

Throughout the latter millennia of BCE, and centuries into the Common Era, global commerce and politics were dominated by Rome, the capital of an Empire of which the influence continues into modern politics. Indeed, founded in 753 BCE, Ancient Rome is the very ground on which modern democracy and societal institutions are based. Through Tribal Assemblies, Several Legislative Bodies, and most crucially, the Roman Senate, the Roman Government was a vast network of checks and balances that worked to ensure governmental tranquility and cohesion. These democratic bodies, however, were merely advisory, often usurped by the Executive wing of the government. They held varying amounts of power throughout Roman history. With a Senate not holding any formal power and an executive-choosing process without an official format, the nature of Roman history is a constant struggle for power, a constant effort to get away with as much autocracy as possible, and bloody encounters when that effort meets opposition. Indeed, Rome may be the greatest model of democracy and general welfare from ancient times, but its history is fraught with political strife, coups, and Civil Wars.

Roman History may be divided into three periods: the Roman Kingdom, the Roman Republic, and the Roman Empire. As is evident in the names, the Roman Kingdom was an autocratic monarchy in power from 753 BCE until 509 BCE, when it was overthrown by those supporting a more democratic rule, the Roman Republic. The Roman Republic was Rome's greatest era of democracy, in which the Senate's will was generally respected by the executive branch, known as the Consul. The Republic was violently brought to a close in 27 BCE, the end of a gradual transition towards autocracy begun by its infamous, penultimate Consul Gaius Caesar, and completed by his great-nephew Augustus Caesar. The newly-established Roman Empire quickly expanded under the war-wise control of Augustus; in 117 AD, it became the largest European empire ever, with control over 4% of the world. The 2nd century was the peak of not only the Roman Empire's territorial expansion, but also its governmental equanimity. By 285, divisive and injudicious leadership had led the Constantinople-centric Eastern Romans and the Rome-centric Western Romans to the brink of war as they split into two separate empires. The Eastern half became known as the Byzantine Empire, a nation that would remain a globally dominant force for a millennium. The Western Roman Empire quickly fell victim to further internal strife, stripping it of its global influence, and threatening its very existence.

The Roman Kingdom

In 753 BCE, as the first Roman nation-state was founded, Europe was divided into countless minor kingdoms with little territory. Even within the Apennine Peninsula, there were nearly a dozen autonomous nations speaking different languages and ruled by different kings. The story of Rome's founding can be considered no more than a legend, crafted by later rulers as little more than religious fables. However, as the story goes, two brothers, Romulus and Remus, gathered a small army of shepherds in the Apennine Peninsula. With these men, they founded the settlement of Rome, planning to rule their commune jointly. However, the very first of Rome's countless struggles for power soon arrived, after Romulus and Remus broke into a violent dispute. Romulus murdered his brother, naming the settlement after himself and becoming the first king of the Roman Kingdom. Romulus immediately established a Senate to advise his

leadership with the input of the Roman people, an institution that would be generally potent throughout the life of the Kingdom. Indeed, the Senate had the power of electing the king when the role had been vacated, although the king enjoyed a life term.

Along with democracy, Romulus was committed to growing the settlement's working population, welcoming in tradesmen of all kinds to his nation-state. Naturally, this economically-focused population growth resulted in a mainly male society, threatening the Kingdom's sustainability. Romulus, in one of his great, cunning military initiatives, devised a plan by which Rome invited a nearby Sabine city to a party. The Romans kidnapped the city's women, an event now known as the "Rape of Sabine," although one must note that no sexual assault was involved. Not only did this event enable sustainable population growth in Rome, but it also led the infuriated Sabine Kingdom to declare war on Rome. At the end of the conflict, Romulus had negotiated a merger of the two nations, with him as the *de facto* king. The Roman Kingdom would not expand its territory much further under the rule of Romulus, but the inaugural king did bring his nation into the forefront of European trade and politics. Word of the prosperity of the Kingdom brought great numbers of immigrants who added to its culture and economy. Six kings would succeed Romulus in the remaining 207 years of the Roman Kingdom. However, none truly attained the same rate of economic growth that Romulus had achieved, nor did the raw territory of the Kingdom grow under their rule. Nonetheless, the Roman Kingdom remained an influential power in the politics of the Apennine Peninsula.

The Roman Republic

The Roman Kingdom experienced relatively peaceful times until its latter king, Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, or Tarquin, at which point the Kingdom's stability swiftly unraveled. Tarquin was so disliked by the Roman public that the Latin word for "king," *rex*, was a derogatory term in Roman culture for almost a millennium. He fought several imprudent wars with nearby states, wasting funds and barely maintaining Rome's standing as the leader of the Latin region. The final straw was when Tarquin's son, Sextus, raped the daughter and wife of powerful Roman nobles, enraging the nation as a whole. The noblemen of Rome dethroned Tarquin in 509 BCE, led by Lucius Junius Brutus. The coup threw Rome into chaos and put it in an existential crisis. Most crucially, there was a wide gap between Romans who favored a new monarchy and those wishing for a Republic. Even within the group of rebels who had deposed Tarquin, there was no agreement as to whether the movement was anti-monarchy or simply anti-Tarquin. In addition to the internal power struggle, neighboring nations took advantage of the turmoil and invaded, nearly ending the Roman state altogether.

The Senate reached its conclusion within the year, however, placing all of the monarch's responsibilities in a new democratically elected position known as Consul. To ensure a more accountable executive, the Senate established two consular positions, both of which would be elected on an annual basis. The following century was one of frequent battles with nearby states, namely the Etruscan Kingdom to the north, although no major territorial changes occurred. However, the consular government format was effective, and the new Roman democracy generally held strong. At the beginning of the 4th century, the two Consular positions were

replaced by consular tribunes, a further move to promote democracy. 340 BCE began an era of massive territorial expansion, marked by the Latin War. In this war, Rome defeated its remaining Latin neighbors, finally consolidating control of the Latin world. Subsequently, Rome fought several wars with the nearby Samnite Kingdom, gaining complete control over this former enemy in 290 BCE. With these victories, Rome had multiplied its holdings by a dozen, more than halfway to a united Apennine state. By 218 BCE, after the Pyrrhic War and the first two Punic Wars, the Roman Republic had accomplished exactly this, an Apennine nation with Rome as its capital and governing body. The Romans continued to take over the Mediterranean world in the coming century, capturing France, Spain, Achaëa, and the regions therearound.

By 133 BCE, the Roman Republic was experiencing a major divide between the aristocratic Optimates and the plebeian Populares. However, the founders of the plebeian movement, the Gracchi brothers, were summarily executed en masse, and the Populares failed to gain traction. Nonetheless, the Republic would experience violent conflicts for the following 70 years as slave uprisings became prevalent and the aristocratic class lost its power over the state. The Roman Republic ultimately fell into turmoil in 49 BCE, when the infamous Gaius Julius Caesar led a battalion into Rome after having been labeled an enemy of the state and deposed Pompey, the Senate-backed leader. He proceeded with several legislative actions to consolidate his control over Rome, culminating in a law allowing him to appoint the Republic's consuls at his discretion. The following events were nothing short of a mess, beginning with senators executing Caesar; subsequently, Mark Antony and Caesar's great-nephew, Octavian, eliminated the assassins; finally, Mark Antony and Octavian vied for control in a civil war which Octavian ultimately won. By 27 BCE, Octavian was in complete control of the Roman government, proclaiming the establishment of the Roman Empire, of which he would be the all-powerful Emperor. The Roman democracy had been abolished, and the Senate now held only advisory authority over the executive.

The Roman Empire

The Roman Empire rapidly expanded under the rule of Octavian, now calling himself Augustus Caesar. Augustus made major strides towards controlling the Arab World, establishing provinces in Egypt, Palestine, and Turkey, among quite a few others. Perhaps it would be equally as important to note the enormous autocratic reforms initiated by Augustus, gaining the authority to appoint the Senate's membership, and reserving all military winnings for himself and those he decided to support. However, the true legacy of Augustus is one of military domination and the by-and-large takeover of the Mediterranean. The following emperors attained nowhere near the same level of growth in land or prosperity until Emperor Trajan came to power in 98 AD. It was under Trajan's rule that the Roman Empire reached its largest, controlling 4% of the world, and the leader in global trade. Trajan continued Augustus' infamous and quite effective imperial era of *Pax Romana*, or Roman peace. During the period of *Pax Romana*, Rome maintained tranquility and trade cohesion with its many provinces, allowing it to establish effective economic partnerships and not constantly worry about rebellion or invasion as before. Trajan was the second in a dynasty known as the Five Good Emperors, the last great Roman leaders.

With the accession of Emperor Commodus in 180, the Roman Empire began its perpetual spiral downwards towards an inevitable fall. Although originally ruling wisely, an assassination attempt in 182 turned him paranoid and totalitarian. The renowned historian Cassius Dio, living in Rome at the time, said of Commodus' reign, "our history now descends from a kingdom of gold to one of iron and rust." By 192, Commodus had earned a similar public opinion to that of Tarquin centuries before. His boastfulness eventually caused his assassination that year, on New Year's Eve. The year that followed saw five men violently struggling for power in a quasi-civil war, known as the Year of the Five Emperors. The Roman Empire never recovered from that conflict, nor the political strife it so espoused. Assassinations, coups, depositions, and anti-democratic events likewise plagued the Empire. In 258, at the climax of the Crisis of the Third Century, the Empire split into three, the Gallic Empire, the Roman Empire, and the Palmyrene Empire. However, in hardly over a decade, the Roman Empire had entirely reunited itself through rigorous, successive military campaigns.

The Roman Empire's Split and the West's Initial Struggle

The impending disunion was no more evident than in the bitter divide between the Roman half centered in Constantinople and the half centered in Rome. The third century was characterized by constant conflict with the Germanic people on the outskirts of the Empire. Indeed, upon taking power in 284, Emperor Diocletian quickly came to a modern conclusion that the vast number of wars, trade agreements, and other responsibilities required from the executive was too much for a single ruler. He divided control of the empire in half, creating a second *augustus* to rule the Western half as he managed the East. However, personal greed soon sullied the effective division, with Emperor Constantine executing his fellow Augustus in 324, reuniting the Empire under his authority. In 330, Constantine made perhaps the most crucial of 4th-century moves, establishing the eastern city of Constantinople as the new capital of the Roman Empire. Toward the end of the Constantinian Dynasty, the Empire became once again ruled by two *augusti*. Finally, in 395 AD, upon the death of Emperor Theodosius I, Theodosius' two sons became the *augusti*, and the division was decidedly final. The Eastern Byzantine Empire kept its capital in Constantinople, while the Western Roman Empire was centered in modern-day Milan. The Byzantine Empire would remain a major world power for the next millennium for which it survived, whereas the Western Roman Empire immediately met adversity.

In the years leading up to Theodosius' death, the Western Roman Empire suffered tremendously from an influx of Goth refugees, as the Hun progression West displaced all those they encountered. However, the Roman Empire was already dispersed throughout their territories, quelling conflicts with the Persians, Germanic tribes, among others. The Goths were treated extremely harshly by regional Roman authorities, however, rarely provided shelter and other vital resources. In their frustration with this treatment, they assembled a military force, joining with substantial groups of Huns and Alans. The new enemy placed the Roman countryside in great danger, forcing Emperor Valens to attempt a confrontation. In the Battle of Adrianople, the Roman army was entirely routed by the Goth militia, even costing Valens his life. Although more fortified cities were generally able to hold their walls, the countryside of the

Balkans was by-and-large ravaged by the invaders. This was the main basis for Theodosius' appointment to *augustus* in 379, and he was able to gather the necessary forces to block any further movement by the Goths. Theodosius' campaigns were extremely taxing on the Roman economy, not aesthetically or financially aided by the mass corruption remaining prevalent among military staff. Theodosius' greatest general, Stilicho, was able to continue the military success until his arrest and execution in 408, quelling invasions from all sides. Immediately after Stilicho's death, the great Visigoth leader Alaric led a siege of Rome, ultimately victorious. The Visigoths were not relatively destructive of the city, however, and after their departure from Italy for more military conquest, Roman life was able to somewhat return to daily life. Nonetheless, the continuous strife caused by the Goth arrival and subsequent violence was undeniable, and would clearly become a catalyst for further turmoil in the Western Roman Empire.

The Present Crisis

Delegates in this committee must consider the two key aspects of the crisis the Western Roman Empire meets today, both of which, if left without complete focus and action will bring down the Empire entirely. The first major facet of the issue is the military side, for the Empire now faces constant provocations from all sides, most notable of which are the Visigoths, led by Theodoric the Great, the Vandals and Alans, led by Geiseric, the Saxon and Frank tribes of the west, fairly decentralized but constantly stirring up conflict in Gaul and Germania, and the Huns, fairly vanquished at this point but remaining dangerous in dispersion. All of the aforementioned forces are extremely dangerous to Roman livelihood and force the Empire to remain militarily active, and dispersed throughout the continent. Furthermore, there is significant turmoil among the "proper" Roman people, exacerbated by the latter facet of the crisis, the stagnation and downturn in the Roman economy.

Constant raids in the periphery of the Empire have created an economic situation in which those who grow necessary resources are always either directly under attack or paralyzed with fear of such an attack. The Empire has lost major assets in territories it previously controlled, and the sheer number of Mediterranean trading ports diminishes as coastal access is taken by enemies. Most importantly, due to the many conflicts in which it is engaged, the Empire is forced to expend a great percentage of its wealth supporting its military above all other pursuits. Overall, the Roman people have lost hope for the wealth the Empire previously so enjoyed. This leaves the public with extreme contempt for the leaders they believe have so led them into this situation. Thus, perhaps even more dangerous than the attacks from foreign powers is the threat of an internal insurgency able to garner general support against the evident poor leadership in Rome. Delegates, therefore, should be keen on discussing not only methods by which to fund both more successful military campaigns, but also methods by which to promote general prosperity within the Empire and gain back public trust and fondness for the Roman government.