Pax Romana: War, Peace and Conquest in the Roman World. By Adrian Goldsworthy. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016) Pp. 528. Hardback, $32.50.

Evaluations by historians of the *Pax Romana*, the 200 year period of relative peace, stability, and prosperity under Roman rule around the Mediterranean beginning with the ascendancy of Augustus in 27 BCE, have reflected modern trends in historiography. Edward Gibbon, writing in the imperialistic 18th century, saw Roman rule over primitive provinces as a positive phenomenon – creating stability and order out of chaos and barbarism.[1] Conversely, more recent scholars, influenced by postcolonial thought and the subsequent denigration of imperialistic ventures, have argued that the "peace" of the Roman Empire was either nothing more than violent "robbery" or that any positive outcomes stemming from the *Pax Romana* paled in comparison to the oppression, violence, and domination that came along with it.[2] Yet the current violence and anarchy in parts of the world that have developed with the removal of European imperialist structures have given some scholars pause. Goldsworthy's aptly named book, *Pax Romana*, attempts to swing the pendulum back, suggesting that, despite some negatives consequences, this period of Roman peace on the whole was a good phenomenon that improved economic stability and reduced violence throughout the Mediterranean.

Goldsworthy acknowledges the immense bloodshed provincial generations experienced leading up to the *Pax Romana*. The frontiers and provinces, after all, were pacified by violence, and the establishment of peace across the Mediterranean was a consequence of this brutality, never a cause of it. And yet, while the Romans excelled at warfare and domination, their success resided in their unmatched "talent for absorbing others," both in Italy as well as in the provinces.[3] On this question of Roman imperialism, Goldsworthy follows Arthur Eckstein in emphasizing that the Romans were no more violent or brutal than other states across the Mediterranean.[4] Of course, the Roman Empire and the *Pax Romana* ultimately depended on force, and those who decided to question Roman authority soon learned that the long-term benefits of remaining loyal to Rome outweighed any short-term gains from rebellion. Predictably, the Romans remained most concerned with their own interests.

Yet Goldsworthy argues that it was not just fear that ensured the provinces' loyalty to Rome and preserved the Empire. Rather the *Pax Romana* resulted in actual benefits for aristocrats as well as for the general populace throughout the Mediterranean. Local as well as regional stability, growth of long-distance trade, and the reduction of violence from both within and beyond the Empire all came as a result of Roman rule. Most importantly, the *Pax Romana* ended the widespread local in-fighting that had consumed most of the Mediterranean before Roman hegemony. Despite the violence and oppression that accompanied its

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[1] Edward Gibbon, *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 1 (New York: Penguin Classics, 1776/1996), 103.
[2] Greg Woolf, "Roman Peace," in John Rich and Graham Shipley, *War and Society in the Roman World* (London: Routledge, 1993), 171-194: 189; Neil Faulkner, *The Decline and Fall of Roman Britain* (Stroud, UK: Tempus, 2004), 12; Neville Morley, *The Roman Empire: Roots of Imperialism* (New York: Pluto Press, 2010), 69.
[3] Adrion Goldsworthy, *Pax Romana: War, Peace and Conquest in the Ancient World* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2016), 11.
[4] Arthur Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy, Interstate War, and the Rise of Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

establishment, peace was a reality, and by the 2nd century CE, the striking lack of rebellion throughout the empire on any large scale indicates the benefits of the *Pax Romana* for those living in the provinces. Thus, following Tacfarinas' uprising in North Africa and the three Jewish rebellions in the first century CE, these regions saw little resistance to Roman control. Internal politics and rivalries always remained more influential than feelings towards Roman imperialism, and diplomacy always preceded the legions. Even during the famous rebellions of the Iceni under Boudicca and the rebellion under Arminius, the majority of the local population stayed loyal to Rome. Roman rule was never so unbearable that an entire province chose to reject it. Nor did banditry throughout the Mediterranean represent some larger anti-Roman feeling among the populace. And while corrupt Roman governors did commit abuses, Goldsworthy argues that such governors were not the norm and were often punished by the emperor. For every Caeius Verras there was a Marcus Tullius Cicero. Goldsworthy holds that for the cities, day-to-day administration existed almost the same both before and after Roman occupation. The Romans neither could nor wished to govern their affairs directly. Goldsworthy maintains that in an age before modern communication and transportation, the existence of the *Pax Romana* was impressive in its scope, longevity, and success. Creating relative peace across the Mediterranean is rare, even by today's standards.

Goldsworthy's extensive book is broken into fourteen chapters as well as an introduction and conclusion. Chapters 1-6 comprise Part One of the work, which focuses on the establishment of Roman strength and hegemony under the Republic. These chapters explore the relationship and diplomacy between Rome and her Italian Allies (Chapter 1 and 3); the motivations of the Roman military (Chapter 2); individual Roman action in the provinces (Chapter 4-5); and the Romans' noncommittal interactions with the Greek East (Chapter 6). Goldsworthy cautions his readers to avoid the mistake of viewing this process of Roman expansion with the benefit of hindsight. The Roman Senate typically acted on a pragmatic ad hoc basis and Gallic noblemen competed for rank long before Caesar arrived.

Part Two of Goldsworthy's monograph analyses Roman hegemony throughout the Mediterranean under the Empire. These chapters explore local politics under the Augustan Peace (Chapter 7); resistance towards Roman rule in the provinces (Chapter 8); the presence of banditry throughout the Empire (Chapter 9); apathy and corruption among governors and emperors (Chapter 10); the social stability that accompanied Roman control of the provinces (Chapter 11); the autonomy and strategic deployment of Roman soldiers in the provinces (Chapter 12); the static and dynamic Roman responses to raids along the frontier (Chapter 13); and the desire of those both within and beyond the provinces to become and remain Roman for centuries to come due to the benefits of the *Pax Romana* (Chapter 14).

Goldsworthy's book is a strong addition to the field of Roman imperialism for both scholars and popular readers alike. As with many of his other monographs, *Pax Romana* remains fairly accessible to the general reader with an interest in Roman military and imperial history, despite being over 400 pages in length and demonstrating his points with extreme detail. These readers will be helped by Goldsworthy's chronology and glossary in the back of the book as well as his clear and enjoyable prose. Roman historians will also find much of value in this monograph by taking full advantage of Goldsworthy's endnotes and the many historiographical

debates that are intertwined within his chapters. The scope of *Pax Romana* is ambitious, exploring the political, social, military, geographical, and diplomatic aspects of Rome's lengthy domination of the Mediterranean, but Goldsworthy delivers, adding considerably to our understanding of the nature and benefits of Roman rule. Perhaps most impressively, Goldsworthy's greatest success lies in his even-handed ability to convincingly highlight the many positive consequences of the *Pax Romana* without excusing or justifying the brutality and violence that ultimately allowed this complex Roman peace to exist.

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