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Roman Expansion and the Pressures of Anarchy

The purpose of this study is a reexamination of the early involvement of the Republic of Rome in the eastern Mediterranean, down to the replacement of the long-prevailing Hellenistic anarchy in the region by a hierarchy of states with Rome at the top. This was established by 188 BC, and brought a minimum of order to the Greek world in the subsequent period down to 171 BC – though not with total stability. The hierarchy was created by victories over Antigonid Macedon and then over the Seleucid Empire won by a coalition of Greek states at whose head stood not a great Greek power, but Rome.

In one sense, this subject is well-trodden ground. The ancient historical writer Polybius of Megalopolis, a near-contemporary of many of these events, showed the way in terms of both the geographical and the chronological scale of our study; and prominent modern scholars have been studying Roman imperial expansion into the Greek Mediterranean for over a century.[1] But Roman expansion in the East remains highly contentious territory. There are sharp clashes among modern scholars even over the historicity of certain major events, and always about the motives behind the actions of the states involved. There are especially sharp differences of analysis concerning the causes of Roman imperial expansion in the East (as well as, of course, Roman expansion in general), and the causes of Roman success.[2]

[1] See, e.g., Fustel de Coulanges 1893; Colin 1905; cf. Frank 1914; de Sanctis 1923.
[2] Amid the vast literature, see Colin 1905; Frank 1914; de Sanctis 1923; Holleaux 1935; Harris 1979: 195–7, 205–8, and 212–23; Gruen 1984: Ch. 11; Ferrary 1988: Part I; Derow 1989 and 2003.

Following this introductory chapter, the first part of the present study examines the extent of Roman geopolitical interest in the Greek East and the extent of Roman political gains in the region down to the period after the end of the first Roman war against Philip V of Macedon in 205. The second part of the study examines the crisis in the eastern Mediterranean that developed at the end of the third century BC. The intense scholarly debate begins here.

It was Maurice Holleaux who first proposed that Roman interest in the Greek world east of the Adriatic, and the extent of the Republic's concrete interests there, remained minimal down to 201/200 BC. Holleaux argued, further, that the situation was changed dramatically at that point because of the arrival at Rome of envoys from several Greek states, led by Rhodes and Ptolemaic Egypt, warning of the threat posed by the sharp rise in power of the expansionist monarchs Philip V of Macedon and Antiochus III (the Great) of the Seleucid Empire. It was the Greek envoys' news of a treaty of alliance between the kings to destroy the Ptolemaic kingdom altogether and gain its resources – an unusual if not unprecedented act in Hellenistic geopolitics – that compelled the Roman Senate to intervene for the first time with great force and large intentions in the East. Theodor Mommsen had already argued that it was the profound shift in the balance of power in the Greek East that led to the Roman intervention there in 200 BC; and Holleaux's thesis has in fact never been subjected to a detailed and thorough scholarly refutation.[3] Nevertheless, it has been steadily eroded over time to the point that many recent studies of this crucial period in Mediterranean history either downplay the importance of the Pact Between the Kings (for instance, Habicht, Badian, Errington, Harris), or fail to mention it altogether.[4]

Meanwhile, an entire school of scholars led by W. V. Harris has argued that Rome from the beginning was as voraciously imperialist and exceptionally aggressive in its ambitions in the eastern Mediterranean as in the West, and that therefore the only explanation needed for the Roman decision of winter 201/200 BC to intervene in the Greek East was the inherently brutal imperialism and ferocious bellicosity of

[3] Holleaux's major reconstruction of events was first published in 1921; page references here are to the 1935 edition. For Mommsen's view, see Mommsen 1903: 696–701, with the comments of Radista 1972: 564–5, and Eckstein 2006: 261.
[4] Downplaying the importance of the pact: see, e.g., Habicht 1957: 239 n. 106, and 240, cf. Habicht 1982: 146; Badian 1958a: 64 n. 3, cf. Badian 1964b: 135 n. 3; Errington 1971 and 1986; Harris 1979: 312 n. 2. Failure even to mention the pact as a factor in these crucial events: Ager 1991: 16–22 (in a study of Rhodian diplomacy in this period); Derow 2003: 58–9 (in a discussion of the origin of Roman intervention in the East in 201/200).

Roman society.[5] To be sure, Erich Gruen has attempted to restore the balance in analysis by emphasizing the powerful independent role which, he argues, the rival policies, expansive ambitions, mutual conflicts, and outright aggressions of the Greek states themselves played in the complex events that led to the rise of Roman power in the East, emphasizing as well the influence which Greek interstate practices had upon Roman approaches to the region.[6] But Gruen's attempt to bring the Greeks back in as a crucial factor in events has often been bypassed in recent scholarship in favor of the point of view promoted by Harris, which centers itself sternly on Roman action, Roman ambition, Roman expansion, Roman aggression – in short, on Roman imperialism.[7]

These are the main issues we will be tackling in the first two-thirds of the present study – which is a defense of the two fundamental elements in Holleaux's thesis. This defense is underpinned, however, not only by detailed scholarship in a traditional vein which underlines, as Gruen has done, the Greek impact upon complicated events, but also by the employment of modern international relations theory, which emphasizes the tremendous impact and pressures on the decision-making of all governmental elites caused, in what is essentially an anarchy, by the shifting distribution of power among states within an existing state-system (see below).

Let us look now in more detail at the controversy over early Roman involvement in the Greek East. Sharp disagreement exists, first, over the causes of Rome's two wars in Illyria, in 229/228 BC and in 219 BC. Sharp disagreement exists, second, over the nature and extent of the control Rome gained over Illyria as a consequence of these wars. Prominent scholars have recently argued that from 229/228 onward Rome had formally sworn treaties of alliance with the Greek polities and indigenous tribes in maritime Illyris, treaties that legally bound them to the Republic; thus the Romans intentionally created a powerful geopolitical stronghold from which further advances into Greece could be launched. Other scholars, however, deny that the results of these wars were nearly so politically and strategically far-reaching.[8] Third, major scholars argue that the impact – and perhaps even a goal – of the first Roman war

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[5] See Harris 1979: Chs. 1–3 for the general theory, and 212–18 on the events of 201/200 BC. The influence of Harris' study has been widespread and profound: see, initially, North 1981; Rowland 1983; Rawson 1986; and in the long term, see the scholars listed below, n. 7.

[6] Gruen 1984.

[7] See, e.g., Mandell 1989 and 1991; Derow 1989, 1991, and 2003; Oakley 1993; Raaflaub 1996; Heftner 1997: 315–19; Habicht 1997: 185, cf. 194–5; Rosenstein 1999: 193–205; Campbell 2002: 167–9.

[8] See Derow 1991; Coppola 1993: 123–7; Habicht 1997: 189 – compared now with Eckstein, 1999; cf., Petzold 1971. Also important: Badian 1964a.

against Philip V of Macedon (214–205 BC) was the establishment of a large network of relationships with Greek states that set the stage for Rome soon thereafter becoming the major force in Greek politics. Yet the contrary has also recently been argued: that Greek ruling elites down to 205 viewed Rome's first war with Macedon as a war primarily fought among Greek polities in a Greek context, with Rome merely an ally of one side, and that this war left Rome with few political gains in Greece.[9]

On one reconstruction, Rome advanced purposefully into a powerful position among the Greek states well before the crisis that began to shake the eastern Mediterranean from 207 BC with the faltering and then the collapse of the Ptolemaic Empire. On the other reconstruction, however, the Romans merely acted energetically but sporadically from 230 BC to protect what they saw as their interests in the Greek East, but those interests were minimal, and Roman political aims and gains quite limited. As for the Illyrian polities, from 229 BC down to the outbreak of Rome's first war with Macedon in 214, and indeed well beyond it, they were linked to Rome solely by informal ties of friendship. Moreover, they were not very important places – and they were isolated by formidable mountains from the rest of the Greek world. Somewhat later, the first war between Rome and Macedon did confirm the Senate in a perception – originating in the invasion of Italy by Pyrrhus the king of Epirus in 280–275 BC – that significant threats to Roman security in Italy could suddenly emerge from the most powerful states of the East; and this probably led to a potential Roman desire to increase control over Greek affairs. But down to 205 BC this potential desire was not actualized; it was countered at Rome by a natural focus on Rome's terrible struggles in the West for survival, and consequently a lower level of concern about Greek affairs. Similarly, Rome was not yet an important factor in the decision-making of many Greek polities. This is the reconstruction of early Roman involvement in the Greek Mediterranean which will be supported in Chapters 2 and 3 – a view similar to that of Holleaux, but with new evidence and arguments.

This study also places the sudden emergence of deep Roman involvement in the Greek Mediterranean specifically within the framework of the crisis that convulsed the Greek world in the last decade of the third century BC. The origins and nature of this crisis will be our focus in the second part of the study (Chapters 4, 5, and 6). Detailed discussion is necessary because the thesis presented here is again close to that of Holleaux, and highly controversial: namely, that a profound crisis among the great Greek monarchies that began in Egypt ca. 207 and intensified

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[9]   Compare Rich 1984 with Eckstein 2002. On the proper date for the formal outbreak of this war, traditionally but wrongly stated by scholars to be 211, see below, Chapter 3.

after 204 transformed the geopolitical situation in the East, and was the primary (though not the only) cause for the sudden expansion of Roman influence and power deep into the Greek world between 200 and 188. The faltering of the Ptolemies led first to the treaty of alliance between Antigonid Macedon and the Seleucid Empire to divide up the Ptolemaic realm, then to large-scale warfare in the Greek Mediterranean from the frontiers of Egypt all the way to the Hellespont (203/202–201 BC), then to a revolution in Greek diplomacy towards Rome (201/200 BC) – apparent in the desperate pleas by major Greek states for Roman help – and then to the decision of the Senate to initiate major diplomatic and military involvement in the eastern situation, an involvement that rapidly escalated because of unexpected events.

We approach this crisis by employing types of historical argument that are on the one hand traditional in ancient studies, but which are also set within a new and broad political-science framework. It is a theoretical framework unfamiliar to most modern historians of antiquity, a broad theoretical framework originating in modern international relations studies; and it helps explain the warlike conduct both of Rome and of the Greek states over *la longue durée*, while also helping to explain their specific conduct during the crisis of the eastern Mediterranean in the last decade of the third century. This theoretical framework is provided by the central school of thought in the modern study of international relations, a school of thought termed "Realism."

Realism focuses on the harsh and competitive nature of interactions among states under conditions of international anarchy.[10] It is a family of related yet sometimes competing theories both about individual state behavior and about the nature of interstate relations taken as a whole. These theories share certain pessimistic core hypotheses, and they all emphasize a profound connection between the behavior of individual states and the character of the international system of states in which polities are forced to exist. Realism is also in itself a work in progress: it is a research program, not a finished theoretical edifice.[11]

International-systems Realism accepts that the most important actors in international politics are "territorially organized entities": city-states or dynastic empires in antiquity; nation-states in the modern world.[12]

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[10] On the concept of international anarchy, see below.
[11] On Realism as a family of related but competing theories, see, e.g., Wayman and Diehl 1994. As a research program: see Mastanduno and Kapstein 1999: 4.
[12] On the centrality of "territorially organized entities," see Gilpin 1988: 304–5; cf. Mastanduno and Kapstein 1999: 7. This would mean that internal actors, whether they are social, political, or economic interest groups, are less important in interstate relations than the placement and interaction of territorially based power-entities within the interstate system.

But Realism posits equally that the character of the state-system within which any one state exists exercises a strong impact in itself upon the behavior of that state – for the pressures deriving from the system strongly encourage (though they do not determine) certain types of actions, while simultaneously they strongly discourage (though they do not forbid) other types of action. Bluntly, certain types of interstate systems – especially anarchic systems, such as the one that existed in the Hellenistic Mediterranean – encourage assertive and aggressive modes of conduct by all states, and simultaneously discourage passive and peaceable conduct. Within this generally system-focused approach, contemporary Realist analysis of interstate politics is based on three propositions.

First is the centrality of anarchy. The interstate world consists of a multiplicity of sovereign polities; in political-science terms anarchy is usually a multipolar system, in which different states may differ (often widely) in power but in which there is no predominant actor. And over this multiplicity of sovereign polities there is no regulating authority either, and little or no international law (and certainly no effective way of enforcing it). Each state thus determines its own interests independently, and acts accordingly and usually strongly to further those interests. Multipolar anarchy has been the prevailing structure of interstate life since the emergence of organized territorial entities.[13]

There are only two exits from anarchy. The first would be the establishment of true international law, through the voluntary agreement by all states that they will obey such law, and that such law will be enforced upon them by a strong enforcement mechanism of some kind. This development in international affairs is, of course, something that so far has never occurred. The second exit is through the emergence, more or less violently, of a stern hierarchy among states, in which one state exercises great power and control over others, enforcing a modicum of order to its own liking; in other words, the emergence of unipolarity, or hegemony, or empire. Yet unipolarity, hegemony, and empire are themselves relatively rare in the history of interstate relations, because of the ferocious persistence with which sovereign polities cling to their independence.

From anarchy as the prevalent structure of state-systems there derives a second proposition: the ruthless self-seeking to which an anarchic system leads all states – all states, one must emphasize, and not just a few "pathological" ones. This ruthless self-seeking occurs because in the absence of international law, states must provide for their own security; providing for security in an anarchic system takes power; and so power is sought most of all. Hence grim self-help and power-maximizing

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[13]   On the characteristics of anarchy, see Waltz 1959 and 1979.

behavior become prevalent. Harsh behavior towards other states, tend-ing towards expansion of power, originates both from greed and from fear, but primarily from fear and not from greed – that is, from the desire for self-preservation in a world of states made fiercely competitive by the overarching structure of anarchy.[14] In short: "States must meet the demands of the political eco-system or court annihilation."[15] Thus Rome certainly was in modern terms a ferociously aggressive and militarized state – but so were all large states in the Classical and then Hellenistic Mediterranean, so were all medium-sized states, and so were even most small states.[16] As Kenneth Waltz, the leading Realist theorist, puts it: in self-help systems, "competition produces a tendency toward sameness of the competitors."[17] Or, even more bluntly: "the units that survive [in an anarchy] come to look like one another."[18]

The enduring prevalence of multipolar anarchy, combined with the ruthless self-help and power-maximizing behavior engaged in by all states simultaneously, leads to the third Realist principle: under anarchy, war, or the threat of war, is always present, and every state must be sternly prepared to defend its interests through organized military force. That is, "the state among states conducts its affairs in the brooding shadow of violence."[19] Nor does war occur primarily because of "miscommunication" among essentially well-meaning enti-ties. It occurs primarily because of real conflicts of interest between bitterly competing, functionally similar, and highly militarized entities. Moreover, the nature of the state-system precludes easy and peaceful resolutions of such conflicts. Thus in an international anarchy – and again, anarchy has historically been the prevalent structure of state-systems – "war is normal."[20]

A shocking statement. The idea is that under anarchic conditions – such as those existing in Mediterranean antiquity – wars are natural occur-rences, and part of the normal conduct among states. Wars arise not

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[14]   See, e.g., Waltz 1988.
[15]   Sterling 1974: 336; cf. Waltz 1979: 107 and 127 (emphatic). This is essentially what is called the "Offensive" Realist position. "Defensive" Realists argue that inter-national anarchy in itself need not always lead to power-maximizing behavior on the part of states, but that only very harsh and demanding anarchic systems do so: see, e.g., Taliaferro 2000 and 2004: 17; cf. Wohlforth 2001 (employing early modern Russia and Eastern Europe as an example of a very harsh system). My argument is that the Hellenistic Mediterranean fits, precisely, the latter situation.
[16]   See Eckstein 2006: Chs. 3–6.
[17]   Waltz 1979: 118–28, at 127.
[18]   Ibid.: 77; cf. Layne 1993: 11 and 15–16.
[19]   Waltz 1979: 102. Modern political scientists call this the "sameness effect" (Layne 1993: 11 and n. 24).
[20]   Waltz 1988: 620.

only out of the negative characteristics of the states themselves (e.g., intense militarism and a habit of aggressive diplomacy) – though such internal characteristics have traditionally been the focus of historians, and they are certainly important causal factors.[21] Rather, according to Realist theory, wars also arise – indeed, primarily arise – out of the structural defects of the international system itself, out of the system in which states exist, as a result primarily of the tensions, distrust, and clashes of objective interest which anarchic conditions promote and create.[22] Moreover, while the militaristic and aggressive internal cultures characteristic of states under anarchic conditions contribute importantly and synergistically to the prevalence of conflict and war in anarchic state-systems, these internal characteristics themselves derive in good part from the pressures of those systems – and emerge precisely because they are adaptive to those pressures.[23]

It is no accident that Realist paradigms of interstate behavior have their origins with thinkers (starting with Thucydides) whose life experience was formed by constant war and instability.[24] Conversely, times of peace and prosperity tend to bring forth criticisms of Realist assumptions about interstate life as too pessimistic, and so it was in the 1990s, when significant criticisms of the Realist paradigm as too pessimistic about interstate behavior appeared widely in the political-science literature. The argument was that although anarchy in a formal sense still prevailed in the post-Cold War world, its destructive pressures were being greatly alleviated by sophisticated diplomacy, rapid communications, and the existence of many independent international institutions of mediation.[25] In this period also, it was suggested by post-Modernists after "the linguistic

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[21] A classic example, focusing solely on Roman aggressiveness and militarism as the cause of Roman wars, is Harris 1979. Studies of modern states which take the same basic approach: Hobson 1902 (Victorian Britain); Williams 1962 (the United States); Fischer 1964 and 1969 (Wilhelmine Germany). This is rightly termed dangerously introverted historiography by Bayley 1988: 14–15.

[22] Not even Waltz, the Realist scholar most focused on systems-level analysis, denies that the nature of the internal cultures of individual polities has an important and independent effect on international outcomes, including on the frequency of wars (i.e., it is an important "independent variable"): see Waltz 1959: 160; Waltz 1979: 102; Waltz 2000: 8. But it is not the central cause of warfare.

[23] The fundamental study of this rather obvious point on the origins of militaristic and aggressive state cultures – a point that nevertheless still needs reassertion – is Gourevitch 1978; cf. Downing 1992 and now Jervis 2001: 287. Note Sterling's maxim: above, n. 15.

[24] See most recently Schweller 1999: 30–1. Also Schmidt 1998: Ch. 1; Donnelly 2000: Ch. 1; cf. esp. Eckstein 2003.

[25] This is called international relations Liberal Internationalism. Classic examples: Kegley 1993: 133–5 (Presidential Address to the International Studies Association), or the essays in Kegley, ed., 1995.

turn" struck historical studies that Realism was simply an artificial, dramatic, and destructive discourse, not related to anything real at all; rather, it was a self-fulfilling prophesy of conflict and war, for statesmen were trained in it, and then acted upon its assumptions. Thus if one changed this discourse to a more cooperative and communitarian one, international relations themselves would in turn become more cooperative, communitarian, and benign.[26] One must say, however, that the dismal events following September 11, 2001 have put a sharp brake on both types of criticism of Realism as too pessimistic.

But even if one accepts that not all interstate anarchies need be savage – and employment of the modern interstate system to demonstrate this is at best a debatable strategy –it is clearly the case that historically, some anarchic systems have been harsher and more cruel than others.[27] And it is equally clear that the state-systems that existed in Mediterranean antiquity were especially cruel anarchic systems. They fulfilled all the harshest expectations of the Realist paradigms of ferocious interstate interaction. International law was non-existent, and the few and informal customs of "proper" interstate behavior that stood in the stead of international law (such as not murdering ambassadors or not looting religious sanctuaries) had no means of enforcement. There existed a great multiplicity of fiercely independent and ferociously militaristic states, brutally contending with each other for survival, for scarce resources, for scarce security, and for power. It is no wonder, then, that the Realist paradigm originated in the reaction of ancient intellectuals (especially Thucydides) to this situation.[28] Realists in fact have always asserted that anarchy and its consequences are the great timeless factors in international relations.[29] Whether their paradigms are actually completely valid for modern interstate relations has become a subject of debate (see above); but their paradigms certainly appear to hold true for the more primitive conditions and more savage environment of Hellenistic antiquity. But two unique aspects of the exceptionally cruel interstate anarchy of the ancient Mediterranean need now to be underlined.

First, this was a world in which war was not only constant, but the states involved in constant warfare were, in general, extraordinarily

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[26] This is called international relations Social Constructivism. Classic examples: Wendt 1992 and 1999; Vasquez 1999.
[27] See Wohlforth 2001 (on early modern Russia and Eastern Europe).
[28] On Thucydides and the founding of the Realist paradigm, see Eckstein 2003.
[29] Realist assertion of the universal applicability of Realist principles regarding anarchy and its consequences: see Waltz 1979: 66 and 126. Cf. also Doyle 1991: 175 ("the continuity of interstate anarchy"); Glaser 1997: 171; Elman and Elman 1997: 9 and n. 11, cf. 13–14; and Copeland 2000: Ch. 8 *passim* (esp. 233–4).

fragile. In the fifth and early fourth centuries BC, for instance, more than forty Greek city-states (*poleis*) were destroyed through warfare.[30] And unlike modern nation-states, even the strongest and most powerful of ancient states exhibit a large potential for collapse. To cite two examples: Carthage, in the western Mediterranean, went in just five years (245–240 BC) from being a great imperial power to being on the verge of destruction, the city itself almost captured by its own rebellious mercenary army; and the Ptolemaic regime, in the eastern Mediterranean, went in just seven years (207–200 BC) from being one of the three great imperial states in the Greek East to being on the verge of destruction, with a child on the throne, riots in the capital at Alexandria, a massive indigenous rebellion in Upper and Middle Egypt, and increasingly severe attacks upon it from outside Greek powers. Polybius, the greatest of the surviving Hellenistic historians, asserts (at 2.35) that even Rome might have disappeared under a tidal wave of barbarian (Celtic) invasions in the 230s and 220s BC. And the point is this: the inherent fragility of ancient states made the ferocity of their mutual competition a truly life-and-death struggle. As Thucydides (5.101) has the Athenians say to their victims the Melians, international relations is not a game played for honor, but a struggle for physical survival.[31]

Second, the primitive character of diplomatic interaction among ancient polities was itself an additional factor conducive to constant warfare. Ancient Mediterranean states employed ambassadors only on an ad hoc basis, usually during crises; no ancient state employed permanent ambassadors or permanent diplomatic missions to other states. Yet this is the type of constant diplomatic interaction and exchange of information which modern governments not only take for granted, but which helps ameliorate the tone and even the substance of modern interstate interactions. This is because permanent diplomatic representation allows modern governments to warn each other of possible conflicts of interest at an early stage, creating the possibility of modifying a policy at a point when no one is greatly committed to it. Moreover, such interactions in the modern world are usually couched in a specially tactful diplomatic language which has been developed over centuries, and which is employed by a corps of specially trained diplomatic professionals. But while such institutions are ameliorative of the competitive pressures and the tendency towards violence in modern anarchic state-systems,[32] the fact is that none of these ameliorative institutions existed in

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[30]   Detailed discussion in Eckstein 2006: 53–4 and n. 72.
[31]   Fragility of ancient states: see detailed discussion in Eckstein 2006: Ch. 7.
[32]   See, esp., Kegley 1993, and the essays in Baldwin, ed., 1993 and Kegley, ed., 1995.

Mediterranean antiquity. Ancient Mediterranean states sent out embassies to other states only as important issues arose, and employed diplomatic missions to deal with crises only at points where sharp interstate conflicts over objective state interests had already arisen: in other words, in situations that were inherently very difficult to resolve. In addition, there existed no trained corps of diplomatic professionals to deal with such crises; and even more importantly, the language of state interactions at the crisis stage was in antiquity usually brutal and blunt – resembling the language of bitter private quarrel.[33] Modern political scientists have expressed shock upon discovering all of this, and have emphasized how the primitive level of ancient diplomatic interaction, especially in an interstate crisis, was conducive to the outbreak of wars.[34] Some scholars have even described the ancient interstate situation as essentially "pre-diplomatic."[35]

Such a primitive level of interstate contact had a dangerous impact upon the interaction of states within what was already an anarchic and hence war-prone interstate structure. The limited institutional ability and even limited desire of ancient states to communicate continually with one another – what political scientists would call their low level of interdependence – in turn affected these states' very definition of what their interests were, and the perceived choices of action available to them to achieve those interests. When the governing elites of states are unsure of what the intentions of their neighbors are (because of lack of information), and inherently view them (correctly) as bitter competitors for scarce material and security resources, and have few contacts with them, they naturally tend towards assuming the worst about them. Ferocious competition, deep uncertainty, and mutual opacity among such states lead to a tendency for their governing elites to fear and hence to prepare to meet what the political scientists call "the worst-case scenario." And such widespread readiness among governing elites to accept the likelihood of a "worst-case scenario" was yet another factor conducive to a war-prone interstate atmosphere.[36] No wonder, then, that in Aristophanes' comic play *Peace* (421 BC), the hero arrives on Mt. Olympus to find that the gods themselves have departed in disgust,

[33] See the excellent discussion in Grant 1965: esp. 262–3.
[34] See Lebow 1991: 144–5; cf. Kauppi 1991: 119.
[35] Aron 1973: 15.
[36] On differing regimes of diplomatic process and their impact on the perceived choices available to states, see Keohane and Nye 1987: esp. 745–9. On the negative impact of "the uncertainty principle," mutual opacity, and the prevalence of "the worst-case scenario," see Morgenthau 1973: 208; van Evera 1998: 13–14. Kokaz 2001: 95, is far too optimistic on the peace-making efficacy of occasional "traveling ambassadors."

because not even they can get the Greeks to resolve the disputes that lead to constant war.[37]

Furthermore, the very fact that states tended to send out envoys to protest the conduct of other states only at the point where the clash of interests was obvious and sharp meant that such diplomatic interactions generally occurred at a point where stern considerations of status and prestige made compromise between governments extremely difficult.[38] To be sure, a state might sacrifice important interests when confronted by a greatly superior power – but this was action taken not for the sake of compromise and the preservation of international peace but rather for the sake of self-preservation. In that sense, crisis "diplomacy" between ancient states was simply an alternative means of pursuing the agenda of the more powerful. It might be a less violent means of interstate coercion, but coercion it was: the type of diplomacy that modern political scientists have termed "compellence diplomacy."[39]

The Republic of Rome habitually practiced such compellence diplomacy during its confrontations with other polities, and Rome has often been called to task (rightly) for doing so. But Rome has been called to task here as if this were a defect of aggressiveness characteristic of Roman diplomacy alone.[40] Yet Rome was not alone in this practice. On the contrary: it was the *common* method of crisis diplomacy among all ancient Mediterranean states; its prevalence can be traced back at least as far as the fifth century BC; and it was the usual conduct followed in crises between states throughout both the western and eastern Mediterranean throughout the entire Hellenistic period.[41]

Political scientists have underlined that such a habit of "compellence diplomacy" and "brinksmanship" among states can itself exercise its own independent negative impact upon interstate interactions in the modern

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[37]   Ar. *Peace*, 195–220; cf. Tritle 2007: 175 and 184. Tritle nevertheless is optimistic both about the possibility of interstate arbitration among the Greek polities, though he can cite no example where a powerful state submitted to it (175–7), and about the impact of the fourth-century Greek attempts to organize a "Common Peace" (*koine eirene*) among the city-states – though he knows that the latter was effective only when backed by the military might of a domineering hierarchical state such as Macedon (180–1). He is correct that Greek intellectuals were often appalled at the existing violence of the interstate situation (180–5); but the fact was that they could not stop it.

[38]   See Lebow 1991: 144; Kauppi 1991: 119. Alonzo 2007 (esp. 215–16) is too confident about the ability of Greek prewar diplomacy to prevent the outbreak of conflict (and he does not cite any cases).

[39]   On this type of diplomacy and its detrimental impact upon interstate relations, discussed in a modern context, see Ferrar 1981: esp. 194–200.

[40]   See Veyne 1975: 819; Harris 1979: 217; Ferrary 1988: 48; Derow 2003: 59–60.

[41]   Discussion in Eckstein 2006: Chs. 3, 4, and 5. Ferrar 1981 argues that such diplomacy is typical of states existing in an anarchic international system.

world, increasing the general atmosphere of anxiety and mutual suspicion; in social-science terms this is another independent variable conducive to interstate violence. It is fair to assume that the same was true in Mediterranean antiquity as well.[42] And there is another negative aspect to this phenomenon: compellence diplomacy rarely is, nor can it afford to be, a bluff; it is almost always backed by a true willingness to use violence to enforce demands.[43] That is: Rome, and the many states that interacted with Rome and competed bitterly with Rome for power and security, did not just seem tough; they *were* tough, and they were ready to fight. Hence crisis diplomacy in the ancient Mediterranean was, like war itself, often merely another facet of an interstate system founded on the brutal facts of power, another facet of almost unrestrained interstate competition and clashes of interest.[44]

In such a world it was obviously best to be as powerful as one could be – and hence to engage in power-maximizing behavior of the most ruthless kind. Rome did it. All ancient states – large, medium, and small – did it. This was the world in which Rome and its ferocious rivals had to live and operate.[45]

Let us be clear about this. The Roman Republic was a very heavily militarized and militaristic society, and its culture was obsessed with war. In our period, for instance, no candidate could run for even the lowest public office at Rome without having served ten campaigns in the army (Polyb. 3.19.4). This meant that the main life experience of young male aristocrats (those who would naturally be seeking to run for public office) was and had to be army service, and that the Senate (made up of all ex-public officials) thus consisted solely of men with long military experience. Similarly, in our period a stunning percentage of the Roman male populace as a whole served annually in the army: on average about 13 percent annually between 230 and 188 BC.[46] And, as we have said, Rome habitually engaged in assertive and aggressive diplomatic conduct – proclaiming Rome's alleged rights, complaining biiterly about the actions of others, and always seeking to gain new areas of influence. No one denies these aspects of Roman culture or Rome's internatonal behavior, or their importance to international outcomes.

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[42]   On the negative impact of persistent "brinksmanship" upon the tone of modern interstate life, see Ferrar 1981: 194–200; Stevenson 1997a: 125–61, esp. 158.

[43]   See esp. Ferrar 1981: 194–5; so, too, Stevenson 1997a: esp. 134–5.

[44]   Cf. Strauss 1991: 203.

[45]   See Eckstein 2006: esp. Chs. 4, 5, and 6. On the mini-imperialisms of small ancient states, see Ma 2000.

[46]   See the chart in Hopkins 1978: 33. After 188 BC the crisis situation and the strain significantly lessen, so that the percentage of the male citizen population in the Roman army drops rapidly into single digits, a continuous phenomenon until ca. 110 BC (ibid.).

The analytical problem in terms of the causes of Rome's successful expansion is, however, that these characteristics were also the characteristics of all its rivals. At Rome there were ceremonies that celebrated the increase in state resources and power; the same was true at Athens, at Pergamum, in the Seleucid Empire – or at tiny Cos. At Rome the goddess Victory was worshipped – but the same was true at Tarentum, at Rhodes, and among the Hellenistic monarchies, which possessed "une véritable théologie de la victoire."[47] At Rome the primary pathway to power and influence for individuals in the state was through achievement in war. But the same was true in the Achaemenid Empire, at Classical Athens (and of course at Sparta); it was true at Carthage, among the great Hellenistic monarchies, among the Hellenistic federal leagues of city-states, and among Celtic tribes. At Rome, individual bravery in battle was greatly honored, in private and in public, and especially honored – for aristocrats – was victory in single combat. But the same was true of the Persians, the Achaean League, Epirus, Syracuse, Antigonid Macedon, the Seleucid realm, and Carthage. The Romans were stern and steadfast in war-making, grimly intent on prosecuting any war until victory was achieved, however long it took – but a stern steadfastness in war-making was also characteristic of Classical Athens, Corinth and Sparta, of Hellenistic Tarentum and Carthage, and even of Polybius' small city-state of Megalopolis. It is obviously important that the Roman Republic went to war with some rival polity almost every year; but, again, the same was true of the Achaean League in the third century BC, and of monarchs such as Seleucus II, Attalus I, Antiochus III, and Philip V: under the shadow of Alexander the Great, and under the pressures of the harsh environment, this was what it meant to be a king. It is therefore not surprising that in the 123 years between 323 BC (the death of Alexander) and 160 BC, there were only four years when one or the other of the great Hellenistic monarchies was not at war (i.e., when there was general peace in the Greek East), nor is it surprising that twelve of the first fourteen Seleucid kings died in battle or while on campaign. Again, the Romans each year celebrated religious ceremonies both in spring and autumn which appear to have had a direct connection to war; but the annual Macedonian religious ceremonies along these lines not only occurred at similar times, they were also much bloodier and more brutal. This fits with what Polybius indicated concerning the Macedonians: they – not the Romans – were the most ferocious of all soldiers he knew. The Romans were formidable (especially when defending their homeland of Italy from attack: 6.51.6–10), but

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[47]   Lévêque 1968: 278.

the Macedonians enjoyed war as if it were a banquet (5.2.6), something he never comes close to saying about Romans. Polybius had seen both Macedonians and Romans in battle (see, e.g., 28.11).[48]

We may choose to view all the above Roman characteristics and customs, and the conduct connected to them, as "dark" and "pathological."[49] But despite the assumptions of many prominent modern historians of Rome, such pathology did not make the Romans exceptional within their environment. Within their environment, within the system of states in which Rome existed, the Romans were in fact quite similar in their pathologies to their neighbors and rivals, and their aggression had a rational basis, aiming at survival. If the Romans' militarism, bellicosity, and aggressive diplomacy appear extraordinarily pathological in modern terms, these characteristics are nevertheless only ordinarily pathological in their own world. This situation conforms, precisely, to Waltz's maxim concerning the tendency towards sameness among the competitors in harshly anarchic conditions.[50] And if the Romans' intense militarism, bellicosity, and aggressive diplomacy are in fact not extraordinary within their world, but are the common coin in which all their contemporaries and rivals dealt, then these characteristics simply cannot be (despite the opinion of many prominent modern scholars) the key explanation for the Romans' extraordinary success.[51]

In particular, modern scholars point an accusatory finger at the Roman senatorial aristocracy as the source of continual Roman war-making. Typical is the statement that "War was necessary to satisfy the material and ideological needs of the aristocracy." Perhaps created originally to deal with the real problem of violent neighbors that confronted Rome early in its history (though some scholars even doubt this, preferring to see the Romans as simply inveterately bellicose), the warrior aristocracy of Rome by our period, it is claimed, now headed a war machine that created the wars it required. In this way the aristocracy enriched itself through booty, while maintaining its social prestige through leadership

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[48] On all this, see in detail and with extensive supporting evidence Eckstein 2006: Ch. 6. Note also Livy 32.17–18.1 (the evaluation of T. Quinctius Flamininus, after his defeat at Atrax, that the Macedonians were the better soldiers), and 45.30.7 (on the origins of exceptional Macedonian ferocity); both these passages are based on Polybian material: see Eckstein 1997: 181–2.

[49] The characteristics which sum up Roman culture in Harris 1979: see 53 ("pathological," with aggression having "dark and irrational roots"); cf. 50–1.

[50] See above, p. 9 and nn. 17 and 18.

[51] The thesis of Harris 1979: Chs. 1–3, and 5; cf. Harris 1984a and 1990; Rowland 1983; Cornell 1995; Rosenstein 1999; Derow 2003.

in war, hence enforcing the deference within Roman society which it felt was its due.[52]

Allegedly, the instrument for achieving these aristocratic goals was the Roman Senate, which "will have looked for war even when none was ready at hand."[53] The Senate was the central decision-making institution in foreign relations. It was a group of approximately 300 aristocratic ex-public officials, riddled (as far as we can tell) by faction and individual competition, while at the same time operating mostly by consensus, which meant that in the nature of things, serious decisions occurred only when problems were obvious to everyone. About half of the senators were men who would not advance beyond the lowest public office (the quaestorship) because of the limited number of available senior magistracies; this meant they would never command in war or gain much glory – which, in turn, meant that, however imbued such men might be with a warrior ethos from their early army experiences, they had little reason to vote for war simply out of their own personal ambition. Nor is it likely, given the intensely competitive atmosphere within the senatorial aristocracy, that many of them would vote for unnecessary wars simply to further the personal ambitions of someone else. On the contrary: plenty of evidence suggests that the social structure of the Senate often operated to restrain overwrought ambitions, that it did not act as a rubber stamp for those who wished triumphal parades, and that commanders (i.e., public officials) who were accused of having begun unnecessary wars found this to be a serious accusation indeed.[54] Moreover, the internal discourse at Rome emphasized that the only type of just wars – which were the only kind of wars approved by the gods – were defensive wars. This ideology is an odd one indeed for a state that is claimed to be an exceptional international predator. The ideology was of course subject to some manipulation, but there were limits.[55] Nor

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[52]   See Harris 1979: 10–41; Raaflaub 1996 (the quote: 278). The "war machine": whether or not modern scholars of Rome have read the sociologist Joseph Schumpeter, it is his view of the origins of war and imperialism which they have adopted; see Schumpeter 1952: 25 (general statement), cf. 51–3 (on the Roman Republic). Schumpeter originally wrote this famous essay in Germany in the bitter aftermath of World War I, which he blamed on the European aristocracy's need for warfare in order to maintain its social position. Romans as inveterately bellicose, rather than responding to early challenges through the adaptation of militarism: see, e.g., Rowland 1983.

[53]   Oakley 1993: 16; this is also the entire tenor of Harris 1979: Ch. 5.

[54]   See the good discussion in Rich 1993; cf. already Sherwin-White 1980 (review of Harris); Sherwin-White 1984: 13–15 (on the social structure of the Senate); Wiseman 1985.

[55]   Hence, for instance, the successful prevention of war against Rhodes in 167 BC by M. Porcius Cato (consul 195); see the moralizing tone of his speech *For the Rhodians* (= Gell. 6.3) – the Rhodians have not injured Rome enough to deserve war – with Astin 1978: 273–81.

was it always easy to convince the *populus Romanus* to go to war (they were citizens and primarily farmers, not professional pirates) – as we will see when we discuss the Roman decision of 200 BC.

In a harsh anarchy such as the one in which Rome existed, in which war was always a threat, the focus of every government was on achieving self-preservation in the short term, and to plan for the long term would be pointless even if one had institutions capable of doing such planning.[56] The Romans did not have such institutions. The very structure of the Roman Senate militated against any long-term decision-making, and so the *Patres* stumbled along from crisis to crisis – just as every other ancient government did. None of these senators had staffs of experts to help him, and relatively few senators in our period had even been outside of Italy (and certainly not for long).[57] And decisions were made, one might almost say instinctively, on the basis of the governing elite's often bitter experience and perceptions of the outside world, of how the harsh anarchy of states within which Rome existed actually functioned, on what worked well for survival and power in a militarized environment, and what did not.[58]

The Romans were highly militaristic, bellicose, and assertive internationally, but so was every other state, and there is a better answer to the question of the origins of Rome's extraordinary success. It lies in cultural characteristics significantly different from Rome's stern militarism, bellicosity, and diplomatic aggressiveness – characteristics that allowed Rome to survive in its extraordinarily harsh environment, but that it shared with every other major ancient state. Rome's advantage, and the strong element of truth in the idea of Roman exceptionalism, lay elsewhere than in its bellicosity and aggression: it lay in the Romans' exceptional ability in Italy to assimilate or conciliate outsiders and foreigners, and in the exceptional Roman ability at alliance-management. Such alliance-management included occasional savage terrorism, and we should not doubt the ultimately military nature of Roman dominance in Italy. But unlike the Athenians, for instance, the Romans avoided imposing taxation or specific political regimes upon their allies, and they demonstrated

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[56] Focus, in harsh anarchies, on self-preservation and survival above all: Waltz 1979: 91–2; cf. 107 and 127.

[57] On the inefficiency of the Roman Senate as a decision-making body see Astin 1968; Veyne 1975: 804–9; Eckstein 1987a: esp. xvi–xviii. On the senatorial lack of area experts in foreign affairs, see Gruen 1984: Ch. 6.

[58] On the impact of learned perceptions upon the interstate decision-making by governing elites – perceptions which themselves are in good part the result of the international environment – see Desch 1998: 144–5. Another way of saying this is that the Romans, through long experience, had become socialized to the harshness of their interstate world.

an extraordinary capacity to compromise with local elites and to provide those elites with a real stake in Roman success. The ability to conciliate outsiders went so far as the creation of the concept of Roman citizenship as purely a legal category, divorced from ethnicity or location or even language, to which local elites could aspire (again, something foreign to an exclusivist city-state such as Athens). Roman techniques of conciliation and the extension of citizenship brought all of Latium, with its large population, into the Roman state after ca. 340 BC, and in the third century BC these techniques (including the granting of citizenship) were being spread far beyond Latium. Even Hannibal's invasion of Italy, and his ability to inflict devastating military defeats upon the Romans on Italian soil, did not shake the heart of the Roman alliance-system – though no one knew that beforehand, and Hannibal had thought such victories would do so.[59] The solidity of the Roman alliance-system in Italy, based on the Roman capacity for deal-making (as well as, of course, on fear of Rome), was an extraordinary achievement. It eventually gave the Romans the advantage of possessing extraordinarily large *resources* which they could mobilize in the usual bitter competition for survival and power that characterized all states within the Hellenistic anarchy.[60]

Though wars between states are "normal" under anarchic conditions and require little explanation in themselves – and were certainly "normal" among these aggressive Hellenistic states – comparatively rare but hugely important historically are large-scale wars that simultaneously involve most of the polities within a state-system in one enormous struggle with one another. These cataclysms have, naturally, been intensively analyzed by modern political scientists, and Realists suggest that they often arise out of a particular structural cause within the state-system. Evidence indicates that within multipolar anarchic systems, dramatic shifts in the distribution of capabilities across the system often create these situations of special crisis. The sudden decline in the capabilities of one or more of the major actors in the system, and/or the dramatic growth in the capabilities of one or more of the other major units in the system, can be a dangerous moment for the system taken as a whole. In the terminology of political science, this is a "power-transition crisis." In such

[59]   In the face of catastrophic Roman defeats in the early years of the Hannibalic War, about 40 percent of Rome's allies, mostly in southern Italy, went over to Hannibal (see Lazenby 1996: 44). It was a terrible blow; but this still meant that about 60 percent of Rome's allies stayed on the Roman side under very difficult circumstances (cf. Cornell 1996: 103).
[60]   As Goldsworthy 2000: 70, says, the main targets of Roman imperialism were other imperialists. The basic Roman advantages in the harsh rivalry for power and security in the Hellenistic Mediterranean via the creation of a very large but also relatively well-integrated state were laid out long ago by Mommsen 1903: 412–30, esp. 428–30, cf. 451–2; cf. Strauss 1997; Eckstein 2006: Ch. 7; Rosenstein 2007.

situations, the distribution of status, territory, resources, and influence which have become traditional and habitual within the system develops an increasing disjuncture with the realities of power – and hence the system breaks down. The result of that breakdown tends to be large-scale war, the convulsion of the entire state-system – a phenomenon that political scientists call "hegemonic war." Hegemonic war, a struggle for leadership and control over the entire system, in turn creates – though only after massive violence – a new interstate structure that is now more in accord with the real balance of power and capabilities across the system.[61]

Obviously, "power-transition crises" are crucial moments in the life of international systems. The most famous such crisis is probably the decline of the Turkish and Austro-Hungarian Empires in the face of rising Serbian and (more broadly) Russian power in the early twentieth century, combined with the declining power of Wilhelmine Germany itself in relation to the rising power of Tsarist Russia. The resulting tensions led to the catastrophic World War I.[62] It is argued here that a similar power-transition crisis of profound proportions, occurring among the great Greek states of the eastern Mediterranean, occurring too within the heavily militarized and brutal anarchy that constituted the Hellenistic state-system as a whole, was similarly the catalyst for dramatic change. It led to the transformation of the system, through the sudden expansion of previously minimal Roman interest and intervention in the Greek East, and the emergence there instead of a Roman predominance that turned out to be permanent.

Throughout the third century, the state-system in the Greek Mediterranean had been a multipolar (fundamentally a tripolar) system, based on the predominance of three great states: Ptolemaic Egypt, the Seleucid Empire, and Antigonid Macedon. Each of these powerful monarchies had been founded by a marshal of Alexander the Great in the period of enormous chaos and violence in the East that followed his premature death. None of them was strong enough to conquer the other two (though the ambition was always there).[63] This multipolar (tripolar) state-system provided significant room for political and military maneuver by second-tier and even smaller states attempting to maintain their independence by playing off the three great powers against one another. But now one of these great powers that had traditionally been strong enough to provide a crucial balance within the triadic state-system of the Greek

[61] Hypotheses and evidence on "power-transition theory": Kugler and Lemke 1996: 3–35; Geller and Singer 1998: 72–5. On the structural link between the onset of power-transition crises and the onset of "hegemonic war," see Gilpin 1988.
[62] A useful analysis of World War I as primarily the result of a power-transition crisis within the European state-system: Stevenson 1997b: Ch. 5.
[63] See Ager 2003; Eckstein 2006: Ch. 4.

Mediterranean suddenly ceased being able to fulfill its accustomed systemic function. The weakening of Ptolemaic Egypt after ca. 207 BC and then its increasing collapse after 204 led to a dramatic redistribution of power across the Hellenistic state-system, and in fact the collapse of the Ptolemies destabilized the entire system. One result among several was a tremendous expansion in the power of the two other great states, Antigonid Macedon under its vigorous king, Philip V, and the empire of the Seleucids under its vigorous king, Antiochus III the Great. Another result was the unexpected appearance of no fewer than four embassies at Rome in winter 201/200 from Greek states, all pleading for Roman intervention and help in this crisis.

Political scientists stress that such power-transition crises are not only crises for the individual states directly involved but are also simultaneously *system*-level crises, affecting all states within the system simultaneously and synergistically, though each in a different way – which is one reason why such crises lead to fundamental changes in the shape of the system. And as we have already noted (above, p. 20), these fundamental shifts in power and capability within the system tend to be accompanied by great interstate violence – "hegemonic war." Thus the warfare that broke out on a large scale in the Greek East in 202, and which eventually involved the Romans by 200, was – however destructive – not an unusual development, given the collapse of Ptolemaic Egypt and the disruption of the state-system.

It is not that the emergence of a power-transition crisis makes large system-wide war inevitable. The Realist approach emphasizes the pressures exerted by the system, by the events of the power-transition crisis itself as the crisis unrolls, and even by the nature of the unit culture involved, but the approach is nevertheless not that deterministic (though it is sometimes accused of being so).[64] Thus careful and delicate diplomacy led to the power-transition crisis of 1989–91 coming to an end with the empire of the Soviet Union having disappeared, and the Soviet Union itself having disappeared, but without a war. Realists do argue, however, that the emergence of a power-transition crisis greatly increases the likelihood or probability of large system-wide war, because the issues involved are so important for all states within the system and for the system as a whole.

This probability increases with the harshness of the specific anarchic state-system under discussion – as well as with the lack of sophisticated instruments of diplomacy. But no one is denying here that human decision-making – the decisions of Greek, Macedonian, and Roman statesmen – played a crucial role in the profound transformation within the Hellenistic state-system that occurred between 207 and 188 BC. These

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[64]   Criticisms: see Levy 1988; Snyder 1991. Response: see, e.g., Waltz 2000: 24.

statesmen could have made different decisions, they could have chosen to act in ways significantly different from the ways they chose – ways, for instance, that were less militarily and diplomatically aggressive on behalf of the competing interests of their own polities. Thus Antiochus and Philip could have decided not to take voracious advantage of the sudden weakness of the Ptolemies; and the governing elites of the less powerful states could have decided to accommodate themselves to the suddenly expanding power of Macedon and/or the Seleucids, hoping to appease the appetite of the newly much more dominant powers (what the political scientists call "bandwagoning"), or even seeking to gain advantages from the new systemic configuration (what the political scientists call "jackel bandwagoning"), rather than calling in Rome to aid them in their military resistance. The Roman Senate, although faced with multiple Greek requests for help, could have decided not to intervene (indeed, the Roman assembly came close to deciding not to intervene, even though the Senate urged it – see below, Chapter 6). In any of these ways, the ancient Mediterranean world would have had a quite different history. There might have developed no major threat to the traditional balance of power if Philip and Antiochus had not decided to assault it; there might have emerged a bipolar system in the Greek East (dominated by Macedon and Syria) or even a unipolar structure in the Greek East (dominated by either Macedon or Syria) if the *Patres* in Rome had not decided to prevent it.

In history as it actually unfolded, however, it is significant that all these statesmen chose the types of policies and actions that, according to Realist theoreticians, *typically* happen among the fiercely independent states of anarchic systems when power-transition crises occur. Moreover, these decisions to a great extent derived from the pressures and the constraints which both the anarchic system in general and the inherent dynamics of such power-transition crises themselves imposed upon the human decision-makers, although we must also acknowledge as a very important causal factor the militaristic and independence-seeking internal cultures of the states involved.[65]

Modern students of political science have sometimes complained about the relatively small number of cases of power-transition crisis, resultant

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[65]   On the increasingly stereotyped actions of decision-makers in a crisis as the crisis evolves over time and develops its own inner dynamic, see Wolfers 1962: 13–19; Lebow 1981: Ch. 5; Richardson 1994: 10–34. On the feeling among statesmen in such crises that alternative avenues of action are quickly closing off and that "there is no choice" (what is termed "cognitive closure" by the political scientists), see, e.g., Kauppi 1991: 115–16. Again, the militaristic and independence-seeking cultures we are discussing were themselves in great part the result of the pressures of the system, and of the often bitter experience of decision-making elites concerning the nature of those pressures: see above, p. 19.

hegemonic war, and major system-transformation with which they have had to work in laying out the fundamental factors that might lie behind such interstate phenomena.[66] The crisis that shook the eastern Mediterranean from ca. 207 onwards should be added to the list of those cases of power-transition crises which are discussed by political scientists. It has been missing from all such discussions because detailed knowledge of interstate relations in the ancient world among political scientists, skimpy in any case, is most often limited to Thucydides, with a lesser emphasis on the conflicts between Rome and Carthage. Hellenistic history has received no attention, and has never been subjected to detailed analysis by political scientists. In a previous book I have sought to rectify this gap in general knowledge of the Hellenistic Mediterranean among political scientists, but that book was not focused – as this one is – on the detailed story of Roman relations with the Greek East; it dealt, rather, with the general problem of anarchic state-systems in Mediterranean antiquity.[67] My hope in this book is that political scientists as well as modern historians of antiquity will benefit from the theoretically informed reconstruction of the complicated evolution of Roman involvement in the Greek East which follows, and the detailed and theoretically informed reconstruction of the great transformaton in the state-system that convulsed the Mediterranean world at the end of the third century BC.

One must stress here that the large-scale interstate violence typical of power-transition crises did not begin in 200 BC with the Roman intervention in the East. In that sense, whereas modern international relations theorists have been completely ignorant of the power-transition crisis that developed in the Hellenistic Mediterranean after 207, modern historians of antiquity have strongly tended to focus too narrowly on the Roman decision of winter 201/200.[68] All ancient states, even the most powerful ones, were fragile in a way in which modern nation-states are not: it was one of the factors contributing to the savage competition among them to gain resources, power, and influence.[69] The Ptolemaic state began to fall into serious trouble from ca. 207 BC with the emergence of an uncontrollable indigenous rebellion in Upper and Middle Egypt. The premature death of Ptolemy IV in 204 and the accession to the Ptolemaic throne of a child of 6 intensified the crisis. Large-scale interstate violence then began with the invasion of Ptolemaic territory in the Levant by King Antiochus III the Great in 202; this attack had been preceded (this

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[66]   See Wohlforth 2000: 127 and 132.
[67]   Eckstein 2006.
[68]   Examples: Harris 1979: 212–18; Mandell 1989; Derow 2003: 58–60.
[69]   See above, pp. 11–12.

study will argue) by a treaty of alliance between Antiochus and Philip V of Macedon to destroy the Ptolemaic regime utterly; and as the large-scale war between Antiochus and the weakened Ptolemaic government continued, Philip V in 201 opened a major campaign of his own against Ptolemaic interests and holdings in the southeast Aegean. By summer 201 the eastern Mediterranean from Gaza to the Hellespont was already at war on a scale not seen in 100 years. This was the power-transition crisis, leading to hegemonic war, and thence to system transformation. Up to this point, the Republic of Rome was not involved.

There is no doubt that with the faltering and then the increasing collapse of the Ptolemaic state, a new and radically transformed inter-state system was about to emerge in the eastern Mediterranean. *Something* was going to replace the previous multipolar system based on a triad of great powers (Macedon, the Seleucid Empire, Ptolemaic Egypt). There is no doubt, either, that because the Ptolemaic regime had served the function, on the level of the system, of containing both the expansionist conduct of the Seleucid monarchy and to a lesser extent Antigonid Macedon, now that such containment had been greatly weakened the new system that was emerging would be characterized by the increased power of the most powerful states. Perhaps in the offing was a bipolar system in which Macedon and the Seleucids would confront each other across the entire realm of the Greek East; or perhaps the hegemony of one or the other of these two great states over the East would eventually have emerged (after yet another round of system-wide "hegemonic war"). What did emerge, however, was a surprise: the intervention of a large and powerful polity that had previously been mostly outside the orbit of the Hellenistic Greek system. This Roman intervention instigated a short but intense and violent period of hegemonic rivalry among Rome, Macedon, and the Seleucid monarchy (200–188 BC), a rivalry that ended with the emergence of Rome as the patron of what looked on the surface to be an artificially restored balance of power among the three great Greek states. As Waltz suggests, "Larger units existing in a contentious arena tend to take on systemwide tasks."[70]

The great Hellenistic historian Polybius described in extensive detail, especially in books 14–21 of his *Histories*, the process by which this systemic transformation at the end of the third century BC was accomplished. Polybius was a man widely experienced in political and military affairs, and an intellectually sophisticated observer and analyst of events.[71] Unfortunately, much of his work on the period of transformation has

[70]   Waltz 2000: 34.
[71]   Recent studies of Polybius (ca. 200–118 BC): Eckstein 1995; Champion 2004.

been lost, but enough survives to show that he approached the transformation in a theoretically informed manner of his own. He emphasized that the years between 204 and 200 BC witnessed the definitive emergence of a *symplokē*: a new "interconnectedness" between the eastern and western halves of the Mediterranean. This was an interconnectedness between events in the geographically separate regions of the Mediterranean basin that had previously not existed: events in the Greek East had previously not had an impact on the West, and vice versa. Polybius thought that the first steps towards this *symplokē* occurred in 217 BC, when Philip V of Macedon first turned towards the West and attempted imperial expansion at the expense of the Romans (whom he saw as weakened by the Hannibalic War), and that thereafter the two regional subsystems of states in the eastern and western Mediterranean gradually but increasingly became transformed through interaction into one single very large system. For Polybius the growth of the *symplokē* explained at a deep level the intervention of the great western power Rome in 200 BC into the power-transition crisis that previously had been limited to the Greek East; at the same time the Roman decision itself intensified the growth of the *symplokē*, until by the time Polybius was writing, ca. 150 BC, the *symplokē* was obvious to all.[72]

The final third of our study will cover the period of the great hegemonic wars between Rome, Macedon, and the Seleucid Empire, and the immediate consequences of those wars. The surprising result of the power-transition crisis in the East was that the Roman Republic managed by 188 BC to create what political scientists call a "unipolar" system in the Mediterranean. By the early 180s Rome as the leading state in a large coalition of primarily Greek allies had defeated both Antigonid Macedon and the Seleucid Empire, and had emerged as the sole remaining superpower. Yet both Macedon and the Seleucid Empire retained significant potential to challenge Roman preponderance if the right circumstances occurred, and meanwhile the Romans themselves – as, we will see, so often previously – withdrew completely back across the Adriatic to Italy once the crisis was over, leaving all Greek states with much independence. This suggests that even in the 180s, Roman strategic goals in the eastern Mediterranean remained highly limited in scope. Moreover, historically "unipolarity" tends strongly to exit backward into multipolarity rather than forward towards hegemony and

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[72]   On the *symplokē*, see esp. Walbank 1985: 313–24. This was not the only perspective Polybius brought to the crisis of 207/204–188 BC, however: he was a Hellenistic intellectual (and not a modern political scientist), so he also perceived at work in these events the power of the goddess Tyche (Fortune) as retributive justice against what he saw as the unjust behavior of Philip and Antiochus. Discussion of this aspect of Polybius' thought: below, Chapter 4.

empire.[73] Thus although a clear international hierarchy had now been established in the Mediterranean state-world, one that was gradually replacing the previously prevailing anarchy, this was not yet a stable situation. The future still remained to be written. But because "unipolarity" is an analytical category with its own specific characteristics, characteristics that have recently – for obvious reasons – been intensively studied by modern political scientists, here, too, a theoretical framework from political science will help us understand the unrolling of the historical process.

This book thus follows the example of Polybius in offering a theoretically informed narrative of world-historical events. As in my immediately previous book, this study is intended both for political scientists and for modern historians of antiquity – though in its detailed attention to the reconstruction of a relatively short but crucial and highly controversial period in ancient Mediterranean history, perhaps more for the latter now. In what follows, political scientists may be disconcerted by the extended and complex arguments sometimes necessary to establish even the basic narrative of events – to establish what, historically, actually occurred; but our information is so scanty that much effort must be devoted to this. Meanwhile, modern historians of antiquity may already be somewhat put off by the explicitness of the theoretical model into which rather traditional questions are being placed – and put off as well as by the unfamiliar terminology.

These are the problems inherent in attempting an interdisciplinary study combining two neighboring but differing scholarly disciplines: history and international relations. But not even the most traditional of historians engages in historical research and writing without some broad hypotheses in mind about how the world works.[74] The thesis I propose here concerning "how the world works," analyzing the events from ca. 230 BC down to ca. 170 BC primarily from an international systems and Realist perspective, is simply more explicit in its theoretical framework. And on the other side, no matter how attractively "logical" a theoretical framework such as Realism may appear to be for explaining international relations, that framework is worth only as much as the empirical evidence that supports it. It is therefore incumbent to establish first the historical facts involved in any case under discussion, for only then can analysis proceed. Thus for ancient historians I hope to use international relations theory to clarify and provide a new vocabulary for what occurred in the eastern Mediterranean in the crucial half-century under

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[73]   See esp. Layne 1993; Wilkinson 1999; discussion below, Chapter 8.
[74]   See the comments of Carr 1952: Ch. 1; cf. Schroeder 1997: 65–8.

discussion, whereas for political scientists I hope this study will offer a new case study of systemic transformation for them to ponder and analyze.

We will proceed as follows. In the first section of the book, the involvement of Rome in areas east of the Adriatic before 200 BC will be traced in detail, the theme being the hesitant and minimal nature of Roman involvement in the region (Chapters 2–3). The second section of the book will deal with the power-transition crisis that shook the Hellenistic state-system after 207, originating in the increasing faltering of Ptolemaic Egypt (Chapters 4, 5, and 6). The third section of the book will deal with the period of hegemonic war and Roman intervention attendant upon the power-transition crisis (Chapters 7 and 8), and then describe and analyze the initial two decades of Roman unipolarity and Mediterranean interstate hierarchy in the period from the victory over Antiochus III to the reassertion of Roman power against Macedon after 172 BC. Once more, the theme will be Roman hesitation about large and continual entanglements in the East. The lack of intense Roman interest, and the ambiguities of unipolarity (as opposed to hegemony or empire), in turn allowed the Greek states in this period to retain a very significant sphere of independence – as both Greeks and Romans, looking back, understood (Chapter 9).