion in the East. This certainly required more extensive investigation and verification.

Eumenes’ statements were inflammatory and designed to get a reaction out of the Roman state. The speech, if authentic to any degree, suggests he tailored the intelligence to suit the audience: he understood Roman political culture enough to force a reaction. He knew about Roman state-level paranoia, thanks to their experience with the Celts in the early fourth century and Hannibal in the late third, over existential military threats that were hidden and secret, but could appear out of nowhere. He knew the nature of imperium demanded obedience in the absence of force, and the gift of freedom ought to be repaid with respect and honour. His intelligence was not crafted subtly enough so that no one saw through his exaggerations. Some senators dismissed it as mere self-interested hyperbole.308 But they did provoke a response in others.309 Pergamene rulers had been exposed to Rome for decades by this point. Eumenes had developed an understanding of Rome’s desires and general intentions, as well as its weak spots and special sensitivities. He manipulated Roman perception of themselves, their position, and of historically powerful eastern states. Because of his historical knowledge of Macedonian power and Rome’s conflicts with the kingdom, Eumenes could and did manipulate Roman cultural perceptions and appeal to historically based anti-Macedonian sentiment, well known from the Roman cultural dossier on the kingdom and its Antigonid rulers. This sentiment was already present and growing. Eumenes’ words directed the thoughts of the senate to ‘what if’ considerations. Both consuls were jostling to be assigned Macedon as a province.310

308 App. Mac. 11.3; Plut. Cat. 8.7-8.
309 Livy claims that the thought of Greek and Asian cities turning to Macedon instead of Rome perturbed the senate: 42.14.1.
310 Livy 42.10, cf. 40.10.
The return of Gaius Valerius in the same year amplified the claims of Eumenes. He had been sent along with five others to investigate the affairs of Perseus and the state of affairs in Greece.\(^{311}\) His report was damning for Perseus. Valerius brought with him two informers, Praxo from Delphi, who had housed those who had allegedly attempted to assassinate Eumenes on his way home from Rome, and Rhamnius of Brundisium who claimed Perseus had employed him to poison any and all Roman generals and legates who passed through his city.\(^{312}\) This report may have cemented the notion in some Roman minds that Perseus sought war.\(^{313}\) Roman suspicions had so far given them nothing to act on decisively. But this intelligence forced the Romans to rethink their analysis of previous intelligence. Macedon was more threatening to Rome’s status and

\(^{311}\) Livy 42.6.4-5. Valerius’ secondary task was to renew ties with Ptolemy. The purpose of the mission was, as usual, a combination of diplomacy and intelligence gathering. The choice to send Valerius first to Macedonia and then to Egypt, separated by vast distances, is intriguing. Macedonia was safe enough in that, at the time, war was hardly going to break out any time soon. Egypt was currently under the control of Ptolemy VI Philometor, who was still a child, and so Valerius, in addition to renewing the traditional Roman-Ptolemaic friendship, was probably also supposed to investigate the intentions of Ptolemy’s regents. This was because both Ptolemy and Antiochus were fairly new to their thrones at this point and, if history were any guide, a war over Coele-Syria was almost predictable at this point. See Grainger 2002.

\(^{312}\) Livy 42.17, and above, n. 163. The attempted assassination of Eumenes on his return from Rome is suspicious. Some scholars claim a reasonably natural phenomenon (a rockslide) was transformed into an assassination attempt; others accept the story. For a dismissal of the accusation see Errington 1971a: 208-9; Gruen 1984: 409; Hammond and Wallbank 1988: 499; Briscoe 2012: 202-3. For those who accept an assassination attempt, at Perseus’ or another’s hands, see for example Meloni 1953: 164; Hansen 1971: 110; Wallbank 1979: 207; Brizzi 1982: 231-6. Polybius chose to believe that the assassination attempt occurred, and was one of the first acts of the war: Polyb. 22.18.8. Other ancient sources play up the attempted assassination: Livy 42.15.3-16.5; Diod. 29.34; App. Mac. 11.4. The charge cannot simply be dismissed as ‘absurd’. An assassination attempt is not beyond the realm of possibility. For ancient sources to accept the claims so readily, either Rome was particularly successful at presenting a false case for assassination, or the circumstances surrounding the affair were particularly suspicious. The presentation of Praxo with an established story suggests the attempt was not invented without considerable planning, but it does not necessarily prove the charge. Green 1990: 841. For Perseus to attempt to assassinate Eumenes at least seems out of character in this period. It suggests that Perseus wanted to launch an offensive war against Rome. This is not supported by actions either prior to or during the early stages of the war, when he seemed to want to avoid it. The charges, complete with informers, suggest that Gaius Valerius was not necessarily charged with investigating Perseus’ plans so much as creating a viable pretext for Roman action.

\(^{313}\) Livy 42.18.1.
alliances than previously considered. According to Livy, even though war had not been formally voted on, Roman mobilisation began. A vanguard was sent into Illyria in late winter/early spring 172/1.

172-171: Confirmation of allies

The Roman response to Eumenes’ intelligence was to dispatch armies of intelligence officers to repair, identify, and secure Roman alliances, and to isolate Macedon. Annalistic sources attempt to claim that a secret decision to declare war had been made by this point, but that it was not announced or voted upon. Livy suggests that the senate waited for embassies to arrive and announce their allegiance, despite their determination to declare war. While foreign ambassadors did come to Rome to secure Roman favour, the Romans were not passive participants in this process. Romans actions suggest that a war was becoming increasing likely, but was not thought to be inevitable. Instead, the senate dispatched a large number of embassies throughout the Mediterranean world. Some ventured to northern and central Greece, others to the Aegean islands and the kingdoms and cities of Asia Minor, to the Peloponnesian, Illyria, Egypt, and Africa, but not to Macedon. Perseus would have got the message: he was being politically isolated because the Romans were by now deeply suspicious of him. They surveyed the attitudes of people toward Rome, and their willingness and ability to help Rome if it came to war. The embassies’ mission was to encourage a pro-Roman stance, elicit agreements for

314 Livy 42.27.
315 Livy 42.18.3, 36.8-9. The chronology is insecure due to the Roman calendar being far out of synchron with the solar year. See Walbank 1941, and now Burton forthcoming: Appendix B for the likely date of the dispatch of the vanguard forces from Rome to Illyria.
316 Livy 42.14.1; App. Mac. 11.3; Val. Max. 2.2.1.
317 Cf. Livy 42.14.1, 18.1. It serves Livy’s moralistic purpose better to claim that the senate determined what needed to be done, rather than presenting them as waiting for more information about the state of affairs. But it was only after the Romans had acquired intensive intelligence about foreign attitudes that any decisions could be made.
318 Cum in expectatione senatus esset bello etsi non indicto, tamen iam decreto, qui regum suam, qui Persei secuturi amicitiam essent…: Livy 42.19.3.
319 The vote for war was not taken until spring 171, after the return of various commissions and the important report of Gaius Valerius: Livy 42.30.8-31.1 (the doublet at 42.17-18.1 is misplaced chronologically).
320 Livy 42.19.3-9, 26.7-8, 37.2-4, 45.1-7; App. Mac. 11.4; Polyb. 27.3.1-5.
aid, and investigate to what extent Perseus had been meddling with Rome’s arrangements.\textsuperscript{322} Intelligence moved beyond investigations of what was happening now to verification of Eumenes’ specific charges, and the confirmation of attitudes and capabilities. The commissioners needed to verify Eumenes’ statements and attempt to fix whatever damage Roman negligence had done to their reputation; they needed more intelligence about the situation in various Greek cities and leagues, especially which factions were currently in power; and they tried to determine which states would support Rome if it came to war and what each could provide.\textsuperscript{323} These investigations do not equate to a determination to go to war. They suggest that the intelligence possessed was increasingly worrying, that war was a likely option, but that there was a recognition that known intelligence was still not sufficient to determine if war in 172 was the optimal action. There was still a possibility, however small, that Perseus could be forced into a corner, or that reports of his activities were erroneous, exaggerated, or simply inflammatory slanders of his enemies. It was only with more information that the senate could determine the best way to deal with the Macedonian monarch. To have declared war before sounding out the attitudes of the majority of the Greeks and Hellenistic kingdoms would have been foolish. If the vast majority of them were indeed in favour of Perseus and were inclined to side with him against Rome, a prematurely declared war might have gone terribly wrong.

Ambassadors went to Carthage and Masinissa to secure pledges of supplies and troops for war. Masinissa, Antiochus IV, and Ptolemy all promised to aid and support Rome, each according to Livy with ulterior motives to take advantage of Rome’s distraction.\textsuperscript{324} Ariarathes, sharing plans with Eumenes, and certain Thracian tribes presented themselves in Rome as allies. The Thracians were particularly well received because of their position next to Macedonia.\textsuperscript{325}

\textsuperscript{322} Adire eos Cretam et Rhodum iussereunt, simul renovare amicitiam, simul speculare, num sollicitati animi sociorum ab rege Perseo essent: Livy 42.19.8. Livy 41.25.5, 42.19.7-8, 26.7-9. For the names and destinations of various parties in 172 see MRR I.412-414.

\textsuperscript{323} Although as Green suggests, the Romans simply took Eumenes at his word when he claimed they were being replaced by Perseus as the preferred arbiter of Greek affairs, this did not obviate their need to verify Eumenes’ intelligence. Green 1990: 427.

\textsuperscript{324} Livy 42.29.

\textsuperscript{325} Livy 42.19.3, 29. The Thracian Cotys sided with Perseus. See Livy 42.29.12.
When the arrival of Issae envoys reported the Illyrian alliance with Perseus, the senate sent out their own envoys to verify the Illyrian stance and to order Gentius to stop his attacks on his neighbours.\textsuperscript{326} At the same time, the Roman embassies sent to Asia had returned. They reported that Eumenes, Antiochus, and Ptolemy had all received solicitations from Perseus, but remained Roman allies.\textsuperscript{327} The senate further discovered that Boeotia, Thrace, and Crete were divided through factionalism, but that the majority would aid Rome against Perseus.\textsuperscript{328} Roman envoys gathered promises of neutrality from some. The Acarnanian League was quick to announce its allegiance to Rome.\textsuperscript{329} They played no visible part in war, so the promises may have been limited to promise help if the Romans requested it, and to ensure they did not support Macedon materially or physically. Byzantium and Bithynia were to remain neutral, despite Roman pressure.\textsuperscript{330} Prusias, the king of Bithynia, believed he was justified in not attacking his brother-in-law.\textsuperscript{331} By remaining so, he ran the risk of offending both Rome and Macedon, but also increased his chances of benefitting regardless of the outcome. If Perseus won, he would be pardoned due to family alliances; if Rome won, he could limit his punishment by claiming family fealty. Gentius was deemed fickle and unreliable. Rome mistrusted him, but could not determine at this point whom he would support.\textsuperscript{332} Other allied states intended to maintain their allegiance with Rome – except for the wavering Rhodians, according to a dubious report in Livy.\textsuperscript{333} Rhodes was important because of its wealth and position. It had the ability not only to support the war, but also to be an active military presence, particularly with its fleet. Hence, securing their allegiance was vital. Recent Roman interactions had not been positive. In 177, the Rhodian fleet had escorted Perseus’ Seleucid bride to Macedonia. Perseus repaid them

\textsuperscript{326} Livy 42.26.2-6.  
\textsuperscript{327} Livy 42.26.7-8.  
\textsuperscript{328} Livy 42.37-38, 43-46. Roman meddling in the politics of the states in mainland Greece will be discussed in the following chapter. Suffice it to say, they engaged in covert action and clandestine diplomacy with great energy. See Polyb. 27.1.1-13, 2.1.-12; Livy 42.19.6-7, 25.14, 44.7-8.  
\textsuperscript{329} Livy 42.38.3-4.  
\textsuperscript{330} Both Byzantium and Bithynia were courted by Perseus and Rome. For their relationships see Polyb. 27.4.1-10, 5.1-8, 8.2-7; Livy 42.25.6, 29, 40.6, 42.4, 46.1-10.  
\textsuperscript{331} Livy 42.29.3.  
\textsuperscript{332} Livy 42.29.11.  
\textsuperscript{333} Livy 42.26.9.
by refurbishing their navy.\footnote{Polyb. 25.4.8-10.} The Roman response was to write a letter to the Rhodians ordering them to treat the Lycians as friends rather than subjects.\footnote{Polyb. 25.4.5-8, Livy 41.6.}

There had been a strong anti-Roman sentiment in Rhodes. Alleged support for Rome was naturally met with mistrust. Perseus requested they remain neutral or act as a mediator. But the election of a pro-Roman magistrate ensured a visible pro-Roman stance, with the promise of 40 ships.\footnote{Polyb. 27.3; Livy 42.44-5.} Even after throwing their lot in with Rome, Rhodes provided no substantial assistance in the war that followed.\footnote{Polyb. states that the ambassadors spent the majority of their time in Rhodes, but that this was unnecessary because Rhodes had already decided to favour them. Rhodes’ actions during the war, and the continued neutral relations with Perseus suggest they required more coaxing than sources would have us believe: Polyb. 27.7, 27.14. On the other hand, when they rendezvoused with the Roman fleet in the first year of the war with five (rather than the forty promised) ships, they were discharged, along with all the other foreign contingents, since no naval action was required. See Polyb. 27.7; Livy 42.56.7.} Overall, then, the investigative missions were generally successful in persuading and attaining support for Rome, or at least determining whom the Romans could rely upon.\footnote{Livy 42.45.1-7; Polyb. 27.3.1-5; App. Mac. 11.4.}

These missions were not about diplomacy or recruitment. There is no visible attempt by Roman ambassadors to force participation in war through imposing or citing obligations. This activity was not designed to amass an army to fight Perseus. An army fighting under duress is never reliable, and is prone to desertion. Rather, the missions were urgent attempts to discover attitudes toward Rome and Perseus, and to attempt to secure allegiance and neutrality wherever the Romans could. The Romans needed more information about who remained friendly toward them, about who would choose to help them over Macedon, and about who could reasonably be expected to participate. Roman allies had up to this point been providing generalised intelligence about activities and problems that Rome used to monitor positions and security. Now there was a need for more specific intelligence about attitudes and capabilities. Foreigners could not
provide this; it needed a Roman presence both for analysis and to extract verified information about intentions. The missions were primarily designed to establish the position of Rome in the Mediterranean to ensure that they possessed the best platform from which to conduct war and to control any covert access points to Roman allies and holdings. Once this was established, and a viable pretext for military action was devised, the Romans could securely wage war. What is important here is that Rome spent the time first engaging in intelligence to determine Perseus’ actions, then, through analysis of intelligence, upon deciding he was a threat, using intelligence to ensure the environment for war was advantageous.

Political Intelligence Gathering and the Third Macedonian War

In the build up to the Third Macedonian War, the senate was kept informed of affairs pertaining to both Macedon and the Greek states through their alliance systems. There were apparently no events they were ignorant of. As discussed in earlier sections, the details of these events, that is, their motivations and causes, were more opaque. They needed Roman investigation. This pattern of receiving and verifying information prior to action is evident throughout the 170s. Despite Livy’s assertions that a decision for war was made early, the senate did not make foreign policy decisions about how to view Perseus based on rumour, personal animosity, or the accusations of Eumenes. Only accusations of Perseus holding secret meetings with Rome’s Greek allies and covert actions drove Rome to actively investigate. It was only after Eumenes’ suggestion that the Romans’ refusal to deal with the matter was damaging their reputation and power that serious Roman efforts to discover Macedonian motivations and capabilities – and the real world effects of Perseus’ actions – were undertaken. And it was only after these investigations that warfare became a viable option. Until this point, diplomatic engagement with Macedon, attempts to re-engage Roman allies and help with their various crises, and thus avoid war were the senate’s preferred options. Macedonian activity may have

339 Livy 42.18.1. It is interesting to note that Valerius’ report is not mentioned in Appian’s account of the war. He places the blame solely on Eumenes’ accusations and the Roman desire for war with Perseus: App. Mac. 11.7-8.
been troubling and suspicious, but it was understandable for a major Hellenistic power, and there had yet to emerge any proof that its militarisation was directed at Rome. No decision was made about whether war was the viable and preferable choice until Valerius returned and presented to the senate his damming information and witnesses that proved Perseus was engaged in overt, hostile, and violent anti-Roman activity. No final declaration of war was made until those sent to secure allegiances and identify attitudes reported back to the senate.

The decision would not have been made without Roman verification of foreign intelligence. Without it, the senate had no grounds, and seemingly no intention, to interfere; after all, the overt actions of Perseus were the same as they had been for years. The actual content and results of the intelligence analysis are unrecoverable. Fortunately, this is not important here. What is important is that intelligence was thought to be necessary and vital, and that there was a concerted effort to acquire as much intelligence as possible, not only about enemies but also allies, prior to taking action. There was great potential for politicisation of intelligence. And it is likely that certain parties in Rome desired war with Macedon. But it is the use of the Roman intelligence system to build the pretext that is significant here.

Verification resulted in inevitable delay. But the cost of the delay was outweighed by the benefits of knowing, as certainly as possible, the current state of affairs abroad in a world of highly changeable states and alliances, a highly interconnected world where rumour ran rampant. Rome’s delay in engaging with events in the East in the 170s is criticised as a strategic blunder by modern scholars who claim that Rome was not interested in actively engaging in the affairs of others. The delay between becoming aware of the Macedonian problem and the declaration of war was not an example of Roman indecisiveness, however. Historical precedent suggested Macedon would be easy

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340 The historical record does not provide sufficient information to determine whether Rome or Eumenes was warmongering and Perseus peaceful, or whether there was a legitimate perceived reason to counter Perseus.

to bring to heel either diplomatically or militarily. Immediate action was not necessary; the delay was influenced by the senate’s attempt to gather as much intelligence about the state of the Mediterranean region as possible before action. On the eve of a war with a major Hellenistic power, even one whose leader they scorned - and at a time when Roman control over events unfolding the eastern Mediterranean was not secure - required care and consideration. Without the knowledge of who would side with whom, the Romans could cause more damage to its reputation and/or power. The delay in order to seek new and as up-to-date information as possible was necessary for Rome to protect itself and to determine the most appropriate course of action. Their intelligence system allowed them to do this. They were provided with intelligence, verified it, and sought more in order to make an informed decision about the need for war. As this chapter has sought to demonstrate, the Roman impulse to trust but verify information flowing into Rome, and then to seek more information before taking major decisions such as going to war, shows an appreciation and understanding of intelligence systems, rather than ignorance of them.

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Political intelligence builds a picture of the international state system. It influences decision-making, and in crises, indicates what must be done next, normally a declaration of war or the dispatch of diplomats. There is a third option however: interference. Typically known as covert action, this option is taken when decision-makers deem military or diplomatic activity to be unnecessary, unsuitable, or potentially unsuccessful. It is perhaps the best-known form of intelligence in the popular imagination, evoking images of sinister agents and double agents, their handlers, and their nemeses as popularised in spy novels and films. In reality, covert operatives usually are only minor players in international relations. But the existence of covert action in the international context is the clearest indication that an appreciation and understanding of the intelligence process exists; covert action is the necessary condition for intelligence. As this study has demonstrated so far, just as modern states engage in intelligence activities to clarify the international state of play, so too did the Roman state. After acquiring intelligence about international affairs, the senate was left with numerous choices about how to react. Common reactions were either to dismiss information as relatively unimportant and unworthy of Roman interference, to attempt to initiate a diplomatic solution to a problem, or to engage with arms. Covert measures were undertaken as both temporary and permanent solutions to some problems.

Covert action, as is the case for most aspects of intelligence studies, lacks a clear and uniform definition. It inhabits a space somewhere between diplomatic

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1 The use of covert action as a response to intelligence has implications for the application of International Relations theory to Roman expansion, as will be discussed in the conclusion.

2 Many of the modern interpretations of covert action arise from studies of the Cold War. In 1948 the CIA was sanctioned to participate in ‘propaganda; economic warfare; preventive direct action, including sabotage, anti-sabotage, demolition and evacuation measures; subversion against hostile states, including assistance to underground resistance movements, guerrillas and refugee liberation groups, and
and military activity. In simplest terms, it is influence. Covert action is intended to influence a target audience to do or refrain from doing something, or to influence opinion to achieve a national objective. The agent and some of his actions usually take place in the open. Without a visible agent, no audience can be influenced. Agents are, however, usually under some form of cover in terms of whom they are working for or what other actions they are engaged in. In antiquity, these covers were official and legitimate - covert operatives had a legitimate mandate as diplomats, and conducted covert operations as additional assignments. They are covert because the intentions of the manipulator remain hidden to some, and so the resulting action appears to arise distinct from the instigator. There should be no definitive link detectable by others between the true intention of the state responsible for the agent and the result of the operation. As a basic definition, covert actions are missions designed to subtly or secretly influence another person or state into acting, refraining from acting, or manipulating public opinion using various techniques, where it is intended that the role of the state responsible for the agent is either not recognised or not openly discussed. The term covers manipulative and ethically questionable activities, ranging from relatively benign and persistent propaganda campaigns to paramilitary operations. Covert actions are difficult to neatly categorise. Most involve various covert behaviours as a situation progresses. They are deliberate attempts to meddle in the internal activities of other states.

support of indigenous anti-Communist elements in threatened countries of the free world’. This is about as close to a definition of covert action as we are likely to come.

3 Modern undercover operatives usually operate, as the Romans did, under either ‘light’ and ‘official’ covers- that is, with a cover provided by another governmental service — or under ‘deep’ cover, masquerading as businessmen or private individuals. ‘Deep’ cover is difficult to maintain and is inherently more dangerous, as it lacks the protection that comes with government service. Treverton 1987: 29.


5 Paramilitary operations are violent and dangerous covert acts. They involve equipping, training, and driving armed groups to attack enemies so that one’s own state cannot be deemed to take part in acts of war, while still succeeding in subverting the political or military regime of foes. Scott 2004: 323-4.

6 Modern studies delineate four distinct categories of covert action. Ranging from the least to most complicated and risky these include psychological warfare and the use of propaganda; political action through the bribery, favouritism, and persuasion of foreign officials; economic action by subverting the means of production, influencing currency rates, and disrupting trade arrangements; and finally paramilitary operations, that is, deniably providing advice, resources, and training to third parties,
In the Roman context, these activities include espionage under the guise of diplomacy, political interference, the support and discouragement of factionalism, and, on occasion, assassination. Under the guise of legitimate diplomatic missions, Roman representatives encouraged other states to go to war; purposefully abused their diplomatic privileges, investigating and acting beyond official and announced mandates; or took action to fulfil predetermined covert intentions. Such acts were the result of a practical assessment of available intelligence. The senate was, in general, more reticent and had less need to engage in covert activities than modern states. The Romans were accused of meddling in affairs to improve their own situation, however, from at least the third century, when Hannibal alleged that they were secretly stirring up Carthaginian controlled Spanish tribes, using this as an excuse to attack Saguntum. There were other preferable pathways to achieving their goals, which varied by area, time, and circumstances. If diplomacy or war was considered a viable option with a high chance of success, this was the preferable route. It was only when these alternatives were considered unviable that covert action, based on foreknowledge and cultural preconceptions, was chosen.

Covert actions are uncommon because they are risky. The results of potential discovery often outweigh any possible benefits. Further, any complications could outweigh the problems that lead to the elimination of diplomatic or military options in the first place. Because of this, plausible deniability is the most important aspect of covert action. Those in charge need to be able to claim that any individual caught acting in a covert manner was doing so without their knowledge or authority. If implicated continuously in arranging assassination, assault, or kidnapping attempts, and provoking, equipping, or organising coups. See Johnson and Wirtz 2008: 260-95. Propaganda and psychological warfare can easily be tied to Roman action, as can political action and assassinations. Activities involving the economy are harder to identify in ancient sources and will not be addressed here.

7 To repeat: there was no guarantee that available intelligence was accurate or correctly interpreted, or that care was taken to eliminate emotional or cognitive biases from the analysis.
8 App. Hann. 1.3.
such behaviour, national reputations are ruined and it becomes difficult to manage affairs diplomatically. While the effort required to maintain plausible deniability was comparatively less important in antiquity, it was still a concern. Covert action could be practiced with relative safety due to the general lack of transparency, the diminished importance of complete secrecy in intelligence affairs, and the lack of technology and public media. These reduced the consequences if covert actions were discovered and publicly acknowledged both internationally and domestically. Nonetheless, whenever a Roman official was implicated in covert action, the senate was rarely mentioned as being involved. In part, this is due to the nature of surviving sources and lack of unclassified Roman documents. Surviving accounts only present one side of the story, and that story is carefully presented so that it does not disrupt the public propaganda of the mid-republic as an open and honest society that gained its power through strength and good faith rather than through duplicity and deception.

Evidence for covert missions is circumstantial. This is to be expected. Covert operations are, after all, by nature secretive. They are also devious and underhanded. They thus clash with the propaganda image put forward by the Romans as honest brokers of foreign policy, and one of the purposes of most of our historical records, which is to present the Romans in a positive light. Yet it is possible to identify covert actions in events in Roman history. Some may have been invented by sources as justifications and explanations for some Roman actions. Even if the accounts are historical invention, their presence in narratives reveals an understanding and expectation of covert behaviour. Ancient commentary on certain missions suggests that other missions of unknown or mysterious purpose(s) may have had covert motives. In light of the difficulties of interpretation, this chapter does not seek to attain absolute certainty about covert operations; rather, it will investigate explicit mentions of covert action by sources.

10 The success and failure of covert activities are controversial. Some consider operations a failure if they are discovered; others suggest that if the objective of the mission was achieved the mission was a success regardless whether discovery took place or not. Lowenthal 2006: 171-2. In general, during this discussion, missions will be regarded as successful if the objective of a plot was carried out, regardless of the consequences. The success and failure of missions are not particularly relevant for the present purposes. The focus here is on Roman engagement in these activities.

11 As articulated in the *nova sapientia* debate in 171, discussed below.
themselves, and representations of events that should be interpreted as covert action. These episodes reveal a Roman desire to achieve particular foreign policy goals without causing major destabilisation.

Any attempt to engage in covert action is suggestive of international ambitions wedded to conceptions of one nation or state’s entitlement in an international system. Roman engagement suggests a sophisticated awareness of the power relationships in the mid-republican Mediterranean, and a conscious choice of how to act in different international environments in order to maintain the power in those relationships. This is not to say that Rome sought hegemonic or imperial control over foreign states, but at the very least it had an interest in gaining and maintaining a position of influence and power in the Mediterranean. And, once won, that position had to be protected. Covert missions were devised to subvert foreign counterintelligence measures and to manipulate affairs to Rome’s advantage when diplomacy proved ineffective, or to avoid resorting to the destabilising effects, and sheer expense in terms of blood and treasure, of going to war.

12 For studies of Roman covert actions in later periods see for instance Austin and Rankov 1995; Sheldon 1997; Lee 2009.
6.1 Political Interference

The safest form of covert action is to influence perception in order to meddle in the political affairs of foreign states. Such efforts focus on convincing the people or their leaders to support one agenda or distrust another. It is the least risky of all covert behaviours, but also potentially the least effective. The most basic level of such influence is through state-sanctioned propaganda. If attempts to persuade are given time and resources, propaganda has immense power to convince the public. The public, however, may not have sufficient power for the propaganda to have a direct political influence. Regardless, a sympathetic or ambivalent populace is better than an antagonistic one.

Propaganda campaigns are hard to trace in Roman history. The most obvious places to find them are in the speeches of ambassadors and commanders, which are for the most part invented by later sources. Some of these appeals drew on the image of Roman fides. As part of the proconsul Quinctius Flamininus’ attempts to sway Greek states to the Roman cause in 197, his appeal to the wavering Boeotian assembly spoke of his past deeds and those of his ancestors in aid of all the Greek states, among them, the Boeotians. He then chose to augment his position, not by appealing to Roman resources and military strength, but to their fides, setting the Romans up as leaders to be trusted and relied on.\(^\text{13}\) Easier to trace, and of more interest are the covert attempts to influence succession and support powerful proxies and pro-Roman factions. Mid-republican Romans undertook these efforts to encourage the growth of pro-Roman sentiment throughout the Greek East during their attempts to counter the ambitions and the actions of Macedon and Syria. They knew the importance

\(^{13}\text{Pauca ab ipso Quinctio adiecta, fidei magis Romanam quam arma aut opes extollenti verbis: Livy 33.2.5. Propaganda and ambassadorial tours to influence the perception of Rome are evident in the East, especially prior to the outbreak of both the Second and Third Macedonian Wars. What the ambassadors actually said to create pro-Roman sentiment, however, is for the most part unknown. In one tragically amusing case, when an embassy was sent to reassure the Greeks and apologise for bad Roman behaviour in the first year of the war against Perseus, when Roman commanders attacked and plundered Rome’s allies and friends, reassurance quickly turned into a witch hunt for anti-Roman politicians, accompanied, in one case, by a demand for hostages: Polyb. 28.3-5; cf. Livy 43.17.2-9.}
of image and perception for the maintenance and perpetuation of power, and
the key role that local leaders (collaborators) and their followers played in the
plans and strategies of the great powers. Military conquest and defeat, and
diplomatic alliances between leagues were not enough to gain and retain a sense
of loyalty. Using their understanding of foreknowledge, various missions were
made to align the Greeks with Rome. This section takes as case studies the
manipulation of public perceptions of Hannibal at Antiochus’ court in the 190s,
of Demetrius of Macedon in the 180s, and the attempted manipulation of the
international perception of Eumenes and Pergamum in the late 170s and 160s.

Reception: Hannibal at Antiochus’ Court

An embassy consisting of Sulpicius Galba, Villius Tapulus, and Aelius
Paetus was sent to Syria in 193. The same representatives had earlier been sent
to Antiochus at Lysimachia. The tradition records that after investigating affairs
between Masinissa and Carthage, Scipio Africanus joined the embassy to
Antiochus. Villius and Sulpicius were first sent to visit Eumenes in Pergamum.
Falling ill, Sulpicius remained there. Villius, or Scipio, depending on which
tradition is followed, ventured to Ephesus. Hannibal was found there, and
Roman representatives engaged him in friendly and frequent conversations.
These conversations continued amicably and at length until Antiochus began to
question Hannibal’s commitment to his cause, and stopped inviting him to war
conferences or holding his advice in high regard.

14 This is not to say that Rome did not attempt to exert control in the region through
fear and deterrence. Different regions and peoples were subjected to a variety of
methods of control. This is not a discussion of a Roman imperial agenda, but a focus
on their appreciation for and use of covert action as a useful option to fulfil this
agenda, whatever the intentions.
15 Livy 34.59.8; 35.13-17.
16 Livy 34.59.8 (explicit); Lysimachia conference: Polyb. 18.50–51; Livy 33.39–40; App.
Syr. 3; Diod. Sic. 28.12. The reason for dispatching the same men was presumably so
they could assess the king’s attitude and determine if this had changed. This is not an
argument for Roman intelligence ‘expertise’. See above, chapter 2, with Gruen 1984:
203-49.
17 According to Acilius, quoted in Claudius Quadrigarius: Peter F64A = Acilius 7 F4.
See also Livy 35.14.5-12; Plut. Pyrr. 8.2; Flam.21.3; App. Syr. 9-10; Zonar. 9.18. Whether
Scipio was present or not is of little concern. His presence may have been inserted into
the tradition to create another showdown between the famous antagonists.
Thus far most accounts agree. Livy’s account gives the embassy no specific mandate beyond investigating Antiochus. He represents the ambassadors’ discussions with Hannibal as simple politeness with, predictably, no hint of Roman duplicity. In his account, Villius, of his own volition, engaged Hannibal in conversation to attempt to discover Hannibal’s feelings toward the Romans and assure him that the Roman state was in no way a threat to him.¹⁸ Livy clearly indicates that these conversations were not part of a plot to discredit the Carthaginian in Antiochus’ eyes, but that this was merely their unintended consequence.¹⁷ The care that Livy takes to avoid the implication of covert action appears suspicious.¹⁹ His steadfast avoidance of suggesting that clandestine activity may have been part of the Roman strategic toolkit may indicate his purposeful censorship of source material, especially when his account of this situation is compared with other surviving sources, all of which suggest covert Roman behaviour.

Polybius claims the embassy was sent to investigate Antiochus’ intentions. There is no indication here that the ambassadors set out with a senatorial mandate to undertake covert action. When the ambassadors noticed the reception of Hannibal, however, they sought to sabotage it.²¹ Polybius does not explicitly implicate the senate, but his ambassadors improvise a way to influence affairs to their perceived advantage once they are on the ground in Syria. The Polybian version of the anecdote is short and undeveloped, although the ambassadors’ intentional manipulation of the situation is supported by Appian, Justin, and Dio (via Zonaras). The former two both have the senate dispatch the

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¹⁸ Villius cum Pisidiae bello occupatum esse regem audisset, Ephesum profectus, dum paucos ibi moratur dies, dedit operam ut cum Hannibale, qui tum ibi forte erat, saepe congraderetur, ut animum eius temptaret et, si qua posset, metum demeret periculi quicquam ei ab Romanis esse: Livy 35.14.1-3.
¹⁹ Iis colloquis aliaq uidem actum nihil est, secutum tamen sua sponte est, velut consilio petitum eset, ut vilior ob ea regi Hannibal et suspectior ad omnia fieret: Livy 35.14.4.
²⁰ His care to avoid implicating Rome in duplicity is not out of ignorance that such covert actions occurred since Livy recognises it in others, such as the spread of disinformation by Philip V of Macedon. See Livy 39.34.
²¹ τότε Ρωμαίοι συνθεωροῦντες ἢδη τὴν Ἁιτωλίαν ἐπὶ ὑπαρχεῖν ἐξαπέστειλαν πρεσβευτάς πρὸς Αντίοχον, βουλῶμεν μὴ λανθανέιν σφας τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως προαίρεσιν. οἱ δὲ πρεσβεῖς, ὁρῶντες τὸν Αντίοχον προσέχοντα τοῖς Αιτωλοῖς καὶ πρόθυμον ὁντα πολέμειν Ρωμαίοις, ἐθεράπευσαν τὸν ἄνδρα, σπούδασαντες εἰς ὑποψίαιν ἐμβαλεῖν πρὸς τὸν Αντίοχον. ὁ καὶ συνέβη γενέσθαι: Polyb. 3.11.1-2; cf. App. Syr. 9.
legates using a diplomatic mission as cover. Justin asserts the senate instructed them to spy out the state of the king’s preparations and to mollify Hannibal’s hatred of Rome, or to arouse Antiochus’ suspicion against him.\textsuperscript{22} Appian and Dio/Zonaras have Scipio arrive, ostensibly as an envoy to Antiochus; the former states that Scipio was to determine what Antiochus was planning and to get a sense of his war preparations; the latter says that Scipio’s true purpose was to manipulate affairs to Rome’s advantage any way he could.\textsuperscript{23} The secret conversations with Scipio, according to both authors, irreversibly damaged Antiochus’ opinion of Hannibal. The king was also jealous of Hannibal since everyone believed success in the upcoming war hinged on his strategic advice, and he did not want the Carthaginian to steal the glory for his victories. Dio/Zonaras adds that Antiochus as a result refused to give Hannibal any resources for an expedition to Carthage.\textsuperscript{24}

Unfortunately for the Romans, their covert action was only temporarily successful. The Polybian tradition is clear that Antiochus and Hannibal reconciled after Hannibal told the story of his father making him swear an oath as a child that he would never be a friend to the Romans.\textsuperscript{25} And, of course, Hannibal is later found commanding part of the Seleucid fleet against Rome and its allies in the war with Antiochus.\textsuperscript{26} The Romans’ covert action had no significant or lasting effect on the outcome of the arrangement between Hannibal and Antiochus. This should give us pause. Is the story of the ambassadors’ engagement with Hannibal authentic? Once one starts to pick apart the details — leaving aside the irreconcilable variants in the tradition — things start to look odd. Justin would have his audience believe that Hannibal

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} Romani quoque legatos ad Antiochum misere, qui sub specie legationis et regis apparatum specularuntur et Hannibalem aut Romanis mitigarent aut adsiduo conloquio suspicium inuisumque regi redderent: Just. 31.4.4.
\item \textsuperscript{23} ἐς ὁμοιαν πεμφθέντες Ἀντίωχον τής τε γνώμης ἀπόπειραν καὶ τῆς παρασκευῆς κατάσκεψιν: App. Syr. 9; ἐνευθέν δὲ εἰς τὴν Ἀσίαν διέβη, λόγῳ μὲν ὡς πρεσβεύσατο πρὸς τὸν Ἀντίωχον, ἐργὼ δὲ ἵνα κάκειν καὶ τὸν Ἀννίβαν ἐπιφανεῖς καταπλήξη καὶ πράξῃ τὰ τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις συμφέροντα: Zonar. 9.18.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Polyb. 3.11.5-12.1 (cf. Livy 21.1.4); Just. 31.6.6 (reconciliation without the story). In App. Syr. 14 (cf. 9), Hannibal’s superior strategic advice is spurned by the king out of jealousy for his reputation and fear that he would steal the glory by winning victories in the war.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Livy 37.23.7-24; App. Syr. 22; Just. 31.6.9, 7.3; Zon. 9.20.
\end{itemize}
was easily duped by friendly visits and assurances that past struggles were ‘just politics’ and between nations, rather than concerning personal relationships between friends." The Roman annalist Acilius depicts the two old warhorses, Hannibal and Scipio, sitting down for a friendly chat about great generals. On the surface, it seems rather unlikely that Hannibal was blind to such manipulation. Throughout surviving accounts of the Hannibalic war, Hannibal is presented as being masterful at such techniques himself. Appian seems to be wrestling with precisely this logical problem when he says that Hannibal, despite his military genius, did not understand that he was being manipulated. Justin also attempts to vilify the Romans by making them attack an innocent victim. But Hannibal cannot be regarded as such considering his history with and attitude toward Rome, and his knowledge of the Roman view of himself. The story of his childhood oath to never be a friend to Rome is proof enough of that—if indeed that is an authentic story, or Hannibal’s telling of it is.

Regardless of the authenticity of the embassy of 193’s covert action, its presence in the historical tradition shows that it was a common expectation that the Romans would use such methods in international affairs. The near-unanimous identification by the extant historians of the ambassadors’ attempt to manipulate Hannibal as covert action, and Livy’s clumsy attempt to deny it, demonstrate this well enough. Appian and Justin represent the senate managing and ordering the embassy’s covert activity, a mundane detail which may reflect reality. This demonstrates Roman state-level interest and engagement in such operations, regardless of success or failure.

**Succession: Demetrius, son of Philip V**

Demetrius’ reception by the Romans and ultimate demise is a well-studied case, though not from the perspective of intelligence. Modern scholarship is

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27 Just. 31.4.7.
28 Peter F64A = Acilius 7 F4 (=Livy 35.14.5-12); cf. Plut. Pyrr. 8.2; Flam.21.3; App. Syr. 10.
29 καὶ τούθ’ ὁ μὲν στρατηγικότατος Ἀννίβας οὐχ ὑπενόησεν: App. Syr. 9.
30 Justin’s account is difficult to reconcile with his other statements about Hannibal — that he knew the Roman animosity toward him was so intense Rome would not rest until an old man was dead — hence the requirement that he be handed over by Antiochus after Magnesia and his eventual suicide (or potential assassination). See below, 311-17.
divided over the extent of Rome’s involvement. The case itself is complicated by source problems. Polybius seems to have disliked Quinctius Flamininus and claimed the Third Macedonian War was conceived in the final years of Philip V’s life, both of which affect his account; Livy distorts chronology and deliberately obfuscates suggestions of Flamininus’ complicity; Appian’s account is fragmented; and Plutarch is more interested in character rather than history. Nevertheless a picture of how covert action shaped events can be discerned through the fog.

Demetrius was a hostage in Rome for six years. He was released back to Macedonia around the age of 15, in 191. During his time in Rome, Demetrius ingratiated himself with the members of the Roman aristocracy, and went through a process of re-education. This was natural. He spent six of his formative years being instructed in Roman mores. He seems to have developed some pro-Roman sentiments and Roman ways of thinking. It was this

31 There has been extensive investigation into this issue; see Edson 1935; Walbank 1940: 223-57; Briscoe 1972; Gruen 1974a; Newey 2009.
32 Polyb. 22.18. Polybian biases are complicated here. He seems to have liked neither the Macedonians nor Quinctius Flamininus. His presentation of events condemns Flamininus for manipulation and interference, and Perseus and his father for paranoia and Machiavellian behaviour. See the Polybian-derived sections of Livy 39.23-29, 33-35, 46-48, 53, 40.2-16, 20-24, 54-56. Livy’s account expands on the surviving fragments of Polybius at 22.6-18, 23.1-11.
34 App. Mac. 9.6.
35 Plut. Aem. 8.4-6.
36 A thorough discussion of the role of high-ranking hostages is beyond the scope of this study. Their status is difficult to determine: various modern scholars deem them hostages, internees, political prisoners, exiles, or detainees. Each of these terms has different implications for the treatment and lifestyle that they would be subject to. Polybius never refers to himself, or those brought to Rome with him as a ‘hostage’ – that is ὅμηρος. They appear to have lived in relative freedom and had relative freedom of movement, and could even communicate with their homelands without apparent fear of monitoring or control. Considering the Roman use of counterintelligence and the control of information that was disseminated to the public, the relative free hand the senate allowed hostages was perhaps risky. But this had to be balanced against the potential benefits of political manipulation that could be deemed part of their re-education. This is especially true of high-ranking hostages. It was in Rome’s best interest to induce these hostages to adopt pro-Roman beliefs and policies. For more on the role of hostages see Lecrivain 1916; Aymard 1961; Moscovich 1972; Moscovich 1983: 9-23; Braund 1984; Elbernd 1990; Lee 1991; Ndiaye 1995; Allen 2006.
37 Livy 40.5.8 for Demetrius’ ‘love of the name of Rome’, amore nomini Romani.
connection with Rome that induced his father to send him as an ambassador to
the city in the winter of 184-183. He was to address accusations made by Philip's
opponents. This decision was at Philip’s initiative and was a gamble. Philip
could have sent a more experienced ambassador but chose Demetrius, despite
his youth and inexperience in diplomatic matters, hoping that the esteem in
which he was held by the senators would result in a favourable attitude toward
Philip and Macedon. His gamble paid off to an extent. Demetrius is presented
in the sources as a young, nervous, and inexperienced individual, faced with
accusations he could not answer. According to Polybius, the senate received
him kindly and sympathetically, and allowed him to fumblingly summarise
Philip’s prepared response to the accusations. The defence was less important
than Demetrius’ mere presence which was a bid by Philip to repair relations. The
senate’s favourable response suggests their policy of supporting Philip was
predetermined. There was no apparent effort by the senate to refute the actual
charges that, incidentally, must have been based on Philip’s (albeit incomplete)
intelligence gathering. Rome did its international duty by adopting a moderate
diplomatic position. The senate’s response put Philip in his place: it was due to
Demetrius that Philip received favourable treatment. Philip sent someone who
could not competently defend him and Rome responded as they had
determined they would from the outset, with the result that Macedon was now
obligated to Rome. The senate chose to openly support Demetrius, and
ensured that Philip knew it was through Demetrius that Macedon was saved. By

38 Livy 39.35.1-2; Polyb. 22.14.10; App. Mac. 9.6.
39 Philip’s choice to send Demetrius was not made as a desperate last hope, as
Polybius would have his audience believe, but was his first choice to defend himself
against accusations: Polyb. 22.14.10; Livy 39.35.2-3.
40 Livy 39.47; Polyb. 23.2.
41 Livy typically presents Philip as guilty and thoroughly anti-Roman, taking up
Polybius’ suggestion that Perseus inherited the Third Macedonian war plans from his
father: Et legati a Philippi conloquio ita digressi sunt, ut praec se ferrent nihil eorum sibi
placere, et Philippus minime, quin rebellandum esset, dubius: Livy 39.35.1. See above,
chapter 5, n. 261.
42 Polyb. 23.2.10, 3.6; Livy 39.47.11; App. Mac. 9.6.
44 The sources emphasise the idea that Philip was insulted by the response: Polyb.
23.3.6; Livy 39.48.1; App. Mac. 9.6. For scholars supporting this notion see Edson 1935:
192-3; Badian 1958: 94; Newey 2009: 70. This ensured that the Third Macedonian War
would originate with Philip. That Demetrius succeeded in deferring Roman action
cannot have been that much of a shock to Philip – he sent Demetrius for this very
publicising what both sides knew and expected — the Romans, that they were far from beginning hostilities against Macedon, Philip, that his son would smooth out any difficulties with Rome — they gave the impression to Philip’s enemies and Rome’s friends, Eumenes in particular, that they were closer to war than they actually were. This was covert action at its most subtle.

Less subtle is how elements in the Roman aristocracy manipulated Demetrius to divide the Macedonian royal house. The choice to send Demetrius was a signal that Philip favoured or appreciated his son’s relationship with Rome. Certain forces in Rome took advantage of this in an effort to secure pro-Roman sentiment in Macedonia in the future. Covert action is evident in Demetrius’ reception and treatment. As has been seen, Demetrius was treated very sympathetically by the senate. The senate’s reception of Demetrius planted ideas in his head, and fostered his presumably pre-existing ambitions. While he was in Rome, Quinctius Flamininus personally approached Demetrius. Polybius has Flamininus suggest to him that he was the preferred candidate for the Macedonian throne, over his brother Perseus. There is no indication that Roman officials were serious in establishing Demetrius’ claim to the throne at this point. Beyond his pro-Roman sentiment, there was little to suggest that Demetrius would be an effective ruler. Planting the idea of a Roman-sponsored succession in his head had another, more immediate effect on the political situation in Macedon — one that ideally would put a stop to the international complaints about Macedonian behaviour. In suggesting Demetrius was the preferable heir, the Romans destabilised Macedon. The suggestion of Roman purpose. His son’s success cannot have been insulting or a complete surprise. The manner in which Rome presented its response could have been more tactful, but cannot have been a shocking revelation. In any case, Philip got what he wanted out of the exchange: Gruen 1974a: 234; cf. Green 1990: 425-26.

As argued by Gruen, there was little to suggest that the Romans had adopted an anti-Macedonian position at this point. There is nothing to suggest Philip was considered a threat, or that their relationship was unsalvageable. Gruen 1974a: 225-31.

 Hammond and Walbank suggest that when Philip learnt of Flamininus’ support for Demetrius he knew without a doubt that the senate intended to establish Demetrius as a client king. This is a valid conclusion, but is not the only available interpretation of Roman action, and certainly not the conclusion that Philip definitively reached in 181. Hammond and Walbank 1988: 458.

They may have done so when Philip died. But this is mere speculation.
support for him encouraged factionalism, giving power to both pro- and anti-Roman groups with seemingly confirmed figureheads in Demetrius and Perseus.9 While Philip lived, nothing practical would come of the suggestion. It was not in Rome’s best interest to be openly seen as interfering in Macedonian affairs. Fostering pro-Roman forces could not be done openly without prematurely undermining Macedonian sovereignty. Ideally, infighting in Macedon would distract Philip from international adventures, as the king was prone to do. It is politically unwise for a nation’s government to be caught acting in a manner contrary to its stated intentions. The Romans maintained the impression that they were leaving Macedon to act freely, having listened to complaints and investigated them. In reality, they engineered a situation that made it difficult for Macedon to continue the same pattern of behaviour, all the while ensuring no one could definitively accuse the Romans of meddling in Macedon’s internal affairs.

Roman officials meddled to distract. What occurred as a result could not be blamed on Rome per se. Covert actions are unpredictable once enacted. Without agents on the ground to shape the consequences of covert action once in play, unintended consequences may result. Destabilising the situation in Macedon forced Philip to focus on domestic affairs rather than pursue his international ambitions and disrupt Roman arrangements. Roman behaviour up to this point suggested that the Romans made a concerted effort to destabilise, both actively and passively, any perceived threats to their dominion in the Mediterranean. Military intervention was not necessary in order to cause such destabilisation.30 Demetrius returned to Macedon elated by the success of his mission and encouraged by the notion that he could be king. Allegedly, the bulk of the Macedonian people were relieved that war had been averted and viewed Demetrius as the author of peace.31 This favour inspired jealousy in Perseus, and suspicion in Philip. It created a division in the Macedonian court, one

9 Livy 39.53-54, 40.5; Polyb. 23.3-11.
30 Destabilisation was the intended consequence of Rome’s refusal to deal with the Carthage/Numidia situation in North Africa (discussed below, pp. 297-303) and the Achaean League/Messene/Sparta problem in the Peloponnese (above, chapter 5, pp. 221-24), as was their manipulation of Hannibal at Antiochus’ court (above, pp. 269-72).
31 Livy 39.53.2-5.
faction of which was virulently pro-Roman and adopted Demetrius as its champion. Demetrius cemented himself as a Roman favourite when later in 183 he ingratiated himself with the Roman commission and Marcus Philippus. Livy credits Demetrius’ rise entirely to the Macedonian people, attempting to construct the idea that any Roman favour toward Demetrius was displayed with no ulterior motives. In doing so, Livy has no choice but to present the senate as politically naïve, unaware of the international reactions to their choices. But this was clearly not the case. Everything the senate did they did with a clear understanding of how perception and contrived impressions—covert action, in other words—functioned in international relations. The development of their international position through the manipulation of Demetrius’ reputation as an enthusiast for all things Roman did not arise from ignorance. Demetrius had done nothing on his embassy in 184/3 to be considered worthy of reward on his own merit. His presentation in the senate was fumbling and amateurish, but that did not matter: the decision about Macedon was favourable even before he tried to speak.

The factionalism and jealously in Macedon grew. Philip fell into paranoia and mistrusted his son, and Perseus became increasingly jealous of his brother. He contrived a plot to remove Demetrius from power, condemning his pro-Roman stance and deeming him to be if not a traitor then at least a spy. He claimed that while the Romans returned the former hostage Demetrius’ body, they kept his heart and soul. Perseus amassed followers and appealed to his father, manipulating his perception of Rome, and as a consequence, his younger

52 Livy 39.53.3-8.
53 Livy 39.53.10-11. It is here that Livy begins to distort chronology. Polybius has Flamininus conspire with Demetrius and subsequently send a letter to Philip requesting that Demetrius visit again in 184. Livy moves these events to 182, after Perseus has begun to conspire against his brother: 40.11.1-3. Livy performs a similar obfuscation later. He has Philip send envoys to the senate to address Perseus’ accusations about senatorial, and particularly Flamininus’, interference in the succession: Livy 40.20.3. Polybius characterises Flamininus’ interference as pure manipulation, but accepts it as fact. Livy tries remarkably hard to obscure Flamininus’ involvement and records suggestions of his culpability as mere accusations: …quorum Perseus Demetrium insimulat sermonum cum Romanis, maxime cum T. Quinctio, adversus fratrem de regno habitorum: Livy 40.20.3. For more on this see Newey 2009.
54 Polyb. 23.7.4-7; Livy 39.53.5-11.
55 Livy 40.5.12.
son. Demetrius and Perseus spied on one another in attempts to control their futures. They were brought before their father where Perseus presented the Romans as nefarious and manipulating. This was of less importance, Perseus alleged, than Demetrius’ ambitions for the throne and his plotting against Perseus. He presented a letter allegedly from Flamininus that implicated Demetrius in plots to overthrow Philip. Philip ordered an investigation into the behaviour of both Perseus and Demetrius. Philocles and Apelles, the supposedly non-partisan ambassadors sent to Rome by Philip to investigate the charges against Demetrius, were actually agents of Perseus. They returned with a letter from Flamininus asking Philip to forgive Demetrius for discussing the Macedonian succession, and stating that Flamininus would never advise the young man to do anything against his family. Whether or not this letter was a forgery as claimed in Livy is controversial. The suggestion that Apelles, one of the Macedonian investigators, was contemplating fleeing to Rome lends credence to the idea that the letter was legitimate. No one takes refuge in a state where he has used his status as an ambassador as cover to gather intelligence, and who has committed fraud against one of that state’s highest ranking officials. In any case, the letter contained nothing that was not public knowledge or indeed compromising, but the very presence of a letter addressed to Demetrius from a high-ranking Roman was incriminating enough, and completely compromised Rome’s entire covert operation to this point. Either the Romans considered Demetrius expendable at this point, or Flamininus was naïve, believing Roman favour would save Demetrius, thus perpetuating the division within the kingdom. If the latter, he completely misread the situation, underestimating the antipathy of Perseus and Philip. In any event, the letter spelled the end for Demetrius, who was poisoned soon after.

56 Livy 40.9-10; cf. Polyb. 23.11.
57 Livy 40.11-12.
58 Livy 40.12-16.
59 Livy 40.20.
62 Livy 40.24.
Polybius goes so far as to suggest that Flamininus deluded the poor innocent boy by suggesting that the Romans were ready to immediately promote him as king.\(^{63}\) What motivation Polybius ascribed to Flamininus’ suggestion is lost. It was likely to have been seditious.\(^{64}\) Livy tries to obscure Roman responsibility for any of the actions that follow, manipulating chronology and choosing to ignore certain statements or their significance. In Livy, Perseus is the villain of the piece. He certainly capitalised on Demetrius’ ambitions. There is no evidence, however, that Demetrius held these ambitions prior to his initial reception as an ambassador in Rome. Senatorial involvement in Demetrius’ actions is obfuscated.\(^{65}\) There is no indication in Livy’s narrative that any Roman official ever encouraged Demetrius’ ambitions; the conversation with Flamininus is omitted. The senate’s response to Philip was allegedly designed to boost Demetrius’ prestige—nothing more.\(^{66}\) Any indication of Flamininus’ involvement is restricted to the suspicions and accusations of Perseus.\(^{67}\) The absence of Roman involvement is especially suspicious when Livy’s reliance on Polybius’ account is well attested. Gruen suggests that the absence of the story in Livy is hardly surprising, but attributes significance to the absence of Flamininus’ manipulation in the account of Appian.\(^{68}\) Appian’s account of the Macedonian war, however, is too fragmentary to be of any great significance to the debate. The surviving account is limited to a paragraph, which details only the sending of Demetrius to Rome, and Philip’s anger at being granted a pardon through

63 ὅ τε Τίτος ἐκκαλεσάμενος τὸ μειράκιον καὶ προβιβάσας εἰς λόγους ἀπορφήτους, οὐκ ὁλίγα συνεβάλετο πρὸς τὴν αὐτὴν ὑπόθεσιν. Τὸν τε γὰρ νενόμισκον ἐφυσχαγώγησεν, ὡς αὐτίκα μᾶλλα συγκατασκευασόντων αὐτῷ Ῥωμαίων τὴν βασιλείαν...: Polyb. 23.3.7-8.

64 Badian deems this action a turning point in Roman behaviour toward client kings and believes this was the moment the Romans discovered the usefulness of manipulation as a tool of foreign policy. He interprets the act as Rome showing its preferred candidate for the throne, rather than a covert attempt to ensure a preferable succession, or to disrupt and divide the Macedonian ruling house. Badian 1958: 94-5. This is the earliest recorded instance of Rome meddling in succession. It is also one of the first instances where there was a need and opportunity to do so.

65 It ought to be remembered that he was indoctrinated as a young, impressionable hostage and as a consequence was an easy target.

66 Livy 39.48.1.

67 Livy 40.11.1-3. Livy’s obfuscation of Roman covert action is an observable pattern; cf. the case of Hannibal at Antiochus’ court previously discussed.

68 Appian’s use of Polybius as a source is thought to be significant here. Gruen 1974a: 235. Roman manipulation is also absent from the accounts of Justin 32.2; Zonar. 9.
Demetrius rather than out of gratitude. It provides no details about Demetrius’ reception, his time in Rome, his reception when he returned to Macedon, or his eventual death. Covert meddling with Demetrius in Rome solely relies on Polybius’ original account, and, implicitly, Livy’s conscious choice to cover up the affair.

Demetrius death, Philip’s paranoia, and Perseus’ ambitions were not part of a Roman plot. There was no benefit to Rome in removing Demetrius. By favouring Demetrius, Rome would cause destabilisation in Macedon, which would detract from the kingdom’s expansion, and stop the steady stream of complaints from Philip’s enemies that filtered into Rome. This was successful. The consequences of Roman covert action were disastrous for Macedon. Demetrius is presented as a somewhat naïve figure, easily manipulated by both Romans and Macedonians. Most scholars accept Flamininus’ involvement in at the very least inflating Demetrius’ ego. Even Livy’s account includes a letter from Flamininus detailing his favouritism of Demetrius although, as has been seen, Livy doubts its veracity. Internal discord ensured that Philip’s ambitions would be checked until he could heal divisions within Macedonia and in his own house. Rome could take advantage of this discord and preoccupation, and maintain their policy of avoiding direct involvement in Macedonian and Greek affairs, maintaining the status quo that created Roman superiority without a need for Roman action. Destabilisation of Macedon meant the senate could focus more of its attention on other matters. The policy was successful. The Romans defeated the Ligurians, held off the Illyrians, solidified their positions in Greece and Spain, and contemplated the problems that may have arisen with the ascension of the Egyptian child-king Ptolemy VI Philometor. For Rome to have to attend to two threatening Mediterranean powers was not in its best interests. Demetrius presented an opportunity to delay problems with Philip. Demetrius provided the means and opportunity. He was easy to manipulate, well-placed, young, and favoured. He provided Rome with a viable successor as a client king with pro-Roman sentiments if he did manage to displace Perseus. That he failed

69 App. Mac. 9.6.
70 Livy 40.23.7-8.
71 For Rome’s international actions outside of Macedon at this time, see books 23-24 of Polybius, book 40 of Livy.
was not immediately disastrous. Roman-Macedonian relations remained ostensibly friendly for the following decade. So long as plausible deniability was maintained, there was no disadvantage to Roman manipulation.

**Incumbent rulers: Eumenes and Pergamum**

The result of Flamininus’ manipulation of Demetrius did not deter Roman officials from interfering in the politics of nominally independent states. The secret suggestion in 167 that Attalus take the Pergamene throne from his brother Eumenes II, with the support of certain members of the senate, reads remarkably similarly to the Demetrius tragedy, complete with the Livian avoidance of assigning blame to Roman officials. Roman clandestine interference may, however, have begun much earlier in Pergamum. In the aftermath of the Second Macedonian War and the Roman victory over Antiochus the Great, Pergamum, under Eumenes, gained power and territory. His initial relationship with Rome was one of friendship and alliance. From 189-173, Eumenes systematically brought Pergamum into an age of prosperity through a series of conflicts.  

Rome’s lack of involvement in Pergamene expansion has been considered indifferent and neglectful, then suddenly turning hostile. Alternatively, Eumenes has been regarded as the Roman watchdog in Asia Minor, serving as a monitor of Roman intelligence and hegemony in the region. Neither picture is quite accurate. Evidence suggests Rome sought to maintain the status quo - Eumenes was needed to support Roman interests in Asia Minor, but he could not be allowed to become a powerful force that might threaten Rome. There was some active Roman intervention in the period; there was also a conspicuous absence of Roman intervention. Considering Roman control of Iberia was floundering, maintaining the status quo was

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72 After the Peace of Apamea in 188, Asia Minor was tied up in conflicts between Eumenes and his enemies: the Galatians (189-187), Prusias of Bithynia (185-183), and the coalition of Pharnaces (182-179).
74 Errington 1971a: 192-94, 248-52 views Eumenes as the caretaker of Roman interests in Asia Minor; Hansen 1971: 92 insists that the empire was a gift from Rome, that is, it was allowed to grow through Roman munificence.
75 For more on the events of this period see Gruen 1974a; Derow 1979; Gruen 1984; Habicht 1988; Derow 2003; Eckstein 2008: 353-6.
beneficial. Nominally, their alliance ensured the Romans supported Pergamene endeavours. Eumenes acted as an equal of Rome in dealings in Asia Minor, making demands about territories he desired. In the summer of 189, Eumenes personally visited Rome to balance the presence of Rhodian ambassadors. The affectation of modesty and submitting to Roman desires was a farce, which Roman officials easily saw through. In the following fifteen years, Eumenes extended his dominions and created a Panhellenic coalition, aimed at overlapping Rhodian and Seleucid spheres of influence, despite Roman wishes to the contrary. By maintaining friendly ties and neither actively encouraging nor discouraging growth, the Romans attempted to have the best of both worlds – Rome created a helpful alliance, avoided the responsibilities of governing a distant area, and ensured that Pergamene power did not grow beyond Rome’s ability to contain it. It was not until Eumenes began to overreach himself that Roman action was aimed at thwarting growth.

**Rumours**

Eumenes was instrumental in instigating the Third Macedonian War. In the aftermath, Roman priorities with respect to Pergamum were adjusted – to thwart Eumenes’ power. The initial step in this process is connected to the bizarre account of rumours about wartime collusion between Perseus and Eumenes. These rumours seem to have been sourced through anti-Pergamene officials in Rome; they suggested Eumenes had conducted secret negotiations with Perseus. Allegedly, in 168, Perseus sent messengers to both Eumenes and Antiochus IV requesting alliances and aid. Antiochus was sent an envoy openly; the envoy sent to Eumenes had the ostensible task of conducting hostage negotiations.

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76 See App. Hisp. 42-98. For Roman problems in Spain at this time see Knapp 1977; Richardson 1986.
77 Polyb. 21.18; cf. Livy 37.52; App. Syr. 39.
78 McShane 1964: 172-6. For Eumenes’ expansionist activity, see McShane 1964: 155-64; Gruen 1984: 549-59. When confined to Asia Minor, Eumenes was not a threat. Eumenes could be left to his own devices, without active Roman aid, when he was not in a position to challenge Rome or large Hellenistic powers. The most enthusiastic Roman response to a request for aid came with the realisation that Hannibal was a guest at the Bithynian court: Livy 39.46, 39.51. Rome’s reaction here had more to do with their fear of Hannibal than a desire to aid Eumenes or mediate between the two parties. For Rome’s role in Hannibal’s death, see below, pp. 297-303.
79 For Eumenes and the Third Macedonian War see above, chapter 5, pp. 251-54.
negotiations. The ambassador, Herophon, returned to Perseus later in 168. According to Livy, he had been dispatched to Eumenes twice before. All Polybius says is that Herophon was an experienced diplomat. Roman agents discovered the mission; the lack of verified information resulted in rumours. The discussions themselves were held in secret, and there was no certain knowledge of what occurred. But it was suggested that Perseus and Eumenes were setting terms of a Pergamene withdrawal from the war. The covert nature of their discussions and the alleged ‘cover’ spread by the Macedonians was that the discussions were about the return of prisoners of war. When questioned by the consul Aemilius Paullus, Eumenes stood by the story. Hostage negotiations were a legitimate official cover, and indeed the release of Macedonians was a goal of the mission. Despite the secrecy recorded in Livy and Polybius, Appian openly states, as is his wont, that the affair was a plot of Perseus designed to manipulate the presence of Roman intelligence agents and discredit Eumenes in Roman eyes. Both Appian’s and Polybius’ accounts are fragmentary; there must have been more to the situation than rumours of a hostage exchange. Something must have aroused greater suspicion. The secrecy surrounding political discussion is not unusual, as discussed above. Such discussions were often conducted in secret in order to stem the flow of information. The senate had no right to know what was discussed. They did have cause to be suspicious, however, when discussions took place between their ally and their enemy.

80 Livy 44.24.10. Polybius presumably went on to say that both embassies were designed to drum up support for Macedonia. Walbank 1979: 365; Briscoe 2012: 541.

81 …duabus ad eundem Eumenem iam ante legationibus functus erat: Livy 44.24.10.

82 Ταύτα δὲ διοικήσας Ἦροφοντα μὲν ἐξέπεμψε προσβεζῆν πρὸς τὸν Εὐμένη, καὶ πρότερον ἥδη (ὑπαρτολεμένον…: Polyb. 29.4.8.

83 Livy and Polybius both admit that there was never a clear indication of what went on in any discussion. Polyb. 29.5.1-3; Livy 44.13.9; cf. Livy 44.20.7, 44.24.11.

84 Quae conloquia occulta et legationes infames quidem erant, sed quid actum esset quidve inter reges convenisset ignorabatur: Livy 44.24.11.

85 Et ab Eumene Herophon ignotis, quae occulte acta erant, redit. De captivis actum esse et ipsi evolgeaverant et Eumenes consulem vitandae suspicionis causa certiorem fecit: Livy 44.27.13. Cf. Livy 44.24.7.

86 Livy’s words, Ipsi evolgeaverant, suggest the returning captives were to blame for the spread of the tale, which supported the idea that they were released.

87 App. Mac. 18.1. Appian’s sadly fragmentary statement implies the presence of various spies in foreign courts was expected by Mediterranean officials. Perseus could hardly have contrived a plot to manipulate Rome without an understanding and expectation the affair would reach Roman ears.
It is suggested the rumours arose before the end of the war, though they gained traction much later. The senate wanted to believe them, despite no certain evidence of what occurred. The release of prisoners adds weight to both the Pergamene and Macedonian claims. The suggestion of collusion is circumstantially linked to timing – Perseus was openly attempting to recruit allies through diplomatic measures. The dispatch of embassies often occurred simultaneously. Secret diplomatic endeavours were hardly extraordinary, regardless of their ostensible briefs. That the mission to Antiochus was supposedly ‘open’ is unusual. As discussed in chapter 3, the senate was not inclined to making decisions based on rumours without verification. Here, the senate made a concerted effort to question Eumenes’ defence and the statements of freed hostages. Investigators took the opportunity to assume collusion as it suited them. Without the rumours and intelligence, the Romans could do nothing to justify attitudinal shifts toward allies. Contrary to their usual practice, they acted on rumours. The question is why.

Whether negotiations between Eumenes and Perseus about ending the war took place at all is debated among scholars. Of the scholars who are sceptical of the historicity of the rumours, most argue for Roman gullibility. The senate was misled by rumour and legitimately became suspicious. Following this, the discussions probably occurred but the rumours that Eumenes was willing to negotiate peace or a Pergamene withdrawal from the war are dubious. It would

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88 Polyb. 29.8.10.
89 Polyb. 30.1.6.
90 Livy 44.24.1, 44.27.13. As has been seen in chapter 2 n. 78 and chapter 5 n. 13, a running theme in books 44 and 45 of Livy is the unreliability of rumours as opposed to verified and reliable information. Immediately prior to his account of Eumenes’ potential activities, Livy has Aemilius Paullus present a speech to the Roman people, reminding them to have faith in his reports to the senate and not to give credence to unfounded rumour. Vos quae scripsero senatui ac vobis, is modo credite et cavete rumores credulitate vestra alatis, quorum auctor nemo extabit: Livy 44.24.6. For a discussion on the reconstruction of this phrase see Briscoe 2012: 533-4.
91 Ad Antiochum aperta mandata erant: Livy 44.24.7. Presumably it is a Livian construction to create contrast.
be foolish of Eumenes to abandon a thirty-year alliance in the middle of a war and side with someone who had continuously thwarted his attempts for westward expansion, either personally or through aid given to Pergamene enemies. While Livy’s account presents Eumenes’ contributions to the Roman war effort as unenthusiastic, the Roman alliance was part of what gave him his power. To throw it away for peace in a war he had a large part in instigating against a traditional enemy state ruled by a king he had a deep personal aversion to — Eumenes believed, after all, that his agents tried to kill him at Delphi — seems perverse. Polybius was sceptical and confused but eventually accepted the tale because he needed a justification for the change in Roman attitude toward Eumenes and Pergamum after the war. Polybius’ informants, Perseus’ friends, had a stake in presenting Eumenes in a negative light. By the time they were discussing this with Polybius all of his Macedonian informants, like Polybius himself, were in exile in Italy and the kingdom of Macedon was destroyed. They, like Polybius, were seeking to return home to what was left of their families. Distancing themselves from Perseus’ regime by talking up rumours about the king meddling with Rome’s ally Eumenes during the war, and claiming they themselves had nothing to do with it, could not hurt. In any case, such discussions may indeed have taken place; as an aside to hostage negotiations Perseus may have suggested peace. But Rome’s choice to accept the rumours without verification is contrary to their standard practice, and shifts suspicion onto Rome.

The senate’s reaction to the charges against Eumenes suggests not so much that they believed the substance of the rumour, but that they used it as an opportunity to undertake covert action to reconfigure the international environment in a manner more congenial to their post-war security needs and desires. This incident, like Demetrius’ manipulation before it, is not suggestive of Rome naively groping their way through situations they could not understand or puzzling over information they could not comprehend. The senate deliberately chose to act on the rumours to create policy and facts on the ground overseas. The senate never dismissed the rumours as unfounded nonsense but

93 Polyb. 29.6.2-5.
94 Polyb. 29.8.10.
decided when and under what circumstances they might be useful. When Eumenes heard that these rumours had gained traction, he travelled to Rome to clear his name but was refused entrance to the senate and ordered to leave Italy – something previously only demanded of enemies.55 It is difficult to credit Polybius’ thesis that the rumours must have had some basis in truth because the senate’s change in attitude toward Eumenes is otherwise difficult to explain.56 While the senate did begin a policy of discrediting Eumenes aimed at reducing his power at this stage, his banishment from Italy was not the beginning of it, nor was Eumenes ever charged with collusion, disloyalty, treachery, or perfidious behaviour.57 The most the senate accused him of was greed.58 This, it could be argued, was pattern behaviour for Eumenes. He had grasped for territory after downfall of Antiochus; he spent most of the 180s disrupting Asia Minor with expansionary adventures;59 and some senators accused him of stirring up war against Perseus in 172 based on his private fears and grudges.60 Eumenes’ greed, therefore, was nothing new. On the other hand, the senate could not accuse of Eumenes of treachery, without evidence or even strong suspicion. As Eckstein points out, Polybius focuses on explaining why Eumenes could have done what he was accused of.61 Whether true or not, it was the possibility that had to be addressed.62 The lack of proof meant the senate could not openly call him to

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55 Polyb. 29.6.4, 30.19; Livy, Per. 46. For the banishment of foreigners from Rome upon the outbreak of war as a counterintelligence measure, see chapter 3.
56 Polyb. 29.6.3-5.
57 Accusations against kings by other kings are relatively common, hence, as discussed above, the tendency of Rome to seek to verify their information. The absence of that dynamic taking place here is suspicious. For such accusations, see for instance Jos. Af. 16.253; 18.250; Bj. 7.220-221. See Braund 1984: 91-104 for more on the roles of kings at the frontiers of Roman influence.
58 Gruen 1984: 563; Eckstein 1988: 429; Burton 2011: 294. Badian points out that there are reasons that Eumenes may have wanted the war to end. It was certainly not beyond the realm of possibility in the Roman mind-set that Eumenes would attempt to mediate. Badian 1958: 102-3.
60 App. Mac. 11.3.
62 It is possible the rumours were created in Rome by anti-Pergamene forces looking to discourage the Roman alliance, but this is impossible to verify. Cato was a well known critic of Eumenes, in particular because of his greed. According to Plutarch, Cato is alleged to have claimed when Eumenes visited Rome in the early second century that although Eumenes was a friend of Rome, kings were by nature carnivorous beasts: « Ἔστω, » εἶπεν, « ἀλλὰ φύσει τούτο τὸ ζῷον ὁ βασιλεὺς
account for the alleged action. Suspicions and fears are all that is required for a state to act internationally. Intelligence revolves around the unknowable. Waiting for concrete evidence of intentions and plans removes the chance to dissolve problems before they rise. Rumours, considered alongside Eumenes’ past actions and expansionistic tendencies, suggested that his pretensions to power were unchanged. To leave Eumenes to continue to expand unhindered, or indeed to be rewarded for his role in the Third Macedonian War in the same manner that he was rewarded after the war with Antiochus, would have been imprudent. His wings had to be clipped. But there was no evidence that Eumenes had secretly betrayed Rome. This uncertainty was precisely what Rome took advantage of in order to act covertly to bring Eumenes to heel.

The senate’s reaction to the rumours was mainly concerned with protecting Rome’s reputation for moral rectitude. By dismissing Eumenes, the senate avoided having to discuss the matter of greed or to argue that Eumenes was guilty of it. To do so would make a mockery of the morally upright senate’s proclamation that Eumenes was ‘the first and greatest friend’ of Rome. Either Eumenes was avaricious and potentially disloyal, and the senate had not seen it - that is, they had themselves been manipulated - or the senate would be forced to accuse their closest friend of greed based on a rumour with no evidence, contrary to their policy regarding the verification of information, an admission that they had misjudged his character - that is, a failure of intelligence. There

σαρκοφάγον ἐστίν. » Plut. Cat. 8.8. He was suspicious of him and frowned upon the lavish treatment afforded to him: Plut. Cat. 8.7-8. Cato and critics like him (alluded to in App. Mac. 11.3: above, n. 100) are the prime suspects in the spread of these stories and suspicions of Eumenes, if they originated in Rome. In light of the senate’s disregard of his greed, it is possible Cato sought for something that would force the senate to pay attention and limit the growing power of Eumenes personally. Magie suggests Valerius Antias’ position, recorded by Livy, which represents Eumenes’ brother Attalus as being more actively loyal to Rome than Eumenes during the war, represents the fabrications of the charges by Pergamene enemies in Rome (Livy 44.13.12-14 = Valerius Antias fr. 52P). Magie 1950: 21-3; 767 n. 64. Valerius Antias may be reflecting the attitudes at Rome after the war. Briscoe 2012: 505-10; also 541-550. Walbank 1979: 365-8.

103 After the victory over Antiochus III, Polybius has Eumenes promise to never abandon Roman friendship or good will for any other man so long as it were possible: Polyb. 21.20.1. There was still no solid evidence he had broken this promise.

104 Burton claims Rome was caught in a discursive trap and the only way out was to adopt a different discursive strategy. Burton 2011: 295.
was no way for the senate to welcome Eumenes and address the issue without damaging the international perception of Rome – something that was always a motivating factor in their decision-making. By banning Eumenes, and informing him of this ban upon his arrival on Italian shores, but with the explanation that it applied now to all kings, Rome allowed Eumenes to go back to being king in Pergamum, with their alliance and ‘special relationship’ intact, while misdirecting international attention from the issue of Eumenes’ personal greed to the nature of kingship generally. Nevertheless, for a king to be turned away so publicly, with no right of reply, damaged the perception of his power. And, of course, that was the point.

Eumenes, when building his power, exaggerated his relationship with Rome. Here, Rome attempted to manipulate that perception and put Eumenes firmly in his place - the king was important, but beneath Rome. Eumenes had been allowed free rein, as Pergamum had long served as a check on Macedonian power. But with Macedon now removed as a threat, Pergamum was now no longer necessary as a rival. So the Romans sought recognition as the dominant power in the Mediterranean. Wars and diplomacy were aimed at reducing the power of system competitors that might threaten the perception that the state of Rome was the most important state, and the one smaller powers should look to. With the removal of Antiochus the Great and subsequently the abolition of the kingdom of Macedon, for Rome to allow Pergamum to expand, occupy the power vacuum, and usurp the position of the saviour and benefactor of Greek states would run counter to Rome’s tireless (and expensive) efforts undertaken in the eastern Mediterranean. It was not, however, in Rome’s best interests to reduce the power of Pergamum or remove Eumenes openly at the

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105 It is possible that the timing of Eumenes’ visit was bad. Not long before, Masinissa was refused entrance to Rome to sacrifice; he had committed no impeachable acts. The justification here was that it served no purpose for Masinissa to leave Africa and his kingdom to come to Rome: Livy 45.14.4. After Pydna, Rome was suffering an influx of embassies, bearing not only congratulations but also requests and representations about various problems. These were probably overly burdensome on the senators’ patience. See Braund 1984: 55-6.

106 It does not follow that Rome wanted to acquire more territory – otherwise Macedon would have been provincialised. At the time, the Roman state had no desire to deprive any state of its independence. The abstract recognition of increased Roman power was what was required.
time – acts that would inevitably lead to war against ‘a special friend’ of Rome.\textsuperscript{107} Trust and fidelity are as important as military power. As Pergamum’s powerful friend, open interference was impossible; covert action was required.\textsuperscript{108} The rumours were a tool to block Pergamene action. Suspicions meant Rome could limit Eumenes’ power without openly creating or empowering enemies. The Romans maintained the alliance yet announced to the world that Eumenes was subordinate. Eumenes had been growing in power, and in arrogance, since the war with Antiochus, as many senators knew. If allowed to continue to expand his power and influence with the Greeks unhindered, he could emerge as a potential successor to the great Hellenistic powers.\textsuperscript{109}

**Action**

More active covert operations began with Roman involvement in the rebellion of Galatia. In 168, the Galatians rose against Eumenes. For two years, Pergamum struggled against them. In 167, Eumenes sent his brother Attalus to the senate for aid.\textsuperscript{110} Rather than provide aid, the senate attempted to undermine Eumenes’ power by secretly supporting the Galatian efforts and by encouraging Attalus to stage a coup, with the promise of Roman support. The senate’s manipulation of Attalus followed the same strategy as that of using Demetrius. Destabilisation would result from political infighting. The difference was that in the case of Attalus, Rome was attempting to displace a king rather than create competition without concern for its outcome. The attempt was riskier, but with more potential reward. Polybius has Attalus well received and unexpectedly favoured in Rome. Certain distinguished Romans held private conversations with Attalus, advising him to speak on his own behalf, rather than for his

\textsuperscript{107} Their alliance could not be broken without Rome being perceived to be at fault.
\textsuperscript{108} Tiersch 2015: 244-6.
\textsuperscript{109} Here it should be recalled that Greek states were seeking aid from Macedon and Pergamum, not Rome, in the 170s. See the diplomatic scramble prior to the Third Macedonian War discussed above, chapter 5, pp. 256-60.
\textsuperscript{110} Polybius claims that Attalus would have been sent to Rome even if the Galatians were not distressing Pergamum in order to congratulate the senate and seek a reward for their loyalty: Polyb. 30.1. Attalus’ request for the cities of Aenus and Maronea is controversial. The cities had been fought over by Macedon and Pergamum since the end of the war with Antiochus. It is usually interpreted that Attalus asked the senate for the strategically important towns for *himself* rather than Pergamum and that the senate complied in order to create division between Eumenes and Attalus; Polyb. 30.3.3-6. See Gruen 1984: 573; Hammond and Walbank 1988: 560.
With Roman aid, he would receive a kingdom for himself. Livy naturally chooses to downplay the involvement of senators despite his use of the Polybian narrative. He presents Attalus as harbouring secret expectations of personal reward from Rome. Attalus knew that these pre-existing ambitions would damage his relationship with Eumenes. Certain corrupt Roman advisors, rather than senators who fostered Attalus’ greed, then influenced Attalus. In Livy’s account, the motivation for Attalus replacing Eumenes is a result of Attalus’ personal desires; Roman complicity amounted to some corrupt Roman advisors encouraging these desires rather than creating them. Regardless, Attalus, while initially supportive of the plan, changed his mind under the influence of Stratus, Eumenes’ doctor, who had been sent by the king in case his brother fell under evil influences at Rome. He determined that loyalty to family and to Pergamum was more important and would win him more general favour in Rome itself, instead of listening to those who hated Eumenes and deposing his brother.

Attalus’ change of heart forced the senate to resort to another plan to punish Eumenes. The towns of Aenus and Maronea, which had been promised to Pergamum, were given independence – an obvious sign of displeasure, but one that could be dismissed as Roman fickleness rather than a blatant punishment of Attalus, or Eumenes. True punishment came with Roman interactions with the Galatians. The Romans responded to Eumenes’ request for

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113 ἔνιοι τῶν ἐπιφανῶν ἀνδρῶν λαμβάνοντες εἰς τὰς χεῖρας τὸν Ατταλὸν παρεκάλουν τὴν μὲν ὑπὲρ τάδε λόγου προσβείαν ἀποθέον, περὶ δὲ ἐαυτοῦ ποιεῖν τοὺς λόγους…: Polyb. 30.1.7. Badian believes, plausibly, that Polybius’ reluctance to name names here arises from his personal connection with those involved in this manipulation. Badian 1958: 103.
112 Like Demetrius, the conversation provoked Attalus’ personal ambitions and he conceded to alter his presentation to the senate and address the possibility that he rather than Eumenes would hold Roman favour in Asia Minor: Polyb. 30.1-3.
113 Suberat et secreta spes honorum praemiorumque ab senatu, quae vix salva pietate ei contingere poterant: Livy 45.19.4. Polybius has Attalus hope that the senate will aid in the Galatian conflict: Polyb. 30.1-3.
114 Erant enim quidam Romanorum quoque non boni auctores, qui spe cupiditatem eius elicirent…: Livy 45.19.5.
115 Polyb. 30.2; Livy 45.19.8-17. That Eumenes anticipated the Romans might try to corrupt his brother — and that his brother was corruptible on this score — and so sent his doctor along contradicts Dmitriev’s notion that Attalus was completely loyal and harboured no ambitions of his own. Dmitriev 2010.
aid against the rebellious Galatians.116 The senate had little justification to deny aid to their ally. The legate sent by the senate met with the Galatians in 167, allegedly attempting to mediate. Polybius believes that Licinius Crassus did more to encourage the ongoing revolt of the Galatians than to counsel peace.117 Even Livy, who continuously tries to downplay Roman subterfuge, suggests that little effort was expended in ending the war.118 The discussions were secret, as expected. Attalus was forbidden from accompanying Licinius to undertake negotiations and represent Pergamene interests; Licinius’ words roused more hostility from the Galatians toward Pergamum. As Ager argues, mediation would have required compromise, and such talks often broke down. But mediation usually involved representatives from both parties rather than the deliberate exclusion of one of them.119 Livy’s reason for Attalus’ absence was that his presence would cause a quarrel and breakdown of any efforts to bring peace.120 His reasoning is problematic. If it were known that the problems between Pergamum and the Galatians were such that representatives could not be in each other’s presence without a devolution into chaos, then there was little hope that mediation could solve the situation without war. If this were so, it would have taken few words from Licinius to encourage Eumenes to continue rather than cease his attacks.

There is little evidence beyond Polybian supposition to claim that the senate actively tried to encourage Galatian attacks. For the Romans to limit Eumenes’ power and distract him from other more aggrandising endeavours, all the senate had to do was maintain their policy of distancing themselves from affairs in Asia. As evidenced by the removal of Attalus from the negotiations, the relationship between Pergamum and the Galatians was fraught with strife. The

116 The Romans had also counselled Pergamum to do nothing without Roman consent and involvement. This order played a part in discussions about future action, as recorded in a letter between Attalus and Attis, a Galatian priest of Cybele: OGIS 315 VI.
117 Polyb. 30.3.7-9.
118 P. Licinius consularis cum regulo Gallorum est locutus rettulitque ferociorem eum deprecando factum, ut mirum videri possit inter tam opulentos reges, Antiochum Ptolemaeumque, tantum legatorum Romanorum verba valuisse ut extemplo pacem facerent, apud Gallos nullius momenti fuisse: Livy 45.34.13-14.
119 Ager 1996.
120 Attalus cum eis profectus, sed castra Gallorum intrare eum non placuit, ne animi ex disceptatione irritarentur: 45.34.12.
problems between them would only be solved with a solid military defeat by one side or the other. The Roman presence did little more than fulfil the technical requirements of alliance with Eumenes, while maintaining their policy of covertly limiting Pergamum’s rise. This interference by Rome from a distance was once again in evidence in 166. In that year, Eumenes defeated the Galatians near Synnada. In response, the Galatians appealed to Rome. The senate determined that the conquered people ought to be free, destroying Eumenes’ attempts at gaining systematic control in the region. Polybius claims that Eumenes’ enemy, Prusias, instigated the embassy of the Galatians. Whether this is true or not is irrelevant. The senate’s reaction to the claims, despite an alleged successful defence by Pergamene ambassadors, was to side with the Galatians. The embassy sent to investigate affairs in response was to ensure that there were no Pergamene preparations for war being undertaken. The senate here was evidently aware that their policies of limiting Pergamum might have been pushing the limit of what they could get away with. In order to protect themselves and any future covert action the senate sought more verifiable (that is Roman sourced) intelligence about the state of affairs in Asia.

Investigative missions then became an almost annual Roman initiative. In 164, Sulpicius Gallus and M.’ Sergius were sent to Greece ostensibly to look into affairs generally, and to settle a boundary dispute between Lacedaemon and Megalopolis, but their covert task was to investigate Eumenes and Antiochus IV.

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121 That Eumenes and his brother had grandiose ambitions and were intent on gaining control of Asia Minor is revealed through the correspondence between the Pergamene kings and Attis, a priest of the temple of Cybele at Pessinus between 163 and 156. The letters reveal the covert action and intelligence efforts accepted by Pergamum in its efforts to gain control over Asia Minor. The priest served as a Pergamene agent. The final letter has Attalus contemplating the advantages of taking action without Roman knowledge. If they were successful, Rome would take offence and it would damage their relationship; if they failed Rome would be delighted – and their failure would prove that Pergamum could not act without Roman aid. Attalus’ response was to keep Rome informed of any plans whose outcomes he doubted. This final letter embodies Attalus’ acceptance that foreign policy was no longer completely in his control, and that Pergamum had openly become the subordinate in its relationship with Rome. See OGIS 315; Welles 1934: 241-53 no 55-61; Virgilio 1981: 83-119.

122 Ivi Pergamum 165; Diod. 31.14.

123 Polyb. 29.22.

124 Polyb. 30.30.6-7.
especially to discover whether they were planning to attack Rome.\textsuperscript{125} Sulpicius set himself up in the gymnasium at Sardis to invite complaints against Eumenes.\textsuperscript{126} As with many covert efforts, this one backfired. According to Polybius, sympathy grew for Eumenes. Polybius attributes this to two things: Sulpicius’ derangement and his revelling in his personal quarrel with Eumenes, and a natural human tendency to side with the underdog.\textsuperscript{127} This fits with his perception that the Romans sought actively and openly to humiliate Eumenes personally. But there may be another aspect to this. Culturally Pergamum had more in common with Greek states than Rome did, and Rome was now actively supporting the cause of the barbarian Gauls in Asia Minor. The rise of Eumenes’ power offered these states an alternative to Rome. It was possible that a coalition of remaining Hellenistic states could balance Roman power in the East, as evidently the Romans feared about Antiochus IV (now dead) and Eumenes. The Romans were thus not necessarily acting out of needless paranoia when they tried to reduce Eumenes’ power. Eumenes was an active participant in the power games of the East. The secret letters sent between Pergamum and Attis, a priest at Pessinus, suggest a near pathological desire by the rulers of Pergamum to gain control, and an understanding of covert means to gain it.\textsuperscript{128} Polybius imposed on Roman interactions with Pergamum a narrative about a personal vendetta against Eumenes. Such an interpretation draws attention away from Roman attempts to project power in the Mediterranean system. Polybius has no problem

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{125} ἡ σύγκλητος … Γάιον Σολπίκιον καὶ Μάνιον Σέργιον καταστήσας πρεσβευτὰς ἐξαπέστελλεν, ἅμα μὲν ἐποπτεύοντας τὰ κατὰ τοὺς Ἑλλήνας, ἅμα δὲ τοῖς Μεγαλοπολίταις καὶ τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις διευκρινίσασθαι περὶ τῆς ἀντιλεγομένης χώρας, μάλιστα δὲ πολυπραγμονήσοντας τὰ κατὰ τὸν Ἀντίοχον καὶ τὰ κατὰ τὸν Ἐὐμένην, μὴ τις ἐξ αὐτῶν παρασκευὴ γίνεται καὶ κοινοπραγία κατὰ Ῥωμαίων: Polyb. 31.1.6-8. By the time the embassy was dispatched, Antiochus had died, suddenly and prematurely, of disease on campaign in distant Iran.\textsuperscript{126} Polyb. 31.6.1-5.
\item \textsuperscript{127} Polyb. 31.6.5-6 (cf. 27.9-10 for the same sentiment about the underdog, when Perseus scored an early victory against Rome at Callicinus in 171). The Ionian League voted to give Eumenes honours in 167/6 seemingly in response to the harsher Roman treatment of Pergamum. See OGIS 763; Welles 1934: 209-19.
\item \textsuperscript{128} See Welles 1934: 209-19. Letter 55 (OGIS 315), dated to 163, contained instructions of a military nature to Attis. Attis was asked to go as quickly as possible to the country districts and observe everything, making an assessment and informing Eumenes of how many soldiers he will need. He was told that if the opportunity arose, to take Pesongoi by treachery, as the site was holy and needed to be taken by whatever means necessary.
\end{itemize}
considering Rome to be an imperialistic state. But its behaviour with regard to Pergamum was not imperialistic. There was never an intention to conquer or annex Pergamum. The senate was concerned with containing its power and maintaining the status quo. The senate did not want to see a coalition of Antiochus (or his successor) and Eumenes. What was once helpful had become threatening after Pydna. From the aftermath of Magnesia until Eumenes’ death in 159, the senate supported Eumenes when necessary to maintain the balance in Asia Minor, and covertly distracted and disrupted his plans when he represented a danger.

Whether Rome’s ongoing attempts to manipulate the kingdom of Pergamum can be deemed successful depends on one’s interpretation of success. While individual schemes often failed in terms of their intended results - the replacement of Eumenes by Attalus, the reduction of the influence of Pergamum among the Greeks – the ultimate goal of limiting Eumenes’ expansion and blocking his attempts at coalition-building was achieved by a consistent policy of meddling from a distance. The treatment of Eumenes by Rome is a prime example of the unpredictability of covert action and the flexible nature of its outcomes, alongside a reliance on plausible deniability. Setbacks were merely setbacks. There was no single act that could be definitively linked to Roman policy or to the senate as a body. The presentation of a plot to Attalus was through individuals, not by public senatorial mandate. True enough, the senate sanctioned and engaged in covert and morally ambiguous behaviour. But it could not be accused of failing its duties, and succeeded in ensuring that Eumenes’ desires for power and control were never met.

**Roman Political Meddling**

Manipulative interference in the internal affairs of other states is hard to prove with certainty, especially in the ancient context, but here a case has been made that the usefulness of covert action was understood and appreciated. Any internal changes as a result of Roman covert activity cannot be attributed solely to the Romans, however. Causation is not simple, and the Romans were not acting in a static world as the sole human agents of change. Roman officials made a conscious choice to engage in activity not involving warfare or diplomacy to attempt to manipulate international circumstances to benefit the Roman state.
Hannibal was always a threat to Rome. He was its most well-informed enemy. Anyone who acquired him as an advisor and gained access to his knowledge was a dangerous threat to Rome. In the case of Pergamum, the senate chose to engage in covert activity because dissolving an alliance after thirty years with no viable reason would not reflect well on a Roman state that gained prestige through the association, nor would declaring war against an ally. The rise of rumours allowed a legitimate suspicion to be created and justified the Romans adopting a more wary stance toward Eumenes. Roman manipulation of Demetrius had tragic results, but was not necessarily done with malicious intent to him personally. Domestic struggles distracted Macedonian attention from international affairs. If Perseus had not successfully plotted to remove his brother, it is plausible that Roman action would have solved their international concerns. Macedon would no longer have been an aggressor state, and so complaints from other states would have stopped. Roman actions are not examples of a malignant foreign policy; they are protectionist. The senate tried to maintain control over problematic situations that arose in the East in order to protect and perpetuate the position and perception of the Roman state. Maintaining the status quo among a large number of foreign states is of fundamental importance to larger powers in the international system. The growth of one state beyond its bounds had the potential to send ripple effects throughout the system and affect the alliance structures that Rome had built with other Hellenistic and Mediterranean states over many years and at great expense in blood and treasure. It was in the best interests of Rome to ensure that nothing upset the balance created through their interactions in the East before they were ready for it. It was of course a policy of self-interest. This is to be expected in an anarchic international system. It was neither exceptional, imperialistic, nor malicious.
6.2 Covert Diplomacy, Espionage, and Assassination

Propaganda, coercion, and soft power techniques exercised by the senate were relatively safe methods of covert action. There was little possibility of blowback, and broad scope for plausible deniability. The ‘simple’ covert actions were designed to alter the perception of Rome and its system competitors in the minds of other states in the Mediterranean. Some covert actions were aimed more specifically at individuals. These were more dangerous in nature and the fallout from discovery had the potential to be disastrous both domestically and internationally. These complex covert operations were neither rashly nor commonly undertaken. When they were, Roman officials covertly supported or ordered the manipulation of interstate relations between its friends and allies, and, where necessary, the assassination of problematic individuals. Such operations were undertaken as temporary or permanent solutions when Rome recognised a developing threat, but needed time to consider and deal with greater problems, and when no other solution could be found. It is difficult to identify and analyse these types of covert actions since by their very nature they are top secret. Much speculation inevitably surrounds them in both modern and ancient authors.

Nonetheless, all attempts by the senate or ambitious Roman individuals to engage in high-risk covert behaviour are intriguing and significant in developing an understanding of mid-republican Romans officials’ mentalities, motivations, and conceptions of how they could and should achieve their political and foreign policy goals. The choice to remove dangerous or irritating individuals rather than resort to war or wait for diplomacy to run its course does not fit with the mentality that Roman aristocrats were inherently attached to and desirous of war, that they were infinitely patient for diplomatic solutions to take effect, or that they were completely indifferent to international developments where they resisted registering a formal, official presence. It could be argued that complex covert operations are inherently ‘defensive’, albeit duplicitous and aggressive types of defence. Roman officials engaged in subtle, cunning, and manipulative
behaviour to improve Rome’s international position in the Mediterranean system without blindly rushing to war or gratifying their military urges. Complex covert operations involving violence are not born from a primitive and unsophisticated understanding of intelligence and international relations. They suggest a considered approach to international affairs with careful forethought about actions, goals, and consequences. Decisions to remove or distract foes indicates a consideration of foreknowledge and current intelligence about various peoples with a developed threat profile already subjected to analysis, and discussion about what measures ought to be undertaken to redress nascent threats to best suit Rome’s current situation and ultimate purposes. It is a considered, nuanced, and practical response to international developments.

Paramilitary Operations: Carthage and Numidia

The examples described so far in this chapter are the clearest covert actions in the mid-republic. Other examples require a closer analysis to see through senatorial and source obfuscation, and to overcome the Romans’ carefully constructed position of plausible deniability. Some incidents, in retrospect, display such ineptitude on the Romans’ part that they could be misconstrued as resulting from Roman naivety or a lack of consideration and understanding of the state of affairs where they were conducting covert operations. As has been established in the previous section of this chapter, the Romans did not blunder their way through the Mediterranean in a state of ignorance; naivety is a poor explanation for Roman activities, especially those that constituted a fixed policy over a period of years. One such example is the Roman covert encouragement of Numidia against Carthage over land disputes in the fifty years following the Second Punic War. This was a paramilitary operation. Covert paramilitary operations are difficult, risky, and controversial


130 Paramilitary operations are the largest and most damaging covert actions undertaken against one’s enemies. They are military operations where the involvement and encouragement of the sponsoring side is kept covert. These can be full-scale wars, such as the ‘secret war’ in Laos, where Laotians loyal to the Kingdom of Laos played the role of soldiers, but with the covert aid and guidance of the CIA against the North Vietnamese army during the Vietnam War. Alternatively,
instruments of power. Failures can be spectacular and embarrassing to the covert supplying state, damaging to international prestige and reputation, and can undermine future policy. The fallout in antiquity was on a far smaller scale, as plausible deniability was easier to maintain. Nevertheless, operations were only useful so long as the puppet state was obliging. As in the modern world, paramilitary operations were often short-term solutions aimed at distracting or annoying one party to keep it from acting in a way that would threaten the party engaging in covert activity. For Rome, paramilitary activity was not designed to secure anything for Rome beyond diminishing a rival state’s power by proxy. Numidia was supported by Rome to bleed the Carthaginians for as long as possible and, secondarily, to distract Carthaginian forces from Roman activities elsewhere.\footnote{Modern paramilitary operations are often similarly designed, such as US covert activity in Afghanistan in the 1980s.}

In the treaty ending the Second Punic War in 201, it was decreed that Masinissa had a right to ancestral Numidian land. The Carthaginians were to restore all houses, land, and cities that had belonged to Masinissa or his ancestors. Carthage was to surrender war elephants and all but ten of its triremes.\footnote{… σικίας καὶ χώραν καὶ πόλεις, καὶ εἰ τι ἐπεράν ἐστι Μασιννάσου τοῦ βασιλέως ἢ τῶν προγόνων ἐντὸς τῶν ἀποδεχθησομένων ὅρων αὐτοῖς πάντα ἀποδόθαι Μασιννάσι: Polyb. 15.18.5, cf. Livy 30.37.3-4. Livy states the Carthaginians were to hold the territory they had held before the war, and were to make a treaty with Masinissa. The specious clause that Carthage was forbidden to defend itself at Livy 42.23.3 is rejected by modern scholarship. It violates international norms and is contrary to the idea that Carthage be allowed to maintain ten warships.} Effectively, thanks to friendship with Rome, Masinissa became the undisputed King of Numidia. The Romans never resolutely defined what this ‘ancestral land’ was. The land in dispute originally appears to have been Carthaginian. Masinissa’s father had driven Carthaginians from it years before. Syphax, a rival Numidian, captured it and gave it to the Carthaginians as a gift during the Second Punic War. Masinissa later recovered it.\footnote{Livy 40.17.2.} In the fifty years following the end of the Second Punic War, the Numidians and Carthaginians
were constantly at odds over territory. Numidia, under Masinissa, was an expansionist power. Carthage was mired in political struggles after the war; various factions arose advocating for Rome, for Masinissa, or for democracy. Rome’s subtle encouragement via the treaty for Masinissa to harry Carthage and stop short of war against a Carthaginian state that could not go to war without Roman permission was nothing short of manipulation. To say that it was an attempt to disown North African affairs unfairly paints the Romans as naïve and unconcerned with foreign relations. They interacted closely with both parties. With Numidia and Carthage at odds, the senate capitalised on their mutual distraction and turned its attention eastward. The Romans achieved and maintained the position of power over Carthage without putting themselves in the position of maintaining security in North Africa, instead leaving loopholes open for Masinissa to do this for them.

134 Polybius and Appian are the main sources for what happened over the next few decades. Polybius says that in the conflicts between Masinissa and the Carthaginians, Carthage always came out second best because the Romans thought it in their best interest to side against them. αἰεὶ συνέβαινε τοῖς Καρχηδονίωις ἐλαττοῦσθαι παρὰ τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις, σὺ τοῖς δικαίοις, ἀλλὰ τῷ πεπείθαι τοῖς κρίνοντας συμφέρειν σφίσι τὴν τουλάχιστον γνώμην: Polyb. 31.21.6. Appian unquestioningly attributes to both the senate and the ambassadors it despatched sinister and covert purposes. It is significant that covert operations were thought to exist regardless of whether they could be proven as such, indicating that they were not beyond contemplating by our sources.

135 App. Pun. 68. Sources reveal there were at least ten contemporary opinions about the escalation phase between the Second and Third Punic Wars. There were three factions in Carthage, two in Rome, four Greek opinions recorded in Polybius, and Polybius’ own opinion. The sources for relations between Carthage and Masinissa between the Second and Third Punic Wars are fragmented and vague. Livy discusses the affair as an aside to more important affairs in the East. See App. Pun. 68-72; Polyb. 15.18, 36.1-9; Livy Per. 48-51; Diod. 32; Zonar. 9.26.

136 This could be interpreted as a Roman attempt to avoid responsibility, so they would not need to investigate and heavily involve themselves in the relations of their neighbours. But the Romans avoided their responsibilities established in peace treaties when it suited them. The Illyrian Ardiaei, for example, interfered in affairs well south of the Lissus line, the tripwire that supposedly was to trigger Roman reprisals established in the treaty ending the First Illyrian War, long before the Second Illyrian War was declared. Polyb. 3.18.1 with Burton 2011: 139.

137 The response of Masinissa was predictable, especially so to those who had known him during the Second Punic War. Masinissa was ambitious and greedy. And the Romans, with their vague instructions, ensured that Masinissa knew which direction to turn his ambitions toward.
The first problems arose in 193. The Numidians invaded and occupied the Carthaginian controlled lands around the Emporia, taking advantage of Roman displeasure surrounding the Carthaginian treatment of a captured agent of Hannibal.\(^{138}\) When Masinissa learnt Carthaginian ambassadors had complained to Rome, he too sent a deputation. There was a debate centred on which land really belonged to the Carthaginians based on Africanus’ initial vague treaty divisions. The senate investigated, sending Scipio Africanus, Cornelius Cethegus, and Minucius Rufus to arbitrate.\(^{139}\) These investigators failed to reach a conclusion and dropped the matter, according to Livy. Here even Livy admits that it was to the Romans’ advantage to leave the matter unsettled.\(^{140}\) Zonaras too claims they did this so that the quarrel would continue and neither could directly blame the Romans for the outcome.\(^{141}\) Plausible deniability was maintained. By not acting, the Romans did not just leave the status quo in place, but, as Appian states, they encouraged Masinissa.\(^{142}\) A deliberate failure served Roman purposes, and fits with the actions of Rome in the following years.\(^{143}\) North Africa could be ignored while the Romans could turn their attention to developing problems with Antiochus the Great.

Over the course of the next thirty years, the Romans refused to find a solution, ensuring the conflict between the two remained, and internal arguments focussed on that issue rather than other plots. In 182, the disputes involved Rome once more. Rome sent embassies to re-establish peace.\(^{144}\) These ambassadors, told by the senate to provide covert aid to Masinissa’s cause,\(^{145}\)

\(^{138}\) Livy 34.60-62. For more on Hannibal’s plot and his agent, above chapter 5, pp. 190-92.
\(^{139}\) MRR I.348.
\(^{140}\) Livy does try to detract from senatorial involvement in the decision. Missi P. Scipio Africanus et C. Cornelius Cethegus et M. Minucius Rufus audita inspectaque re omnia suspensa neutro inclinatis sententiis reliquere. Id utrum sua sponte fecerint an quia mandatum ita fuerit non tam certum est quam videtur temporì aptum fuisse, integro certamine eos relingui; nam ni ita esset, unus Scipio, vel notitia rei vel auctoritate, ita de utrisque meritus, finire nutu disceptationem potuisse: 34.62.16-18.
\(^{141}\) Zonar. 9.18.
\(^{142}\) App. Pun. 68.
\(^{143}\) For another case of a deliberate failure see Briscoe 1969: 54.
\(^{144}\) App. Pun. 68.
were covert agents with the cover of arbitrators.\textsuperscript{146} Arbitration failed. The affair was referred to Rome and the status quo continued. Carthage was contained. There is no hint in Appian that the Romans intended anything beyond encouraging the conflict. In 172, Masinissa claimed more land; the Carthaginians protested. The Roman response was to send arbitrators again. This time, instead of dispatching agents with an official cover, they delayed for as long as possible until Carthaginian interests were deemed to be ruined.\textsuperscript{147} All Roman action during this time maintained their deniability while implicitly encouraging the actions of their agent, Masinissa. In 157, Roman ambassadors arrived once more to arbitrate. By now, the Carthaginians were suspicious, questioning the Roman habit of deception, that is, of posing as fair arbitrators, but always deciding against them in land disputes with Masinissa. This final attempt to arbitrate failed, though not because of Roman deception. The Carthaginians no longer complained about the treaty’s original terms, regarding this as a fruitless strategy, but only about transgressions of the treaty. The Roman ambassadors departed after taking the opportunity to investigate Carthaginian lands. They discovered well-cultivated land, and a city rich in resources and power; they returned to Rome and announced Carthage was a threat.\textsuperscript{148} In 152/1, Scipio Nasica arrived with a commission to arbitrate. Carthage was censured for possessing war materiel, and Masinissa was induced to surrender some of the land he had acquired.\textsuperscript{149}

In 151, the Carthaginians reached breaking point. With all their trust in Rome’s willingness to arbitrate in good faith lost, they resorted to addressing the problem themselves with arms.\textsuperscript{150} There is no indication Carthage wanted war with Rome. But every nation has a point where it cannot continue to accept discriminatory treatment. In the ancient world of states run by aristocratic men culturally conditioned by shame/honour codes, this point was probably reached.

\textsuperscript{146} There is no hard evidence for the covert behaviour. Any suggestion in the ancient sources must be their own rationalisation of Roman activity. But that these rationalisations occur in Polybius and his successors certainly suggests that covert behaviour was not unheard of, and indeed expected in these circumstances.

\textsuperscript{147} App. Pun. 68; cf. Livy 42.23.1-24.10, 43.5.5-8, Diod. 30.8.1.


\textsuperscript{149} The chronology is uncertain. Livy Per. 48; Zonar. 9.26.

\textsuperscript{150} Diod. 32.1, Livy Per. 49; Zonar 9.26.
far sooner than in the modern world. The Carthaginians, quite reasonably, wanted to stop the continual harassment of themselves and absorption of their land. They nevertheless sent an embassy to Rome to apologise for taking up arms against Numidia. The Romans pounced. To avoid war, the senate declared, Carthage had to ‘satisfy the Roman people’. This was another vague order issued by the senate that manufactured a scenario where Rome could act as it pleased. Both annalistic and Polybian sourced histories of the Third Punic War stress that at this point Carthage was considered a security threat.

The senate’s Delphic pronouncement was designed to delay and destabilise. Once the Carthaginians were fed up with Roman bad faith, and Numidia had encircled Carthage, the policy no longer held any advantages for Rome. Rome’s cover was blown. The senate’s covert operation using Masinissa as a proxy, had gone beyond the point of plausible deniability - not that it mattered anymore. Masinissa had successfully contained Carthage, with Roman support, until the Romans could afford and desired to address the Carthaginian problem themselves. Operations like this are high risk since they can result in proxies rebelling against their masters, or metamorphosing into monsters beyond the control of their creators. Yet for the purposes of keeping Carthage

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151 Lebow 2008.
153 See Polyb. 36.2.1; Livy Per. 49-51; Diod. 32; Dio. 21. Removing moral considerations, this threat was manageable for most of the 150s. Carthage needed to be kept isolated and weak. The decision to ensure this covertly was sensible. The Romans had no recourse to limit them diplomatically, and had no viable pretext for war. Covert action, the use of agents, and secret manipulation, allowed the senate to control and limit Carthaginian power.
154 One is reminded here of the Afghanistan Taliban, created as a proxy paramilitary organisation by the United States to fight the Soviet Union in the 1980s (above, n. 131). The idea, however, that Masinissa might become a threat to Rome by conquering Carthage completely, which is why Rome intervened when it did against Carthage in the late 150s, and obliterated the city and forbid the cultivation of its rich territory in 146, lacks plausibility. See Burton 2011: 311. On the other hand, depriving Masinissa of Carthage as the centre of a new North African empire had its advantages. By the time he died, Masinissa had gradually extended his boundaries to encircle Carthage: App. Pun. 106. Common preconceptions suggest the Numidians remained nomadic. Archaeological excavations suggest a more developed and settled civilisation, with close links to Punic culture. Punic was a common Numidian language and culturally the two nations were not dissimilar, to the extent that when Carthage fell, many of its citizens fled to Numidia, allegedly taking Carthaginian libraries with them. Röllig 2004; Martín Ruiz 2007. Masinissa made his kingdom part of the Hellenistic world; he
out of Hellenistic affairs at least militarily, the operation was successful. With the
two North African powers distracted and fighting each other, their international
participation had been limited. This allowed the Romans to increase their
engagement with the eastern Mediterranean, engage with enemies, gain allies,
and stabilise their interest in the region without having to worry about Africa.

Five decades of continuous disregard for Carthaginian concerns, and the
presentation of demands, which the senate was likely to know would never be
met suggests a well thought out plan of destabilisation. No ambassador ventured
to Carthage with the actual intention of bringing peace. There was nothing
stopping ambassadors making a clear statement about who was entitled to what
land. It is understandable that covert actions were suspected by ancient sources.

By distracting the Carthaginians and the Numidians with internal and local
disputes, the senate could safely ignore their actions while other Roman
priorities were seen to. It was a practical approach and one based firmly in
intelligence. It worked for a significant period, until the Romans were ready to
refocus their attention to North Africa.¹⁵⁵ This scenario is impossible to prove as
a conscious strategy, as all good covert actions should be, but it is identified as
such by some ancient sources, and is certainly not beyond the realm of
possibility.

**Political Assassination Involving Romans**

In international affairs, manipulating the perception of an individual or a
state is used often enough to modify behaviour. At times, analysis suggests that
an individual is the focal point of undesirable behaviour, and that if that focal
point is removed, that is, assassinated, the situation may resolve itself. The
benefits of removal must be considered, as a conspicuous death inevitably
results in ripples of suspicion about a state across the system regardless of
whether proof is forthcoming. If Antiochus III, for instance, were to have died
in mysterious circumstances, however difficult that would have been to achieve,
suspicion would automatically have turned on his powerful enemies, such as the Romans. Political assassination by a foreign agent is the last, desperate measure in the covert operations toolbox. Foreign targets that are more formidable are less susceptible to small covert operations. As the scale and complexity of covert interventions increases, so do the chances of discovery and the difficulty in maintaining plausible deniability. The consequences of failure or inadvertent discovery are that much greater and nearly impossible to recover from. It is a complex and controversial approach to dealing with geostrategic problems. Assassinations are only undertaken when a belief exists that the potential benefits outweigh the potential risks and the consequences of discovery are predictable, usually predictably low. The possible outcomes must be carefully considered in advance. Consequences often do not match the desired or expected outcomes. Predicted outcomes are never absolute. Even a hint of suspicion can jeopardise plausible deniability. It is only with a degree of certainty about the possible outcomes and contingency plans to deal with these, should the target outcome fail to transpire, that the effort required for assassination is worthwhile.

These problems did not preclude Roman assassination attempts. In general, assassination plays little role in the narrative of Roman conquest. During the mid-republic, however, there were suspicious deaths of prominent anti-Roman leaders, while Roman forces were conspicuously present on the ground. Assassination attempts were rare, but so were the circumstances where assassination was necessary. All possible examples are necessarily speculative due to the secretive nature of assassinations, covert activities, and the biases of the extant sources. There are no direct statements claiming that the senate ordered the death of an individual in order to carve an easier path for them to achieve their objectives. There are accusations of assassination attempts in the sources. But because of the nature of forensic investigation, it is difficult to determine the accuracy of these accusations. The rock fall that allegedly almost killed Eumenes II on his return from Rome in 172 was claimed to be an assassination attempt; it could easily have been a naturally occurring event.

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phenomenon. The same is true of the deaths of Roman ambassadors abroad. The alleged murder of the ambassador Coruncanius by the Illyrian queen Teuta’s agents sparked the First Illyrian War. Gnaeus Octavius was killed in Laodiceia as part of a plot to reduce Roman influence in Syria. Demetrius Soter, in an attempt to gain favour and validation as the Seleucid king, delivered Octavius’ assassins to Rome. Little is known about these deaths; it is possible that some or all of them could be attributed to illness or accident. That assassination was raised as a potential explanation, and an excuse for involvement, indicates that planned and targeted killings were not beyond contemplation in international affairs, and suggests that assassination was an accepted and feasible resource of international espionage under circumstances that demanded it.

Assassination is not the answer to a unique problem; it can be used in various scenarios. The following three examples of assassinations with alleged Roman involvement each involve a different rationale. Brachyles’ assassination was driven not by fear or desperation, but to make the implementation of Roman policy easier in Boeotia. It was not necessarily aimed at advancing pro-Roman sentiment in Boeotia. By removing a well-liked and powerful anti-Roman politician the senate reduced the amount of attention Roman officials had to focus on Boeotia and the likelihood that anti-Roman forces would gain power. Political assassination of this sort is an expansion of political interference, a programme that the senate undertook extensively in the establishment of their influence in Greece. In the case of Hannibal, his removal was tied to a historical fear. He was anti-Roman, skilled in warfare and tactics, and informed about Roman military and political practices, as well as the geography of the Italian peninsula. That he fled to and aided Antiochus, who was perceived as a growing threat to Roman security in the 190s, further cemented the danger associated with him in Roman minds. His removal may not have been necessary later on when he fled to Prusias’ court – Bithynia was never a threat to Roman power.

157 Polyb. 22.18.5; cf. Diod. 29.34.2; Livy 42.15-16. For more on this episode see Meloni 1953: 162-6; Walbank 1979: 207; Gruen 1984: 409; Hammond and Walbank 1988: 499; Briscoe 2012: 202.
158 Polyb. 2.8; App. Ill. 7.
159 Polyb. 31.11.1; cf. App. Syr. 46; Zon. 9.25; Just. 34.3.8; Plin. HN. 34.24.
160 App. Syr. 47; Polyb. 32.2.
Nevertheless, the senate had enough historical precedent to fear his continued survival while Roman control in the East was not yet consolidated. The third assassination involved a different rationale; it was a last resort against an enemy that Roman military strength could not subdue. The Celtiberian chief Viriathus fought against Rome for a decade. Although suffering some Pyrrhic victories, he was never defeated by Roman forces. Instead, he forced them into situations that required unusual diplomatic arrangements. His continued existence was a threat to Roman control in the Iberian Peninsula. The situation in Iberia meant that the senate could not focus on his removal militarily without sacrificing attention elsewhere. Hence, they resorted to duplicity and assassination. In each case, covert action was a true last resort given the effort the Romans made trying to convince the rest of the Mediterranean world of their devotion to fides. Their use of covert action served to improve Rome’s position in the Mediterranean, and was undertaken as a response to cultural and political intelligence about each individual circumstance.

**Bracchyles 197**

As with other covert actions, assassinations can be linked to Quinctius Flamininus. Flamininus’ complicity can be most closely linked to the death of the pro-Macedonian Boeotian politician Bracchyles. Boeotia was in a strategic geographical position. If the Romans could consolidate it as a pro-Roman area, they would control a powerful communications route between southern Greece and points further north, keeping them informed of events in Macedon. Any rise in anti-Roman sentiment in the region, therefore, required a response. The decision to assassinate the pro-Macedonian Bracchyles was a continuation of Roman policy to attempt to control the region by other means. Bracchyles’ power was a threat to Roman interests and influence in Boeotia, and if allowed to continue, could have threatened Roman influence in other areas once the

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161 Roman complicity in this incident is controversial, and, as is the case of all assassinations, impossible to prove with extant source material, indicating a measure of Roman success in maintaining cover and plausible deniability when engaging in such behaviour. Many simply accept Roman complicity due to the inclusion of the account in Polybius’ narrative and Livy’s habit of obfuscation. Badian 1958: 75 stresses that Flamininus did not instigate the assassination even if he agreed to it; Derow 2003: 61 sees the act as typical Roman aggression; Eckstein 2008: 284 has Flamininus acquiesce to the assassination; Dmitriev 2011: 159 makes passing mention of the affair as a characteristic example of Roman brutality.
Romans departed Greece. In 197, with the Second Macedonian War just ended, and the risk of war against Antiochus on the horizon, it was imperative that the Romans consolidate pro-Roman sentiment throughout the Greek states as part of a strategy of resistance to the impending influence (and perhaps threat) of Antiochus III. Boeotia was not a stronghold of pro-Roman sentiment, but had traditionally been aligned with Macedon. The strength of anti-Roman feeling here must have been strong; the people elected a pro-Macedonian leader while a Roman army effectively surrounded them. Bracchyles was a lightning rod for anti-Roman public opinion. As was typical of ancient Greek polities, without such a powerful leader, the people were less likely to present a unified front, despite whatever disaffection and wariness they may have felt. The removal of Bracchyles, if it were achieved with secrecy and suitably covered up, would remove the focal point of anti-Roman sentiment from Boeotia and create an easier environment in which to foster Roman influence and Roman alliances. The pro-Roman Zeuxippus was put up to the plot, and he succeeded in removing Bracchyles. Problematically for their plausible deniability, the Romans were implicated in the action resulting in the rise of vehement anti-Roman sentiment. The extant source tradition is confused. Polybius implicates Flamininus; 162 Livy as usual renders Flamininus, and the Romans generally, blameless. 163

Flamininus’ involvement in the plan to assassinate Bracchyles is reliant on the fragmentary version in Polybius, where Roman interference in Boeotia is still visible, and credible. Gruen suggests that there is no evidence to determine whether Roman interference, much less involvement in the assassination, took place. Gruen raises four points in support of his belief that the Romans pursued a policy of non-interference here: that Flamininus permitted the recall of pro-Macedonian troops; that he neither initiated nor implemented the assassination attempt (though he refused to punish the guilty when informed); that he mobilised troops only after Roman soldiers were murdered; that he dropped the issue when Greeks intervened. 164 At face value, Gruen raises sound points. Flamininus’ overt actions indicate Roman outrage at the assassination, and a

162 Polyb. 18.43.
163 Livy 33.27-28.
sense of fair play. But the same actions can be read as covert attempts to secure Roman favour, and to correct for the fallout from the assassination without resorting to destabilising, and demoralising, military action.

Flamininus’ decision to grant the Boeotian request to recall the pro-Macedonian fighters without hesitation was an attempt to gain favour. Boeotia was inclined to be anti-Roman, as evidenced by their support for Philip in the Second Macedonian War. In 197, Flamininus occupied Thebes with two thousand soldiers, while he discussed affairs with city magistrates, choosing in a time of war to use the presence of military power to influence decision-making. This is unlikely to have endeared the Boeotians to him. Flamininus’ recall of the troops without restrictions presented the Roman state as fair, lenient, and forgiving. As Gruen notes, Flamininus misread the situation. The release did not inspire pro-Roman sentiment. Instead, Philip was credited. This action is not a policy of non-interference, however. As discussed above, covert action and politicking often attempt to soften hostile opinion through public displays that attempted to counter the pre-existing perception, that is, through generous behaviour and speeches advertising it. The subtle manipulation results in changes in the perception of a state, building pro-Roman sentiment without openly stating the intention behind the action. To say that Flamininus released the pro-Macedonian soldiers without intending to reap reward and favour from it suggests a political naivety that is ill supported by this particular Roman’s other recorded actions. One of the released soldiers, Brachyles, was elected Boeotarch, with political figures who had supported a Roman alliance having been passed over.

In an attempt to control the growth of anti-Roman feeling, Flamininus then agreed to the assassination of the anti-Roman leader. He did not initiate or implement the operation, but without his support no pro-Roman force would have risked the political fallout that followed an assassination attempt. No source implicates the Roman senate, suggesting that Flamininus was acting of his own volition, or, perhaps, that senatorial permission was hidden. Their complicity, if

165 Livy 33.1.1-8; cf. Zonar. 9.16; Plut. Flam. 6.
166 Livy 31.1.8, 12.6.
167 For an explanation of this kind of covert action see Shulsky and Schmitt 2002: 81-3.
168 Polyb. 18.43.1-4; Livy 33.27.5-8.
it existed, was probably limited to their original mandate to Flamininus. According to Polybius, the pro-Roman Zeuxippus suggested the assassination. Flamininus claimed he could not be involved and passed the plotters onto Alexamenus, who had been the Aetolian *strategos*. Alexamenus organised the assassination with a cohort of three Aetolians and three Italians, who were presumably Roman soldiers. In Livy’s account, Flamininus is not mentioned in connection to any plan. He is allegedly ignorant of the affair. Yet Livy maintains that three Italians were involved. The presence of Italians in the assassination party suggests that Flamininus was at least complicit. The assassins escaped; the Boeotians automatically assumed the Romans were the perpetrators. The pro-Roman politician Zeuxippus initially rebutted arguments regarding his involvement. Brachyles’ companions, under torture, implicated him as public opinion had deemed him guilty of the assassination. Zeuxippus then had no choice but to flee.

If the Romans were behind the assassination of Brachyles, Flamininus misjudged the operation and his ability to maintain plausible deniability. Anti-Roman sentiment was such that regardless of whether Flamininus was involved or not, suspicion automatically fell on Rome. The action gave strength to the anti-Roman position of Boeotia. Livy, suppressing the Polybian narrative, would have us believe that the Boeotians now unfairly implicated Flamininus in their accusations that Zeuxippus would not have acted without Roman knowledge. The Boeotians had a point. It is unlikely that a staunchly pro-Roman leading official would be involved in the assassination of the current, virulently pro-

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169 Nabis later had Alexamenus killed, who was in his turn killed by the Spartans: Livy 36.34-36.
170 Polyb. 18.43.7-12.
171 Livy 33.27-28.
172 Livy 33.28. It has been suggested that since Flamininus did not attempt to have Zeuxippus recalled from exile until 188 he did not support the action. See Polyb. 22.4. This is too simplistic. There were more pressing concerns between 197 and 188 to hold Flamininus’ attention. Further, Zeuxippus was a witness who knew the details of the assassination plot intimately. If anyone or anything were a threat to Flamininus’ power and reputation, it would be Zeuxippus. He had the power to damage Flamininus at Rome and abroad. His exile until the incident was overtaken by events of greater moment, and the passage of time, was deemed advantageous.
173 Livy 33.29.1. Livy here succeeds in presenting the Boeotian beliefs without committing himself to discussing whether they were sound. Briscoe 1973: 300-4.
Macedonian (and popular) leader without Flamininus’ knowledge and approval. The Romans, despite affording certain degrees of freedom to their allies, appreciated consultation prior to action. To risk assassinating a Roman enemy without checking Roman plans, when a Roman army was on the ground, would have been the height of foolishness. Zeuxippus was staunchly pro-Roman, had a Roman army at his gates, and a Roman commander in his presence. His role in the assassination of Bracchyles was designed to smooth the way for Rome, and to create a place of power for himself in Boeotia in the aftermath. To act without Flamininus’ approval would have damaged his relationship with Flamininus and ensured that even if he were successful he may have been reprimanded for acting without Flamininus’ knowledge. Gruen’s point that Flamininus was aware but did nothing is valid. Flamininus could never act overtly. To maintain plausible deniability, assassins should be external agents. The less Flamininus knew about the intended action, the safer his position. He gave implicit approval by referring Zeuxippus to the Aetolians, and supported the action with the provision of Roman soldiers. Because the assassination was undertaken in public and witnesses escaped, the covert action backfired. Roman forces were the natural people to blame for Bracchyles’ death. Flamininus’ actions in the aftermath did nothing to deflect rumours of his complicity.

Flamininus’ response was to go into damage control. He seems to have thought the situation remained salvageable. To respond to the anti-Roman accusers with military force would validate the accusations. To respond with vehement denials would imply involvement. Flamininus was stuck. He tried to contain and control the fallout through diplomatic means and denial of wrongdoing. It was only after the clandestine murders of Roman soldiers that he came to the realisation that a pro-Roman attitude could not be fostered among the Boeotians and no diplomatic act would recover their relationship. Too late, he ordered the murderers handed over; he had lost too much influence. As a last resort, he employed deterrence. After summoning witnesses from Athens and Achaea to prove his planned attack was justified, clearly trying to maintain Rome’s reputation for fides and iustum bellum, he attacked the Boeotians with

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174 Livy 33.29.7.
two armies, ravaging their territory. When mediators from the Achaean League and Athens arrived, Flamininus allowed them to create a settlement. The settlement came after his military deterrence had subdued the riotous opposition. Bloodshed served its purpose. Acquiescence to Rome was not the desire of Boeotia. Nor was it Flamininus’ intended solution. Attempts to repair the situation without further bloodshed failed. There were two responses left. Flamininus could either withdraw or attempt a violent display of Roman power. Deterrence was not his preferred policy – Rome had only just ended a war with Philip, and if the suggestions about Antiochus were true, he could not afford to spark a major war in the Greek mainland. Roman power was reasserted, but it was done so openly; covert action, the last resort, was attempted before this, but it had not worked.

Flamininus’ actions suggest not a policy of non-interference, but of desperation and of an intelligence operation gone wrong. It was a response to the inadvertent support given to anti-Roman sentiment. Diplomacy had failed; war was undesired. This scenario reveals the dangers of complex covert operations, particularly those involving assassination. Assassination was an attempt to remove an obstacle to pro-Roman forces. Ideally, it should have paved the way for the introduction and consolidation of Roman influence and control in the region. The removal of Bracchyles was untimely. He died under circumstances that enraged rather than subdued the anti-Roman elements in Boeotia. His removal thus benefitted no pro-Roman force. It resulted in a harsh Roman response to regain control. Flamininus’ attempts to take control of the situation were ad hoc, reactive, and in general aimed at reducing the spread of anti-Roman sentiment as much as possible. This undermined all covert manipulation that had occurred previously, and further damaged pro-Roman sentiment. The liberators of Greece had no choice but to reveal the extent of

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175 Livy 33.29.9-10.
176 The anti-Roman sentiment was not contained. The Boeotians were quick to go over to Antiochus when he arrived in Greece, still seething over Rome’s involvement in the Bracchyles affair: Polyb. 20.7.3.-5; Livy 36.6.1-3; cf. App. Syr. 13; and Perseus had no trouble gaining Boeotian support before the Third Macedonian War: see Polyb. 27.2.10.
their desire for, if not control, then respect and obedience. Of necessity, Roman power would be enforced at the point of a sword.

**Hannibal 183-181**

Flamininus is again implicated in covert activities in this case. After his welcome at Antiochus’ court had been worn out, Hannibal fled to Bithynia to be accepted by Prusias. His presence in Bithynia was, as far as much of the source tradition indicates, not motivated by any desire to plot an attack against Rome or her allies. Hannibal wanted to retire. Other traditions, however, record that he tried to stir Prusias up against Rome, commanded Bithynian naval forces in its war against Rome’s ally Pergamum and scored a major victory, and even founded a city called Prusa. And of course Hannibal’s status as Rome’s great enemy was never forgotten. He died sometime between 183 and 181.

How he died is unknown, as is the nature of Flamininus’ involvement, thanks to a convoluted source tradition. Flamininus ventured to the court of Bithynia with the legitimate cover of diplomatic negotiations, and while there he dealt with the Hannibal problem. The source tradition is divided over whether Flamininus was acting independently of the senate, whether Hannibal was assassinated on Roman orders, or whether he committed suicide to avoid being surrendered into Roman hands, albeit for no legitimate reason. His death was considered suspicious at the very least. The earliest source to suggest the senate rather than Flamininus was responsible is Valerius Antias, but is also alluded to in Zonaras, Valerius Maximus, and a variant in Plutarch. Popular tradition claims that Hannibal’s death, whether by assassination or forced suicide, was at the initiative of Romans, not Hannibal himself. Suicide is not assassination, but if Hannibal were forced to do it, it is akin to political assassination. It is plausible

177 Plut. Flam. 20.2; App. Syr. 11.
178 Nep. Han. 10-11; Frontin. Str. 4.7.10-11; Just. 32.4.6-7; Plin. NH. 5.148 (Prusa).
180 f49P = Livy 39.56.7.
181 Appian (Syr. 11), Plutarch (Flam. 20-21), and Pausanias (8.11.11) suggest any interaction with Hannibal was at Flamininus’ initiative and outside the mandate the embassy received from the senate. Livy, as expected, remains non-committal about Flamininus’ involvement (39.51.1-3). Nepos (Han. 12.1-13.1), Justin (32.4.8), and Zonaras (9.21) suggest Hannibal’s surrender was part of the senatorial mandate. Cf. MRR I: 380.
that the Romans expected Hannibal to die rather than be surrendered to them.¹⁸² Hannibal, at this stage only in his sixties, was still a legitimate threat. He had brought Rome to its knees; he still had supporters in Carthage; he had aided Antiochus, providing vital foreknowledge about Roman tendencies and Italian geography; he may have actively commanded Prusias’ fleet against Pergamum, and stirred up the Bithynian king against Rome; he could easily have gone on to aid Macedon. The senators had good reason to be wary. It was natural, then, for them to have desired to control and reduce the scope for any mischief he might make for Roman power in the Mediterranean. Others have been killed for far less.

The lengthiest version of the episode is recorded in Livy. Livy’s narrative is again non-committal and careful to avoid assigning blame to either Flamininus or Rome.¹⁸³ In his account of Hannibal’s death, it is clear that Livy was faced with some sources that implicated Rome. His language is deliberately vague and suggests potential causes for the action rather than a single story presented as fact. Naturally none of these causes lays blame at the feet of the senate or Flamininus. Livy asserts Flamininus might have reprimanded Prusias about his decision to harbour Hannibal. Prusias might have had plans to kill Hannibal or ignobly hand him over to the Romans.¹⁸⁴ Hannibal was put under surveillance, something Livy could not explain. Hannibal then killed himself with pre-prepared poison.¹⁸⁵ Hannibal is portrayed as believing Flamininus was responsible for a plot to kill him,¹⁸⁶ and later, as saying that Romans sent

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¹⁸² Gruen asserts that despite rumours and innuendo, the Roman embassy’s purpose was not primarily to kill Hannibal. Gruen 1984: 112. Any covert action needs to have legitimate cover in order to maintain plausible deniability. Nonetheless, Gruen makes a valid point. The embassy had a valid purpose – to arbitrate between Bithynia and Pergamum. This does not mean that dealing with Hannibal was not part of their mission. Many covert actions are conducted under cover of other, more open and legitimate diplomatic business.

¹⁸³ Livy is certainly not above discussing planned assassinations and plots when they involve non-Romans. In the section preceding the account of Hannibal’s death, Livy narrates the secret consensus of the Messenians in control of the government that Philopoemen needed to be put to death (39.50 cf. Polyb. 23.12).

¹⁸⁴ Livy 39.51. Livy is the only source to suggest that Prusias might have wanted to hand Hannibal over in order to gain Roman favour.

¹⁸⁵ Livy 39.51.

¹⁸⁶ Livy 39.51.4.
Flamininus specifically to do this. Livy is placing accusations in Hannibal’s mouth, without proof or vouching for the accusations. Livy’s style here implies his source, perhaps the same record as used by Plutarch and Appian, suggested Flamininus’ involvement, but that he felt the need to defend him. As discussed earlier, Livy’s defence of Flamininus is common throughout his account of these years. Associating Romans with assassination did not serve Livy’s purpose. Five chapters later, however, Livy mentions that Valerius Antias claimed the embassy had been sent to Prusias to bring about Hannibal’s death. He neither elaborates on nor judges this statement, which shifts some blame from Flamininus onto the senate. This is the first suggestion in Livy that the senate may have actually been involved in the planning or sanctioning of covert actions. Even Livy cannot deny that Flamininus used Prusias as an agent to place Hannibal under surveillance, and was intimately involved in a situation that resulted in Hannibal’s death. The displacement of the report of the alternative tradition is significant: Livy knew it existed and purposely avoided discussing it in its proper context. This reveals the historian’s agenda to apologise for senate’s engagement in extreme covert operations—and his awareness that this took place in international politics.

Plutarch suggests that everybody knew where Hannibal was but did not care. His age and weakness meant he was no threat. Regardless, Flamininus took offence at Hannibal’s presence when he was sent to Prusias’ court on another matter and took it upon himself to demand Hannibal’s death. He viewed Hannibal’s continued existence as some kind of insult to Rome. Prusias could not convince Flamininus to change his mind. Hannibal allegedly caught wind of the demand for his death and committed suicide to avoid assassination at Roman hands. When the senate was informed of what had happened, some of the senators believed Flamininus’ actions to have been cruel and unnecessary. The idea of Hannibal’s forced suicide is repeated in a section of

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187 Livy 39.51.10.
189 Livy 39.56.7 = fr. 49P.
190 Plut. Flam. 20.2.
192 Plut. Flam. 22.
Valerius Maximus’ discussion on cruelty.\textsuperscript{193} The tale recorded in Eutropius is ambiguous, claiming that Hannibal was killed through the agency of Flamininus.\textsuperscript{194} Appian takes the assassination further and presents a tale where Prusias had Hannibal poisoned at the behest of Flamininus.\textsuperscript{195} Here, Flamininus acquired an agent, as with Zeuxippus in the case of the Boeotian Bracchyles, to carry out the assassination. Appian is always quick to see covert acts in Roman behaviour. He alone is not enough to prove that Rome was involved in Hannibal’s death, although his justifications suggest that it was suspicious even in antiquity.

The other tradition includes no trace of an assassination plot. Zonaras and Justin have a Roman embassy present itself at Prusias’ court. Part of their senatorial mandate was to demand the surrender of Hannibal. Hannibal committed suicide rather than submit himself to Rome.\textsuperscript{196} Surrender is also in Pausanias’ account, though there it is Flamininus’ idea. Flamininus came to Prusias and demanded Hannibal’s surrender. Hannibal then ran, but cut himself on a sword and died of infection.\textsuperscript{197} Hannibal is presented as fearful and rash, somewhat at odds with the way he is traditionally represented in the extant sources. Polybius’ extant account of these events has Flamininus sent as a legate to Prusias and Seleucus, but his account of Hannibal’s death does not survive.\textsuperscript{198} The Romans had no grounds to demand Hannibal’s surrender. The manner of his death is strictly speaking unknown. Poison could be the result of assassination or suicide attempts. There are no forensic grounds to conclude one is more likely than the other. What is significant in this case is that sources cannot agree on the nature of his death, suggesting that his removal was questioned in antiquity. The timing of his death, while not conclusive, implicates the Romans as at least mischief-makers.

Hannibal’s death is the least plausibly deniable of the assassination cases involving the Romans, but the surviving narratives raise suspicions. Flamininus

\textsuperscript{193} Val. Max. 9.2. ext. 2.  
\textsuperscript{194} per Flamininum: Eutrop. 4.5.2.  
\textsuperscript{195} App. Syr. 11.  
\textsuperscript{196} Zonar. 9.21; Just. 32.4.  
\textsuperscript{197} Paus. 8.11.11.  
\textsuperscript{198} Polyb. 23.5. The eulogistic surviving fragment from the Suda about Hannibal suggests that Polybius did write a larger account of his downfall. Polyb. 23.13.
arrived at the head of embassy and Hannibal lost his life. Without the presence of a Roman embassy in Bithynia, Hannibal could have continued his life living under Prusias’ protection until he died of natural causes. Plutarch’s suggestion that Flamininus acted and that the senate was displeased is apologetic, but reflects the divided nature of the senate. By suggesting dissent, the senate is excused from blame for the result. Blaming one individual makes the senate look better for posterity, allowing it to appear to maintain plausible deniability. By shifting the blame to Flamininus, the latter could be blamed as a rogue agent, seeking glory if there was ever international fallout from Roman actions.\(^{199}\) For all the accusations of Flamininus’ involvement in controversial acts, there is no indication that his career suffered for his involvement. His posthumous reputation may have suffered in some historians, but there is no suggestion that Flamininus was ever seriously questioned about his conduct when representing Rome in the East by the Roman senate.\(^{200}\) This does not mean that the senate was complicit in his actions, but it does indicate that while they may not have supported his methods they approved of the outcomes he achieved. It is of little concern whether Flamininus should be blamed personally or not. Perhaps more indicative of senatorial involvement is the censorship in the account. Flamininus is the only member of the embassy routinely mentioned – so the blame was his. But the presence of both Cornelius Scipio Asiaticus and Cornelius Scipio Nasica is attested by Valerius Antias.\(^{201}\) Scipionic family members are removed from Polybius’ admittedly fragmentary account. This is suspicious, although understandable if Polybius believed covert assassination had taken place as part of the mandate of the embassy as a whole.

Leaving aside Flamininus’ legitimate diplomatic activities during his career, his deep involvement in covert activities, as discussed above, generates suspicion about his involvement here. His intention to remove Hannibal would not have been well publicised. Hannibal had networks of agents and informers. Previous Roman expeditions to detain him, when his connections with Antiochus III were

\(^{199}\) Successful assassins are rarely questioned, especially in anarchic worlds with no international laws and human rights commissions to appeal to.

\(^{200}\) Gruen 1984: 220-1. This is in contrast to Roman atrocities in Spain, where the likes of Sulpicius Galba were subject to questioning and ordered to pay reparations. App. *Hisp.* 60; *Livy Per.* 49.

reported to Rome, had failed; Hannibal fled Antiochus’ court before the Romans arrived.\(^{202}\) The varied source tradition suggests that even in the second century information surrounding his death was well controlled.\(^{203}\) Hiding the action, especially if it were a senatorial plan developed over time, improved its chances of success, and of the truth to be obscured. The assassination of Bracchyles above was a reaction to political developments. Hannibal’s may not have been. In that case, his assassination was either a spur-of-the-moment improvisation or had been extensively planned for when a convenient opportunity presented itself. Plausible deniability was maintained, and resulted in obscurities of the source tradition. But the confusions in Livy’s account, especially when taken into consideration with his tendency to obscure Roman involvement in covert activity, suggest that he was deliberately covering over sources hostile to Flamininus’ and the senate’s covert activity. And if the ultimate source of Plutarch is Polybius,\(^{204}\) then both the latter and Valerius Antias, the closest sources to the event, suggested that Hannibal’s removal was orchestrated by the Romans.

**Viriathus 139**

Roman complicity is most readily apparent in the death of Viriathus in 139. This case is interesting in that it is the only case of assassination relating to the West during the mid-republic and is removed in time from recorded Roman assassination attempts in the East by decades. The Romans traditionally conducted western affairs in a different manner from the East. They focused primarily on military intervention rather than diplomacy or political deliberations. This was especially true in Spain, which was simultaneously provincial space, that is theoretically belonging to Rome, and external, foreign space, that is largely unconquered.\(^{205}\) In such a liminal space, it was apparent that diplomacy, avoidance of conflict, and mere displays of power were not enough, or perhaps even appropriate, to maintain the loyalty of the provinces’ restive tribal inhabitants. The peoples of the West had little understanding of the nature

\(^{202}\) Zonar 9.20.

\(^{203}\) As discussed in chapter 3, the senate was aware of the power of controlling information, and routinely did this. Restricting access to information or discussions of planned assassinations would not be beyond possibility.

\(^{204}\) Smith 1944: 89-90.

\(^{205}\) See Burton 2011: 153-54.
of eastern power structures, complex diplomatic arrangements, or the efficacy of projecting the image of power. They were more used to seeing and obeying overwhelming force on the ground. This is why when Scipio Africanus departed Spain in 205, the Spanish tribes loyal to Rome departed from their allegiance, thinking that the Romans had no more generals as good as Scipio or armies as formidable as his. The senate adapted its policies to suit the circumstances in order to achieve their ends. The assassination of Viriathus was not designed to pave the way for an agenda, nor was it undertaken out of fear of him, but was a last resort when warfare failed. Roman power in Spain was faltering, and attempting to maintain control in both the East and the West was proving to be a struggle.

Viriathus rose to power due to Roman mismanagement of Iberian affairs. In 150, Servius Sulpicius Galba organised to massacre the Lusitanian people, presumably tired of what Rome deemed their constant ‘rebellions’. Viriathus survived the massacre. Little is known of his origins. Cassius Dio calls him a shepherd, who became a thief, only to eventually become a general. Viriathus harried Roman forces for the better part of a decade until his assassination in 139. Roman operations in Spain had often been more brutal than elsewhere because of the high rates of failure, the great risks involved, and the low rates of material reward. Viriathus presented Rome with a problem. No Roman commander could defeat him. Caepio’s predecessor, his brother, Fabius Maximus Servilianus, was forced to make a treaty with Viriathus in order to save himself. With the exception of Diodorus, who claims that the plot to

\[\text{206} \text{ Livy 29.1.19-22; App. Hisp. 38.} \]
\[\text{207} \text{ The massacre was treacherously planned. Galba made an agreement with the Lusitanian marauders that he would settle them on fertile land. When they arrived at an appointed place and time for a census, he had them killed. Later some 20,000 remaining Lusitanians were sold into slavery: App. Hisp. 59-60; cf. Cic. Brut. 89; Nep. Cato 3.4; Livy Per. 49; Val. Max. 8.1.2, 8.7.1, 9.6.2; Oros. 4.21.10. Galba later defended himself on the grounds that he had intelligence that the Lusitanians were secretly planning a war. If true, his counterintelligence activity was top secret and sophisticated, requiring him to have successfully infiltrated to gain short-term military intelligence in the first place, then to organise and, more importantly, maintain the illusion that he was planning nothing more than a census. For more on this, see above, chapter 4, pp. 150-51.} \]
\[\text{208} \text{ Dio fr. 79.} \]
\[\text{209} \text{ App. Hisp. 69.} \]
assassinate Viriathus came at the initiative of Viriathus’ friends,\textsuperscript{210} surviving accounts agree that the plan to assassinate him was at the promagistrate Servilius Caepio’s initiative. While Viriathus was engaged in peace negotiations, Caepio convinced three of his closest associates, Audax, Ditalco, and Minurus, to murder him. These friends were sent to Viriathus on the pretext of discussing peace with Rome. Caepio bribed them to kill Viriathus, relying on Roman stereotypes of fickle Celtiberian behaviour, with gifts and promises.\textsuperscript{211} Caepio’s complicity in the crime is far from obscure; even Livy’s \textit{Periochae} blames him.\textsuperscript{212} The assassins were apparently skilled. After they assassinated Viriathus, the Lusitanians could not identify the killers, nor do they appear to have blamed the Romans either.\textsuperscript{213} The assassins were sent to Rome to receive their promised rewards.\textsuperscript{211} Viriathus’ death did not immediately result in the surrender of the Lusitanians, but considering the long history of hostility between the Lusitanians and Rome this was an unlikely result. In the event, Viriathus’ successor could not hold out against Roman military strength, and did surrender.\textsuperscript{214} Viriathus’ death removed a legitimate strategic threat, and succeeded in producing a more acceptable strategic arrangement more likely to end the struggle. Whether the Lusitanians would have surrendered rather than continue fighting if they knew with certainty about the Romans’ complicity in their leader’s death is of course unknowable.

The senate condemned Caepio’s act as perfidious and traitorous. This is perhaps not a judgement on his assassination of Viriathus, but because he breached the sanctity of diplomatic relations and broke \textit{fides} by having Viriathus killed after he had entered into negotiations. It is possible, however, that he was acting within a senatorial mandate. The treaty was ratified by the people of Rome, and was the first conflict to end without an enemy’s abject surrender since the end of the Second Macedonian War in 205.\textsuperscript{216} The senate’s actions in

\textsuperscript{210} Diod. 33.21.
\textsuperscript{211} App. \textit{Hisp.} 73-74; cf. Livy \textit{Per.} 54; Eutrop. 4.16; Vell. Pat. 2.13. See also Flor. 22.13; Oros. 5.23.15.
\textsuperscript{212} As mentioned above, Appian is quick to attribute duplicitous covert actions to the Romans. But here his account is supported better by other accounts.
\textsuperscript{213} App. \textit{Hisp.} 74.
\textsuperscript{214} Livy \textit{Per.} 54; App. \textit{Hisp.} 74.
\textsuperscript{215} App. \textit{Hisp.} 75.
\textsuperscript{216} Knapp 1977: 31.
the aftermath smack of bad faith. Caepio believed that the treaty was insulting to Rome, and, if Appian is to be believed, the senate gave him permission to secretly harass Viriathus.\(^{217}\) The plan was to force Viriathus to break the agreement himself, allowing Rome to avoid responsibility for doing so, to avoid risking damage to their reputation for \textit{fides}, and to pass the blame to the other side.

Eventually the senate conceded to Caepio’s request. Viriathus had succeeded in defeating every Roman army sent against him, and drawing other Celtiberian and Lusitanian tribes to his side by reminding them of previous Roman duplicity.\(^{218}\) He allegedly sparked the Numantine war between Rome and the Celtiberians, further destabilising Roman power.\(^{219}\) Conflict with Rome had failed to result in his defeat and subsequent surrender or death for approximately a decade.\(^{220}\) While Viriathus was willing to form an agreement with Rome, he refused to submit to them. The Romans expected full \textit{deditio}, forcing the surrender of weapons. Viriathus refused.\(^{221}\) Viriathus’ continued presence as an anti-Roman focus of loyalty for the Spanish tribes was a threat that outweighed the risk of his removal. The senate was left with the option of recognising a Lusitanian rebel as an equal in Spain, and having to acknowledge that they had breached their \textit{fides} and could not defeat a ‘primitive’ enemy through military strength or intelligence endeavours, or he had to be eliminated by other means. Arranging his death through assassination was a viable option. As a last resort, it would secure Roman dominion over the Lusitanians and allow them to go on to crush Numantia, while avoiding the perception of weakness.

Caepio’s complicity in the plot against Viriathus’ life appears to have become common knowledge. He was never charged, but was punished for his lack of secrecy. After his return from Spain, he vanishes from record. His brother became a censor in 125, but he achieved neither higher office nor does

\(^{217}\) καὶ ἡ βουλὴ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον αὐτῷ συνεχώρει κρύφα λυπεῖν τὸν Οὐριάτθον: App. \textit{Hisp.} 70
\(^{218}\) App. \textit{Hisp.} 61.
\(^{219}\) App. \textit{Hisp.} 66.
\(^{220}\) The length of the Lusitanian war is unclear. Livy claims Viriathus harried Roman forces for 14 years: \textit{Per.} 54. Appian suggests Viriathus waged war for 8 years: \textit{Hisp.} 63; 75.
\(^{221}\) Dio 22.75.
he serve as a diplomatic legate. He retired from public life.\textsuperscript{222} The assassination was a last resort and the most successful covert operation during the mid-republic, of those that became known in the historical record at any rate. Whether the senate was complicit is questionable, as always. Either surviving sources sought to hide senatorial complicity, or the senate was adept at maintaining plausible deniability domestically as well as internationally.

Examples of Roman complex covert operations that manifest as paramilitary operations and assassination attempts as discussed above are rare. These actions are by no means the first or preferred methods of dealing with perceived international problems. But they were undertaken by Roman forces, and were a viable option in international relations when circumstances necessitated them. From hindsight, it is possible to claim that the removal of certain individuals was neither practical nor necessary. Extreme covert actions are not rational. They are reactions to circumstances seemingly beyond the control of a state that believes at that time that a threat must to be removed to prevent immediate dangerous consequences from following. In the Roman context, and for the purposes of the discussion here, that these attempts existed at all reveals the Roman acknowledgment and use of intelligence. Determining the threat level posed by Viriathus, for instance, and determining the need for his removal was not a decision made because he was an annoying individual. Roman foreknowledge regarding his mentality and capabilities, the Roman awareness of their history in the Iberian Peninsula, and Viriathus’ superior ability to use the environment and people to his advantage resulted in the belief that he needed to be removed. Military efforts had failed. Covert action remained. Intelligence was a fundamental factor in the construction of these beliefs and ideas. Without access to it and an appreciation of its use in decision-making, instead of duplicitous and risky acts the Romans would have continued with lengthy and costly diplomatic and military activity.

\textsuperscript{222} MRR 1.510.
Covert action is notoriously hard to investigate after the fact. Part of the reason clandestine actions succeed is because they have successfully been perceived to have never existed. Modern nation states strive to hide covert behaviour to increase their chances of success, but also to reduce the public fallout. This is only natural. The more evidence available that manipulations have taken place under the guise of diplomacy, the less trust is likely to be afforded to a state’s diplomacy. Covert acts are cunning and unscrupulous but they are just one foreign policy tool among many. They are not necessarily reflective of a state’s or people’s general attitude or mentality, but of their level of political sophistication and pragmatism toward achieving foreign policy goals. Rome exhibited such behaviour — and indeed had to, given that its system competitors, particularly in the East — and engaged in covert operations as a matter of course. The sources reveal this to be the case for both Rome and others, despite Livy’s obvious attempts to deny such behaviour to Rome. His attempts to whitewash, in fact, only serve to implicate the Romans in covert activity even further. Ironically, his narrative suggests that the senate ultimately conducted their political covert activities with sophistication and success. His equation of covert operations with bad faith motivated him to cover up such Roman operations.

The Romans of the mid-republic shared the same motivation. The senate spent time and effort in creating the image that the Roman state was the embodiment of fides - that its actions in the international arena could be trusted and its policy pronouncements taken at face value. Many sources idealise Roman behaviour to the extent that they never depict them engaged in any act that could be considered counterintelligence, intelligence, or covert action, or at

223 For the historicity of fides and the conception of fidelis behaviour see Livy 1.24.4–5, 42.47; cf. Dion. Hal. 2.75.3; Plut. Numa 16.1; Flor. 1.2.3; Plaut. Mil. 1369, Capt. 346-349, 439-445; Enn. Ann. fr. 268–286 S. It could be argued that the dissemination of fides itself was a covert action. There is no space to explore this idea here. As a domestic virtue, fides governed personal relationships and aided in the maintenance of the republican social system. For more on fides see Fraenkel 1916; Heinze 1928; Hellegouarch 1963; Boyancé 1964a; Boyancé 1964b; Boyancé 1972a; Boyancé 1972b; Hampl 1973; Freyburger 1982; Freyburger 1986.
least certainly not before they had been corrupted by *nova sapiencia*.

Diodorus Siculus reveals that the Romans publicised their *fides* during the build up to the First Punic War when he has Hiero reply to Roman envoys who are attempting to maintain peace that the Romans, harping on about *fides* as they did, should surely not attempt to defend immoral killers using *fides* as moral cover.

During the mid-republican era of overseas expansion, that principle became fundamental in Roman interactions with external parties. The principle of *fides* and a devotion to what the Romans conceived to be their duty toward friends and allies was for the most part honestly maintained. People do not make appeals to moral standards that they have no intention of observing or only using as a tool of cynical manipulation. Such hypocrisy would soon have been exposed in an interconnected Mediterranean system, and would ultimately have been counterproductive to Roman foreign policy goals. As the senate observed after the consul Popillius Laenas enslaved some Statellate Ligurians who had surrendered to his *fides* in 173, this was a terrible example—so terrible that if publicised nobody would ever surrender to Rome’s good faith again.

If Roman representatives continuously failed to live up to their self-proclaimed morality then foreign states would begin to question the words and judgement of ruling Romans.

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224 For ‘new thinking’, which involved deception, at the time of the Third Macedonian War, see Livy 42.47.4-9. Polybius, despite claiming that stratagems were important in war, also claims that Rome fought without guile in warfare – something that the Greeks had learned to overcome (Polyb.13.3). See Brizzi 1982; contra Wheeler 1988b.

225 ὁ δὲ Ἰέρων ἀπεκρίνατο ὡς τοῖς Μαμερτίνοις Καμάρινι καὶ Ἑλήναν ἀναστάσισις πεποιηθεῖσας, Μεσσηνίων δὲ ἀσβεστάτα ἠπαθηθήσεται, δικάως πολυφωνοῦνται, Ῥωμαίοι δὲ, θρυλλοῦντες τὸ τῆς πίστεως ὠνομα, παντελῶς ὡς γήραναι τοὺς μιαφόνους, μάλιστα πίστεως καταφρονήσαντας, ὑπερασπίζετειν· εὶ δὲ υπέρ ἀσβεστάτων τῆλικοῦτον ἐπαναροφοῦνται πόλεμον, φανερῶς ἔσεσθαι πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ὅτι τῆς ἰδίας πλεονεξίας πρόφασιν πορίζονται τῶν τῶν κινδυνευόντων ἔλεον, τὸ δὲ ἀληθές Σικελίας ἐπιθυμοῦσιν: Diod. 23.1.4.

226 atrox res uisa senatui, Statellates, qui uni ex Ligurum gente non tulissent arma adversus Romanos, tum quoque oppugnatos, non ubro inferentis bellum, deditis in fidelum populi Romani omni ultimae crudelitatis exemplo laceratos ac deletos esse, tot milia capitum innoxiorum, fidem inplorantia populi Romani, ne quis umquam se postea dedere auderet, pessumo exemplo usitasse, et distractos passim iustis quondam hostibus populi Romani pacatos servire: Livy 42.8.5-6. A cynical interpretation of *fides* would allow us to read it as simple propaganda in many Roman international activities, but cynicism is not the only way to interpret such events. Most twentieth- and twenty-first century interpretations of the ancient world tend to be overly cynical. Modern audiences tend to mistrust reports of innocent diplomatic tours and appeals to supposedly commonly upheld moral standards due to the tendency to be suspicious of double-speak and euphemism.
Roman officials – choosing to be more suspicious of Roman motives. There is a growing scholarly consensus that the focus on *fides* in this era shifted eastern Mediterranean international relations away from endless conflict and toward a more stable system of long-term diplomacy and alliances. But as has been seen throughout this study, the Romans engaged in covert action while shaping the Mediterranean system to its wishes. Plausible deniability is far easier for a state to maintain if there is a general belief in the good intentions behind the actions and a consistent effort to act in accordance with publicised values. The principle of trustworthiness conflicted with the need to access verified information, about both friends and foes, and on occasion the need to stimulate action without revealing Roman involvement. The Roman state was at times faced with the dilemma of needing knowledge and needing to maintain their international trustworthiness – these are the scenarios where covert action was helpful.

Covert action was, necessarily, uncommon. It cannot be a state’s principal instrument of international success. Covert activity by its very nature is not ethical or even necessarily pragmatic. It relies on complicated plotting to achieve significant change in foreign states without detection. Covert operations do not take place in a vacuum where all variables can be controlled, and the actions and reactions of the parties involved can be predicted with certainty. Aside from the problem of discovery, and the risks associated with maintaining plausible deniability, covert action could not be resorted to too often since it could become self-defeating. It could undermine Rome’s ability not only to undertake such acts, but also to undertake diplomacy. Common knowledge that covert operations were often practised by Rome would undermine the notions of *fides* that were fundamental to Roman diplomatic endeavours. Given all these variables, covert actions are a desperate measure, usually a last resort. As this is recognised by modern intelligence agencies, so too was it recognised by the Romans. If problems could be solved through either military or diplomatic activity, these would always be the preferred options.

The status of the incidents discussed in this chapter as covert operations is necessarily speculative, as befits all good covert action. The mid-republican Roman senate and officials for the most part succeeded in maintaining plausible

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deniability. Although their involvement was called into question both at the time of certain incidents and by historians investigating them in their aftermath, concrete proof of Roman involvement was never discovered. Of the various examples discussed here, the only incident where the senate is directly implicated is in one tradition surrounding the death of Hannibal. All other operations, while likely involving senatorial support, are absent from senatorial discussions and divorced from publicised senatorial mandates.

Each of the Roman interventions discussed here also succeeded in changing the status quo, but for different reasons. Due to the unpredictable nature of reactions to covert operations in the field, these changes did not always match the expected outcome, nor were all successful. As usual, these operations open pathways for and remove the necessity of alternative actions. Removing important political and military figures and meddling in internal political and tribal dynamics made it easier to suppress opposition to Rome. Removing leaders can reduce the resolve of belligerents and diminish the intensity of the threat they pose, making it easier to defeat them with military force, or it can remove the need for military intervention at all. Without leadership, recalcitrant factions often crumble, opening avenues for diplomatic arrangements.

Similarly, as has been seen here, covert activities can secure the status quo. They can be distractions or a method of control to subtly influence affairs so that others do not disrupt a carefully constructed congenial internal situation in another state, through the growth of arrogance and overreaching in that state, or to construct distractions until such a time as greater (that is, diplomatic or military) attention can be devoted to a problematic situation. Hannibal, Antiochus, and Prusias were manipulated to reduce the military nous, and thus the threat, posed to Rome by Syria, and to Pergamum by Bithynia. Demetrius was manipulated to distract Philip’s focus away from expansionist activity abroad to internal factionalism. Eumenes was controlled by having limits imposed on his expansionary activity without Rome breaking the alliance or suffering bad publicity. Bracchyles was assassinated to remove an obstacle to pro-Roman factions; Viriathus was killed out of desperation. Rome engaging in covert activities of this type, aimed at a variety of outcomes, reveals the depth of thought they devoted to them and how significant a part it was in their foreign
policy decision making process. Their purpose was to foster pro-Roman sentiment and create scenarios in the Mediterranean where Rome was the acknowledged superior power, without having to constantly check others either militarily or politically. There is no single observable goal, whether it be to conquer and subjugate through objectless disposition, or to pathologically protect themselves against all threats, major and minor, real and imagined. These are not the actions of a state bent on acquiring unipolarity, power, resources, and conquest, but of a sophisticated state working within an anarchic system to create a scenario where they could maintain a level of security by creating alliances, fostering pro-Roman sentiment, and, where necessary, displaying power through occasional displays of military might. The Romans used intelligence to construct an idea of the world and make decisions about how different areas could be influenced, and whether it was worth the attempt to do so.

Covert actions were taken both as a primary option, such as the attempt to discredit Hannibal in Antiochus’ court, and as a last resort before conflict when anti-Roman sentiment has grown beyond what diplomatic measures could control, such as in the assassinations of Bracchyles and Viriathus. Playing one state off another and assassinating leaders require an intensive appreciation and analysis of the probable outcomes of behaviour. The Romans did not simply blunder into the international sphere and unthinkingly throw their weight around. That the senate displayed conscious and discerning behaviour in making foreign policy decisions in these cases suggests that they were neither exceptionally warlike nor aggressive, nor that they gained their empire in a fit of absence of mind. The senate’s use of different types of complex international behaviour highlights the sophisticated and flexible thinking behind Roman international relations, one that was ad hoc and adapted to circumstance in order for the Romans to achieve its specific goals for each time and region in the absence of a well-developed grand strategy or forward policy. The senate chose to act through intelligence, suggesting that those in power during the period of mid-republican overseas expansion appreciated the role of information in attaining power, and the potential role of political manipulation in maintaining and increasing it. Roman actions throughout the period were not solely designed for conquest and assimilation. Wars were fought when necessary, and diplomacy
was used when possible, but so too was the third option of covert action, which was aimed at manipulating perception, and in desperate circumstances, removing obstacles to Roman power and influence abroad.
Austin and Rankov assert that Roman generals during the republic ‘might find themselves plunging into the unknown’. The preceding chapters in this study have attempted to challenge this idea - that mid-republican Romans engaged in international relations with no use or understanding of the value of political intelligence. Even a glancing familiarity with mid-republican diplomatic history, with its numerous fact-finding missions, official commissions, and embassies designed ‘to look into affairs’, should suffice to refute that. Republican generals of course did not venture into foreign territory with complete knowledge of what they would find - no one ever does - but nor did they fumble into darkness without some conception, accurate or not, of the political, military, or geographical circumstances. In the period between the Second Punic War and the mid-second century, Roman influence (and control) spread throughout the Mediterranean. They conquered, assimilated, and established durable diplomatic arrangements in both the East and the West. This was achieved through diplomatic skill and military might, but also, and crucially, through intelligence. While no bureaucratic service or staff operatives devoted solely to intelligence gathering, analysis, and advising existed, the Roman senatorial personnel in their various official roles fanned out across the Mediterranean world during the mid-republican period, with varying levels of intensity, and engaged in systematic political intelligence. They did this in three ways that are identifiable in terms of modern intelligence disciplines: these are intelligence collection, counterintelligence, and covert action. The Romans of the mid-Republic, as has been demonstrated throughout this study, used all three methods in attempts to secure their foreign policy goals. Their engagement with intelligence was not random or ill-conceived, but deliberate and agentic - an active, ongoing attempt to learn more and more about the people and places of the Mediterranean system.

The purposes and intentions behind Roman intelligence differed markedly from those of most modern states. One of the main flaws in

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1 Austin and Rankov 1995: 108.
intelligence scholarship is that it measures the intelligence capabilities of ancient states against modern expectations. Discussions about how ‘good’ Roman intelligence systems were often amount to analyses of pre-emptive strike capabilities. Contemporary intelligence permits modern nation states to pre-emptively strike against an enemy and create long term plans to address potential threats. As the preceding chapters have shown, this was never a possibility or a necessity in antiquity. There were no permanent agents, embassies, or even excuses for the physical presence of foreign officials in other states. To permanently hold others under surveillance, without legitimate fear of detection, would have required a system built around the embedding of trusted agents in foreign nations. If this were a requirement of the ancient Mediterranean system, particularly in the East, the Romans’ failure to participate in it would have been damaging and detrimental to the growth of Roman power. Monitoring and watching one king or people, and waiting for them to do something perceived as threatening would have required an unusually large investment of manpower, as well as a highly centralised and relatively unchanging political establishment - the very opposite of what the Roman republican system was or could provide. The ability to perform intensive international surveillance, and to react to intelligence in a timely manner, required a level of technology and a set of domestic and international social and cultural assumptions unavailable to the Romans. Intelligence systems are structured and developed to serve the needs and desires of the specific state that creates them. These systems are therefore inherently subjective in terms of their creation and function; intelligence is more art than science. In Rome, intelligence, like most policy-related matters, was an ad hoc business. It would never have occurred to the Romans to undertake permanent surveillance, or to have to know everything that was going on everywhere at once, or if it did occur to them, the potential costs of such practices simply outweighed the possible benefits. Intelligence was not regarded by the Romans as a magic bullet allowing

2 Those enjoying hospitium in Rome or proxenia in the Greek context are not analogous to modern foreign agents, stations, or high commissions. They were highly interpersonal relationships between individual members of different states. While they may have conveyed intelligence to and from their homelands and host lands, this was not their primary purpose or intention, and were they to do so openly, they surely would have been detected, aroused suspicion, and been expelled.
for pre-emptive military strikes, but a method of developing an understanding of
world affairs to avoid complete surprise, and ideally, to manage international
political affairs to Roman advantage.

The major focus of mid-republican intelligence examined here was
political. In the Roman world, this intelligence was closely intertwined with
diplomacy, with ‘diplomats’ serving as both diplomatic and intelligence agents.
The Romans, like everyone else in the Mediterranean system, were motivated to
gather intelligence partly to maintain the status quo - that is to protect their
national interests and guard their reputation - and, sometimes, partly to further
their foreign policy goals and ambitions. The Romans’ comprehension of the
need for information and the power of intelligence was by no means primitive.
When faced with a need for more information, to protect information, or to
level the playing field, the mid-republican state engaged in what modern western
society would think of as normal, if possibly controversial, methods to achieve
their goals. This process started with the simple gathering of information about
foreign peoples and areas from unofficial sources, such as merchants and
traders. Ultimately, this collation of information created what this study has
called ‘cultural dossiers’ in the official mind, containing information that could
be constantly updated and readjusted in light of new intelligence. Dossiers of
analysed information were never likely to be complete or accurate. Their
accuracy, while significant for an interpretation of how successful Roman
intelligence might have been, is of no great significance, as has been argued here.
The value of cultural dossiers is in their existence and use. Dossiers provided a
context within which to determine what actions could or should be undertaken,
in conjunction with the interpretation of events unfolding in specific contexts, or
with specific, new, time-sensitive intelligence sourced from others.

Although dossiers were collated, the Romans’ active intelligence efforts
were primarily reactive and focused on short-term goals. As has been seen here,
scholars, such as Sheldon, have shown that the senate had to rely on others to
provide critical information about events occurring outside Rome.3 This is not a
sign of Roman intelligence inefficiency but necessary practicality. The Romans’
standard policy of exercising influence through their network of friends and

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3 Sheldon 2005: 68-82.
allies, and potential friends and allies, who knew that the Romans desired information, and sought favour by providing it, was the most efficient and effective method of staying informed. Waiting for information to come to them had the effect of securing the Romans’ own intelligence and agents. If Roman personnel were permanently housed abroad with the intention of monitoring events outside Rome, they would have had to subject intelligence to physical transfer - a risky business, prone to interception and loss. As Rome’s empire expanded, the city became a hub for foreign visitors, sometimes bringing different perspectives about the same events to the senate. All the senators had to do was collect the information, analyse it, and pass judgement on how to action it, without expending much energy or effort, or showing their hand too early. Further, by waiting for intelligence to come to them, the senate could focus on protecting, defending, and monitoring what information entered and exited Rome. By engaging in political counterintelligence, Rome maintained control over intelligence, and power by hoarding information. With the recognition of the power of information came active attempts to limit the information available to others, and thus others’ ability to use intelligence against Rome.

The chapters throughout this study have presented a case that mid-republican Romans engaged with, understood, and appreciated intelligence for both generalised knowledge of the world around them and for more specific short-term defensive and offensive operations. They did this in order to secure their position and reputation and to aid in achieving their goals in an anarchic state system. Roman decisions about how to interact with foreign states and rulers, about when and why these interactions ought to occur, and the best way to achieve whatever political outcome was deemed best, considered and consulted with intelligence sources. Policies were not formulated in a myopic way, determined by malignancy or benignity, as the mood took the senators. Although it is impossible to talk about over-arching ‘policy’ as far as the mostly ad-hoc decision makers of the Roman senate are concerned, the general foreign policy methodology of the senate was to investigate the reality behind intelligence reports, without taking the word of one state as truth, and only to make judgements after those reports were verified through investigation by Roman agents if at all possible. Competing perspectives by agents of rival states
could be assessed, and even manipulated if necessary, before any Roman resources were spent verifying potentially concerning behaviour or emerging situations abroad. In every case, the senate determined whether and the extent to which verification was necessary. It was only after the senate constructed its own conception of the state of affairs based on intelligence, accurate or not, that it made any decisions about how to act. At times, this was a declaration of war, at others, to initiate or further diplomatic efforts, and occasionally, attempts to remove or delay issues and problems by participating in covert behaviour. Despite the consistent intelligence methodology, the Romans used a variety of foreign policy responses based on intelligence, but all aimed at maximising the foreign policy goals of the Roman state, whatever those happened to be at the moment. The intelligence system the Romans used was not primitive or non-existent; it was flexible, efficient, and thus well-suited to Roman needs, and their political, cultural, and social realities.

Of course, history is dotted with Roman intelligence failures. From hindsight, there are naturally instances where Roman policy seems foolish and areas where improvements could be made to Roman intelligence efforts. Their intelligence methods were not perfect. It could be tempting to view Roman failures as a sign of incompetence or a lack of finesse; but there were limitations to what the Roman state did and could feasibly be expected to discover, and how useful this intelligence would be. Just as intelligence received from foreign agents could be filled with bias - all political intelligence has a political agenda, after all - even Roman-sourced intelligence was tainted by self-interest and personal prejudices. The competitive nature of the republican political system ensured that this would be the case. Rome’s intelligence agents, analysts, and interpreters, were also highly individualist politicians, policy-makers, and senators from proud families whose ancestry and traditions exerted enormous pressure on their progeny to succeed by seeking gloria in public life and on the world stage. Any edge they could obtain over their rivals - even in something so mundane as gathering, interpreting, and presenting intelligence in particular ways - was worth the effort. To restate the obvious: intelligence was less a science than an art. This is especially true in the ancient context where intelligence was subject to the

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4 See Harris 1979: chs. 1-3 (with some exaggeration).
usual human weaknesses of vanity, ambition, and prejudice. Pure reason and rational actors are out of place here, just as they are in the modern world. Durable social and cultural constraints - the Romans’ own, and those of representatives of other states providing intelligence - guaranteed it. Avoidance of intelligence failure requires clairvoyance and the complete absence of bias on the part of the intelligence gatherer, and complete transparency, passivity, predictability, and indifference to their own position in international affairs on the part of those about whom the intelligence concerns. These are impossible conditions to meet, even in the modern world, as numerous intelligence failures, large and small, have shown in recent decades. Ancient intelligence systems cannot possibly be held to the same standards as modern intelligence agencies, and the evidence shows that in terms of intelligence failure, the Roman mid-republican record was no better or worse than that of most modern states.

This study is not an attempt to investigate the practicalities of Roman intelligence use. Nor is it an investigation of the role of the intelligence process from beginning to end in any particular circumstance, although there have been some case studies that partially fulfil this condition, and this is certainly an avenue that would benefit from further investigation in order to develop a full picture of specific instances of intelligence use during escalations to war and alliance building. While examples of strategic military intelligence have inevitably crept into the study, particularly in chapter 4, its main focus has been on strategic political intelligence, the general patterns of Roman mid-republican techniques used to acquire and protect it, and the methods used to analyse and action it. Although detailed and complete case studies would improve our understanding of Roman intelligence skills, our main concern here was not to pass judgement about how ‘good’ or ‘bad’ Roman intelligence was in its historical context. Intelligence is value-neutral and lacks agency. It does not win anything, or lose anything for that matter. It is merely a tool employed (or not) with varying levels of success by individuals and decision-making bodies. Intelligence, or a lack of it, is not to blame for military or diplomatic failure, nor can it be praised for being responsible for military or diplomatic success. Intelligence, a state’s appreciation of it, and efforts to use it, cannot be judged by the end result of its employment. Judgement may be passed on the results of intelligence usage after the fact, but not on intelligence itself. What this study has
been concerned with was not evaluating the success or failure of Roman intelligence but the Romans’ appreciation and understanding of its utility.

One of the ultimate aims of this project, stated at the outset, was to determine whether the study of Roman political intelligence could move the debate over Roman imperialism in new directions. To begin with the old, and somewhat sterile, defensive/aggressive debate, Roman attempts to gain, assess, and action intelligence reveal a range of motives and behaviour, depending on circumstances. Sometimes Roman pursuit, analysis, and actioning of intelligence may be construed as aggressive; at other times collection, verification, analysis, and decision making appear deliberate and hesitant; and occasionally Rome’s reaction to intelligence seems remarkably passive or indifferent, even contemptuous. It must also be kept in mind that the Romans used intelligence for reasons other than assessing system competitors’ military, political, and diplomatic capabilities; the pursuit of trade routes and resources, creating obligations in their friends and allies, or building favour with other states also put intelligence to good use. In other words, through the study of political intelligence, no discernible pattern emerges as to whether the Romans of the mid-republic were aggressive or defensive imperialists. Their behaviour varied according to time, circumstance, and the particular use to which intelligence was put.

If intelligence must be contextualised within imperialism debates, it is probably useful to correct Gruen’s notion that Rome was a passive, reactive hegemon as regards the East,5 and the ideas of Harris and his epigoni that the Romans simply seized (or indeed, nefariously created) opportunities for aggressive expansion.6 The study of intelligence suggests that the Romans were not passive and indifferent to their place in the international system, but neither were they aggressively opportunistic in advancing their power. By carefully and deliberately assessing intelligence (the methodology outlined above), they attempted a much more sophisticated approach to international affairs than most give them credit for. They neither ignored intelligence about other states in the system nor lay in wait for intelligence-derived opportunities for intervention.

6 Harris 1979; cf. Waterfield 2014.
but instead paid sufficient attention, as each case merited, gathering information as required, so that they could react to emerging situations as they saw fit. The Romans seem to have exercised some concern for their image abroad, their reputation for power and *fides*, but their need to demonstrate that they were a vigorous, constantly expanding military power - like a great Seleucid king - seemed less important to them. At times the Romans appeared indifferent to events unfolding in the East (and, occasionally, in the West; Saguntum comes to mind), and at times they seemed all too keen to leap into evolving crisis situations, or to suddenly involve themselves, surprisingly and ferociously, after long periods of seeming indifference. The *longue durée* must be kept in mind as well. As this study has shown, the decisions behind Roman foreign policy decision making varied based on the state of intelligence at the time particular decisions were made. Rome’s war with the Aetolian League was not in view as soon as the ink dried on the treaty of 211, with its alleged seeds of later dispute sown by tricky, devious Romans, as those who think the Romans were aggressive imperialists would have us believe. The Roman use of intelligence shows that perceptions and understanding about other states, and thus their decisions concerning them, evolved and changed over time. Situational awareness was key. Roman behaviour was highly variable and cannot be reduced to simple patterns of aggressive or defensive conduct. This was a function of the limitations in their intelligence (which were highly constrained, as has been seen), and of the intelligence cycle relative to Roman preparedness and capability. With hindsight, such behaviour can appear arbitrary at best or vicious at worst. But it is all explicable without resorting to tidy, positivistic declarations about the Romans being aggressive or defensive imperialists.

Studying Roman intelligence thus provides a further challenge to the dominant paradigm of how Roman imperialism and international relations are thought about. Traditional studies of Roman imperialism rarely consider what or how the Romans knew about their neighbours, but instead are deeply Romanocentric, and often judge the means - how Rome gained an empire - by the end - Rome gained an empire. But the central question with which the study of imperialism is concerned is why and how empires emerge. The aggressive/defensive debate seeks a parsimonious explanation of Roman expansion, a grand strategy that can apply to the empire as a whole across time.
Approaches of this kind, while useful for describing, maintaining, or even justifying empire after the fact, simplify the process of imperial evolution, and ignore the unit-level aspects of policymaking and interaction with the outside world, which are revealed through the study of intelligence. A Romanocentric perspective and the attribution to the Romans of an overarching, ongoing foreign policy position are at odds with the sheer ad hoc nature of decision making in the mid-republic. Some Roman decisions, based on intelligence, resulted in war, but others used intelligence to understand the world, and avoid conflict and interaction for as long as possible.

The application of International Relations theory has clarified some, but not all, of the problems with the aggressive/defensive debate. It has moved the study of the growth of the Roman empire beyond the restrictive focus on Roman imperialism, acknowledging the complexities of interaction between large active powers, each with their own agendas. But currently even IR approaches have yet to come up with a satisfying unified theory of Roman imperialism. IR theory, whether Liberalism, Constructivism, or Realism, seeks to explain all past behaviour in terms of a particular paradigm that will allow predictions about future events. This means, necessarily, that data that does not fit the paradigm - ‘outliers’, as it were - must be explained away or excised from the data set. As a consequence, rather than considering all the evidence for ancient international relations, theory tends to force or select evidence to fit a neat theoretical paradigm. The result is a distortion of the historical record or, sometimes, a violation of strict theoretical orthodoxy.

Systems-level approaches of the IR Realist stripe simplify affairs by reducing complex states into functionally similar units. Domestic affairs, beliefs, ideologies (‘unit-level’ phenomena), and indeed intelligence matter little. There is something odd about the role of intelligence in modern political affairs, which for the most part are built upon Realist paradigms, given that prevalent IR Realist theories ignore complex decision-making processes at the domestic level when creating foreign policy. This is not to say there is no place for intelligence

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7 While it is true that Polybius attributes to the Romans an overarching plan for world conquest (1.3.6, 3.2.6), his own narrative belies this thesis.
8 See Burton 2011: 21 for examples. Burton calls himself a ‘modified’ Constructivist.
in a perfectly Realist real world. In such a world, although all states would predictably behave in the same security-seeking way, intelligence agencies would still be required to gain an edge to judge the extent of another state’s preparations for war, its present capabilities, resources, manpower, and so on. In any event, IR Realist paradigms are predicated on the idea that mentalities, histories, ideologies, cultural assumptions, social practices — all these unit-level phenomena — simply do not matter, whether, according to Classical Realism, because human nature remains fundamentally the same, or, according to Neo-Realism, because the international system compels states to behave the same way.

And yet, as has been seen throughout this study, Roman foreign policy was shaped in an ad hoc way by analysis of intelligence that was filtered through social and cultural assumptions, multi-directional biases, long histories of international relationships, and so on, resulting in real-world actions with real-world consequences, some not predictable in terms of IR Realism paradigms.

Purely constructivist IR paradigms are little better at capturing ancient international relations realities. Such theories require that international systems are products of discourse and are fully mind-dependent. While it is true that intelligence is highly overdetermined in terms of its discursive creation, it informs its gatherers and analysts about objective facts on the ground, which then influences action. Thus mind-dependent interpretation helps analysts interpret and thus construct the world and subjective world views, but structures exist independently of individual minds. Analysts do not create the world; they formalise it (possibly erroneously). Knowledge of the real world grows and changes with the creation, application, and refutation of ideas and theories. Errors are made through misunderstanding others and observed reality, and the attempting to predict future action based on limited knowledge. Gaps in knowledge tend to be filled with socially constructed assumptions about self and others. There are, however, objective realities. The facts on the ground, as it were, provide the conditions for actual events and for perceived possibility. If one hears that the Carthaginians are laying in ship timber, this is a verifiable fact; how one then processes the information and takes action based on one’s application of previously held and the new intelligence about Carthage is a subjectively constructed way of understanding reality, and it may be more or less objectively accurate. But both the reality and the constructed perception of that
reality are causally potent and influence how the self responds to the actions of the other.

The explanatory parsimony of such strict **IR Realism** and strict **IR Constructivism** is their intended virtue, but also their Achilles’ heel. The study of intelligence reveals the limits of both. The logical positivism of Realism privileges sensory experience as the only valid causal factors in human affairs. Human decision-making is not so rational. While empirical evidence is of vital importance in shaping affairs, so too are the perceptions of human minds and idiosyncrasies of socio-cultural beliefs and assumptions. Once again, intelligence is a subjective art. Even if foreign ambassadors presented the senate with an objective fact (it would only become this pending verification, of course) – say, the building of an army - interpreting what that meant, what the implications of it were, and how to address it is in no way objective, but the result of a conditioned constructed reality. Roman ideas and opinions, their foreknowledge, and their values and norms determined what the appropriate response was. The interpretation of Roman actions, particularly when based on the intelligence cycle, demands an appreciation for epistemological relativism. Realist positivism would reduce all considerations to tangible, empirical facts. There is no denying that there are some objective truths out there, and tangible factors that influence decisions, but they are no more important in the intelligence process than beliefs, opinions, and behaviours, which are entirely relative and subjective. Decisions are not made with a rational mind, but from a constructed, incomplete, and biased view of the world. The outcomes of these decisions cannot be reduced to qualitative factors such as access to levels of technology, manpower, and resources. Sometimes, despite rational predictions, victory goes unexpectedly to the underdog.

As was argued at the outset of this study, a Critical **Realist paradigm** is perhaps best suited to describe and explain Roman international behaviour, particularly regarding intelligence, during the mid-republic. Critical Realist paradigms advocate that there are mind-independent aspects of the world that can be objectively known through sensory data, but that mind-dependent interpretation helps human beings understand the world around them. To recap: Critical Realism does not equate causality merely with constant
observable conjunctions of events. Rather, it accepts that some causes are unobservable, and, unlike Humean causation, that causes ontologically exist in complex situations where multiple causes interact with each other instead of in mechanistic X leads to Y scenarios. Perhaps most importantly, Critical Realism accepts that there many kinds of social causes, from reasons and norms to discourses and social structures.

The Roman use of intelligence highlights undeniable complexities in their decision-making and motivations. As this study shows, the Romans adopted many different approaches in many different foreign policy situations. Using intelligence, the senate made informed decisions about what actions to take in different circumstances. Roman attempts to learn about affairs, and their multitude of methods designed to deal with problems as they were discovered suggests that to truly understand the evolution of Roman imperialism, and of Roman imperial attitudes, future studies need to focus not only on general systemic factors compelling functionally similar behaviour to other states in the Mediterranean system, but also on domestic politics and ideologies, and on the unique circumstances of each international interaction. No parsimonious theory is able or willing to explain complex human interaction and behaviour. But scholars ought to be prepared to move beyond attempts to simplify history for the sake of making it easier to comprehend. Complexity should be acknowledged and appreciated, but not be played the slave to.

An understanding of the Roman appreciation for intelligence and its implications opens new pathways of investigation, not only for examining the development of political intelligence and counterintelligence over the course of the Roman expansion, but also in cases where a more detailed approach to intelligence used in specific campaigns and against specific peoples would appear beneficial. But more significant is that Rome’s engagement with intelligence reveals that the field of Roman mid-republican imperialism needs to move beyond the simple aggressive/defensive imperialism debate, and avoid the sterile application of orthodox IR theory to the study of Roman imperialism. As Critical Realism and other world systems approaches suggest, it is time to move past the frustrating attempts to fit activity to patterns and to embrace the complexities of historical empire building. It is only by acknowledging these
complexities that a nuanced understanding of the historical reality of Roman affairs can take place. IR theory and imperialism have opened pathways into understanding Roman foreign policy and international relations. They have served their purpose well. But it is time to move beyond the rigid orthodoxies of modern theoretical paradigms to examine the past as it was represented and understood by the Romans themselves, and how they tried to deal with individual foreign policy scenarios as they arose. Approaching each international interaction and examining it on its own terms reveal more about the Roman world and Roman actions than an attempt to force all Roman actions into a straight-jacket.


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