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THE EARLY PARTHIAN POLICY OF AUGUSTUS

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I. Introduction

Augustus has proven to be a focal point for scholarship on the relationship between Rome and Parthia.[1] Such scholarship on Augustus and Parthia has come to be defined by two features, one a conclusion and one an assumption. As for the former, many soundly have concluded that the Augustan period restored diplomacy and the goal of peace between Rome and Parthia after two decades of violence that began with Crassus' invasion of the Parthian empire in 54–53 B.C.[2] In this way, scholars have identified correctly a relatively progressive side to the Augustan period. Indeed before Crassus, Rome and Parthia had their tensions, but

[1] The treatment of the Arsacids and the Parthian empire in Potts 2013, 690-801 mentions relatively little of the Romans, much less Augustus, due to its focus on the archaeological and linguistic evidence of ancient Iran rather than the preserved literary record, which for the Arsacid period is Greco-Roman in character and largely interested in events touching on Roman interests and affairs. This, however, was not to slight the importance of the Roman-Parthian relationship. As Potts indicates (XXVII), it was a deliberate choice so that this volume would complement that of Daryaee 2012, which nicely reviews the narrative history of Iran. For the discussion of the Parthian empire in the latter *Handbook*, see Dąbrowa 2012, 164-86, which reviews the source problem, Roman-Parthian relations, and Augustus. Taken together, these volumes offer an impressive comprehensive treatment of ancient Iran.

[2] Consider only the following, Marsh 1931, 78, 81; Ziegler 1964, 45–57, 82–96; Colledge 1967, 46; Seager 1972, 16–7; Schieber 1979, 105–6, 120; Sherwin-White 1984, 320, 326–7, 332–5, 340–1; Gruen 1990, 396, 398, 415–6, and Gruen 1996, 158–63, 195–6; Campbell 1993, 214, 220–8; Rich 1998, 72; Gaslain and Maleuvre 2006, 169–94; Sampson 2008, 171–2; Farrokh 2007, 146–7; Lerouge 2007, 98, 102–3, 126–7; Sheldon 2010, 81–91; Shayegan 2011, 334–40. See also Rose 2005, 21–75, especially 21–44, who argues that even monumental representations of Parthians in Augustan Rome emphasized peace with Parthian cooperation.

engaged in no actual military conflict.[3] Crassus, however, invaded the Parthian empire with some seven legions. The immediate result was the battle of Carrhae, which resulted in a major Roman defeat and the death of Crassus.[4] But clashes continued long thereafter as the Parthians invaded the Roman East several times in the late 50s and 40s B.C. and then Antony embarked on his own Parthian campaign several years later.[5] The subsequent Augustan period saw the situation improve dramatically. There were no direct military engagements, but rather important positive achievements: (i) renewed and repeated diplomatic contact; (ii) the 20 B.C. decision of Parthian king Phraates IV to return the standards and captives previously lost by Crassus to the Parthians; and (iii) the re-establishment of a Roman-Parthian treaty in A.D. 2. Such progressive, peaceful developments under Augustus contrast starkly with the preceding period of on-and-off-again conflict.

The defining assumption involves the starting point of Augustan policy on Parthia and its early nature. Most scholars assume that Augustan policy on Parthia effectively began in 31/0 B.C. when Octavian, victor of the battle of Actium, longed to conquer or exact reconciliatory concessions from the Parthians (in response to and retribution for previous Roman defeats).[6] This is an assumption that undeniably encourages scholars to suggest the princeps willingly and aggressively provoked Parthia early on after Actium. For example, some argue that during an internal Parthian struggle for the throne between 31 and 25 B.C., Octavian har-

[3] Perhaps the closest they came to any such engagement was under Pompey and Phraates III in the mid–60s, when there was disagreement over control of the territory Gordyene. But no real fighting resulted. See Dio Cass. 37.5.2–5; cf. Plut. *Pomp.* 36.2. For discussion of it in the context of Roman-Parthian relations in the mid–60s, see Schlude 2013, 163–81.

[4] Plut. *Crass.* 20.1 estimates Crassus' troop strength at seven legions (the most conservative number on record). For the campaign in general, see once again Sampson 2008, and more recently Traina 2011 and Weggen 2011.

[5] Recently, Schlude 2012, 11–23 addressed the events of the late 50s and 40s B.C. Antony will be discussed below (see especially Sections II and III).

[6] Many scholars assume Augustus' plans or preference for war with Parthia, for example, Debevoise 1938, 138–9; Zanker 1988, 186; Campbell 1993, 221–2; Wolski 1993, 147; Merriam 2004, 56–8, 69–70; Sheldon 2010, 80–1. Marsh 1931, 81, and Sherwin-White 1984, 328–41, especially 332–3, approach Augustus' policy with regard to Parthia not so much from the point of view of his reaction to past Roman defeats by the Parthians as from that of his reaction to the Roman desire for imperialist expansion. Still, it is telling that Marsh implicitly and Sherwin-White explicitly affirm that the only reason Augustus did not take up arms against Parthia was his fear of further military reverses. War was the favored alternative. Some scholars note or imply that Augustus was thinking on revenge, without identifying its precise form, e.g. Gruen 1990, 396; Levick 1999, 25. Others agree that he needed concessions, though explicitly note that he had little interest in a war, e.g. Seager 1972, 16–7; Schieber 1979, 105–6, 120; Gaslain and Maleuvre 2006, 169–94, especially 181, 186; Lerouge 2007, 102–4; Linz 2009, 55–8. (It also should be noted that other voices deny Octavian's real interest in a military venture against Parthia. Consider, for example, Sartre 2005, 65, who emphasizes that 'There is no indication that Augustus ever seriously considered pushing it [the Euphrates border] back…we see no attempt at conquest in that direction'.)

bored Tiridates II, a Parthian claimant to the throne, and held as a hostage the son of king Phraates IV, to use them as bargaining chips. In this way, he threatened to thwart potential anti-Roman behavior on the part of the king with the possibility that he could retaliate by supporting a rival. And in the midst of that tension, the princeps returned the son only on the condition that his father return the Roman standards previously lost to Parthia.[7] He obtained his demand – a demand that confirms the original assumption that Octavian wanted revenge.

This general picture, however, is not without tension and problems. First of all, one may note that the idea of Octavian as desiring revenge on Parthia, as well as taking up an oppositional position vis-à-vis its king, contradicts somewhat the emphasis on his interest in diplomacy and peace with the same state. Perhaps such tension was simply the reality of the situation, one could argue. He forcefully put the pressure on in a way that ultimately made possible a more constructive relationship. Yet there exists another way to alleviate, or in fact eliminate, the rub – and this brings us to the problem of the standard narrative of Augustan policy on Parthia. It has neglected a body of literary evidence that suggests earlier developments in the 30s B.C. lessened demand at Rome for action against Parthia. Details preserved in authors like Plutarch and Dio reveal that Antony and his partisans largely quenched the Roman thirst for revenge against Parthia before Actium, and (perhaps even more surprising) that Octavian in fact worked with Antony to rehabilitate at home the Roman reputation in relation to Parthia. (The sore spot of Parthia, it seems, was above partisan politics.) With this in mind, the notion that Octavian entered the 20s B.C. with the absolute need for revenge against Parthia is not correct. He had already pursued a policy on Parthia before 30 B.C. that effectively addressed the black eyes suffered by Rome at Parthian hands. And this provides us with a new and significant starting point for Augustan policy on Parthia – one that no longer demands that we interpret Octavian's decisions related to Parthia in and shortly after 31/0 B.C. as adversely and provocatively as previously thought. In the end, peace and cooperation between Rome and Parthia were consistently the hallmarks of the Augustan period, even and also from its very beginning.

II. Antony and Parthia

Let us first consider Antony and how he and his partisans answered, to a large degree, the Roman need for revenge against Parthia. Antony's troops fought the Parthians several times in the 30s B.C. The first came in 39–38 B.C. in response to a 40 B.C. Parthian invasion of the Roman East under the direction of Pacorus, the

[7] See, for example, Debevoise 1938, 136–7; Campbell 1993, 222; Seager 1972, 17; Dąbrowa 1983, 40–1; Sherwin-White 1984, 322–4; Levick 1999, 25; Gaslain and Maleuvre 2006, 169–94; Farrokh 2007, 146–7; Lerouge 2007, 103–4; Linz 2009, 57–60; Sheldon 2010, 76, 81–5.

son of Parthian king Orodes II, and the Roman collaborator Labienus. Antony commissioned his subordinate officer Ventidius to recover the Roman East, which he did by eliminating Labienus in 39 B.C. and then Pacorus in 38 B.C. Antony himself, who personally came on the scene following these events, concluded the conflict by eventually bringing to terms Antiochus of Commagene, who had decided to hold out in Samosata with the Parthian troops who had fled to him following Pacorus' defeat.[8] The second time came in 36 B.C., when Antony invaded the Parthian empire, then under rule of Phraates IV. Rather than crossing the Euphrates into Mesopotamia, he invaded from Armenia, whence he received additional cavalry support from its king Artavasdes II, the son of Tigranes (II) the Great. In the end, his campaign did not advance too far. He suffered the destruction of his baggage train, lost more Roman standards and soldiers as captives, was abandoned by the Armenian contingent, besieged Praaspa unsuccessfully, failed to negotiate for anything advantageous, and saw many of his soldiers slaughtered and wasted as the Parthians pursued his retreat to Armenia and the winter hampered his subsequent march to Syria.[9] Contrary to much previous scholarship, these engagements should be recognized as settling the score with Parthia after Carrhae, at least in part and from the Roman perspective.

Now there will be two immediate and obvious objections to this proposal. First, there is the fact that Antony's invasion of the Parthian empire in 36 B.C. was another Roman debacle. How could such a campaign even the score with

[8] Plut. *Ant.* 33–4; Dio Cass. 48.39–41, 49.19–22; Zonar. 10.23 (PI513A) and 10.26 (PI519B). For a comprehensive biography of Ventidius, see Bühler 2009. With regard to Antony's actions at Samosata in particular, see Dio Cass. 49.22.1–2 and Plut. *Ant.* 34.2–4 who differ slightly on details, but both conclude that Antony was forced to lift the siege in exchange for rather limited concessions from Antiochus. Oros. 6.18.23 and Zonar. 10.26 (PI519B-C) are also less than impressed with Antony's handling of Antiochus. While Josephus in *BJ* 1.320–2 provides a more flattering picture of Antony, suggesting that his client king Herod the Great managed to kill many barbarians and carry off much plunder in the siege before forcing Antiochus' surrender, in *AJ* 14.439–47 he clarifies that Herod's actions preceded his arrival at Samosata. Even so the undeniable fact remains that Antony ultimately concluded the campaign and did so in the dominant position.

[9] The two primary accounts of this expedition are Plut. *Ant.* 37–51 and Dio Cass. 49.24.2–31.4. Based on Strab. 11.13.3, we can assume that many details included by Plutarch and Dio likely derive from Quintus Dellius, a friend and subordinate officer of Antony who accompanied him on this 36 B.C. campaign and wrote a firsthand account of it. In terms of the size of the expedition, ancients differ on the numbers. While on the low end Velleius Paterculus notes thirteen legions (2.82.1), on the high end Livy, *Epit.* 130 mentions eighteen legions; the contingent was big. For further discussion and bibliography, see, among others, Holmes 1928, 123–8; Debevoise 1938, 121–32; Ziegler 1964, 35–6; Bucheim 1960, 77–9, 82–3; Colledge 1967, 44–5; Bengtson 1974; Schieber 1979, 107–14; Bivar 1983, 58–64; Dąbrowa 1983, 37–8; Sherwin-White 1984, 307–21; Wolski 1993, 141–5; Pelling 1996, 30–4; Dąbrowa 2006, 343–52; Osgood 2006, 303–6.

Parthia? Second, after 30 B.C., when Antony was gone, some elite Roman voices still recalled defeats by the Parthians and demanded revenge. For example, one could point to Augustan poets such as Horace or Propertius.[10] If these men emphasized the disgrace of Rome by Parthia and the remaining need to blot it out, all after Antony and his efforts, how can we credit Antony with successfully avenging Rome against Parthia?

These would be fair objections, but they underemphasize the successes the Romans did enjoy under Antony, as well as the way his efforts in the east in general were presented to the Roman people back home.

As for successes, consider the first Roman engagement with the Parthians under Antony. While his start was slow against the 40 B.C. Parthian invasion, his subordinate lieutenant Ventidius was able to carry out a productive two-year campaign, in which he drove the Parthians from the Roman East in 39 B.C. and managed to kill Pacorus on the battlefield in 38 B.C. These were not insignificant events – as the Romans appreciated. Dio tells us the senate offered Antony public commendation and thanksgiving for the advances of 39 B.C.[11] As for those of 38 B.C., they were so impressive that Antony removed Ventidius from command, and the senate voted thanksgivings and a triumph to both Antony and Ventidius. And while Antony did not live to celebrate his triumph, Ventidius did. And his triumph, as the sources attest, left a deep impression on the Roman people. Pervasive is the notion in the sources that Ventidius finally avenged the disaster of Crassus. Many even apparently believed and circulated that Ventidius actually killed Pacorus on the same day that the Parthians cut down Crassus. As Dio says, 'The Romans voted these honors to Ventidius since they believed that through [the death of] Pacorus he had thoroughly repaid the Parthians for the misfortune that had befallen them in the time of Crassus, especially because both events happened on the same day of each year'.[12] Whether true or not, the rumor would have resonated with a populace

[10] Particularly good examples include, Hor. *Odes* 1.2.51–2 and 3.3.43–4, encouraging action against Parthia; 3.5.5–12, lamenting the assimilation of Crassan prisoners-of-war in the Parthian empire; 3.6.9–12, noting Roman losses c. 40 B.C. and 36 B.C.; Prop. 3.4. See Debevoise 1938, 138–9; Seager 1980, 103–18; Wissemann 1982, especially 47–103; Campbell 1993, 226–7; Merriam 2004, 56–70, who would agree that both of these poets recalled the defeats, but argues that only Horace of the two wished for Octavian to take action to avenge them, while Propertius rejected that line of thinking. For the image of the Parthians among the Romans in general, see Sonnabend 1986 and Lerouge 2007.

[11] Dio Cass. 48.41.5, καὶ [ὁ Οὐεντίδιος] αὐτὸς μὲν οὐδὲν ἐπ' αὐτοῖς παρὰ τῆς βουλῆς, ἅτε οὐκ αὐτοκράτωρ ὢν ἀλλ' ἑτέρῳ ὑποστρατηγῶν, εὕρετο, ὁ δὲ Ἀντώνιος καὶ ἐπαίνους καὶ ἱερομηνίας ἔλαβεν.

[12] Dio Cass. 49.21.1–3, ἐνταῦθα δὲ ἤδη αὐτῷ ὄντι ὁ Ἀντώνιος ἐξαίφνης ἐπιστὰς οὐ μόνον οὐχ ἥσθη ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐφθόνησεν, ὅτι ἔδοξέ τι καθ' ἑαυτὸν ἠνδραγαθίσθαι· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς αὐτὸν ἔπαυσε, καὶ ἐς οὐδὲν ἔτι οὔτ' αὐτίκα οὔθ' ὕστερον αὐτῷ ἐχρήσατο, καίτοι καὶ ἱερομηνίας

still uneasy about Carrhae. They could now breathe a collective sigh of relief as they watched a Roman triumph over the Parthians. One almost senses the Romans did not wish to stop celebrating the victory; shortly after Ventidius died, they gave him a public funeral.[13] While a Horace or Propertius wanted something more done about Parthia, most Romans likely entered the Augustan age with the feeling that they had beaten Parthia. Crassus' catastrophe could be forgotten in the brilliance of Ventidius' victory.[14]

Of course there are still Antony's blunders in 36 B.C. Antony, to be sure, scored some limited victories in this campaign. He routed Parthian forces during the siege of Praaspa and defeated them in a number of engagements as the Romans troops tried to extract themselves from the region.[15] In fact, Plutarch at one point tallies these Roman victories at eighteen![16] Even so we must remember that such highlights were balanced out by reverses, and all of them were in the con-

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ἐπ' ἀμφοτέροις τοῖς ἔργοις καὶ ἐπινίκια δι' αὐτὸν λαβών. οἵ γε μὴν ἐν τῷ ἄστει Ῥωμαῖοι ἐψηφίσαντο μὲν τῷ Ἀντωνίῳ ταῦτα πρός τε τὸ προῦχον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου, ὅτι ἡ στρατηγία ἐκείνου ἦν, ἐψηφίσαντο δὲ καὶ τῷ Οὐεντιδίῳ, ἅτε καὶ τὴν συμφορὰν τὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ Κράσσου σφίσι γενομένην ἱκανώτατα τοῖς Πάρθοις διὰ τοῦ Πακόρου, καὶ μάλισθ' ὅτι ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἑκατέρου τοῦ ἔτους ἀμφότερα συνηνέχθη, νομίζοντες ἀνταποδεδωκέναι. καὶ συνέβη γε τῷ Οὐεντιδίῳ μόνῳ τε τὰ νικητήρια ἑορτάσαι ὥσπερ καὶ μόνος ἐνίκησεν (ὁ γὰρ Ἀντώνιος προαπώλετο). Translations here and below are my own. For the specific belief that Ventidius requited the Parthians for the defeat of Crassus, see also Plut. *Ant*. 34.2; Val. Max. 6.9.9; Tac. *Germ*. 37.4; Arr. *Parth.* 24; Flor. 2.19.7. And that the events took place on the same day is also noted by the following, Eutrop. 7.5; Fest. *Brev*. 18; Oros. 6.18.23.

[13] Aul. Gell. 15.4.4, explicitly citing Suetonius, *Eundem Bassum Suetonius Tranquillus ... scribit … morte obita publico funere sepultum esse*.

[14] Dąbrowa 2006, 344 briefly notes Ventidius' successes. See also Bühler 2009, 225–7 and Sheldon 2010, 58–60 who discuss the victory and its impressions on the Romans. But they do not go as far as we should, nor do they entertain this implication for Octavian. Strugnell 2006, 239–52 argues the opposite view, that Ventidius' victory had limited impact at Rome. Perhaps its impact would have been greater still if somehow Ventidius had regained the standards lost under Crassus and displayed them in his triumph at Rome. Lerouge 2007, 94, however, rightly acknowledges this significance of Ventidius' victory; it so successfully avenged Crassus' death that Antony had to resort to the unreturned standards and prisoners of war as a (related) justification for his own future Parthian campaign. At any rate, we should not allow Strugnell's speculative thinking to divert our attention from the facts, Rome was desperate for a victory over Parthia, Ventidius earned a decisive one, and the Romans enthusiastically celebrated it. For another treatment of the impressive accomplishment of Antony in these and later events, as well as how the later source tradition may have obscured it, see K. R. Jones, Marcus Antonius' Median War and the Dynastic Politics of the Near East', in J.M. Schlude and B.B. Rubin (eds.), *Arsacids, Romans, and Local Elites: Cross-Cultural Interactions of the Parthian Empire* (Oxbow Books), forthcoming.

[15] e.g. Dio Cass. 49.26.2, 49.29.2–4; Plut. *Ant*. 39, 41, 42, 45. Wolski 1993, 143–4 recognizes the talent and accomplishment of Antony as a commander under the difficult circumstances that the Romans faced in their retreat.

[16] Plut. *Ant*. 50, ὥδευσαν μὲν οὖν ἀπὸ Φραάτηων ἡμέρας ἑπτὰ καὶ εἴκοσι, μάχαις δ' ὀκτὼ καὶ δέκα Πάρθους ἐνίκησαν.

text of a failed siege, determined retreat, and huge loss of life, as mentioned above.[17] In the end, the campaign was no resounding success. Yet it is vital to appreciate that many Romans must have understood them differently, since the reverses never reached them in unvarnished form. The position published by Antony at Rome included nothing of his problems. According to Dio, 'he indeed concealed all things unpleasant and portrayed some of them as just the opposite, as if they were even successes'.[18] In other words, Antony offered the Roman public a highly edited version of events that would have left most to think that Rome was the victor. The more we dig into the sources, the less evidence we see for the likelihood of a potent demand at Rome in 30 B.C. for revenge against Parthia. Antony had already addressed the concern.

III. Octavians's Role before 31/0 B.C.

This accomplishment, however, did not belong to Antony alone. Octavian and his partisans played an active role in assisting him in this project. And this we should consider the beginning of Octavian's Parthian policy (not his actions in 30 B.C.).

One might suppose Octavian would have attempted to undermine entirely Antony's attempts to fashion himself as conqueror of the Parthians. Yet the evidence available, while limited, suggests the opposite, i.e. Octavian actually took positive action to help construct the image. Hence even while Antony spread his own lies about the uncompromised advances of his 36 B.C. campaign, Octavian and his supporters instituted sacrifices and festivals to celebrate the faux victory.[19] And Octavian may have continued the fiction when responding to Antony's complaint that he had given away nearly all of Italy to his own soldiers and left nothing for those of Antony: 'The soldiers [of Antony] had no claim on Italy, since they had Media and Parthia, which they won for the Romans, when they fought well with their general'.[20] While those in-the-know would have recognized the irony in this statement, others would have seen it as confirming the image already constructed: Antony had Parthia in hand. In fact, it seems not unlikely that Octavian would

[17] Based on Plutarch's account, Antony seems to have lost something on the order of a third of his fighting force, setting out as he did with 100,000 troops (*Ant*. 37), but seeing 32,000 destroyed (*Ant*. 50–51).

[18] Dio Cass. 49.32.1, πάντα γὰρ δὴ τὰ δυσχερῆ συνέκρυπτε, καὶ ἔστιν ἅ γε αὐτῶν καὶ ἐς τὸ ἐναντιώτατον, ὡς καὶ εὐπραγῶν, ἔγραφεν.

[19] Dio Cassius says of their response to the ill-starred campaign, οὐ μέντοι καὶ ἐν τῷ κοινῷ διήλεγχον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐβουθύτουν καὶ ἑώρταζον (49.32.2).

[20] Plut. *Ant*. 55.2, τοῖς δὲ στρατιώταις Ἰταλίας μὴ μετεῖναι, Μηδίαν γὰρ ἔχειν καὶ Παρθίαν αὐτούς, ἃς προσεκτήσαντο Ῥωμαίοις καλῶς ἀγωνισάμενοι μετὰ τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος.

have anticipated (and so intended) both reactions. It is important to note the irony, but also to highlight the maintenance of the image (no less real).

Along similar lines, one could also point to the story of the Donations of Alexandria, whose ultimate publication must have been the work of Octavian and his partisans.[21] In this famous incident, Antony supposedly choreographed an ostentatious, public display in the Alexandrian gymnasium, in which he bestowed impressive titles and eastern territories upon Cleopatra VII and her children. As the story goes, Antony gave to Alexander, his son by the queen, Armenia, Media, and Parthia.[22] Again, it would appear that Octavian was supporting the image of Antony as a success vis-à-vis Parthia.

No doubt some will question this reading. Was this story not used to make Antony look bad? Indeed we know Antony had no power at all over Parthia. Yet this anecdote takes for granted that he controlled it. Perhaps Octavian circulated this story to highlight the gaping chasm between the reality and Antony's claims. But this is unlikely, considering the larger context of the passage, which mentions a string of other territories that were under Roman control at this point. While Antony ultimately only had an alliance with the king of Media (another so-called Artavasdes, who had sought the friendship of the Romans in newfound displeasure with Phraates after Antony's 36 B.C. venture), he had effectively conquered Armenia and removed its king Artavasdes in 34 B.C., theoretically making way for a new king whom he could appoint and install.[23] And the other territories he distributed in the Donations were fully subject to Roman hegemony: Egypt, Cyprus, (north) Africa, Syria, Coele-Syria, Phoenicia, and Cilicia. Yes, the aim was for the story to make Antony look bad, but not for what he did not do (i.e. conquer Parthia), rather for what he did do: high-handedly give the Roman East to an Egyptian queen and her children. Another objection may be that this story is too storied; it is nearly impossible to sift fact from fiction.[24] Yet such attempts to identify the reality are unnecessary and miss the point: whatever the truth, Octavian consistently constructed for the Roman public a picture of Parthia as conquered and cowed.

[21] Plut. *Ant.* 55.1 suggests as much, ταῦτα δ' εἰς σύγκλητον ἐκφέρων Καῖσαρ καὶ πολλάκις ἐν τῷ δήμῳ κατηγορῶν παρώξυνε τὸ πλῆθος ἐπ' Ἀντώνιον.

[22] See Plut. *Ant.* 54.3; Dio Cass. 49.41.1–4; cf. Livy, *Epit.* 131; Zonar. 10.27 (PI521D–522A).

[23] Dio Cass. 49.33.1–4, 49.39.1–40.4, 49.44.1–4; Plut. *Ant.* 52–53. Antony cemented his friendship with the king of Media through a marriage alliance involving the Mede's daughter Iotape and his son Alexander. While this marriage would have provided Alexander with a connection to Media, the Median king certainly did not agree to vacate his own throne to make room for Antony's son. As mentioned, however, Armenia was in Roman hands and in need of a king. In fact, as Dio Cass. 49.44.2 makes clear, Antony subsequently gave part of the territory to the Median Artavasdes in 33 B.C.

[24] Scholars have rightly noticed the Augustan propaganda machine at work here, Syme [1939] 2002, 270; Schieber 1979, 118; Osgood 2006, 338–9. Some, however, such as Roller 2010, 99–101 and Sheldon 2010, 74, seem inclined to accept the event entirely as fact.

The material I am reviewing here has long been discussed. There is, however, much still to appreciate when it comes to the rehabilitation of the Roman reputation in relation to Parthia. Before 30 B.C. a great deal had already been done, thanks to Ventidius and Antony, to restore Rome's image of itself. Not everyone may have been convinced, but most would have. Along with this, it should be noted that Octavian played an important part, too. Of course he wanted Antony to look bad, but not at the expense of continued Roman insecurity about Parthia. This was one area in which it was more important to put Rome first. Before 30 B.C. Octavian also worked to satisfy the Roman desire to settle the score with Parthia.

IV. Octavian and Parthia after 31/0 B.C.

This new understanding of Augustan policy on Parthia has important implications. As discussed, this policy is often thought to have begun in 30 B.C. with a drive for revenge. The result was provocative action against Parthia early on, i.e. Octavian harbored Tiridates as a potential claimant to the Parthian throne, held the son of king Phraates as a hostage, and supposedly released him only in return for the Roman standards. To be sure, this was no armed action. But it was an attempt to clamp down aggressively on Parthia (albeit more diplomatically) to wrest concessions from the state.

Yet based on our observations above, this may not be the best picture of early Augustan relations with Parthia. A different (and more appropriate) starting point may lead to different conclusions. By 30 B.C., much of the Roman need for Parthian revenge was already answered – and Octavian played his part in the process. As a result, Octavian's hands were more free when it came to Parthia. He did not need to march against Parthia or to force the state into offering concessions. And so when we consider his response, in the wake of Actium, to the internal Parthian struggle for power between Phraates and Tiridates, we should not assume hostile intent automatically, but be open to reading his decisions as more progressive, where appropriate.

Most likely, Octavian's aim was to maintain a position of neutrality in the Parthian civil war. After the disastrous conclusion of Antony's 36 B.C. campaign and down to Octavian's assumption of power in the Roman East in 31/0 B.C., there was no direct military engagement between Romans and Parthians. And Octavian wished to keep it that way. So when the Parthian internal conflict threatened to involve the Romans, and thereby draw them necessarily into war with one Parthian faction or another, Octavian opted for non-commitment. The account of Dio suggests as much. He writes, 'as long as the faction of Antony still resisted, even after the sea battle, not only did [Octavian] not take one of the

sides of those requesting an alliance, but he did not even give an answer other than that he would think on it'. Note the neutrality. While Octavian cited pressing business in Egypt as an explanation, Dio reckons that he pursued this line of behavior 'in order that [Phraates and Tiridates] might be exhausted at the time by fighting against one another'.[25] And it is conceivable that this may have been considered an additional benefit when it came to the security of the eastern Roman empire. But his primary goal must have been to avoid opposition to and alienation of a powerful Parthian faction.

His policy remained the same even when conflict finally spilled over into the Roman empire.[26] When Tiridates was defeated and fled to Syria with the son of Phraates in tow as a hostage, Octavian worked to establish a good rapport with both and to encourage each to trust in him. He received the envoys of Phraates in friendly fashion. Neither did he promise Tiridates assistance, nor did he arrest and surrender him to Phraates to face a dire fate. Rather he permitted him to reside in Syria, which had some benefit for both parties. While he did not signal immediate disapproval of Tiridates by sending his hostage back to Phraates at this time, he nevertheless removed the boy from the custody of Tiridates as a favor to the king and brought him back to Rome.[27] Afterwards an additional trust-building measure was needed for the king after Tiridates made another unsuccessful attempt on the Parthian throne in 26–25 B.C.[28] As a result, Octavian

[25] Dio Cass. 51.18.2, στασιασάντων γὰρ αὐτῶν καί τινος Τιριδάτου τῷ Φραάτῃ ἐπαναστάντος, πρότερον μέν, καὶ ἕως ἔτι τὰ τοῦ Ἀντωνίου καὶ μετὰ τὴν ναυμαχίαν ἀνθειστήκει, οὐχ ὅσον οὐ προσέθετό τῳ αὐτῶν συμμαχίαν αἰτησάντων, ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἀπεκρίνατο ἄλλο οὐδὲν ἢ ὅτι βουλεύσεται, πρόφασιν μὲν ὡς καὶ περὶ τὴν Αἴγυπτον ἀσχολίαν ἔχων, ἔργῳ δὲ ἵν' ἐκτρυχωθεῖεν ἐν τούτῳ μαχόμενοι πρὸς ἀλλήλους.

[26] The primary sources are inconsistent on the sequence of events between 30 and 25 B.C. The most important literary sources include, Dio Cass. 51.18.3, 53.33.1–2; Justin 42.5. While Justin includes some details not found elsewhere that should be considered reliable, he also has combined events incorrectly into a condensed account that has produced confusion for modern scholars when they compare it to the fuller version of Dio Cassius. For this reason, I closely follow Dio Cassius below, but still refer to Justin where relevant. For a detailed and careful discussion of the source problems, see Timpe 1975, 155–60, which agrees with the following reconstruction of these years' events with a few exceptions.

[27] Dio Cass. 51.18.3, τότε δὲ ἐπειδὴ ὅ τε Ἀντώνιος ἐτελεύτησε, καὶ ἐκείνων ὁ μὲν Τιριδάτης ἡττηθεὶς ἐς τὴν Συρίαν κατέφυγεν, ὁ δὲ Φραάτης κρατήσας πρέσβεις ἔπεμψε, τούτοις τε φιλικῶς ἐχρημάτισε, καὶ τῷ Τιριδάτῃ βοηθήσειν μὲν οὐχ ὑπέσχετο διαιτᾶσθαι δὲ ἐν τῇ Συρίᾳ ἐπέτρεψεν, υἱόν τέ τινα τοῦ Φραάτου ἐν εὐεργεσίας μέρει παρ' αὐτοῦ λαβὼν ἔς τε τὴν Ῥώμην ἀνήγαγε καὶ ἐν ὁμηρείᾳ ἐποιήσατο. In accordance with Justin, Timpe 1975, 159–60 favors 25 B.C. as the year in which Tiridates fled the Parthian empire with Phraates' son as a hostage. But this obviously runs contrary to Dio Cassius. It would be better to follow Dio Cassius here, accepting that in 30/29 B.C. Augustus brought Phraates' son to Rome, where he subsequently he would play into the events of 25 B.C. in a significant way.

[28] Isid. Char. 1; Dio Cass. 53.33.1–2. Numismatic evidence puts Tiridates in some control of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris in 26–25 B.C.; see McDowell 1935, 185, 222; cf. Debevoise 1938, 137–8. A

(now better called Augustus) decided to return the boy to his father Phraates – and he did so, according to Pompeius Trogus, *sine pretio*, without a price, free of charge.[29] In short, this was a very carefully balanced response to what was a real diplomatic crisis. Octavian was not purposely ratcheting up tensions with Parthia by securing and then manipulating Tiridates and Phraates' son as bargaining chips to influence the king. In fact, he had little reason to do so. Antony, with his assistance, had already neutralized the problem of Roman self-image vis-à-vis Parthia. No Parthian concessions were necessary at this time. In addition, to take such provocative action actually would have alienated Phraates and perhaps produced a new Parthian problem for the Romans. On the contrary, Octavian sought to diffuse tensions as much as possible in the difficult circumstances and to move Roman-Parthian relations in a more positive direction.

Phraates' subsequent behavior offers some proof of this interpretation. As is well known, some years later (c. 10 B.C.) Phraates sent Augustus several other royal family members to board with him in Rome. Among others these included four sons: Seraspadanes, Rhodaspes, yet another Phraates, and Vonones.[30] Various authors suggest Phraates took this action because of internal instability and dynastic intrigue at home in Parthia – a not implausible explanation.[31] But for purposes here, we should note that this would have placed Augustus in a powerful position, being able to supply one of these royal candidates as a figurehead to a faction aligned against Phraates, should he have wished. Would Phraates have transferred such key figures to Augustus' custody if Augustus had used Tiridates and his other son against him in the 20s B.C.? Certainly not. This is a considera-

more recent discussion of this evidence is de Callataÿ 1994, 42–7, 55–7, who lays out the numismatic and literary evidence and explicitly suggests that Tiridates enjoyed Roman assistance in this venture. The evidence for this would seem to lie in title of ΦΙΛΟΡΩΜΑΙΟΥ that Tiridates adopted on his coins in 26 B.C. But while this is clearly a striking and unprecedented title on a Parthian coin, it remains speculative to conclude that substantial Roman support motivated its adoption. Phraates clearly did not consider it significant when he sent his royal family members to stay with Augustus at Rome fifteen years later (see discussion below). As for the title's intended meaning, it could have signaled one's status as a Roman client king in a Roman context. So Timpe 1975, 157 understands it. In a Parthian context, however, such ethnic terminology might have offered the illusion of power over some Roman constituency. Tiridates perhaps considered both interpretations advantageous, since they had the potential to inspire support among different groups. For an alternative explanation of this title, see Gaslain and Maleuvre 2006, 182–3, who follow others in assuming Roman support (they explicitly mention financial and military support), but seem to suggest the possibility that actually Augustus and Phraates were conspiring together in this event, setting Tiridates up for a fall! The suggestion is extremely intriguing, though ultimately unlikely.

[29] Just. *Epit*. 42.5.9.

[30] Strab. 16.1.28; cf. Strab. 6.4.2; Aug. *Anc.* 32.2; Vell. Pat. 2.94.4; Joseph. *AJ* 18.42; Tac. *Ann*. 2.1; Suet. *Aug.* 21.3; Eutrop. 7.9; Oros. 6.21.29. It may even be that Parthian hostages entered Roman hands in 20 B.C. along with the Roman standards and captives (see Gruen 1996, 159–60).

[31] See Strab. 16.1.28; Tac. *Ann*. 2.1; Joseph. *AJ* 18.39–43, providing juicy details.

tion left unnoticed in scholarship. In the final analysis, we must conclude that Augustus had earned the trust of Phraates. Augustus did not use the circumstances surrounding the Parthian internal strife of 31–25 B.C. as an opportunity to pressure and provoke Parthia. He aimed at fully amicable relations.

This reconstruction still needs to address a final – and important – detail: the testimony of Dio on the return of Phraates' son. In contrast to the account of Pompeius Trogus cited above, in which Augustus returned the boy to the king with no strings attached, Dio maintains that he sent him to his father 'on the condition that he receive the captives and military standards which were taken in the disasters of Crassus and Antony'.[32] Yet as explicit as this text is, there is as much reason to doubt it and credit Pompeius Trogus instead. While he and his sources were much closer to the event, it seems most plausible that Dio himself, in an attempt to explain this significant decision of Phraates centuries later, fixed on the last known diplomatic contact between the Roman and Parthian states, i.e. the return of the boy to Parthia, as a suitable hanger for the restoration of the standards. Also telling is the fact that, as Dio himself admits, the Parthian king returned the standards in 20 B.C.,[33] years after the supposedly conditional return of his son, which must have happened in 25 B.C. or very shortly thereafter.[34] Such an agreement, if it had existed, likely would have produced faster results. What is more, other primary sources commenting upon the restoration of the standards, several even contemporary with the event like Pompeius Trogus, fail to make the specific connection that Dio does.[35] It is highly improbable that this is a mere coincidence. All these considerations stack up against the account of Dio on this point.

The nature of Dio's explanation, however, is understandable against the backdrop of when Phraates returned the standards and how Augustus subsequently presented it. Even if a conditional return of the prince was unlikely, the underlying idea that Augustus was the primary cause behind the restoration of the standards, taking some action that inspired the Parthian decision, nevertheless finds support both in the circumstances that produced this accomplishment and in the propaganda program of Augustus that exploited the event. Indeed their return in 20 B.C. was linked to the presence of Augustus in the Roman east at that time.[36] He had been there since 21 B.C. to deal with wide-ranging

[32] Dio Cass. 53.33.2, τὸν δ' υἱὸν αὐτῷ, ὃν πρότερον παρ' ἐκείνου λαβὼν εἶχεν, ἀπέπεμψεν ἐπὶ τῷ τούς τε αἰχμαλώτους καὶ τὰ σημεῖα τὰ στρατιωτικὰ τὰ ἔν τε τῇ τοῦ Κράσσου καὶ ἐν τῇ τοῦ ᾽Αντωνίου συμφορᾷ ἁλόντα κομίσασθαι.

[33] See Dio Cass. 54.8.1.

[34] Dio Cassius seems to place this event in 23 B.C. (53.33.1–2).

[35] See, for example, Aug. *Anc.* 29, Strab. 16.1.28, Vell. Pat. 2.91.1, and Suet. *Aug.* 21.3.

[36] See Just. *Epit.* 42.5.10–11; cf. Dio Cass. 54.8.1. Modern scholarship has also noted this connection, Ziegler 1964, 47, Dąbrowa 1983, 41–2, Wolski 1993, 147, Gruen 1996, 159–60 (cf. Gruen 1990, 396–7), and Linz 2009, 60–4, who nevertheless would not agree with all the details of the following reconstruction of these events.

business, focusing his administrative and diplomatic efforts first in Greece in 21 B.C. and then in Asia Minor, Syria, and their environs in 20 B.C. During this time, Augustus favorably answered a request of the Armenians. No longer satisfied with the rule of Artaxes II, who ultimately secured the Armenian throne after Antony's removal of Artavasdes and own demise, they called for the return and installation of his brother Tigranes III, then resident in Rome. Consequently, Augustus commissioned the future emperor Tiberius to establish Tigranes on the throne of Armenia – a task, as it turned out, made relatively easy by the Armenians who killed Artaxes before the arrival of Tiberius and Tigranes.[37] With such a Roman intervention in Armenia in motion, Phraates decided it was best to play it safe and cultivate proactively and positively his relationship with Augustus. Though Augustus had given him little cause for concern (and good reason for hope) in the previous decade, the last time the Romans ventured so far beyond Syria was under Antony and with belligerent results. The Parthian king took no chances; he had no interest in the repetition of past conflict. Phraates even may have surmised that the right reaction to Augustus could build constructively upon the progress already made in the Roman-Parthian relationship since 31 B.C. Aware of the significance of the Roman standards and captives, whose return Antony actually requested of him (unsuccessfully) back in 36 B.C. on the eve of his campaign into the Parthian empire, and to which Augustus perhaps even drew attention in an embassy while he was in the Near East in 20 B.C. (but not in connection to any conditional demand), Phraates returned them now to encourage further Roman-Parthian friendship. In fact both motivations, fear of potential conflict and hope of friendship, find explicit expression in the sources.[38] In other words, their

[37] For the most detailed account of the trip, see Dio Cass. 54.7.1–8.1 and 54.9.1–10. For developments touching on Armenia, see Dio Cass. 54.9.4–5; Aug. *Anc.* 27.2; Vell. Pat. 2.94.4 and 2.122.1; Strab. 17.1.54; Tac. *Ann.* 2.3; Suet. *Tib.* 3.9.1; Joseph. *AJ* 15.105.

[38] Dio Cass. 49.24.5 attests Antony's request for the standards and prisoners. With this in mind, it should be noted that Antony deserves credit for helping to prepare the field for the significant settlement of the Augustan period (see also below). Just. *Epit.* 42.5.9 emphasizes the fear of a new Roman invasion of the Parthian empire, *Post haec, finito Hispaniensi bello, cum in Syriam ad conponendum Orientis statum venisset, metum Phrahati incussit, ne bellum Parthiae vellet inferre*. See also Dio Cass. 54.8.1. Strab. 16.1.28 posits Phraates' zeal for friendship, τοσοῦτον ἐσπούδασε περὶ τὴν φιλίαν τὴν πρὸς Καίσαρα τὸν Σεβαστόν, ὥστε καὶ τὰ τρόπαια ἔπεμψεν, ἃ κατὰ Ῥωμαίων ἀνέστησαν Παρθυαῖοι. Augustus also associates the return of the trophies with the Parthian desire for 'the friendship of the Roman people', though he puts a self-concerned spin on the details (*Anc.* 29.2; once more, see below). Interestingly, Dąbrowa 2012, 173 suggests that the return of the standards and prisoners *preceded* the Armenian request for a new king – and not vice versa, as argued here. Yet he also contends that their return resulted in part from 'military pressure from Rome'. While I obviously would say the issue was more of a perceived (not real) Roman military threat, in either case the Roman activities in Armenia in 20 B.C. would have been the most likely source of the Parthian anxiety that helped to inspire their return.

return was fundamentally a response to Augustus' progressive decisions over the past decade and his activity in the Roman east in 21–20 B.C.

The Augustan tradition then reinforced the Augustus factor. Faced with this potentially unexpected development, Augustus fully understood the magnitude of the opportunity at hand. Although he had worked with Antony back in the 30s B.C. to successfully avenge the Crassan debacle in the eyes of Romans, in 20 B.C. he could now rewrite history – to his own advantage. As it turned out, Augustus managed to oversee what Antony tragically could not: the return of the standards and captives of Crassus.[39] Who could argue with that? And who would argue with that? Augustus' Roman audience would not have minded another celebration at Parthia's expense. As a result, Augustus was now to be the real avenger of the Roman defeats by Parthia. The best possible face was put on the event and its reverberations are clear in the literary and material record.[40] Augustus presented the event entirely as his own impressive doing – and his language was suggestive of a military accomplishment. In his *Res Gestae* he claimed, 'I forced the Parthians to return to me the spoils and standards of three Roman armies and to seek as suppliants the friendship of the Roman people.'[41] He left no doubt that his was the powerful compulsion producing this momentous Parthian submission. And others quickly took his cue, happily encouraging the fiction of a military victory. For example, the Roman senate honored Augustus with a triumphal arch that clearly credited him with this accomplishment. In fact the combined numismatic and archaeological evidence suggests that a triple-bayed arch, topped centrally by Augustus in a four-horse chariot and peripherally by Parthians, one of which offered a legionary eagle to the princeps, once dominated the eastern side of the Roman forum. Imperial coinage boasted mottos of *signis receptis* ('the standards have been restored') and images of Parthians at their knees and offering up the standards. A statue of Augustus from Prima Porta, likely copying an honorific representation, shows Augustus every bit the victorious commander against Parthia, right arm outstretched in preparation for public address, body draped in the general's cloak, and torso embraced by a cuirass that sports an image of a Parthian transferring a standard to a representative of Rome, thought to be either Mars Ultor or Roma. Consider also the variety of poets in Augustan Rome who praised him for

[39] While Antony failed to recover the standards of Crassus, he apparently managed the recovery of his own standards, lost during the campaign of 36 B.C. See Dio Cass. 49.44.2.

[40] On this issue and for what follows, the scholarly discussion is immense. Some useful starting points include, Sherwin-White 1984, 324–5; Zanker 1988, 183–92; Gruen 1990, 395–9 and 413–6 (cf. Gruen 1996, 158–63); Campbell 1993, 226–8; Rich 1998, 71–128; Merriam 2004, 56–70; Rose 2005, 21–36, which is particularly valuable, providing comprehensive bibliography; Lerouge 2007, 105–27; Schneider 2007, 50–86.

[41] Aug. *Anc.* 5.29, *Parthos trium exercitum Roman[o]rum spolia et signa re[ddere] mihi supplicesque amicitiam populi Romani petere coegi*.

realizing the return of the Roman standards: Horace, Ovid, Vergil, and Propertius.[42] With all this in mind, it is not surprising that the Augustan program managed to shape the writings of later Roman authors, including Suetonius who supported the claim of Augustus,[43] as well as Dio, whose analysis was faulty, as already discussed, but nevertheless must have found encouragement in it.[44]

In fact, Augustus did not demand the standards in exchange for a hostage. The restoration of the standards was a calculated and constructive Parthian response to Augustus, who tended only to react to Parthian affairs when necessary so as to relieve tension and ensure peace with Rome's eastern neighbor. For the wiggle room to do so, Augustus actually had Antony to thank, whose initial accomplishments in the east largely sated the Roman appetite for revenge on Parthia and whose subsequent failures in the same theater he agreed to conceal in misleading publications.

V. Conclusion

Augustus no doubt would be pleased that his propaganda program has worked its magic on modern scholars, too. To return to where we began, scholarship has noted rightly the diplomatic achievement of Augustus in Roman-Parthian relations.

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[42] See, for example, Hor. *Epist.* 1.12.27–8; Ov. *Fast.* 5.579–98, 6.465–8; Verg. *Aen.* 7.605–6; Prop. 4.6.79–82. It should be noted, however, that not all would agree that Ovid and Propertius were entirely sincere in their praise, e.g. Merriam 2004, 65–70, who also provides good bibliography on Propertius in n. 13.

[43] Suet. *Aug.* 2.3, *Parthi … signa militaria, quae M. Crasso et M. Antonio ademerant, [Augusto] reposcenti reddiderunt*. Again, however, compare Dio Cass. 49.44.2, which suggests that the standards lost by Antony in 36 B.C. had already been returned to that triumvir.

[44] Rather than underscoring Augustus' attempts, discussed here, to present the Parthians as subjugated, some scholars instead have argued that Augustus portrayed the Parthians as a people relatively equal to Rome, a people who were to control the eastern (degenerate) half of a divided world. Such scholars see this as an Augustan technique in public policy designed to make the conquest of the Parthian empire unappealing and unnecessary. In other words, it was an attempt by Augustus to explain his failure to conquer Parthia. See Sonnabend 1986, 209–10, followed by Shayegan 2011, 334–40. Such a reading draws upon several authors from the period of Augustus and Tiberius who speak, in some form, to a *divisio orbis* between the Romans and powerful Parthians, Just. *Epit.* 41.1.1; Strab. 11.9.2; Vell. Pat. 2.101. Later echoes include, Joseph. *AJ* 18.46; Tac. *Ann.* 2.56. Lerouge 2007, 119–22, however, rightly notes that this idea of a *divisio orbis* as a part of official Augustan public imagery runs contrary to all the efforts after 20 B.C. to display the Parthians as conquered by Rome. Even so she entertains the possibility that these passages in fact may reflect Augustan policy, insofar as they originated from an attempt by the princeps to highlight the magnitude and stability of Roman power in the West. This is possible. But it is equally possible that we may simply be looking at the play of image vs. reality in Roman-Parthian relations. The image desired by Augustus was Roman victory and dominance over Parthia, while the reality was surely less: Rome faced a powerful Parthian empire with which it had to negotiate, compromise, and cooperate. It was impossible for Augustus to suppress this reality entirely; many in antiquity were acutely aware of the facts.

Once more peace with Parthia became reality. Also entrenched, however, is the idea that the lingering need to address the Parthian defeat of Crassus drove Augustus to confront Parthia aggressively beginning in 31/0 B.C. But this reading is problematic; those who adopt it have fallen prey to a deceptive Augustan self-representation designed to rewrite history. In light of the surprising return of the standards, Augustus thought it possible to win recognition as the ever-determined and successful champion of Rome against Parthia. Yet this was in retrospect. The vast majority of Romans were not calling for an attack on Parthia in 30 B.C. They were content because Antony and Octavian had addressed the issue beforehand. Antony secured a victory over Parthia. And for his part, Octavian in the 30s B.C. advocated at home the idea that the Romans were avenged on the Parthians through the efforts of Antony. As a result, he was able to freely collaborate with the Parthian king in and after 30 B.C. on improving Roman-Parthian relations. This he did by engaging in friendly diplomacy, maintaining neutrality during a Parthian civil conflict, and protecting and then restoring the king's son to him. His approach was not to encourage tension, but diffuse it and reestablish a lasting Roman-Parthian peace. In the end, Augustus' earlier Parthian policy was even more progressive than modern scholarship has so far appreciated.[*]

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Abstract

This article addresses the early Parthian policy of Augustus, which proved to be pivotal in the history of Roman-Parthian relations. Considering his importance in this regard, scholars have rightly focused on Augustus and Parthia. Yet they routinely begin their treatments in 31/0 B.C., neglecting evidence that he took action related to Parthia beforehand. In addition, while moderns recognize progressive elements of his Parthian policy, most still unduly emphasize his provocation of Parthia in and after 30 B.C. This article instead argues that Octavian, before 30 B.C., collaborated with Antony in creating an image of Parthia as conquered by Rome for domestic consumption, which later allowed him to pursue constructive foreign relations with Parthia.