

War and Peace

The Roman state's record of war-making and overall military success across many centuries has understandably led to Roman society being seen as fundamentally militaristic. This chapter assesses this image by examining Roman attitudes and ideology, especially as reflected in religious ritual. It begins by investigating Roman attitudes to war as they developed through the main phases of Roman history, complementing this with consideration of attitudes to peace. The second section explores the related question of how Romans celebrated victory, together with the equally important question of how they dealt with defeat. Consideration of these subjects can provide insights into some of the fundamental assumptions which underlay the relationship between the Roman state and war, and the extent to which there were changes in those assumptions across the centuries.

1.1 Attitudes to War and Peace

It has become a truism in recent scholarship that Republican Rome was a militaristic state that waged war on an almost continuous basis, implying a positive view of warfare, at least on the part of the Roman elite. This section analyses the basis for these claims, draws attention to some important qualifications, and examines the extent to which the factors operating during the Republican period continued to do so in the later phases of Roman history. Discussion of these subjects also raises the complementary question of Roman attitudes to peace, although this is a subject that has received rather less attention in modern scholarship.

Historiographically, an emphasis on the militaristic features of the Roman Republic emerged in the late 1970s, perhaps influenced in part by contemporary disenchantment with modern imperialist ventures in

the aftermath of the Vietnam War.¹ It certainly represented a reaction against the longstanding view of Rome as a reluctant imperialist. The previous influence of this older paradigm, with its benign view of Roman aims, can be accounted for in a variety of ways,² but an important element was acceptance at face value of Roman accounts of the so-called *fetial law*. These accounts, above all those of Livy (1.32) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (2.72), describe the activities of the *fetial priests*, who undertook various functions relating to Rome's dealings with other peoples and states. In addition to the formalisation of treaties and the surrender of treaty-breaking Romans to an enemy, their functions were said to have included the performance of rituals designed to ensure that Rome only ever waged wars that had divine approval. These rituals involved the *fetial priests* seeking redress for injuries by travelling to the relevant frontier and invoking Jupiter as witness to the justice of Roman demands. Such practices seemed to lend credence to the idea that Rome had a well-established 'just war' tradition and could not therefore have engaged in territorial expansion without good reason. However, more recent scholarship has raised doubts about placing too much weight on the significance of the *fetial law*. While such rituals are plausible in the context of Rome's very early history, when it was one among a number of communities competing for position in Latium and was having to deal with the fallout from localised activities such as cattle-raiding, they become increasingly less so as Roman warfare extended through the Italian peninsula and into the wider Mediterranean world.³

While the revisionists of the late 1970s expressed scepticism about the relevance of the *fetial law*, the argument for a militaristic Rome was based primarily on renewed emphasis on other features of the Roman state and society which, while well-known, had been underplayed in this context. For one thing, war was clearly an important consideration in the organisation of Republican political institutions. There was a strong link between citizenship and military service, reflected in the oldest gathering of Roman

¹ The revisionist view was argued independently by Crawford (1978: 51–3), Hopkins (1978: 25–47) and (in most detail) Harris 1979, esp. ch. 1 (with a recent restatement of Rome's unusual aggression in Harris 2016: 37–43). For the possible influence of the contemporary context, see Rich 1993: 41–2.

² See Linderski 1984 for the historical contexts of some of its leading proponents (Mommsen, Holleaux, Frank).

³ For detailed discussion and references, see Rich 2011. For ethical/philosophical reflections on 'just war' in the late Republic/early Principate, see Chlup 2014.

citizens, the centuriate assembly, being arranged into voting units according to the relative ability of individual citizens to provide their own arms (see further in Section 2.1), while the primary role of the city's senior magistrates, the annually elected consuls, was to lead the Republic's armies on campaign. Military success in this role was regarded by members of the elite as the best way to achieve renown for oneself and one's family, a principle confirmed by the ceremonial occasion of the triumph, when a victorious general paraded through the streets of the city to public acclaim (see further in Section 1.2). The attitude of the rank and file to war is less easy to determine with certainty because the ancient sources were written by and so reflect the views of the elite, although it has been argued that the prospect of booty is likely to have encouraged a favourable view.⁴ Rome's treatment of defeated communities in Italy also implies a predisposition to war: rather than requiring payment of tribute, Rome stipulated provision of troops – 'taxing military labour instead of material resources'⁵ – and for Rome to benefit from that provision presupposed that it would engage in further warfare: 'Wars were the very essence of the Roman organisation.'⁶

During the middle Republic Roman forces seem to have found themselves engaged in campaigns on an almost annual basis, corroborating the idea that the elite was hardly reluctant to engage in warfare. The continuous nature of warfare during much of the Republican period has seemed to find further support in the ritual associated with the temple of Janus, in the forum, whose doors were apparently only closed when Rome was not at war. A number of ancient sources claim that, prior to the reign of Augustus, they were closed on only one occasion, namely after the conclusion of the First Punic War in the mid-third century.⁷ Ancient religious rituals associated with Mars, god of war, which cluster in March and October – the start and finish of the campaigning season, at least during the early centuries of the Republic – have also seemed to reinforce the idea that war-making was a fundamental feature of the city's annual cycle.⁸

There is no denying the implications of many of these features of Roman practices, or the essential validity of the claim that the elite of Republican Rome was favourably disposed towards making war. Some qualifications may, nonetheless, be noted. First, there is the question of the regularity of war-making. While there were probably few years when the

⁴ Hopkins 1978: 38, Harris 1979: 102–3. ⁵ Scheidel 2008: 39.

⁶ Momigliano 1975: 46; cf. Crawford 1978: 53. For reservations about Momigliano's view, see Harris 1984b.

⁷ Varro *Ling.* 5.165, Livy 1.19.3–4. ⁸ Beard *et al.* 1998: vol. 1, 43.

Republic was not engaged in warfare somewhere, the level of commitment of military resources could vary quite significantly; there were years when campaigning was very limited. More specifically, there is good reason to think that much of the fifth century BC was relatively peaceful,⁹ while from the mid second century BC onwards to the end of the Republic '[external] warfare became intermittent, and wide fluctuations can be observed between periods of intense fighting and interludes of relative calm'.¹⁰ Indeed, Polybius claims that the senate decided to initiate war against the Dalmatians in 156 BC because, among other considerations, 'they did not wish the men of Italy to become weak and womanly in any way because of the long period of peace – for it was now twelve years since the war with Perseus and the campaigns in Macedonia' (32.13.6–7).

Secondly, reservations have been expressed about the significance of the rituals associated with Janus and Mars,¹¹ while another aspect of Roman religious practice warrants attention, namely the physical separation of military and civilian activities by the *pomerium*, the sacred boundary of the city. It is Roman acknowledgement of the *pomerium* that accounts for the centuriate assembly – the citizen body at arms – meeting on the Campus Martius (the 'Field of Mars', which lay outside the *pomerium*), for the temple of the goddess of war, Bellona, being erected in this same area in the early third century BC, and for triumphing generals needing to seek special dispensation for their troops to enter the city.¹² The maintenance of this separation during the Republic implies important limits to the militarisation of Rome.

A final important qualification from a rather different angle has been provided by a more recent study of Roman imperialism during the fourth and third centuries, in which Arthur Eckstein has argued that Rome was not unusual in being predisposed towards war. Eckstein situates Rome of the fourth and third centuries BC in the wider context of, first, an Italian peninsula, and then, a Mediterranean world, which, drawing on modern international relations theory, he characterises as 'anarchic' because no one state was in a position of dominance and there was no established framework for dealing with interstate disputes. This 'multipolar' world engendered an environment in which states had to organise for war or succumb to their neighbours.¹³ Rome's militarism is not in doubt, then, but it was not exceptional. If that claim is accepted, then it implies a somewhat different view of the character of Roman imperialism – one in which the

⁹ Rich 2007a: 11–13.

¹⁰ Cornell 1993: 157; cf. Rich 1993: 44–9.

¹¹ Rich 2013: 543–5.

¹² Rüpke 1990: 29–41.

¹³ Eckstein 2006.

overriding emphasis is not just on Roman bellicosity and aggression, but in which allowance is also made for Rome's need to respond to the bellicosity and aggression of its neighbours.¹⁴ In a sense, this picture represents a partial shift back towards the older paradigm, albeit via use of modern political science theory, without abandoning the insights gained from the revisionist arguments of the late 1970s. It may, however, still not give sufficient weight to the implications of Rome's arrangements with its allies. While Eckstein recognises the importance of Roman manpower resources in accounting for Rome's rise, his study does not perhaps give sufficient weight to what these arrangements imply for its incentive to initiate war.

The second century saw a dramatic change in the Mediterranean world, whereby the configuration of states shifted from multipolar competition towards unipolar dominance by Rome. This no doubt helps account for the development already noted, that Rome waged external wars less continuously during the final century or so of the Republic. At the same time, the fact that Rome nonetheless continued to wage expansionist wars even after the 'anarchic' context of the fourth and third centuries had resolved to a more orderly situation suggests that Roman militarism was not just a response to the militarism of other states. This was also the context in which civil war first emerged as a significant phenomenon in Roman history, starting with the so-called 'Social War' against Rome's Italian allies in 91–89, followed rapidly by the conflicts associated with Sulla in the 80s and Sertorius in the 70s, and then the civil wars of the 40s and 30s which brought the Republic to an end. This phenomenon partly reflected the fact that, with the further expansion of Rome's territorial empire, the political and material stakes had become even higher. But it was surely also related to the fact that Rome was no longer competing for survival against other states in the multipolar world of the fourth and third centuries BC.

Augustus' new regime signalled an important departure in relation to one of the most significant factors underlying the positive view of war which prevailed during the Republic – namely, the elite's pursuit of military glory. His constitutional control of most of the provinces where legions were stationed from 27 BC onwards meant that the governors of those provinces were his legates and therefore any victories they won did not formally entitle them to a triumph. As a result, the privilege of holding a triumph quickly became restricted to the emperor, or occasionally members of the imperial family who might hold a command in their

¹⁴ Cf. Chaniotis 2005: ch. 4 for the aggression of Hellenistic kings.

own right, with the last recorded triumph by a member of the senatorial elite being held in 19 BC.¹⁵ Instead, successful governors acting on the emperor's behalf had to make do with certain symbolic tokens, such as the right to wear a laurel crown at the games and the award of a statue.¹⁶ There is debate as to whether or not this was an intentional by-product of Augustus' re-organisation of the provinces in 27 BC,¹⁷ but whatever the answer it certainly suited him that members of the elite could no longer gain the kudos arising from a triumph, which might otherwise form the basis of a challenge to his authority. Even then, successful generals were often viewed with suspicion by emperors who lacked military experience, most famously Domitius Corbulo during the reign of Nero, but also Agricola under Domitian, and Salvius Julianus during the reign of Commodus (Cass. Dio 73.5.1–2). This political concern may have encouraged emperors to adopt a more cautious attitude towards allowing subordinates to engage in further territorial expansion and so helps to explain this distinctive feature of imperial policy during the Principate.¹⁸

This trend towards restricting the opportunities of the senatorial elite to celebrate military achievement led ultimately to their effective exclusion from holding military commands from the later third century onwards. Whether or not this was due to a specific measure on the part of the emperor Gallienus as some sources claim, the practical pattern is clear, with military commands now the monopoly of members of the equestrian order with military experience.¹⁹ While the equestrian order had not traditionally been so far removed from the senatorial elite in social prestige, this third-century development nonetheless marked a significant change, since, in contrast with the situation in earlier centuries, many of these equestrians were men who had achieved this status through military service, often rising through the ranks.²⁰ The culmination of this development was the emergence during the final decades of the third century of emperors from this background, many of them with origins in the Balkans, which had become a major recruiting region by the third century.

¹⁵ Lange 2016 highlights late Republican precedents for Augustan changes.

¹⁶ Such 'triumphal ornaments' were still valued by their recipients: see, e.g., the famous inscription commemorating the career of Plautius Silvanus from the mid-first century: *ILS* 986.

¹⁷ Cf. Beard 2007: 68–71, Rich 2013: 556.

¹⁸ Cf. Cornell 1993: 162–4. Sidebottom 2005 suggests that emperors did not need to add territory because they accrued enough resources through inheritance and confiscation of property from the elite, whereas Harris (2016: ch. 4) emphasises financial limitations as a constraint on military campaigns.

¹⁹ Davenport 2018: 485–7, 534–9. ²⁰ Davenport 2018: 509–20.

These important changes reflected the altered geopolitical circumstances of the Roman world, which experienced significant military setbacks and uncertainty during the mid-third century as it came to terms with the emergence of the Sasanian Persian regime to the east and of more powerful barbarian groupings to the north. Civil war also once again became a significant form of conflict. One way of viewing these developments is as the reverse process to that experienced during the Republic, with movement away from a unipolar world dominated by Rome to a multipolar one in which the Roman empire, while still a major player, was once more having to compete against other powerful players. The resultant emergence of 'soldier emperors' and expanded military forces has often been characterised as marking a process of militarisation, but if so, then once again some important qualifications need to be registered.

First, although the rhetoric of imperial victory remained unchanged (see further in Section 1.2), the Roman state in this period was rarely in a position to undertake imperial expansion, which is an obvious, but important, difference from the militarism of the Republican period. Secondly, while emperors of the later third and fourth centuries typically came from military backgrounds, the re-organised state which Diocletian and Constantine put in place was one in which there was a much sharper separation between military and civilian roles than had been the case during the Principate; the rationale for this may have been primarily a concern to place limits on the powers of those holding military commands, but it nonetheless represents a significant limit to militarisation. Thirdly, from the end of the fourth century onwards, not only was it the case that it became rarer for emperors to have a military background, but they almost never led their armies in person. This important shift was partly the result of the re-emergence of the dynastic imperative and partly a reaction to the death in battle of two emperors in the 360s and 370s. Fourth-century military emperors wished to consolidate their legacies through establishing a dynasty, and when the last of these emperors, Theodosius I, died prematurely while still in his 40s, he was succeeded by relatively young and militarily inexperienced sons.²¹ This new pattern did, however, create opportunities for ambitious generals to exercise political power at the imperial court, which those in the west proved particularly adept at taking.²²

It is only in the sixth century that it is possible to talk once again about significant Roman imperial expansion, in the context of the emperor Justinian's campaigns to remove the Vandal regime in north Africa and

²¹ Lee 2007: 30–37.

²² Lee 2013a: ch. 5, McEvoy 2013: chs. 6, 9.

the Gothic regime in Italy. Strictly speaking, however, these were cases of the eastern half of the empire regaining territories lost during the fifth century, while Justinian's decision to undertake these campaigns appears to have included a strong element of religious justification, in so far as the Vandal and Gothic regimes supported the heterodox Arian form of Christianity.²³ Moreover, despite these campaigns achieving some success, it remained the case that Sasanian Persia was an established fixture in the wider geopolitical scene as a power of comparable resources and influence to the Roman empire, which acted as a significant limit on the ambitions of Roman emperors. Although that limit was in principle removed when the Islamic invasions of the early seventh century overthrew the Sasanian regime, the Roman empire also lost much of its eastern territory, including the economically critical region of Egypt, forcing a radical re-evaluation of state organisation and priorities.

Given the prominence of war during the Republic, it is unsurprising that the subject of peace was much less developed as a feature of Roman discourse and ritual: 'republican Latin is rich in words pertaining to war, poor in praises of peace', and Pax as a personified deity does not make an appearance until the end of the Republic.²⁴ The Principate, on the other hand, is traditionally associated with the phrase *pax Romana*, as in Pliny the Elder's famous dictum about 'the immeasurable majesty of the Roman peace' (*HN* 27.3).²⁵ Augustus promoted peace as an ideal, most visibly through his Altar of Augustan Peace, but also in a range of other media.²⁶ This was partly about advertising his claim to have ended civil wars (*RG* 34.1), which had had such a negative impact on communities around the Mediterranean. Their appreciation of internal peace was reflected in dedications to Augustus in regions not usually exposed to war,²⁷ and it was a theme endorsed by other emperors in the first century – in a senatorial decree under the emperor Tiberius referring to 'all the evils of civil war [which] had long since been laid to rest through the divine will of Augustus',²⁸ and in Vespasian's construction of a Temple of Pax in Rome after the civil war of 68–9.²⁹ However, Augustus' advertising of peace also

²³ Lee 2013a: 259.

²⁴ Quotation: Linderski 1984: 152. Republican *Pax*: Weinstock 1960: 44–52, Cornwell 2017: ch. 1.

²⁵ General discussions of the subject include Woolf 1993, Hardwick 2000, Rosenstein 2007, Cornwell 2017: 187–200.

²⁶ Weinstock 1960: 47–50, Galinsky 1996: ch. 4, Cornwell 2017: ch. 5.

²⁷ *SEG* 4.490 ('a saviour who brought war to an end': Asia, 9 BC), *ILS* 3786, 3789 (dedications to Augustan peace: Baetica, Spain and Narbo, S. Gaul).

²⁸ *SC Cn. Piso*, ll. 46–7 (AD 20) (= Eck *et al.* 1996: 42). ²⁹ Cornwell 2017: 191–4.

reminded Romans of the commitment he made in 27 BC to the pacification of those provinces which were insecure either because of the risk of internal rebellion or from external threats – a commitment crucial to Augustus' political supremacy since it justified his control of the empire's armed forces.³⁰

As implied by the term 'pacification', peace was not, in Roman thinking, the outcome of mutual agreement between equals based on principles of justice, but rather the result of others submitting to Roman rule. This is reflected in a wide range of sources, such as the following: when dealing with a north Italian people in 181 BC, a Roman commander is said to have told their envoys that he only made peace with people who had surrendered (Livy 40.25); in his *Res Gestae*, Augustus referred to 'peace achieved through victories' (13); and another Roman commander is presented in 69 as reminding an assembly of Gauls that peace between peoples can only be maintained by arms (Tac. *Hist.* 4.74.1). In a similar vein are the sentiments attributed to non-Roman leaders, famously equating Roman peace with slavery and destruction (Tac. *Hist.* 4.17, *Agr.* 30). 'In Rome even peace was aggressive.'³¹

Indeed, there was a tradition that viewed peace in negative terms, maintaining that the lack of an enemy to fear encouraged a relaxation of moral virtues and a consequent weakening of the state. This was the attitude that underpinned the senate's decision to initiate war against the Dalmatians in 156 BC (Polyb. 32.13.6–7); it was also Sallust's diagnosis of the development of factional violence in late Republican politics following the destruction of Carthage in 146 BC (*Iug.* 41, *Cat.* 10), echoed in Tacitus' view that the Syrian legions in the mid first century were 'sluggish from a long period of peace' (*Ann.* 13.35.1) and that the Britons were more warlike than the Gauls because 'long years of peace had not yet weakened them' (*Agr.* 11.4).³²

The view that the Roman empire should only make peace from a position of dominance persisted through the Principate and into Late Antiquity, even when circumstances forced the empire to engage in negotiation. In 89 the emperor Domitian agreed a peace with the Dacian king Decebalus, whose terms apparently included the empire giving Decebalus large sums of money on a regular basis (Cass. Dio 67.7.4) – a step which subsequently provided ammunition for critics (Plin. *Pan.* 12.2). Likewise during Late Antiquity the empire effectively bought peace on

³⁰ Rich 2012a. ³¹ Linderski 1984: 152.

³² Mattern 1999: 205–6 for further examples; Wheeler 1996 for the *topos* of lax Syrian legions.

many occasions through the provision of financial subsidies to neighbouring states and groups.³³ Despite the practical benefits of such a pragmatic approach, the policy continued to draw opprobrium from members of the elite: in the words of one senator reacting to the proposal to give Alaric the Goth money not to enter Italy in the early fifth century, 'This is not peace, but slavery!' (Zos. 5.29.9).

Given the generally positive attitude to war throughout Roman history, and the limited character of discourse about peace, it is perhaps surprising to find even the occasional reference in Roman sources countenancing the possibility of an end to war. In phraseology reminiscent of Old Testament prophecies (Is. 2.4, Mic. 4.3), the poet Martial represents a scythe (*falx*) as commenting that 'the settled peace of our emperor has bent me to unwarlike uses; now I belong to the farmer, where previously I was the soldier's' (14.34); the context, however, appears to have been Domitian's victory over the Chatti in the early 80s, which makes the sentiment less significant than at first sight.³⁴ In 382 the philosopher and orator Themistius commented in a speech delivered before the emperor Theodosius I that he had heard that those living in Thrace – the scene of much recent bloodshed between Romans and Goths – 'are now turning the metal of their swords and breastplates into hoes and pruning hooks' (*Or.* 16.211B); but again, the context makes this less significant – Theodosius' need to justify his reaching an accommodation with the Goths, rather than driving them out of the empire.³⁵ Similarly, in the mid-sixth century a Roman diplomat can be found extolling peace as 'very clearly a good thing for all mankind', in contrast to 'the uncertainties of war' (*Men. Prot. fr.* 6.1 ll.34–6), but this was an argument from necessity, as the empire sought, from a position of relative weakness, to persuade Persia to accept its proposals.

More intriguing is the claim that the third-century emperor Probus planned to abolish the armed forces. The fullest statement of this appears in the *Historia Augusta's* biography of Probus (20.3–6; cf. 23.2–5), but this is a particularly problematic source, and its reputation as a sophisticated literary jest from the late fourth century has led one commentator to interpret this passage as a knowing parody of Old Testament prophecies and their Christian interpretation.³⁶ The appearance of the same story in abbreviated form in other sources (*Aur. Vic. Caes.* 37.3, *Eutr.* 9.17.3) has prompted the alternative view that it is simply voicing a desire to see the restoration of senatorial authority at the expense of the military.³⁷ Neither

³³ Lee 2007: 119–22. ³⁴ Weinstock 1960: 52, Leary 1996: 10, 88.

³⁵ Heather 1991: 157–81. ³⁶ Paschoud 2001: 146–61. ³⁷ Rüpke 1990: 21.

interpretation leaves any scope for the story to express genuine anti-war sentiments.

The suggestion that it is a parody of Christian views does, however, serve as a reminder of a potentially important new factor for attitudes to war and peace in Late Antiquity. While Christian teaching, as reflected in the Bible and in the writing of the early church fathers, was by no means consistent or unequivocal in its opposition to war, it did nevertheless include a greater willingness to question the use of violence, while, building on Old Testament prophecies, it also offered a more positive view of peace. This did not, however, translate into any re-evaluation of government priorities with the advent of Christian emperors from the fourth century onwards. Constantine and his more immediate successors were military men by background who faced serious external and internal military challenges and who did not have the time or inclination to consider the implications of their espousal of Christianity for war and peace beyond a traditional mindset that saw the Christian God as a potentially surer guarantor of military success. The thinking of the Christian bishop and intellectual Augustine about the issue of war and justice, while important in the longer term, did not have any immediate impact on elite attitudes, and the most notable trend during the final centuries of antiquity was an increasing tendency to view war in terms of religious conflict, whether against Zoroastrian Persia or heterodox Arian Vandals and Goths.³⁸

1.2 Celebrating Victory, Dealing with Defeat

Given Rome's overall record of military success during the Republican period, it is unsurprising that there developed a range of rituals associated with the celebration of victory. These rituals illuminate the close interrelationship between war and religion in Roman culture, while also highlighting the political implications of military success. This section outlines these features during the Republic, while also charting their evolution in subsequent phases of Roman history. Even during its periods of greatest military success, however, Rome experienced temporary setbacks and defeats. Despite the popular image of Roman invincibility, its military power did have its limits, even during the Republic and increasingly so during Late Antiquity. So alongside a consideration of changing patterns in the Roman celebration of victory, it is also instructive to

³⁸ Discussions of this large subject include Noethlichs 2001, Lee 2007: ch. 7, Swift 2007.

examine how the Romans responded to defeat: how was it explained and did those explanations change over time?

The natural focus of some of the rituals associated with military success during the Republic was the divine personification of that success, the goddess Victoria. Although there is, inevitably, debate about the origins of the cult, her presence was manifesting itself in the city through a variety of media from the early years of the third century BC, when a statue of Victoria was said to have been put up in the forum and a temple dedicated to the goddess was constructed on the Palatine Hill. Since the latter was done prior to a campaign during the Third Samnite War, it was evidently a strategy for achieving divine support, as also was Cato the Elder's vow, and subsequent construction, of a temple to Victoria Virgo while campaigning in Spain in the 190s. Victoria also featured on coinage from the third century onwards, while other deities acquired epithets associated with victory during this period, above all Jupiter Victor and Mars Invictus.³⁹ In a more immediately military context, winged Victory motifs also adorned some of the ships rams recently recovered from the site of the final naval battle of the First Punic War in 241 BC, while Roman Victoria received honour in a Samnite ritual context in the second century BC.⁴⁰ The cult of Victoria received further elaboration and prominence in the increasingly competitive atmosphere of late Republican politics, as Marius set up many statues in her honour following his successes against the Cimbri and Teutones, only to be outdone by Sulla who, in addition to statues and trophies, established games in her honour. Pompey in turn built temples for Venus Victrix, Hercules Invictus and Minerva Victrix, while Caesar expanded Sulla's games.⁴¹ Finally, Augustus made Victoria an integral element of state procedure by placing a statue of the deity in the senate house, as well as an altar dedicated to her, on which senators offered incense at the start of meetings.⁴²

An important, more general way in which military success was celebrated during the Republic was through the granting of *supplicationes* – days of thanksgiving to the gods following news of a significant military victory. Requiring the senate's sanction, these occasions involved the offering of prayers accompanied by sacrifices, typically over a period of one to five days during the third and second centuries.⁴³ Once again, late

³⁹ Weinstock 1957: 215–18. ⁴⁰ Rams: Tusa & Royal 2012: 42–3 Samnites: Dench 2018: 130.

⁴¹ Weinstock 1957: 224–9, 233.

⁴² Pohlsander 1969, Cornwell 2017: 98–102. For the iconography of Victoria during the Republic and beyond, see Hölscher 1967.

⁴³ E.g., Livy 45.2 (Pydna, 168); general discussion: Halkin 1953.

Republican political rivalries brought inflationary pressures to bear on the number of days of thanksgiving granted, offering as it did an obvious way of calibrating the significance of a victory against others. Pompey's achievements during the 60s were considered to warrant ten days, but Caesar's were then awarded fifteen days in 57, then twenty days twice in the late 50s, forty days in 46, and then fifty in 45.⁴⁴ The culmination of this trend was Augustus' claim to have been awarded a total of 890 days of supplications during his life (*RG* 4.2).

The grant of a *supplicatio* during the Republic was almost always the first step in the process leading to the best known and most important ritual of victory – the triumph.⁴⁵ The granting of a triumph by the senate allowed a victorious commander to parade through the thronged streets of Rome in special regalia and a four-horse chariot, preceded by his troops, wagonloads of booty, prisoners and, sometimes, pictorial displays of battle and of conquered cities or peoples – ‘a spectacle in which generals bring right before the eyes of their fellow-citizens a vivid impression of their achievements’ (Polyb. 6.15.8). The event culminated in the commander ascending the Capitol and offering sacrifice in the temple of Jupiter – the clearest reminder of the religious dimension of the occasion. However, it was also an event that could not fail to enhance the renown of the commander and strengthen his political influence and that of his family, and as such was eagerly sought after by any ambitious member of the elite. The senate's permission to stage the ceremony was required and although there has been much debate about the specifics of any formal requirements, the need to obtain permission served to enhance the event's prestige.⁴⁶ The distinction and prestige of the triumph was further enhanced by the existence of the lesser form of celebration known as an *ovatio*, in which the commander progressed on foot, rather than in a chariot, and wore the normal dress of a magistrate, rather than triumphal regalia, and a crown of myrtle, rather than laurel.

One can easily imagine the attractions of the public acclaim that such an event potentially offered, and yet a triumph lasted only a day, or very occasionally two or three days, while some were very routine affairs. However, there was a range of strategies for ensuring that the occasion

⁴⁴ Halkin 1953.

⁴⁵ Beard 2007, with succinct overview in Rich 2013: 551–7 (including caveats about some of Beard's conclusions); Pittenger 2008 discusses senatorial debates, and Östenberg 2009 the composition of the procession.

⁴⁶ Debate about requirements: Beard 2007: ch. 6, Rich 2014.

endured in public memory.⁴⁷ The most obvious strategy was to leave permanent memorials in public places, whether that be a statue, temple, portico or triumphal arch – all, of course, adorned with an appropriate inscription.⁴⁸ The entrance to the commander's house would also be decorated with captured booty as a reminder to visitors and passers-by, with subsequent owners apparently obliged to retain these features so that the house 'celebrated a triumph in perpetuity' and 'every day reproached an unwarlike occupant for entering someone else's triumph' (Plin. *HN* 35.7). During his lifetime the *triumphator* was entitled to wear a laurel crown at the games,⁴⁹ while after his death his family would perpetuate knowledge of his achievement by one of their number donning his triumphal robes and funeral mask at family funerals and by regular reference to his achievements in the funeral eulogies of other family members (Polyb. 6.53.6–7, 6.54.1–2).

As previously noted, Augustus' arrangement of the provinces effectively limited the holding of triumphs to members of the imperial family, thereby confirming the prestige associated with the occasion. However, during the following two centuries the frequency of triumphs decreased significantly. From an estimated average for much of the Republic of one triumph perhaps every one and a half years,⁵⁰ the period from Augustus to the early third century witnessed only thirteen triumphs by emperors, and three by imperial princes.⁵¹ This change partly reflects the fact that only some emperors during the Principate participated personally in military campaigns and partly the fact of far fewer territorial additions to the empire, and it also helps to explain why the imperial *adventus* (ceremonial arrival in Rome or another city) assumed increasing importance over time, absorbing many of the features of a triumph.⁵² These changes did not, however, reflect reduced interest in victory as a concept. If anything, the celebration of victory became even more prominent because the ideology of victory played such an important role in legitimating and underpinning the position and power of emperors – to the extent that some scholars have

⁴⁷ Cf. Beard 2007: 18–31 for the specific case of Pompey; Popkin 2016 for the issue of memory.

⁴⁸ Temples (of which approx. forty examples are known): Pietilä-Castrén 1987, Orlin 1997: 28–34, 199–202 (though temples could also be erected by generals who had not been awarded a triumph). Porticoes: Rich 2013: 555. Arches (of which six Republican cases are known): Kontokosta 2013. See also Popkin 2016: ch. 2 for triumphal structures from the period of the Punic wars.

⁴⁹ Rich 2013: 555.

⁵⁰ Pittenger 2008: 278. Rich (2014) emphasises the fluctuating frequency of triumphs across the Republican period.

⁵¹ Campbell 1984: 133–42, Rich 2013: 556–7.

⁵² MacCormack 1972: 725–6, Ando 2016: 413–14.

written about a ‘theology of victory.’⁵³ That celebration took a range of forms. At the start of his reign Augustus made an emphatic statement about his victories at Actium (31) and Alexandria (30) by founding commemorative cities named Nicopolis (‘Victory city’) at each site, complete with regular celebratory games.⁵⁴ Subsequent successes by himself and his successors were memorialised in a variety of ways – through a proliferation of triumphal monuments, above all arches, trophies and columns (notably those of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius), not just in Rome but throughout the provinces; the increasing multiplication of *cognomina* derived from the names of defeated peoples as part of the imperial titulature (Germanicus, Dacicus, Parthicus and the like); intensification of victory as a theme on coinage; and regular religious festivals commemorating past victories.⁵⁵

That emphasis on victory became even more important during the third century as, first, the empire found itself on the back foot militarily and then, secondly, the new style of Tetrarchic government that emerged towards the end of the century needed legitimisation. When there were victories to celebrate, those opportunities were exploited. From Augsburg there is the recently recovered altar dedicated in 260 ‘to the sacred goddess Victoria’ (who features in a relief on one side), commemorating the victory of a local commander over ‘the barbarian Semnones or Juthungi’ as they returned north from a raid into Italy, with the liberation of several thousands of prisoners.⁵⁶ Following his suppression of the breakaway Palmyrene state in the early 270s, the emperor Aurelian was able to celebrate a triumph in Rome in which the defeated Palmyrene queen Zenobia was paraded (thereby achieving what Augustus had failed to do vis-à-vis another eastern queen, Cleopatra),⁵⁷ while in 303, Diocletian and Maximian ‘celebrated a triumph in Rome with notable pomp. Before their chariot went the wife, sisters and children of Narses, and all the booty, which they had plundered from the Parthians [i.e., Persians, defeated in 298]’ (Jer. *Chron.* 227^m). And because emperors now spent so little time in the city of Rome, such visits acquired added significance.

Indeed, during the fourth century the ideology of victory took on a new lease of life as it began to absorb Christian ideas linking the victorious emperor with a triumphant Christ, with the cross acquiring particular symbolic significance in this context.⁵⁸ At the same time the controversial

⁵³ Gagé 1933a, Fears 1981. ⁵⁴ Lange 2009: ch. 4. ⁵⁵ McCormick 1986: ch. 1.

⁵⁶ *AE* 1993.1231 with Bakker 1993 (image of Victoria relief at 371).

⁵⁷ Sources in Dodgeon & Lieu 1991: 105–7. ⁵⁸ Gagé 1933b.

decision of Christian emperors in the later fourth century to remove from the senate house in Rome the altar of Victory which Augustus had placed there, and to resist attempts to have it restored, indicates an important divergence from Roman religious traditions.⁵⁹ By the sixth century, the traditional winged Victory which had featured on gold *solidi* for centuries was superseded by an angel holding a globe with a cross.⁶⁰ Another notable development was the way in which celebration of victory in civil war became more overt, perhaps because this was one category of warfare where emperors achieved unequivocal success in this period and they were able to brand their defeated opponents as usurpers.⁶¹ The Arch of Constantine, with its inscription commemorating the suppression of ‘a tyrant and all of his faction’ (Maxentius), is the best known example of such celebration from the fourth century, but Constantius II also marked his defeat of Magnentius with an equestrian statue and obelisk in Rome, both accompanied by inscriptions referring to the elimination of ‘the tyrant’,⁶² while Theodosius I erected an obelisk in Constantinople to mark his defeat of ‘the tyrants’ (Magnus Maximus and his son) (*CIL* 3.737). In the early fifth century a column with a spiral relief modelled on those of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius in Rome (but with the addition of some Christian symbolism) was erected in Constantinople to celebrate the defeat of Gainas in 400:⁶³ since Gainas was a general in the Roman military and had mobilised units against the emperor Arcadius, this was strictly speaking another instance of civil war, but as Gainas and many of his troops were of Gothic origin, the images may well have suggested success against a foreign enemy. A similar ambiguity may have been present in the emperor Anastasius’ victory over the Isaurians in the final decade of the fifth century: while clearly a case of civil war, Isauria had long had a reputation as an untamed region within the empire.⁶⁴

The emperor during Late Antiquity with the best grounds for celebrating victories of a more traditional kind was Justinian, above all following the overthrow of the Vandal regime in north Africa. During his reign Justinian advertised his successes through various media in Constantinople, including an equestrian statue in the square outside the imperial palace

⁵⁹ Lee 2013a: 49–51. ⁶⁰ Bellinger 1966: 36, 57, 67, 69, 133 etc., with Wright 1986: 77.

⁶¹ Cf. Wienand 2015.

⁶² *ILS* 731, 736. Constantius’ famous entry to Rome in 357 was, according to one critical commentator, a triumph to celebrate this victory (*Amm. Marc.* 16.10).

⁶³ Liebeschuetz 1990: 272–8.

⁶⁴ Details of Anastasius’ victory celebrations in McCormick 1986: 61, to which add *Anth. Pal.* 9.656 (erection of a palace commemorating the victory).

and a mosaic on the ceiling of the palace entrance showing him ‘winning victories through his general Belisarius’ and receiving booty and prisoners from vanquished Vandals and Goths (Proc. *Aed.* 1.2, 10). Most famous, however, was Justinian’s staging of a triumph through the streets of Constantinople in 534 in which, unusually, the victorious general, Belisarius, was allowed to play a prominent part. Heralded as a revival of honours from ‘olden times’, Justinian nonetheless made sure that he was not upstaged by Belisarius, who was required to proceed on foot and, when he reached the hippodrome, to prostrate himself before the emperor alongside the defeated Vandal king Gelimer (Proc. *Bell.* 4.9). Needless to say, there was now no place for any culminating sacrifice to Jupiter.⁶⁵ Indeed in another triumph-like celebration towards the end of his reign, a focal point along the route of the procession was Justinian’s visit to the church of the Holy Apostles.⁶⁶

How, then, did Romans react when confronted by military failure? Although the Romans had a high win/loss ratio for much of their history, and even ordinary provincials in remote locations can be found asserting that ‘the Romans always win’,⁶⁷ they nevertheless experienced periodic defeats, even during times when the Roman state was predominantly militarily successful – as acknowledged by Lucilius, writing in the second century BC: ‘the Roman people have often been beaten by force and overcome in many battles, but never in a whole war, in which lies all that is vital.’⁶⁸ There were of course a number of well-known military disasters during the Republic – the Gallic victory at the River Allia (390), which resulted in the sack of Rome itself, Hannibal’s crushing victory at Cannae (216), the massacre of Roman troops by Germanic tribes at Arausio in southern Gaul (105), and Crassus’ defeat by the Parthians at Carrhae (53). There were also some notable cases of Republican armies surrendering to the enemy in humiliating circumstances, such as to the Samnites at the Caudine Forks (321) and to the Numantines in Spain (137). But these are merely the most notorious from a much larger pool of Republican cases.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Further discussion of this episode in McCormick 1986: 65–6, 125–9, Beard 2007: 318–28, Börm 2013.

⁶⁶ Const. Porph. *De Cer.* Appendix (Reiske p. 497), with McCormick 1986: 67. The event celebrated the repulse of Cotrigur Huns from Constantinople in 559.

⁶⁷ *AE* 1990.1016 = *SEG* 40 (1990), 1524 (Hisma, Arabia; mid-2nd c.?); the inscriber may have been an auxiliary soldier (Isaac 1998: 341).

⁶⁸ 613–14 M; cf. Livy 9.18.9, *Per.* 67 (‘Romans cannot be conquered’). For this attitude in the context of the setbacks of the Hannibalic War, see Clark 2014: ch. 2.

⁶⁹ Rosenstein 1990: Appendix 1 lists 102 defeats.

Instances from the Principate are fewer, but include the infamous massacre of Varus' three legions in Germany (AD 9), Caesennius Paetus' withdrawal from Armenia after the Parthians forced his surrender at Rhandeia (62), the defeat at Beth-horon suffered by Gaius Cestius at the hands of rebel Jewish forces (66), the destruction of a legion under the command of Oppius Sabinus by the Dacians (84/5), and the successive defeats of the governors of Cappadocia (Sedatius Severianus) and Syria (Attidius Cornelianus) by Parthian forces (161–2). From Late Antiquity, notable defeats include that of the emperor Valerian by the Persians (260), that of Julian by the same enemy a century later (363), the Goths' victory over Valens at Adrianople (378), and the failure of Leo's naval expedition against the Vandals in north Africa (468) – with many more, albeit less dramatic, possibilities available.

Given the strength of the Roman ideology of victory, it is worth considering how the Romans responded to military defeat. The question of response can be considered under two related headings – commemoration and explanation. With regard to commemoration, it has been noted that, unlike the Athenians, the Romans did not erect casualty lists or any other form of war memorial in their capital. However, this does not mean that the Romans were in denial about defeat: rather, 'they developed a different culture of commemoration, whereby Roman military disasters were incorporated into the state's religious calendar. Rome's response to heavy casualties in warfare was not to remember the individuals who had lost their lives, but to lament a serious reversal in Rome's fortunes and to seek to win back the gods' support.'⁷⁰ One well-known instance of this approach was the designation of 18 July as a *dies ater* ('a black day') on which no public business was to be conducted, following the defeat by the Gauls at the River Allia in 390 BC and the sacking of Rome – an anniversary that continued to be observed for many centuries well into the Principate. Likewise, a festival was designated for 8 June when the temple of *Mens* ('good sense') had been dedicated as a reminder of C. Flaminius' lack of good sense which had contributed to his defeat by Hannibal at Lake Trasimene in 217 BC.⁷¹

As this implies, when it came to explanations of defeat, commanders were often blamed, even if cases of actual prosecution were rare and reserved for commanders who appeared exceptionally culpable (e.g.,

⁷⁰ Cooley 2012b: 80.

⁷¹ Cooley 2012b: 83–4.

Claudius Pulcher after Drepana, 249, Servilius Caepio after Arausio, 105).⁷² Soldiers could also sometimes be blamed and punished, although this was less common. Survivors from Cannae were effectively exiled to Sicily for not having stood their ground, while Roman setbacks at Numantia in Spain in the early 130s were attributed by some to the deficiencies of the troops, which Scipio Aemilianus had to put right before he was able to capture the city.⁷³ Interestingly, after the defeat by Pyrrhus at Heracleia in 280 both commander and soldiers were ordered to spend the winter in tents (Front. *Str.* 4.1.24).⁷⁴

In some instances, however, a different kind of explanation was offered, involving contravention of religious ritual. The reasoning was that defeat was due, at least in part, to the Romans having alienated divine favour – a further illustration of the close relationship between warfare and religion in the Roman world. This explanation by no means always ruled out also laying the blame on the commander, as some of the following examples show.⁷⁵ According to some sources, Claudius Pulcher lost his battle in 249 because he ignored unfavourable auspices, C. Flaminius was said to have neglected a range of religious duties in Rome before leaving the city to meet his death at Trasimene in 217,⁷⁶ while Crassus famously ignored the report of adverse omens as he left Rome for his fatal Parthian campaign (Cic. *Div.* 1.29). The belief that disasters could be accounted for by alienation of divine favour persisted into the Principate. One of Augustus' responses to the news of the Varian disaster was to vow major games to Jupiter 'in the hope that the state might return to a better condition' – explicitly following, it is said, precedents set during the war against the Cimbri in the late first century BC and the Social War (Suet. *Aug.* 23.2). And Paetus is said to have advanced into Armenia in disregard of unfavourable omens – the horse carrying the consular insignia taking fright while crossing the Euphrates, and an animal due for sacrifice escaping outside the ramparts of the army's camp before its construction was complete (Tac. *Ann.* 15.7–8).

As for human responsibility, no instances of generals being prosecuted for defeat are known from the Principate, although that is partly due to the fact that a number of those defeated died in battle either by their own hand

⁷² Rich 2012b, qualifying Rosenstein 1990 in important respects, while also conceding that some defeated commanders did enjoy subsequent electoral success.

⁷³ Rosenstein 1990: 102–3 (Cannae), 99–101 (Numantia).

⁷⁴ Further discussion in Rich 2012b: 88–94, arguing that the sources place more emphasis on commanders than Rosenstein 1990 allows.

⁷⁵ Emphasised by Rich 2012b: 96–8. ⁷⁶ References in Rosenstein 1990: 77–9.

(Varus, Severianus) or that of the enemy (Oppius Sabinus), while another died of natural causes soon after (Cestius Gallus). Of those who survived, Paetus is known to have been dismissed from his command (Cass. Dio 67.22.4), and it is likely that this was also the fate of Cornelianus, since a new occupant of his post was soon in place (*HA Verus* 9.2). However, blame was sometimes directed against the deceased, unable to rebut criticism and therefore obvious targets. There was a tradition in Roman historiography, represented above all by Velleius Paterculus, which portrayed Varus as militarily incompetent,⁷⁷ while Severianus' decision to advance into Armenia in 161 is presented by one source as having been influenced unduly by the charlatan oracle-monger Alexander of Abonutichus (Lucian *Alex.* 27). There is only limited evidence of blame being directed at the rank-and-file soldiers, although again the lack of detail in the surviving sources for many of these episodes may mask this. The primary example is the Syrian legions in the early 160s, whose defeats at the hands of Parthian forces are attributed in some sources to their discipline having been undermined by exposure to the luxurious lifestyle of eastern cities – a long-standing, but flawed, *topos* in Roman discourse.⁷⁸

Crucially, none of these defeats occurred when the emperor was in direct command of Roman forces, thereby shielding the emperor from any direct blame. Although emperors did sometimes lead campaigns in person during the Principate (most obviously Trajan), there were a substantial number who did not, even when they had prior military experience, such as Tiberius and Hadrian. However, that changed during the third and fourth centuries as it became the norm for emperors to be militarily active, which also made them more vulnerable to criticism for defeat. Alongside that important change was a second: the growing prominence of Christianity gave the tradition of religious explanations a novel twist, as Christian writers offered their verdicts on the reasons for the empire's military setbacks. The most serious defeat during the third century was that of the emperor Valerian by the Persians in 260, because for the first time an emperor was captured by the enemy. Since Valerian had been responsible for initiating an empire-wide persecution of prominent Christians only a few years earlier, Christian writers interpreted his defeat and capture as the judgement of God, with one commentator in

⁷⁷ Velleius was, admittedly, a former soldier with knowledge of operations in Germany, but other sources present a more favourable view of Varus: see Wells 2003: ch. 5; Syme (1939: 511 n. 2) describes Varus as 'the official scapegoat'.

⁷⁸ Wheeler 1996.

particular highlighting the inversion of Roman traditions by describing Valerian as 'having been most deservedly triumphed over' (Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 5.4).⁷⁹ As for the two great military disasters of the fourth century, the emperor Julian's reversion to paganism offered a ready explanation to Christian observers for the debacle in Persia and his death. On the other hand, the emperor Valens was a Christian, but, even so, an explanation for his defeat and death at Adrianople was ready to hand in his support for heterodox Arian Christianity.⁸⁰

Unsurprisingly, Christian explanations for the defeats and deaths of Julian and Valens did not go uncontested. Amongst the various claims as to who had struck the blow that ended Julian's life, the pagan rhetorician Libanius asserted that it was done by a Christian Roman soldier,⁸¹ and Libanius later argued that the disaster at Adrianople showed that the gods were angry that Julian's death had not been avenged (*Or.* 24.16, 30, 40). Interestingly, the pagan historian Ammianus Marcellinus, although an admirer of Julian, nonetheless indicates at various points in his narrative that in invading Persia, Julian persisted in the face of inauspicious omens.⁸² Other comments by Ammianus imply that some pagans attributed Valens' death to his persecution of pagan adherents during his reign, of which there had been a particularly vigorous episode in Antioch in the early 370s.⁸³ The famous request by the senator Symmachus to the emperor Valentinian II for the restoration of the altar of Victory to the senate house in 384, following its removal a few years earlier by the emperor Gratian, was supported in part by the argument that without maintenance of the cult of Victoria, and indeed pagan cult more generally, the empire could only expect further defeats at the hands of foreign enemies (*Relat.* 3.3, 9). There clearly developed a growing pagan conviction that it was the emperors' abandonment of paganism in favour of Christianity that was responsible for the empire's military setbacks, articulated most forcefully by the late fifth-century historian Zosimus who in turn reflected the views of the late fourth-century historian Eunapius.⁸⁴ It was such views, and especially the fallout from the Gothic sack of Rome in 410, that in turn prompted Augustine to embark on his monumental apologetic work *The City of God*, which aimed to rebut the notion that Christianity was responsible for the empire's decline, while his protégé

⁷⁹ Other accounts collated in Dodgeon & Lieu 1991: 58–65. ⁸⁰ Lenski 1997: 149–54.

⁸¹ *Lib. Or.* 18.274–5 with Sozom. *Hist. eccl.* 6.2; cf. also Amm. Marc. 25.6.6 for early rumours of Roman responsibility.

⁸² 23.5.4–13, with Liebeschuetz 1988, Matthews 1989: 126–7. ⁸³ Lenski 1997: 155.

⁸⁴ Treadgold 2007: 81–9, 107–14.

Orosius wrote a history which emphasised the severity of military (and other) disasters in the empire's pagan past compared with his own day.⁸⁵

Explaining defeat in Late Antiquity was not, however, conducted solely at the level of religious causation. Human agency was also seen by many as playing a significant role. The sources for the events surrounding Valerian's defeat in 260 are very patchy, but it is evident that there were other explanations besides the Christian emphasis on divine judgement. Zosimus accounted for the debacle in terms of natural disaster and Persian treachery – that Valerian's army was severely weakened by an outbreak of plague, prompting him to seek a settlement with the Persian king Shapur I, who then perfidiously took Valerian prisoner during negotiations (1.36). However, this may be a case of one pagan defending another against criticism; other non-Christian sources refer to Valerian as being defeated in war by Shapur, though without blaming him for incompetence.⁸⁶ Because Julian was surrounded by so much religious controversy, it is less easy to discern whether ancient commentators viewed him or his troops as militarily responsible for the debacle. In the case of Valens, on the other hand, there are clear implications in contemporary sources that the emperor, some of his generals, and his troops were all targets of criticism for military incompetence from some quarters,⁸⁷ though since so many of them perished in the battle, such criticism was to a large extent academic.

After the death of Theodosius I in 395, it was rare for emperors to lead a military campaign in person, initially because Theodosius' sons were still relatively young, but probably also because of the desire to avoid the political instability which had ensued from the deaths in battle of Julian and Valens – and perhaps also recognition of the need to distance the office of emperor from direct blame for defeat. That blame was instead directed onto the relevant general. So, for example, when Belisarius suffered a defeat at Persian hands at Callinicum in 531, an official enquiry was held as a result of which he was dismissed from his post by Justinian.⁸⁸ Later in the century, during the reigns of the emperors Tiberius II and Maurice, a number of generals were dismissed following defeats.⁸⁹ Although these dismissals carried blame, they did not result in prosecutions, nor did they

⁸⁵ See further O'Daly 1999, Van Nuffelen 2012. ⁸⁶ Eutr. 9.7, *Epit. de Caes.* 32.5.

⁸⁷ Lenski 1997: 145–8.

⁸⁸ *Proc. Bell.* 1.18, *Joh. Mal.* 461–6, with discussion in Greatrex 1998: 200–7 – a case which illustrates how apportioning 'blame' is never simple, inasmuch as defeat, in any era, usually occasions mutual recriminations.

⁸⁹ Justinian: *Theoph. Sim.* 3.15.8, *Joh. Eph. Hist. eccl.* 6.10, *Evag. Hist. eccl.* 5.19. Philippicus: *Theoph. Sim.* 3.5.14–16. Petrus: *Theoph. Sim.* 7.2–5.

necessarily finish the prospects of the individual in question. Belisarius was able to resurrect his career through his role in saving Justinian during the Nika riot in Constantinople in 532, going on to lead the successful campaign against the Vandals the following year, while some of those in the later sixth century held further commands at later dates, not least because they were relatives of the emperor by blood (Petrus) or by marriage (Philippicus). The use of dismissal in this way suggests it served as a convenient strategy for deflecting blame from the person of the emperor.