

The Role of Marius's Military Reforms in the Decline of the
Roman Republic

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I

Gaius Marius' military reforms caused more problems for the Roman Republic than any enemy of Rome ever could. Marius's reforms were created to strengthen the Republic by professionalizing Rome's military, but instead the political impact of the reforms had long term consequences that helped contribute to the decline of the late Roman Republic. In this paper the decline of the Roman Republic refers to the weakening of the Senate's authority over Rome's military and generals. The reform with the biggest impact was the opening up of the military to the *capite censi* or landless poor. In passing this reform Marius opened up the military to Rome's largest class, but it created problems for the Republic, in the form of what to do with the men once they retired from active duty. Marius believed that he solved the issue of what to do with the retired men, when he made a deal with the Senate to give his troops plots of land on retirement. Instead of fixing the problem, Marius opened the door for other generals to use the giving of land to manipulate their troops into supporting their political ambitions.

Marius did not use his troops to gain political power, but his reforms allowed other generals to test their troop's loyalty. After the Social War generals began to realize they had the complete loyalty of their troops. Lucius Cornelius Sulla was the first general to realize he could use his troops for his own political ends and he capitalized on it by marching his forces on Rome in 88 and 82 BC. Sulla's success at marching on Rome started a ripple effect causing other generals to imitate his actions, by using their legions as their own political weapons to help advance their political careers.

After Marius soldiers relied on their generals to provide them with an opportunity to gain loot and to provide them with land upon retirement. The generals relied on their troops to give

them complete loyalty and to support them in their goals to gain political power. Due to Marius's reforms the loyalty of the Roman legions started to shift away from the State in favor of the generals. Since the State did not offer a retirement plan, the soldiers began to lose any loyalty they felt to the State. If a general did not offer his soldiers a chance at looting and therefore gain their loyalty, the soldiers did not become loyal to the State, but instead tried to transfer to serve under a new general, who looked out for his soldier's interests. Sulla and Caesar were masters at gaining their troops loyalty to the point where they had created their own private armies. Both Sulla and Caesar knew the way to the troop's loyalty was through wealth, which made them very generous in their spoils of war.

The giving of land to retired veterans may not have been the best idea since the majority of the troops were from the landless society, and they did not have the farming background that allowed them to be successful on their new land. This becomes evident at the time of the Catiline conspiracy, when Sulla's veterans in Etruria became discontent and bankrupt.¹ Even though the giving of land may not have been the best pension plan, generals fought with the Senate to give their troops land, and soldiers were loyal to generals who delivered on their promise of land grants.

The two biggest imitators of Sulla were Catiline and Caesar. Catiline was unsuccessful in his attempts, but Caesar was very successful and helped usher in a new era for Rome. This paper examines three events where the political impact of Marius's military reforms is most evident in contributing to the decline of the Roman Republic. The three events are Sulla's and Caesar's dictatorships, and the Catiline conspiracy. Marius's military reforms contributed to the decline of the Roman Republic by allowing generals to use the giving of land as a pension to gain the

¹ Richard Edwin Smith, *The Failure of the Roman Republic* (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 102.

loyalty of the troops, whom they used as a political weapon against their enemies in order to gain control of the State.

II

From the founding of Rome, up until the reforms of Marius in 104 BC, the Roman military was a non professional army, made up of land owning citizens. The population was organized into five classes, with the Equestrian class forming the sixth class. The Equestrian class was composed of the wealthiest individuals, which allowed them to become cavalry because they could afford the upkeep of having horses. The rest of the land owning population fell into the five classes, based on wealth and served as infantry.² The *capite censi*, or landless poor, were not allowed to serve in the military, except for emergency situations. In the early and middle Republic, the State did not supply arms and armor; it was up to each individual to supply their own military equipment. The land owning populace had more to lose, which made them willing to fight.

The citizens who qualified for enrolment in the military saw their participation in the defence of the State as their civil duty, responsibility, and also as a privilege.³ These early soldiers were loyal to the Republic. They held prominent places in society and once the fighting was over they could go back to their farms and continue on with their lives. The campaign season began in March and ended in October.⁴ The men were usually away fighting for a few weeks to a few months at most and were able to return to their farms in time to finish the harvest. Since these early soldiers were land owning citizens, they did not have to rely on their general to

² Lawrence Keppie, *The Making of the Roman Army: from Republic to Empire* (London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 5.

³ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

give them a piece of land upon retirement. They did not require any retirement plans, because their farms and livelihood were waiting for them on their dismissal from service.

Most of the men were willing to leave their farms for a short time to fulfill their military duty, due to the amount of booty they could gather in a campaign season. The troops were allowed to keep all the loot they acquired, which became viewed as an incentive or financial compensation for their military service.⁵ Most of the soldiers were able to return from military service with money and goods that helped make up for the profits they lost while they were away. As Rome began to expand into lands further away, the soldiers had to leave their farms for longer periods, which put strains on the family left behind, who cared for the farm. Many farms went into ruin, because there was no one left to harvest and replant. Others lost their farms to ambitious neighbors, who used the time the man was away to buy the land from the struggling family.⁶

Rome started to experience recruitment issues after the Second Punic War, when the Republic started to acquire land outside of Italy. These new oversea areas required a standing force to keep them loyal to the Republic. The military based on militia farmers was not designed to be used to keep a standing presence overseas.⁷ The recruitment problem also stemmed from public land being sold to wealthy members of the Senate between 180 and 170 BC.⁸ Members of the Senate used the public land to create large farms worked by slaves, to produce cash crops, such as olive oil and wine. These farms became known as *latifundia* and the Senators or wealthy individuals who owned these were not concerned with feeding the city's populace, but instead used the farms to turn a profit.

⁵ Ibid., 55.

⁶ Appian, *The Civil Wars* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 5.

⁷ Klaus Bringmann, *A History of Roman Republic* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 151.

⁸ Ibid., 144.

In order to fix the recruitment issues, the Senate lowered the military land requirements. The army was brought back up to strength, but it was only a quick fix and did not permanently fix the problem. The recruitment problem reappeared in 113 BC, when Germanic and Celtic tribes, consisting mostly of the Cimbri and Teutoni people, started to migrate into Roman lands. In their first encounter with the Cimbri, Rome experienced a disastrous defeat that almost cost them a whole army. In 112 BC Jugurtha was fighting his two brothers for the control of Numidia, which caused Rome to fight two separate wars at the same time.

The Senate saw the Germanic and Celtic tribes as the bigger threat, but was persuaded against their better judgment by the Equites who saw more profit in the war with Jugurtha.⁹ The Equestrian class was mostly involved in banking, money lending, tax collection, and the execution of public contracts. They believed a war with Jugurtha would give Rome a better position to profit from trade and investments in Numidia. The Equites found a tribune named Memmius who was sympathetic to their cause and used him to use the powers of his office to push their interests through. With the help from the tribune, the Equites were successful in pressuring the Senate to declare war on Jugurtha in 110 BC.

Rome suffered a slow start in the war with Jugurtha, but by the end of 110 BC, Quintus Caecilius Metellus took over command of the war and gave Rome some victories. Metellus proved to be a capable commander, but was unable to win the war quickly. Metellus's inability to end the war allowed his legate Gaius Marius to gain the consulship for 107 BC. As the new consul Marius replaced Metellus as the commander in the war.

⁹ Smith, *Failure of Roman Republic*, 96.

III

Gaius Marius came from a wealthy family from Arpinum and was part of the Equestrian class. It was not uncommon for men from his class to join the lowest ranks of the Senate and be sponsored by a patrician house. Marius joined the military where he was an excellent soldier, and was able to advance up through the ranks of the military. Marius became noticed by the Metellus family, who sponsored him in his political career. Marius was an ambitious man, who desired to gain the consulship. In 108 BC, an opportunity opened for Marius to run for the consulship. When he asked Metellus if he could leave for Rome to seek the consulship, Metellus tried to talk him out of it, which infuriated Marius.¹⁰ Due to ambition and anger to Metellus, Marius gained the support of the troops and Equestrian businessmen by telling them he could end the war in few days.¹¹ Marius was also able to gain the support of the plebs, who were going through a period of elevating new men.¹² With the support of the Equites and the plebs, Marius was able to gain the consulship in 107 BC along with full command of the war with Jugurtha.

In Sallust's account of the Jugurthine war, he mentions the recruiting Marius conducted before going back to Numidia: "he himself in the meantime enrolled soldiers, not according to the classes in the manner of our forefathers, but allowing anyone to volunteer, for the most part of the proletariat."¹³ This recruiting from the *capite censi* seems to have been a necessity due to the reappearance of the recruitment problem. Marius may have also wanted loyal soldiers with him when he went to take command of the army that had been working with Metellus. The recruitment of the *capite censi*, during the Jugurtha campaign was the first step in the direction Marius was going to take Rome's military during his second consulship. The Senate did not

¹⁰ Sallust, *Sallust*, trans. John Carew Rolfe (London: Harvard University Press, 1960), 273-275.

¹¹ Sallust, *War with Jugurtha*, 275.

¹² *Ibid.*, 277.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 323.

approve of Marius's recruitment of the *capite censi*, but he had the support of the plebs and their tribunes, which made him untouchable in the Senate.¹⁴

Marius was not able to end the war as quickly as he boasted, but he did end the war by negotiating with Jugurtha's father in law King Bocchus for the surrender of Jugurtha. Marius sent his *quaestor* Lucius Cornelius Sulla to finish the negotiations and take Jugurtha off of Bocchus's hands.¹⁵ For his work Sulla claimed to have ended the war, which started the enmity between him and Marius.

IV

Marius's first order of business during his second consulship was the reorganization of the military. Since Rome had suffered four major defeats at the hands of the Germanic and Celtic tribes, Marius was facing an issue of not being able to recruit enough soldiers. In order to fix the recruitment problem, Marius eliminated the land requirement opening up the military to any Roman male citizen, enhanced military training by basing it off the techniques developed by gladiators, replaced the three different soldier types with cohorts of men universally armed with the Spanish short sword or *gladius*, and created the use of the eagle as the standard for all legions.¹⁶ Marius's reforms did exactly what they were meant to do, which was to professionalize Rome's military.

By eliminating the military land requirements, Marius opened up the military to the largest class in Rome, the *capite censi*. In the past the *capite censi* were only allowed in the military during emergencies, which allowed them to be a reserve force to be called up in time of

¹⁴ John Warry, *Warfare in the Classical World* (London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 133.

¹⁵ Sallust, *War With Jugurtha*, 379.

¹⁶ Harriet I. Flower, *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 81.

need.¹⁷ The benefit of opening the military to the poor and landless class was that it allowed Rome to greatly expand its military. The downside was that these landless troops had nowhere to go after retirement. Unlike the days before Marius, where the military was composed of land owning citizens, who could go back to their farms, the landless needed help from the State in the form of retirement benefits. The most common form of retirement benefits was grants of land in Italy and newly conquered territories.

The Senate never had to give land or any form of retirement to soldiers when the military was composed of land owning citizens. With the *capite censi* making up the bulk of the military the Senate did not realize they had to change their policy towards troop retirement, in order to keep the loyalty of the troops. The Senate was set in its ways and refused to create a retirement program for the troops. The Senate's inability to change its policy towards the troops, allowed the generals to step in and become the heroes by giving their troops land, which eventually caused the soldiers to shift their loyalty from the State to the generals. Smith mentions this when he says, "The soldiers felt an attachment to their general rather than to their country, and if he failed to attract their loyalty, than the love of country did not fill the gap."¹⁸

After the Germanic and Celtic tribes were defeated, Marius became the first general to negotiate with the Senate for a retirement plan for his soldiers. Marius persuaded the Senate to give his soldiers land, which he based off of the early Republic's practice of giving distinguished soldiers plots of land.¹⁹ With this one act and the reorganization of the army, Marius contributed to the decline of the Roman Republic. The opening up of the military to the *capite censi* and the

¹⁷ Keppie, *Making of Roman Army*, 61.

¹⁸ Smith, *Failure of Roman Republic*, 128.

¹⁹ Keppie, *Making of Roman Army*, 55.

granting of land to his troops had political repercussions that plagued the Roman Republic until its collapse in 30 BC.

The political repercussions of Marius's reforms and the giving of land to his retired troops are evident in the civil wars caused by ambitious generals and the discontented veterans who could not make a living from farming. The generals became the middle men between the troops and the Senate, and were looked on by their soldiers as looking out for their best interests. The soldiers relied on their general to give them booty from the wars and a piece of land to retire on and in return the generals wanted loyalty from their troops. Over time the legions shifted from being the States' armies to the general's private army.²⁰ Civil wars broke out between competing general's private armies, which played a role in weakening the Republic. The giving of land to retired veterans may also not have been the best retirement plan, since many of the veterans were originally from the landless class and did not know how to farm.²¹ Many retired veterans went into debt and became discontented and used their military skills to become a threat to the Republic. They became willing to march on Rome in order to fix their present situations.

As the generals realized that they had the complete loyalty of their troops Smith mentions, "it suited the purposes of the general to use their support for his own political ends, while it never seemed to the soldiers improper to allow themselves to become the tool of a general whose chief anxiety was his own political power and prestige."²² Rome's legions became political weapons to be used by the generals against their enemies. Marius set the stage for ambitious generals to use their soldiers to help advance their own political careers, but Marius did not use his soldiers to help him gain his seven consulships. Generals did not use their troops

²⁰ Warry, *Warfare*, 134.

²¹ Smith, *Failure of Roman Republic*, 102.

²² *Ibid.*, 128.

to help them gain political power, until after the Social War, when Lucius Cornelius Sulla became the first general to march on Rome in 88 BC.

V

Lucius Cornelius Sulla was part of an old patrician family, the Cornelian. During Sulla's time the Cornelian family was on hard times and did not control the same wealth as the other patrician families.²³ In 107 BC Sulla was elected *quaestor*, which was the start of his political career. Sulla became Marius's *quaestor* and helped end the Jugurthine War. Sulla proved himself a capable general in the war against the Germanic and Celtic tribes, and he made himself available for a generalship during the Social War. In the Social War Sulla proved himself to be one of Rome's most able generals, which allowed him to gain the consulship for 88 BC. In 90 BC King Mithradates of Pontus decided he wanted to free people from Roman rule and attacked the Roman provinces in Asia Minor.²⁴ In 88 BC the Senate agreed to give military command to Sulla to deal with the threat.

Marius wanted the command against Mithradates, which caused him to use a tribunician law to withdraw Sulla's command, and had it transferred to himself. Sulla did not like the turn of events and decided to use force to regain his command against Mithradates. He appealed to his soldiers stationed in Campania to march with him on Rome in order to protect their interests, since a war with Mithradates would provide booty for the troops and the general.²⁵ Sulla seems to have made his soldiers afraid that if he was replaced in the command against Mithradates another legion would enjoy the spoils of Asia.²⁶ Sulla's officers did not like the idea of marching

²³ Arthur Keaveney, *Sulla the Last Republican* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 10-11.

²⁴ Flower, *Companion to Roman Republic*, 98.

²⁵ Bringmann, *History of Roman Republic*, 188.

²⁶ P.A. Brunt, "The Army and the Land in the Roman Revolution," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 52 (1962): 78.

on Rome and refused, but the soldiers afraid of losing their opportunity at gaining spoils encouraged Sulla to march. In 88 BC Sulla marched his army on Rome. Marius fled to North Africa, where his veterans were living in retirement. Sulla used the presence of his troops in the city to persuade the Senate to give him back the command against Mithradates.

After Sulla left Rome to fight Mithradates, Cinna came to power and aligned himself with Marius. They both recruited armies and marched on Rome, to gain the consulship of 86 BC. They were successful in gaining power in Rome, but the excitement seemed to have been too much for Marius, who died shortly after he gained the consulship in 86 BC. Cinna took control of Rome and declared Sulla an enemy of the State. Cinna recruited an army to fight Sulla, but was murdered by his troops en route to face Sulla. Sulla defeated Mithradates in 84 BC and by 83 BC he was back in Italy with his army. Upon his return in Italy, Sulla was met by *nobiles* who had suffered during Cinna's reign; these *nobiles* included Marcus Licinius Crassus, and Gnaeus Pompeius or Pompey.²⁷ In 82 BC Sulla marched his army on Rome for a second time. This time he made himself dictator and set about reorganizing the Senate.

Once Sulla became dictator in 82 BC he organized proscriptions against his political enemies and posted the lists at the forum for all to see. According to Arthur Keaveney, Sulla saw himself as the champion of the Senate and state and believed his task was to punish public enemies in the form of the proscriptions, so Rome could become whole again. Sallust mentions the proscriptions as a time of chaos, when people were murdering in order to gain the persons items they desired, and the proscriptions did not end until Sulla made sure his supporters were satisfied with riches.²⁸ Sulla used a large sum of money for an ambitious building program. He

²⁷ David Shotter, *Fall of Roman the Republic* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 41.

²⁸ Sallust, *War With Catiline*, 97.

expanded the forum, built theatres in different parts of Italy, and built temples all over Italy, with the most elaborate temple belonging to Fortune.²⁹ According to Plutarch, Sulla held great banquets for the people, where so much food was presented that large quantities were thrown into the river.³⁰ The banquet lasted for several days and the main purpose of the banquet seems have been an attempt by Sulla to reconcile with the people and to assure them their troubles were over.³¹

Sulla was the first general to realize the potential of Marius reforms, of using the military to advance his own political gains, which were to regain the command against Mithradates and to become dictator of the State. He was the master at using his troops as a political weapon against his enemies. When in camp Sulla wandered around and mingled with his troops, which allowed him to develop close relationships with his men.³² This close relationship allowed Sulla to gain his troops affection and absolute loyalty. The military reforms of Marius made the decline of the Republic possible, but it was Sulla who started the Republic's decline. Sulla seems to have noticed the damage he caused to the Republic, which would explain why he worked hard to strengthen the Republic. He created a constitution that was designed to prevent a recurrence of his own behavior.³³ Sulla may have believed he was the only one who could fix the Republic and keep it from going into further decline. It would explain why he became dictator and created a constitution that tried to strengthen the Senate. It would also explain why he gave up his dictatorship after his constitution was in effect.

²⁹ Paul L. MacKendrick, "Nabobs as Builders: Sulla, Pompey, Caesar," *The Classical Journal* 55, no. 6 (March 1960):241.

³⁰ Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives* (London: William Clowes and Sons Limited, 1881), 379.

³¹ Keaveney, *Sulla*, 159.

³² *Ibid.*, 182.

³³ Smith, *Failure of Roman Republic*, 107.

By Sulla's time different parts of the government, such as the tribunate, had evolved from their original purpose into something with more power, which threatened the wellbeing of the State. Sulla recognized this and made it his duty to restore the government back to its original state. Sulla restored the office of tribunate back to its primitive form, by eliminating its power to pass legislation, and its power to summon the Senate. Sulla also curbed the tribunes power to veto. Sulla worked to prevent other generals from marching on Rome by making it treason if a governor did not step down within thirty days of the successor's arrival, if a governor led an army outside of their province, entered an allied kingdom, or started a war without the Senate's consent.³⁴

Sulla tried to prevent an individual's rapid rise through the political offices and their holding of repeated offices, by creating a law called the *lex Cornelia annalis*, which forced a person to proceed from office to office in a fixed order.³⁵ Sulla strengthened the Senate, which was weakened, due to his proscriptions, by increasing the Senate from 300 to 600. Sulla saw his march on Rome and his dictatorship as a necessary act in order to strengthen the weakening Republic. Once Sulla felt his reforms had strengthened and restored the Republic to their former glory, he was willing to relinquish the dictatorship.

Instead of fixing the Republic, Sulla's dictatorship showed other ambitious generals how to use their army, to gain political advancement. After Sulla the desire for plunder made the soldiers more willing to follow their generals into civil wars regardless of the cause the general represented.³⁶ Sulla seems to have realized that his actions would be imitated, which caused him to settle the majority of his veterans in Italy as a safeguard to provide the Senate with

³⁴ Keaveney, *Sulla*, see 140-142.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

³⁶ P.A. Brunt, "Army and Land in Roman Revolution," 78.

a force to defend against any imitators. Sulla failed to realize that his veterans would provide the force for any imitator. He did not account for his veterans going into debt and being willing to support anyone who promised them plunder and a way out of debt. Instead of protecting the Republic, Sulla's veterans later contributed to its decline by supporting Catiline in his conspiracy. Sulla's dictatorship ended the days of loyalty to the Republic. Smith states, "Rome, with the Senate at the head, could no longer command the allegiance of Romans."³⁷

The 60s BC was a time of political corruption and indebtedness on a grand scale. During Sulla's dictatorship, he confiscated the land and uprooted many small farmers in Etruria, in order to give the land to his veterans.³⁸ This caused a migration of poor landless farmers to Rome, which created problems for the Republic, starting in the 60s. Selfishness and dishonesty became all too common and this led to gross materialism and extravagance, which became all the rage for the patricians and plebian's. It became common practice for people to live outside their means as stated by Smith, "luxurious villas and town houses ate up fortunes; millions of sesterces were spent on the pleasures of the table and on highly qualified slaves."³⁹ Bribery during elections was also a common event, with people going into debt because of spending too much on bribes. Being in debt became almost a fashion statement during this time.

During Sulla's rule he filled Rome's treasury from the profits he made during the war with Mithradates and from the vast amounts of wealth he gained from the proscriptions. His soldiers came back loaded with loot and his supporters during the proscriptions became very wealthy very quickly, which seems to have flooded Rome with wealth. As people became rich overnight they started to flaunt their newly acquired wealth, by hosting extravagant dinner

³⁷Smith, *Failure of Roman Republic*, 107.

³⁸ Charles Matson Odahl, *Cicero and the Catilinarian Conspiracy* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 15.

³⁹ Smith, *Failure of Roman Republic*, 124.

parties and buying luxury goods. This new fashion of uncontrolled spending seems to have been on a crash course with disaster that culminated in the debt crisis of the 60s. Walter Allen believed the debt crisis was caused by large amounts of gold and silver being exported out of Rome, which caused money to be tight and increased interest rates on loans.⁴⁰ According to Allen the money was being invested in the newly conquered territory of Mithradates, since the possibility of exploitation during reconstruction was high.

VI

Allen's explanation seems very plausible, but it is also worth looking at Sulla's veterans for an answer. Sulla's veterans gained sudden wealth in the form of loot, which caused them to gain a taste for luxury. Once they retired they could not drop their taste for luxury, which caused them to build big fancy farms, have vast amounts of slaves, and host luxurious banquets, which drained their wealth and caused them to go into debt.⁴¹ It seems very likely this is what happened too many of the people in Rome, who gained their wealth suddenly. Many of the people were not used to having vast wealth or living an extravagant and luxury lifestyle. Once they gained their wealth they became fond of their new life style, which caused them to spend all of their money. Once their money was gone they did not want to give up their lifestyle or did not know how, which caused them to go into debt.

In 66 BC Lucius Sergius Catilina returned to Rome from his governorship in North Africa. Catiline was from an old patrician family, who had fallen on hard times. Catiline had strength of both body and mind, but was cunning and desired heights beyond his reach.⁴² He

⁴⁰ Walter Allen, Jr., "In Defense of Catiline," *The Classical Journal* 34, no. 2 (Nov. 1938): 72.

⁴¹ Cicero, *In Catilinam I-IV-Pro Murena-Pro Sulla-Pro Flacco*, trans. Louis E. Lord (London: Harvard University Press, 1964), 20.

⁴² Sallust, *War With Catiline*, 9.

aligned himself with Sulla during Sulla's dictatorship, which allowed him to profit from the proscriptions. Catiline used his new wealth to bribe his way to a governorship in North Africa. On his return from North Africa, he decided to act on his urge to capture the commonwealth and was willing to use any method to do it as long as he acquired kingship. Catiline was incited by the corrupt morals prevalent in Rome, caused by luxury and avarice.⁴³ He decided to use the corrupt morals and political strife to his advantage in his attempt to capture the commonwealth.⁴⁴

In 66 BC Pompey left Rome to fight Mithradates, who rebuilt his forces and was again trying to free the Roman provinces of Asia Minor. While Pompey was away in the East, there was a general fear in Rome of what Pompey would do when he returned victorious.⁴⁵ The Senate feared Pompey would follow in the footsteps of his mentor Sulla and march on Rome with his army. This fear seems to have been what encouraged Pompey's rival Marcus Licinius Crassus to establish a base of power in Rome. Crassus's goal during this time was to gain an army in order to oppose Pompey when he returned. Crassus joined with Gaius Julius Caesar in trying to pass reforms that would give him his army. Marcus Tullius Cicero was Pompey's biggest ally in Rome and he stopped the reforms of Crassus and Caesar from being passed. With the failure of their reforms, Crassus gave his support to Catiline with the hopes of having a consul in office that was favorable to his plans.⁴⁶

Catiline desired the consulship, but was unable to run for the office the year he returned, due to charges of extortion brought against him by his province.⁴⁷ Extortion was a common charge many governors faced when they returned to Rome and bribery was the common method

⁴³ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁴ Smith, *Failure of Roman Republic*, 18.

⁴⁵ Flower, *Companion to Roman Republic*, 101.

⁴⁶ Bringmann, *History of Roman Republic*, 223.

⁴⁷ Sallust, *War With Catiline*, 31.

of getting out of trouble.⁴⁸ Many used the money they gained during their governorship to bribe the courts to let them go. Catiline was able to bribe the court to drop the charges against him, but lost most of his wealth in the process. Catiline was like any other patrician during his time, in that he used his wealth to show off his class standing. He hosted huge dinner banquets that were meant to show off his wealth and he lived a lavish lifestyle, which quickly drained what little wealth he had. The loss of his wealth made him go into debt, which caused him to desire the consulship even more.

In 64 BC Catiline was taken to court again for participating in the Sullan proscriptions. Caesar was one of the men presiding over the court and he used his support to have Catiline acquitted of all charges.⁴⁹ With his acquittal Catiline was able to become a candidate for the consulship in 63 BC. Catiline's rival for the consulship was Cicero, who was a new man from the equestrian class. Catiline played on the political strife to gain the support of the "dissatisfied and discontented."⁵⁰ He supported a debt cancelation program that gained him the support of the indebted lower class and indebted Sullan veterans. Indebted farmers and Sullan veterans from Etruria were Catiline's most vocal supporters. He also gained the support of indebted patricians like himself, who were looking for a quick and easy way to get out of debt.

Catiline lost the elections for 63 BC to Cicero, who was able to gain the support of the equestrian class and the Senate. For Catiline, having the support from Crassus, Caesar and the indebted was not enough. Catiline was not ready to give up his desire of the consulship and ran for the consulship for 62 BC. Catiline's inability to win the consulship for 62 BC seems to have motivated him to start his conspiracy of using force to advance his political career.

⁴⁸ Odahl, *Cicero and Catilinarian Conspiracy*, 20.

⁴⁹ Smith, *Failure of Roman Republic*, 25.

⁵⁰ Allen Mason Ward, *Marcus Crassus and the Late Roman Republic* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1977), 173.

In his second oration against Catiline, Cicero talks about six classes of people who supported Catiline. The first class was composed of people who were in debt, but had enough possessions worth more than their debt. They were not willing to sell their possessions in order to get out of debt, which causes Cicero to call them the most shameless.⁵¹ The second class was composed of indebted men, who planned to use the confusion caused by Catiline to gain supreme power for themselves. The third class consisted of Sulla's veterans who were disgruntled at the loss of their wealth and their inability to make a living from farming. The fourth class was composed of men who had gone into debt, due to their extravagant lifestyle and laziness to try to fix their situation.⁵² The fifth class was composed of assassins and bandits and the last class was composed of indebted patricians like Catiline, who made up his bodyguard and preferred to party and gamble all night.

Catiline was able to gain the support from the veterans and indebted populace because he offered a plan that was aimed at alleviating the debt problems at the expense of the money lenders. Debt cancellation or reduction of debts may not have been the best plan, because the people who were smart with their money and loaned money like Crassus, would have been the ones who suffered under the plan. Cicero seems to have realized this, which is why he fought hard to protect the patricians and plebs not in debt and the State's interests.⁵³ Catiline's main reason for supporting the debt cancelation program was because he was in debt and he may have noticed he could kill two birds with one stone. By supporting the program he could not only fix his debt problem, but also become the hero for the debt ridden populace, which would gain him

⁵¹Cicero, *In Catilinam II*, 18.

⁵²Ibid., 21.

⁵³Cicero, *In Catilinam I*, 8.

the support he needed in his bid for the consulship. After he lost the elections he was still seen as the hero by the indebted veterans and farmers who were willing to support his conspiracy.⁵⁴

VII

In 63 BC Catiline's conspiracy is another good example of the political impact of Marius's military reforms. Rome not only had to worry about the active military marching on the city, but after Catiline Rome had to deal with veterans marching on the city. Giving land grants to retired soldiers may not have been the best pension plan. R.E. Smith makes this clear when he states, "Since many of the veterans would have had no experience of the land, it was possible that both socially and economically it was unsound; and the discontent of Sulla's veterans at the time of Catiline's conspiracy suggests that it was not universally satisfactory."⁵⁵ Many of the veterans who were given land in Etruria went into debt, from either buying supplies necessary for the farm or because they did not know how to make a lively hood from the land.

Many of Sulla's veterans had a love for extravagance and luxury, due to their days stationed in Asia.⁵⁶ While they were in Asia they gained vast amounts of loot that allowed them to live like lords. Once they retired on their farms, they could not break their acquired habits and squandered their wealth on luxury goods. With this taste for luxury and extravagance, many of the veterans had a hard time adjusting to a farmer's life. Many of Sulla's veterans sold their farms and relisted, in order to gain more loot. The ones, who stayed and went into debt, were looking for a way to relive their military life and for a way to acquire more loot. Catiline gave them the opportunity they were looking for, which would explain why they were willing to march with him on Rome.

⁵⁴ Sallust, *War With Catiline*, 63.

⁵⁵ Smith, *Failure of Roman Republic*, 102.

⁵⁶ Keaveney, *Sulla*, see 154-155.

According to Appian the main goals of Catiline's conspiracy were to start military rebellions across the Italian country side, murder Cicero and other leading Senate members and set fire to the city in order to incite fear and panic, so his troops would have an easier time in marching on the city.⁵⁷ Catiline gained support from indebted patricians, who were willing to carry out the murders and set fires across the city. Gaius Manlius served under Sulla and became a staunch supporter of Catiline, who rallied the disgruntled and indebted Sullan veterans to Catiline's cause. These Sullan veterans became the back bone of Catiline's armed forces.

Catiline was one of Sulla's supporters during the civil war and seems to have been present in Rome when Sulla marched on the city. Catiline used his good relations with Sulla to prosper from the proscriptions. Catiline was present and prospered from Sulla's dictatorship and according to Odahl, "aware of the careers of Marius, Sulla, and Pompey, Catiline realized that he would need military support both to gain and retain power."⁵⁸ Catiline may have thought using force worked for Marius, Sulla, and Pompey, so why would it not work for him?

Catiline seems to have also adopted Sulla's idea of proscriptions, because Sallust mentions how Catiline's supporters asked him how they would benefit from his march on the city. Catiline replied that he would conduct proscriptions against the wealthy, magistracies, and priesthods and he would allow them to seize anything else they desired.⁵⁹ Catiline was desperate to restore his wealth and was willing to follow in the foot steps of Sulla to achieve his goals. Catiline did what Sulla was trying to prevent in his new constitution, which was imitating his march on Rome. Sulla placed his veterans in Italy for the sole purpose of protecting Rome from imitators, but Catiline was able to play on their debt problems in order to manipulate them

⁵⁷ Appian, *Civil Wars*, 70.

⁵⁸ Odahl, *Cicero and Catilinarian Conspiracy*, 50.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

to march with him on Rome. The only men in Italy with the experience of marching on Rome became the backbone of Catiline's forces.

Like Sulla, Catiline used veterans as a means of achieving supreme power in Rome. However, he did not want to gain supreme power in order to strengthen the Republic; he wanted to bring the Republic to an end, in order to be the sole ruler of Rome.⁶⁰ It seems Catiline believed if he became the ruler of Rome than he would have access to the treasury, which would allow him to continue his extravagant lifestyle and his days of debt would be no more. The veterans seem to have been willing to support Catiline in his conspiracy, because he was giving them one last chance to pillage and regain their lost fortunes. The plebians seem to have supported Catiline because he offered them a chance at a revolution to increase their social standing. This can be seen in Sallust: "meanwhile Manlius in Etruria was working upon the populace, who were already ripe for revolution because of penury and resentment at their wrongs; for during Sulla's supremacy they had lost their lands and all their property."⁶¹

VIII

Catiline's conspiracy was a failure, due to the work of Cicero, who called Catiline out and dismantled the conspiracy before it could begin. Cicero had a mole in the conspiracy, who kept him up to date on the plans of the conspirators.⁶² He used his information to create fear to persuade the Senate of the danger Catiline posed. In order to create fear, Cicero called a Senate meeting, where he gave certain Senators letters and had them read the letters out loud, which

⁶⁰ Cicero, *In Catilinam I*, 5.

⁶¹ Sallust, *War With Catiline*, 49.

⁶² Cicero, *In Catilinam I*, 7.

exposed the conspiracy.⁶³ This had the desired affect Cicero wanted because the Senate gave their full support to Cicero in stopping the conspiracy.

Cicero used the fear that he created to round up the suspected conspirators and have them executed without a fair trial. The suspected conspirators were Publius Cornelius Lentulus, Gaius Cassius Cethegus, Lucius Statilius, Publius Gabinius Capito, and Caeparius.⁶⁴ Rome had laws that protected Roman citizens from being executed without a fair trial, but Cicero was able to get around the laws by invoking the *senates consultum ultimum*. The *senates consultum ultimum* was the Roman form of martial law that could be enacted by the Senate in times of emergency. Cicero believed it would protect him from any illegal action he was about to commit of executing Roman citizen's without a fair trial. What sealed the conspirator's fate were the weapons that were found in Cethegus's house. Cethegus claimed the weapons were collector's items, but they were all the proof Cicero needed to seal their fates.⁶⁵ After the conspirators were executed Cicero persuaded the Senate to use the armies that were left in Italy to attack Catiline's makeshift army. Catiline was caught off guard by the Senate's sudden aggressiveness and was forced to fight one of the Senate's armies. Catiline was killed along with most of his forces in the fighting, which effectively brought an end the Catiline conspiracy.

The Catiline conspiracy is an important event in the late Roman Republic because it is a good example of the political impacts of Marius's reforms and Sulla's dictatorship. The recruitment of the *capite censi* allowed generals to more easily manipulate their troops to fulfill their ambitions for political power.⁶⁶ The new landless troops had more needs than the previous land owning troops; this allowed the generals to play on the needs of their troops in order to gain

⁶³ Odahl, *Cicero and Catilinarian Conspiracy*, 52.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁶⁵ Wilfried Nippel, *Public Order in Ancient Rome* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 55.

⁶⁶ Warry, *Warfare*, 134.

their loyalty and support in their goals for political power. Sulla allowed his troops to live in luxury during their time in Asia and when he gained the dictatorship he flooded the city with wealth, which eventually led to the indebtedness and discontent of the 60s BC. Once his troops gained a taste for extravagance and luxury, they had a hard time settling down on their modest pieces of land.⁶⁷ Most of the troops could not bring themselves to live a modest life and instead spent all of their wealth on their extravagant lifestyle. Once the wealth was gone, they became willing to enter the political arena on the side of Catiline, in order to regain their wealth, so they could continue to live their extravagant lifestyle.⁶⁸

After the conspiracy was put down Cicero made it known that he was the savior of the Republic and he believed that the proper functioning of the Republic had been restored.⁶⁹ Cicero was going to discover with the return of Pompey in 62 BC that his faith in the restored Republic was unfounded. Pompey shocked everyone when he disbanded his army on his landing in Italy. Pompey proved he was not like Sulla, by following the Senate's rules of disbanding his army. The Senate seems to have gained confidence from Pompey's actions, because they were not willing to work with him in giving the land pension to his troops.⁷⁰ Pompey continued to argue with the Senate about receiving land for his troops, until Caesar's arrival from Spain in 60 BC.

IX

Gaius Julius Caesar returned from his governorship in Spain in 60 BC and immediately put himself forward as a candidate for the consulship of 59 BC. Once in Rome, Caesar learned of Pompey's problems with the Senate and made a private deal with Pompey and Crassus to gain

⁶⁷ Cicero, *In Catilinam II*, 20.

⁶⁸ Cicero, *In Catilinam I*, 10.

⁶⁹ Shotter, *Fall of Roman Republic*, 58.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

their support. Caesar offered to help Pompey with his pension problem once he was consul, in exchange for Pompey's and Crassus's support.⁷¹ This was the beginning of the First Triumvirate, which came into power in 59 BC.

The First Triumvirate was a private alliance between Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus. Caesar was instrumental in the forming of the First Triumvirate, because he acted as the mediator between Crassus and Pompey. The enmity between Crassus and Pompey went back to the days of Sulla when Pompey received more recognition from Sulla than did Crassus.⁷² Once Caesar helped the two get over their feud, their partnership became very profitable for the three. Due to the support from Pompey and Crassus, Caesar was able to gain the consulship and in return he helped Pompey receive pensions for his troops.

Caesar's co-consul was Calpurnius Bibulus who resisted Caesar's agrarian proposals that were designed to give land to Pompey's troops. Caesar used violence and forced Bibulus into an early retirement from the consulship. This was Caesar's first use of violence in politics, but it was not his last. During their alliance Caesar and Pompey routinely used their soldiers and veterans to help pass legislations and decide elections.⁷³ The veterans and soldiers were used by Pompey and Caesar to provide support necessary for the legislations to pass. The veterans and soldiers were also used to support the individuals who could be controlled by the triumvirate. The use of soldiers by the First Triumvirates is a good example of the continued change of the Roman military after Marius's military reforms. By the time of the First Triumvirate it was common for soldiers to be active participants in politics, by becoming the clients of their general.

⁷¹ Ibid., 62.

⁷² Odahl, *Cicero and Catilinarian Conspiracy*, 21.

⁷³ Nippel, *Public Order in Ancient Rome*, 49.

If the soldiers retained any loyalty to the State then it seems very likely they would have been repulsed by the idea of manipulating politics to favor their general.

During Caesar's consulship he arranged to receive the governorship of Cisalpine Gaul, Illyricum, and Gallia Transalpina for five years.⁷⁴ Before Caesar's consulship Germanic tribes were on the move in Gaul looking for new land and this migration was very similar to the Cimbri and Teutonic migration that Marius dealt with. The Germanic migration may have been the reason why Caesar chose Gaul as his province, because he wanted to gain money and soldiers, which Pompey proved was the best way to obtain political power.⁷⁵ Caesar may have also been familiar with Marius's career and realized the best way to gain popularity was to put down a barbarian threat. Over the next five years Caesar carved himself out a kingdom that made him very wealthy. While he was away Pompey and Crassus controlled the Senate and protected his interests.

In 56 BC Pompey and Crassus had themselves elected for their second consulships and each received a province of their choosing. Pompey received Spain for five years and Crassus received Syria.⁷⁶ Crassus wanted Syria so he could expand his trade relations in the east and he wanted to be like Pompey and Caesar in expanding the empire.⁷⁷ His military efforts were unsuccessful and he died at the hands of the Parthians in 53 BC.

With the death of Pompey's wife and Caesar's daughter Julia in 54 BC, Pompey lost her influence, which seems to have kept him loyal with Caesar.⁷⁸ Julia was well loved by both Pompey and Caesar, which allowed her to influence Pompey to remain loyal to her father. The

⁷⁴ Shotter, *Fall of Roman Republic*, 64.

⁷⁵ Bringmann, *History of Roman Republic*, 239.

⁷⁶ Shotter, *Fall of Roman Republic*, 70.

⁷⁷ Adrian Goldsworthy, *Caesar: Life of a Colossus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 295.

⁷⁸ Shotter, *Fall of Roman Republic*, 71.

death of Crassus in 53 BC was the last tie that kept Pompey loyal to Caesar. After Crassus's death the triumvirate was no more and Pompey gained the majority of Crassus's supporters, which may have led him to believe that he had enough support to take charge of the republic.⁷⁹ Pompey's alignment with the Senate was the last bit of support he needed to turn against Caesar. Pompey's first move against Caesar was to pass a law that required governors to be elected from ex-consuls and ex-praetors who had not held a governorship.⁸⁰ This law stopped Caesar from switching his governorship to the consulship without becoming a private citizen, thus making him vulnerable to prosecution.

Caesar was threatened with prosecution before he left Rome to take over his governorship of Gaul. He was being prosecuted for violations of vetoes, laws, and auspices during his time as consul and the charges kept adding up during his governorship. He broke the law created by Sulla, by taking his legions out of Gaul to pursue a war with the Germanic, Gallic, and British tribes.⁸¹ When his governorship ended Pompey wanted Caesar to disband his legions and return to Rome to face charges against him. Cicero stepped in to prevent a civil war, by starting the negotiations between Caesar and Pompey.

Since Pompey and Caesar did not trust one another the negotiations were not successful and ended with the Senate getting involved by declaring Caesar an enemy of the State. During the negotiations with Caesar, Pompey made it clear to the Senate that he was the better commander and could squash Caesar. Caesar's enemies in the Senate believed him to be the Catiline, who kept his intentions and villainy from being known.⁸² With Pompey showing confidence in his ability to defeat Caesar and the attacks on Caesar in the Senate comparing him

⁷⁹ Goldsworthy, *Caesar: Life of a Colossus*, 361.

⁸⁰ Lilly Ross Taylor, *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1949), 151.

⁸¹ Keaveney, *Sulla*, see 140-142.

⁸² Goldsworthy, *Caesar: Life of a Colossus*, 369.

to Catiline, it seems the Senate felt strong enough to end the negotiations in favor of declaring Caesar an enemy of the State. Once Caesar learned he was an enemy of the State, he seems to have realized he had failed in his attempt to gain what he wanted through political means, which caused him to use force by marching across the Rubicon in 49 BC.

Caesar, like Sulla, was the master at gaining his troop's loyalty and using his army against his political enemies. During Caesar's time in Gaul, he increased his army from four to twelve legions, by accepting non-citizen recruits from his region, whom he treated as full citizens.⁸³ Caesar's treatment of his troops gained him their respect and trust. Caesar's soldiers served him to the limit of their endurance, because of the profit they made from the spoils of war and from Caesar's generosity.⁸⁴ Caesar's generosity allowed him to gain his troops loyalty and to cultivate them for his own purposes, which they realized what the purposes were, but the money was good and they continued to follow him.⁸⁵ Caesar realized like Sulla that the way to the troop's loyalty was through wealth in the form of slaves and loot. As long as the soldiers profited from Caesar's generalship they were loyal and would follow him anywhere.

After Caesar crossed the Rubicon, Pompey fled with most of the Senate to Greece where he could gather his loyal forces. Caesar gathered his ten veteran legions and followed Pompey. The civil war in reality was a private war fought by Pompey's and Caesar's private armies. In 48 BC Caesar gained a decisive victory over Pompey at Pharsalus, in Greece, which caused Pompey to flee to Egypt. In Egypt Pompey was murdered by Ptolemy XIII in the hope of keeping the war out of Egypt and to gain favor with Rome.⁸⁶ Pompey's sons and supporters continued the war,

⁸³ Keppie, *Making of Roman Army*, 98.

⁸⁴ Appian, *Civil Wars*, 85.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁸⁶ Shotter, *Fall of Roman Republic*, 75.

until they were beaten in 46 BC. After the war in 46 BC, Caesar focused his attention on fixing the damages he caused to the Republic, like what Sulla had done in 82 BC.

Like Sulla, Caesar used his forces to achieve political power, but once he gained the power he acted very different than Sulla. Caesar did not go the Sullan route of proscriptions, but instead offered to forgive everyone who supported Pompey in the war. Caesar was appointed dictator for ten years and went about strengthening the Republic. Caesar realized the old Republic was dead and went about reorganizing a new form of government. He wanted the dictatorship to last an unlimited amount of time and he incorporated parts of the Republic that best fit with his new style of government.⁸⁷ There is a debate on what Caesars plans were for his dictatorship, but it seems likely that unlike Sulla, Caesar had no intention of stepping down from his dictatorship after he had repaired his damages to the Republic.

Caesars plans of reorganizing the Republic made him many enemies in the Senate, who only wanted him to be dictator long enough to fix the problems in the Republic.⁸⁸ Once they learned he was not going to give up his dictatorship, they hatched a plan to murder him, in order to preserve the Republic. In 44 BC prominent members of the Senate lead by Marcus Brutus and Gaius Cassius Longinus, murdered Caesar. Brutus and Cassius believed that with Caesar's death they could restore the Republic to its former glory. Instead the death of Caesar started a power struggle that claimed the lives of Brutus and Cassius and ended in the death of the Roman Republic.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 79.

⁸⁸ Bringmann, *History of Roman Republic*, 266.

X

Marius created the military reforms to fix the recruitment issues present in the 100s BC and to professionalize Rome's military. The *capite censi* were the largest class in Rome and the opening of the military to them was seen as a permanent fix to the recruitment issues. Marius realized his troops needed a retirement plan, since they did not own land to retire to. By working with the Senate to give his troops land, Marius gained the gratitude and loyalty of his troops. The Senate failed to realize they had to provide a retirement plan for the troops in order to keep the loyalty of the legions. The Senate left it up to the generals to provide land for their troops, which caused the loyalty of the legions to switch from the State to the generals. Marius's military reforms contributed to the decline of the Roman Republic, by allowing generals to use the giving of land as pension to gain the loyalty of the troops, whom they used as a political weapon against their enemies in order to gain control of the State.

Marius never realized the potential of his troops' loyalty and did not use his soldiers to help him gain his repeated consulships. Generals did not use their forces to gain political power until after the Social War. Sulla was the first general to understand what could be achieved with a loyal professional army, when he marched his forces on Rome in 88 and 82 BC. Sulla used his army to put him at the head of the State in the position of dictator, which started the army's involvement in politics. After Sulla other generals imitated his rise to power, which greatly contributed to the decline of the Roman Republic. Men like Catiline and Caesar both used Sulla's example of gaining political power.

Catiline was an indebted patrician, who only wanted to gain the consulship in order to make money and get out of debt. He tried to gain the consulship the proper way, but when he

failed to get elected, he resorted to the use of force to achieve his political ambitions. Catiline was able to manipulate the forces that were meant to protect the State from Sullan imitators like himself. Catiline played to the veterans' debt problems in order to gain their support in his plans to overthrow the Republic. Men such as Catiline were no longer respecting the power of the Senate, which made them willing to use force to gain political power.

The decline of the loyalty to the Senate continued with Caesar, who fought a civil war with Pompey, in order to become dictator of the State. Caesar, like Sulla and Catiline, tried to gain power through political means and when that failed, he resorted to the use of force to achieve what he could not through political means. Caesar, unlike Sulla, was unwilling to give up his dictatorship, because he believed the Republic was no longer a valid way to govern an empire.⁸⁹ In Caesar's eyes the Republic was dead and it was up to him to reorganize the government in order to provide stability.⁹⁰

Due to Marius's military reforms the Senate lost the loyalty of the legions and once the generals realized they could gain their troop's loyalty by providing them with land and loot, their loyalty to the State began to disappear as well. The desire for loot made the soldiers more willing to follow their generals in civil wars, irrelevant of the cause they represented.⁹¹ Once the Senate could no longer command the loyalty of its legions and generals, it became defenseless in stopping powerful men such as Sulla and Caesar from taking over the government. The late Roman Republic was in a steady decline before Marius, but Marius's military reforms contributed by increasing the decline of the Republic.

⁸⁹ Shotter, *Fall of the Roman Republic*, 80.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁹¹ Brunt, "Army and Land in Roman Revolution," 78.

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