

**Classical Review**

**Journal & Vol/Article reference:**

**Total number of pages (article pages only):**

**Date:**

This proof has been sent to you on behalf of Cambridge University Press. Please review this page and the proofs carefully, mark any corrections as necessary and answer all queries as listed on the 'Queries' page. Please note that this pdf is for proof checking purposes only. It should not be distributed to third parties and may not represent the final published version.

**IMPORTANT:** Please return the marked PDF proof within **three** working days of receipt to:

**[classicalreview@classicalassociation.org](mailto:classicalreview@classicalassociation.org)**

**Authors are strongly advised to read these proofs thoroughly as any errors missed may appear in the final published paper. This will be your ONLY chance to correct your proof. Once published, either online or in print, no further changes can be made.**

Instructions for supplying corrections:

Please ensure that you review the PDF document carefully and answer all author queries included on the following page. All corrections/notes must be electronically marked directly on the pdf proofs and be clear and succinct. Emails are not passed on with the PDF. Please do not provide lists, dialogue and long explanations. Do not attempt to edit the body of the text within the pdf in any way.

If you have no corrections to make, then please contact the email address as shown in the orange box above. Please ensure that you quote the Journal & Vol/Article reference (shown at the top of the page) and your full name.

Instructions for marking up electronically:

All proofs are enabled to allow electronic annotation using the 'Tools' function in the free Adobe Reader software. Full descriptions of the Adobe Reader tools are available at:

<https://helpx.adobe.com/uk/acrobat/using/commenting-pdfs.html>

Please do not use the 'Sticky note' function, as its placement is not precise enough. Please do not emphasise your marks in any way, 'Show comments' allows all marks to be clearly seen. Please return the file as an attachment via email to the address listed in the orange box above.

If you have any questions or difficulty, please contact the CUP Content Manager at: [caproduction@cambridge.org](mailto:caproduction@cambridge.org)

**NOTES**

This proof is sent to you for correction of **typographical errors only**. Revision of the substance of the text is not permitted.

- Only one set of corrections is permitted.
- Corrections which do NOT follow journal style will not be accepted.
- A new copy of a figure must be provided if correction of anything other than a typographical error introduced by the typesetter is required.
- An answer must be provided for each author query shown on the proof.

# Author Queries

*Journal:* The Classical Review

*Manuscript:* S0009840X23001245jbr

- Q1** The distinction between surnames can be ambiguous, therefore to ensure accurate tagging for indexing purposes online (e.g. for PubMed entries), please check that the highlighted surnames have been correctly identified, that all names are in the correct order and spelt correctly.

## ROME AND MILITARY STRATEGY

LACEY (J.) *Rome. Strategy of Empire*. Pp. xiv + 430, ills, maps.  
New York: Oxford University Press, 2022. Cased, £26.99, US\$34.95.  
ISBN: 978-0-19-093770-6.  
doi:10.1017/S0009840X23001245

In the prologue to a recently published book (A.J. Echevarria, *Military Strategy: A Very Short Introduction* [2017]), Echevarria states that ‘no military strategy can guarantee victory, but an inappropriate one all but ensures failure’. L.’s new book on Rome’s strategy of empire draws from this concise premise. As a professional strategic analyst (Marine Corps War College) and a former US military officer with an interest in history – from ancient to modern –, he is a suitable author for addressing military strategy in a historical context. Without claiming to have resolved debates that have been raging among Roman scholars since Edward Gibbon, this book takes a different approach to the general understanding of how the Roman empire was able to sustain itself for centuries before ultimately falling to pieces. Despite not being a Roman historian, L. poses the right sort of questions about military strategy in relation to the historical narrative and evidence of the Roman imperial period, thus begging the question of whether – as an analytical tool – it has been properly addressed by modern scholarship dealing with the ancient world.

For instance, L. contends (pp. 92, 120, 146) that the best-known modern work on this topic (E. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* [1976]) fails to address several relevant issues pertaining to military strategy that any modern analyst should always bear in mind. In his opinion, any empire out to cement its position in the long run – and the Roman empire was definitely no exception – needed, and still needs, to resolve three fundamental strategic issues: firstly, the building of a sustainable, integrated economy, including the production and mobility of goods through trade networks and communication infrastructures; secondly, the creation of an army stronger and better equipped, through reliable supply chains, than those of its potential enemies; finally, the stimulation of population growth so as to guarantee a steady supply of manpower for an army large enough for defensive purposes. In sum, for L. military strategy does a better job of explaining the longevity of the Roman Empire as a political and military structure, as well as its eventual decline and fall when some or perhaps all three of the aforementioned strategic issues were no longer tenable (p. 219), than more conventional historical narratives.

In order to achieve this rather ambitious goal, the book is divided into two main sections, one arranged thematically and the other chronologically. The first section comprises Part 1, ‘Themes and Topics’ (Chapters 1–7). Although there is no evidence that strategic thinking was theorised in imperial Rome, L. is of the mind that military strategy was perhaps unconsciously addressed when facing the challenges posed by the defence of its empire. Rome’s use of established routes for moving its armies, its knowledge of geography when planning the defence of its frontiers with static forces (pp. 24 and 57), its use of naval power – even on the navigable rivers of Central Europe – for transporting military supplies to the Empire’s most far-flung outposts and the need to underpin its financial stability through imperial taxation in order to keep the entire system fully operational are just some of the relevant topics relating to the implementation of efficient strategies presented and discussed in this thematic section. The second section, which focuses on offering a more conventional chronological history of the strategies adopted during the imperial period, comprises Part 2 (Chapters 8–13)

devoted to the early empire until the ‘third-century crisis’ and Part 3 (Chapters 14–19) dealing with the late empire until the collapse of the West.

The volume has the merit of prompting us to come up with new arguments for addressing old debates. For instance, a strategic analysis such as L.’s clearly shows that, barring a few exceptions, regular taxation hardly contributed to developing any sort of ‘imperial strategy’ in pre-Augustan Rome (pp. 44 and 157). The obvious reason behind the predominance of mere depredatory policies has to do with the continuous state of war in which the Roman Republic was embroiled for centuries. Instead, imperial Rome financed its basically defensive military strategy through regular taxation (p. 132), since both internal peace and the reduction of external conflicts allowed both the local and imperial administrations to collect taxes rather efficiently, at least for some time.

That said, it is somewhat surprising that L.’s analysis does not take into account – not even in the index – the substantial contribution of slavery to the Roman economy or even the continuous efforts made by entrepreneurs and traders to supply markets across the empire with slaves when the theatres of war were increasingly more distant. Additionally, L. cites (p. 139 and n. 39) a well-known paper on new measurements of lead pollution in ice cores from Greenland (J.R. McConnell et al., *PNAS* 115 [2018]) to support his argument in favour of rapid growth of the Roman economy in the Augustan Age and throughout the Principate, which contrasts with the lower levels recorded during the crisis of the Republic. However, further research (D. Pavlyshyn, I. Johnstone and R. Saller, ‘Lead Pollution and the Roman Economy’, *JRA* 33 [2020]; N. Silva-Sánchez and X.-L. Armada, ‘Environmental Impact of Roman Mining and Metallurgy and its Correlation with the Archaeological Evidence: a European Perspective’, *Environmental Archaeology* [2023]) has strongly suggested that such measurements should be viewed with greater caution. For instance, this research (including the 2018 paper on the Roman imperial period) has revealed that the mining industry in areas like the Hispanic provinces and even the long period of uninterrupted warfare during the last 150 years of the Roman Republic produced similar levels of lead pollution in Greenland ice.

Overall, L.’s book not only makes a refreshing contribution to the conceptualisation of strategy in historical terms, but also underscores the real importance of military strategy when enquiring into the evolution and eventual collapse of long-standing imperial structures such as those of the Roman Empire.

*Catalan Institution for Research and Advanced  
Studies (ICREA) / Universitat de Girona*

TONI ÑACO DEL HOYO Q1  
[toni.naco@icrea.cat](mailto:toni.naco@icrea.cat)