Honor and The Performance of Roman State Identity

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Are the personal identities of elite decision makers a domestic source of state identity? This article explores this question and reveals how state identity was produced in the Roman world system during the early Principate.[1] The argument advanced proposes the Roman world was ensconced by a metavalue of *honor* that significantly shaped the personal identities of Rome's aristocratic decision-making classes. Competition for honor subsumed aristocratic life and shaped not only the personal identities of the elite, but also the persona of the Roman state. The Romans extrapolated their psychological framework, in which the stratification of domestic society rested on personal identities of honor, to their outlook on foreign policy. Akin to their domestic lives, those executing foreign policy conceptualized Rome as engaged in a status competition for honor with the polities existing its world system. Preserving and enhancing one's honor relative to others was fundamental in domestic life, and this was also the state's primary objective in relation to all others. The identity of the Roman state, therefore, was an aggressive status seeker.

A survey of historical world systems reveals a variety of cultural and institutional environments. The way historically situated actors conceptualize the nature of international relations often depends upon these contexts, as is the content of legitimate foreign policy. Reus-Smit (1997, 1999) argues that historical world systems are embedded in *constitutional structures*. These are normative complexes comprising metavalues that provide foundations for the fundamental institutions operating in differing world systems. For instance, those undergirding multilateralism in the modern era and the system of dispute arbitration among the ancient Greek city-state system. This article builds on Reus-Smit's basic insight that cultural environments shape institutional type. However, instead of fundamental institutions, the focus here explores how cultural environments influence personal and subsequently state identity.

Constructivists have advanced the field of International Relations (IR) regarding the sources and dynamics of state identity. State identity is fundamental because it indicates how we should expect states to act and makes intelligible the types of policies they pursue. Constructivists locate the sources of state identity in many places, including national discourses, international norms and practices, and the collective notions of *Self* shared among states. However, constructivists

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have yet to explore the terrain of *personal identity* as a domestic source thereof. This paper investigates how the metavalues constituting a system's cultural environment shape the personal identities of decision makers. I argue that this interaction serves as a significant source of state identity.

The argument emerges inductively in response to puzzles regarding Roman foreign policy during the Principate years that current theory proves inadequate. Shedding light upon these demands analyzing how the culture of honor affected the personal identities of Rome's leaders. The argument advanced suggests the ancient Mediterranean conception of honor was a domineering social force impinging upon states and individuals. The ramifications of this force for the personal identities of Rome's decision-making class was extreme. For the Romans, personal identity was characterized by the degree of honor the community of relevant actors allocated to individuals; and among the aristocracy honor was a zero-sum game. Accordingly, competition for honor subsumed aristocratic life to the point of significantly shaping both the personal identities of the elite decision-making classes *and* the persona of the Roman state. In fact, competition for honor among the elite was significant to the point of shaping the Roman psyche regarding the *nature* of international relations.

Akin to their domestic lives, the Romans executing foreign policy conceptualized that they were engaged in a status competition for honor between the Empire and the polities existing in the Roman world system. The Romans extrapolated their psychological framework, in which the stratification of domestic society rested on personal identities of honor, to their outlook on foreign policy. Preserving and enhancing one's honor relative to others was fundamental in domestic life, and this was also the primary objective of the Roman state in relation to all others. Therefore, the most paramount foreign policy interest for the Romans was to sustain and augment the image of the Empire's honor (simultaneously enhancing personal honor as well). Historical data derived from literary sources and artifactual evidence support the claim that the identity of the Roman state was an aggressive status seeker. Imperial foreign policy was obsessively reactive to perceived insults to the Empire's superior standing, and unleashed unfathomable violence to defend its image. To illustrate how honor affects personal identity, and subsequently state identity, three Roman foreign policy practices are explored. These include *the humiliation of captured enemy soldiers*; *the propensity of wars to avenge slights*; and *the conquest of new territories with little regard to financial or strategic significance.*

The article unfolds in the following way: First is a treatment of the constructivist literature on state identity. I then build on existing Roman cultural history to argue that honor played a forceful role in the production of personal identity among the decision-making elite. The connection between honor and personal identity set up the main argument explicated in the following section—that the Roman psyche extrapolated the competition for honor in domestic life to the arena of foreign policy. Indeed, the domestic competition for honor shaped the Roman conceptualization of the purpose and nature of international relations. The last sections provide empirical evidence regarding the impact of honor on both personal identity and the identity of the Empire.

Constructivism, Identity, and the Expansion Debate

Constructivists have a lot to say about identity. Indeed, a fundamental constructivist claim is that identity makes political behavior intelligible. Primarily, constructivists have examined the identities of states and the social processes that construct and differentiate them. The multitude of approaches that have been advanced to study identity reflects diverse theoretical and methodological proclivities. However, while there is little disagreement that identity influences actor

behavior, it is difficult to find coherence regarding much else. Ashizawa (2008) rightly contends that the state of identity studies in constructivism is, ''untidy'' (p. 573).[2] Other critics charge that while the literature is vast, identity persists poorly defined (Abdelal, Herrera, Iain Johnston, and McDermott 2006), or that it is not useful analytically (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). However, despite the *untidiness* of the concept in the literature, most agree that identity holds explanatory value when attempting to understand state behavior. Therefore, it is nonetheless an important concept deserving the surge of interest received since the constructivist turn in the early 1990s.

Early scholars advanced that identity is fundamental to constructivism (Jepperson and Katzenstein 1996; Wendt 1999). A state's identity reveals what it values and the kind of policies we should expect it to pursue. Wendt's focus on systemic theorizing treats it as an outcome of international interactions, and *brackets* other foundations of state identity, such as domestic sources (Richard and Reus-Smit 1998). Departing from Wendt, constructivists have problematized a host of sources claimed to shape state identity, including norms (Finnemore 1996; Checkel 1999; Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999; Varadararajan 2004), institutions (Finnemore and Barnett 2004), and national identity (Bloom 1993; Hopf 2002; Callahan 2006). Nau (2002), who treats state identity as largely unchanging and static, nonetheless incorporates norms, culture, and domestic politics as integral to identity. Banchoff (1999) posits that evidence of state identity is, ''gleaned from many sources'' (p. 268). These sources include legal norms that govern a state's foreign policies, public opinion, and media images. In particular, the public discourse of political elites reinforces salient norms and narrates collective history. Political discourse also aligns with constructivism's emphasis on intersubjective meaning. As discourses operate to produce conceptions of a state *Self*, nonthreatening allies (that are also to some degree apart of the Self), and potentially dangerous *Others*. Constructivism, therefore, is largely concerned with the processes involved in generating boundaries between Self and Other (Campbell 1992; Steele 2005), including the discursive, symbolic, and physical constructions of the state (Zehfuss 2001). However, not all constructivists focus upon the processes involved in producing a dichotomous Self and Other. For instance, Towns (2002) explores gender equality in Sweden as a state identity having little to do with constructing Others as enemies or as dangerous. Callahan (2006) examines the effects of Humiliation Days in the United Kingdom and the United States to show how critiques of the Self can generate new identity spaces whereby criticism and resistance may manifest. Constructivists have also utilized identity to reintroduce the concept of *security communities* back into the discipline (Deutsch et al. 1957; Adler and Barnett 1998).

Constructivists often differ in how they explain the process through which identity manifests as foreign policy. Barnett (1999) utilizes a ''trinity'' of analytical concepts to show how Israel arrived in a political space whereby acceptance of the Oslo Accords was a legitimate policy option in accordance with its identity. Others provide empirics demonstrating how identity leads to the interests states subsequently act upon (Brysk, Parsons, and Sanholtz 2002). Ashizawa (2008) develops an analytical framework suggesting policymakers perceive a concept of the identity of their state. From this, they develop *pro-attitudes* toward certain kinds of foreign policy behaviors.

As demonstrated above, constructivists have offered a wide range of answers to questions regarding the origins and substance of state identity. However, while the production of state identity derives from the behavior and beliefs among groups of individual *human* actors, constructivists have largely ignored questions regarding personal identity. To rectify these lacunae, this article interrogates the

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[2] For an excellent overview of constructivist approaches to identity, see Ashizawa (2008).

connections between normative structures, personal identity, and state identity. The theoretical question posed asks, do the personal identities of decision makers participate in producing state identity? The argument advanced is that the metavalues ensconcing societies have a strong affect on personal identity, and the dynamics of personal identity among a decision making elite contributes to the production of state identity. The purpose here is *not* to provide an exhaustive account of the role of personal identity in international politics. Rather, the aim is to introduce a determinant of state identity yet investigated.

The traditional constructivist terrain of discourses, narratives and norms are certainly necessary to understand state identity. However, when examining Roman state behavior, these factors fail to capture the full extent of the processes that made certain foreign policy practices *possible*. For instance, discourse provides insight into the normative context of Roman society and state. And scholars can use this normative framework to shed light on the Roman practices described in the empirical sections. However, evidence derived from textual and artifactual sources, and the cultural norms they illuminate, only partially answer questions regarding the extreme nature to which these policies were actualized, and the reverence and ritualization they held in Roman life. Instead, to make greater sense of these foreign policy behaviors requires examining how the culture of honor affected conceptions of the *individual Self*,[3] especially how this shaped a preoccupation with one's standing among others and legacy after death. This is because for Rome's aristocratic class, honor *defined* an individual's personal identity. By bringing the dynamics of personal identity into the analysis, we observe with greater clarity the extent to which the values of honor affected Rome's elite decision makers, and how the interaction of personal identities among this class shaped the identity of the Empire, making intelligible the foreign policies described.

To be clear, this article does not develop a theory of personal identity for IR. Nor does it claim to explicate the cognitive processes whereby personal identity manifests. Instead, it builds upon the conception of personal identity in the ancient Mediterranean world explicated by Lebow (2008) and others. We know from historical sources that personal identity in the ancient Mediterranean world entailed something much different than how it is contemporaneously understood. In the modern era, we emphasize the individual nature of our identities, differentiating between how we feel about ourselves and how others feel about us. However, to the ancient Greeks and Romans, these two perceptions of self were synonymous. Personal identity comprised the collection of social roles an individual possessed and was contingent upon how the community of relevant actors thought about that person. ''People did not lack a concept of self, but that self was relationally defined and has been described as the sum of their socially assigned roles'' (Lebow 2008:63). Though applied to states, the constructivist literature also treats identity as a relational social concept (Barnett 1999). Thus, it is utilized here as an analytical tool providing a richer explanation of the origins and sources of Roman state identity, which constructivism suggests is the locus of foreign policy behavior. Accordingly, personal identity in this article refers to the conception of self relationally produced among individuals of a requisite social and economic class in Ancient Roman society. It also entails the agency of individual actors to determine how the community assesses their identity, and subsequently calculates behavior in relation to this assessment.

The focus on honor and personal identity also weighs in the debate among Roman historians regarding the empire's expansion throughout the period of

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[3] Though temping, I hesitate to use the term *ego* as the characterization in which Freud deployed it is unlike the manner in which personal identity was conceptualized in the ancient Mediterranean world. However, reference that the term *ego* makes to the notion of one's subjective self is similar.

the Republic (approximately the sixth through first centuries B.C.). This, in turn, has important ramifications for conceptualizing the identity of the Roman Empire. Certain historians argue forcefully that the Romans only made war for ad hoc defensive purposes (Eckstein 1987; Mommsen 2010). Thus, whatever territorial gains the Romans acquired served to buttress the Empire's defenses. This suggests the identity of the Roman state was passive, concerned primarily with retaining the status quo and devoid of the drive to conquer and expand its dominion. Conversely, another school of thought argues that war was a paramount value within Roman culture (Harris 1985; Mattern 1999). It was the vehicle through which young aristocratic men obtained the prize of fame and honor, a requisite for securing important offices in the Roman state. This entails a much different conceptualization of Roman state identity—that of an aggressive polity engaging in war making not for security and defensive concerns; but rather for the prize of fame and status.

Historian Arthur M. Eckstein dismisses that the Romans had an aggressive disposition to subjugate others to their rule. In his study *Senate and General* (1987), he argues that Rome's expansion was nothing unique, as other ancient states were compelled, from time to time, to expand in order to ensure security. Downplaying the role of cultural aggressiveness he says,

> the Romans wanted Rome to be strong rather than weak, and, in general, ''big'' rather than ''little.'' One aspect of this preference was a desire to surround themselves with as large a system of friendly or subordinate states as possible, and the Romans soon came to identify their own self interest with the maintenance (and occasionally the expansion) of that system. (1987, p. xiv)

Citing a lack of historical evidence suggesting otherwise, Eckstein (1987) downplays the idea that the Romans pursued world domination. Building on his thesis, his later work analyzes Roman expansion through the defensive variant of structural realism (2006). In this analysis, Roman foreign policy was a response to the pressures of an anarchical multipolar system. Anarchy, Eckstein claims, impelled all the actors in the system to engage in defensive wars to maintain borders and resources. Thus, Roman expansion occurred only to create stronger buffer zones.

Eckstein's analysis is problematic whether the Romans lacked a schematic for universal domination, or were simply unable to conceptualize foreign policy in this way, ignores what is evident. Namely, the Romans exhibited an enduring desire to exert control over foreign polities and expand their domination. This manifested itself in how Rome waged war, treated enemies, and revered acts and individuals expanding the Empire's rule. Also, structural realism's exclusion of cultural variables renders particular episodes of Roman expansion anomalous. The conquest of Britain and the Trajan's war against Dacia, both examined at the end of this paper, fail to be explained by structural realism. Instead of systemic causes, these instances of expansion and war were driven by cultural forces.

Instead, the evidence presented here regarding the importance of honor to the personal identities of Rome's aristocrats supports a different argument for its expansion. This argument claims that the Roman state consistently exhibited a drive to expand the empire. As Harris (1985) says, ''the rulers of the Roman state wished to increase the empire, and this was one of the overriding and persistent aims of their external policy'' (105). Indeed, the Romans made ritual warfare against neighboring states every spring. Behind this drive for expansion was a desire to increase the power and strength of the state, coupled with a broad, overarching aspiration for universal dominion. Without question, the Romans wanted to rule the world. Harris, relying on Polybius' account of the Punic wars, asserts, ''In any case it is clear that … desire for world conquest was the supreme

aim of Rome's external policy'' (108–109). He continues by weighing Polybius' assessment of why the Romans decided to make war on Carthage in 264 B.C., claiming that security considerations played only a marginal role. Instead, the overall decision rested upon ''the collective and individual benefits'' (113) accrued from success in battle.

Harris's argument is buttressed when considering the domineering role of honor as a metavalue in domestic life. As discussed below, the recognition among aristocrats of an individual's honor ordered the stratification of Roman society. Those deemed the most honorable concurrently held the highest and most powerful positions within the Roman state. However, the attainment of honor fundamentally depended upon recognition of sacrificing oneself in the name of Rome. Especially during the years of the early and middle Republic, this occurred through courageous acts in battle. For aristocrats, therefore, war was the vehicle through which young men gained recognition of their honor. The social force of Rome's honor culture was so strong that young men were conditioned at a very early age to take seriously the rewards produced through recognition. In fact, young aristocrats seemed more interested in learning the arts of soldiering, and eager to engage in battle, than socializing with women and friends. War and territorial expansion were the means by which Roman aristocrats satisfied the social pressures to attain a personal identity deemed honorable, a requisite for high office and powerful positions.

Honor and the Competition of Personal Identity

To illustrate how honor had such a significant effect upon the personal identities of the Roman elite, I begin with the understanding of honor articulated in Lebow's (2008) work on *Spirit worlds* and by Roman cultural historians (Harris 1985; Van Wees 1992; Lendon 1997; Mattern 1999). Lebow's new theory of international relations locates the origins of political behavior in certain human motivations first identified by ancient Greek thinkers (2008). Derived from the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, human motives revolve around satisfying the drives of *appetite* (bodily needs) and *spirit* (self esteem). *Reason* is a third drive that humanity cultivates to tame the first two. These three motives constitute the elements of the human psyche and lay the foundation for a theory of preferences Lebow employs to explain both historic and contemporary international politics. For the purposes here, Lebow is most instructive in his explication of *spirit*. *Spirit worlds* are societies whereby honor plays a fundamental role in social hierarchy and agent behavior. In these worlds, honor is the primary element of an individual's personal identity.

Honor in the ancient Mediterranean context refers to the distinction one aristocrat bestowed to another by virtue of the latter's qualities and deeds (Van Wees 1992; Lendon 1997).[4] The Roman aristocrat and author Seneca (1968) defined honor as the ''favorable opinion of good men.'' It is the recognition by the *appropriate* members of society of an individual's attributes and behaviors. That is, it must be conferred by others through deeds deemed honorable by a requisite population. In this sense, honor societies share deeply held convictions regarding what is honorable and the legitimate means through which it is obtained (Lebow 2008). However, honor was more than the mass of public opinion. Honor was greatly reified and treated akin to a personal possession (Lendon 1997).

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[4] It is important to note that while *honor* is an important factor shaping political outcomes across varying societies and time periods, its definition is different depending on context. For instance, Tsygankow and Tarver-Wahlquist (2009) do not define what they mean by honor in their analysis of Russia-Georgia relations, as such it is difficult to determine how honor operates in their case to shape the outcomes they describe. Honor in the ancient world is also quite different than its manifestations in the southern United States during the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as other places it is found.

Challenges to a person's honor, especially by those inferior in status, often resulted in violent expressions aimed to restore any damages inflicted One's honor was more important than one's own life. Indeed, the historical record is filled with examples of individuals eagerly willing to die to obtain the glory of honor (or protect their honor), which transcends mortality.

Akin to most honor societies, Roman social structure can first be examined dichotomously between those eligible to compete for honor and those shut out (Lebow 2008). In Roman society, those eligible to compete consisted exclusively of the aristocracy. Foremost, the extent of an individual's honor depended upon the family to whom he[5] was a member. The more prestigious one's family, the greater the community's allocation of honor for that person. Throughout the years of the Republic, the male children of the elite were socialized to prove their honor through sacrifices to the state. This occurred fundamentally through the military campaigns Rome waged against its neighbors. Acts of courage in battle, so long as recognized by other members of the aristocracy, bequeathed honor and status. This was a requisite for pursuing high office within the Roman state (Harris 1985). Young Roman soldiers of the elite, therefore, competed for recognition of bravery. As Sallust informs us, '' … there was intense competition among them for glory: each one of them hastened to strike down an enemy, to climb the rampart, and to be seen doing such a deed'' (Earl 1961:15). Wealth was the second criterion, so long as it was obtained in a socially acceptable manner (the inheritance of landed estates was the most respectable form of wealth). The third criterion involved one's legal status. Hierarchically, members of the Senatorial and Equestrian classes inherently possessed a greater degree of honor than mere citizens. However, even possessing the status of *citizen* was more honorable than that of a freedman or slave (Mattern 1999).

Honor also derived from the exquisiteness and grandiosity of an aristocrat's home, including the number of slaves owned and the luxuriousness of the family's clothes. How elites carried themselves influenced their honor too (did they behave like *proper* aristocrats?). In the late years of the Republic through the Principate, other factors including education, posture, pronunciation and literary accomplishments became important. In the imperial Roman world, the penultimate of high culture was rhetoric, poetry, philosophy, and history. Achievements within these arts ensured a large deference of honor for the holder, as Rome's highest classes valued erudite pursuits (Lendon 1997). As such, most aristocrats who governed the Empire also produced works of literature (Mattern 1999). Caesar (2008), for instance, wrote seven books on his conquests of Gaul (France) in addition to the many other texts he penned describing his military exploits and thoughts on philosophy.

Honor was fundamental because it served as the primary element constituting an individual's identity. The mechanism through which persons acquired their identity was the community's recognition of their honor. The community, in a sense, produced the personal identities of individuals by acknowledging the appropriate characteristics and deeds a man undertook. This is why personal identity in the ancient world is said to be relationally constituted. The identities created by the community of relevant actors became a reified, concrete social fact. It was the most important *possession* of the holder and treated as such. Individuals had a real expectation to behave in accordance with this identity, and any attacks on its constitutive element—honor—demanded rectification. Likewise, leaders that behaved in contradiction to their identity were punished by the community. For example, since kings represented the penultimate of honor, they were concurrently expected to be the bravest in battle. Statesmen were similarly expected to behave as moral pillars in the eyes of the community. In

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[5] I use the personal pronoun *he* since the Roman decision-making elite consisted exclusively of men.

the minds of the Roman elite, positions of power reflected the degree of honor its holder possessed. If a leader defiled his personal identity, by failing to live up to the standards expected by the community, he was no longer seen as legitimate. Suicide was a common and perfectly acceptable act if one disgraced their honor, as it was a last vestige for its rescue.

The degree of honor associated with an individual's identity was the foundational concept organizing the stratification of Rome's hierarchical society. Among Rome's aristocracy, honor was a zero-sum social fact that incited intense competition. This is because honor was synonymous with the positions a man could obtain and the rights he could execute, spurring the elite to compete fiercely for recognition even at a young age. As Michael Lendon (1997) says,

> Aristocratic life often appears to us as a ceaseless, restless quest for distinction in the eyes of one's peers and of posterity. From Achilles to Alcibiates to Alexander to Scipio Africanus to Trajan … soldiers and generals made war for it, men of affairs intrigued for it, orators spoke for it, historians wrote for it, poets sang for it. (p. 35)

The consequence of this domineering social force in Roman society produced an omnipresent competition among aristocrats for recognition of possessing more honor than others, and it was the mechanism that determined the heights one could climb in the political and social strata. This competition subsumed the lives of the Roman elite and fundamentally shaped their psychological framework. As personal identity was constituted relationally by the aristocracy, predicated on relative standing, the dynamics among the elite was in fact a competition among personal identities.

Competition for Honor in Roman Foreign Policy

The significance of honor to the personal identities of the Romans was pervasive to the point of shaping their conceptualization of foreign policy. By observing Roman foreign policy behavior, we see the same obsession with honor and status. International relations for the Romans was a status competition between Rome and all others. Roman psychology effectively extrapolated the dynamic of competing for honor in domestic society to the Empire's interactions with others. In this way, the dynamics of personal identity within Roman society significantly influenced the Empire's state identity. Akin to the personal identities of its ruling class, the Empire was an aggressive status seeker.

The identity of the Roman Empire was a polity fundamentally obsessed with the image of its status. All questions of foreign policy reduced to considerations of augmenting, sustaining or recovering the perception of Rome's superior rank. Similar to domestic life, honor at the state level is a relational concept entailing greatness, superiority and even Godliness relative to others. Within the Roman context we see that even the most practical aspects of foreign relations were deeply entwined and affected by issues of rank and standing. International relations for the Romans, ''were not so much a complex geopolitical chess game as a competition for status, with much violent demonstrations of superior prowess, aggressive posturing, and terrorization of the opponent'' (Mattern 1999, Preface).

The Romans considered acts of arrogance and insults violations of the Empire's honor. To name the most prominent, these translate into instances of rebellion, attacks against the Roman army, pillaging of Roman towns, refusal to worship Roman deities and failure to show reverence to the emperor. Defeating the Roman army in battle was also a great injury to the Empire's honor. In fact, Roman generals were known to attack an enemy in revenge for battles lost fifty or even a hundred years prior. For Rome's honor to be restored, the enemy

must not only suffer defeat, but it must then demonstrate deference to the Empire. Only then could Rome's status be restored. Deference from enemies involved the defeated king worshiping before Roman military Standards and Roman Gods, as well as images of the emperor.[6] Typically, the Romans also usurped the right to crown kings among defeated populations. Deference also involved the return of any spoils of war enemies acquired in previous battles. In particular, the return of Roman military Standards and eagles were not for debate. The defeated enemy also gave the emperor hostages as a sign of good faith of its intention to refrain from future acts of disobedience, often consisting of the defeated king's own children.

It is crucial to stress that the Roman conception of international relations did not fall within our seemingly modern categories. Victory or defeat was not framed in terms of their implications for security. Rather, glory and shame framed the conflicts between Rome and foreigners. Battles were the means of accounting for the status competition between Rome and its adversaries. Among historians of the time, ''conflict is framed in terms of honor and disgrace … and while considerations of safety are important here, the conflict is not described in the modernizing language of 'buffer zones' or 'springboards for attack' but in terms of the *decus*[7] of Rome, which must be maintained at all costs'' (Mattern 1999:176). While examining Rome's progressive advance toward the east, spanning the late years of the Republic to the twilight of the Empire centuries later, C.R. Whittaker observes that, ''The wars were usually provoked by Rome, who displayed a progressive desire for annexation or control, *but no defensive intent and certainly no Grand Strategy*''[8] (2004:29). The wars Rome fought in the East, primarily against long time rival Parthia, concerned a historic struggle for status between the two empires. They were hardly reactions to real, existential threats to either's survival. Each sought to diminish the image of the other's greatness, which occurred through countless battles and conflicts aimed toward exacting deference from the opposing side. As such, Roman military behavior was much more about ad hoc responses to threats against its status than geopolitical strategy aimed toward securing borders or budgets. Mattern summarizes that,

> The Romans, in describing this struggle, do not frame their analysis mainly in ''rationalizing'' economic or geopolitical terms; these motivations alone—the desire to achieve defensible frontiers, for example, or to balance the budget through conquests or to retain the tax revenue of a rebellious province—are inadequate to explain the intensity and brutality of the Roman effort in many cases. Instead, the Romans perceived their struggle for empire in very different terms: Crucial were issues of psychology, the emotions of terror and awe that they hoped to produce in the enemy; and moral and status issues, such as the need to repress suburbia (arrogance), avenge iniuriae (insults), and maintain the honor or decus of the empire. It was on these things that, as they believed, their security depended; it was for these that they fought. (1999, p. 194)

Thus, the production of Roman state identity manifested from the competition for honor that subsumed the aristocratic classes. The metavalue of honor shaped the personal identities of the aristocracy as aggressive status seekers in a zero-sum competition for honor. Insults and attacks to an aristocrat's honor violated their

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[6] The Roman Standards are the military ensigns soldiers carried into battle. The purpose of the standards was to direct the movement and actions of the army, such as indicating when to advance and when to attack or change tactics.

[7] This word roughly translates into the English word for honor. Though, as has been suggested here, the meaning of honor is closely connected with the idea of Roman security.

[8] Emphasis added.

identity and demanded restitution. This psychological framework extrapolated to how the Romans conceptualized the nature of international relations. Accordingly, the Empire's identity also centered upon notions of honor and its foreign policies were fundamentally linked to augmenting, sustaining, and rescuing any damages inflicted by other polities.

Identity and Foreign Policy Behavior

This section provides empirics for how the metavalue of honor that shaped the personal identities of Rome's elite also influenced the identity of the Empire and made possible particular foreign policy behaviors. The three foreign policies explored here exist outside of the range of political motives legitimated in the current era of world history. Indeed, they are only intelligible through an analysis of the connection between the metavalues of honor and the conception of personal identity extant in the ancient Mediterranean world. These foreign policy behaviors include the practice of humiliating defeated enemies; the Empire's propensity to fight wars seeking to avenge perceived insults; and conquering and occupying territories and populations with no regard to whether they enhanced the financial or strategic power of the Empire.

The "Triumph" of Humiliation

The practice of Roman humiliation is best captured in the celebratory procession known as the *Triumph*. The Triumph was an ancient religiopolitical ritual dating back to the time of the Etruscan civilization (approximately 1200 B.C.—550 B.C.). The purpose was to glorify a military victory, the victorious leader of the campaign, and the winning army. It was a formal celebration that finalized the end of a war and the return of the army to the city. During the years of the Republic, it also signified the relinquishing of the general's military command. Though it evolved and changed over the near thousand years from which archeologists can trace the ritual, certain aspects remained unaltered (Warren 1970). The Triumph was a military procession, similar to a grandiose parade, through the streets of Rome that allowed the Empire's subjects and citizens to witness the spoils of war and celebrate the victorious army and its leader. The celebrated general was known as the *imperator* and deified for the day. The culmination of the Triumph centered on the execution of captive enemy leaders followed by the sacrifice of two perfectly white bulls to the Gods by the winning commander. During the long history of the Republic, the Triumph was awarded to the military general of a victorious campaign. However, emperors usurped this right for themselves after the fall of the Republic and the arrival of the imperial principate system. Indeed, as Mattern (1999) says, ''The Triumph was one of the most jealously guarded privileges of the Emperor, and is perhaps the most eloquent expression of the Roman glorification of conquest'' (168). The highlight of the Triumph was the humiliation of captive prisoners who were led through the streets of Rome, many of whom met their death at its conclusion.

The number of enemy captives featured in the Triumph is hard to ascertain from the historical record. However, ancient sources indicate that the processions consisted of large numbers of prisoners. The implication derived from historical sources is that the number of prisoners mattered less than the status of those captured—again, signifying the importance of honor (Beard 2007). Kings and chieftains, along with their children and other members of the nobility, were the most desirous to be on display. Augustus' *Res Gestae* prominently records that nine monarchs and their children featured in his Triumph (Cooley

2009). The Romans also had a strong fascination with foreign and exotic places and peoples. Captives brought to Rome from widely unknown and mysterious locations were accorded great value too.

Jeering and taunting Roman spectators abused and insulted captives along the procession. Prisoners also faced scourging from Roman soldiers as they were paraded through the city. The humiliation was severe. The crowds spat upon and threw objects at the prisoners, and many opted for suicide than face becoming fodder for the Roman spectacle. Augustus, after defeating Marc Antony, was deeply disappointed with Cleopatra's suicide as it robbed him of this great privilege (Mattern 1999).

The Triumph captures the connection between how honor shaped the personal identities of the Roman elite and the identity of the Empire. To receive a Triumph was the highest accolade a Roman could have imagined. Indeed, not every victor was awarded this most sought out and competitive prize. The Senate, whose approval was necessary for a Triumph, had strict criteria when considering such awards and granted them sparingly in order to preserve the reverence of the ritual. In the near thousand years that we know the Romans practiced the Triumph, approximately only 300 ever occurred (Beard 2007). Accordingly, a Triumph constituted the recipient as the pinnacle of honor in Roman society, ensuring eternal fame and deification (at least for a day). Pompey the Great secured an astounding *three* Triumphs for his victories expanding the Empire. The Romans of the time and in the centuries after equated Pompey's achievement of three Triumphs as evidence of his immense honor (Deutsch 1924). In fact, it was the return of Pompey's ring, which was inscribed with three trophies signifying each Triumph, that the people of Rome finally came to terms that Pompey the Great was actually dead. Thus, in a society in which personal identity was the sum of the community's recognition of an individual's honor, the award of a Triumph indicated ubiquitous confirmation of the recipient's enormous, God like stature.

Concurrently, the Triumph reaffirmed the identity of the Empire as an obsessed status seeker. Crafting an image for the rest of the known world, Triumphs were larger than life events of extreme grandiosity and lavishness. Many Triumphs lasted for days, in which the state expended great sums for numerous feasts and works of art to commemorate the victory and humiliation of the loser. Thousands of animals were brought to Rome to fight to the death in triumphal games, as were gladiators and charioteers. All of this was done to evidence Rome's great stature, which was equated as otherworldly compared to the tribes and kingdoms surrounding the Empire. The humiliation of parading elite captives reinforces this notion. Rome not only decimated its enemies in battle, but reduced their most honorable members (Kings and nobles) to spectacle for its masses. In this way, the humiliation of noble captives *proved* the disparity in honor extant between Rome, who wielded the authority to bring valiant and brave kings to their knees, and everyone else.

A need to humiliate competitors and venerate victory was the consequence of their particular conceptualization of international relations. The Romans gained honor from success on the battlefield. However, the purpose of parading the enemy for Rome's onlookers was to secure fame. As Beard (2007) remarks, ''It was a much better display of Rome's success … to have the enemy exhibited in the procession than killed on the field of battle'' (123). It was also for posterity, as such large witnesses to Rome's successes could better ensure eternal fame for the victor and the Empire. In fact, the Romans went to great lengths to record their victories and foreign policy successes. In addition to captives, the procession also entailed details of the victorious military campaigns. These included representations of places conquered, such as paintings of foreign landscapes and animals exotic to Rome.

Rome initiated many wars to exact revenge against those challenging its superior status. Insults against the Empire, or arrogance from foreign leaders, were deemed *jus ad bellum* and typically involved the unleashing of Rome's overwhelming violence. Insults and arrogance manifested in a few ways. As mentioned earlier, these included revolts and other forms of disregard to Roman authority.

The two wars against Dacia led by the emperor Trajan, first in 101 and later in 105 A.D., capture the connection between the competition for honor among the Empire and foreigners. Trajan's decision to pursue war in these instances derived from the desire to suppress arrogance and to exact revenge for previous grievances against Rome's honor. Whittaker (2004) reinforces that these instances of all out warfare were not connected with opportunistic expansion, or some grand strategic design to enhance the fortification of the Empire. He says,

> To take another prominent example, much has been made of Trajan's motives for war and his supposed strategy in annexing Dacia in the early second century A.D. Trajan's aims are ascribed by Roman authors, some of them contemporaries, to revenge or desire for gold and glory, but never elevated to a grand, strategic aim for the defense of the Balkans ... By destroying the a stable Dacian kingdom, Trajan created a threat from the now invigorated Sarmatians and Iazyges that continued to plague the Empire for the next two hundred years. If the annexation of Dacia was really strategically determined, why on Earth did the province not include a frontier across the Hungarian plain, which would have shortened the defenses of the middle Danube by some 500 km? (pp. 34–35)

In the years leading up to the eventual wars, the Romans perceived Dacian behavior as denigrating to the honor of the Empire. Historians of the era, such as Cassius Dio (1925), record the Dacians disregarding Rome by aggressively increasing their capacity for war making. They also tested the patience of Rome by making numerous raids into villages and towns within the Empire's provinces in the two decades leading up to the eventual wars (Rossi 1971). A last point of injury for the Romans was a truce settlement that the emperor Domitian reached with the Dacian king Decebalus years earlier. In an act quite shameful to the Romans, Domitian acquiesced to terms that provided the Dacians with Roman engineers. The Dacians, quite brazenly, used them to enhance their military capabilities.

Deference to others in a peace accord was a shameful act of foreign policy on the part of the emperor. The only honorable outcome in Roman warfare was to fight until the last man and dollar were extinguished. This particular settlement was especially shameful since it involved buying off the enemy, coupled with the latter's incendiary use of Roman technicians to make war against the Empire. Within the psyche of the Roman leadership, Domitian's actions disgraced Rome and diminished its honor. These grievances needed to be rectified in order to reaffirm Rome's great glory and rescue any damage to its status (Bennett 1997). In this way, Rome was exacting revenge and asserting its supremacy against a kingdom that flagrantly disregarded the Empire's self proclaimed right of rule over the world.

Rossi (1971) introduces another consideration for why Trajan made war on Dacia. To the Romans, the Dacians may not have been the lowly barbarians they deemed most of the Empire's surrounding tribes. They were economically well off and engaged in agriculture, stock breeding, and mining (including gold mining). Furthermore, the Romans saw them as formidable and worthy warriors. As mentioned above, the Emperor Domitian failed on two accounts to quell the Dacian army. The Dacians learned the Roman methods of soldiering and employed special armaments in battle. The Romans recognized this as a sign of

being *civilized* and a defeat against such a formidable opponent as the Dacian warriors would have been held in the highest esteem among Rome's subjects. Such a victory would accordingly bring honor to both Rome and Trajan.

The case of the Dacian wars capture the link within the Roman psychological framework between maintaining the status of honor with the security of the Empire. By decimating and humiliating the enemy, the Roman's sought to demonstrate that rebellion was futile. This had the intended goal of generating a psychological condition of terror among those subjugated by the Empire that the Romans were far too superior militarily, and willing to expend a limitless amount of blood and treasure, to attempt a disregard of its status. According to the Romans, this was the basis of their notion of imperial honor and glory. Dacia received the full brunt of Rome's war machine because it not only attacked Roman garrisons on the Danube frontier, as well as engaged in hostile behavior such as an arms buildup; but primarily because these acts were considered as a violation of Rome's prestige and honor, and thus needed to be rectified.

Conquests of New and Exotic Peoples and Places

The campaigns to annex Britain undertaken by Julius Caesar in 55 B.C., and later by the emperor Claudius is 43 A.D., illustrate how the metavalue of honor interacted with the personal identities of the emperors to produce a normative framework promoting the subjugation of new places and exotic peoples. The acquisition of Britain and the subjugation of its tribes contributed nothing to Roman security or the Empire's finances. In fact, the occupation distracted the focus of the army from its primary role of suppressing revolt in the provinces and attacked the financial coffers. There is, therefore, no *rational* security or even cost-benefit explanation for the invasion.[9] Instead, the aim of conquest was to augment both the emperor's and the Empire's honor, which occurred in the Roman mind from expanding the dominion of Rome's authority. Despite its costs to the Empire, or the lack of a clear strategic purpose, conquest for conquest's sake was a perfectly legitimate foreign policy practice. New peoples and places were especially tantalizing to the Romans, as their distance and cultural differences magnified the glory linked with subjugating them.

For these reasons, the Romans had a strong fascination with Britain and its tribes. To the Roman psyche, whomever was able to subjugate the island secured glory for themselves and enhanced the image of the Empire. In this regard, the eventual subjugation of Britain by Claudius was a calculation to enhance his fame and legend (securing his right to a Triumph), and at the same time to invigorate the image of Rome's greatness (Barrett 1991; Evelyn-White 1908).

Roman mythology and literature constructed Britain as, "not a place, but an idea" during the first century B.C. (Stewart 1995:1). The reality of Britain's position to Rome was that of a marginal, benign and extremely remote place which posed no threat to the Empire. However, the mythology built around accounts by Roman and Greek explorers in the second and first centuries B.C. depicted a curious and fantastic place in the minds of the Roman people. Cut off from the continent, and existing in what was considered the most northern part of the world, the Romans saw Britain as outside their *orbis*. The English Channel was seen as an imposing barrier to the island, further enhancing the perception of distance from the rest of the Roman world. Included in Julius Caesar's description of the island is the observation of short nights, which may have also fueled curiosity and added to its strangeness (Crawfurd 1867). Its inhabitants were, "culturally transgressive and peculiar" (Stewart 1995, 4) in that they painted

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[9] Rational in the modern sense of costs and benefits, though it was quite rational to the Roman psyche, which valued conquest because of the glory it entailed.

their faces for battle, lived on milk and meat instead of sowing crops, and, as noted by Caesar himself, ''they swapped their wives with their relatives'' (3).

Stewart (1995) highlights J.S. Romm's assertion that writers in the late republic and early imperial periods, ''began to look longingly at the few frontiers still remaining to them … including the mysterious island of Thule [Britain] located vaguely in the north Atlantic'' (6). The subjugation of Britain emerged as a means to reassert the supremacy of the Empire. Though he never acted, Augustus made plans for an invasion of Britain years before Claudius' victory.

Claudius' invasion has been documented in various places as first and foremost a means to secure a grandiose Triumph for himself. Though first century historian Suetonius (2000) only briefly mentions his British campaign, his account specifically indicates personal honor as the motivating factor.

> When the senate voted him the Triumphal ornaments and he considered the honour insufficient to an Emperor's dignity, wishing for the glory of a full Triumph, he chose Britain on the grounds that it offered the greatest potential as a place to win it, for no one had made the attempt since Julius Caesar (Suetonius, Claudius).

This passage reveals the connection Claudius made between conquest as a means to accumulate glory and greatness. In fact, Suetonius nor any other contemporary Roman historian indicates that there was any security concerns emanating from the British isle toward the Romans. Also, the economic benefits that accompanied the subjugation of the Britons (such as taxation or tribute) were secondary (if considered at all). In fact, as Whittaker (1994) notes, Britain was not desired for *any* economic or strategic reason.

> Even if one believes, as I do, in the rationality of imperial decisions, it is hard to find much evidence even of ''scientific'' thinking in the sense of cost effective, economical decisions. In the celebrated case of Britain, which both Strabo in the first century and Appian in the second tell us was not worth conquest economically, we are faced with the ironic fact that the Romans nevertheless occupied the country. The reason is given to us explicitly by Florus, who links Britain to Armenia: ''it was fine and glorious to have acquired them, not for any value, but for the great reputation they brought to the magnificence of the Empire.'' (p. 67)

Expanding the authority of the Empire was one of the most important duties of an emperor. As such, the annexation of Britain was crucial to Claudius' political career and posterity. We can see the importance attributed to his conquest in various places (Standing, 2003). For instance, ''Claudius' son was generally known by the honorific title of Britannicus. The invasion turned into a focus for praise of the monarch, the hallmark of his regime, and a representative manifestation of his power and authority. It remained so after his death'' (Stewart 1995:7). The public revered him because, ''First, the fact that the enemy lived across the Ocean; second, the land and its people were unknown; and third, Claudius was the first to bring Britons under Roman jurisdiction'' (7).

The conquest of Britain is a clear instance of the impact of Roman honor upon the personal identities of the elite and its ramifications for Roman state identity and foreign policymaking. The financial costs were great, and reorienting soldiers away from their posts risked the Empire's security. Yet, Claudius pursued conquest anyway because honor was a greater goal than security. Social expectations regarding Claudius' role as emperor—and simultaneously the pinnacle of Rome's stratified honor system—demanded he pursue foreign policies that augmented the stature of the Empire. His identity as emperor depended on such behaviors.

Conclusion

The role of personal identity in IR theory has yet to receive much attention. This paper brings personal identity into the conversation by exploring how society's embedded values influence the identities of leaders, and how this subsequently shapes state identity. Personal identity is the faculty that assesses self in relation to others. It is the faculty that assesses oneself in relation to other selves. Throughout history, world systems exhibited particular metavalues that produced cultural environments influencing an individual's conception of *Self*. I argue this process is an important and intrinsic source of state identity.

In the Roman world system, a metavalue of honor determined the structure and character of personal identity. The production of an individual's identity occurred through the recognition of honor by members of an aristocratic class. This recognition had profound implications for the positions a man could legitimately hold in Roman society. Critically, the occupation with honor oriented Rome's leaders toward conceptualizing the primary purpose of foreign policy as augmenting the honor of the state. As such, Roman history reveals an array of foreign policy practices seeking to diminish the standing of foreigners, while demonstrating the greatness of the Empire. Importantly, these practices are only sensible given the cultural environment of the ancient Mediterranean world system, and how the culture of honor influenced personal identity.

The evidence from Roman history suggests the manner in which culture affects personal identity is an important source of state identity. This has broad implications for the constructivist research program. Thus far, constructivists have mined the sources of state identity from many places. Yet, constructivists have skirted around investigating personal identity, let alone any connections between it and state identity. The conventional constructivist terrain of norms and cultural values provide context for how individuals understand legitimate behavior. Derived from norms and culture, scholars can begin to understand the basis of a historical state's foreign policy. For instance, norms reveal the importance of honor to the stratification of Rome's domestic society. However, personal identity has the potential to provide more nuance and detail to the social processes of state identity production than norms alone. Norms are less instructive regarding the severe violence and extreme nature of certain Roman foreign policy practices. Instead, by understanding how the culture of honor structured conceptions of an individual's self, the extreme practices of the Roman state become intelligible. Thus, personal identity can provide a stronger analytical tool for explaining behavior than relying on norms, cultural values and social context, as questions of personal identity demand knowing how individual actors calculate and act upon these social forces. As argued throughout, the competition for honor that defined the personal identities of the Roman elite was extrapolated psychologically to the arena of statecraft and foreign policy.

Taking state identity seriously requires deeper explorations into the sources thereof. For these reasons, the linkages between culture, personal identity, and state identity are crucial to explore, especially for scholars examining foreign policy behavior in historical world systems. Scholars studying historical world systems should contemplate the conceptions of self produced by cultural environments. As indicated by the case of Rome, these connections prove important to understanding foreign policy in the distant past.

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