

Correlating Victory with Model Leadership in Caesar's *Gallic War*, Book 2

When reading Caesar's *Gallic War*, one habitually finds Caesar in the right place at the right time doing the right thing and thereby saving the day. The intense focus of Caesar's narrative on himself (Kraus 2005: 188-9) has been seen as both idealizing (Goldsworthy 1998) and propagandizing (Ramage 2003) in both conventional and innovative ways (Riggsby 2006, esp. 191-214). This paper will explore Caesar's control over his own narrative by scrutinizing how Caesar 1) depicts himself as a model leader and 2) correlates his leadership with Roman victory so that 3) he can transform tangible examples of his military success into political capital back in Rome.

This paper will focus on Book 2, the campaigns against the Belgians in the second year of the war, as a representative specimen of the work as a whole. In this book Caesar elucidates several elements that contribute to the ultimate success of the campaign:

- quick movement, causing the Gauls to capitulate because they are not ready to fight (2.2-3, 12);
- attention to logistics and food supply, whereas the Gauls do not have supplies to sustain their campaign (2.10);
- strategy in the field, by which the Roman position secures defensive strength (2.5, 8-10);
- diplomacy, by both carrot and stick, by which some groups of Gauls are induced to ally with the Romans and/or are willing to attack others to Rome's advantage (2.5, 10, 13-14, 32-33);
- military intelligence, whereby Caesar knows more accurately about Gallic strength than they perceive his marching order (2.3-4, 16-19);

- engineering technology, by which the Roman forces can besiege Gallic towns with siege engines the scale of which the Gauls have never seen (2.12, 30-31);
- instinctive discipline and self-direction in a crisis, i.e., Roman soldiers know what to do even without orders whereas Gauls panic and flee (2.11, 20-21);
- and, of course, the brilliance of the commander-in-chief himself in a crisis (2.20-21, 24-26).

For each item on this list, the discussion of which will form the body of this paper, Caesar is shown or implied by the narrative to be directly or indirectly responsible. He praises his soldiers for their training and their courage, and he illustrates how successful leadership depends on the synergistic cooperation between a commander and his soldiers, yet through his personal oversight over every one of these factors he suggests that the centrality of his own position is what provides the decisive impetus for success. Since Caesar knows how events turned out and assumes a reading audience sympathetic to Roman success, the tone is not defensive or self-justificatory, but declarative and even didactic. When the book ends with the news that the Senate decreed a thanksgiving in honor of Caesar's achievements longer than any it had decreed before (2.35), the reader is not to wonder why the thanksgiving was exceptional, but to understand why exceptional leadership was being thus recognized.

Since successful military command translated into authority in Roman politics, Caesar details his military successes in order to strengthen his own claim to political relevance and further political office. He embeds his leadership within the larger cause of Roman imperialism and presents himself as being notably effective at what every Roman

proconsul should have done. The potency of his leadership in Gaul establishes his claim to future recognition in Roman politics.

Bibliography

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