

## The Ramifications of Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*

From 58 BCE to 51 BCE, Caesar fought against the Gallic tribes, and his writings about these campaigns in *De Bello Gallico* deploy political language and rhetoric that caused the Senators to be apprehensive of his growing power. Throughout, Caesar emphasizes his ability to lead and gain support and allies back in Rome so that he could continue to acquire power. These books were used to justify the conflict between Rome and Gaul and Caesar's continued leadership role in the fight against the Gauls.

Caesar exploited the otherness of the Gauls to validate the war, and by dividing them into the various tribes made the subjection of the Gauls appear easier since they were not unified (Busch 2004). Caesar did balance the description of the Gauls in order to amass a substantial army, because if the Gauls were too easy to defeat, Caesar would not need a large army to undertake this task, and on the other hand, if the Gallic tribes were too difficult to defeat, Rome could send another general and potentially undermine Caesar's plan at accumulating power (Riggsby 2006). Caesar also needed the leadership role to fund his extravagant lifestyle, as he would not be willing to split the spoils of war with another commander, since he was notably generous with his own troops to foster continuous loyalty with his men. Caesar's governorship and generalship of Gaul were crucial for his survival as a major political actor in the Roman Republic since he needed imperium to delay his criminal charges and the debts he owed.

In this paper, I delve into the implications that Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* had on the Senators by examining his language and the political undertones of these books. I focus primarily on the first and seventh books as Caesar justifies the war and shows his leadership in action against the competent Gallic leader, Vercingetorix. In addition to exploring Caesar's

writings, I analyze the writings of Caesar's opponents back in Rome, such as Cicero's letters to Atticus and his brother Quintus, focusing on the reactions and the ways the Senators try to limit Caesar's power throughout the war. In order to inspect the contents of these writings, I study the historical and political context of the events that took place before and during the Gallic War that contributed to the Roman politicians' interpretation of Caesar's writings and how that impacted their ability to curb Caesar's expanding power.

In this paper, I argue that Caesar did not realize the negative ramifications of his writings on the powerful politicians in Rome, especially as the First Triumvirate crumbled in the late 50s, as the Gallic War was coming to an end (Canfora 2022). The changing political environment made it difficult for anyone to predict the effects of Caesar's writings on those in Rome, especially on the political alliances while Caesar was away (Rawson 1977). Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* also revealed the loyalty of his soldiers to only Caesar and not to Rome, causing concern for those in Rome as Caesar's army grew over the years of the Gallic War. Although Caesar wished to appear powerful, his writings caused fear and anxiety in the Romans for another civil war, as they all remembered Sulla from a few decades prior. As Caesar's writings were dangerous for the implications of the political and military power that he held, the Senate was concerned with what his unchecked powers and his persuasive rhetoric could do against Rome, so they tried to limit his military command and governorship of Gaul.

## Bibliography

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