

067: Rome and Carthage Between the Punic Wars

Introduction

After twenty-three years of seemingly endless warfare, the signing of the Treaty of Lutatius in 241 was intended to cease hostilities between the Romans and the Carthaginians and bring an end to the First Punic War. No other ancient conflict was fought so continuously for so long, a point stressed by the historian Polybius of Megalopolis, and while Rome surely came out of the affair the dominant power, both sides were militarily and financially exhausted. Yet, little over two decades later, hostilities resumed, resulting in a second conflict that was just as destructive, if not more so, than the one before. Like with the First and Second World Wars of the 20th century, the Second Punic War, waged between the Roman Republic and Carthage from 218 until 201 BC, overshadows its predecessor. This is perhaps due to the abundance of sources we have for the second round of fighting. In addition to the work of Polybius, who also chronicled the war for Sicily, we also have the colorful if overly patriotic account of Livy, a Roman historian who greatly valued and relied upon the missing books of Polybius on the war. The moralist and biographer Plutarch wrote several *Lives* on men who were active figures during the time, though noticeably omits its two most well-known characters: Hannibal Barca, the brilliant son of the premier Carthaginian commander in Sicily, Hamilcar Barca, and Publius Cornelius Scipio, better known as *the Scipio Africanus*, who ultimately led Rome to victory at the Battle of Zama in 202. Rightly so, the Second Punic War is viewed as a major turning point for the ancient world: Rome would no longer be seen as just an (albeit important) Italian power, but the master of a Mediterranean hegemony, which would in turn directly lead them to confronting the Hellenistic kingdoms of the east.

My aim in this series is not to necessarily go over each and every detail or movement of the conflict, but instead to try and view the war from a broader perspective. This episode is no different in that regard: we will be covering the events that took place following the signing of the Treaty of Lutatius in 241 until the Siege of Saguntum in 218, before concluding with a breakdown as to how Rome and Carthage went to war once again.

It is worth noting that one of the most important events to occur during this period were the First and Second Illyrian Wars, at least from a long-term perspective. The invasions of Illyria, located on the east coast of the Adriatic along the Balkans, saw the first Roman legionaries landing at the backdoor of Greece and the Hellenistic world.¹ For the purposes of my overall narrative, I am going to hold off on discussing both it and the First Macedonian War, which took place shortly before and contemporary to the Second Punic War. I believe that it is far more valuable to discuss those events together further down the line as part of the Roman introduction to the political framework of the Eastern Mediterranean, so any references will be cursory at most.

Rome and the Celts

When we chart out the expansion of Rome, it doesn't seem that straightforward and logical, at least when we look at a map. Sicily now belonged to the Republic, whether it was governed by a client king like Hiero of Syracuse or under the direct administration of Roman officials. Yet despite being thought of as an Italian power, Rome did not control the entirety of Italy. To the north there still dwelled many Celtic tribes living on the Italian side of the Alps, occupying the fertile lands of the Po Valley. At the

¹ As told by Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.2-12; Appian, *The Illyrian Wars*, 7-9

conclusion of the First Punic War, there were three major Celtic tribes in northern Italy: the Boii, the Insubres, and the Cenomani, with the first two being the largest of the group.² Since the defeat of the Boii and Senones shortly before the arrival of Pyrrhus in the early 280s, the Celts had caused few problems and remained quiet throughout much of the mid-3rd century.³ This does not mean that the Romans forgot the threat that they could pose – Brennus made sure of that when he occupied the city in the year 387. By 237, the Boii underwent a period of internal strife which saw competing factions fight amongst themselves, some looking to keep the peace while others seeking to challenge Rome.⁴ Perhaps they believed that the Republic was vulnerable after decades of warfare with the Carthaginians. This bellicose attitude could also be due to the pressures of migrating tribes from across the Alps moving into the Po Valley, and the northward expansion of the Romans. Indeed, the consul Fabius Maximus won a victory over the Ligurians in 233, with Roman operations now reaching the borders of southeastern Gaul.⁵ In the following year, the territory of the Senones in the modern province of Ancona along the Adriatic Sea was taken away and opened for settlement by Latin colonists.⁶

The expulsion of the Senones terrified the other tribes about their chances of survival, and so the Boii and Insubres came together to decide a course of action. They sent a delegation to a tribe of Gauls living on the other side of the Alps named the Gaesatae, a term which apparently reflects their practice as mercenaries-for-hire.⁷ Envoys requested the services of these mercenaries to help them fight the Romans, an idea which the Gaesatae found very attractive.⁸ So began the march of tens of thousands of Gauls into Italy, and they reached the Po Valley by 228. The Insubres and Boii joined up with the Gaesatae, forming an army of nearly 50,000 warriors and 20,000 horsemen and chariots.⁹ Other tribes like the Veneti and Cenomani did not trust the mercenaries (or perhaps they saw the writing on the wall), and instead cast their lot with the Romans.¹⁰

Rome, meanwhile, had been set into a panic as soon as the first Gaul stepped foot on the Italian side of the Alps. An army was mustered at the Field of Mars, and preparations for war were made. The fear that infected the city, no doubt stirred by the memories of Brennus' sack, was powerful enough to compel the leading officials to bury a Gallic man and woman alive in the cattle market (the *forum boarium*) as an act of human sacrifice.¹¹ The Gallic horde descended upon Etruria, plundering as far as the city of Clusium, less than three days march from Rome itself. An initial relief force was sent to try and stop them, but nearly 6,000 Roman troops were killed, and the survivors rallied at a nearby hill where they were encircled and unable to leave.¹² Thankfully one of the consuls of that year, Lucius Aemilius, had been moving in that general direction from the east anyways and found the trapped Romans. Upon

² Cunliffe, B. (2017): 143

³ Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.20.1-2

⁴ Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.21.1-6

⁵ Plutarch, *Life of Fabius Maximus*, 2.1

⁶ Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.21.7-8

⁷ As per the commentary of the translation of Polybius by R. Waterfield: "[the] Latin *gaesa* [is] derived from a Celtic word meaning 'throwing-spear'. Hence, Gaesatae must originally have meant 'people of the throwing-spear'."

⁸ Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.21.9-2.23.1; Plutarch, *Life of Marcellus*, 3.1-3.2

⁹ Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.23.4

¹⁰ Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.23.2

¹¹ Plutarch, *Life of Marcellus*, 3.3-4. In addition to the Gauls, a Greek man and woman were also buried alive as part of the ceremony.

¹² Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.25.1-11

realizing that another Roman army was coming, the Gallic leadership decided to quit while they were ahead and take their booty back across Etruria.

The Gallic warriors were in great spirits, having made off like bandits with sacks full of Italian goods loaded on their baggage train. Humiliating the Roman army was just icing on the cake. But the joyous atmosphere must have dissipated when the scouts reported to the chieftains, not just giving information about the army of Aemilius that trailed behind them, but also about another consular army *ahead* of them. Consul Gaius Atilius Regulus had sailed from Sardinia to the western shores of Italy and discovered the troubling events that had transpired. After interrogating some Celts for the location of the army, he set a trap in motion to ambush the Gauls as they entered through a narrow pass near the city of Telamon in Etruria. Sandwiched between the two armies, the Gallic coalition decided to stand their ground and fight their way out, or die gloriously in battle. Polybius' recounting of the engagement illustrates just how terrifying the Gauls could be in combat, even when very much outnumbered: the noise of the war cries and the *cornyx* horn-blowers deafened the battlefield, many adorned in heavy armor and cloaks while wielding long slashing swords and shields. Even more frightening were the warriors who cast all garments aside and went naked into battle, wearing nothing but golden armbands and necklaces known as *torques*. The legionaries stood their ground though, even as some of the more frenzied Celts threw themselves into the Roman line with reckless abandon – one of these brave Celtic warriors managed to take the head of Regulus during the midst of the battle.¹³ The Gauls could only hold out so long though, and were eventually massacred, with 40,000 killed and at least 10,000 taken into captivity.

So ended the largest Celtic invasion into Italy up to that point, and the surviving consul was able to celebrate a triumph with the captured chieftains dragged in chains. But the fury of the Romans was not abated by this victory. Immediately following the Battle of Telamon, Aemilianus set upon the territory of the Boii out of revenge and let the troops run wild, pillaging to their hearts content.¹⁴ In 224, the Boii were crushed outright, forced to bend to the Roman yoke. 223 saw an invasion of the lands of the Anares, nearby the Greek settlement of Massalia (modern Marseille) in southeastern Gaul. Following this campaign, the Roman army crossed the Po River for the first time ever, leading them into conflict with the Insubres once more.¹⁵ Consul Gaius Flaminius, a man of quick temper and eagerness for battle, was apparently responsible for overseeing the operations, but failed to realize that the Celts on the Roman side of the Po destroyed the bridges on the river.¹⁶ This left the Romans facing an angry host of Insubrian warriors numbering 50,000 strong and unable to make an immediate escape. By the skin of their teeth, the Romans managed to beat back the Celts once again.¹⁷ Envoys from the tribes were soon sent to Rome in 222, the leaders looking to submit unconditionally rather than facing another onslaught. But instead of accepting their capitulation, the consuls Marcus Claudius Marcellus and Gnaeus Cornelius

¹³ Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.28.10; Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 25.13.1

¹⁴ Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.31.1-7

¹⁵ Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.32.1-2; Livy, *Periochae*, 20.10; Plutarch, *Life of Marcellus*, 4.1

¹⁶ Flaminius was a *novus homo*, a new man that had made his way up the senatorial ranks. He thus receives quite a lot of flack from the sources, though it may be attributed to his relatively mean origins.

¹⁷ Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.32.3-2.33.9

Scipio Calvus pushed to continue the war further into the territory of the Gauls.¹⁸ Out of desperation, the tribes once again invited Gaesatae warriors to come across the Alps, bolstering their numbers in an act of brave but futile resistance. Slowly but surely, the Roman vice soon closed upon the Celts. Eventually the capital of the Insubres at Mediolanum soon fell to siege, and the leadership decided to give up entirely.

The capitulation of the Insubres marked an important turning point for the fate of the Celts in Italy. Following the seizure of their territory, Roman colonies were soon established at Cremona and Placentia in the lands of the allied Cenomani, while the surviving Celtic population was either expelled from the Po Valley or lived in isolated pockets.¹⁹ This wouldn't be the last time that Gallic warbands would make their way south, but the defeats inflicted by the Romans seriously dampened the ability of the tribes to stage any further attacks. In several ways, the war with the Celts was something of a rehearsal performance, for many of the key players in this conflict would also make their appearance in the subsequent Hannibalic War. The consul Marcellus, despite his aggressive push for further war against the Gauls, earned himself a reputation as a man of great courage and skill in battle by slaying the king of the Insubres in single combat, earning himself the much-desired *spolia opima*.²⁰ Gaius Flaminius' victory at the Po River certainly displayed his tenacity, but his choice to have the legionaries stationed with their backs against the shoreline with no room to maneuver was a dangerous gamble – one that would be exploited by Hannibal at Trasimene in 217.²¹ Fabius Maximus' dealings with the Ligurians was relatively limited in aim and scope, but showed his capabilities for leadership, and would be the man to eventually earn the nickname *Cunctator*, "The Delayer". But the Roman expansion and resentment of the Celts would prove to be a problem sooner than they anticipated, as word traveled fast into Gaul. If given the opportunity, the Gauls would gladly ally with anyone who may have posed a serious threat to the Roman hegemony, which is what exactly happened when a Carthaginian army crossed the Alps a few years later. But speaking of Carthage, let us move away from Italy and head to North Africa, where the Punic peoples were dealing with a major crisis of their own.

The Mercenary War

Barring the outbreak of violence with the Celts and in Illyria, the Romans saw a time of relative stability in the period after the First Punic War. But the situation was far different for Carthage. The terms laid out by the Treaty of Lutatius required them to pay a heavy indemnity of 3,200 silver talents over 10 years, aggravating the financially drained Carthaginian treasury after it had just gone through two decades of warfare.²² Adding onto that, their holdings in Sicily were taken by Rome as well, further reducing the amount of income they could bring in to use to pay off the debt. Harsh, but not necessarily out of bounds by the rules of ancient warfare. This was only the tip of the iceberg of Carthage's problems, however.

¹⁸ Plutarch, *Life of Marcellus*, 6.1-2 claims that there was a peace struck, but the Celts had broken it. Polybius, *Histories*, 2.34.1 does not mention any peace accord, so I shall take it as a retroactive excuse for the Roman expansion into the Po Valley, since Plutarch himself admits Marcellus' desire to continue the war.

¹⁹ Livy, *Periochae*, 20.18; Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.35.4

²⁰ Plutarch, *Life of Marcellus*, 7.1-7.4; Livy, *Periochae*, 20.11

²¹ Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.33.7-8

²² Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.62-63

Following the end of the war with Rome, Hamilcar Barca had brought his troops to Lilybaeum in the western end of Sicily, whereupon they were ferried to Libya by another commander named Gisgo.²³ Now that fighting was done, the mercenaries that had served under the Carthaginian banner were looking forward to receiving their wages, expecting their employers to honor all the promises of bonuses and backpay made by their commanders in times of hardship and defeat. But Carthage was broke, its coffers emptied to pay for the war effort, and any future revenues would be stymied for some time thanks to the indemnities placed upon them in the treaty. The generals were acutely aware of the problem that was now brewing, and to prevent the mercenaries from aggregating, they tried to stagger their transportation into Africa so they could try and give troops their dues one group at a time. On the other hand, the Council of Elders would not, or could not, provide them their wages. Out of desperate foolishness, the city magistrates believed that if they allowed all the mercenaries to enter Africa en masse, they perhaps could persuade them all to give up the backpay owed to them. Surely they would understand the financial struggles they faced after so many years of fighting. As a gesture of goodwill, the Carthaginians would lodge them in a local village with a gold stater to pay for any room and board expenses, and were even allowed to keep their baggage and families with them as well.

To say that the reception was poor is to put it mildly, and almost immediately tensions would flare up once the Carthaginians announced their inability to pay the full wages. Polybius suggests that the fever pitch was brought about by the diverse backgrounds of the mercenaries, which included Celts, North Africans, Iberians, and even Greeks and ex-Roman deserters.²⁴ The Carthaginian commanders were unable to effectively communicate the situation in each group's native tongue, and while most people can comprehend the concept of unpaid wages, a proverbial game of telephone across different languages and translators would have only aggravated the situation. These soldiers had enough of dealing with negotiators who did not serve with them in Sicily and didn't know of the promises that were made, so they decided to set up camp in Tunis, only a few miles from Carthage's walls. Regardless of their origins, the mercenaries had all banded together in one place with the same goal in mind: taking what was owed to them. They realized that the Carthaginians had almost no chance of fending off nearly 20,000 angry warriors-for-hire, when they were reluctant to field any more armies after fighting with Rome for so long.²⁵ Even the Carthaginians' goodwill had unwittingly squandered the chance to keep the mercenaries' wives, children, and property as a bargaining chip and deterrent against any hostile actions.

Perhaps the situation could still be fixed. Progress was being made thanks to the help of Gisgo, a Carthaginian general who was well known for his services in Sicily, and the mercenaries believed that he had their best interests at heart. Gisgo supervised the delivery of payments, attempting to placate the mistrust and anger towards the Carthaginians, assuring that a mutually beneficial agreement was the best solution for everyone.²⁶ This was certainly a step in the right direction, but agitators would seek to sabotage his efforts. The two ringleaders of the most riotous faction of mutineers were Spendius, a Campanian ex-slave who deserted from the Roman army, and a Libyan named Mathos.²⁷ According to

²³ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.66

²⁴ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.67; Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 25.2.2

²⁵ Cornelius Nepos, *Lives of Eminent Commanders*, 22.2.2

²⁶ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.69.1

²⁷ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.69.2

the terms of the peace between Carthage and Rome, the Carthaginians were legally obligated to hand over Spendius back to his owner, where he would face torture and execution for running away. Mathos on the other hand was concerned about his fate once negotiations between the mercenaries and the Carthaginians concluded, as he was the chief representative of the disaffected Libyans. If Carthage was willing to punish its own generals with crucifixion for incompetence, one can only imagine the horrors to be inflicted on an insurrectionist – something that must have been also feared by the other Libyans as well, who would be at the mercy of the Punic commanders once the other mercenary groups were paid and sent home.²⁸ A third conspirator was Autaritus, a Gaul who served as an effective spokesman given his knowledge of the Phoenician language.²⁹ This cohort of extremists riled up the rest of the troops, and anyone who came forward to deal with the Carthaginian negotiators were immediately stoned to death. Despite Gisgo's best efforts, he was seized and put in chains, marking the beginning of the Mercenary War.³⁰

While an army of angry mercenaries was bad enough, the situation became even worse when Mathos persuaded his fellow Libyans in the North African countryside to join the mercenaries as well.³¹ The eagerness of the Libyans to take part in this venture is quite telling – their revolt was not only a threat to the internal security of Carthage's holdings, but a large amount of Carthaginian foodstuffs and weaponry were produced within the area, and a great number of Libyans were recruited into Punic armies.³² Taxes steadily rose as the war with Rome dragged on, with some Libyans being imprisoned by debt collectors until they paid their dues. Resentment boiled over among the tribes and cities, and when word of Mathos' actions reached them, they saw an opportunity for independence. Upwards of 70,000 Libyan men would add to the armies of the mercenaries, while their women sold their jewelry and household goods to help pay for the war effort.³³ Even the coinage given to the mercenaries by Gisgo had been restruct with the expression "of the Libyans" in Greek, a serious indicator that the mutiny now turned into a full-fledged rebellion intending to overthrow Carthage's hegemony over North Africa.³⁴

The mercenaries first move was to divide their army into two, besieging the cities of Utica and Hippou Acra while having the main camp at Tunis – Carthage meanwhile was stuck in the middle. Despite their weariness of war, many of the citizens immediately volunteered to join the defense of their city, and command was handed to the general Hanno, who had experience in fighting against both Libyan and Numidian tribesmen. By the spring of 240, Hanno led his newly trained recruits out to relieve the siege of Utica. Initially there was some success, but Hanno was not as capable of a commander as had been hoped – and, in fairness, many of the mercenaries were trained by Hamilcar Barca to employ hit-and-run tactics that were not easily countered. To fight fire with fire, the Carthaginians recalled Hamilcar from retirement and gave him complete control of the operations. With 10,000 men and a corps of war elephants, Hamilcar's army smashed the mercenary force at Utica, sending most of them fleeing to Tunis.

The Barcid commander's skill in battle was matched by his ability for diplomacy. Hamilcar was able to

²⁸ Hoyos, D. (2010): 206-207

²⁹ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.80

³⁰ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.70.4-7

³¹ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.70.8-9

³² Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.71

³³ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.72.1-4

³⁴ Miles, R. (2010): 204-205

establish an alliance with Naravas, a prince of the Numidians who was able to provide 2,000 of his skilled horsemen in return for a marriage alliance with the Barcid family.³⁵ Additionally, the Punic general was able to gain several new recruits from the mercenaries by offering them clemency once he had defeated and captured them. The generosity of Hamilcar became worrisome to the ringleaders of the mercenaries, who feared that the Libyans would cease their revolt should they be given lenient terms of surrender. As insurance, Spendius and Autaritus spread disinformation among the troops and warned them against Carthaginian duplicity. More gruesome was their choice to escalate the conflict even further: the mercenaries marched out several of their captives, including the negotiator Gisgo, who were summarily tortured and executed to the horror of everyone present. Any Carthaginian that fell into their hands was to be dismembered in the same fashion, and any rebel who showed an inclination for capitulating to the Carthaginians was to lose their hands. This brutality was responded to in kind by Hamilcar and the Carthaginian leadership, who now refused to take any prisoners and would toss them to the elephants to be trampled to death. All bets were off, and the war would descend into massacres and ever-greater acts of savagery.³⁶

As 239 rolled on, Hamilcar brought Hanno back into the fold, hoping that they were able to better deal with the mercenaries and Libyans if there were multiple armies coordinating. Political rivalries and disagreements in how to conduct the war only got in the way however, and worse yet was the defection of the cities of Utica and Hippou Acra.³⁷ Now with greater confidence, Mathos and Spendius took to besieging Carthage itself.³⁸ But with the mercenaries encamped outside of the city, Hamilcar was able to coordinate attacks on their supply line with the help of Naravas and his skilled riders, turning the besiegers into the besieged. They soon gave up the attack on Carthage, and the rebels summoned a force of 50,000 to deal with Barca. Hamilcar's experience in waging guerilla warfare in Sicily served him well, as he picked off smaller groups before retreating back into the countryside. Using the threat of his elephants and the Numidian horsemen, the mercenaries were gradually harassed and hemmed into a narrow pass, trapped like cattle and barred from any outside reinforcements or supplies.

Hamilcar's blockade had done its work to grisly effect: the starving mercenaries resorted to cannibalizing both the dead and the living to survive. Reduced to desperation, Spendius and Autaritus were soon delivered into captivity.³⁹ The Libyans themselves had nearly rioted from the rest of the mercenary army when they found out the officers were captured, but Hamilcar's army showed no mercy as they encircled and massacred the nearly 40,000 trapped men.⁴⁰ Of the original leaders of the rebellion, Mathos was the only one standing, but remained hidden at Tunis. Having followed the Libyan leader to the city, Hamilcar and Hannibal brought Spendius and Autaritus before the city walls and crucified them for all to see. Yet Mathos was able to surprise Hannibal's camp (for the Carthaginians had been stationed at opposite ends of the city), capturing the Punic commander. By the break of dawn, it was Hannibal's body that hung from the cross, with the mutilated remains of Carthaginian soldiers surrounding him like some sort of grotesque offering. I am omitting details for many of these events, which by this point must have been psychologically exhausting for both sides. Undeterred, Hamilcar continued the siege into 237, and Mathos decided to throw fate to the wind and engage in one final

³⁵ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.78.1-9

³⁶ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.80.11-1.82.2

³⁷ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.82.8-10; Cornelius Nepos, *Lives of Eminent Commanders*, 22.2.4

³⁸ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.82.11

³⁹ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.84.9-1.85.5

⁴⁰ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.85.6-7

battle. Unfortunately for him it ended in his defeat, and Mathos was paraded in chains throughout Carthage, while the rest of the Libyan cities capitulated to Hamilcar and the other commanders, ending the crisis.

Lasting nearly three and a half years, the brutality of the Mercenary War was considered shocking even by the appalling standards of ancient warfare. Polybius believed that the conflict was “*distinguished by far greater savagery and disregard for convention than any other war in human history*”.⁴¹ Thanks to the skilled leadership of Hamilcar and the resilience of its citizens, Carthage danced on the edge of the oblivion and triumphed. The invasions of Agathocles and Regulus were certainly major incidents, but the rebellion of the mercenaries and Libyans was an existential threat, and the conduct of the war certainly reflects it. Time would be needed to heal, but the glories of Hamilcar gave him enough political clout to consider ventures away from home, in the region of Spain.

Barcid Spain

With the end of the Mercenary War, Carthage underwent a serious political transformation, which is altogether unsurprising. The people were unhappy with current leadership, feeling that they had been bungling one problem after another. Carthage’s government was structured as an oligarchy, with a Council of Elders and two leading officials known as the *sufetes*, akin to the Roman Senate and Consuls.⁴² There was little chance for the voice of the average Carthaginian to be heard, but with decades of warfare and nothing to show for it, they grew tired of the arrangement. As an Achaean aristocrat, Polybius explains it as a slide into a situation that was, at best, a state similar to democracy. At worst, it was pure demagoguery, and the main beneficiary of this change was Hamilcar Barca.⁴³ Hamilcar was the general that won the great victories in Sicily, the savior from the menace of the Mercenary War. He became the rallying figure around which the Carthaginians could celebrate, and so the Barcid clan was able to gain a tremendous amount of influence within the city. This did not sit well with the Elders, who raised charges against Hamilcar on the grounds that it was his false promises in Sicily that caused so much discontent among the mercenaries and inspired the revolt. He was acquitted on all charges, no thanks to the support of the people and a new ally, Hasdrubal, an important member of the Carthaginian elite that married Hamilcar’s daughter.⁴⁴ Hamilcar would also leverage his newfound clout to authorize a military expedition in search of new lands and goods to restore Carthage to her former glory.

The chaos inflicted upon the North African countryside meant that a new source of income needed to be found – not only did they have to cover the costs of the First Punic War and the Mercenary War, but they also still had the indemnity to Rome. This could potentially be found abroad, but where to go? Sicily and Italy were obviously not on the table, and North Africa still needed time to settle down, as evidenced by a revolt among the Numidians that broke out not too long after Hamilcar’s trial.⁴⁵ If they went east, they would have drawn the attention of the Hellenistic kings. The only solution therefore was

⁴¹ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.88

⁴² Polybius, *The Histories*, 6.51.1-2; This council has also been likened to the Spartan *Gerousia*.

⁴³ Polybius, *The Histories*, 6.51.4-6; Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 25.8.1

⁴⁴ Appian, *Spanish Wars*, 4; Cornelius Nepos, *Lives of Eminent Commanders*, 22.3.2

⁴⁵ Appian, *Spanish Wars*, 4

to expand into Spain, known as Iberia to the Greeks and Hispania to the Romans.⁴⁶ Carthaginian influence had already been felt in the area thanks to the settlement of colonies and trading posts, the most important of these being Gadir (modern Gades), and they held a close commercial relationship with the nearby Celtiberian tribes.⁴⁷ Punic officials were also probably quite aware that Iberia possessed great mineral wealth, particularly in silver – a fact that may seem ironic in hindsight given the Spanish conquest of the Americas.⁴⁸ Strabo claims that Hamilcar himself witnessed the everyday use of silver by the local tribes for drinking vessels, and even for troughs used to feed animals.⁴⁹ Exaggeration or not, the Carthaginian treasury was in desperate need of precious metals, as attested to by the overwhelming proportion of bronze coins minted during this time.⁵⁰

Hamilcar departed across the sea to Iberia in late 237, never to return to Carthage again.⁵¹ Joining along with him in this venture was his new son-in-law Hasdrubal, and his nine year old son, Hannibal. According to a story apparently relayed to King Antiochus III by Hannibal himself, his father had been overseeing the sacrifice to Ba'al Hammon to ask for good fortune on the adventure. The omens confirmed the god's approval, and Hamilcar turned to his son and asked if he wished to go with him. Hannibal agreed, and with one hand on the altar he swore an oath to never act towards the Romans in goodwill, and to remain an eternal enemy.⁵² Quite dramatic, and who is to say what is or isn't true about this tale. But serving alongside his father and brother-in-law would provide Hannibal with a wealth of military experience. For the next nine years, the Barcids oversaw the consolidation and growth of the Carthaginian's Spanish holdings. The Iberian tribes were brought into the fold by diplomacy and by conquest. Mines were set up and restored, bringing life to the Carthaginian economy once again. Beautiful Barcid silver coins minted in Spain show a depiction of Heracles-Melqart, a combination of Hellenic and Punic imagery that was intended to communicate the strength of Carthage to the Hellenistic communities in the Mediterranean.⁵³

Hamilcar's success could not last forever though. In 228, the patriarch of the Barcid clan was killed in battle or in ambush, and in some versions he sacrificed himself so that his sons could escape.⁵⁴ Command would fall to Hasdrubal, who continued the work of his father-in-law. He was extremely successful and saw the expansion of Carthage's dominion, which approximately covered from the provinces of Andalucia in the west to Valencia in the east. The Romans meanwhile, who were previously more focused on the threat of the Celts, did indeed take note of the developments in Spain. According to tradition, two separate envoys were sent by Rome to investigate Carthaginian operations in Iberia. The first in 231 indicated to the Romans that there was nothing to be concerned: Hamilcar told them

⁴⁶ Strabo, *Geography*, 3.4.19 explains that "Iberia" was originally the territory on the side of the Ebro (Iberus) River closest to the Atlantic, but the Romans (confusingly) referred to the whole province as both Hispania and Iberia (though it would be known as "Closer" and "Further" Hispania).

⁴⁷ Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 5.33.1; Cunliffe, B. (2018): 76-82

⁴⁸ Strabo, *Geography*, 3.2.8-11; Polybius, *The Histories*, 34.9.8-11

⁴⁹ Strabo, *Geography*, 3.2.14

⁵⁰ Miles, R. (2010): 217

⁵¹ Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.1.5-6; Appian, *Spanish Wars*, 5; Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 25.10.1; Cornelius Nepos, *Lives of Eminent Commanders*, 22.3.1

⁵² Polybius, *The Histories*, 11; Livy, *The History of Rome*, 21.1.4-5

⁵³ Miles, R. (2010): 220-222; ANS 1944.100.81012

⁵⁴ Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.1.7-8; Appian, *Spanish War*, 5; Justin, *Epitome*, 44.5.4; Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 25.10.3-5

that he was only interested in Spain to pay off the indemnity.⁵⁵ A much more documented second embassy was also sent in 226, where the Roman officials struck an agreement with Hasdrubal which demarcated the Ebro River (modern Catalonia): anything north of the river fell into the Roman sphere of influence, while the south was to belong to Carthage.⁵⁶ We will talk more about this agreement in a little bit.

But like with Hamilcar, Hasdrubal was to end his career violently. Rather than dying in battle though, he was assassinated in 221 by one of the Celtiberians as an act of revenge for a personal slight.⁵⁷ Naturally, control fell into the hands of 26-year-old Hannibal, who was immediately elevated to the position of general by the army. The experience from serving under his father and brother-in-law, in addition to his own innate genius, made itself apparent in the campaigns immediately following Hasdrubal's death. One by one, Hannibal won a series of brilliant victories against the tribes throughout Spain in 221 and 220, his armies marching as far north as modern Salamanca and at the easternmost part of the Tagus River.⁵⁸ This would ultimately bring him into contact with the city of Saguntum in 219. In contrast to the tribes and settlements that Hannibal previously laid siege to, the Saguntines were technically allies with Rome. There is great controversy as to when and how this relationship was established, or to what extent we can even call it a formal alliance.⁵⁹ Polybius claimed that Hannibal was fully aware of their relationship, and understood that that he would incur the wrath of the Romans if he dared attack it. Yet he did, igniting a conflict that would last for nearly twenty years.

Outbreak of the Second Punic War

Hannibal's siege of Saguntum is the key moment that all sources agree to be the official start of the Second Punic War. But before we continue, we need to assess how all the events I have covered during this episode contributed to the outbreak of war. Given the pro-Roman (if not anti-Carthaginian) nature of our sources, and perhaps with the outcome of the Third Punic War in mind, some scholars are inclined to take a sympathetic stance with Carthage and view the Romans as overly aggressive and belligerent during this interwar period. There is evidence for this position: the Treaty of Lutetia that ended the First Punic War was signed under sour pretenses. The draft originally agreed upon by both parties saw the Carthaginians paying 2,200 talents over 20 years, but the Senate imposed an additional 1,000 talents and halved the remittance period to 10 years at the last moment.⁶⁰ During the Mercenary War, Rome took the opportunity to take control of Sardinia while the Carthaginians were occupied with more pressing concerns, as the Carthaginian troops stationed on the island also revolted in 238. When the *sufetes* protested the acquisition, they dropped the issue after the Senate intimidated them with the threat of another war. To add insult to injury, an additional payment of 1,200 talents was added to the indemnity as an "incentive".⁶¹ Polybius himself heavily criticized the Romans for this action, outright claiming that it was unjustly stolen.⁶² Roman interests must have been concerned about the possible

⁵⁵ Cassius Dio, *Fragments*, 48; Hoyos, D. (1997): 144-149 dismisses this earlier visit as a fabrication of later authors, whereas Miles, R. (2010): 225 n.34 sees no reason not to accept the stories as genuine.

⁵⁶ Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.13.3-7; Livy, *The History of Rome*, 21.2.7; Appian, *Spanish Wars*, 7

⁵⁷ Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.36.1; Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 25.12.1

⁵⁸ Polybius, *The Histories*, 3.13.1-14.8; Livy, *The History of Rome*, 21.5-6

⁵⁹ Hoyos, D. (1997): 174-184

⁶⁰ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.62-63

⁶¹ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.88.7; Hoyos, D. (1997): 132-143

⁶² Polybius, *The Histories*, 3.10.4, 3.28.1-2, 3.30.4

revival of Carthaginian power, as Sardinia would be an invaluable staging point for an invasion of Sicily and Italy. By hamstringing them financially, the additional indemnity would keep them preoccupied.⁶³

Polybius believed that there were three major causes for the conflict: the first being the resentment of Hamilcar Barca, the second the Roman seizure of Sardinia and additional indemnity of 1,200 talents, and third was the expansion of Carthaginian power in Spain.⁶⁴ Of the three, Polybius believed that the seizure of Sardinia was the most important. It compelled the Carthaginians to move into Iberia, gaining access to the Spanish silver mines to pay off the indemnity, but the ample surplus would be used to fill the treasury. In addition to its mineral wealth, they were now able to recruit many warriors from the Celtiberian tribes, who were some of the fiercest fighters around.⁶⁵ They would serve in Carthaginian armies in the Second Punic War as the Libyan and Numidian tribes had done in Sicily.⁶⁶ The influx of these resources alone would be concerning, but the purpose and aim of acquiring them were also affected by the loss of Sardinia. Hamilcar was already bitter enough about the outcome of the war in Sicily, but the Republic's theft and intimidation only magnified it further. This hatred spurred on the Barcid family to plan for another war against Rome, which otherwise may not have been the case had the Senate left Sardinia well enough alone.

Certainly the Republic was opportunistic and bullheaded in many of its dealings with their Punic neighbors. But we also see that Rome could be quite conciliatory, even when they had nothing to gain from doing so. At one point, Carthage had imprisoned hundreds of Roman merchants who were selling supplies to the mercenaries. Rather than take any aggressive action, the Senate was able to work out a very favorable arrangement on their part: for the freedom of the merchants, Rome imposed a ban on any trade with the mercenaries under the threat of punishment and set up a logistics network to sell to the Carthaginians instead. On their own initiative, Rome freed over 2,700 Carthaginian prisoners taken during the First Punic War and returned them to Africa, and even refused an offer of surrender of Utica by the mercenaries.⁶⁷ Perhaps this generosity is overly stressed upon in the Roman tradition, and Rome had no desire to see a subordinate power replaced with angry bands of wayward soldiers. Rome's ally King Hiero of Syracuse also made a great contribution of foodstuffs to the Carthaginians, though Polybius notes that his actions were probably out of his desire to prevent the Romans becoming the uncontested power in the region should the Punic city fall.⁶⁸ Even the declaration of the Ebro as the border is completely understandable: the invasions by the Celts must have made the Senate extremely nervous about the stability of their northern frontier, and should the Carthaginians continue to expand into Gaul, such ramifications would have been felt in Italy. Because the Romans were preoccupied with the invasion of the Gaesatae and other Celtic tribes, the Carthaginians could establish themselves in Spain with relatively little oversight during Hamilcar's time.⁶⁹ Indeed, the Romans did not contest the Carthaginian's control over their current Spanish holdings. In fact, the Romans had vowed to not meddle

⁶³ Hoyos, D. (1997): 142

⁶⁴ Polybius, *The Histories*, 3.9-10

⁶⁵ Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 5.33.2-5; Hoyos, D. (2003): 46

⁶⁶ Goldsworthy, A. (2007): 148

⁶⁷ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.83; Cassius Dio, *The Histories*, 12.17; Cornelius Nepos, *Lives of the Eminent Commanders*, 22.2.3; 2,743 men were freed according to Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Deeds and Sayings*, 5.1.1; Appian, *Spanish Wars*, 4 claims that Sardinia was taken as compensation for the attacks on the merchants, though this is certainly incorrect.

⁶⁸ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.83.1-4

⁶⁹ Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.22.9-11

in the Carthaginian side of the Ebro whatsoever – though whether they honored this vow is another question. The only issue they were concerned about was the threat that may develop from Hasdrubal's future conquests. A parameter that is purposefully vague, mind you, and one that the Romans could potentially exploit.

But how much did Rome really have to fear from a resurgent Carthage? One thing to recognize is the aggressively tenacity with which the Carthaginians looked to restore their position in the Mediterranean. Despite decades of warfare with Rome, the Libyan rebels, and mercenaries, they still planned on a costly campaign to retake Sardinia, only to be stopped with a Roman intervention. Hamilcar's expedition into Spain took place with the full consent of the common people and government less than a year after the conclusion of Mercenary War. True, the main motivating factor was almost certainly the need to pay off the indemnity of Rome, made even worse by the piling on of another 1,200 talents to the debt after the loss of Sardinia.⁷⁰ But part of the reason that Hamilcar had become so popular with the average Carthaginian was his willingness to continue the First Punic War, and the Council's decision to offer terms and abandon Sicily was seen as cowardly and premature.⁷¹ The force that was required to campaign in Iberia was massive. By Hasdrubal's day, the Carthaginian army may have numbered somewhere around 60,000 infantry, 8,000 horse, and 200 elephants.⁷² Much of these mercenaries were paid for with Spanish silver, but along with its mineral wealth, Spain provided a large recruitment pool of Celtiberian warriors.⁷³

In many ways, the Second Punic War may be viewed as a conflict between the Romans and the Barcid family, rather than strictly a war between Rome and Carthage. To clarify a bit, the Barcas themselves were not particularly well-regarded or trusted among the Carthaginian elite. While it is unlikely that Hamilcar could not have undertaken the Iberian mission without the consent of the Council, he had to leverage his popularity with the masses and his political alliances with other members of the Carthaginian elite to escape conviction at his trial and secure command of a major overseas expedition.⁷⁴ Once he reached Spain, Hamilcar was given *carte blanche* to conduct operations in the area, expressing behaviors that have been viewed by some as similar to Hellenistic kings.⁷⁵ Cities were founded by both him and Hasdrubal, the most important of these being Carthago Nova: New Carthage (modern Cartagena), a name that either could be paying homage to the mother city or intended as its replacement.⁷⁶ The alliances between the Carthaginians and the Celtiberians could be better described as a personal relationship between the Barcids and the families of the Celtiberian elite: Hasdrubal married the daughter of a local Spanish chieftain, much like how Hamilcar secured the loyalty of Naravas of Numidia by offering the hand of his daughter, and Hannibal also married a Iberian woman from the allied city of Castulo. Diodorus claims that Hasdrubal took the Carthaginian equivalent of the title *strategos autokrator*, supreme general of all Iberia.⁷⁷ Hamilcar's rage over the suffering of Carthage and its treatment by Rome is said to have been the motivation behind all these changes, and the desire of

⁷⁰ Miles, R. (2010): 217

⁷¹ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 21.1.5

⁷² Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 25.12.1

⁷³ Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 5.33.2-5; Hoyos, D. (2003): 46

⁷⁴ Polybius, *The Histories*, 6.51.4-6; Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 25.8.1

⁷⁵ Miles, R. (2010): 217-227

⁷⁶ Polybius, *The Histories*, 6.13.1-2

⁷⁷ Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 25.12.1; Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.78.1-9, 2.36.2; Livy, *The History of Rome*, 24.41.7

vengeance was passed on to Hannibal as well. As Livy put it:

*“Hamilcar’s ghost could not remain calm, nor could any son of his, and, while anyone of Barca’s lineage or name remained, the treaty with Rome would never remain undisturbed.”*⁷⁸

The growing autonomy of the Barcids was also preventing the Council from having any real administrative oversight in their Iberian territories. Normally they would be the ones to appoint a new commander in the event the previous one was killed or stepped down. But when Hasdrubal replaced Hamilcar, and Hannibal replaced Hasdrubal, the army had been the one to make the decision before the Council provided its consent, much to the outrage of some of the most vocal anti-Barcid party members.⁷⁹ Once given, it was viewed as a mere formality, an acknowledgement of their impotency.⁸⁰

This brings us back to Saguntum. Polybius suggests that Hannibal planned to master the countryside of Spain and make Saguntum his final target, as he knew that it was going to bring the attentions of the Romans.⁸¹ Livy and Appian claim that the Barcid commander fabricated a *cassus belli*, falsely arguing that the Saguntines were attacking one of the Spanish tribes in the Carthaginian protectorate.⁸² The Saguntines meanwhile had been watching Hannibal’s approach with a wary eye, and sent word to Rome immediately when the first Carthaginian troops appeared in their territory. In the winter of 220/219, Roman envoys were sent to Hannibal’s winter quarters at Carthago Nova to investigate and warn Hannibal against attacking the city.

On what grounds did the Romans have to step in on behalf of Saguntum? As I relayed earlier, there was some sort of alliance or close tie established between Rome and the Saguntines. Whether this was a formal military alliance – whereby the Romans would seek to defend the Saguntines and vice versa should either one be attacked – or just an established political friendship, it isn’t exactly clear.⁸³ Saguntum (modern Sagunto) is quite south of the Ebro River, 30 kilometers (18 miles) north of the city of Valencia, thus legally placing it within the Carthaginian sphere of influence as per the Treaty of the Ebro. This makes the timing and circumstances of the Romano-Saguntine alliance quite suspect, and our sources fail to mention when exactly this may have taken place, though Polybius off-handedly states that it may have gone back as far as Hamilcar’s day.⁸⁴ According to the Ebro treaty, Rome should not have meddled in the Carthaginian sphere to begin with, something that may have been recognized by the Romans themselves. In Polybius’ recounting of events the Saguntines were under Rome’s protection, but he also incorrectly places Saguntum north of the Ebro.⁸⁵ For much of his research, Polybius used the work of those like Fabius Pictor, the first known Roman historian. Polybius admits that Fabius was overt in his patriotic bias, and the incorrect assertion of Saguntum’s position relative to the river may have been a way to give greater legitimacy to Roman outrage.⁸⁶

⁷⁸ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 21.10.3

⁷⁹ Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 25.12.1; Cornelius Nepos, *Lives of the Eminent Commanders*, 22.3.3; Appian, *Spanish Wars*, 8; Livy, *The History of Rome*, 21.3.5

⁸⁰ Miles, R. (2010): 220-228

⁸¹ Polybius, *The Histories*, 3.14.10

⁸² Livy, *The History of Rome*, 21.6.1-3; Appian, *Spanish Wars*, 8; Appian, *The Punic Wars*,

⁸³ Hunt, P.N. (2017): 32

⁸⁴ Polybius, *The Histories*, 3.14.10 states that Hannibal was not to attack Saguntum until he seized control of the rest of Spain, as per the advice of his father. Whether Saguntum was to be the launching point in Hamilcar’s plans for war, or whether he just was advising to consolidate control in Iberia, is unclear.

⁸⁵ Polybius, *The Histories*, 3.14.5

⁸⁶ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.14.1-4, 3.9.1-5

As per the envoys at Carthago Nova, attacking Saguntum would be a violation of the *fides* or trust between the Romans and the Saguntines, and so Rome would be obligated out of morality and honor to protect their allies. Hannibal was not pleased at this response, scorning at the notion of “trust” when recalling the Sardinia incident.⁸⁷ Fueled with the desire for vengeance, Hannibal cast his die and began the siege of Saguntum in the spring of 219. For almost eight months he worked on capturing the city, even suffering a vicious leg wound in the process. Upon taking it, he razed the city to the ground, slaughtering or enslaving its inhabitants, and returned to his winter quarters in Carthago Nova.⁸⁸ In the meanwhile, Roman envoys tried to meet with Hannibal during the siege, but were rebuffed and never granted an audience. They then sailed off, this time to Carthage itself. Already one step ahead, Hannibal sent word to the pro-Barcid party members back home to get to work on riling up the Council and the citizens against the Roman cause, and the meeting was ultimately pointless for the Romans.⁸⁹ When the news about the vicious destruction of Saguntum reached the Roman Senate, they sent a second embassy to Carthage in early 218 while the consuls set about conscripting the legions. Meeting with the Council of Elders, the envoys gave them an ultimatum: hand over Hannibal Barca for punishment, along with any of his loyal party members, or face war. Yet Carthage stood firm, refusing to concede to the demands of the Romans.

As stated earlier, there were signs of a rift between the Barcids and the Carthaginian elders. Why then did the Punic government vote to go to war with Rome on their behalf? Perhaps there may be too much emphasis placed on the autonomy of the Barcids and their supposed separation from North Africa.⁹⁰ They, in fact, continued to play an important role in Carthage as well, such as when Hasdrubal was sent home to confront a Numidian revolt.⁹¹ Hannibal also repeatedly sent for instruction from the Council, including what to do with Saguntum and the threat of Roman retaliation.⁹² The patterns of behavior of Hannibal and his predecessors, such as the establishment of personal alliances, were not necessarily outside of the parameters that were extended to Carthaginian commanders – the Council clearly held enough faith in the Barcids as their representatives as to manage the Spanish cash cow, and oversee the conduct of the war against Rome. Certainly there were anti-Barcid elements among the Carthaginian elite, as was made clear when the figure name Hanno made a passionate speech about cooperating with the Romans and urging them to give up Hannibal as requested. Livy’s portrayal of Hanno is surely as a mouthpiece for the Roman point of view, but the historian does admit that he was the minority figure – most of the Elders were in favor of Hannibal and standing up to Roman threats.

Additionally, we cannot foist all the blame on the actions of Hannibal. While his siege and sack of Saguntum was the immediate catalyst, the Carthaginians had plenty of umbrage that pushed them to fight the Romans. Never mind the humiliation of the Treaty of Lutatius, the indemnities, and the loss of Sardinia, the Senate was actively trying to prevent the expansion of Carthaginian power.⁹³ As I’ve already relayed, Rome’s establishment of the Ebro River as the boundary of the Roman and Carthaginian

⁸⁷ Polybius, *The Histories*, 3.15.6-11

⁸⁸ Polybius, *The Histories*, 3.17.1-11; Livy, *The History of Rome*, 21.7-9; Appian, *Spanish Wars*, 10-12

⁸⁹ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 21.9.4

⁹⁰ Hoyos, D. (1997): 150-154

⁹¹ Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 25.10.3

⁹² Polybius, *The Histories*, 3.15.8

⁹³ Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.13.7

spheres of influence did not necessarily challenge the Barcid control over southern Spain. What it did do was place an artificial cap on that growth, implicitly suggesting that Carthage was the subordinate in their relationship.⁹⁴ The Carthaginian Council – who were obviously not happy that they were ignored in favor of the Barcids – dryly noted to the embassy of 218 that this agreement was not made between the Senate and the Elders of Carthage, but between Rome and Hasdrubal.⁹⁵ They also challenged the validity of using Saguntum as a cause for war, for it was never agreed upon as per the Treaty of Lutatius. Now Rome was ordering the Council to hand over their own commander for punishment. Clearly the dismissive manner of Rome in their treatment of the Carthaginians was challenging their authority and position in the Mediterranean.

Saguntum was for the Second Punic War what Sarajevo was for the First World War: a spark that lit a decades-old powder keg. The Romans and Carthaginians were not necessarily destined to go to war of course, and it would be too simplistic to attribute its main causes to the machinations of the Barcid family. As we have seen, there are many variables that arose to precipitate the outbreak of the war. It ultimately was a scenario where two great powers did not wish to back down to the demands or ambitions of the other out of fear of losing face or to their prestige challenged.⁹⁶ Rome did not want Carthage to become a threat again, a fear exacerbated by the instability of their northern border as seen with the wars against the Celts of the Po Valley. Carthage meanwhile did not want to be treated as a subordinate or second-rate power, its citizens eagerly pushing for the restoration of the city's former position as a top power of the Mediterranean after suffering through the First Punic War and the Mercenary War. Hannibal's impetuosity is said to have been brought about by his youth and out of a desire to honor his father, his actions helping push the Roman and Carthaginian leadership to continue to make a series of poor decisions.⁹⁷

After delivering the ultimatum to the Carthaginians, it is said that that one of the Roman ambassadors, Fabius Maximus, held a fold of his toga in hand, exclaiming to his Punic audience:

"Here we bring you war and peace. Take whichever you please!"

Unanimously, the Council of Elders roared back that Fabius could *give* whatever he desired, and so the elder Roman threw down his hand, ushering in the Second Punic War.⁹⁸ While the Romans may have prepared to face off against the Carthaginians in Spain or North Africa, little could they have possibly imagined that the fight would be brought to them. Hannibal and his army had already made its way across the Ebro River, intend on invading Italy through the Alps.

⁹⁴ Eckstein, A.M. (2006): 170-171

⁹⁵ Polybius, *The Histories*, 3.21.1; Livy, *The History of Rome*, 21.1

⁹⁶ Eckstein, A.M. (2006): 174; Hoyos, D. (1997): 253; Goldsworthy, A (2007): 149-150

⁹⁷ Polybius, *The Histories*, 3.15.6

⁹⁸ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 21.19.13-14

References

Primary

Appian – The Illyrian Wars
Appian – The Spanish Wars
Appian – The Punic Wars
Cassius Dio – The Histories
Cornelius Nepos – Lives of Eminent Commanders
Diodorus Siculus – Library of History
Justin – Epitome
Livy – The History of Rome
Livy – Periochae
Plutarch – Life of Fabius Maximus
Plutarch – Life of Marcellus
Polybius – The Histories
Strabo – Geography
Valerius Maximus – Memorable Deeds and Sayings

Secondary

Beck, H. (2011) *The Reasons for the War in A Companion to the Punic Wars*, Pgs. 225-240
Cunliffe, B. (2018) *The Ancient Celts, Second Edition*
Eckstein, A.M. (2006) *Mediterranean Anarchy, Interstate War, and the Rise of Rome*
Hoyos, D. (1997) *Unplanned Wars: The Origins of the First and Second Punic Wars*
Hoyos, D. (2003) *Hannibal's Dynasty: Power and politics in the western Mediterranean, 247-183 BC*
Hoyos, D. (2007) *Truceless War: Carthage's Fight for Survival, 241 to 237 BC*
Hunt, P.N. (2017) *Hannibal*
Goldsworthy, A. (2007) *The Fall of Carthage: The Punic Wars 265-146 BC*
Miles, R. (2010) *Carthage Must Be Destroyed: The Rise and Fall of an Ancient Civilization*