

THE DIPLOMACY OF INTERVENTION IN THE MIDDLE REPUBLIC: THE ROMAN DECISION OF 201/200 B.C.¹

Resumen: El artículo argumenta que la histórica decisión mundial de intervenir en la crisis geopolítica que estaba convulsionando Grecia en el invierno del 201/200 a.C. tuvo varios elementos determinantes, sobre los que destacó una cultura greco-romana que, en general, observaba la intervención del más fuerte a favor del «injustamente tratado» como una buena acción, como un signo no tanto de poder como de virtud.

Palabras clave: diplomacia antigua, intervención interestatal en la Antigüedad, expansión imperial romana.

Abstract: The paper argues that the world-historical Roman decision to intervene in the geopolitical crisis that was convulsing the Greek East in winter 201/200 B.C. had many determinants, but one overlooked determinant was a Greco-Roman culture that in general looked upon intervention by the strong upon behalf of the “unjustly treated” as a good thing, as a sign not merely of power but actually of virtue.

Key words: ancient diplomacy, ancient interstate interventions, Roman imperial, expansion.

INTRODUCTION

Envoys from four Greek states —Egypt, Rhodes, Athens and Pergamum— arrived in Rome in autumn 201, pleading for Roman intervention against Philip V of Macedon and Antiochus III of Syria. They warned of severe consequences should the power of the two kings be allowed to expand unimpeded. The sudden expansion of the kings’ power was ultimately caused by the weakening and then increasing collapse of Ptolemaic Egypt, which since ca. 280 had formed one of the three pillars of the state-system in the Greek Mediterranean. The Ptolemaic regime had now lost control of much of the Egyptian countryside (and hence its revenues) because of a huge indigenous rebellion which it was unable to put down; the death of Ptolemy IV had brought to the throne a child of five; and in Alexandria weak caretaker governments were being replaced by coup and riot. Philip and Antiochus, both of them vigorous military monarchs, had decided to take advantage of Ptolemaic weakness by destroying the regime and seizing its resources. The weakening and then growing collapse of Egypt and the consequent expansion of Macedon and the Seleucid state was a true crisis of the Hellenistic system.² The Roman government answered the pleas for help and the warnings of the Greek envoys, at first sending out a diplomatic mission in an attempt

¹ This paper partly summarizes—but also significantly extends—the discussion in Eckstein 2008: Chap. 6.

² The great Egyptian rebellion, Vélisse 2004. The chaotic situation in Alexandria: Mittag 2003. How the crisis of Ptolemaic Egypt resulted in an even larger crisis in the state-system of the Greek Mediterranean: Eckstein

2008, Chaps. 4-5. Political scientists call the faltering of one of the pillars of a state-system “a power-transition crisis,” and it can lead to massive warfare in the system as states seek to take advantage of the new configuration of power; World War I is a good example. See Gilpin 1988 and Waltz 1988.

to control the kings' actions (spring 200). But major military intervention was envisaged at least against Philip, and serious preparations for war were undertaken. When Philip rejected the Roman ultimatum (mid-summer 200), the war began.³

The question is why the Romans answered the pleas of the Greeks for help. The answer given by many modern scholars is that the Roman Republic in the third century B.C. was a war-machine—a state dependent on continual warfare to maintain its social, political and economic stability. The elements of this “war machine” were: (1) the warmongering Roman aristocracy, imbued with a warrior culture and dependent upon continuous warfare (against real, exaggerated, or even fabricated enemies) in order maintain its wealth, power and status inside Roman society; (2) the needy Roman populace, eager to enrich their difficult lives with booty and/or land taken from others; and (3) the alliance-system through which Rome controlled Italy, a system prone to war because its basis was joint war-making. All this was combined with a hostile, suspicious and aggressive Roman attitude towards the outside world. It is then alleged that Rome was the exception among Hellenistic states in being so militaristic, aggressive and “pathological” in culture; and Roman savagery in turn is the key to Rome’s extraordinary external success. Such views currently dominate scholarship on the period.⁴ From this perspective, the Roman decision of 201/200 B.C. to intervene in the Greek East is unsurprising. It was inherent in the bellicose and aggressive character of the Roman state. The pleas and warnings of the envoys from the four Greek states constituted merely a convenient excuse for the working of the Roman war-machine that year.⁵

There is no doubt that Rome in the Middle Republic was an intensely militarized and militaristic culture; the Republic was certainly guided by a senatorial aristocracy imbued with a warrior ethos; and the *populus* was habituated to war and to service in the army. These factors made a substantial contribution (as what political scientists call independent variables) to the frequency of Roman wars.⁶ But the Roman Republic also existed in a violent international anarchy—that is, a state-system of many bellicose and militaristic states in which there was no law and order, and in which it was usual for clashes of interest to be decided by warfare. Rome would not have survived long in its violent and anarchic environment if it had not developed its internal characteristics: “States must meet the demands of the political eco-system or court annihilation.”⁷ Thus the fact that Rome was militaristic and aggressive did not make it exceptional or exceptionally pathological among Hellenistic polities, and especially not among the great powers; the Romans faced a world in which the harsh pressures of the anarchic system led to the “functional similarity” of all states. The imperialism of Antigonid Macedon under Philip V and the Seleucid realm under Antiochus III demonstrate this point: it was against the aggressions of Philip and Antiochus that the Greek embassies to Rome were complaining (though at least two of the complainers —Rhodes and Pergamum— were themselves aggressive and bellicose states, though with fewer resources).⁸

³ On whether the Aetolian League also complained to Rome about the aggressions of Philip V in this period (which would make five Greek states that came to the Senate), see below, p. 87-88.

⁴ See Harris 1979: 53, cf. 50-51, and Chaps. I-III and V in general; cf. North 1981; Mandell 1989; Derow 1989, 1991, and 2003: 58-60; Ampela 1998: 74 and 77; and cf. already Veyne 1975: 838-39.

⁵ So, e.g., Harris 1979: 212-218.

⁶ On the bellicosity of Roman internal culture, fundamental is Harris 1979: Chaps. I-III.

⁷ On the international anarchy and its characteristics, see Eckstein 2006, Chs. 4-6. The quote: Sterling 1974: 336. The classic work on international anarchy is Waltz 1979. See also Mearsheimer 2001.

⁸ On functional similarity of all states under anarchy, see Waltz 1979: 97. On the militarism and aggression of Philip and Antiochus, Rhodes and Pergamum, see Eckstein, 2008: chs. 4 and 5. On the militarism and imperialism even of relatively small Hellenistic states, see the brilliant study by Ma 2000.

The issue before us is thus whether the arrival of the Greek embassies at Rome in late 201 merely provided a convenient excuse for the on-going exercise of Roman bellicosity and aggression towards the entire outside world —the current scholarly *communis opinio*— or whether the information from the Greek envoys acted instead as a crucial catalyst in turning Roman attention towards a truly dangerous situation in the Greek Mediterranean, and pushing the Senate towards the high-risk option of intervention because the Greek envoys made the Senate believe this was morally the correct thing to do and that there were also greater risks in inaction. In addition, the Roman decision of 201/200 raises important questions about an ancient diplomatic culture that *in general* was conducive to such interventions.⁹

A NOTE ON THE MORALITY OF “INTERVENTION”¹⁰

One advantage that modern historians of the ancient world derive from reading political scientists is that the latter do not employ terminology loosely, but offer explicit and technical definitions of the terms they use. Thus instead of talking of “intervention” in this essay without bothering to define it, as if we can simply assume it a concept understood by all readers, I offer the definition of intervention evolved by the political scientist James Rosenau (who is followed now by the Classicist Polly Low): “intervention” means the interference of one polity in the quarrels of one or more other polities (either in internal conflicts or in bilateral or multilateral external conflicts), with such interference marking a distinctive new stage of development in the previous pattern of relations between the polities involved. The latter part of the definition helps distinguish a situation of “intervention” from, on the one hand, normal interstate interactions (since any such normal interactions might appear from one perspective to be “interventions”), and on the other hand from aiding a state that is already an established or formal ally.¹¹

Though modern historians of the ancient world use the term “intervention” regularly, we need to underline that “intervention” is a modern word; there is no exact parallel for it in either Greek or Latin. To use it to describe ancient interstate behavior is thus somewhat problematic.¹² Even more importantly, interventionist behavior (whatever terminology we use to describe it) tends to be viewed by moderns with deep suspicion—a suspicion deriving in part from the strict ideals of state sovereignty characteristic of the post-Westphalia European state-system, and more directly from negative reactions to 19th century European imperialism. We can see this suspicion, for instance, in United Nations Resolution 2625 (1970) which declares that “No state or group of states has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the external or internal affairs of any other state.” Such an absolute prohibition against interstate intervention indicates that for moderns, intervention is—at best—a decision that always needs to have an extraordinarily strong justification.¹³

Yet it is important to understand that this negative emotional valence surrounding intervention may not have existed—or not nearly so strongly—among ancient statesmen. Rather, they appear to have viewed the intervention of the strong to protect the weak as both a natural and a good

⁹ On the distinction in general between pretexts and true catalysts, see Lebow 2000/2001: esp. 614.

¹⁰ This section significantly extends the important new discussion of the cultural psychology of intervention among ancient states in Low 2007, Ch. 3.

¹¹ Rosenau 1968; cf. Low 2007: 175-176.

¹² Low 2007: 175 and 178.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 177-178.

thing—both within their societies, where the private power of the wealthy and influential was a fact of life, and externally, where the weight of powerful states was a similar fact taken for granted.¹⁴ The positive emotional valence surrounding interstate intervention “to help the wronged”, as it was often put (*boêthein tois adikoumenois*), is a persistent theme in Greek writers such as Lysias, Isocrates, and Demosthenes; in the propaganda of Sparta in the early fourth century; and we even find provision for interventions to protect the weak in official treaties such as the Common Peace of 371/370.¹⁵ To be sure, almost all the texts that extol interstate intervention to protect the weak come from writers in a powerful polity that engaged in such interventions, and this raises questions about sincerity. Nevertheless, occasionally we do have very positive responses to intervention from representatives of the state being helped. This suggests that we are dealing here with a true positive cultural ideal concerning intervention—at least under certain circumstances—and not just the propaganda of the strong.¹⁶

Ernst Badian famously argued that in the Roman case, the custom of the strong protecting the weak within society was a behavior that the senatorial elite projected outward into the interstate world, with Rome as the protecting patron.¹⁷ The intensity of such a Roman projection of patron-client relations into the interstate world has been challenged of late,¹⁸ and meanwhile it appears that within Athenian society much effort was taken to avoid the creation of such patron-client relations, which indicates an awareness of the negative aspects of such “interventions” for the weaker partner.¹⁹ But the latter point only makes the positive valence with which interstate intervention to protect the weak tended to be viewed among the Greeks more instructive, and—again—this provides a broader context for Roman behavior.

Yet one should not push these findings about the positive valence of intervention too far. First, in Greek thinking such “intervention” is an international good only when it is an action to protect the weak against previous aggression by third parties (*boêthein tois adikoumenois...*)—i.e., it is counter-intervention.²⁰ We also have occasional negative evaluations of intervention—as “meddlesomeness” by powerful states at best (*polypragmasunê*), and aggression at worst.²¹ But the negative comments are fewer than one would expect, and one can accept that, in a different emotional world from ours and an even more violent international world, intervention by the strong on behalf of the weak was less fraught as a phenomenon than it is for us.

This has relevance to the diplomacy of intervention as it appears in the events of 201/200 B.C. Low’s study of attitudes towards intervention stops in the mid-fourth century—but the phenomenon continued, both in Greek thought and Roman thought as well. Hence what we call intervention was still viewed as a sign not necessarily of aggression but rather of “shining nobility of soul” (*psyche lampra*) by the historian Polybius, writing ca. 150 B.C. Polybius’ attitude appears now to

¹⁴ On what modern scholars conventionally call patron-client relations (both internal and external), see the essays in Wallace-Hadrill, ed., 1989.

¹⁵ See Low 2007: 178-186; Lys. 2.8, 13, 14, 22, 67-68; Isocr. 4.54-70, 6.31; Demosth. 2 *Ol.* 24; 16.14-15; Spartan propaganda: Xen. *Hell.* 5.3.14, 63.7-9, 6.5.33-34. Peace of 371: Xen. *Hell.* 6.3.18; cf. also Plato, *Laws* 684b1-3.

¹⁶ See Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.46-47 (speech of the envoy from Phlius), with Low 2007: 181-182; Lys. 2.66 (Athenian gratitude to foreign liberators from the Thirty), with Low 2007: 199-200; or the gratitude of the polis of Erythrae to the Athenian general Conon after being

liberated from Spartan control: Rhodes and Osborne 2003: no. 8, with Low 2007: 243. Another example: Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.21 (the gratitude of the people of Scepsis to the Spartan general Dercylidas for liberation from the tyrant Meidias).

¹⁷ Badian 1958a.

¹⁸ See Burton 2003.

¹⁹ See Millett 1989,

²⁰ Low 2007: 185-186.

²¹ Aggression: Demosth. 3 *Phil.* 10 and 12; *polypragmasunê* (a negative evaluation of fifth century Athens by an Athenian in the fourth century): Isocr. 8.26, 30, 58, and 108. See Low 2007: 204-206.

have been quite traditional (see above). His assumption about the positive moral valence of intervention comes through in the following passage, where he explains why the Romans intervened in the internal policies of the Achaean League—his own polity—on behalf of the Spartans, who claimed to be oppressed by the League: “The Romans, being human men and possessing a noble disposition and high principles, take pity on those who are in misfortune and appeal to them.” Polybius presents this attitude as a natural one (*Rômaioi ontes anthrôpoi...*). Such, too, was the opinion of Polybius’ father Lycortas—an experienced politician, *strategos* of the Achaean League twice—concerning the same issue of Sparta: “The Romans were but doing their duty in taking heed of the pleas made by persons they believed had been treated unjustly.”²² These sentiments are all the more striking since both Lycortas and Polybius were opposed to the Roman attempt to interfere with the League at Sparta; they argued that the Romans could and should be dissuaded from such interventions in Achaean affairs via appeal to the mutual loyalties inherent in the long-term alliance Achaean had developed with Rome in the wars against Philip V and Antiochus.²³

When seen in the light of Low’s findings, there is a further implication to these Polybian passages. They tend to show that when Livy reports that the Roman decision of 201/200 was taken because of “injuries and war inflicted on friendly states” (*ob iniurias armaque illata sociis populi Romani*—31.6.1), and when he emphasizes their complaints to the Senate (31.1.10, 3.1, and 5.6), this is—to be sure—Roman propaganda and not the whole story (see below); but it is also probably not false as to mood. Polybius understood—he took it for granted—that the Roman decision-making elite partook of the same ideology of intervention “to help the unjustly injured” that the Greek decision-making elite did. This Mediterranean-wide culture of intervention thus provides a crucial context for the Roman decision of 201/200—as opposed to the decision being seen primarily an indicator of exceptional Roman bellicosity and aggressiveness.

In sum, as we consider the diplomacy of intervention in 201/200, it now appears that a positive Roman response to the Greek embassies was less problematic and more natural in the Hellenistic Mediterranean than it would be in the modern world. In a violent environment lacking international law, one needed power to defend oneself—if not one’s own power, than the power of the powerful. It was an old story, and it came with its own penumbra of morality.²⁴ Everyone understood that the intervening state might well draw pragmatic advantages from the intervention in terms of its own increased power and influence.²⁵ Everyone understood, too, that those who asked for help might end up paying a price for it. The price would be paid in loss of status (i.e., the willingness to forgo in public the ideal of autarky, and the admission of weakness)—and in taking on obligations to the helping side.²⁶ Nevertheless, those who came to the powerful and presented themselves as “the wronged” were appealing to an ideal of intervention which was not uniquely

²² Polyb. 24.10.11; and 24.8.2.

²³ Polyb. 24. 10.12 and 24.8.4-5. On the specific issues involved at Sparta, and the (limited) outcome of the Roman intervention, see Gruen 1984: 481-502.

²⁴ Cf. the flattery employed by the envoy Aristagoras in the Ionians’ appeal for help to Sparta and Athens in 499 B.C.: Hdt. 5.48-51 and 97; Corcyra’s famous appeal to Athens against Corinth in 433 B.C.: Thuc. 1.31-36 with Crane 1992. Another example: the appeal of the Ionian cities to the Spartans for protection against Persia in 400: Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.3.

²⁵ Low 2007: 192-193; 202-203. Hence although the Thebans in 395 ask for Athenian help against Spar-

ta on the grounds of *boêthein adikoumenois* (Xen. *Hell.* 3.5.10 and 14), the envoys also stress the advantages Athens would gain from helping Thebes—including becoming (again) the dominant state among the Greeks: 3.5.10 and 14-15. Alcibiades in Thucydides emphasizes how coming to the aid of suppliants increases the power of any powerful state that answers such a plea (6.18.2).

²⁶ On the ancient ideal of total state autonomy, see Ostwald 1982: 29; asking another polity for help—and in public—was a violation of this ideal.

Roman but was widespread in Mediterranean culture. This is necessary to keep in mind for properly assessing the decision taken in Rome in 201/200.

THE GREEK EMBASSIES AND HELLENISTIC *REALPOLITIK*

An examination of the situation facing Rome in the autumn of 201 indicates that the coming of the Greek envoys did not serve to provide the Romans a mere convenient excuse for warmaking. To be sure, Rome that spring had finally achieved victory over Hannibal and Carthage, bringing the Second Punic War to a satisfactory close. But the victory had come at enormous cost, involving many military disasters, and it had left the Roman state and populace exhausted. The scale of Livy's census figures ca. 201 suggest that since the 220s Rome had lost a third of its male citizens available for army service.²⁷ Hannibal supposedly boasted that during his long invasion of Italy he destroyed 400 towns and killed 300,000 Italians (App. *Pun.* 134); the Romans, retaliating against polities that went over to Hannibal, added to the widespread destruction.²⁸ Significant portions of Roman Italy (especially in the south) were devastated in the fighting; much good farmland was for sale in 200 B.C. (Livy 31.13.6).²⁹ Thus neither the Italian allies who had loyally shouldered heavy military burdens, nor those who had defected to Carthage and suffered savage Roman punishment, could have been any more eager than the Roman populace itself for a major new war.

And to complicate matters, there was serious new trouble on the Celtic frontier in northern Italy. After a period of quiescence, the Celts had launched large raids into Roman territory in the summer of 201, and the Boii then severely defeated a Roman army under the overall command of the consul P. Aelius Paetus (Roman dead numbered 7,000 according to Livy). The defeat was stunning—and men in the Senate may have feared another Gallic invasion of central Italy.³⁰ The *Patres'* concern over Celtic unrest was justified. Encouraged by the Boian victory of 201, a confederation of Celtic peoples attacked the two large Roman colonies in the central Po Valley in 200: Cremona was besieged; Placentia overrun and destroyed.³¹

This was serious danger coming from Rome's most traditional enemies, barbarian tribes who lived just over the Apennine Mountains from the Roman heartland. The northern frontier was the obvious theater of consular military action for summer 200. Consuls, of course, often sought military glory while in office;³² but under these conditions a war in the Greek East was not necessary in order for the new consuls of 200 to achieve whatever glory they wished.³³

Furthermore, the recruitment of an army in summer 200 for the war in Greece seems to have been a strain. The *populus Romanus* was reluctant to authorize such an eastern intervention

²⁷ Livy *Per.* 20 gives the number of adult male Roman citizens at about 270,000 before the outbreak of the Second Punic War. By 209 that number had sunk to 137,000 (*Per.* 27)—less than half the men in 220. These figures recovered to 219,000 by 201 (*Per.* 29), but this is still far below the figure of 220. The precise numbers cannot be trusted, but the trend is clear enough.

²⁸ See Cornell 1996: 103 and n. 22.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 103-11; cf. also Hopkins 1978: 1-56.

³⁰ The Roman defeat: Livy 31.2.7-10 with Eckstein, 1987: 54-55. Senatorial fears of a new Celtic invasion of

central Italy: Zon. 9.16 with Eckstein 1987: 63-68 and 282-83.

³¹ Discussion of the opening of the great Celtic War of 201-191: Eckstein 1987: 56-58.

³² See, among many scholars, Harris 1979: 10-40.

³³ It is revealing of the violent character of the Mediterranean anarchy that while the Greeks were engulfed in massive warfare caused by the collapse of Ptolemaic Egypt, the Romans were simultaneously facing a major crisis with the Gallic barbarians of the Po Valley.

precisely because they were exhausted (Livy 31.6.3-6).³⁴ Even after a potential war against Philip was reluctantly voted by the *comitia centuriata*, a special dispensation exempted large numbers of veterans from the new draft (Livy 31.8.6). Yet in late 199 there was a mutiny among embittered long-serving men who had been conscripted into the eastern army much against their will—and the general in charge handled the situation with surprising understanding (32.3.2-7).³⁵

Thus there existed significant pressures in 201/200 against a major Roman intervention in the East. Yet if Rome had had a long and deep involvement in the geopolitics of the Greek world before 201/200, then the Roman decision to help the Greek states in 201/200 might still seem a natural development—the consequence of increased Roman power evident in the victory over Carthage combined with long-term Roman interest in and concrete interests in the Greek East.³⁶

This is an important issue because, as we have seen, political scientists define “intervention” as an act that constitutes a new stage in relations between states, a break in the previous pattern of interaction.³⁷ The story of Roman contacts in the East before 201/200 is a complicated one, and I have dealt with it in detail elsewhere. Here I will merely summarize my findings, which show that the Roman decision of 201/200 did indeed constitute a break in the previous pattern.

The earliest Roman military involvements east of the Adriatic were two expeditions into Illyria, in 229/228 and 219, against large-scale piracy centered on the Illyrian Ardiaei. The political result of the successful expeditions was merely a scattering of informal friendly states along the Illyrian coast directly across from Italy. There followed the First Macedonian War (214-205), which at heart was a defensive Roman response to Phillip V's alliance with Hannibal and his attacks on Illyria, both of which Philip initiated in the belief that Rome had already lost the Second Punic War. The war with Macedon did lead to increased Roman contacts in the East as the Romans sought allies against Macedonian power—for Rome itself, so hard-pressed by Carthage, could commit only limited resources to block Philip's expansion. The Romans established relations with the Aetolian League, Sparta and Messene, and across the Aegean with the Kingdom of Pergamum. But the course of the war shows that Roman interest east of the Adriatic was limited—the goal was simply to keep Philip embroiled in Greece so that he could not think of coming to Italy to join his ally Hannibal. The war ended in a compromise peace with Philip in 205, with mutual concessions in Illyria; it also ended badly for Roman relations with the Aetolians, since the minimal Roman war-effort, and the Aetolians' subsequent separate peace with Philip in 206, led each side to believe it had been betrayed by the other. Meanwhile, Pergamum in 205 affirmed its friendship with Rome by aiding Roman envoys to obtain the Great Mother of Pessinus as a religious artifact to help in the removal of Hannibal from Italy. This was the sum total of relations between Rome and the Greek East in 201 B.C.³⁸

These findings deepen the apparent paradox of the Roman decision of 201/200. On the surface the events in the East had little to do with Rome, and the decision was not a natural development of an ever-intensifying Roman involvement in the region. The Senate in 201/200 did have bitter experience of the aggressive ambitions of powerful Hellenistic monarchs: first through the invasion of Italy by King Pyrrhus of Epirus in 280-275, which had done great damage,³⁹ and then in Philip V's recent attempts to seize Illyria and (the Senate feared) invade Italy; so it seems reasonable that the Senate understood that serious security threats might arise from the powerful eastern

³⁴ *Id cum fessi diuturnitate et gravetate belli sua sponte homines taedio periculorum laborumque fecerant.* Detailed discussion of the reluctance of the Assembly below, pp. 92-94.

³⁵ On the apparent difficulties of holding the levy in summer 200, see Buraselis 1996: 155, n. 21.

³⁶ So, e.g., Harris 1979: 212-218; Derow 2003:

³⁷ Above, pp. 3-4 (definition of Rosenau 1968).

³⁸ Detailed discussion of all of this in Eckstein 2008: Chs. 2-3.

³⁹ See Eckstein 2006: 155-158.

monarchies. But in autumn 201 the Roman decision-making elite was not looking for a war in the Greek Mediterranean. The Roman state was exhausted, had its own serious problems to deal with in the West, and Roman involvement and interests in the Greek world were still minimal. Indeed, we know that the *Patres* were still so uninformed about European Greece in 198/197 B.C. that the Senate required a basic geography lesson—and this was in the third year of the new war against Philip.⁴⁰

Thus even though the *Patres* understood that serious threats to the security of Italy could arise from the powerful monarchies east of the Adriatic, it is clear that without a specific catalyst to set off these fears, Rome would not have intervened in the Greek East in 201/200. One may add that given the disorganized nature of the Roman Senate, an institution of about 300 men divided into many groups, factions, families and personalities in constant and fluid interaction with each other, it was natural that the Senate tended to avoid thinking about long-range problems—including, e.g., the far-away problem caused by the weakening and then collapse of Ptolemaic Egypt. As a group, the *Patres* could be quite efficient when confronted with a crisis. But the Senate as an institution tended just to “muddle through”. In 201/200 it had much on its mind, and contained very few men with extensive experience in the Greek world.⁴¹

So a catalyst was required simply to bring the crisis in the East to the *Patres*' attention, let alone to cause a decision to take action. This necessary catalyst was the arrival of embassies from at least four Greek states, complaining of the conduct and warning of the dangers of Philip and Antiochus. The political scientist Richard Ned Lebow defines a diplomatic catalyst as information or an event that (1) significantly reshapes the thinking of a decision-making elite about external affairs so that (2) the costs and risks of inaction suddenly appear more dangerous than the costs and risks of acting forcefully.⁴² In Lebow's terms, then, the embassies from the Greek states in autumn 201 acted as just such a catalyst, because (1) the information the envoys brought with them reshaped the thinking of the Roman elite about eastern events, so that (2) the Senate concluded that the costs and risks of Roman inaction in the East were more dangerous than the costs and risks of acting forcefully there.

What was the nature of the ambassadors' information? Polybius' account of what occurred in Rome in 201/200, in Book 16, is unfortunately lost. But at 15.20.5-6 he provides us a crucial clue: he says that Tyche (Fortune), angered at the aggressive military pact struck by Philip and Antiochus against the collapsing Ptolemies and the child-ruler Ptolemy V, “alerted the Romans” to the kings' ruthless behavior. The obvious way in which Tyche “alerted the Romans” to the kings' behavior (*epistésasa Rômaiou*..) was via the Greek embassies, and Polybius depicts Philip in autumn 201 as worried about the Greek embassies going to Rome (16.24.3). This strongly suggests that Polybius had the envoys of late 201 warning the Senate that the kings had made a treaty of alliance to destroy the Ptolemaic state, and hence to overturn the entire Greek state-system; it was in this way that Tyche's anger at the Pact was fulfilled.⁴³ Polybius had already told his audience that both Philip and Antiochus desired worldwide rule; it is likely that the Greek envoys were not shy about

⁴⁰ See Polyb. 18.11.2-12, Livy 32.37.1-5, cf. App. *Mac.* 8, with Eckstein 1987: 284. Contrast Harris 1979: 217, who depicts Rome's “intrusion” into Greek affairs in 200 as simply the next and inevitable imperialist step, after victory over Carthage, in the implacable Roman advance.

⁴¹ On the nature of senatorial government, see Astin 1968.

⁴² The function of “catalysts” in the development of international crises: Lebow 2000/2001: esp. 614.

⁴³ One must translate *epistésasa Rômaiou* at Polyb. 15.20.5 properly in order to see this. For the correct translation, see Walbank 1967: 474; for detailed confirmation of this translation, and its implications for how Polybius depicted what the Greek embassies said in Rome in 201/200, see Eckstein 2005.

making this declaration either.⁴⁴ Our other (later) sources are explicit that the Ptolemaic envoys (Justin 30.2.8-3.5) and the Rhodians (App. *Mac.* 4) warned the Senate about the Pact Between the Kings and its broad implications. Since Livy and Justin both link the embassy from Pergamum to that of Rhodes (Livy 31.2.1; Justin 30.3.5), we can also assume that the envoys from King Attalus I strongly seconded this information.⁴⁵

Despite some scholars, there is no convincing evidence that the Greek envoys were inventing or exaggerating the terms of the pact between Philip and Antiochus. That is, the envoys presented the *Patres* with a real crisis, one that had already forced each of their governments to take extraordinary actions: the military alliance struck between the bitter rivals Pergamum and Rhodes against Philip; the insulting elimination of the “Macedonian” tribes at Athens; the Rhodian, Athenian and Ptolemaic appeals to Rome. These very actions demonstrate the seriousness of the situation in the East.⁴⁶

No doubt the Greek envoys pointed to the danger the kings posed not merely to their own states but ultimately to Rome; that is, their pleas for intervention were couched at least partly in terms of Roman self-interest. Like the declarations about injustice being suffered, this was standard diplomacy: the Corcyrean speech at Athens in 433 B.C. is a classic example of a warning and appeal to the self-interest of the state being asked for aid (Thuc. 1.31-36); we regularly find the same phenomenon in Xenophon.⁴⁷ And we can adduce a parallel from a much closer time, and from Polybius himself. In 225 B.C. the Achaean League was under severe threat from the aggressive King Cleomenes III of Sparta; the Achaean leader Aratus of Sicyon sent envoys to King Antigonos III of Macedon to ask for help, and the envoys stressed that if Antigonos did not help Achaea, then he would eventually have to face Cleomenes coming north towards Macedon, but backed now by the accumulated resources of the entire Peloponnese (including Achaea). The prospect to which the Greek envoys could point in 201 was similarly dramatic. The example of Cleomenes, the Achaeans and Antigonos shows that Polybius would have been comfortable depicting such a scene.⁴⁸

Massive military resources were certainly in play. At Raphia in 217, the combined armies of Antiochus and Ptolemy IV had totalled 150,000 men; at Panium in 200, the combined armies of Antiochus and Ptolemy V totaled perhaps 120,000 men. These were forces ready for battle and actually in the field; and they were twice the size of the huge Roman army at Cannae. The union of Antiochus with the resources of Egypt might eventually create a military power with resources

⁴⁴ Philip: Polyb. 5.101 (esp. 101.10) and 108.4-5; 15.20-24, with Walbank 2002. Antiochus: 11,39.14-16, with Ma 2002: 272-276. Polybius’ assertions here are confirmed by other evidence: Alcaeus’ poems for Philip, inscriptions and cuneiform texts for Antiochus; see Eckstein 2008: 144-145.

⁴⁵ Cf. Briscoe 1973: 43; Gera 1997: 62 n. 9.

⁴⁶ Scholars who argue that the Greek governments exaggerated or even invented the Pact: Magie 1939; Errington 1971, and 1986: 5 and n. 16. But the evidence for the historicity of the Pact—including new inscriptional evidence—is decisive: see Dreyer 2003 on the new “Bargyilia Inscription”, and the detailed overall discussion in Eckstein 2008: Ch. 4. On the reactions of the Greek states to news of the Pact, see Polyb. 14.1a.4 with Walbank 1967: 424, and Eckstein 2008: Ch. 5. Gruen 1984: 101-2, followed by Warrior 1996: 43, suggests that the

Greek envoys were asking merely for Roman mediation of their conflicts with Philip and Antiochus. That is not the ancient tradition, nor is it consonant with later Roman actions (see below).

⁴⁷ See, Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.11-19: envoys from the Chalcidice ask Sparta for help against their imperialist neighbor Olynthus and point to an ultimate danger to Sparta through a possible alliance of Olynthus and Thebes. This was a warning the Spartans took seriously, for they sent the full army levy north (*Hell.* 5.2.37 and 39), and in fact it was disastrously defeated (5.3.1-7). Another warning from supplicants which the Spartans take seriously: Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.20.

⁴⁸ See Polyb. 2. 47-50, with Walbank 1933: Ch. 4 (still valuable); Gruen 1972; Eckstein 1995: 198-199. Since the envoys to Antigonos III came from Polybius’ own hometown of Megalopolis (2.48), he likely had good sources on this incident.

triple those that had been available to Hannibal and Carthage; the union of Philip with the power of Egypt might give him military resources double those which Carthage and Hannibal had enjoyed. The envoys could also point to the formidable and growing navies of both kings (more than 150 quinquiremes all told), which might make Italy easily accessible to attack. None of this can have been a comforting prospect at Rome.⁴⁹

At this point a cynic might adduce, however, the disturbing counter-example of the Egestaeans appeal to Athens in 415. According to Thucydides, the Egestaeans depicted themselves as the victims of unjust aggression (from their neighbor Selinuntum, backed ultimately by Syracuse): a classic case, then, of *adikoumenois boêthein* (6.10.5, explicit). But the Egestaeans also argued — as (we have posited) the Greek envoys of 201/200 did — that there existed in this local quarrel a danger to the large state being asked for help: in this case, the expansion of the power of Syracuse and a possible ultimate alliance with Sparta against Athens (6.6.2). And Thucydides says repeatedly that this claim was false.⁵⁰ Moreover, he is equally emphatic that the fundamental motive behind the Athenian intervention was not the defense of Athens from a future threat, nor any desire to help Egesta (“a specious pretext”: 6.8.4), but the Athenian desire to conquer all of Sicily. This, he says, is the *alêthestatê prophasis* for the Sicilian expedition. (6.6.1): a phrase that startlingly repeats, of course, his famous phrase at 1.23.6 underlining “the truest explanation” for the Peloponnesian War. But this time the truest explanation is not fear (Spartan fear of the growing power of Athens), it is hope and greed—Athenian hope to conquer Sicily.⁵¹

Some modern scholars indeed view the events at Rome in 201/200 as a replay of this scenario: the warnings of the Greeks were false, the basic Roman motive was imperial aggression.⁵² But, in contrast to Thucydides, Polybius insists that the crisis of 201/200 — and the danger it represented to all states — was real, and hence the warning of the envoys from the four Greek states was real. Thus the Achaean historian devoted an entire volume (Book 14) to the collapse of Ptolemaic Egypt — an extraordinary departure from his usual *tour d’horizon* method of narration;⁵³ and he is emphatic in 15.20 about the terrible nature of the crisis, and the terrible role which Philip and Antiochus’ actions played in it.⁵⁴ The Roman Senate, of course, had long experience with the ruthlessness of power-politics among states in the Mediterranean anarchy, both in Italy itself and in the western Mediterranean (a ruthlessness Rome shared).⁵⁵ And while most Roman senators in 201 had no detailed knowledge of the Greek world, we may still suggest that they had a general impression that the great powers in the East were as ruthless as everyone else. The *Patres* knew enough — from the earlier Roman experience with Pyrrhus and the recent experience with Philip V — to be wary.⁵⁶ And one other factor comes into play: the recent trauma of Hannibal’s invasion of Italy. Hannibal had inflicted devastating — almost fatal — damage upon Rome, and he had struck from bases seemingly

⁴⁹ On the naval threat, see Griffith 1935 (still valuable). Antiochus’ navy: Grainger 2002: 36-37. Philip’s navy: Polyb. 16.2.9. On the great military resources available to the Hellenistic monarchies and how this may have been seen at Rome in 201/200, see Grainger 2002: 28.

⁵⁰ See Thuc. 6.8.2, 6.8.4, 6.9.1, 6.11.7, 6.12.1, 6.13.1-2.

⁵¹ For the intentional contrast of Athens in Book 6 with Sparta in book 1, see Rawlings 1981: 68-69 and now Desmond 2006: 366-367. Athenian imperialist motivation: 6.8.2, 9.3, 22.5, and the entire tone of Alcibiades’ speech for the expedition in 6.16-18, esp. 6.18.4-7; see Forde 1989: Ch. 2.

⁵² See above, nn. 4, 5, and 46.

⁵³ Walbank 1967: 424 and 434-435.

⁵⁴ Polybius similarly believed that the threat Cleomenes III posed to every Greek state including Macedon — and the warning of the Achaean envoys to Antigonos — was real: above, pp. 14-15. A similar real warning: the Chalcidic states’ warning to Sparta about Olynthus: above, n. 47.

⁵⁵ See in detail Eckstein 2006: Chap. 5.

⁵⁶ By contrast — to go back to Thucydides — Syracuse had not attacked Athens before 415.

impossibly far away (in Punic Spain). After the experience of Hannibal, one can see why *any* warning of a looming threat from great powers overseas was likely to find a hearing in the Senate, and be taken seriously. Indeed, Livy at 31.7.2-3 indicates the direct link in people's minds between what was now seen as dangerous Roman indecisiveness with Carthage in the years before the Hannibalic War, Hannibal's subsequent devastating invasion of Italy, and the decision of 201/200.⁵⁷

From the point of view of modern political-science theory, what the Greek envoys were offering the *Patres* was a "worst-case scenario." Political scientists argue that in interstate relations, no governing elite can know with certainty the power-capabilities of its competitors, or (crucially) the *balance* between its own state's power-capabilities and those of its competitors. Ignorance may not be total, but information is usually uncertain, sporadic and hard to interpret, while in a state-system that is a militarized anarchy, distrust of the intentions of other states is strong (and rightly so). Thus even in the modern world, with all the many sources of intelligence available, governing elites face "the uncertainty principle." And the only way for the true balance of capabilities between states to reveal itself is —unfortunately— through the cruel test of war.⁵⁸ But the opacity of states —the "uncertainty principle"— was far more intense in the ancient Mediterranean, because ancient states possessed far fewer instruments of intelligence-gathering than do modern states. One starts from the fact that no ancient polity even had a permanent embassy stationed in another state—a lack of mutual communication that comes as a shock to modern political scientists.⁵⁹ And given the "uncertainty principle", even modern states in an anarchic state-system must always be ready to counteract a sudden worse-than-anticipated threat: "the worst-case scenario."⁶⁰

The long and bitter struggle of Rome to attain power and security in the cruelly competitive environment first of central Italy and then the wider western Mediterranean made such a suspicious attitude towards the outside world all too natural at Rome. Hence both correct caution in the face of a militarized interstate anarchy and the bitter impact of Roman history predisposed the *Patres* towards believing in "the worst-case scenario" when it was presented to them by the Greek ambassadors. This does not mean the envoys were consciously exaggerating, let alone lying, for they were the products of their own cultures, "socialized" to the harsh nature of the militarized anarchy in which their states existed, and themselves imbued with "worst-case scenario" thinking. Of course, when all governmental elites in an anarchic state-system engage in such similar pessimistic thinking, the result may be a self-fulfilling prophecy.⁶¹ But we are not at liberty to assume that the envoys were mistaken. The Pact Between the Kings was real, and so was the system-wide threat it posed, and the system-wide crisis it had helped provoke. Mommsen saw this long ago.⁶²

Once the Greek envoys presented the *Patres* with their facts, the pressures in the Senate to do something —pressures deriving from system reality, from Roman internal culture, and from recent bitter memory— would have been strong. In short, in terms of modern "worse-case scenario"

⁵⁷ On the relationship between the bitter Hannibalic experience and the feelings behind the Roman decision of winter 201/200, see Siebert 1995: 242.

⁵⁸ The importance of opacity and "the uncertainty principle": Morgenthau 1973: 208. Actual power-capabilities and comparative power-capabilities of states unknown (even to themselves) until tested in war: see Levy 1983: 24; Blainey 1988: 114; Thompson 1988: 41; Wohlforth 1994/1995: 104-5, 123 and 127; Jervis 2001: 281-282 and n. 2.

⁵⁹ See Lebow 1991: 144-145; Kauppi 1991: 119.

⁶⁰ On the uncertainty principle, see Jervis 1976: 58-113; Waltz 1988: 619; Sheehan 1996: 8; Glaser 1997: 184. On the deleterious impact of mutual "opacity" of states, see Morgenthau 1973: 208. The relationship of the opacity of states and the uncertainty principle to governmental thinking concerning "the worst case scenario:" *ibid.*, and van Evera 1998: 13-14.

⁶¹ See the warning of Jervis 2001: 283.

⁶² Mommsen 1903: 696-701.

theory the decision of the Senate in 201/200 was natural. The *Patres* could not know the extent of the ultimate threat to Rome posed by the hugely expanding power of Philip and Antiochus; they could not know the actual extent of the power possessed by the kings; they could not know the relationship between Roman power and the threat the kings posed. But many senators must have come to feel that to ignore the problem presented to them by the Greeks, and to let it grow, was dangerous. Experience of the harsh interstate world—and especially the impact of Hannibal's recent invasion of Italy—pushed the *Patres* in that direction.

The governments that sent envoys to the Senate well knew that the price of Roman intervention might be high—in terms of eventual Roman patronage over an artificially-restored Hellenistic balance of power, or even in terms of Roman hegemony. The Rhodians in particular had previously expressed suspicion about the Romans (see below). But states often have uncomfortable choices: feeling unable on their own to check the surging power of the kings, the weaker states turned in desperation to a power outside the traditional Greek state-system to provide help.⁶³ Given the alternatives—Philip and Antiochus as totally dominant in the East or, worse, Philip *or* Antiochus emerging as the sole system hegemon—the consequences of Roman intervention were evidently a cost these governments were prepared to pay. Rome, after all, was geographically quite distant from the Greeks, west beyond the Adriatic Sea—a fact which might serve to ameliorate any subsequent geopolitical situation.⁶⁴

In terms of considerations of *Realpolitik*, then, we must give crucial weight in the Roman decision to an unexpected occurrence: the arrival at Rome in autumn 201 of no less than four embassies from important and desperate Greek states, all of them with the same message, all of them warning the Senate about the conduct and intentions of the Philip and/or Antiochus, and all pleading for Roman intervention and help. It was, quite simply, an extraordinary event.

Yet one final point needs to be made: the arrival of the Greek embassies at Rome was also in one sense a *typical* event, for in ancient state-systems, weaker states under severe pressure often were forced to call upon a more powerful state for help (though never, as here, four states at one time). This phenomenon is already depicted as commonplace in Herodotus and Thucydides, hundreds of years previously. And the phenomenon was as common in the western Mediterranean as it was in Greece: Rome—like the other western great powers Carthage, Tarentum and Syracuse—had a long history with such appeals.⁶⁵

Moreover, decision-makers in the more powerful states tended strongly to give a positive answer to such pleas on *Realpolitik* grounds. True, the Senate did not respond to every plea: in 240 it rejected the appeal of the city of Tunis in North Africa for protection against Carthage, on grounds that Tunis belonged to Carthage, and Rome was at peace with Carthage (Polyb. 1.83.11). But rejection was unusual—though in accepting pleas from weaker states threatened by powerful neighbors, governments in antiquity knew this might lead to conflicts with other large states.⁶⁶ But this risk was preferable to appearing weak or hesitant by rejecting appeals for help, and preferable to abandoning significant (or possibly significant) regions to another power. The fact that Rome

⁶³ The Athenians in autumn 201 also sent an embassy to Alexandria to ask for military aid against Philip. But Ptolemy V's government, faced with Antiochus' threatening advance southwards, could offer only vague replies (Livy 31.9.1-5, a story indirectly confirmed by the "Cephisodorus Inscription": see Merritt 1936).

⁶⁴ On significant distance, especially overseas, as a factor that tends to make hegemony less harsh, see Mearsheimer 2001: Chap. 7.

⁶⁵ Discussion in Eckstein 2006: Chap. 5.

⁶⁶ On the role that the pleas for help of lesser states in antiquity could play in destabilizing relations between great powers, see Hoyos 1998: Chaps. III, XII and XVI.

often responded to such pleas for protection leads some scholars to see Rome as uniquely aggressive.⁶⁷ But Roman behavior here was no different than that of any other great ancient state, as every state responded to the pressures of the harsh interstate anarchy.⁶⁸

THE POSITIVE MORAL VALENCE OF INTERVENTION IN 201/200

As we saw above (p. 79), both Polybius and his father Lycortas saw these positive responses to pleas for help as not only natural on the part of any powerful state, but —further— as an example of high morality (Polyb. 24.8.2 and 10.11). This brings us back to the positive moral penumbra that in antiquity surrounded what we call intervention. The diplomacy of Egypt, Rhodes, Athens and Pergamum at Rome in 201/200 was extraordinary in scale, and rarely had Greek states gone so far away to find a strong state to help them, and never before to Rome.⁶⁹ But the Senate also faced in Rhodes, Ptolemaic Egypt and Athens three states that in recent years had in fact worked at cross-purposes to Rome—during the First Macedonian War.

The Romans' goal in that war had been to keep Philip V so involved in Greece that he could not contemplate an invasion of Italy in alliance with Hannibal.⁷⁰ Between 209 and 206, the Ptolemies, Rhodes and Athens attempted to mediate the war (the first two did so continuously), but they saw the war in almost purely Greek terms, as a conflict primarily between Macedon and the Aetolian League (with Rome merely an ally of the Aetolians). Hence their mediation efforts focused on bringing peace between Macedon and Aetolia. But the Senate opposed any mediation that allowed Philip, freed now from Aetolia, to go against Rome, and in 207 the Senate overtly attempted to sabotage any negotiations (App. *Mace.* 3.2). This led to a scathing public denunciation of Roman motives and conduct by the Rhodian mediator Thrasycrates (Polyb. 11.4-6 cf. App. *Mac.* 3.2). The Ptolemaic envoys must have stood by without protest as Thrasycrates bitterly attacked the Romans (in Polybius he speaks for all the mediators: 11.4.1). The mediation of 207 failed, but in 206 the Rhodians did succeed in bringing about a Macedonian-Aetolian peace separate from Rome (App. *Mace.* 4.1). This put the Romans in a difficult position, facing wars simultaneously against Carthage in the West and Macedon in the East, and with no strong allies in Greece. Thus the Senate eventually agreed to a compromise peace with Philip (205); but there was anger at the Aetolians (Livy 29.12.4), and there must have been similar anger, too, at the Rhodians. In short, relations between Rome and the Greek states that sought to mediate the war in Greece in 209-206 were not hardly friendly.⁷¹

And yet just five years later three of these mediating states —the Ptolemies, Rhodes and Athens— came to Rome pleading for help against Philip and/or Antiochus; it was a radical reversal of diplomatic course. There was a tradition that even the Aetolian League asked for aid against Philip in

⁶⁷ See, e.g., Harris 1979: 189 and 217.

⁶⁸ On Roman willingness to accept into their protection polities which were at high risk —conduct that can appear to us highly provocative on the Romans' part— and a defense of such willingness on grounds of grim interstate realities, see Raaflaub 1996: 292.

⁶⁹ The only parallel in terms of distance is when the states of European Greece went to Gelo the tyrant of Syracuse in 480 to plead for military help against the looming Persian invasion (Hdt. 7.145 and 157-63). The

parallel is instructive in terms of the Greek perception of the intensity of the crisis in 201/200.

⁷⁰ See above, p. 11.

⁷¹ Despite, e.g., Schmitt 1957: 25. The interests of the mediating states in creating peace between Macedon and Aetolia were both strategic (to prevent expansion in the power of Macedon, or Pergamum, and/or Rome as a consequence of the fighting) and economic (the war was disrupting commerce in the Aegean and into Greece). See in detail Eckstein 2002.

this period, only to be insultingly rejected because of the Aetolians' previous "betrayal" of Rome in 206—i.e., on moral grounds (Livy 31.29.4; App. *Mac.* 4.2). The historicity of the Aetolian incident is controversial, and this is not the place to discuss it in detail.⁷² But the story raises the question of whether, given the problematic recent relations between Rome and three of the states asking for help in 201/200, there were factors beyond sheer *Realpolitik* that led to a positive senatorial response.

One factor favoring a Roman decision for intervention was, as we noted earlier, the positive moral valence surrounding positive responses to pleas for help. In fact, intervention in fifth and fourth century Greek thinking did not have to be, and—ideally—was not reliant on previous friendship; rather, there was apparently a special "nobility" in a state deciding to help a suppliant where relations had previously been non-existence or distant.⁷³ Moreover, Lysias (ca. 395 B.C.) comments on the special nobility of the Athenians' being willing to help even traditional enemies (in this case, Corinth) when the latter were the victims of aggression and "injustice" (2.67-68). Demosthenes is similar (18.95-101).⁷⁴

We should canvass the possibility that the moral world of the Senate was not much different. That is, for the *Patres* an intervention to aid states that claimed to be victims of aggression but with which Rome previously had distant or even problematic relations carried in itself a certain positive moral valence, of action taken on behalf of "principle": as the Greeks put it, *boêthein tois adikoumenois*. Hence the Senate in 188 and 180 did not reject the pleas of envoys from Sparta for relief from Achaean oppression, though Sparta had backed Philip V in the war with Rome that began in 200, and though Sparta and Rome had actually fought a war against each other in 195; and both Polybius and Lycortas understand the morality in the Romans' answering such pleas.⁷⁵ The Ptolemies had established informal *amicitia* with Rome ca. 273, but this distant relationship should certainly not be pressed to help us understand the decision of 201/200—not in the face of the Ptolemaic diplomacy of 209-207. Rhodes, too, may have possessed informal *amicitia* with Rome, but this is controversial, and in any case from the Roman point of view the Rhodians' recent conduct had been hostile. Thus the Roman decision to intervene in the East fulfills James Rosenau's definition of intervention as an action that creates a new stage in relations between states; this is the case for Rome and three of the states which came to the Senate in 201/200 and asked for help.⁷⁶

But the presence of the Kingdom of Pergamum among the suppliants definitely complicates our picture here. However much the Romans were motivated by *Realpolitik* on the one hand (certainly a great deal), and the generally positive moral valence of helping "the unjustly injured" on the other (even states with which one's relations had been problematic), the presence of Pergamum made the senatorial decision to help much easier on moral grounds.

⁷² See Badian 1958b: 208-11 and Ferrary 1988: 51 and n. 26., vs. Dorey 1960 and Eckstein 2008: 211-217.

⁷³ Low 2007: 201, cf. 179-180; examples of this ideal in Lysias' version of Athenian history: 2.8, 2.13, and 2.14; cf. 2.22.

⁷⁴ See Low 2007: 201, cf. 180.

⁷⁵ In 188 the Senate sent a letter of complaint to the Achaeans in response to Spartan envoys' complaints about the Achaean execution of dozens of Spartan leaders ("the Compasium Massacre"): discussion and sources in Gruen 1984: 481-482. On the interaction of 180, see above, p. 7.

⁷⁶ On the nature of Roman-Ptolemaic relations, see Eckstein 2008: 201-206 (esp. against Lampela 1998: Chap. II). Whether or not the Rhodians, had an informal *amicitia* with Rome, it obviously had no impact on Rhodian behavior in 207 and 206: see Eckstein 2008: 198-201. A recently discovered inscription suggests that the Rhodians had little detailed knowledge of Rome ca. 200: see Konterini 1983. On Athens, see below, n. 78. The Roman rejection of the Aetolians in this period, if historical, would have been a special case because of their direct "betrayal" of Rome in 206,

As we have seen above (p. 81), King Attalus I of Pergamum had been an ally of Rome and the Aetolian League in the First Macedonian War. To be sure, defeat on the battlefield by Philip and an invasion of Pergamum by Philip's in-law Prusias of Bithynia drove Attalus from the war in 208.⁷⁷ But Attalus' relationship with Rome remained good, and he appears as an *adscriptus* on the Roman side in the Peace of Phoenice, the compromise peace which Rome swore with Philip in 205 (Livy 29.12.14). These considerations alone would have given greater weight to the Pergamene pleas for help in autumn 201 than those coming from any of the three other Greek states.⁷⁸ But there was also a special religious reason for senatorial attentiveness to the envoys of Attalus. In 205 the Senate had received a prophesy that Hannibal would not be driven from Italy until the goddess called the Great Mother was brought from Asia Minor to be worshipped at Rome. The Senate sent an embassy to Pergamum, asking for help in procuring the Great Mother of Pessinus in central Anatolia. The Pessinus temple was not in territory that Attalus controlled, but he persuaded the priests there to give the Romans the Black Stone, a central cult-object of the Great Mother. The Black Stone was conveyed to Rome with great fanfare—including miracles that allegedly occurred as the ship bearing the Stone came up the Tiber.⁷⁹

Both the alliance against Philip and the special effort made for Rome in 205 would no doubt have made the declarations of Attalus' envoys to the Senate in 201 carry great weight. But the purely religious aspect here should not be ignored: Roman gratitude for the coming of the Great Mother would have been intensified because Hannibal by autumn 203 had indeed left Italy, as the oracle had predicted—recalled by the Punic Senate to defend Carthage from the invasion of Africa by P. Cornelius Scipio.

Senators obviously understood that military events at the secular level had relieved Italy of Hannibal after 15 terrifying years; but there were probably many also who were impressed with the apparent connection between the coming of the Great Mother and the departure of Hannibal. Our sources stress that the Romans of 220-200 B.C. were a deeply religious people (see, e.g., Polyb. 3.112.9), and Polybius says that even in his own later period (ca. 150 B.C.) most senatorial aristocrats were pious believers (6.56.12-15).⁸⁰ Polybius' continuator Poseidonius stressed the intensity of Roman religious feeling still prevalent in his own time—that is, a century after the events under discussion here (Ath. 6.274A). Indeed, even after the Roman declaration of “conditional” declaration of war against Philip in spring 200, the departure of the consul P. Sulpicius Galba for Greece was long delayed in good part because of the perceived necessity of investigating a major sacrilege at the Temple of Persephone at Locri (Livy 31.13.1). Here, too, a connection existed between the supernatural and secular planes: for the looting of the Temple of Persephone by King Pyrrhus of Epirus in 275 was followed by a severe storm which inflicted great damage on Pyrrhus' fleet as he was crossing the Adriatic from Italy back to Greece (Livy 29.18.6). The Romans did not want this to happen to them.⁸¹

⁷⁷ See McShane 1964: 106-109.

⁷⁸ Athens, too, appears as an *adscriptus* on the Roman side to the Peace of Phoenice (Livy 29.12.14), but this is probably a fabrication by Roman historical writers in the service of an additional justification for the decision of 201/200. App. *Mac.* 4.1, based on a Greek source, emphasizes that Athens had no relationship with Rome prior to going to Rome for help. Good arguments for eliminating Athens from the list of *adscripti* at Phoenice: Dahlheim 1968: 209-21 (esp. 219 n. 99); Habicht 1982: 138-139.

⁷⁹ Detailed discussion: Burton 1996.

⁸⁰ On this passage, see rightly Morgan 1990: 14-15, in contrast to the Romans' alleged cynicism about religion asserted by Harris 1979: 166-75. On Roman religiosity, see also Lind 1973: 250-52.

⁸¹ See Warrior 1996: 69-70. Possible problems in levying an army may also help explain the long delay in Galba's departure for Greece: above, p. 80-81.

Thus there were probably many men in the Senate who sincerely felt in 201/200 that Rome owed King Attalus a large debt for his help in bringing the Great Mother to Italy. And we can be more exact. One of the envoys sent out by the Senate in 205 to obtain the Great Mother was Ser. Sulpicius Galba; he was a close relative (probably the brother) of P. Sulpicius Galba the consul of 200—and P. Sulpicius Galba was the most vigorous public proponent of intervention in the East in 201/200.⁸² This suggests that the circle around Ser. and P. Sulpicius Galba constituted a strong voice in the Senate predisposed to give heavy weight to the pleas and warnings from Attalus.

In sum, our analysis of the Roman decision of 201/200 is facilitated by understanding that in Hellenistic culture in general, what we call “intervention” often carried a positive moral valence as an action of the strong, including when the intervention was on behalf of states with which previous relations had been distant (or even cool).⁸³ That appears to have been the case with three of the four states involved in the diplomacy at Rome in 201/200.⁸⁴ But the presence of the envoys from Pergamum would have added great moral weight to the pleas coming from the Ptolemies, Athens and Rhodes, for Attalus had a truly good relationship with Rome, and had done Rome a recent great favor by helping bring the Great Mother to Italy (and hence, many senators will have believed at some level, in facilitating the departure of Hannibal).⁸⁵

THE ROMAN DECISION

We have laid out the many reasons for a positive Roman response to the Greek envoys, but the fact remains that the *Patres* had free will. They could have decided to ignore the Greek pleas and warnings, especially since the embassies were asking Rome for protection against powers that were known to be formidable, but were distant and not yet directly threatening to Rome itself. So there is truth in the assertion of de Sanctis and other scholars that the Roman decision to intervene for the Greeks was an act of will, and grew in some sense out of the Romans’ desire to exercise control over, and indeed to dominate, their environment.⁸⁶ This is what Veyne calls “the imperialism of routine.”⁸⁷ But this “imperialism of routine” did not differentiate Rome from any great (or medium-sized or even small-sized) Hellenistic state, either east or west—which is one reason why the Hellenistic state-system was so harsh an environment, and so beset with conflict. The pressures generated by such a system pushed all states in certain (aggressive) directions.⁸⁸

And what of Livy’s —Roman— understanding of the decision? He had two differing versions of Roman motivation. The Polybian version (we have argued) emphasized the geopolitical threat posed by the Pact Between the Kings, and this theme is prominent whenever Livy depends on Polybian material (as in 31.14.4-5).⁸⁹ But Livy’s account of the decision is based much more on the Roman historical tradition, the “Annalistic” tradition. And the Annalists took a moralizing

⁸² On Ser. Sulpicius Galba see Broughton 1951: 304, with sources. McShane 1964 121 n. 100 notes that Attalid interests receive special emphasis in Roman diplomatic confrontations with Philip in spring and summer 200 (Polyb. 16.25.4; Livy 31.16.2)

⁸³ Cf Low 2007: 179 and 200-201; but her discussion is limited to the fifth and fourth centuries.

⁸⁴ None of them possessed a sworn treaty of alliance with the Republic, so there were no legal obligations on which they could call.

⁸⁵ No doubt the Pergamene envoys joined the others in stressing that intervention was in Rome’s ultimate interest, given the broad geopolitical threat posed by the Pact Between the Kings: see Livy 31.2.1 and Justin 30.3.5, and above, p. 83.

⁸⁶ De Sanctis 1923: 21-31; cf. in a negatively moralizing vein Harris 1979: 212-18; Mandell 1989.

⁸⁷ Veyne 1975: 794-796.

⁸⁸ See Eckstein 2006 and 2008.

⁸⁹ Cf. Briscoe 1973: 94-95.

stance, emphasizing Philip's attacks against Greek states that were friends of Rome as the reason for the Roman intervention (*ob iniurias armaque illata sociis populi Romani...*—31.6.1). This was a version of events that invoked (as we can now see) the positive morality of intervention that was in fact widespread in the Hellenistic Mediterranean, while by underlining Roman protection of friendly states, it also appealed to the specific morality of Roman *fides* (good faith).⁹⁰ This is different from geopolitics and the Pact. To a great extent it is propagandistic: the reference to *socii populi Romani* is an exaggeration, since even if the Ptolemies and the Rhodians had informal *amicitia* with Rome, their recent relations had not been positive (see above), and if this is a reference to Athens, then we are dealing with the suspect appearance of the Athenians on the Roman side in the Peace of Phoenice in 205, when Athens had in fact been a non-belligerent and indeed a mediator in the First Macedonian War.⁹¹ On the other hand, the description of friendly relations would fit the Pergamenes very well—and perhaps their appearance with the other three states in late 201 covers a lot of sins here.⁹²

In his depiction of the decision of 201/200, Livy combined the Polybian and Annalistic traditions to produce his own synthesis.⁹³ But Livy's divergence from Polybius' emphasis on the Pact should not be exaggerated. Nor was the Roman Annalistic tradition untrue *per se*, in that along with the broader geopolitical issues, each Greek state must have pled its own specific case of victimization before the *Patres* (that is, the moral issue). The Roman tradition stressed the latter aspect, i.e., the Romans in the role of protectors of victims of aggression.⁹⁴ But even the Annalistic tradition acknowledged that geopolitical considerations played a major role in the Roman decision, stressing the growing power of Philip (Livy 31.3.4-6, and 31.7 *passim*). Nor was even the (Polybian) connection between Philip and Antiochus absent from the Annalists, for the envoys dispatched in spring 200 to give Rome's ultimatum to Philip were simultaneously given the task—according to Livy—of remonstrating with Antiochus about any attack on Egypt (Livy 31.2.3-4 with 33.39.1). This is different from Polybius, but not that much different.⁹⁵

Where Polybius differs most from the Annalistic tradition is in his emphasis on Roman ambition after the Hannibalic War to extend control over the entire world (see esp. 3.6.2). This is missing from Roman versions of events (including Livy). Is that the result of conscious Roman deception? But Roman internal discourse in this period emphasized “defensive” war—not Rome's right to imperial aggression.⁹⁶ Moreover, in terms of understanding Polybius' full point here, we must underline that for him the Romans' great ambitions did not differ from those of Philip, or Antiochus—or Carthage.⁹⁷ To Polybius, that was the way of the world.⁹⁸

⁹⁰ See Merten 1965: 10-11; and on the religious feeling associated in Roman thinking with *fides* in interstate relations, see Freyburger 1986: 116-117.

⁹¹ See above, n. 78.

⁹² See above, pp. 23-25. Livy also says the Senate was taking revenge on Philip because he sent Macedonian troops to help Hannibal in Africa in 202: 30.33.5 and 31.1.1. This is the kind of propagandistic story that gives the Annalists a bad name: Walbank 1967: 456; Briscoe 1973: 55.

⁹³ See Warrior 1996.

⁹⁴ Cf. Briscoe 1973: 55-56 and 95-96; cf. Warrior 1996: 43-45.

⁹⁵ Conversely, Polybius' depiction of events must have had the Greek envoys not only emphasizing the

broad geopolitical issue of the Pact but asking for help because of the individual “aggressions” to which each state had been subjected: that would be rhetorically effective.

⁹⁶ Such an internal discourse may be naïve, but it is not likely to be consciously hypocritical: see Eckstein 2006: Chap. 6, and below on Galba's speech in Livy 31.7.

⁹⁷ Polybius' emphasis on the same will to power in Philip and Antiochus that he perceived in the Romans: see Walbank 2002. His conception of Punic ambitions: 5.104.3 and 15.9.5-6 (highly rhetorical).

⁹⁸ See esp. his comments at 5.67.12-68.1 and 5.106.4-5.

What is certain is that after hearing the Greek envoys, the Senate passed a resolution (*senatus auctoritas*) proposing to the *comitia centuriata* (the Army Assembly, which was the popular assembly responsible for declaring peace and war) that an ultimatum be sent to Philip that he cease his attacks against Greek states, failing which there would be war with Rome. This amounted to a “conditional” declaration of war against Macedon being declared by the Roman People. The Senate further proposed that diplomatic pressure be put on Antiochus III to prevent him from making an attack on Egypt proper.⁹⁹

Because neither Philip nor Antiochus constituted an immediate threat to Rome, the senatorial resolution envisioned what modern political theorists call a preventive war: that is, a war where one attacks another state because it is an alleged long-term threat, though one is not yet in immediate danger of being attacked.¹⁰⁰ But preventive wars are often politically controversial precisely because a direct threat is lacking. And so it turned out at Rome in 201/200. When the senatorial resolution came before the Roman People, the *comitia centuriata* rejected it, and rejected it overwhelmingly (Livy 31.6.3). Livy says that the Assembly was urged to reject the war-motion especially by the tribune Q. Baebius, who accused the Senate of “sowing the seeds of war upon war” without considering the needs of an exhausted populace who wished to enjoy peace after the long struggle with Carthage (31.6.4). That is, Q. Baebius convinced the *populus* that the Senate was proposing an unnecessary war.

Baebius came from a powerful senatorial family; a relative (his father?) had been one of the *maiores natu* on the Roman embassy that declared war on Carthage in 218.¹⁰¹ Baebius’ ferocious opposition to the senatorial war-motion therefore suggests that opinion within the Senate about intervention in the East was itself quite divided. Moreover, another relative of Q. Baebius the tribune of 200 was Cn. Baebius Tamphilus, who as aedile of the plebeians in 200 was responsible in autumn 200 for the production of Plautus’ comic play *Stichus* (as part of the Plebeian Games, which Baebius oversaw: cf. Livy 31.50.3). And a central scene in the *Stichus* castigates envoys from Greece who take up “room at the dinner table” of a rich man, room that rightfully belongs to Roman farmers impoverished by the Hannibalic War and in need of economic help—while Roman *patroni* are criticized in this scene for paying more attention to Greeks than to impoverished Romans. The idea is evidently that Greeks should not be the recipients of Roman resources which it would be more moral to spend on ameliorating conditions for Roman citizens in Italy.¹⁰² Thus the Plautus play produced by Cn. Baebius the aedile is similar in political point to the point made by Q. Baebius the tribune before the *comitia centuriata*. Moreover, Baebius the aedile went on to win immediate election in autumn 200 to a praetorship for 199—a political success that suggests both the power of the family and the popularity of his political stance. In sum: the moralizing argument at Rome concerning intervention cut both ways in 200; providing aid to foreigners under attack may have possessed a positive moral valence at Rome, as it did in most Hellenistic polities, but under the difficult social and economic circumstances besetting Italy, the moral factor did not carry enough weight by itself to convince everyone that Rome should intervene in the Greek East when

⁹⁹ On the development of the Roman “conditional” declarations of war, which replaced declarations of war by fetial priests at the frontier of the enemy state as the distance from Rome itself to potential enemies increased, see Walbank 1949: 15-19. The basic principle of *rerum repetitio* and *iustum bellum*—that bad behavior on the other side was the main issue and that such delicts had

to be rectified if war with Rome was to be avoided—of course did not change.

¹⁰⁰ See Evans and Newnham 1998: 448-50.

¹⁰¹ Q. Baebius the envoy to Carthage in 218: see Broughton 1951: 239..

¹⁰² Plaut. *Stich.* lines 494-504, cf. lines 167-70. Discussion: Eckstein 2008: 215-216 and 234.

Roman citizens themselves needed help. Both Q. Baebius' speech and Plautus' play thus join battle with the proponents of intervention precisely on grounds of morality.¹⁰³

The reasoning the Senate offered to the public in favor of preventive war was based in the end on its bitter experience of interstate life: this is apparent in a speech of 200 that Livy attributes to the consul P. Sulpicius Galba. The context is an informal public meeting (*contio*) following the first overwhelming rejection of the war-motion. Galba is seeking to convince the *populus* to vote again on the issue, this time in favor of war:

It seems to me, citizens, that you do not understand the question before you. The question is not whether you will have peace or war—for Philip will not leave that matter open for your decision, seeing that he is preparing a mighty war on land and sea. Rather, the question is whether you are to send your legions across to Macedonia, or meet the enemy here in Italy. What a difference that makes, if you never knew it before, you found out during the recent war with Carthage... So let Macedonia, not Italy, have war; let it be the enemy's farms and cities that are laid waste, not ours! We have already learned from experience...Go to vote, then, with the blessings of the Gods, and ratify what the Senate has proposed (31.7.2-3 and 13-14).

The emphasis here is on a looming geopolitical threat to Rome in the East, not on the aggressions of Philip against Rome's Greek friends—and not at all, let it be said, on the prospect of glory, loot and imperial power. But insofar as Galba does mention Philip's aggressions against the Greeks (as at 31.7.6-7), he draws a lesson from the fate of Saguntum in Spain in 219: because the Romans did not militarily aid those under attack by Hannibal far away, they soon faced the invasion of Italy itself.¹⁰⁴

Did the real P. Sulpicius Galba actually say something like this at a decisive public meeting that preceded the second Army Assembly meeting, where there was eventually a vote in favor both of "conditional" war with Philip and forceful diplomacy with Antiochus? Livy was writing 200 years later, and studies have shown that the Latin of Galba's speech in Livy 31.7 is, in its rhetorical construction as well as its wording, essentially a composition by Livy himself.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, to judge from Cicero's silence about P. Sulpicius Galba in the *Brutus*, his history of Roman public speaking, no published speeches of Galba existed in the 40s B.C, so Livy was probably not reworking an original Galban text.¹⁰⁶ But this need not mean that the speech is pure invention.¹⁰⁷ We are concerned here merely with the basic theme of the speech, not with its Latin or its rhetorical construction, and Quillin has stressed that its main point is quite simple enough to have been remembered: Rome must fight Philip either in Macedon now or in Italy later, must go to war with Philip now

¹⁰³ Cn. Baebius was severely defeated by the Gauls in the Po Valley as praetor in 199, but eventually reached the consulship, as did his brother M. Baebius: discussion and sources in Rosenstein 1990: 24-25. Some scholars suggest that behind the Baebii stood the opposition of Scipio Africanus to intervention in the East: so Dorey 1959: 293-94; Scullard 1973: 42 and 87; Briscoe 1973: 70-71; Hamilton 1993. But any connection of Scipio to the Baebii is extraordinarily tenuous—and in 195/194 Scipio favored a forward policy in the East on security grounds (Livy 34.43.1-5); the thesis cannot be followed. Detailed discussion in Eckstein 2008: 258-259.

¹⁰⁴ On the ideological power of the passage about the abandonment of Saguntum, see Merten 1966: 11-12.

One should stress here how different Galba's speech in Livy is in tone from that of the cynical imperialism of Alcibiades in his speech before the Athenian Assembly in Thucydides, advocating intervention in conflicts in Sicily in order to expand the Athenians' empire (above, p. 16 and n. 51).

¹⁰⁵ The fundamental study remains Ullmann 1929: 135.

¹⁰⁶ See Quillin 2004: 775 and n. 15.

¹⁰⁷ As asserted by Dahlheim 1968: 242-244; Harris 1979: 214; cf. Harris 1984: 190.

or wait until he becomes a second Pyrrhus or Hannibal. The idea that someone (for instance, Cato the Elder) heard the speech and transmitted its simple and clear message so that it became part of Roman tradition is thus not difficult to imagine.¹⁰⁸ One may add that no scholar doubts Livy's account in the previous chapter of Book 31—that the tribune Q. Baebius gave an anti-war speech before the People during the controversy over intervention, in which he used the memorable phrase that the Senate was “sowing the seeds of war upon war” (Livy 31.6.4: see above). The fundamentals of political debate, when the issues are as simple as this, are easily remembered.

We arrive at this point at the personal motives of the consul P. Galba. The augural lottery had given him the command against Macedon if it came to war (Livy 31.6.1). Since Galba had already commanded in Greece during the First Macedonian War (in 210-207), scholars have sometimes suspected that the lottery was fixed; it seems so militarily convenient for Galba to have gotten Macedonia.¹⁰⁹ But recent work has reasserted the honesty of the lottery for *provinciae*: the procedure was overseen by a board of priests (the augurs), and was hedged about with ceremony and religious feeling; the lottery-pitcher itself was one of the main symbols of the augural priesthood; and an innocent child picked from the augural lottery-pitcher the differently-colored wooden balls that determined which official got which *provincia*. Hence it is likely that the augural lottery of *provinciae* for 200 B.C. was honest—but this in turn means that P. Galba may have felt, if anything, that the gods had given him a special responsibility in this year for defending Rome from a severe threat.¹¹⁰

Scholars have also sometimes proposed that the ambition of Galba and his supporters to win the glory of a military victory over Philip—a victory which, given Philip's military reputation, would be as great as that just won by Scipio Africanus over Hannibal—played a role in their advocacy of the eastern war.¹¹¹ Ambition for *gloria* is always likely in a Roman aristocrat, and a great victory over Macedon would have greatly enhanced the political influence of Galba and his supporters (whoever they were) both in the Senate and before the *populus*. Nevertheless, one should be cautious, for such a reconstruction is founded on our knowledge that Rome was going to win the Macedonian war. The Romans did not know this. Roman armies suffered 90 major defeats on the battlefield under the Republic; dozens of army commanders were killed in battle in the fourth and third centuries; this shows the ferocity and difficulty of the world in which the Romans lived.¹¹² Moreover, P. Galba had not done very well in his military command against Philip in Greece in 210-207—and this might have led him to conclude that victory would be uncertain and difficult to achieve. Indeed, one could argue that Galba's experience of Philip's formidable army and generalship in 210-207 makes more understandable the fears of Philip which are attributed to him in the speech in Livy 31.7. Moreover, the fact is that Galba's eventual campaign against Philip in 199 was not a success: he exhausted his army by attempting an invasion of Macedon from the west which ultimately had to be abandoned, and later there was a serious mutiny among his troops.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ See Quillin 2004: 776; cf. Briscoe 1973: 20-22.

¹⁰⁹ So Macdonald and Walbank 1937: 207; Scullard 1973: 93; Briscoe 1973: 69-70, cf. 45.

¹¹⁰ On the religious honesty of the lot, see the thorough study by Stewart 1998: Chap I. Earlier: Eckstein 1976: 122-25.

¹¹¹ So Dorey 1959; Briscoe 1973: 45-46; Harris 1979: 217-18 (Sulpicius and his supporters felt “entitled to the opportunities of war”); Will 1982: 142-43;

Errington 1989: 255-256; Hamilton 1993; Ampela 1998: 77.

¹¹² Roman defeats: see Rosenstein 1991, esp. the startling list in the Appendix.

¹¹³ Discussion of this campaign in Walbank 1940: 144-47, with the judgment that at the end of 199, Philip “could regard the year's record as a qualified success” (147); so, too, Errington 1972: 143; Eckstein 1976: 126-27, and 1987: 271-72. Mutiny: Livy 32.3.2-7 (above, p. 10).

The original stance of the Army Assembly against war was eventually changed by pressure from a powerful group within the Senate. Livy has the Senate itself, after the first rejection of the *senatus auctoritas*, issuing a formal warning that postponement of the war would be both harmful and shameful to the State (31.6.6).¹¹⁴ And Galba's speech at the informal *contio* before the second Assembly-meeting (31.7) was, as we have seen, a proclamation that preventive war was necessary: better to strike Philip now in Greece than to wait for him to invade Italy; the emphasis is on self-defense, which fits with the warning from the Senate after the first assembly (31.6.6). Yet the war in the East always remained controversial with the *populus*; there were complaints by the tribunes in winter 198/197 about senatorial management of the war, and the *comitia centuriata* voted for peace in 196 despite the pleas of the then-consul M. Claudius Marcellus (son of one of the great heroes of the Hannibalic War) that the war continue until Philip had been truly destroyed. The reluctance of the Roman People to undertake serious involvement east of the Adriatic is clear.¹¹⁵

Since the Senate officially advised for "conditional war" in the East, and pushed hard to get its proposal through the Army Assembly, and since the People in the end voted for it, one cannot say that the Romans were drawn into the intervention in the Greek Mediterranean against their will. Whatever the impact of the envoys from the four beleaguered Greek states, the final decision was the Romans' alone. The Senate made a conscious decision in 201/200 to assert Roman power in the Greek world, as it had done in 229 and 219 against the Illyrians, and as it had done from 216 in response to Philip V. The *Patres* also decided that this intervention would be on a very large scale. And the *populus Romanus* eventually—reluctantly—agreed.

Despite some scholars, this step was clearly not taken lightly, simply as part of the annual "war-machine" that constituted Roman society.¹¹⁶ Not only do we have evidence that the Greek envoys presented the Senate with an ultimately very threatening situation in the East, but the seriousness with which the majority of the *Patres* viewed the strategic danger is shown by the fact that any Roman war in the East was going to be so expensive that the Roman Treasury would not be able to pay off the public debts incurred to private citizens during the Hannibalic War. The repayment of these state debts to individuals had been about to begin (Livy 31.13.4-9). The debts had originated in a financial crisis in 210 created in good part by the need to man and equip the large naval forces necessary to fight the *first* war against Philip in Greece (Livy 26.35.10). Thus the prospect of a second war with Philip was going to delay the repayment of debt incurred in good part by the first war.¹¹⁷ And the crucial fact is this: the majority of the private creditors who would now be forced to wait for the repayment of their money were senators (Livy 26.36: explicit).¹¹⁸

Not surprisingly, the Senate's decision upset those to whom the state owed money (Livy 31.13.2-4). An attempt to mollify their complaints led to a senatorial decision to offer *ager publicus* (public land) near Rome to these creditors at a minimal rent (31.13.5-9). But this meant that in addition to the heavy new expenses that the Treasury would incur from a new war in Greece (expenses that necessitated the delay in the repayment of the public debt in the first place), there

¹¹⁴ *Ediceret castigaretque segnitiam populi atque edoceret quanto damno decorique dilatio ea belli futura esset.* The reference to shame may reflect concern about rejecting the pleas of suppliants, especially Pergamum.

¹¹⁵ Tribunician criticism of senatorial management of the war: Livy 32.38.3-8. Marcellus' failed attempt to keep the war going: Livy 33.25.4-7.

¹¹⁶ So, e.g., Harris 1979: 212-218; Derow 2003: 59-60.

¹¹⁷ Buraselis 1996: 158 asserts that the financial crisis of 210 had to do with manning and equipping a fleet for Sicily, but Livy has the financial crisis caused more by the war with Philip than the Sicilian situation (*aut Siciliam obtineri aut Italia Philippum aceri posse at tuta Italiae litera esse*—26.35.10).

¹¹⁸ Noted by Buraselis 1996: 158-59.

would be a further loss of state revenue because the *ager publicus* near Rome could ordinarily have been let out at a higher rent. Nor should one imagine that this was a particularly satisfactory deal for the creditors. We know they did not find it so, for in 196 they protested again about the money the state still owed them from 210 and which still had not been repaid (Livy 33.42).¹¹⁹ The conclusion is clear: elites do not make decisions that impose such heavy costs on the state, and especially which impose such personal financial costs on many of the decision-makers themselves, unless they are motivated by serious security concerns.

The seriousness with which the *Patres* viewed the security situation is also shown by the military steps they ordered in 201/200. In late autumn 201, even before the first vote in the Army Assembly (which of course failed), the Senate ordered a large war-fleet, previously stationed off the African coast as part of the final military effort against Carthage, north into the Adriatic. We are told that the task of this fleet was to watch against Macedonian action, and the Senate appointed as its commander the ex-consul M. Valerius Laevinus, one of the Roman commanders-in-chief in the First Macedonian War (Livy 31.3.2-4).¹²⁰ Meanwhile, although the demobilization of the large Roman armies of the Hannibalic War continued—as the worn-out *populus* demanded—a legion of Allied troops was sent to guard Bruttium (Livy 31.8.11), and plans were made to establish colonies of Scipionic veterans in Apulia (Livy 31.4.3). Siebert has suggested that the legion of Allies was sent to Bruttium to guard against bandits, and thus should not be seen as part of any defensive Roman war-preparations against Macedon.¹²¹ But the Allied force sent to Bruttium is presented by Livy as part of the preparations for war (31.8.7), and he pairs its task with that of the legion of Allies sent at this time to guard the northern frontier against the Gallic threat (*ibid.*)—i.e. these forces are to protect Roman Italy from external attack. Bruttium and Apulia both faced towards Greece and the East—and their loyalty to Rome was suspect, for these regions had sided with Hannibal. Thus one should see the senatorial action here, along with the dispatch of Laevinus' fleet to the Adriatic, as part of the series of moves made by the *Patres* to shore up the defenses of the Italian peninsula in the face of what was perceived as a possibly very serious threat from the East.

These measures taken by the Senate were all serious—and costly. No doubt there were internal factors that helped pushed Rome towards intervention in the East in 200, including the prevailing Roman culture of militarism, the Romans' instinctive “habit of command” aimed at other states, perhaps even factional rivalries within the senatorial aristocracy and jealousy of Scipio Africanus.¹²² But the concrete defensive steps now taken by the *Patres* suggest that we are dealing primarily with a feeling among most of the Senate that Rome “had no choice”—as Galba tells the populace—but to respond forcefully to the situation revealed by the Greek envoys. In political-science terminology, the Greek envoys took the *Patres* to “cognitive closure” about the threat Rome faced from the East.¹²³ In part this tendency towards “cognitive closure” about external threats was the result of the socialization of the *Patres* into the unforgiving and harsh interstate system in which Rome existed, the long experience of the Senate as to how that system worked; this experience left them with a bias towards pessimism, towards believing “the worst case scenario”—and, of course, with

¹¹⁹ Discussion of the financial dispute of 196: Buraselis, 171.

¹²⁰ Laevinus had been Roman commander in the Adriatic from 215 until early 210, and had been the architect of the alliance with Aetolia (212/211): see Broughton 1951: 255, 260, 265, 269, and 275 (with sources); on his command in winter 201/200, see Broughton 1951: 321 and 322 n. 3.

¹²¹ Siebert 1995: 243.

¹²² The latter factor is stressed by Dorey 1959; cf. Scullard 1973; Hamilton 1993; but there is no evidence.

¹²³ On the dangers of “cognitive closure” in a crisis, and the feeling of “having no choice”—widespread among ancient states—see Kauppi 1991: 114-116, and Eckstein 2006: 24-25, 57, 287.

a readiness to take up the sword. Indeed, political scientists stress that a bias towards pessimistic analysis of strategic situations is a common phenomenon among decision-making elites in states that exist within especially fierce and competitive state-systems, as the Romans did.¹²⁴ The decision of 201/200 thus supports Waltz's maxim that while all states in a competitive anarchy greatly desire to expand their power, "in crucial situations, the ultimate concern of states is not for power but for security."¹²⁵

CONCLUSION

The Roman decision to intervene in the onrolling crisis in the Greek Mediterranean state-system was an "overdetermined" event. It was in one sense natural that the severe nature of the crisis in the East, which began with the faltering and then increasing collapse of Ptolemaic Egypt, would eventually involve even states in the West as more and more polities were affected by events attendant upon the system-wide crisis.¹²⁶ The arrival of an unprecedented number of embassies from Greek states asking for help against the expansionism of Philip V and Antiochus III (who themselves were taking advantage of the crisis caused by Egypt's collapse, via their treaty of alliance to destroy the Ptolemies) —the number and intensity of the requests for help— made a positive Roman response all the more likely. The militaristic character of Roman society and culture, and the bitter experience of the Senate with the interstate anarchy and what violence it could bring, were additional independent variables that made a positive Roman response to the Greek states an easier decision for the *Patres*. And we have underlined the positive moral valence with which ancient Mediterranean cultures surrounded what we call "intervention" —specifically, the actions of the powerful to protect the less powerful (*boêthein adikoumenois...*)— as yet another independent variable favoring a positive Roman response to the Greek embassies. The appearance of Pergamum among the suppliants was especially important here, because many in the Senate in 201/200 will have believed that Rome owed the Pergamenes a special religious debt. Because of modern historical events and emotions, this positive moral valence in antiquity in favor of what we call intervention is a phenomenon which moderns might easily miss (or even misconstrue as aggression).

In another sense, however, the Roman decision to intervene in the crisis in the Greek East—a decision of world-historical importance in the growth of Roman power, as Polybius well understood (15.20.5-6)— was a contingent occurrence, and might well never have occurred. It certainly would not have occurred without the unexpected appearance in the Senate of embassies from no fewer than four Greek states, an action that itself depended on the unprecedented initiatives taken by the four Greek governments involved. That is, there is no reason to believe that the Romans would have intervened in the East in 201/200 purely on their own. Previous Roman involvement in (and concrete interests in) the Greek world had been minimal; in 201/200 the Roman populace as well as the Italian allies were exhausted from the Hannibalic War; Rome had lost enormous numbers of citizen-soldiers in that war, and much of Italy had been wrecked; and meanwhile a large-scale war threatened on the northern frontier of Italy itself with the Celtic peo-

¹²⁴ See Wolhforth 2001: 229-30 (early modern Russia); cf. Brooks 1997: 454.

¹²⁵ Waltz 1988: 616. This Roman pessimism learned over time would of course only have been intensified (as we have stressed) by the recent trauma of Hannibal's invasion.

¹²⁶ This is Polybius' theme of *symplokê*—the merging of the two previously-separate Mediterranean state-systems (east and west) into one large system: see Walbank 1985.

ples of the Po Valley. Without the arrival at Rome of the Greek embassies, events in the eastern Mediterranean would have taken their own course; they probably would have resulted in vastly increased domination over the region by Philip V and/or Antiochus III. And even after the *Patres* promulgated a *senatus auctoritas* to the *comitia centuriata* proposing a “conditional” declaration of war on Philip V if he did not cease his attacks on Greek states, combined with a diplomatic mission to warn Antiochus III away from Egypt, this motion was defeated overwhelmingly by the Assembly, and a tribune from a prominent senatorial family castigated the *Patres* for proposing an unnecessary war. It took addition senatorial pressure, and a reluctant re-vote by the Assembly, before the *populus Romanus* finally accepted the senatorial proposal; and in fact the new war with Macedon always remained controversial, and the *populus* voted for peace in 196 as soon as a reasonable victory had been won. The Roman decision to intervene in the East in 201/200 was in reality a near-run thing.

But in the end the *Patres* did manage to convince the Army Assembly to intervene, worn out though the *populus* was by the terrible struggle with Carthage, and (presumably) worried too about new threats on the Celtic frontier. It appears from the tradition concerning the speech which the consul P. Sulpicius Galba made at the *contio* before the second assembly-meeting that the main argument employed by the Senate majority was that such a preventive war against Philip was the best way to safeguard Roman security from the threat now posed by the emerging Hellenistic hegemony in the East. The transformation of the Greek interstate system that was now occurring, which favored the increased power of the more powerful states, was ultimately threatening to Rome, and to prevent this transformation was beyond the military power of the second-tier Greek states, such as Rhodes and Pergamum. Roman tradition later emphasized the morality of the decision, with the Republic coming to the aid of friendly states which were under unjust attack (Livy 31.6.1). The situation was more complicated than this, since three of the four Greek states who pleaded for help did not have close relations with the Romans. But if Livy 31.6.1 is heavily propagandistic, to the extent that it refers to Pergamum, and to the extent that it reflects the generally positive moral valence that “intervention” under certain circumstances possessed in the Hellenistic Mediterranean, Livy’s statement is not false. Still, the Roman decision of 201/200 to intervene in the Greek East—a near-run decision—appears to have been taken primarily out of fear of the consequences of the systemic crisis now roiling the Greek East, i.e., mostly for reasons of *Realpolitik* which appeared reasonable to the *Patres* at the time in view of their bitter experience with the interstate anarchy. In that sense, the Roman decision confirms one of the maxims of the leading political scientist Kenneth Waltz: “larger units existing in a contentious arena tend to take on systemwide tasks.”¹²⁷

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¹²⁷ Waltz 2000: 34.

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