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CAESAR THE LEADER
How his Leadership Methods, Characteristics, and Abilities Explain his Success

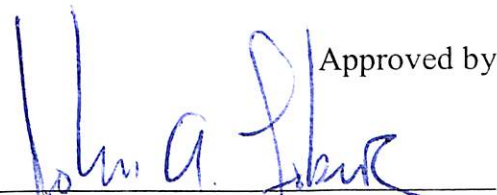
By

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College

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ABSTRACT

WILLIAM JOHNSTON OPPENHEIMER: How his Leadership Methods,
Characteristics, and Abilities allowed him to Succeed
(Under the direction of Dr. John A. Lobur)

Throughout the course of this work I discuss Caesar as a leader, examining the strategies that allowed him to be continually successful throughout his career. I begin with a description of leadership theory, explaining the characteristics and skill necessary for effective leadership. I then proceed with an outline of his life and political career, from his exile during Sulla's dictatorship to his ultimate demise. I include an explanation of the historical political situation facing Rome as Caesar entered politics as well. I then describe his early political career and his tenure in Gaul, using specific instances illustrating his effective leadership and thereby explaining his success. Then, I highlight his actions in the Civil War and victory over the Pompeians. I conclude by explaining why his leadership methods, which succeeded throughout his career, ultimately brought his demise.

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Introduction

Nearly two millennia after his assassination, Gaius Julius Caesar remains one of the most effective leaders in all of history. Through his political savvy and military genius, Caesar rose to supreme power over the Roman state. His success made him a legend in his own time and established him as an integral figure in Western political culture. Roman Emperors took his name upon ascendance to power. Dante Alighieri punished Brutus and Cassius alongside Judas, the betrayer of Jesus. His legacy inspired Shakespeare to compose a drama about him more than a millennium and a half later. Even the Russians and Germans paid homage to him, calling their emperors *Czar* and *Kaiser*, respectively. Caesar not only transformed the world in which he lived, he became an icon in Western Civilization.

Though he did not come from a particularly wealthy or powerful family, Caesar rose through the ranks of the *cursus honorum*, (the successive line of Roman administrative positions), to its highest position through effective leadership methods.¹ He manipulated the political system in the face of powerful opposition, overcoming the dynastic families dominating Roman political system. He won stunning victories at Alesia and Pharsalus, conquered Gaul and emerged victorious in a multi-front Civil War. In the process Caesar united the Roman populace behind his political vision. With the

¹ Matthias Gelzer, *Caesar: Politician and Statesman*, trans. Peter Needham (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1904), 19.

devotion of his soldiers and the common man. Caesar was granted the position “Dictator for life.”²

His incredible careers in politics and on the battlefield make Caesar the consummate leader of his era. He has been reviewed as a politician, statesman, soldier and tyrant. But this proficient leader has not been examined by modern standards of leadership, and so remains a great candidate for study. Political culture has evolved since his time, but the leadership methods Caesar employed are still applicable in today’s political environment. Furthermore, there exists a wealth of information concerning Caesar and his era, including primary and secondary sources, from which an accurate impression of his leadership technique can be drawn.

During the tumultuous late Republican period and Civil War Caesar acted in almost total compliance with the tenets of modern leadership theory, and met with incredible success. Once in absolute power as Dictator, however, he saw little open opposition. But Caesar thrived on opposition- it offered him a clear enemy to overcome and win fame in the process. With the major *optimates* defeated and their allies in hiding, he had no one to fight. A shift in the political paradigm occurred with his victory in the Civil War, but Caesar neglected to adapt his leadership style to fit the new model. His rejection of the Republic incited discontent in traditional elite, who conspired against him. This failure to adjust proved to be the weakness in his leadership method, and allowed his downfall.

In this work I analyze and expose the ways in which Caesar’s leadership methods compare to those advocated in modern leadership theory. I first begin with an examination of modern leadership theory, setting forth criteria necessary for effective

² Plutarch, *Life of Caesar*, 57.

leadership. From there I discuss Caesar's life and times, in order to give the reader a basic understanding of this period. This section explains exclusive governing class in Rome and the turbulent socio-political situation facing the city, thereby revealing the obstacles in Caesar's path.

The next section concerns Caesar's early political career, from his appointment as military tribune through his first term as Consul. His early life and maneuvers form the foundation of his leadership style, and explain his rise to power from relative obscurity. Following that chapter, I will examine Caesar's military career at length. His successes on the battlefield keep him in the public spotlight in Rome during his ten years as Proconsul of Gaul. His conquest of Gaul puts him in position to challenge his opposition and avoid prosecution in the capital. Victory in the Civil War, which broke out as a result of this challenge, leaves Caesar unopposed in Rome. His successful military leadership, therefore, enables him to return to political power once more.

Although away on military campaign, Caesar simultaneously exercises his political abilities in Rome during the Gallic and Civil Wars. In the next section, I illustrate how successfully he controls both the government and public opinion in Rome while abroad. He elevates his friends and allies to important positions and secures his post in Gaul for a decade, which enables him to earn the devotion of his troops and accumulate incredible amounts of wealth. All the while he wins the support of the Roman populace by sending treasures, slaves, and tales of glory home in celebration of his victories, reflecting his great image. His political maneuvers during the wars allow his military successes to have the great effect they did, providing him with the clout

necessary to resume power in the Eternal City. The people, consequently, declared Caesar perpetual dictator.

No one before him enjoyed such devotion from the populace. Caesar became king, effectively, at his constituents' request, only without the title. Although members of the Senate betrayed and assassinated him, he nonetheless achieved the almost inconceivable. The Roman emperors who followed him, the European kings who came after them, and even Mussolini looked to his career for exemplary leadership. Not only was Caesar the most capable leader of his day, he virtually defines effective leadership.

Chapter 1

Modern Leadership Theory

Modern leadership theory seeks to define the concept of leadership in its totality. James MacGregor Burns, the doyen of this field, divides leadership into two categories: “transactional” and “transforming.” The more common of the two, transactional leadership, comprises some exchange between the leader and the follower. When a leader promises lower taxes in return for votes, or plunder for military service, he employs transactional leadership. With both parties satisfied through the transaction, however, the leader and follower can part ways until their interests converge once more. Thus, there is no enduring bond between leader and follower, and therefore no development of loyalty or a common identity between the two.³ Most politicians in democracies embody this type of leadership, promising jobs, lower taxes, and other benefits to their constituents in return for votes. Transactional leadership, therefore, translates into short-term policies and provisions. Transactional leaders are little more than contractors to their constituents.

On the other hand, the rarer and more effective type of leadership, transformational leadership, appears when the leader uses a deeper motivation to inspire and develop a relationship with followers. Some issue, (whether ideological, social, or circumstantial, such as threat of foreign invasion), threatens society with far reaching implications and allows the transformational leader to emerge. This leader envisions a solution to the crisis and a better future for his people, uniting followers behind his

³ James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 20

platform and charisma. Both transactional and transformational leadership necessitate followers' belief in their leader's capability for success. But transformational leadership depends on "moral leadership," in which followers trust their leader and his principles. Therefore, the leader not only promises to transform certain aspects of society, but assumes total responsibility for fulfilling those promises.⁴ Adept transformational leaders translate their visions into long-term significant change and even revolution, distinctly impacting their worlds. Caesar, however, effectively employs both types of leadership.

First of all, a leader needs power. In a republican system like Caesar's, as Machiavelli asserts, there are two ways of acquiring power: through support from the populace or the elite.⁵ Each offers power with specific strengths and weaknesses, and Machiavelli prefers popular support. But power alone does not necessitate leadership; the two are related but different. Power is the capability of the wielder to exercise resources, (military, economic, institutional, and personal ability), to influence others in order to achieve the wielder's goals.⁶ Absolute power, in the sense of Louis XIV, does not truly exemplify leadership. In such situations, followers are actually subjects because of the lack of real alternatives. The powerful utilizes his power, derived from wealth, sworn fealty, or military might, in sole consideration for his own priorities. If the power wielder motivates the follower to act towards mutual goals and aspirations, however, he becomes a leader.⁷ This is not to say that leaders do not use coercion for personal and selfish ends; they most definitely do from time to time. But to paraphrase John Locke, the leader

⁴ Burns, 4.

⁵ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. David Wootton (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995), 31.

⁶ Burns, 18.

⁷ Burns, 19.

draws his power from his followers without duress.⁸ They willingly support him. In turn, the leader must ensure that the people have an interest in preserving him and his power, allowing him to lead.⁹ Thus, leadership obviously depends on power, but is a specific method of wielding it.

Both transactional and transformational leaders employ several qualities, abilities, and talents in order to achieve success. A sharp intellect is an absolute necessity. To succeed in civil administration, foreign policy, public speech, and military strategy, the leader must assess situations to form creative solutions and outsmart his opponents. Even at the start of his career, he must understand the institutions surrounding him to formulate a plan for rising to power. Full comprehension of the rules and traditions of political institutions is essential, allowing him to avoid conflict as well as manipulate the system and those around him. The leader should be schooled in the arts of politics, war and philosophy, as well as mathematics and the humanities. This scholarly intellect manifests itself in and enhances all of his other abilities. As Plato asserts, states should be run by, and therefore the best leaders were, highly intelligent and moral “philosopher-kings.”¹⁰

Beyond the scholastic realm, the leader must have practical intelligence to understand people. Commonly referred to as “street smarts,” this perception allows him to win strategic allies and influence others. By recognizing his constituents’ needs, he shapes his policies and platforms properly to maximize popular support. Moreover, he uses this understanding to outmaneuver his opponents and counter their intrigues. In virtually all cases, this facet of intelligence supercedes academics in importance to the

⁸ John Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*, Ch. 2, Sec. 4.

⁹ Machiavelli, 34

¹⁰ Plato, *The Republic*, 473C.

leader. Many successful leaders manipulate people without scholarly intellect. But superiority in each sphere provides distinct advantages, and the most successful leaders exhibit both.

Nevertheless, even the most astute politician would achieve nothing without ambition: he must be persistently motivated to reach the highest echelons of power.¹¹ But ambition cannot be blind- it must have logical boundaries. By breaking his non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union in 1941, Adolf Hitler's unquenchable and unsound ambition opened a two front war in Europe. He neglected better council, embarking on a campaign against a people he underestimated. By failing to invade and conquer Britain first, as he should have, Hitler's empire was overwhelmed by a multi-front war. Therefore, the great leader must have high ambitions, but understand the reasonable limitations on what he can achieve at any given time. He must utilize his ambition and the charisma that comes with it, but wisely distinguish when to follow a more prudent course in the interest of long term goals.

An essential byproduct of this ambition is a notion of confident determination. The ambitious leader genuinely believes that he can and will attain his goals, so much so that others have complete confidence in him. A general's decisive action at critical moments can turn the tide of battle and win the day. Alexander the Great often rushed into battle at pivotal points, rallying his army with his courage. Similarly, the politician cannot succumb to panic in debate or under criticism. He must be confident in his cause and determined to defend it, maintaining his composure and repelling all attacks. Many have great ambition, but few command the confidence and determination to contend for power regardless of opposition.

¹¹Burns, 112.

Furthermore, great leadership requires moral consistency. And this is not simply a matter of always doing what is good or right. It means an unfailing dedication to a specific code of values. The importance of this is two-fold. First of all, consistency inspires confidence in the leader. In the 2004 Presidential Election John Kerry made the mistake of changing his position on certain issues. President Bush responded by labeling him a "flip-flopper," which brought Kerry's consistency under scrutiny and hurt him in the public eye. Though the leader may be conniving and malicious at times, he cannot betray the principles held dear by his constituency. Secondly, in unconditionally tying himself to an admirable set of standards, he becomes their embodiment. To achieve this he must choose inspirational qualities, and then demonstrate his commitment to them through elaborate gestures. For example, American presidents often show their dedication to education by reading to children in public schools, which they receive publicity for. The leader's values not only shape his persona and platform, they lend credence to his cause. Moral consistency, therefore, is an important aspect of transformational leadership, in that there is not an exchange but a convergence of values.¹²

All of these characteristics, however, mean nothing if the leader cannot demonstrate them. Rhetoric is an essential, especially to a Roman. It allows him to clearly articulate his purpose from the *rostrum* (speaker's platform). Whether defending, prosecuting, debating, or addressing his men before battle or in an assembly, the leader must speak with eloquence and effect. He must present his thoughts in a convincing manner and win support for his policies. The power of speech cannot be underestimated.

¹² Burns, 30.

Rhetoric exposes the leader's charisma and enables him to mobilize support.¹³ Likewise, the power of speech motivates men to fight bravely and with determination. Speeches like Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" have been immortalized because of the impact they had on both military and public morale, thereby affecting the course of history. The Romans depended on rhetoric to express themselves, as the ability to read was limited. Although most people did not witness speeches in the Senate, an orator gained a valuable reputation from speaking effectively. Rhetoric, therefore, was one of the Roman leader's most potent methods of influence.

Despite attributes like intellect, ambition, moral consistency, and rhetoric, the leader must have applicable skills and tactics with which to achieve his goals. Governmental administration is an important part of leadership, allowing the leader to utilize his superior personal qualities. Managing public works, finances, security, maintaining order, and handling crises require the leader to produce logical creative solutions. When someone proves competent in lower level administration they are likely to receive more responsibility. As they rise through the ranks of public service, good public officials improve the lifestyles of their constituents and win their appreciation. In Rome, a successive line of position existed within the government allowing politicians to advance from the lowest levels of administration to the highest. In modern times, Rudolph Giuliani began his political career prosecuting organized crime as a United States Attorney. He gained fame because of his success in dismantling and incapacitating the mafia, and was consequently elected Mayor of New York City. Then, he competently handled the crisis of September 11, 2001. Although there is some controversy over whether he deserves credit for all of these successes, he has nonetheless gained a national

¹³ Burns, 72; 318-9

reputation and stands as a frontrunner for the Republican Presidential nomination in 2008.

Obviously, competent lower-level administrators become popular for their actions and rise through the ranks of government more quickly. Vice-versa, the people loathe incompetence. If the leader cannot effectively delegate responsibility and at least keep the civil infrastructure working he forfeits his career. Therefore, administrative skills can determine whether a leader will rise to power quickly, gradually, or not at all.

Similarly, military leadership has been of the utmost importance to leaders throughout history. It can be transactional or transformational, depending upon the general's success and his goals. Military action can transform society, both by conquering new peoples and by inciting revolution. However, transactional military leadership occurs when the leader uses force to invade a foreign land, not for conquest, but for plunder to pay his troops. Although political success no longer depends as heavily on military success in modern times as in ancient, the armed forces remain a good starting point for a career in politics. Through immense success on the battlefield, a great soldier or general exhibits the charisma necessary to enter politics without having a prior political career. Dwight D. Eisenhower and Ulysses S. Grant used their military careers as springboards to the Presidency. The Consulship, the highest political and military position of ancient Rome, allowed the leader to win wealth through conquest. That wealth, in turn, was used to pay his soldiers and make benevolent gestures to the populace, recruiting more followers. By extending the greatness of his nation through victory and conquest, the military leader receives fame and love from the common man.¹⁴ Effective battlefield leadership also brings the sincere devotion of soldiers, which brings security and

¹⁴ Burt.s. 246

increases the potential power of the leader. In times of turmoil and revolution, the leader with the most dedicated and well trained soldiers poses a serious threat to opposition. Through his military career, the leader demonstrates his intellect, ambition, confidence, and rhetorical skill for all to see, improving his reputation. Although not an absolute requirement, successful military leadership can prove an extremely potent addition to great leadership.

In executing his political, administrative, and military policies, the leader shapes his public image. In most cases he will not directly come into contact with his followers, at least on a regular basis. Therefore, his publicly perceived image exists as his primary method of maintaining support. He can control his image in variety of ways, such as improving public works, providing public celebrations, erecting statues and minting coins. For instance, the Roman Emperor Trajan erected a new Forum in his name with plunder from his wars with Dacia. The magnificent structure not only improved the city and its beauty, but stood as reminder of his benevolence. Public works projects provide evidence of a leader's love for his people.

On a different note, leaders have enhanced their image through religion and ideology. Many ancients, like the Pharaohs of Egypt, claimed demi-god status or descent from the gods. Communist leaders, on the other hand, try to eliminate religion. As Marx himself put it, "religion ... is the opiate of the people;" so they replace it with ideology and a cult of personality.¹⁵ Each, when used properly, result in greater dedication. Regardless, both of these strategies allow the leader to overshadow past leaders and leap to the forefront of fame and renown. The resulting transformational leader has greater

¹⁵ Karl Marx, *Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Right (1840)*, introduction, quoted in John Bartlett, *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1955), 593.

loyalty from the populace as a result. Neglecting one's image prevents a leader from reaching his potential. Competitors will constantly seek to tarnish his image and improve their own, in the process driving him from whatever position he held in the public eye. Great leaders continuously work towards the cultivation of their images while simultaneously but discreetly damaging those of their competitors. All arenas of leadership produce this image, which in turn reflects the leader's political vision.

The great leader sees a better future, expresses it to followers, and leads them towards making that future a reality.¹⁶ His intellect, ambition, determination, and dedication help him to pursue that vision. By achieving military greatness he can build wealth, a loyal army, and fame to help him as well. Through rhetoric and image building he publicizes his vision, recruiting followers from the masses to overwhelm his opponents. This grand political vision forms the heart of his leadership strategy.

¹⁶ Burns, 19.

Chapter 2

An Overview of Caesar's World and Career

At the close of the sixth century B.C. members of the Roman aristocracy overthrew their last Etruscan King, Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, thereby establishing a republic in the monarchy's place.¹ Roughly four centuries later, at the birth of Julius Caesar on July 13, 100 B.C., Rome remained a republic. Referring to Rome as a republic by that point, however, was mainly nominal, because the government had become dominated by the most powerful families of the Senate. Technically, the popular assembly (*comitia*) of Roman citizens held legislative power. It ratified laws and elected magistrates, but powerful Senators used their influence and money to secure their interests in elections. Even Rome's national motto, "*Senatus Populusque Romanus.*" acknowledged that the Senate came before the people.

Those holding the office of quaestor were enrolled in the Senate at the next census following their one year terms. The Senate exercised *auctoritas*: its authority to advise the popularly elected magistrates. The advice given, however, carried much more weight than simple suggestions. Ignoring Senatorial advice, therefore, would anger the elders and affect their future positions within that body. Why, then, would a quaestor oppose the will of the Senate during his short one year term? His best interests were served by appeasing the Senators and forming alliances with them, so that he would have support to

¹ Mary T. Boatwright, Daniel J. Gargola, and Richard J. A. Talbert, *The Romans: From Village to Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 48-9.

run for higher office in a few years. Thus, *auctoritas* became a means of coercing magistrates into obeying the Senate instead of merely advising them, and gave the Senate a great deal of control over the executive branch of government.² Similarly, today, political parties exercise control over who will be elected through monetary support and publicity.

Although Senatorial rank was not inheritable, members of certain families continually found their ways into that body. Powerful families had long ago formed an aristocracy, and their members continually maintained political power. It was such that the *nobiles*, whose families had produced at least one consul, came to dominate the Roman Senate and State.³ *Nobiles* comprised the highest stratus of the aristocracy through their wealth, connections, and family legacies. Dynasties like the Fabii, Cornelii, and Aemilii held power in Rome for long periods, although their lines sometimes fell into decay.⁴ Even so, they often adopted newcomers with high potential into their ranks, as was the case with Gaius Marius, and so retained their power. Their family names were like brand names in the political arena. Simony also played a major part in politics, and successful candidates shamelessly bribed the electorate to secure election. These dynasties made Rome an oligarchy *de facto*, although it technically remained a republic. While the populace could act against the Senate's wishes, politicians generally choose not to exploit their potential and maintained the status quo. This changed in the 2nd Century B.C.

By Caesar's birth in 100 B.C., Rome was in turmoil. Its ever expanding empire had brought it into control of vast foreign territories, slaves, and wealth through

² Gelzer, 18.

³ Gelzer, 2.

⁴ Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), 20.

successful military campaigns. With these conquests, however, came several drawbacks. First, in order to conduct these military operations, Rome had turned to other Italian communities for manpower. It forged alliances with these peoples, keeping them subordinate to Romans but maintaining their local autonomy.⁵ Although this arrangement persisted for some time, the allies gradually became more and more dissatisfied with their inferior status. Their malcontent would eventually force Rome to appease their demands or face rebellion.

Simultaneously, Rome's great territorial expansion and influx of wealth reshaped society. The *equites*, or wealthy equestrian class, took the opportunity to benefit from these wars. They could have run for office and joined the Senate, but chose to pursue wealth over political prestige as Senators could not engage in commerce.⁶ Helping to finance the wars and reconstruct new provinces, they became increasingly wealthy. When the government needed someone to collect taxes from the new provinces, these knights took on tax-farming contracts, making them wealthier and more corrupt. With their amassed riches the equestrians bought up the cheap and war ravaged lands of Italy and the provinces to form large estates. They, as well as Senators, employed slaves captured in the wars to cultivate these estates, *latifundia*, which had previously been smaller subsistence farms.⁷ This drove former farmers into cities and greatly increased the urban population, especially the number of poor. They had the money to pursue politics if they chose, but generally preferred wealth to the public spotlight. Bribery could manipulate those in power to their wills, and often did.⁸

⁵ Gelzer, 6.

⁶ Syme, 14.

⁷ J. F. C. Fuller, *Julius Caesar: Man, Soldier, and Tyrant* (New York: De Capo Press, 1965), 20.

⁸ Syme, 14-5.

Meanwhile, the state used its riches from the wars to embark upon large public works projects, which increased commerce in the cities and enlarged the middle class.⁹ These wars had an effect similar to the Enclosure Acts of seventeenth and eighteenth century Britain. They brought greater wealth to the wealthy and allowed middle class businessmen to prosper, but the poor could still barely survive and were now crowded inside the capital- like the dockworkers and immigrants of Victorian London. This reconfiguration of Roman society combined with the growing unrest of its Italian allies meant Rome would have to make serious modifications in its policies. Otherwise it risked revolution.

But the Senatorial oligarchy vehemently resisted reform, seeking to maintain the status quo in which it held power. Historically, the Senate always compromised with the people at crucial moments and averted rebellion.¹⁰ But in 134 B.C., the actions of the tribune Tiberius Gracchus would begin a century of civil instability. He proposed an agrarian reform bill which would redistribute public lands to provide for the poor. Naturally, the Senate voted against the bill, but he tried to bring it before the assembly anyway. The Senate manipulated another tribune to block the bill, and so Gracchus broke with tradition. He demanded the assembly remove either he or the other tribune, Octavius, from office. Naturally, the assembly deposed Octavius and the bill passed. Although now a law, Gracchus had no guarantee his reform would be enforced once he left power. So, he decided to renew his position- an unprecedented action. Controversy arose during the new election and a riot ensued. Gracchus and many of his supporters

⁹ George Lee Haskins, "Prelude to Destruction," *Death of a Republic*, John Dickinson (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 15.

¹⁰ Gelzer, 2.

were killed in the turmoil; his agrarian reforms would not be fully enforced.¹¹ This incident, however, sparked a century of turmoil that transformed Rome from Republic to Empire. By mobilizing the populace in open rejection of the Senate's will and exploiting its full potential, Gracchus set a dangerous precedent for others to utilize.¹²

A decade later Gaius Gracchus, Tiberius' younger brother, ascended to the tribuneship and took up the struggle of the people in his place. He reenacted the agrarian reforms of his brother, provided grain distributions, established colonies, and made knights eligible to serve as jurors, whereas previously only senators had been allowed to do so. Now the Senate could not regulate provincial equestrian tax farmers, out of fear of judicial reprisal and because of the weight equestrians held in the electorate. On top of these reforms, the younger Gracchus brought forth a bill to enfranchise other Italians as Roman citizens. With the support of the wealthy equestrians and an Italian citizenry indebted to him, Gracchus would have held incredible power. That bill did not pass, however, and the Senate finally acted out against Gracchus by ruining the prospects of his colony in Carthage. In response, he returned to Rome to face his opponents. Chaos erupted upon his return and Gaius fled in a panic, eventually committing suicide.¹³ Thus the second of the Gracchi died, and soon after his agrarian reforms were retracted. His followers and supporters were arrested and executed. The two Gracchi achieved no lasting reforms, but proved that ambitious men could rise against the Senate with potential success.¹⁴ These short-lived victories opened the door for others, even *homo-novi* (men who were the first in their families to serve in the Senate).

¹¹ Appian, *The Civil Wars*, I, 14-17.

¹² Haskins, 18.

¹³ Appian, *Civil Wars*, I, 21-27.

¹⁴ Christian Meier, *Caesar*, trans. David McLintock (New York: BasicBooks, 1982), 28.

Out of this period of instability came Gaius Marius, a highly talented man from a non-Senatorial family. The Metelli, one of the most prominent families of Rome, backed him politically because of his high potential.¹⁵ He steadily rose through the ranks of the *cursus honorum* to win the consulship for the year 107 B.C., with the prospect of raising an army and ending the Jugurthine War in North Africa. Formerly soldiers had to be wealthy enough to afford their own arms and served short periods on campaign. They were conscripted by the Roman government for the defense or well being of the Republic. But because of the land distribution situation and the traditional requirements for army conscription, Marius turned to the urban proletariat to fill his ranks. His reforms revolutionized Rome's military, as people recruited on the promise of pay and plunder. They became career soldiers rather than militia for national security. This greatly expanded the base from which to draw recruits but placed the loyalty of those troops with their commander, who promised to reward their service.¹⁶ With his reformed army Marius was successful in his war against Jugurtha, winning great popularity in Rome and the love of his soldiers. In 104 B.C. with the threat of a German invasion, he was elected consul. He went on to be elected consul for an unprecedented five consecutive years (because of the military emergency), and successfully defeated the Cimbri and Teutones. Decisive victories at Aquae Sextiae and Vercellae made Marius the, "idol of the people."¹⁷ He was, in effect, the Andrew Jackson of his time.

But the consequences of Marius' military reforms were more significant, because land was promised for the soldiers' retirement. Finding open land, however, was already a problem. In his sixth consulship in 100 B.C., Marius worked to allot land for his Italian

¹⁵ Plutarch, *Gaius Marius*, 3-4.

¹⁶ Fuller, 25-6.

¹⁷ Fuller, 27.

and Roman veterans alike, in colonies similar to those established by the Gracchi. The Roman veterans and Senate were upset by this notion of equality, and a coup d'état was attempted against Marius. Disorder broke out, and Marius decided to leave Italy for safety in Asia. So with Marius away, the tribune Livius Drusus took up the veterans' cause in 91 B.C. He had plans to enfranchise the Italians and expand the Senate, but was assassinated before his laws could come to fruition. With another champion of their cause eliminated, the Italians finally withdrew from the Roman alliance promising to, "make war on them [the Romans] to the best of their ability."¹⁸ They planned to destroy the city in retribution for its ingratitude. This Social War, as it has been termed, ensued for the next decade, and nearly destroyed the Roman state.

The Social War resulted in citizenship being granted to all Italian communities, except for the Samnites who fought until they were destroyed. In the war a great deal of Romans lost their lives, and the Senate recalled Marius to suppress the revolution. One of his lieutenants, Lucius Cornelius Sulla, rose to high prominence in this war as well. While Rome was busy fighting its former allies, Mithridates VI of Pontus took the opportunity to conquer Roman provinces in the East. Sulla won the appointment to fight Mithridates, but Marius wanted the opportunity to return to greatness. He was a far better general than politician, and believed that victory in this war would restore the people's love for him.¹⁹ Marius bribed his way into taking the command, but Sulla responded by marching his loyal army into Rome and declaring Marius an enemy of the state. Marius escaped, and while Sulla headed eastward to face Mithridates he allied with the consul Lucius Cornelius Cinna. Together the two marched on Rome with their combined armies

¹⁸ Appian, *Civil Wars*, I, 38.

¹⁹ Fuller, 28.

and claimed power over the city. They began executing their enemies and associates on a mass scale- “merciless killing, decapitation of men already dead, and exhibition of the results to create fear or horror or a sacrilegious spectacle,” as Appian puts it.²⁰ This rampage instilled terror in the Roman people, but a month after returning, Marius was found dead in his bed, in his seventh consulship.

For the next few years Cinna maintained order in Rome while Sulla retook Greece, invaded Asia, and forced Mithridates into peace negotiations. From his victory he won fame, wealth, and thoroughly indulged his troops, tying their loyalty to him further. Sulla prepared to return home after this promising to restore order and punish those who fought against him. Cinna responded by levying an army, but was killed by his soldiers in a mutiny.²¹ Sulla then advanced on Rome and defeated his opposition, including Gaius Marius the Younger, who committed suicide.

Finally, Sulla occupied Rome. To root out his opposition, he began posting the names of unrepentant Cinnans who could be killed with impunity for a reward.²² This unprecedented action threw Rome into a state of terror, and bounty-hunters combed the city and countryside for the proscribed. In the end, Appian claims, sixteen-hundred knights and forty senators, among others, will killed in the proscriptions.²³ He declared himself dictator, and set about reforming the Roman state by expanding the Senate, increasing its power, and decreasing the power of the tribune. Sulla resigned his post as dictator after two years, served as consul for the two years after that, and retired from public life. His reforms and constitution would be largely dismantled only eight years

²⁰ Appian, *Civil Wars*, I, 71.

²¹ Appian, *Civil Wars*, I, 78.

²² Arthur Keaveney, *Sulla: The Last Republican* (London: Routledge, 1982), 126.

²³ Appian, *Civil Wars*, I, 95.

after his death.²⁴ Thus Sulla's march on Rome reign as dictator had little lasting effect, save that it gave precedence to the actions of the years to come.

When Sulla died in 78 B.C., Rome had been in turmoil for almost sixty years, and another forty remained until lasting peace would be restored. Sulla even proscribed the young Julius Caesar when he refused to divorce Cinna's daughter. Luckily for Caesar, he was saved from execution by intervention of the Vestal Virgins and two of Sulla's closest allies. Sulla pardoned him reluctantly, saying with foresight, "Very well then, you win! Take him! But never forget that the man whom you want me to spare will one day prove the ruin of the party which you and I have so long defended. There are many Mariuses in this fellow Caesar."²⁵

This was the strife and chaos into which Gaius Julius Caesar was born on July 13, 100 B.C. His father shared the same name, his mother was Aurelia Cotta. His father's family, the Julii, were one of the original patrician families, allegedly descended from ancient kings and Venus.²⁶ Though his family was not particularly wealthy its patrician status gave him some respect, along with its noble ancestry. In modern American terms, he would be descended from an early president and a Civil War hero, with no one in his family rising above the House of Representatives for some time. His father achieved the rank of praetor in 92 BC, but died when Caesar was only fifteen years old. This was the highest rank any Caesar had achieved for a long time, unless Sextus Caesar, who took the consulship in 91 BC, was his uncle.²⁷ So while his ancestry was prestigious, he did not

²⁴ Keaveny, 186.

²⁵ Suetonius, *Julius Caesar*, 1.

²⁶ Suetonius, *Caesar*, 6.

²⁷ Gelzer, 19.

have the name recognition or nepotistic relatives to bring him into politics. He would have to earn his position.

Caesar was tutored by Marcus Antonius Gniphio, a former Gallic slave educated at Alexandria and a master of both Greek and Latin works and rhetoric.²⁸ This education would prove invaluable to Caesar, whose intellect and rhetorical ability gave him a distinct advantage from a young age. It can also be assumed that he was well trained in fencing and riding, as was customary for children of his class. His physical, mental, and rhetorical training would have been the best available, as his father was a Senator. Furthermore, he would have planned to go into politics and therefore needed expertise in all practical fields of learning.²⁹

Caesar was enrolled as a priest of Jupiter (*flamen Dialis*) at the age of sixteen, and married Cinna's daughter Cornelia two years later. Had Sulla not returned and stripped him of his priesthood, Caesar could never have taken part in military action, severely limiting his political prospects.³⁰ However, Gelzer believes that the ambitious Caesar would have found ways around those constraints.³¹ Following Sulla's pardon, Caesar traveled to Asia as an officer in the army of Marcus Minucius Thermus.

In Asia he stood out as a soldier, earning the *corona civica* for bravery in the attack on Mytilene.³² This was the highest military decoration available to a Roman and commanded enormous respect. After this he fought against the Cilician Pirates, and left for Rome following Sulla's abdication. He entered the world of politics upon his return

²⁸ Gelzer, 23; Fuller, 56.

²⁹ Meier, 56-8.

³⁰ This is a point of argument, as ancient sources conflict on whether or not Caesar actually became *flamen Dialis*. Lily Ross Taylor believes that he was nominated for the position but never inaugurated. Lily Ross Taylor, "Caesar's Early Career," *Classical Philology* 36, no. 2 (Apr., 1941):116.

³¹ Gelzer, 21.

³² Suetonius, *Caesar*, 2.

by prosecuting in several notable court cases, including an ex-consul. This was a customary way of gaining fame for young politicians, and Caesar performed exceptionally.

He returned to the East at the age of twenty-five to be schooled at Rhodes by the legendary rhetorician Apollonius Molon.³³ On his way there, however, he was kidnapped by Cilician pirates. After his ransom was paid, Caesar raised a small navy and captured the pirates. He summarily crucified them all, on his own initiative and without orders from the governor of Asia Minor.³⁴ Even at this early age he showed his audacity and his disregard for authority. At the same time, he cut the throats of the pirates before crucifixion, as a sign of his mercy. From there Caesar was employed in fighting the pirates once more, but was recalled to Rome after being appointed to the College of the *Pontifices*.

Caesar then entered the *cursus honorum* with his appointment as military tribune, and a few years later won election as quaestor (in 69 B.C.)³⁵ About this same time he gave a eulogy for his aunt Julia, the wife of Gaius Marius, in which he praised her, as well as her and thereby his own ancestry. This high profile public funeral was another opportunity for Caesar to stand out in the eyes of the people. Unfortunately, his wife Cornelia also died soon after this, leaving him with Julia, his only legitimate child. Not long after her death he married Pompeia, the granddaughter of Sulla.

Following his quaestorship Caesar was appointed curule aedile, in which he maintained the public works and order in the city, as well as throwing celebrations and games. He spent lavishly, going deeply into debt but winning popular favor in the

³³ Suetonius, *Caesar*, 4.

³⁴ Gelzer, 24.

³⁵ Gelzer, 31.

process. His colleague at this post was Marcus Calpurnius Bibulus, who would later be his co-consul. In both cases Caesar outshined Bibulus. This same year, however, was that of the First Catilinarian Conspiracy, in which Lucius Segius Catilina along with two disqualified consuls launched two failed attempts at assassinating the new consuls. Caesar was implicated in this plot, most likely as a result of political propaganda that came out during his run for the consulship a several years later. One of the prospective victims of the conspiracy was his cousin, Lucius Aurelius Cotta, so Caesar's involvement is unlikely, though not entirely implausible.³⁶ He began working with Marcus Licinius Crassus, another member of the *populares*, or people's party, about 63 B.C., in supporting a land bill for veterans. He also received publicity by prosecuting many former Sullans during his terms as aedile and praetor. This office was not of the most extreme importance, but Caesar used it well to secure his position in future campaigns.

Next, Caesar worked tirelessly to secure the position of *Pontifex Maximus*, the highest religious position in Rome. Although this honor was normally reserved for older and more experienced men, generally former consuls, Caesar excessively bribed the electorate and won the position- a lifetime appointment.³⁷ Meanwhile, Cataline planned and attempted to execute another plot against the state, this one larger than the first. The attempted assassination of Marcus Tullius Cicero was foiled, and eventually Catline and his supporters were arrested and sentenced to death. Another coup had been prevented, but Caesar was again implicated. Luckily for Caesar, he was vindicated in part by his actions in prosecuting the Catilinarians and in part by Cicero's testimony, and so escaped

³⁶ Gelzer 39.

³⁷ Meier, 161.

accusation without damage to his reputation. Consequently, he ran for and won the praetorship for the next year.

As praetor for 62 B.C. Caesar dealt with several small crises and protected himself from attack once more. His wife was implicated in an adultery scandal that year, and so he divorced her. Now single once more, he set off to his propraetorship in Spain. There he successfully suppressed rebellious tribes and fought the hordes of bandits wreaking havoc in modern Portugal. His victories in Spain brought him both wealth and popularity in Rome, where he planned to run for the consulship in 59 B.C. at the minimum age of forty-one. He also competently dealt with the civil administration of this province. Unfortunately he was unable to hold a triumph for his Spanish successes, as he had planned, but won the consulship anyway.³⁸

To achieve this, he masterfully reconciled Crassus with Pompey (Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus): the leading hero of the day. The two were in contention for the leading position in Rome, and Pompey held the upper hand. But Caesar made them see that by working together with him, as consul, they could achieve their goals without support from the Senate. Of course, at this point neither understood the depth of Caesar's ambition or political genius. He was their younger with much less clout, and did not appear a threat in their maneuvers for power.³⁹ Caesar had already aligned himself with Crassus, and so cemented his relationship with Pompey by giving his daughter Julia in marriage. Together, the three formed what has been termed the "First Triumvirate," and set about fulfilling their political ambitions. What began as a transactional relationship between the three turned into an alliance that transformed Rome.

³⁸ Gelzer, 64.

³⁹ Gelzer, 68-9.

As consul Caesar made several popular reforms, including new agrarian laws providing land for the poor and curbing the corrupt tax farming of the provinces. These reforms and others met with hostility from his co-consul Bibulus and the Senatorial majority, but he found ways around their dissent and instituted his policies. Caesar almost overstepped his boundaries, however, but secured his proconsulship in Gaul and Illyricum for the next five years through the efforts of the Triumvirate. This governorship, in effect, protected him from prosecution by his enemies, and he set out to win greater fame and glory.⁴⁰

Caesar served as proconsul of Gaul for ten years, in which time he enjoyed amazing success and secured his reputation as one of the finest generals in history. He invaded Britain, defeated Germanic tribes, and suppressed revolution in Gaul. His military success culminated at Alesia, where he outmaneuvered an enormous united Gallic army. The conquest of Gaul brought not only glory to Rome, but to himself; along with wealth and fiercely loyal troops. His name became legend, and Caesar now surpassed Pompey as the greatest threat to the Roman oligarchy.

Through his alliance with Pompey and Crassus had secured his position in Gaul for so long while keeping a close eye on proceedings in Rome. But his enemies maneuvered against him all the same, seeking his recall for trial on a variety of charges. At the same time they weakened his relationship with Pompey, which proved even easier after Julia's death in 55 B.C.⁴¹ Crassus died in battle against Parthia in 57 B.C., and so the Triumvirate fell to pieces. Caesar would remain a *popularis*, as always, and Pompey became the champion of the *optimates*, or Senatorial, party. Due to the fact that the Senate

⁴⁰ Fuller, 70-1.

⁴¹ Syme, 48.

refused to allow him to run for the consulship from abroad and with the threat of his enemies in Rome, Caesar was forced to march on Rome and precipitate the Civil War or accept the end of his career. He took his chances, crossing the Rubicon and invading Italy saying, "the die is cast."⁴²

From then on Rome descended into yet another Civil War in the year 49 B.C. First Caesar defeated Pompey's forces in Spain, and then headed East to face Pompey himself. He was nearly destroyed at Dyrrachium, but survived when Pompey failed to follow up.⁴³ In consequence, Caesar was able to maneuver and defeat Pompey personally on the field at Pharsalus in Greece, in 48 B.C. From there Pompey fled to Egypt where he was killed. Caesar spent the next three years fighting off the remaining Pompeian forces in Africa and Spain, finally crushing them at Munda in 45 B.C.

All the while, he had kept close contact with those in Rome. Most of his opposition fled to Greece with Pompey, so that during the Civil War he had been declared dictator. He relinquished that office, however, and held the consulship three times between the years 48 and 45 B.C. Although he was not always present, he controlled Rome through his agents and popular support. Because he had defeated his enemies and stood without opposition, Caesar did not proscribe Pompey's followers, as Marius, Cinna, and Sulla had to their rivals. Instead, he repatriated them in hopes of averting the bloodshed that characterized the recent past. He was declared *Dictator Perpetuus* by the people of Rome following his return from Munda, giving him virtual

⁴² Suetonius, *Caesar*, 32.

⁴³ Appian, *Civil Wars*, II, 64-9.

absolute power for life. Accepting this position, of course, was tantamount to accepting a throne; especially in the eyes of the Senate. He was, “master of Rome and the empire.”⁴⁴

As dictator, Caesar instituted many popular and logical reforms, as well as throwing celebrations and holding four triumphs for himself. Extravagant building projects were undertaken for the greatness of Rome, and it appeared Caesar’s reign would usher in a new era. But it was to be short lived. His disregard for the traditions and rights of the Senate, such as appointing magistrates years in advance instead of holding elections, enraged the old members of the *optimae* party. He had accepted divinity and appeared like a king of old, so they conspired against him. On the Ides of March, 44 B.C., Brutus, Cassius, and the others famously murdered Caesar in a meeting of the Senate.⁴⁵ Although the dictator was dead, another decade of civil war ensued. It ended with the accession of Octavian, Caesar’s nephew and heir, to the emperorship. The Republic never returned, as his assassins had hoped.

Such was the life of Gaius Julius Caesar. The chaotic world into which he was born demanded extraordinary leaders. There were several such men with whom he competed for power; namely Pompey, Cicero, and Cato. Their names, along with Sulla, Marius, and Cinna, define this revolutionary era in Roman history. But Caesar surpassed them all in fame and reputation. Only through betrayal by those he had forgiven was Caesar taken from power.

I will dedicate the rest of this work to examining specific instances in Caesar’s career, thereby exposing the depth of his expertise as a leader. The achievements highlighted in this chapter came not by chance or luck, but by his determination and

⁴⁴ Meier, 430.

⁴⁵ Appian, *Civil Wars*, II. 116-8.

ability. As previously mentioned, Caesar did not come from a powerful dynasty like the Metelli or Claudii.⁴⁶ He certainly had advantages, but his rise required crucial alliances with the wealthy, like Crassus; the famous, like Pompey; and many other subordinate agents. His character, personal qualities, and skills explain how he defeated his enemies at every turn. Through open action and subtle maneuvering, Caesar turned almost every situation to his advantage. He was a leader in the truest sense, and by his innate leadership capacity rose above the talented and noble competition he faced. Caesar not only fits the criteria set forth by modern leadership theory, he defined it. Two thousand years later, the most effective leaders exhibit his qualities.

⁴⁶ Syme, 20.

Chapter 3

Caesar's Early Political Career

Early in his career Caesar demonstrates the qualities necessary for effective leadership. Caesar held *nobilis* status, as an ancestor of his had held the consulship centuries ago. But his family lacked the notoriety of those families continually winning the highest office, leaving him at a disadvantage politically. Nonetheless, he managed to exceed his family's unremarkable standing because of his impressive personal characteristics and talents. Three major achievements, along with many other smaller ones, evince his superior political prowess. First, his election to the college of the *pontifices* and ascension to *pontifex maximus* exhibit his great confidence, his audacity, and his understanding of the importance of image. Secondly, after winning the consulship, Caesar drove his co-consul Bibulus into seclusion and out of the political spotlight. Achieving this required a strategic alliance with Pompey and Crassus, two of the most powerful men of the day. He utilized all of his political faculties to create this coalition, and in doing so effectively made himself sole executive in Rome. Finally, Caesar secured his position as proconsul of Gaul, which proved extremely profitable, and escaped prosecution by the nobility which he offended as consul. Caesar succeeded in these and many other instances in his early career, shaping his public persona and demonstrating his leadership capacity. As a result, he emerged as a young but serious contender for power in Rome. Following Sulla's demise, the position of first man of the empire remained open. At this point Pompey stood as frontrunner to assume that position.

as a celebrated war hero, followed by Crassus because of his great wealth. Through strategic maneuvers in this first part of his career, however, Caesar rose to their levels of prominence

The Roman nobility continually perpetuated its hold on the state by regulating who entered its ranks. Bribery and corruption secured positions for nobles and their allies, forcing newcomers to befriend those already in power. Between the years 80 B.C. and 50 B.C., seventy-five percent of the consuls had a father or grandfather who had been consul.¹ Caesar, therefore, needed powerful allies if he intended to rise above the praetorship: the highest office held by his father. But Sulla's former friends and allies dominated the government after his death, while the majority of Marians were dead or in exile. So Caesar, as Marius' nephew, faced a serious obstacle in his pursuit of higher office.

Gaining membership in one of the religious colleges, however, offered a means for infiltrating the highest class. Unfortunately, the great consular families continually dominated these bodies.² Because Sulla had transferred priestly elections from the people to the members of the colleges themselves, Caesar's hopes lay with those Sullan members. To Caesar's advantage, his cousin, the recently deceased Gaius Cotta, had been a member of the college of the *pontifices*. Also, his recent prosecution of Gnaeus Cornelius Dolabella, a former consul, distinguished him as an orator. Although he lost the case, Cicero remarked of his performance, "Do you know any man who, even if he has concentrated on the art of oratory to the exclusion of all else, can speak better than

¹ Paul J. J. Vanderbroeck, *Popular Leadership and Collective Behavior in the Late Roman Republic (ca. 80-50 B.C.)* (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1997), 23.

² Taylor, "Caesar's Early Career," 117.

Caesar?"³ On top of this he had won the *Corona Civica* for saving a fellow Roman in battle years earlier, one of the highest military honors in the Roman state. With this reputation, his cousinly connection, and his congenial character, Caesar won cooption into the college in 73 B.C.

This significant feat placed Caesar in a highly esteemed body with some of the most powerful men of the day, strengthening his public image significantly. He could now utilize his new prestige and connections in pursuit of higher offices as an accepted member of the nobility.⁴ The importance of this membership cannot be overstated, because it affiliated him with the ruling class. He could now look to his more powerful peers for sponsorship in future elections - a distinct advantage in this early stage of his career.

In the following years Caesar won appointment as a military tribune and then election to the quaestorship. He served proficiently in both positions, but lost his Aunt Julia in 69 B.C. At her funeral he made a point to stress her, and thereby his own, noble descent from Venus and the ancient kings. Her funeral, as Marius' widow, drew great attention, allowing Caesar to publicize his notable ancestry and improve his public image. His wife Cornelia died that same year, breaking his tie with the unsavory Cinna. As a widower, the prospect of a new wife offered Caesar the opportunity to form a new marital connection with the elite. With this in mind, he married Sulla's granddaughter Pompeia in 67 B.C. This marriage could not be more propitious, because it distanced him from the *populares* and associated him further with Sulla's old allies. Caesar required these connections in order to further his career.

³ Suetonius. *Caesar*, 55.

⁴ Gelzer, 25.

That same year, Caesar won election as Curator of the Appian Way. Although he received some recognition for successful administration, it does not compare to the fame he gained later as curule aedile. The curule aediles held several responsibilities within the city, including the promotion of games for holidays. As curule aedile for 65 B.C., Caesar saw the opportunity to win great popularity and threw extravagant celebrations at his own expense. The gladiatorial games he organized in honor of his father were particularly impressive. Also, he restored the monuments to Marius' victories throughout the city, which Sulla had removed. In doing so he returned glory to a hero of the empire, and won further love from the people. He overshadowed his peer in this office, Marcus Calpurnius Bibulus, so much so that Bibulus admitted, "the combined generosity of himself and Caesar was attributed to Caesar alone."⁵ Caesar incurred extreme debt to win public affection in these offices, but believed that the popular support he gained promised the means to repay his lenders in the future. As Plutarch writes, "many people thought that he was purchasing a moment's brief fame at an enormous price, whereas in reality he was buying the greatest place in the world at inconsiderable expense."⁶ These early actions evince Caesar's unshakable confidence in his abilities and his future. The financial risks he took seemed excessive to others, but Caesar saw the larger picture. He understood the mindset of the populace, and knew that the political capital gained from his actions far outweighed the monetary debt he sustained in the process.

By employing these policies Caesar emerged as a popular politician. Pursuing politics as an *optimatus* would have placed Caesar in serious competition with members of far more illustrious families, regardless of their political prowess. He probably would

⁵ Gelzer, 37.

⁶ Plutarch, *Caesar*, 5.

have advanced to the consulship eventually by this route, but he could never have truly emerged as the leader of the party. The *optimates* sought to keep the oligarchy in place, and therefore shared power amongst themselves. The *popularis via* offered a greater and faster road to power.⁷ Pompey stood, at the moment, on the verge of becoming the first man in Rome because of his great popular support as well. The decay of the oligarchic system made popular politicians potent once more; the Gracchi proved this eighty years earlier. Gaius Marius again proved it barely two decades before this point. As a popular leader, Caesar's potential increased substantially, but required other popular allies to effectively oppose the establishment.

The year 63 B.C. brought great opportunity for Caesar. First, he worked with the popular tribune, Publius Servilius Rullus, to pass a bill which would buy up and allocate land for the poor and veterans. The bill was also supported by Marcus Licinius Crassus, considered the wealthiest man in Rome. Cicero, as consul, blocked the bill. But this collaboration aligned Caesar with Crassus, (although the two were already linked to a small extent), and served to unite them in the future.⁸ Despite his failure with this bill, the value of siding with Crassus was not diminished. Caesar also found allies in the popular tribunes.

Later that year, the tribune Titus Labienus proposed a bill restoring priestly elections to the people. Caesar supported the bill and it passed; conveniently, considering the circumstances.⁹ The *pontifex maximus*, Quintus Metellus Pius, had recently passed away and left his seat open. This position, the highest religious office in Rome, was

⁷ Meier, 149.

⁸ Meier, 154; 158.

⁹ Lily Ross Taylor. "The Election of the Pontifex Maximus in the Late Republic," *Classical Philology* 37, no. 4 (1942): 424.

reserved for the most highly respected men of the Roman state, namely great ex-consuls. Caesar was only thirty-seven years old and a mere candidate for the praetorship. His opponents, both ex-consuls, outweighed him in reputation and rank. But Caesar refused to back down, even when his competitor Catalus tried to pay him off.¹⁰ With the election now public, Caesar began bribing the electorate. He took out enormous loans; so great that Suetonius says he told his mother if he lost the election he would not return at all.¹¹ Through extensive bribery he won the election overwhelmingly, and rose to unheard of prominence at a young age. Caesar now established himself as a force in Roman politics.

The *pontifex maximus* enjoyed a lifetime term. The position was not only sacrosanct and inviolable; it gave Caesar a prominent home in the city and improved his image considerably. His *dignitas*, or dignity, rose immeasurably with this title as well. Moreover, Caesar's pursuit of this office reveals his ambition and sheer audacity. He may never have had the chance to take this office again, and the opportunity it presented stood too high. By borrowing so heavily and disregarding tradition, Caesar risked his future in politics on a single election.¹² He rejected the payoff from Catalus and exhausted his resources to ensure his victory. The election reveals the depth of his self-confidence and ambition, and they do not betray him. More importantly, his willingness to bypass institutional practice indicates his potential as a transformational, and even revolutionary, leader.

Following his installment as *pontifex maximus*, a scandal broke out in Rome that threatened the stability of the city. Lucius Sergius Cataline lost his bid for the consulship that same year, and conspired with several others to overthrow the government. He and

¹⁰ Gelzer, 47.

¹¹ Suetonius, *Caesar*, 13.

¹² Meier, 161.

his followers planned to form an army of commoners, assassinate the consul Cicero, and capture the city. As their insurgency took shape and word spread of the conspiracy, Cataline fled to join his army; but five lead conspirators were arrested for treason. Both Crassus and Caesar were accused of involvement in the plot as well, but neither was formally brought to trial. The attempted *coup* posed a severe danger to order in the city. The five men were found guilty, and most advocated the death penalty in order to prevent further uprising. As the recently elected praetor for the coming year, Caesar gave his opinion of the case. He spoke with eloquence and condemned the men, but argued for life-imprisonment over death. He justified this assertion by claiming that imposition of the death penalty left the Senate, especially Cicero, open to future prosecution.¹³ Shrewdly, Caesar managed to agree with the leading senators while opposing them at the same time. In arguing against the death penalty, he subtly challenged their authority on the matter. After all, life-imprisonment could be considered worse than death. His speech impressed many and even won significant support for his cause. Nonetheless, Marcus Portius Cato the Younger, soon to be his most bitter enemy, managed to swing the Senate in favor of death. The five conspirators were summarily executed.

Cato won the day, but Caesar's speech had its impact. Again he proved himself a most compelling orator, even with the disadvantage of arguing against the obvious consensus. His prolific rhetoric once more made him famous, and his compassion for the accused improved his public image. Although he lost this round with Cato, Caesar showed the elite that he was now a substantial force in politics. He had the capacity to compete with the old guard.

¹³ Meier, 172.

As praetor in 62 B.C., Caesar takes only two notable actions. Rome was in the position of overseeing trials in subsidiary and tributary territories. In one such case, he chose to defend a Numidian nobleman on trial for assaulting a prince. The court found in favor of the prosecution, but Caesar refused to betray his duty as this man's host. He protected the man and smuggled him out of the country when he left for his propraetorship in Spain. This action won respect for Caesar as a patron, because of the obligation he fulfilled to his client.¹⁴ Relationships such as this defined a man's reputation, or *dignitas*, according to Roman tradition. Therefore, Caesar won admiration for his loyalty and improved his image, although modern standards consider such actions unethical.

The other incident that year involved a scandal at a women's religious festival, the Bona Dea. Publius Clodius Pulcher, another nobleman, visited Caesar's house disguised as a woman, purportedly to sleep with Caesar's wife. The Senate demanded he be prosecuted, but bribery secured his acquittal. Caesar took no part in the trial, but divorced Pompeia all the same. When confronted about this decision, Caesar replied, "I cannot have members of my household accused or even suspected."¹⁵ In refusing to testify against his wife, Caesar shows his mercy and respect. Ruining her reputation was below him, and he wanted no part in it. By the same token, suspicion of her adultery hurt his pride, and divorce without judicial conviction revealed his high personal standards. Caesar acted with admirable poise, improving his image despite the unpleasant situation.

In 61 B.C. Caesar assumed the governorship of Further Spain. Within this province, the area of Lusitania, (modern Portugal), had yet to feel the full force of Roman

¹⁴ Gelzer, 45.

¹⁵ Suetonius, *Caesar*, 74.

authority. Caesar set about suppressing unruly tribes and captured a great deal of plunder, much of which he gave to his soldiers. In response they hailed him *imperator*, basically “general,” - the supreme sign of respect from the army.¹⁶ The Senate voted him a triumph in recognition of his success. On top of this, Caesar also managed the civil administration of the province well and settled the debt problem there.

His proficient military and civil administration in Spain reveals Caesar’s abilities even farther. In his first action as a true military leader, he pacifies the uncivilized part of his province and makes it safe for Roman administration. After the campaigning season, he runs the province with great success. This governorship proves his capability in both arenas on a larger scale, and gives him the recognition necessary to vie for the consulship. Even the Senators, many of whom hated him at this point, acknowledged his adept administration. As Gelzer writes, “He conducted affairs like a born general and ruler, but never lost himself in this activity on the periphery of the Empire: what mattered was always its effect on Rome.”¹⁷ In Rome, however, Caesar faced a problem. Time constraints prevented him from running for the consulship and holding his triumph, because once he entered the city to run for the election his military position became null. Typically, Cato blocked his request to run *in abstentia*. Although a triumph would have added to his popularity and personal glory, Caesar chose to run for office. The power of the consulship was too attractive for a man with his ambition.

Caesar entered the race for consulship in alliance with Lucius Luceius and against Bibulus, his former co-aedile. Bibulus held the support of the high nobility, as a block to Caesar should he win the election. Pompey, the leading hero in Rome following

¹⁶ Plutarch, *Caesar*, 12.

¹⁷ Gelzer, 63.

his Eastern victories, supported both Caesar and Luceius. Caesar had endeared himself to Pompey earlier by supporting the *Lex Manilia*, a bill benefiting Pompey's veterans from the Mithridatic War.¹⁸ The Senate had long feared Pompey might try to take power, as Marius, Cinna, and Sulla had following their great military victories. To prevent this, they continually opposed his policies. Seeking to repay his debt and earn future favor, Pompey backed Caesar for the consulship through his enormous influence.¹⁹ Although Pompey was his chief competition for power, Crassus also backed Caesar. He was already friends with Caesar from their earlier partnerships, and so agreed to back him monetarily. Through Pompey's support, Crassus' donations, and his own impressive retinue, Caesar won the first seat of the consulship. Unfortunately, Bibulus took the second. As time soon proved, however, Bibulus was no match for Caesar's superior political prowess.

Following his victory, Caesar began working to unite both Crassus and Pompey with himself. These three men posed the greatest threat to the oligarchy, and by working together could undermine its power substantially. Caesar needed their support to ensure he received a good province after his consulship; Pompey needed his veteran's bills passed; and Crassus wanted repayment for the tax farmers of Asia.²⁰ Caesar, as consul, stood as the front man for this "triumvirate," and the three planned to use their combined influence to achieve their goals. At this point, Caesar was the lowest member of the triumvirate. He lacked the reputation and wealth of his peers, but overcame those shortcomings with his superior leadership ability.²¹ The triumvirate represents a masterful

¹⁸ Syme, 29.

¹⁹ Robin Seager, *Pompey* (Blackwell: Malden, MA, 2002), 83.

²⁰ Meier, 188; Seager, 83.

²¹ Gelzer, 69.

political maneuver by Caesar. By forming this propitious alliances and exploiting it, Caesar overcame what he lacked in clout or stature. Together, the three controlled Roman politics.

Caesar's achieved more than anyone expected in his consulship, which he assumed in 59 B.C. To reach his goals, he enlisted the service of several other magistrates in critical positions. Most notably, he recruited the praetors Cornelius Lentulus Spinther and Quintus Fufius Calenus to his side, as well as the popular tribune Publius Vatinius, (who he had to bribe extensively).²² Collaboration with men such as these gave him a distinct advantage in combating Senatorial opposition, as the tribunes' veto power always threatened his enemies' proposals. The praetors, (as the second highest magistrates), gave further weight to his proposals through their support. Beyond these partnerships, Caesar took care to respect the traditions of his office. He continually took the auspices, regardless of their impracticality, as custom dictated. His tribune Vatinius, however, promised to ignore them, so that the Senate could no longer use bad auspices as an excuse for quashing a bill.²³ By the same token, he could observe them when they portended in Caesar's advantage. Thereby, Caesar used the auspices for his benefit and crippled one of the Senate's methods of opposition simultaneously.

He acted with a façade of benevolence towards his colleague and the Senate, maintaining the tradition of alternating leadership by the month with Bibulus and conferring with top ex-consuls. But he also mandated the publishing of Senate and assembly hearings, so that everyone knew, (or had the opportunity to learn), the political issues of the day. And so Caesar set forth his first great reform, a land bill allocating land

²² Gelzer, 69.

²³ Meier, 205.

to Pompey's veterans. It proposed the formation of a commission, which employed the bounty from Pompey's wars to procure land in the countryside at an equitably appraised price. The land then went to the former soldiers, rewarding them for service on behalf of Rome. To prevent argument against the bill, Caesar recused himself from taking place on that commission. By wording the bill so well and eliminating suspicion of his profiting from it, Caesar left his opponents no room to argue against it. Sulla's similar provisions acted as a precedent for this land distribution.²⁴ Only Cato stepped forward to speak against it, and with his typical ardor attempted to kill the bill by filibuster. Caesar responded out of necessity and arrested him.

Caesar turned to the popular assembly to pass the bill when the Senate refused to approve it. He then released Cato from prison, as Gelzer puts it, "before he became a martyr."²⁵ Pompey summoned his veterans to Rome for the vote, and he and Crassus both voiced their support for the bill before the assembly. Caesar left little room for opposition, and even invited Bibulus to speak against it. Frustrated, Bibulus impudently replied, "You shall not have this law this year, not even if you all wish it."²⁶ Bibulus obviously lacked the composure of his counterpart; and showed little tact in addressing the assembly, (the theoretical supreme body in Rome), in this manner. Despite the oligarchy's opposition to the bill, everyone knew the assembly would pass it. Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus, among others, justified it too convincingly. He successfully put his enemies, "morally in the wrong," in his rational defense of the bill.²⁷ Consequently, Bibulus resorted to direct intervention, his only option remaining.

²⁴ Meier, 207.

²⁵ Gelzer, 73.

²⁶ Dio, 38, 3.

²⁷ Gelzer, 78.

On the day of the vote Bibulus brought three tribunes and their guards to intercede. Caesar's supporters and Pompey's veterans repulsed them, covered Bibulus in fecal waste, and wounded several others. Caesar's opponents withdrew in disgrace, and the assembly passed the land bill. As a result of this incident, Bibulus went into seclusion. From his home, he attempted to obstruct Caesar's future acts by declaring bad omens. Caesar ignored him, and the people found his feeble attempts ridiculous.²⁸ For the rest of their term Bibulus was incapacitated. Caesar had defeated him and proven, as he had shown during their shared aedileship, to be the superior politician. Suetonius writes that people parodied the situation, referring to the year as the, "Consulship of Julius and Caesar," and ignoring Bibulus' position.²⁹ Admittedly, Bibulus was not the best man to counter Caesar on the *optimata* faction's behalf. But keep in mind he was receiving directions from Cato and his party. His defeat signifies Caesar's ability outsmart and outmaneuver rivals and their backers. Intellectually, Bibulus had no chance. Caesar understood the people and the duties of his office. He successfully prevented his image from being tarnished while making Bibulus appear powerless. He also had the determination to implement his policies regardless of his colleague's objections, and found ways to overwhelm him at every turn. Caesar was simply the better politician.

Caesar now moved forward with his agenda, pushing through a bill remitting a third of the Asian tax-farmers' debts, many of whom fell under Crassus' patronage. On top of repaying his debt to Crassus, Caesar gained support from those equestrian tax-farmers. However, he warned the equestrians against corruption and overbidding for tax contracts in the future. Having appeased both Crassus and Pompey through his policies,

²⁸Michael J. G. Gray-Fow, "The Mental Breakdown of a Roman Senator: M. Calpurnius Bibulus," *Greece & Rome*, 2nd Ser., 37, no. 2 (Oct., 1990): 180.

²⁹Suetonius, *Caesar*, 20.

Caesar now needed a way to secure his alliance further. He did not worry too much about Crassus, their friendship was old and fairly reliable. Pompey, on the other hand, was much more powerful and less dedicated. With his needs met, he might leave the Triumvirate to pursue his own goals.

To cement their relationship Caesar offered Pompey his daughter Julia in marriage. Marriage, as previously mentioned, was a common method of forming political alliances. In marrying Julia, Pompey and Caesar formally united, and began working to achieve their goals with little regard for the oligarchy.³⁰ The two had Rome under their control; no one had the clout to effectively oppose them. Cato and his followers were enraged but impotent nonetheless; an open attack on either could have irreparable consequences. But so far Caesar had overlooked the urban populace in his policies- the very people he should have cared for as a *popularis*. With his popularity quite low, he brought about an agrarian law providing twenty-thousand citizens with three or more children with land. Cato automatically opposed it, but Caesar again removed him from the rostrum. When the bill passed Caesar once more gained some favor in the plebiscite. At the same time, this move benefited Caesar in another way. Caesar made this new colony a reality, and so its new citizens owed him allegiance for his patronage.³¹ This parallels the relationship Caesar had with the Numidian, between benefactor and beneficiary, and thus Caesar gains two important types of support. Caesar, however, still had not received his province for the next year.

His ally Vatinius then brought about the *lex Vatinia*, giving Caesar Cisalpine Gaul and Illyricum as provinces for the next five years. These territories were two of the

³⁰ Meier, 216.

³¹ Gelzer, 81.

best he could have hoped for; Gaul especially because of the unrest in the area. Conquering an unruly territory, as he proved in Spain, provided both fame and wealth to the governor. On top of those two territories, Pompey then proposed Caesar receive Transalpine Gaul. Cato, of course, opposed these acts vehemently, but again to no avail. Caesar now held power in two provinces for half a decade, while his position in Transalpine Gaul had to be renewed annually. His elation in his victory later surfaced in the Senate, when he boasted to his enemies about his position.³²

The remainder of his term as consul was rather lackluster. He passed a law concerning the administration of provinces, which was kept even after the rise of the Empire.³³ Through the efforts of the Triumvirs, Caesar's father-in-law, Lucius Calpurnius Piso, and his ally Aulus Gabinius won the consulships for the next year. With Pompey and Crassus, his other friends as consuls, and his agents still in Rome, Caesar maintained a presence in the city. He could go to Gaul and take up his command soon without fear of removal. Despite the power of the Triumvirate, two of his greatest enemies, Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus and Gaius Memmius won praetorships for the next year. They immediately set about bringing charges against Caesar, trying to invalidate his laws. Caesar left the city before a verdict was reached, and took up his position in Gaul.

Thus, Caesar managed to overcome his opponents and take his prized proconsulship, through sheer determination and force of character. His strategic alliances truly paid off for him, while his intellect and rhetoric allowed him to cripple his co-

³² Suetonius, *Caesar*, 22.

³³ Gelzer. 94.

consul. His actions as consul made him many great enemies, but also placed him in a propitious position. Matthias Gelzer puts it best:

“Caesar’s political ventures, while always admirably serving the needs of the moment, at the same time contained still greater possibilities for the future. In constructing his policies he never laid a stone on which he could not build further: as a result, a retrospective view gives the impression that everything was actually planned...as if by an architect.”³⁴

Others might have crumbled under pressure from the Senate and unpopularity with the people. Caesar’s will was simply strong, and so he survived for the time being. His future success now depended on his performance in Gaul.

³⁴ Gelzer, 95.

Chapter 4

The Gallic Wars

Caesar's future depended not only on a successful performance in Gaul, but an extraordinary one. Upon his departure for Gaul in early 58 B.C., he faced two major challenges. First, he needed military glory to retain his command and expand popular support in Rome. This required the conquest and subjugation of new lands: the best road to wealth and fame for a Rome. Therefore, he needed to turn all of Gaul, a sizeable territory, into a legitimate province of the Roman Empire. Secondly, he had to contain his enemies in Rome from abroad. His enemies had attempted to keep him from leaving for Gaul in the first place, and continued to work against him once he was there.¹ To counter them, Caesar had Pompey and Crassus, along with a network of subordinate officers and agents. At the same time he sent plunder back to Rome and published his accounts of the wars. The resulting popular support, combined with the efforts of his allies, prevented Caesar's enemies from recalling him for nearly ten years. His clout in Rome even provided him an extension on his term, so that Caesar completely conquered Gaul in just under a decade. In the Gallic Wars Caesar proved himself the most potent leader of his age. Militarily, he subdued a large amount of territory and established Gaul as a premier set of provinces. He won the indomitable loyalty of his soldiers and great wealth. By sending dispatches and publishing his commentaries, he kept Rome informed of his progress and turned military success into political capital. Consequently, Caesar's

¹ Gelzer, 101.

position was so great that the Senate passed a resolution, (*senatus consultum ultimum*), saying he must dismiss his army in 49 B.C. To do so and return to Rome meant political suicide, and so he went to war against the *optimates*.²

I have divided this chapter into two sections. The first concerns Caesar's military career. Instead of reviewing each individual campaign chronologically, I focus on specific instances reflecting his effectiveness as a military leader. I examine him as a soldier, a general, and in relation to his troops. His actions in each of these capacities reveal how his characteristics and skills produced success. In the second section I discuss how he used the wars to elevate himself politically while maintaining his position as proconsul. His tactics in this area, again, reflect his sheer ability to lead.

I

Caesar planned to embark on his conquest almost immediately following his consulship, but an obstacle stood in his way. He lacked the authority to invade new regions; his four legions were provided for suppressing revolts and repelling invasions.³ Caesar, as he had as consul, ignored the technicalities of his position. To begin actions against the Helvetii, who had begun migrating westward from modern Switzerland across France (without encroaching on Roman territory), he claimed to be avenging the consul they defeated in 107 B.C. On top of this, in their migration the Helvetii passed through territory of the Aedui, a tribe closely allied to Rome. Caesar turned to a Senatorial decree of 61 B.C., which allowed the governor of Transalpine Gaul to take any action he thought appropriate in defense of the Aedui. Cleverly, Caesar maneuvered around the restraints of his post, attacked the Helvetii and forced them to return home. This strategy, and other

² Meier, 346.

³ Meier, 235-6.

similar ones, allowed Caesar to conquer Gaul without being formally prosecuted.⁴ His intellect and ambition proved superior once more.

Caesar stood out early in his career as a soldier, winning the *Corona Civica* for bravery, as previously mentioned. As a general in Gaul, Caesar continued to display his skill as a soldier. In several instances he personally entered the battle and turned the tide, as he did against the Nervii in 57 B.C. This tribe ambushed the Romans before they could fortify their camp, and so were not prepared for the onslaught. Caught off guard, Caesar quickly gave orders and urged his men to battle. Most of the officers in the 12th Legion had been killed or wounded, and the entire unit risked collapsing. In the heat of battle, Caesar rushed to the front lines and rallied the troops, fighting and issuing orders simultaneously. As a result, he personally turned a near defeat into a stunning victory and virtually destroyed the Nervii.⁵ His courage inspired the troops and won the day with great risk to himself, evincing his dedication and willing self-sacrifice. Furthermore, this action, and others like it, made his army truly respect Caesar as a soldier.

Suetonius testifies to his soldierly talent, writing, “Caesar was a most skillful swordsman and horseman, and showed surprising power of endurance.”⁶ As general, he could have enjoyed a higher quality of life, but Caesar was a soldier and lived like his men. He slept on the road, working tirelessly and disregarding his own pains. As Plutarch puts it, “there was no danger which he was not willing to face, no form of hard work from which he excused himself... they [his troops] were amazed at the way in which he would undergo hardships.”⁷ He was known for digging trenches and building

⁴ J.P.V.D. Balsdon, “The Veracity of Caesar,” *Greece & Rome* 4, no. 1 (Mar., 1957): 25.

⁵ Julius Caesar, *Bello Gallico*, II, 25-28.

⁶ Suetonius, *Julius Caesar*, 57.

⁷ Plutarch, *Caesar*, 17.

siege works, sleeping in the open and leading his troops on the march. He even ate whatever his men ate. In doing so, the men respected him even more. Although their superior, he worked like a common infantryman.

As a general, Caesar employed his intellect, determination, and rhetoric, among other qualities, to conquer Gaul. In recruiting new troops he acted particularly intelligently. The people of the Gallic provinces were not full Roman citizens at this time, but hoped for suffrage following Rome's concessions in the Social War. When he arrived in Gaul, Caesar attracted recruits by treating those who joined his army like Roman citizens.⁸ In doing so, he not only increased his military power, but made those men eternally indebted to him. By the time he crossed the Rubicon in 49 B.C., Caesar had ten legions under his command. He had been granted four legions originally and lost two to transfer, not to mention losses on campaign.⁹ This means that at least eight legions were created by Caesar during his ten year term as governor. Obviously, Romanized Gauls made up a significant portion of his army. They, of course, felt greater loyalty to Caesar than Rome. Without them, Caesar's conquest of Gaul could not have succeeded, nor could his victory in the Civil War.

Caesar acted logically in rewarding and promoting his troops. Members of the nobility made up the majority of higher military posts in the Roman Army, as they had been trained to become officers from a young age. But Caesar saw that birthright did not necessitate effective leadership; Czar Nicholas II met this reality on the battlefield in World War I. Instead, he chose those with talent for promotion and reward. As Suetonius writes, "He judged men by their fighting record, not by their morals or social

⁸ Gelzer, 104.

⁹ P.J. Cuff, "Caesar the Soldier," *Greece & Rome* 4, no. 1 (Mar., 1957): 33.

position, treating them with equal severity – and equal indulgence.”¹⁰ When men fought with distinction, he richly rewarded them. After great victories his troops received bounty, and were often allowed to celebrate excessively. When they acted unruly he punished them, though only severely when absolutely required. These fair and logical policies not only gave the soldiers greater motivation to fight, as they would be rewarded when due; but put people with more skill in higher positions, thereby strengthening the army. While Caesar sometimes chose officers for political purposes, such as Cicero’s nephew, he only placed those with talent in important positions, which he had “keen eyes” for.¹¹ By acting with logic and equality towards all of his troops, Caesar produced a highly skilled and loyal army.

To inspire his men further, Caesar employed his superb rhetorical skill. After the defeat of the Helvetii, Ariovistus and his German army approached the Romans. No one knew whether a deal could be negotiated or war would ensue, but most expected war. The Gauls in the area told stories of German ferocity, which threw his troops into panic and threatened to dishearten the entire army. Caesar responded in a speech, citing Gaius Marius’ defeat of the German Teutoni and Cimbri as proof that the Romans were superior fighters. Furthermore, he made reference to other instances where the Helvetii, recently defeated by Caesar, had themselves repelled German advances. He claimed that the reason the Gauls feared the Germans stemmed from a defeat following a prolonged war, which Ariovistus capitalized on. He then challenged the honor of his army, and said he would advance alone with the 10th Legion if necessary, because of its unquestionable

¹⁰ Suetonius, *Caesar*, 65.

¹¹ Gelzer, 124.

loyalty.¹² This speech completely changed the morale of the troops. The 10th Legion thanked Caesar for his faith in it, while the others felt shame for his doubt in them. When negotiations fell through war ensued, but the revitalized Romans defeated the Germans in battle. Caesar saved his army from losing spirit through historical allusion combined with shame. Although this speech was not recorded verbatim, his usual eloquence can be inferred. Gelzer writes, “At such decisive moments an overwhelming power radiated from his deliberate calm and unshakable confidence.”¹³ Orations, such as this, boosted the morale of his men whenever great danger approached. Caesar’s rhetorical skill complemented his relationship with his armies.

Consequently, he became their motivation in battle; they wanted his approval and respect. When Titus Labienus, one of Caesar’s top lieutenants, engaged Camulogenus and the Aulerci without the proconsul, he encouraged the men to fight as if Caesar himself were there.¹⁴ The soldiers responded by rallying and defeating Camulogenus. Loyalty even drove these men to fight while wounded, as Gaius Acilius did after losing a hand in battle.¹⁵ These instances, and many similar ones, reveal depth of dedication Caesar’s soldiers felt to him. Suetonius records that Caesar’s men never mutinied during his ten year term in Gaul.¹⁶ They fought in dire circumstances and against numerically superior enemies many times, always trusting Caesar to lead them to victory. Arthur, the Duke of Wellington, once said he, “considered Napoleon’s presence in the field equal to forty thousand men.”¹⁷ In this capacity, Julius Caesar was the Napoleon of his day.

¹² Caesar, *BG*, I, 39-41.

¹³ Gelzer, 110-111.

¹⁴ Cuff, 33; Caesar, 62.

¹⁵ Suetonius, *Caesar*, 68.

¹⁶ Suetonius, *Caesar*, 69.

¹⁷ Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, quoted in Stanhope, *Conversations with Wellington*, 1888, 81, quoted in John Bartlett, *Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1955), 400.

The year 52 B.C. tested both the loyalty of his armies and Caesar's expertise as a strategist. The Roman conquest made the tribes realize their joint heritages, and a notion of Gallic nationalism emerged.¹⁸ Having learned of political turmoil in Rome, several defiant Gallic tribes revolted. Eventually, the revolution spread and a united Gallic force formed; many of Rome's oldest allies betrayed her. The situation was dire; the past seven years' success would be destroyed if this revolution succeeded. Caesar maneuvered against Vercingetorix, chief of the Arverni, who constantly attempted to break his supply lines and disillusion the Romans through guerrilla warfare. He countered the Gaul's moves, and besieged the important city of Avaricum. His soldiers risked starvation due to compromised supply lines, but refused Caesar's offer to end the siege with determination.¹⁹ The Romans took the city and slaughtered the inhabitants, hoping this cruelty might send a message to the Gauls.

The effect of this victory, however, was reversed at Gergovia. Caesar besieged the city, hoping to take Vercingetorix. In a sortie he lost nearly seven hundred men and forty-six centurions (company commanders), making it one of his worst losses of the wars.²⁰ As a result even more tribes revolted, including the Aedui, and Vercingetorix was declared supreme commander of the united Gallic army. Caesar decided to unite his force with the rest of his army under Titus Labienus, who had been operating near modern Paris. Once their forces reunited, Caesar repelled a Gallic attack and Vercingetorix retreated to the fortress of Alesia. Caesar pursued and laid siege to the fortress, so Vercingetorix sent his cavalry to recruit more troops from the other tribes and

¹⁸ Gelzer, 155.

¹⁹ Caesar, *BG*, VII, 17.

²⁰ Meier, 321.

break the siege.²¹ He planned to wedge the Romans between Alesia and a relieving army. Caesar countered the Gallic strategic brilliantly.

He began digging trenches, moats, and erecting palisades around Alesia and on each side of his army. The Romans built twenty-three forts and divided their forces into eight camps, which were protected by the defenses constructed.²² Caesar sent his cavalry to forage as much as possible, in preparation for the Gallic relief army. Modern scholars estimate Caesar's army numbered between fifty and fifty-five thousand men, while Vercingetorix's army inside Alesia numbered roughly eighty thousand. The Gallic relief army is believed to be as large as two-hundred and forty thousand infantry, plus cavalry, giving the combined Gallic army over three-hundred and thirty thousand men.²³ Once that enormous force arrived the Gauls began their attack. The first assault failed, as did a second night assault. Roman discipline, siege weaponry, and strategy won in both cases. But the third assault brought almost disastrous results for Caesar.

After surveying the situation, the Gauls found a weak point in the Roman defenses. Early one morning, they sent six-thousand "picked men" under one of their top generals to attack this position.²⁴ They nearly broke through, and Caesar reinforced the position twice. Finally, he brought more reinforcements under his personal command into the battle. Evidently, he wore a special cloak to distinguish himself, which enlivened the troops and halted the Gallic advance.²⁵ Simultaneously, he sent cavalry forces around the Gauls and forced them to flee. The battle was won, and Vercingetorix taken prisoner. He

²¹ Fuller, 150.

²² Fuller, 152.

²³ Paul K. Davis, *100 Decisive Battles: From Ancient Times to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 55-58.

²⁴ Fuller, 155.

²⁵ Meier, 326.

gave each of his soldiers a captured enemy as a slave, on top of rewarding them with plunder. Then, he used the leverage of his new prisoners to force the Aedui and Arverni into submission once more.²⁶ Although there were a few minor uprisings after Alesia, Roman control was established in Gaul for the next five centuries.²⁷ His brilliance as a tactician suppressed the Gallic Revolution.

Alesia was Caesar's crowning achievement as governor of Gaul, and he and his men reaped the benefits in fame and wealth. In defeating the uprising, he gained a highly profitable market for the empire. Outnumbered roughly six-to-one and surrounded; only a general of Caesar's caliber could have devised such an audacious plan for victory. His tactical intelligence and determination made this victory possible. Here, like his attack on Ariovistus and so many others, he took advantage of an opportunity despite serious risks, and won glory for himself, his army, and Rome.²⁸ But military conquest is only one aspect of Caesar's career in Gaul. His victories provided the leverage necessary to retain and improve his political position in Rome.

II

In the Roman Republic, successful military operations translated into enormous political capital. From Scipio Africanus to Gaius Marius, Sulla, and Pompey most recently, victorious generals used their fame from wars abroad to improve their positions politically. Caesar already had political prestige, having held the consulship. But he also made powerful enemies during his tenure in Rome, forcing him to keep a close eye on the city while in Gaul. To facilitate this he had Pompey and Crassus, his allies in the

²⁶ Caesar, *BG*, VII, 89.

²⁷ Davis, 56.

²⁸ A.N. Sherwin-White, "Caesar as an Imperialist" *Greece & Rome* 2nd Ser. 4, no. 1 (1957): 37.

Triumvirate, as well as less prominent officials and agents working in his interest.

Beyond protecting himself from recall and prosecution by his enemies, Caesar had to win the populace back to his side. During his term as consul, he failed to fulfill expectations as a popular politician and suffered from low support at the end of his year.²⁹ In order to recover the voters of the city, Caesar employed his war victories in two key ways. First, he sent plunder back to the city and held celebrations, as evidence of the glory he was winning for Rome. He spent some of this money on public works projects to the benefit of the people. Secondly, he kept the Senate and public aware of his victories abroad. He sent letters to the Senate and certain allies throughout the wars, and then published *De Bello Gallico*, his war commentaries, in 51 B.C. These commentaries not only publicized the details of his conquests, but allowed Caesar to subtly put his own spin on them.

These seven books, written in the third person, represent a very early and eloquent form of propaganda for the people. At the same time, he hoped to win over, “those senators and knights who were still undecided, relatively open-minded and impressionable,” as Meier asserts.³⁰ In these ways, Caesar maintained his political standing while increasing his support from the populace (and hopeful some senators) during his decade stint abroad. When the Senate finally succeeded in recalling him in 49 B.C., he had the military backing and political influence to fight the *optimates* should they try to oppose him.

As Caesar prepared to leave for Gaul at the end of 59 B.C., two important situations arose in Rome. Publius Clodius Pulcher, a ruthless opportunist and tribune, took action against both Cicero and Cato. Drawing much of his power from plebian gangs, Clodius switched sides when his interests shifted, and was therefore an

²⁹ Gelzer, 89.

³⁰ Meier, 259.

unpredictable and dangerous force.³¹ Clodius attempted to prosecute Cicero for executing the Catilinarians as consul a year earlier. Caesar, who hoped to win Cicero to his side as the best orator of the day, tried to protect him by offering him a position in Gaul.³² Cicero refused this however, and before the trial was completed went into voluntary exile. For the time, Caesar lost a powerful potential ally in Rome. However, Clodius then succeeded in sending Cato to Cyprus on a somewhat superfluous mission. This eliminated the threat of Caesar's most vehement and capable enemy for the moment as well.³³ He could breathe freely for a while in Gaul.

As Caesar's victories accumulated, so did his wealth. He used this money, along with Pompey and Crassus, to elevate his political friends and allies into political office without returning to Rome. Caesar had two subordinate agents in this effort as well: Lucius Cornelius Balbus and Gaius Oppius. These two men created an organization of communications to keep Caesar informed of the happenings in Rome, while Caesar sent them money for the election of favorable candidates.³⁴ This organization gave Caesar a presence in Rome and kept him in contact with important figures, such as Cicero. Crassus and Pompey were his allies, but they sought power just as he did and could not be fully trusted. Oppius and Balbus, on the other hand, were devoted to Caesar, and he consistently rewarded their dedication all the way through his dictatorship. By them, he was "ever present in Rome through his ideas, his orders and advice, his gifts and his requests."³⁵ They were highly effective in their duties, which reflected in Caesar's ten

³¹ Vanderbroeck, 30.

³² Plutarch, *Life of Cicero*, 39.

³³ Gelzer, 100.

³⁴ Vanderbroeck, 51.

³⁵ Meier, 225.

year stay in Gaul. Even after Caesar's death, their intricate organization remained in place and successfully elevated Octavian as his heir.³⁶

Pompey and Crassus gradually became worried by Caesar's success in Gaul, while opponents like Ahenobarbus planned to remove him from command. In 57 B.C., Pompey had been put in charge of procuring grain for public distributions, which brought with it great popularity. In 56 B.C. Caesar renewed the Triumvirate with Crassus and Pompey. In this new agreement, the two were to run for the consulship in 55 B.C. Their election would be secured by Caesar's soldiers on leave, who would be sent to Rome for the vote. In turn, they would receive governorships through 50 B.C., while Caesar's term in Gaul would be extended to the same year. After that, Caesar would ostensibly run for the consulship of 48 B.C., as there was a required ten-year interval between consulships.³⁷ This renewal placed Caesar in a virtually untouchable position. With Pompey and Crassus untied with him once more and their desires satisfied for the time being, he could complete his conquest of Gaul. This agreement represents Caesar's innate ability to manipulate others, appeasing them while increasing his position substantially. Crassus and Pompey either failed to realize how Caesar would exploit this new agreement, or thought that he would fail in Gaul. Regardless, Caesar's intellect once more placed him in a most propitious position.

Despite his alliance, his agents at work, and his secured position, Caesar also needed to revitalize his support from the populace. He achieved this in several ways; first, by public works projects. The enormous plunder he captured in the Gallic Wars financed and rewarded his armies, his agents, and the elections of his candidates. But he

³⁶ Vanderbroek, 51.

³⁷ Gelzer, 121-2.

also constructed several buildings, as physical evidence of his conquests for Rome. He financed the Basilica Julia, a new Forum, and an election building in 54 B.C.³⁸ Generosity, such as this could be appreciated by all Romans. His benevolence improved his public image- the people were impressed. Sallust writes, “Caesar was reckoned a great man on the score of the favors he did and of his generosity.”³⁹ Caesar also reported his great victories to the Senate on a regular basis, so that celebrations were proclaimed throughout the city. These public days of thanksgiving, according to Suetonius, “were longer than any general before him had ever earned.”⁴⁰ Also, after his daughter Julia’s death in 54 B.C., he financed gladiatorial games and a public banquet in her honor. Gestures, such as these, redeemed him in the eyes of much of the populace. His aedileship taught him how to win the people, and he succeeded. Beyond his benevolence, however, Caesar’s war commentaries had an enormous impact on his political life in Rome.

By the year 51 B.C., when Caesar published his accounts of the Gallic Wars, his political position in Rome again hung in the balance. Crassus died in battle against Parthia in 53 B.C., and Julia died the year before, breaking his bond with Pompey. Since then, the *optimates* gradually won his former son-in-law to their side, as a block against Caesar. While they feared domination by both Caesar and Pompey, the oligarchy knew that Caesar posed the greater threat. Consequently, they placed Pompey as their front-man, believing they could control him and dismiss him if he became too powerful.⁴¹ At the beginning of 52 B.C., the political situation in Rome had decayed considerably.

³⁸ Gelzer, 140.

³⁹ Sallust, *Cataline*, 54, 2. quoted in Gelzer, 140.

⁴⁰ Suetonius, *Caesar*, 24.

⁴¹ Syme, 45.

Violence and bribery had delayed the elections for the year, culminating with the murder of Clodius by Titus Annius Milo, who was running for the consulship. A state of emergency ensued and leading Senators decided that only Pompey had the power to restore order. He was named sole consul, instead of dictator, both for the public impression and weaker powers granted.⁴² Pompey quickly set about restoring order, but basically had control of Rome. Pompey, and his new *optimates* allies, now posed a serious threat to Caesar. But Caesar still planned to run for the consulship of 48 B.C., and so sent his war records to Rome in preparation.

The *Bello Gallico* gives an excellent explanation of his ten year conquest of Gaul. Even Cicero praised it for its eloquent style and clarity.⁴³ His writing here substitutes for his oral rhetoric, as he could not actually address the citizens in Rome at the time. Throughout the work Caesar goes into great detail highlighting the bravery of his soldiers and the dangers they faced, shedding less light the setbacks he encountered. These seven books were meant to bolster support for him, not serve as concise historical references, although they are believed to be extremely accurate nonetheless.⁴⁴ Caesar did not change the truth, but slightly skewed it in his favor.

Several attributes are highlighted within the *Bello Gallico*, which were central Roman ideals. Examples of these include *clementia* (clemency), *fides* (loyalty), and *dignitas* (dignity).⁴⁵ He uses these ideals in describing his troops and their deeds, as well as himself. In this way, he improves the public image of himself and his army. Whenever

⁴² Seager, 135.

⁴³ Balsdon, 20.

⁴⁴ Cuff, 32.

⁴⁵ Edwin S Ramage, "Aspects of Propaganda in the 'De bello gallico': Caesar's Virtues and Attributes," *Athenaeum* 91.2 (2003): 331.

he attacks an enemy or acts cruelly towards the defeated he justifies it.⁴⁶ Thus, Caesar makes himself out to be an ideal Roman general, and an ultimately victorious one. Furthermore, he uses the idea of the power of the Roman people (*imperium populus Romanus*) and his own power (*imperium*) interchangeably, so that he and the Roman people become one.⁴⁷ These subtleties make his writings even more effective in conveying his image.

Although many scholars believe these books were directed only at the upper classes, T.P. Wiseman makes a good case against them. He rightly asserts that publication, at this time, meant the writings would be read in a public area for the populace to hear. As he puts it, "In late-republican Rome historical narrative was popular entertainment."⁴⁸ So when Caesar describes in detail a largely failed British expedition, he does so to impress the Roman people. Britain seemed a far-off place, but Caesar traveled there to spread Roman civilization. He was the first Roman to bridge the Rhine and inflict substantial losses on the Germans, which even Suetonius highlights despite its relative insignificance.⁴⁹ Caesar utilized his writing fully, to impress and awe the Roman people. When the consular elections came about in the summer of 49 B.C., the stories of his campaigns would still be fresh on their minds. Caesar's publishing of *De Bello Gallico* epitomizes a great leader utilizing his rhetorical skill to improve his public image.

His ten year proconsulship in Gaul provided the wealth, legions, and fame for Caesar to fight and ultimately defeat his *optimates* opponents. But managing military and

⁴⁶ Ramage, "Aspects of Propaganda in the 'De bello gallico,'" 348.

⁴⁷ E.S. Ramage, "The 'populus romanus, imperium' and Caesar's presence in the 'De bello Gallico'" *Athenaeum* 90.1 (2002): 127.

⁴⁸ T. P. Wiseman, "The Publication of De Bello Gallico," in *Julius Caesar as Artful Reporter*, eds. Kathryn Welch and Anton Powell (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1998), 4.

⁴⁹ Suetonius, *Caesar*, 25.

political careers simultaneously demanded the highest caliber of leadership, and Caesar provided it. In only a decade, he conquered vast territory and turned Gaul into a truly Roman region. His achievements required his intellect, rhetoric, confidence, and tactical ability, which he employed to their fullest. His success was so great, that in 49 B.C. his enemies chose civil war over allowing him to run consul.⁵⁰ Here too, they could not restrain Caesar.

⁵⁰ Syme, 47.

Conclusion

Caesar's Victory and Subsequent Failure

By the end of 50 B.C., Rome sat on the brink of civil war. Cato and his allies continually worked to force Caesar to disband his armies, planning to prosecute him before he could run for consul (consuls were ineligible for prosecution until their terms ended). Marcus Claudius Marcellus, a consul of that year, proposed that Caesar relinquish his command in Gaul, that his opportunity to run for consul *in absentia* be cancelled, and that one of Caesar's colonies have its citizenship revoked. The general refused to allow this, as it meant his political demise. According to Suetonius, Caesar said. "Now that I am the leading Roman of my day, it will be harder to put me down a peg than degrade me to the ranks."¹ Seeking to avert war, one of Caesar's tribunes, Gaius Scribonius Curio, vetoed this bill. He requested that both Caesar and Pompey relinquish their armies simultaneously to maintain peace. The Senate voted overwhelmingly for this measure, which ostensibly prevented civil war, since neither side would feel threatened by force.² Pompey would leave for his proconsulship in Spain, and Caesar would use his agents in Pompey's absence to secure election to the consulship of 48 B.C. After conquering all of Gaul on behalf of Rome, he deserved this opportunity. But Cato and his followers feared this more than anything and refused to negotiate.³ In expectation of war, the two vehement *optimates* consuls of that year, along with the

¹ Suetonius, *Caesar*, 29.

² Appian, *Civil Wars*, II, 30-1.

³ Gelzer, 189.

consuls-elect for 49 B.C., ignored the Senate's advice and charged Pompey to protect Rome with two legions, while recruiting more forces in Italy. This mobilization, at the bequest of a minority of Senators, was all but an act of war.

Marcus Antonius (Marc Antony) and Quintus Cassius Longinus, tribunes-elect for the next year, promised to act on Caesar's behalf following Curio's term. They too, attempted to prevent war and protect Caesar from his enemies. On January 1, 49 B.C., the Senate decreed that Caesar must relinquish his command and dismiss his armies by a specific date, leaving him open to prosecution before the consular elections. His newly empowered tribunes vetoed this decree, which led to further debate in the Senate. Cicero attempted to negotiate a peaceful solution to the situation by reducing Caesar's command to only Illyricum and one legion, but Cato would not accept this. On January 7, he and his allies convinced the Senate to invoke a *senatus consultum ultimum*, (a power reserved for state emergencies), which allowed the decree of January 1 to pass regardless of tribunician veto. With their power overridden, Antony and Cassius fled Rome and joined Caesar.⁴

These hostile actions left Caesar little choice. After a decade expanding the territory and glory of Rome, a few members of its elite intended to ruin him. The measures taken by the Senate insulted Caesar's *dignitas*, or dignity; a combination of rank, prestige, and honor.⁵ This concept, similar to the chivalric ideal of honor, was of the utmost importance to the Romans. As Caesar puts it, "dignity has always been of prime importance to me, even outweighing life itself."⁶ A man of Caesar's status could

⁴ Syme, 43.

⁵ Syme, 48.

⁶ Julius Caesar, *The Civil War*, I, 9.

never allow such effrontery. The oligarchy ignored his offers to maintain peace, and he did not fear war. With his battle-tested legions, Caesar prepared to fight.

On the night of January 10, 49 B.C., Julius Caesar led a single legion across the River Rubicon and into Italy. He quickly advanced towards Rome, taking strategic cities along the way. With news of Caesar's fast approach, Pompey fled the capital to Capua and then Brundisium. Caesar attacked him in the port city, but Pompey successfully fought off his attacks and made his way across the Adriatic to Dyrrachium.⁷ In the process of this rapid campaign, Caesar captured several *optimates* Senators and equestrians. Marius and Sulla had confiscated their enemies' properties, imprisoned and even killed them. But Caesar saw the opportunity to win admiration through clemency. Therefore, he freed his enemies with their property intact and absorbed their soldiers into his army. His leniency, which he even used towards his great enemy Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, evinced his morality and improved his image immensely.⁸ Although Caesar continually tried to negotiate a peaceful solution throughout his conquest of Italy, the stubborn oligarchy and Pompey refused his offers. So Caesar sent his subordinates to administer Rome, and prepared for full-scale war.

The Civil War marks a very complicated period in Caesar's career. His enemies controlled the East, Spain, and Africa. Caesar held only Italy and Gaul. The Roman populace, for the most part, remained neutral in the war and waited to see the outcome.⁹ After all, this war was between Pompey and Caesar, with their soldiers and factions. Invading forces posed no threat, so choosing a side could only bring retribution if they chose poorly. The *optimates* had hoped that the citizens would side with them, and give

⁷ Appian, *Civil War*, II, 36-40.

⁸ Gelzer, 201-2.

⁹ Meier 359.

Caesar no hope. To their dismay, as Syme puts it, “Italy was apathetic to the war-cry of the Republic in danger, skeptical about its champions.”¹⁰ The common people had nothing in particular to gain from either faction; both were corrupt in some sense. They needed only to await a victor, and then hope for a return to normal life.

The Civil War pitted Roman soldiers against one another; making their loyalty dubious. But by reminding them of his victories in Gaul, promising property and money, and recalling the oath they swore to him at the beginning of military service, Caesar kept his armies together for roughly five years.¹¹ They mutinied at least once, in 47 B.C.; but Caesar utilized his rhetoric to end the near revolt. According to the ancient sources, when they demanded pay, he addressed them as “citizens” instead of soldiers, which shamed them into repentance. Modern scholars believe, however, that he may have in fact raised money to pay them and win them back.¹² Regardless, he quelled the mutiny and utilized those forces in Africa. He enlisted defeated troops into his ranks as well, and generally exercised clemency towards enemy soldiers and Senators alike. After all, vengeance inspired hatred in his opponents, but Caesar sought victory and peace. Mercy could endear men to him. In these ways, Caesar maintained his armies and attempted to win support for his cause.

Militarily, the five year Civil War was hectic at best. I have highlighted the major events below. In the war Caesar fought in the Greece, Spain, Asia Minor, and Africa, against formidable armies, and dealt with uprisings and administrative problems simultaneously. Pompey might have crushed him at Dyrrachium in 47 B.C., had he

¹⁰ Syme, 49.

¹¹ Cuff, 35.

¹² Stefan G. Chrissanthos, “Caesar and the Mutiny of 47 B.C.,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 91, (2001): 72-3.

followed up his victory. But he failed to pursue Caesar's retreating forces. Appian claims that Caesar remarked after the battle, "Today my enemies would have finished the war if they had a commander who knew how to win a victory."¹³ Following his near destruction there, a highly outnumbered Caesarian army defeated Pompey at Pharsalus a month later. Pompey then fled to Egypt, where a Roman soldier murdered him. Even with their champion and others, including Ahenobarbus, dead, Cato and his remaining allies held out. Caesar defeated the majority of them at Thapsus, North Africa, in a brilliant victory in 46 B.C. Cato committed suicide soon after. This battle marked the real end of the war, and most of his opposition was killed in combat or the aftermath. With Cato's death, as Dickinson remarks, it was, "the end of the republic."¹⁴

Some *optimates*, however, managed to escape to Spain following Thapsus, among them Pompey's sons. Caesar returned to Rome after Thapsus to celebrate his victories, but was forced to deal with this last group of Pompeians the next year. He was nearly overcome at Munda in Spain, in 45 B.C, against his former lieutenant Labienus. Here, Cuff asserts he should have been defeated, but was saved by poor decisions on his opponent's part.¹⁵ Caesar defeated and killed Labienus in battle, and soon after Pompey's eldest son was caught and executed. Caesar then returned to Rome with his *dignitas* intact and his power unopposed. His Civil War ended that year.

Caesar held Rome throughout the Civil War and so ran the government, regardless of its legitimacy. He was elected Dictator in 49 B.C., but resigned the post and took up the consulship the next year. He held this position four times between 48 and 44 B.C. He was named dictator for a year again in 47 B.C.; for ten years in 46 B.C., and

¹³ Appian, *Civil Wars*, 62.

¹⁴ Dickinson, 239.

¹⁵ Cuff, 31.

dictator perpetuus soon after Munda. On top of these positions, he was granted many honors. He celebrated a total of five triumphs, over Gaul, Africa, Alexandria, Pontus, and Spain. The Senate also attached the titles *imperator* and “the liberator” to his name.¹⁶ The city erected statues in his honor, often placed in temples or next to Roman heroes and ancient kings. The Senate even placed his statue in the Temple of Quirinus, with an inscription saying, “To the undefeated god.”¹⁷ The Romans had already begun deifying him. Caesar controlled Rome, and the city celebrated his glory in excess. As Meier puts it, “his achievements seemed to transcend everything known to Roman experience – or indeed human experience generally.”¹⁸ His honors reflected this reality, whether he desired them or not. This extravagant praise, which for the most part he accepted, eventually aroused severe jealousy from the old Pompeians and discontent in general.

Unlike Cinna, Marius, and Sulla, Caesar welcomed his enemies back to Rome following the Civil War. He returned to them their property and even enlisted them in his administration. For example, he made Marcus Junius Brutus, the nephew of his bitterest enemy Cato, urban praetor and promised him the consulship for 41 B.C.¹⁹ Caesar used his clemency to try and win his old opponents to his side. Herein lies his major mistake. Because Caesar took power through war, instead of through normal political means, he could not restore the members of the old regime and maintain autocratic power. This is not to say he needed to execute or even exile them, only cripple their political capacity. Although he wisely increased the Senate’s membership to nine hundred and installed

¹⁶ Gelzer, 307.

¹⁷ Meier, 459.

¹⁸ Meier, 432-3.

¹⁹ Gelzer, 304.

many people loyal to him, the remnants of the oligarchy and its inheritors returned to power as well. The old nobility retained their wealth and demanded recognition of their prestige. Vying for primacy in Rome was their right. Caesar's new Senators lacked the clout of the establishment and its new champions.

The old aristocracy refused to accept the paradigm shift that occurred when Caesar consolidated the power of the Roman state into his hands. He did not defer to them for decisions in most cases, and generally failed to respect their traditional position. Consequently, the *nobiles* felt incapacitated. Caesar's assassins claimed he planned to become king, and that they had liberated the Republic from a tyrant. In reality, they acted in their own interests- not the state's as they so pompously asserted. With Caesar in power their prestige lay in his shadow, severely hampering their political potential.²⁰ Their futures demanded his removal.

Through his victory Caesar had transformed the Roman state, and this transformation necessitated alterations to the governmental institutions. Despite his keen intellect, Caesar could find no solution to the problems of the Republic. His situation parallels Mikhail Gorbachev's in 1990: he wanted to maintain the old system and repair its problems. In reality, of course, this was impossible; the institution was defunct. One of his friends, Gaius Matius, remarked, "If he, with his genius, could find no solution, who is to find one now?"²¹ He was unprepared to overhaul the system, which was necessary, and decided to procrastinate taking action by setting off on campaign against Parthia. He would entrust the state to his loyal subordinates like Balbus, Aulus Hirtius.

²⁰ Syme, 59.

²¹ Gaius Matius, quoted in Meier, 470.

and Antony, with help from reconciled Pompeians.²² Those Pompeians, however, already conspired against him.

The other major problem that faced Caesar was his lack of open opposition. His leadership style, like many others', thrived on a clear and conquerable enemy.²³ The fight drove him to succeed. In the wake of the Civil War, he faced only a broken government and demands from the people. Admittedly, he administered Rome fairly well; passing measures to repopulate the city, planning veterans' colonies, controlling grain distribution, curbing corruption, and even trying to simplify the law code.²⁴ He planned temples, a library, and expanded Rome's boundaries, to the benefit of the people as well as his image. But these problems offered him nothing to defeat, while an expedition to avenge Crassus in Asia did. Casca and the others prevented that undertaking.

Julius Caesar fell dead on March 15, 44 B.C., stabbed twenty-three times.²⁵ In less than sixty years he rose from relative obscurity to the highest position in Rome: king, *de facto*, though he refused the title. He had achieved his ambition, and became the first man in Rome. His intellect, rhetoric, and skill as an administrator and general made this possible. He proved himself the consummate leader of his day. Gelzer calls him, "a master of politics."²⁶ He was also a master of war, and used his skill in each realm to overcome his adversaries. Caesar did not see the men who killed him as enemies, but they were. Failure to adapt to the new political reality, which his murderers could not accept, was his shortcoming. After his death his image became even greater

²² Syme, 55.

²³ Burns, 34.

²⁴ Suetonius, *Caesar*, 42-4.

²⁵ Plutarch, *Caesar*, 66.

²⁶ Gelzer, 329.

than it had been during his lifetime. Cuff writes, “Caesar won no appellation such as Felix or Magnus. He did not need one when he bequeathed his own name to the emperors”.²⁷ His name alone meant more than all the other titles given to the giants of Roman history. Caesar transformed Rome from a republic to an empire. The change was cemented by his grand-nephew and heir, Gaius Octavius, who learned from the few mistakes his benefactor made. Octavian, later named Augustus, proscribed his enemies and kept the façade of the Republic in place. Thereby, he became the first real Roman Emperor.

²⁷ Cuff, 35.

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APPENDIX

Aedile – with a minimum age of thirty-six, aediles oversaw the city's public works and buildings, as well as markets and games.

Consul – the highest point on the *cursus honorum*, men could run for the consulship at age forty-two. There were only two consuls sharing one year term. They held the greatest administrative power when inside the city of Rome, and had *imperium*, or command over the armies, outside it. Consuls spent much of their terms abroad, defeating foreign armies and founding new provinces for theirs and the glory of Rome. Election to the consulship was fiercely competitive but often lucrative, as they received bounty from their actions abroad and were offered positions as proconsuls over provinces after their terms.

Cursus Honorum – successive hierarchy of political offices in Rome. Men who entered this could potentially rise from the lowest magistracies to the highest. Officially, this path began with the position of military tribune; followed by quaestor, aedile (optional), praetor, and finally consul.

Dictator – position outside the *cursus honorum*, which was reserved for extreme circumstances like civil war or an invasion. After being appointed by the consuls and approved by the Senate and people, the dictator had absolute control over the government. He was even impervious to the tribunician power of the veto and prosecution for his actions. The office was originally only a temporary one, to be abandoned after the emergency had been resolved.

Patrician – originally the higher class of Roman citizens, who reserved certain rights for themselves to keep their families in power. By Caesar's time the only real distinction between them and the plebians was that patricians could hold all offices two years earlier, but could not run for the popular tribuneship.

Plebian – originally the lower class of Romans, who had not been able to hold political office. Eventually, their rights were expanded. Over time powerful plebian families rose to high prominence in Roman politics, so that by Caesar’s time this distinction was basically insignificant. They were eligible for the position of popular tribune.

Popular Assembly – official legislative body of Rome, consisting of all citizens. It was divided into centuries and arranged by class, and held the power to elect magistrates and pass laws.

Popular Tribunes – the ten tribunes of the plebeians, who were elected annually from the plebian assembly. The position existed outside the *cursus honorum*, and only plebians could be elected. These men had the power to veto laws and actions as they chose, and were charged to protect common citizens from abuse. Their offices were sacrosanct so it was highly illegal to harm them.

Praetor – at the age of thirty-nine men could run for the praetorship. Praetors were the most important magistrates held within the city, both overseeing the running of the city and acting as judges. When the consuls were outside the city praetors were the most powerful men in the Rome and could command armies.

Pronconsul – basically a governorship, awarded to consuls after their terms. Provincial governors could become extremely wealthy through their endeavors.

Propraetor – position given to praetors following their terms, in which they served under a proconsul over a certain region of a province.

Quaestors – oversaw the treasury and public fund dispersals, men could run for this position at the age of thirty.

Senate - body of about four hundred men at the time of Caesar, which had over time come to dominate Roman politics. Men holding the office of quaestor were enrolled in

the Senate: it was not an inherited position. The Senate claimed *auctoritas*, or authority, and held a monopoly on what came before the assembly, excepting that tribunes could also bring matters before them.