

READING DIACHRONICALLY: A NEW READING OF BOOK 36 OF CASSIUS DIO'S *ROMAN HISTORY**

Abstract. The recent revision of Cassius Dio (e.g. Lange and Madsen (2016b)) has underlined the complexity of his work and the independent interpretations therein, but Book 36 has been studied almost exclusively with a focus on the *lex Gabinia* (Coudry (2016)). In this article, I propose a new approach: to explore Book 36 diachronically from beginning to end and through this to demonstrate Dio's skilful structuring of his narrative with the purpose of presenting political competition as the central destructive factor of the Late Republic. Dio presents this competition as an institutional problem, rather than a moral one, and his explanation of the decline of the Republic is thereby distinctive.

Keywords: Dio, Roman Republic, competition, institutions, narrative

1. Introduction

The book divisions of ancient authors are increasingly seen as meaningful structural devices. Thus both the books of Cicero's and Pliny's letter collections, the historiographical books of Livy and Tacitus, and the poetry books of numerous poets have all been identified as important tools for the respective authors. According to most scholars, these books were mainly used for aesthetic purposes and were at best 'a blunt instrument'¹ interpretatively.² Nonetheless, the instrumental use of books in a wide range of ancient genres and by numerous authors has recently been demonstrated. However, no such work has been done on the Severan historian Cassius Dio. This is problematic since, in contrast to other

* I would like first and foremost to thank Catherine Steel and Christopher Burden-Strevens for their invaluable suggestions for improvements at different stages of this article. I would also like to thank the anonymous *Histos* reviewer for many helpful suggestions. Lastly, I am likewise grateful to the Danish Academy in Rome for support and hospitality during work on this article. All translations of Dio are from Cary (1914–27), and for other quoted authors, I have likewise used the Loeb Classical Library. Any adaptations of the translations are noted.

¹ Levene (2010) 33.

² These are only some examples of a very pervasive trend in scholarship of taking books seriously as important authorial tools: Cicero: Beard (2002) and recently Martelli (2017); Pliny the Younger: Gibson and Morello (2012); Livy: Vasaly (2002) and Oakley (2015); Tacitus: Strunk (2016) 170–9; poetry: Hubbard (1983).

historians such as Thucydides or Livy,³ Dio very rarely steps back to present interpretations in his authorial voice. Consequently, scholars have traditionally assumed that Dio lacked political interpretations altogether. Rather than pronounce them clearly, however, Dio in fact interweaves his interpretations into his narrative, and close reading of Dio's individual books is therefore essential to understanding his broader political interpretations.

Until the 2010s, Dio's work was often thought to be generally devoid of such interpretations both in Anglophone and continental scholarship,⁴ which caused Dio to be used far too uncritically in modern works about the Late Republic.⁵ However, he remains one of the most frequently used sources for the Late Republic and his is one of the fullest surviving works on Roman history. In the 2010s, by contrast, Dio has increasingly been seen as a more complex source with independent interpretative aims⁶ although some of the older criticisms of Dio as unoriginal and lacking a compelling causal framework persist.⁷ The first reinterpretation of Dio's Late Republic accorded human nature the central role: Rees greatly developed previous work on human nature in Dio's Republic⁸ to argue that this factor was the central cause for the fall of the Republic in Dio's eyes.⁹ Hereafter, scholars have focused on a number of more specific elements, such as extraordinary commands or *φθόνος* (jealousy), and their role in the deterioration of the Late Republic.¹⁰ These works view Pompey and Caesar as central to the downfall

³ Dio never presents his interpretation of the fall of the Republic in the explicit fashion of, e.g., Thucydides' famous assertion (1.23.5–6) of the real cause for the Peloponnesian War.

⁴ This stance essentially bases itself on Millar (1964). Lintott (1997) is perhaps the most negative subsequent work. For *Quellenforschung*, see, e.g., Sordi (1971); Zecchini (1978); Cipriani (1978); McDougall (1991). See also the general work of Harrington (1970).

⁵ This use of Dio, without any sustained methodological considerations of his work, is evident in a range of seminal works on the Late Republic: *pace* Scullard (1959), Gruen (1974), and Millar (1998). Millar's index (231–2) even reveals that Dio is the most used historian in his entire work, cited a full forty-two times. This widespread use of Dio highlights the importance of gaining a better understanding of the historian.

⁶ Rees (2011); Kemezis (2014); Burden-Strevens (2015) (a revised version of which is forthcoming); Fromentin et al. (2016); Lange and Madsen (2016b); Lindholmer (2016); Burden-Strevens and Lindholmer (2018).

⁷ See, e.g., Kemezis (2014) 93.

⁸ Hose (1994) 436; Sion-Jenkis (2000) 184–5; Kuhn-Chen (2002) 243–6. The latter asserts that human nature could be tempered by education. Sion-Jenkis (2000) 96–101 additionally sees the involvement of the people in government as a central problem for Dio.

⁹ Rees (2011) 6–7.

¹⁰ Burden-Strevens (2015) 162–93; Coudry (2016) 44–5. See also Kemezis (2014), who takes a literary approach and focuses on different narrative modes, as well as his later work (2016), which underlines the problem of mendacious rhetoric.

of Dio's Republic, and are all heavily focused on Dio's speeches rather than the general narrative.¹¹ This focus on individuals and on speeches is clearly evident in the limited scholarship on Book 36: Burden-Strevens concentrates mainly on the speeches connected to the *lex Gabinia*,¹² while Coudry presents Pompey's consequent command¹³ as deeply problematic and a 'serious and irredeemable breach in the system of the traditional magistracies'.¹⁴ The scholarship on Book 36 thus has the *lex Gabinia* as the unquestioned centrepiece and the rest of Book 36 is mostly ignored. The aforementioned works are undoubtedly important contributions to our understanding of Dio and his Late Republic. However, the common approach to Book 36 is also selective. This is emblematic of scholarship in general, as Dio's books have never been independently studied as self-contained interpretative units,¹⁵ despite the abovementioned increasing interest in the use of the Book by other authors.

In what follows, I propose a change of approach which will yield a new interpretation of Dio's Late Republic. I will explore Book 36 diachronically from beginning to end, in the fashion that Dio intended, and through this demonstrate how he, via adroit manipulation of the organisation and presentation of his material, created a sophisticated cumulative interrelation between individual parts of Book 36. This, in turn, was used by Dio to present political competition as the central destructive problem of the Late Republic. This factor, which is constantly in focus throughout Dio's Book 36, was not merely tied to Pompey or a few dynasts but was rather an institutionally generated problem. Dio's interpretation is hereby distinctive in Late Republican historiography.¹⁶ The problem of institutional competition in Dio's Late Republic has hitherto been practically ignored by scholarship

¹¹ See, e.g., Rees (2011) who focuses extensively on Caesar through speeches or Bertrand and Coudry (2016) and Coudry (2016) whose central focus is Pompey and the speeches around the *lex Gabinia*.

¹² Burden-Strevens (2015) 167–72; id. (2016) 2–6. See also Burden-Strevens' brief examination ((2015) 114–16) of the use of fable structures in the narrative of Lucullus.

¹³ Coudry (2016). See also Bertrand and Coudry (2016).

¹⁴ Coudry (2016) 44–5. On imperialism and the problem of extraordinary commands, see also Bertrand (2016) 695–7; Bertrand and Coudry (2016); Burden-Strevens (2016) 195–207. This focus on the *lex Gabinia* is again evident in the introduction to the recent French commentary on Book 36 (Lachenaud and Coudry (2014) XIII).

¹⁵ Except in commentaries which by their nature are less preoccupied with Dio's interpretations: See, e.g., Swan (2004) or the more recent commentaries by Lachenaud in Lachenaud and Coudry (2011) and (2014).

¹⁶ For a comparison of Dio with the parallel sources for the Late Republic, see Lindholmer (2016) 20–38 and (2019a).

but is in fact central to his interpretation of the Late Republic.¹⁷ The two interconnected aims of this article are thus, in short, to show how Dio manipulated and structured his narrative and how this was employed to present a novel interpretation of the problems of the Late Republic, centred on competition.

It is important to remember that this political competition for offices and commands highlighted by Dio in Book 36 was institutional in the sense that it was generated by and was part of the institutional foundation of the Republic. By viewing the abundant instances of individual competition in Dio's narrative as part of a far broader problem emerging from the Republican institutional setup, Dio's distinctiveness and grander interpretation can be discerned. In the Late Republic, this competition becomes inherently destructive as selfish and problematic politicians are consistently successful, while constitutional and legal tools of competition are powerless—the problems of competition are thus not merely tied to individuals.

Competition is central throughout Dio's Late Republic.¹⁸ Dio, however, uses Book 36 specifically to explore one central aspect of this problem, namely competition tied to commands. Generals used their commands to acquire political influence, prestige, and resources, and the use of commands for personal ends can thus be viewed as part of the broader competition of the Late Republic. This use of commands by destructive dynasts ends in Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon and civil war. Yet, against the background of Book 36, it becomes clear that this is merely the culmination of an important element of institutional competition. Dio incorporates his fundamental exploration of this element in Book 36, which therefore demands attention.¹⁹ However, he embeds this exploration in the narrative, and his interpretation therefore only emerges via a diachronic approach. In the first part of Book 36, Dio demonstrates how commands were consistently used by all commanders for their own advantage with devastating consequences for Rome. In the second part, he focuses on the constant competition to acquire further commands: The ambitiously egoistic individuals are consistently successful, underlining a central flaw in the

¹⁷ Bertrand (2016) 695–7 and Bertrand and Coudry (2016b) 607–8 briefly focus on competition, but mainly among the dynasts rather than as a general problem. See also Lange and Madsen (2016a) 2.

¹⁸ Lindholmer (2016) and also (2018d). For competition in the Early and Mid-Republic, see Lindholmer (2018a).

¹⁹ Despite its occasional lacunae and the fact that our best manuscript, the *Laurentianus* 70.8, only commences at chapter 18. Regarding the manuscripts, however, both *Vaticanus Graecus* 144 and *Parisinus* 1689 cover Book 36 and both are derived from the *Laurentianus* 70.8. For a brief overview of the manuscripts see Cary (1914–27) xxv–xxvi.

system, which causes the deeply problematic extraordinary commands. However, against the background of the competition among commanders in the first part of the narrative, the innovation of the *lex Gabinia* is presented as absolutely necessary. Yet this law, caused by Republican institutional competition, also severely undermined the Republic; by inference, Dio argues that the Republic had become inherently unworkable.

2. Lucullus and the Mithridatic War

The narrative of Lucullus' command at the beginning of Dio's Book 36 is in fact the longest part of this book, despite the consistent scholarly focus on the *lex Gabinia*, which suggests the importance with which it was invested by Dio. Dio presents Lucullus and the commanders sent to relieve him as exploiting their commands as mere tools to further their own political interests rather than the good of Rome. To present this interpretation more forcefully, Dio primes his reader through slight chronological manipulations. Uniquely among the sources, Dio incorporates deeply problematic competition among Lucullus and the commanders which is the direct cause of Roman military ineffectualness and setbacks. Through this presentation of every single commander as involved in selfish competition, Dio rejects the parallel sources' focus on Lucullus and presents political competition as a destructive institutional problem.²⁰

The first chapter of Book 36 is available only in Xiphilinus' epitome,²¹ but it is instructive that already in this chapter Dio deals with Roman foreign policy: Hortensius, the consul of 69, relinquished his command in Crete to his colleague because he preferred the luxury of Rome (36.1a). However, this rejection of a command on the basis of luxury is, in fact, unique in Dio's Late Republic, as all other generals happily use commands for political advancement.²² This indicates that the moral degeneration due to excessive luxury

²⁰ Lucullus' command in other sources: Liv. *Per.* 98; Plut. *Luc.* 19.33–4; Vell. 2.33.1.

²¹ Other studies of ancient books, e.g. Gibson and Morello (2012) 39–45 or Levene (2010) 25–33, have looked at parallels between the openings and endings of books, created for aesthetic purposes. Since this is not the purpose of the present article, however, the missing first few lines of Dio's Book 36 are less problematic. On Xiphilinus' reliability, Berbessou-Broustet (2016) 94 has recently argued that he is generally faithful to Dio, whereas Mallan (2013) asserts that Xiphilinus' work is not representative of Dio's narrative. See also Millar (1964) 195–203 (who gives an overview of Xiphilinus' use of Dio's Book 54); Brunt (1980) 488–92; Fromentin (2013) 23–6; Treadgold (2013) 310–12.

²² Boissevain (1895–1931) lxii–lxiii (followed by Cary (1914–27) and Lachenaud and Coudry (2014)) placed this part in Book 36 but earlier editors, Bekker (1814–21) and Dindorf (1863–5), in fact placed it in Book 35 with fragment 111. Should earlier editors be correct, Dio's Book 36 would be even more clearly focused on the problems of institutional competition, since the atypical story of Hortensius with its focus on luxury

seen in other sources, such as Sallust or Velleius,²³ is not a guiding principle in Dio's narrative.²⁴

Before turning to Lucullus' campaigns, Dio inserts two chapters alerting the reader to understand these campaigns as a manifestation of problematic competition. In the first chapter, Rome's enemies assert that the Romans were excessively greedy (*πλεονεξίας*) for new territory (36.1.2) which, despite the commonplace of such critiques,²⁵ primes the reader to see the subsequently described campaigns of Lucullus in a more negative light. This continues as Dio asserts that Lucullus was accused of 'refusing to end the war, in order that he might retain his command a longer time' (36.2.1) and 'later [*μετὰ ταῦθ'*], when he [Lucullus] was believed to have acted in this same way again, they sent to him the consul of that year [Acilius in 67] to relieve him' (36.2.2). Importantly, Dio has manipulated chronology to place these two accusations, which happened in 69 and 67 respectively, together in the narrative. Consequently, Lucullus' subsequently narrated campaigning becomes a manifestation of the problem of competition and the resulting disinclination of generals to relinquish command, which in turn undermines the authority of the senate.²⁶

After the narrative of Lucullus' campaigns, Dio includes unique narrative material to illustrate further the destructiveness of the competition of Rome's commanders, which completely undermines Roman interests. The background is the mutiny of Lucullus' soldiers (36.14.4):

would be removed and the first part of the narrative would focus only on Lucullus' command. However, Lachenaud in Lachenaud and Coudry (2014) vii–ix argues convincingly in support of Boissevain's inclusion of this part in Book 36.

²³ See, e.g., Sall. *Cat.* 5.1–8; Vell. 2.33.4.

²⁴ On luxury in Rome, see Dio 19.64. *Contra* Fechner (1986) 146; Rees (2011) 45–53. Also *contra* Fornara (1983) 84–9 who, however, gives a good overview of the importance of this factor in the ancient historiography of the Roman Republic. Hose (1994) 400–5 rejects the importance of moral degeneration in Dio and instead argues that the historian focuses on the degeneration of military ability. This, however, seems problematic in view of the massive military successes of, for example, Caesar or Pompey in the Late Republic. See also Sion-Jenkis (2000) 125.

²⁵ See, e.g., Sall. *Hist.* 4.60 and Just. 38.4–7 for Mithridates or Tac. *Ann.* 14.35 and Dio 62.3–5 for Boudicca. See also Adler (2006) and (2012) on Roman historiographical criticisms of imperialism in the Early Empire.

²⁶ In relation to Flaminius' consulship of 223, Livy (21.63.7–8) also comments on the problems of a general who refuses to relinquish his command. However, this is a comment on the specific issue surrounding the individual Flaminius rather than an exploration of an institutional problem, as in Dio. The perpetuation of power by generals has convincingly been shown by Burden-Strevens to be a central problem in Dio's Late Republic: (2016) 195–207. See also Eckstein (2004) 279–88.

At this time, however, they became turbulent again largely because they heard that Acilius, the consul, who had been sent out to relieve Lucullus for the reasons mentioned, was drawing near, and they accordingly regarded Lucullus with contempt.

In Plutarch, Clodius is blamed for stirring up a mutiny (Plut. *Luc.* 34.1–4), but Dio asserts that the political machinations in Rome directed against Lucullus are the direct cause. Constant competition, manifested both by Lucullus' reluctance to give up the command and by the rivalrous attack on him from Rome, is thus the central cause for the problems in Dio's account.

Dio now includes intense competition within the group of generals sent to relieve Lucullus and it is important to note that this narrative element is not found in the parallel sources. Lucullus is here indecisive (*ἐν ἀπόρῳ*, 36.23.3) since his rival generals refuse to cooperate with him: Marcius Rex, consul in 68, refuses Lucullus' request for aid on 'the pretext' (*πρόσχημα*, 36.17.2) that his soldiers declined. Dio even includes the fact that Clodius, who had led an unsuccessful mutiny against Lucullus and subsequently fled, had been welcomed by Marcius and put in command of the fleet since they were related by marriage (36.17.2). Family relations and the competition with Lucullus were thus placed above the interests of the Republic. After the mass-desertion of the soldiers of Lucullus, he also desisted from protecting Roman territory since his replacement Acilius was drawing near (36.17.2). Lastly, Acilius is also heavily criticised as Dio asserts that he delayed his arrival due to the realisation that it was now too late to 'snatch the victory from underneath Lucullus' feet [*ὑφαρπάσων*].²⁷ The result of this political competition is devastating and immediate: 'the soldiers of Mithridates won back almost all his domain and caused great havoc in Cappadocia' (36.17.1). Dio here presents the destructiveness of a system of aristocratic competition which severely impairs Roman foreign policy and imperialism as Mithridates is given easy successes and Clodius, the mutineer, is rewarded with a command. The competition is not merely individual as it includes every single general described here. Rather, the competition is a manifestation of the deeply problematic workings of institutional competition where commands had become mere tools for political advancement.²⁸

After the above successes of Mithridates, Dio criticises Lucullus as a general and the narrative breaks off and changes the focus to Crete. The deeply problematic competition among the generals thus becomes the coda of an otherwise long series of positive military achievements of Lucullus. Dio hereby succeeds in bookending Lucullus' successes with clear criticisms of the

²⁷ Dio 36.17.1 (adapted from Cary).

²⁸ For the use of commands for personal advancement, see Lindholmer (2019b).

use of commands for political competition, which causes this at least partly successful generalship to be seen as part of a larger institutional problem rather than just a string of battles. This, however, is only evident via a diachronic analysis. This bookending and narrative construction rest fundamentally on a rejection of the annalistic internal–external–internal model:²⁹ from chapter one in the year 69 until the year 67, the narrative stays almost exclusively in the east.³⁰ This structuring is of course narratively convenient for Dio but it also facilitates Dio’s presentation of competition as a destructive problem.

In conclusion, the narrative surrounding Lucullus’ command is carefully arranged by Dio as he bookends the campaigns with severe criticisms of how commands were used for competition to the detriment of Rome’s interests, which is part of the larger institutional problem of destructive political competition in Dio. In order to communicate this interpretation, Dio anachronistically groups together the two accusations against Lucullus for prolonging the war. More tellingly, however, Dio has included unique narrative material that exactly illustrates the destructive effects of competition, and the fact that this was a general problem pertaining to all commanders, rather than tied merely to Lucullus. The parallel sources, by contrast, focus simply on Lucullus and his corrupt character, and both Dio’s narrative and his interpretation of the events surrounding Lucullus’ command are thus purposefully distinctive. The first part of Dio’s narrative, then, clearly concentrates on political competition, as Dio focuses on the problem of commands being used for competition, and the devastating consequences of this for Rome’s interests.

3. The Cretan War and the Pirates

Dio’s exploration of the problems of competition tied to commands continues as the narrative moves to the war in Crete. This war had already started in 69 but Dio selectively focuses on the rivalry in 67 between Metellus, to whom the war was entrusted, and Pompey who, by virtue of the as yet unexplained *lex Gabinia*, had vast powers in the Mediterranean. The other sources describing this event, Plutarch and Velleius, both narrate the

²⁹ The annalistic method of history-writing is commonly held to divide the year in an opening section on internal, Rome-based affairs, then an external section with events outside Rome, and lastly another internal section that closes the year. On this, see Swan (1987) and (1997); Rich (2011); Lindholmer (2016) 38–60 and (2018c); Rich (2018).

³⁰ On Dio’s use of the annalistic method, see Swan (1987) and (1997); Rich (2016); Lange and Madsen (2016a) 2–3; Lindholmer (2016) 38–60 and (2018c); Rich (2018). See also Ginsburg (1981) and Rich (2011) for the manipulation of the annalistic method by Tacitus and Livy respectively.

lex before the rivalry between Pompey and Metellus and through this, they present Metellus in a positive light as the victim of the power-hungry Pompey.³¹ Dio, by contrast, narrates the Cretan War before the *lex Gabinia*. He employs this chronological manipulation in order to facilitate the negative presentation of both Metellus and Pompey as exceedingly ambitious and locked in destructive competition.³² In Dio's account, all the generals act self-interestedly with detrimental consequences, and Dio thereby succeeds in presenting institutional competition as a central problem in the Late Republic which is undermining foreign policy. After the Cretan War, Dio turns his attention to the pirates, whom he presents as a direct consequence of the previous competition among the generals. Uniquely among the sources, Dio focuses on the highly successful cooperation and mutual support of the pirates, which functions as a contrast to the selfish competition of the Romans in the previous narrative of Lucullus and the Cretan War.

This institutional problem of competition is clearly exemplified in Dio's description of the Roman commanders on Crete, starting with the explicit critique of Metellus: 'In his love of *dynasteia* [δυναστείας τε ἐρώων] he attacked even the Cretans who had come to terms with the other [Pompey], and heedless of their claim that there was a truce, hastened to do them injury before Pompey should come up.'³³ Metellus here attacks cities that have made peace with the Romans in a selfish quest for personal *δυναστεία*, a highly negative term in Dio's Late Republic.³⁴ Furthermore, this sets the scene for Dio's unflattering portrayal of Metellus' subsequent actions as he maltreated many captured towns (ἄλλοις τε οὖν πολλοῖς ἐκείνος ἐλυμήνατο,

³¹ Plut. *Pomp.* 29; Vell. 34.1–2. Florus (1.41–2) does not focus on the *lex* as such but he also narrates the consequent war against the pirates before the Cretan War.

³² Dio's narrative is slightly fragmented here but Xiphilinus' epitome does suggest that Dio briefly described Pompey's command and its powers, given by the *lex Gabinia*, in connection with the war in Crete: Dio (Xiph.) 36.17a. Bekker (1814–21) and Dindorf (1863–5) suggested that this part does in fact belong to fragment 111 in Book 35, whereas Boissevain (1895–1931), Cary (1914–27), and Lachenaud (2014) argued that 36.17a originated from Book 36. It should be noted that in Xiphilinus, 36.17a is placed just after 36.1a. However, Mallan (2013) 626 n. 49 has recently argued that this does not reflect the order of Dio's original narrative and that Xiphilinus has here transposed this part in order 'to introduce Pompey into the narrative earlier than would have been otherwise the case had he simply followed his usual method of adhering to Dio's sequence of presentation'. That Xiphilinus displaced 36.17a is likewise argued by Boissevain (1895–1931) lxii–lxiii as well as Lachenaud (2014) lii–liv. Yet this is not fundamental here, as none of my arguments hinges on this part of Xiphilinus or its placement.

³³ Dio 36.18.1 (adapted from Cary).

³⁴ On *δυναστεία* in Dio, see Freyburger-Galland (1996) and (1997); Kemezis (2014) 107–12; Carsona (2016); Coudry (2016) 43–4. See also Lindholmer 2018b for the place of *δυναστεία* in Dio's broader interpretations.

36.18.2); and the Roman commander Octavius is even portrayed as helping ‘those who were being wronged [τοῖς κακουμένοις]’³⁵ by Metellus. However, Octavius is no saint either as he only acts after one of his own towns is attacked: ‘Octavius, incensed at this, no longer remained quiet, but first used the army of Sisenna ... to aid here and there those who were being wronged, and then, when these troops had retired, proceeded to Aristion at Hierapydna and aided him in fighting’ (36.19.1). Octavius here supports the Cretans against the Roman general Metellus, to whom the war was entrusted, merely out of personal dislike. Another general, Sisenna, is also portrayed negatively: ‘Cornelius Sisenna, the governor of Greece, did, to be sure, when he heard the news, come to Crete and advise Metellus to spare the towns, but on failing to persuade him offered no active opposition’ (36.18.1). Sisenna hereby becomes yet another general who chiefly prioritises his own good, and Dio here also succeeds in emphasising the lack of constitutional options available in the face of a determined general with loyal soldiers, as the timid efforts at persuasion are futile.

Dio could appear oddly lenient towards Pompey; from Plutarch, however, we learn that Octavius was in fact a general sent by Pompey (Plut. *Pomp.* 29.2). This would shift the criticism more heavily towards the latter since Dio has a habit of criticising leaders through the acts of their underlings.³⁶ Furthermore, after the victory over the Cretans, Pompey is portrayed as using a tribune to steal two Cretan leaders from the triumph of Metellus, claiming they had submitted to him rather than Metellus (36.19.3). Upon the defeat of the Cretans, Dio also portrays the competition-driven Roman imperialism highly negatively as he contrasts the previous freedom of the Cretans (ἐλεύθεροι) with their present slavery (κατεδουλώθησαν).³⁷ This negatively portrayed subjugation fuelled by competition results in an honorary *cognomen*, Creticus, for Metellus and a triumph (36.19.3), which underlines how rewards could problematically be reaped from selfish and destructive competition. Metellus is thus another example of the problem of ambitious generals as his lengthy war, partly because of the competition of Pompey, has turned destructive, and the tools to oppose him are lacking. Furthermore, no general in Dio’s narrative of the Cretan War is fighting for the good of Rome. Rather, the generals are instead often locked in a compe-

³⁵ Dio 36.19.1 (adapted from Cary).

³⁶ See, e.g., Tiberius (Dio 57.19–21) or Septimius Severus (76.14–16).

³⁷ Dio 36.19.3. Tacitus’ criticism of Roman expansion springs to mind (e.g., Tac. *Agr.* 2) and this theme of imperialism as slavery returns throughout Dio’s narrative of the Late Republic. There are also parallels to the description of the Athenian empire by Thucydides (1.98.2; see Hornblower (1991) 150) whom Dio is often thought to have imitated. On this imitation, see Rees (2011) 62–86. On Dio’s use of the trope of enslavement in connection with imperialism, see Lavan (2013).

tion to gain influence on the island, which severely undermines Roman interests. This is a clear parallel to the narrative of Lucullus where all commanders were likewise engaged in selfish competition with destructive consequences. Selfish competition is thus not only limited to a few individuals; rather, it is a permeating feature of Dio's Late Republican political system. Furthermore, Dio's description of the Cretan War is singularly negative compared to those of Velleius and Plutarch, and this is a clear continuation of Dio's rejection of the common tradition in his narrative of Lucullus.³⁸ It is striking that the narrative has still not moved back to Rome: Dio hereby succeeds in creating an uninterrupted chain of imperialism that is corrupted and undermined by competition.

Dio now turns his attention to the problem of the pirates, a narrative element that is also used to highlight the problems of political competition. This is immediately evident as Dio attributes the rise of the pirates to the above described wars: 'at this time, ever since war had been carried on continuously in many different places at once ... large numbers had turned to plundering' (36.20.2). Dio here creates a causal link between the pirates and the uncontrollable competition among the generals and consequent wars, exemplified by the previous narratives surrounding Metellus and Lucullus. This connection is further supported as the causal link between excessive imperialism, and piracy is given in direct continuation of the narratives of these two generals.

In addition to narrating their plundering, Dio includes several descriptions of the pirates' cooperation and its positive consequences. This is unique as the parallel sources are far briefer and instead focus exclusively on the threat posed by the pirates as well as their cruelty.³⁹ This rejection of the common tradition is evident in the very beginning of Dio's portrayal of the pirates: 'For while the Romans were occupied with conducting wars [*πρὸς τοὺς ἀντιπολέμους ἀσχολίαν ἀγόντων*], the pirates had gained great headway, sailing about to many quarters, and adding to their band all of like condition, to such an extent that some of them, after the manner of allies, assisted many others.'⁴⁰ Immediately hereafter, Dio reemphasises the support that the pirates rendered to each other and calls this 'one of the chief sources of their strength' (36.22.5). The Romans, by contrast, caused 'their allies all the greater distress' (36.23.2) by not tackling the piracy problem collectively. Rome's foreign wars are thus again given as an important cause and the pirates are even portrayed as successful by helping each other as allies—a stark contrast to the Romans whose constant egoistic competition is the

³⁸ Florus (1.42) also describes the Cretan War somewhat negatively but focuses his criticisms solely on Metellus.

³⁹ App. *BC* 2.1; Flor. 1.41; Liv. *Per.* 99; Plut. *Pomp.* 24–5; Vell. 2.31.2.

⁴⁰ Dio 36.20.4 (adapted from Cary).

central reason for the setbacks against Mithridates and in Crete. The unity of the pirates here arguably exemplifies the ideal that the Romans are failing to achieve, which is a forceful criticism by Dio of the deleterious effect of excessive political competition. Furthermore, Dio creates the contrast between the Romans and the pirates by again employing chronological manipulation as he, uniquely among the sources, gives the description of the pirates *after* the Cretan War in which Pompey used the command given against them. The contrast created by Dio is thus no accident, but rather the product of conscious manipulation of his material in order to highlight the central problem of political competition.

In conclusion, Dio continues his insistent focus on the problems of competition connected to commands in this part of the narrative as the Cretan War is presented as a competition between various generals for honour with deeply problematic consequences. This competition, like the narrative of Lucullus, includes every single general and is therefore a manifestation of an institutional problem. In these first nineteen chapters of Book 36, Dio has thus created an uninterrupted chain of destructive competition tied to commands, and this is unique in the source tradition. He does this to create a contrast with the solidarity of the pirates, a characterisation which puts Roman competition in an even more negative light. This purposeful structuring of Dio's narrative, however, can only be perceived through a diachronic approach to the narrative. Furthermore, sophisticated chronological restructuring plays a central role in the presentation and strengthening of Dio's interpretation as he—uniquely among the sources—gives the Cretan War and the description of the pirates before the *lex Gabinia*. Dio's account is thus decisively different from the parallel sources and he has structured his narrative purposefully in order to present competition over commands as a central problem of the Late Republic.

4. The *Lex Gabinia*

In Dio's narrative of the *lex Gabinia*, he again concentrates on competition in connection with commands but here the focus is on competition tied to the attainment of a command. Dio has in the previous narrative, through purposeful chronological manipulation, presented a clear problem in the shape of destructive external competition which has created both the pirates and suffering for the Romans and allies alike. This in turn creates the need for the *lex Gabinia* but it is instructive that this *lex* is thus born out of the previously narrated destructive competition among the generals and effectuated by selfish politicians, Gabinius and Pompey, who trump the constitutional efforts of the upright Catulus. This demonstrates that success in political competition is predicated upon egoism, deceit, and unconstitu-

tional tools, which is a fundamental problem in the Roman system of competition in Dio. Furthermore, Coudry has argued that the *lex Gabinia* had irreparable consequences for Dio's Late Republic.⁴¹ However, the previous narrative suggests that the *lex* was an unavoidable consequence of Republican competition and Dio thereby presents the Republic as inherently flawed.

Dio's consistent focus on competition is evident from the start of the narrative of the *lex* as he describes both Pompey and Gabinius as self-serving in their quest to have it ratified (36.23.4–24.5):

[Gabinius] had either been prompted by Pompey or wished in any case to do him a favour; certainly he was not prompted by any love of the common welfare, for he was a most base fellow ... [Pompey] was very eager to command [ἐπιθυμῶν μὲν πάνυ ἄρξαι], and because of his own ambition [ὑπό τε τῆς ἑαυτοῦ φιλοτιμίας] and the zeal of the populace he no longer now so much regarded this commission as an honour as the failure to win it a disgrace.

Competition, in the shape of Pompey's ambition (*φιλοτιμία*) and Gabinius' attempt to curry favour with him, thus plays a key role in the creation of the law, and Dio's narrative is hereby again markedly different from the parallel sources. In Plutarch and Velleius, Pompey is not presented as ambitious but rather as wholly passive and in Plutarch's narrative he even withdraws on the day of the vote (Plut. *Pomp.* 25.2–26.1; Vell. 2.31.2). Furthermore, Dio's description of Gabinius as self-serving stands in contrast to Plutarch and Velleius who merely describe Gabinius as the proposer of the law (Plut. *Pomp.* 25.2; Vell. 2.31.2). Plutarch does note that Gabinius was an intimate of Pompey, but only Dio explicitly suggests collusion, and his forceful critique of Gabinius' person in the quotation above is likewise unparalleled. This is a continuation of Dio's presentation of a political system where all players are involved in selfish and destructive competition, as seen in relation to Lucullus and the war on Crete.

This picture of destructive rivalry is completed by Dio's description of the senate (36.24.1):

that body preferred to suffer anything whatever at the hands of the freebooters rather than put so great command into Pompey's hands; in

⁴¹ Coudry (2016). For similar arguments, see Bertrand and Coudry (2016). See also Burden-Strevens (2015) 167–72 and (2016), who underlines the importance of the *lex* to Dio's historical interpretation. *Contra*, Rodgers (2008) 297, who asserts that the speeches connected to this *lex* 'serve his philosophical or moralizing agenda better than they serve history'. She sees Dio's focus on the *lex Gabinia* as an understandable mistake for a historian with careless chronology and a poor understanding of the Republic (306–8).

fact they came near slaying Gabinius in the very senate-house [ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ συνεδρίῳ].

Dio's wording here suggests that the increase in Pompey's power is the central problem rather than the command itself, which is supported by the fact that the senate had given Antonius an extraordinary piracy command only seven years earlier.⁴² The senate is here clearly involved in the destructive competition as their rivalry with Pompey trumps the good of Rome. Ultimately, the people in Dio terrify the opposition into passivity as they 'rush upon them [the senators] as they sat assembled; and if the senators had not gotten out of the way, they would certainly have killed them' (36.24.2). Dio here underlines the effectiveness of unconstitutional tools and the consequently consistent success of egoistic politicians against the upright.⁴³ Furthermore, Dio again differs from Plutarch and Velleius who describe the senate's opposition far more positively, since it is not merely based upon their rivalry with Pompey but rather on legitimate concerns regarding the new command.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the senate in Plutarch and Velleius acts peacefully, whereas in Dio's narrative the senators almost kill Gabinius 'in the very senate-house'. Through the divergent presentations of Pompey, Gabinius, and the senate, Dio has thus again created a narrative where every single player acts self-interestedly—a narrative devoid of heroes.

Burden-Strevens has convincingly argued that Dio uses the above prelude to prime the reader to understand the following speeches of Gabinius and Pompey as disingenuous and connected to their own ambitious aims.⁴⁵ However, another important contrast to Gabinius and Pompey's claims that has so far been overlooked is the preceding narrative of egoistic competition in Book 36. This is evident, for example, when Pompey duplicitously attempts to reject the command (36.26.3–5):

allow me to remain undisturbed and to attend to my own business, so that now at last I may bestow some care upon my private affairs and may not perish from exhaustion. Against the pirates elect somebody else ... Surely I am not the only one who loves [φιλεῖ] you.

Firstly, Dio's Pompey is purposefully illogical here since he asks to be allowed to attend to his private business by not being general whereas the previous

⁴² Vell. 2.31.3; Cic. *Verr.* 2.2.8, 3.213; Ps. Ascon. 259 Stangl.

⁴³ For the consistent success of unconstitutional tools in competition, see Lindholmer (2018d).

⁴⁴ Plut. *Pomp.* 25.3; Vell. 2.31.1.

⁴⁵ Burden-Strevens (2015) 83–5. Pavlou (2013) has recently demonstrated the importance of the preludes to speeches in Thucydides as well.

portrayal of the generals involved in the wars in Crete and against Mithridates has shown how generalships were used exactly for private purposes. This highlights how the distinction between the private (*τὰ ἴδια*) and the public (*τὰ κοινά*) has broken down,⁴⁶ which is a consequence of the excessive competition and an important problem in Dio's Late Republic.

Moreover, Pompey is disingenuous in claiming that others love the senate as well since this flies directly in the face of the previous narrative of Book 36 where every single general had acted self-interestedly. This is perhaps most clearly evidenced by Metellus who attacks the Cretans who had made peace with Rome through Pompey due to Metellus' 'love of *dynasteia* [*δυναστείας τε ἐρῶν*]'⁴⁷—a direct contrast to the supposed 'love' for the senate. Dio has thus fashioned a clear contrast to Pompey's words in the preceding narrative, which, in connection with the abovementioned description of Pompey, plays a fundamental role in revealing Pompey's speech as an elaborate sham. Yet again, we can only appreciate this sophisticated structuring by analysing Dio's narrative in a diachronic fashion.

Gabinus' subsequent speech also creates clear contrasts between the Republic described and the actual version seen in the previous narrative: '[Pompey] does not seek the leadership, nor does he accept it off-hand when offered to him. For a good man has no business, in any case, to desire to hold office and to manage public affairs' (36.27.1–2). This is of course plainly dissimilar to Pompey himself but also to the generals of the previous narrative, all of whom are eager to obtain and keep possession of commands and use these to further their own interests. Tellingly, the only person to even approximate Gabinus' ideal of not seeking commands is Hortensius who rejects the command in Crete 'on account of his fondness for residence in the capital' (36.1a Xiph.)—hardly the 'good man' posited by Gabinus. Later in Gabinus' speech, Dio continues the creation of contrasts between speech and reality in order to highlight the problem of political competition: 'heed me and your country. For her you [Pompey] were born, for her you were reared. You must serve her interests' (36.28.4). The contrast to the previously described generals is almost comical here since not a single one has served the interests of Rome but rather those of themselves. The preceding narrative thus interacts with the speech as it undermines Gabinus' credibility, while the speech in turn highlights the previous criticism of excessive institutional competition in relation to commands.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ As argued by Burden-Strevens (2015) 228. See also, e.g., Caesar's Vesontio speech: Dio 38.36.1.

⁴⁷ Dio 36.18.1 (adapted from Cary).

⁴⁸ Burden-Strevens (2015) 88–9, 218–9.

Gabinus' speech is followed by a short narrative interlude where the opposition of the senate through the tribunes Trebellius and Roscius is futile in the face of a violently threatening populace that supported Pompey. Dio hereby underlines the impotence of the senate's constitutional attempts in the face of violence and the mendacious rhetoric of Gabinus and Pompey. Catulus' speech consequently becomes the last possible opposition to the *lex Gabinia*. Catulus himself is introduced very positively: 'all respected and honoured him as one who at all times spoke and acted for their advantage' (36.30.5). Everybody else, except Cato, is explicitly portrayed as egoistic by Dio.⁴⁹ Catulus is of course critical of the extraordinary command but it has recently been shown that Catulus' alternative suggestions are purposefully self-contradictory.⁵⁰ This is exemplified by his suggestion to use a dictator to solve the Mediterranean-wide piracy problem, which is followed by his assertion that the geographical limitation on the dictator, namely that he must stay within Italy, should be respected. This underlines the inability of the Republic to resolve the crisis.

Again, however, the previous narrative of Book 36 also plays an important role in undermining Catulus' suggestions. Catulus, for example, suggests that the senate should choose Pompey's lieutenants: 'there will be keener rivalry among them [*φιλοτιμήσονται*] because they are independent and will themselves get the glory for whatever they achieve' (36.36.2). This is framed as a positive thing by Catulus and his suggestion is thereby clearly at odds with the preceding narrative which plainly demonstrates competition among commanders to be a thoroughly destructive force. Furthermore, Catulus also views *φιλοτιμία* positively but the *φιλοτιμία* of Pompey had in fact been a catalyst in his desire for the extraordinary command which Catulus opposes. One could argue that Catulus is advising a return to the virtues of an ideal earlier Republic, which could solve the problems without breaching Republican constitutional limitations. However, this is untenable since both Libourel and newer research have shown that the Early and Mid-Republic in Dio's narrative in fact represent a break with the idealisation of other authors and that problematic competition had been part of the Republic in Dio since its very inception.⁵¹ There is in fact only one example of positive *φιλοτιμία* for individuals in Dio's surviving Early and Mid-Republic, namely in the story of how Decius and Torquatus competed for the honour of sacrificing themselves for Rome.⁵² Furthermore, only in speeches given by the defenders of the Republic is *φιλοτιμία* used in this

⁴⁹ Seen, e.g., in Dio's necrology of Catulus: 37.57.3.

⁵⁰ Burden-Strevens (2015) 145–9.

⁵¹ Libourel (1968) and (1974); Burden-Strevens and Lindholmer (2018).

⁵² Dio (Zonaras) 7.26.1.

positive sense during the Late Republic.⁵³ The preceding narrative, both of Book 36 and the work more widely, thus plays a key role in unveiling Catulus' arguments as unfounded, and the diachronic mode of analysis facilitates the understanding of this interrelation. Moreover, Dio is here drawing on Classical Greek thinking about *φιλοτιμία* which, in fact, also had a positive side.⁵⁴ However, he is simultaneously rejecting this thinking, both through Catulus' naïve and unrealistic usage and via the Late Republic in general where *φιλοτιμία*'s positive part is excluded and *φιλοτιμία* is instead consistently and entirely negative in practice.

The *lex Gabinia* is of course ultimately enacted and after Pompey is given sole command against the pirates, thereby precluding rivalry with other generals in this particular task, he is strikingly successful: 'he subdued the greater part of it [i.e. the sea] that very year' (36.37.3). Pompey had of course been involved in competition in Crete but through Dio's temporal manipulations and alternative structuring of the narrative, where the Cretan War is placed before the *lex Gabinia*, Dio succeeds in creating a marked contrast: the imperialism before the *lex Gabinia* had been completely hampered by competition, thereby giving easy successes to Rome's enemies and creating the piracy problem, whereas Pompey is extremely effective after receiving vast powers through the *lex Gabinia* which was exactly a rejection of Catulus' naïve suggestion of incorporating competition. This is a revealing contrast which is created through the structuring of Dio's narrative and again underlines the problems of institutional competition.

The *lex Gabinia* is thus used by Dio to present competition as the central problem in the Late Republic as he underlines the overwhelming power of the egoistic politicians to achieve their goals and again highlights the previous competition of the commanders negatively through the speeches and Pompey's success.⁵⁵ Furthermore, the victory of the mendacious and self-interested politicians over the positively described and unselfish Catulus exemplifies a central problem of institutional competition, namely the corruption of public speech. Public speech is absolutely central to Republican government but has in Dio become a tool for ambitious dynasts in their constant competition.⁵⁶ Moreover, in relation to the *lex Gabinia* Dio has also rejected the common source tradition, as he again portrays every single player as engaged in problematic competition and the *lex Gabinia* as the result of this. Furthermore, the narrative preceding the *lex Gabinia* gives additional

⁵³ See also Agrippa's speech: Dio 52.6.2.

⁵⁴ On this, see Fechner (1986) and his analysis of the speech of Agrippa at 77–83. For a positive use of *φιλοτιμία*, see, e.g., Isoc. 5.110.

⁵⁵ *Contra* Rodgers (2008).

⁵⁶ Burden-Strevens (2015) 214–29; Kemezis (2016).

depth to the failure of Catulus, since Dio in this narrative had presented Roman imperialism as completely corrupted by competition. The defeat of the Republican proposal of Catulus and the enactment of the *lex Gabinia* is hereby not just the start of a narrative centred on extraordinary commands as Coudry has argued.⁵⁷ It is also the culmination of a shorter, more focused narrative in Book 36, where the *lex Gabinia* is the problematic result of the uncontrollable external competition seen in relation to Lucullus, the Cretan War, and the pirates. Essentially, Dio presents the rampant competition among generals as a central problem in the first part of the narrative but then underlines the impossibility of solving this problem within Republican constitutional limits since only the extraordinary *lex Gabinia* offers a viable solution. This elaborate argument, brought out by the structuring and ordering of the narrative, becomes clear through a diachronic approach.

5. The *Lex Manilia* and the End of Book 36

After the narration of the *lex Gabinia*, Dio turns to internal competition in Rome, the passing of the *lex Manilia*, and the campaigns of Pompey in the east. The internal competition focuses on the unrest created by the newly re-empowered tribunes and again demonstrates the consistent power of unconstitutional tools. Furthermore, Dio presents this competition as the central catalyst for the creation of another extraordinary command which he links to the *lex Gabinia* through clear allusions. Ultimately, through their inter-connection with the previous narrative of ambitious generals, Dio portrays the campaigns of Pompey in the east as part of the larger problem of competition tied to commands. The last part of Book 36 thus continues the previously seen focus on competition as the central problem of the Late Republic.

This focus on competition is evident as Dio for the first time narrates internal matters in Rome with no immediate connections to foreign affairs or potential commands. Dio paints a decidedly negative portrait dominated by bribery, and the tribunes in particular are heavily criticised (36.38.2):

For now that the power of the tribunes [τῶν δημάρχων δυναστεία] had been restored to its ancient status, and many of those whose names had been stricken off the list by the censors were aspiring to regain the rank of senator by one means or another, a great many factions [συστάσεις] and cliques were being formed aiming at all the offices.

⁵⁷ Coudry (2016) 44–6.

In his first mention of the tribunes (4.13.4), Dio had already warned against their destructive power, which is again underlined here as they are connected to the thoroughly negative terms *δυναστεία* and *στάσις* as well as increased problematic competition.

We are poorly informed about Dio's Books 34 and 35 since only a single diminutive fragment has survived and the sources in general for this period, the 70s, are also sparse. However, we do know that the end of this decade marked the reversal of Sulla's conservative reforms. This reached a climax when Crassus and Pompey restored all the prerogatives of the tribuneship and named censors, for the first time since 86, who then conducted a strict census and expelled many senators from the order.⁵⁸ Against this background, it is striking that exactly these two elements are singled out in the quotation above as the main causes for competition in the first actual treatment of internal affairs in Book 36. To engage in some healthy speculation, it could be that Dio here seeks to accentuate the inherent institutional untenability of the Republic by emphasising that it is precisely two reinstated, essentially Republican institutions that create increased competition and *στάσις*.⁵⁹ This connection between tribunes and competition is only supported in the preceding narrative since Pompey had exactly allied himself with a tribune, Gabinius, in order to attain the *lex Gabinia*. The subsequently described *lex Manilia* and the later *lex Trebonia* are likewise products of tribunician legislation and the above notice regarding the tribunes could thus be a way of accentuating the destructive effects of their newly reinstated powers. These are indeed instrumental in the creation of three extraordinary commands and in furthering the superiority of the dynasts in competition.

Moreover, this focus on institutional competition and its connection to tribunes is continued immediately hereafter: Cornelius, a tribune, uses a potentially violent populace, which 'threatened to tear [the consuls] limb from limb' (36.39.3), to force through a law on bribery that the senate opposed. Cornelius repeats his violent success hereafter as he opposes the exploitation by praetors of their role as judges for their own benefit and again forces the issue through via a violent populace (36.39.4–40.2). These narrative inclusions rehearse the senate's lack of power in the face of determined use of violence by a politician supported by the people, and also reemphasises the problematic nature of the tribunes. The workings of institutional competition has thus transformed decisively in favour of the senate's enemies as they, both here and with regard to the *lex Gabinia*, dominate the law-making through threats of violence.

⁵⁸ Steel (2013) 117–20.

⁵⁹ The problems created by the restoration of the prerogatives of the tribunes are also highlighted by Sallust for example: *Cat.* 38. See further Cic. *Leg.* 3.22. See also Steel (2013).

The problem of competition is again highlighted as Dio now describes how a certain Lucius Lucullus, not the famous general,⁶⁰ decline a governorship ‘detesting the business because of the many whose administration of affairs in foreign lands was anything but honest’ (36.41.1). This is, in fact, the only time in Dio’s Late Republican narrative that he records a provincial allotment with no clear connection to a central political player and it enables Dio to demonstrate the deleterious effect of competition on the governing of the provinces as well. In the above, Dio thus highlights the wide range of problematic consequences of competition. It is worth noting that neither the violence of Cornelius nor the refusal of a province by Lucullus is included in the parallel sources and Dio thus appears to have selected his source material purposefully in order to illustrate the various deleterious effects of competition.

These internal criticisms could appear out of place as the narrative before the *lex Gabinia* had primarily been concerned with problems of external competition. However, it is exactly internal competition and its problematic workings that spawn the *lex Manilia*, a new extraordinary command: Manilius had proposed a highly unpopular law regarding the voting of freedmen and he ‘then, in fear because the plebs were terribly angry, [...] paid court to Pompey even in the latter’s absence, especially because he knew that Gabinius had the greatest influence with him. He went so far as to offer him command of the war against Tigranes and that against Mithridates, and the governorship of Bithynia and Cilicia at the same time’ (36.42.3–4). Manilius’ desperate attempt to save himself and his hopes of gaining influence with Pompey like Gabinius become a continuation of the problem of internal political competition which Dio had highlighted in the immediately preceding narrative. Dio’s narrative is again tellingly different here since none of the parallel sources portrays Manilius’ proposal as overtly self-interested but rather as a mere fact or as a consequence of his base character.⁶¹ Political competition is thus again presented as a central destructive driving force as it causes another deeply problematic extraordinary command.

The *lex Manilia* is voted upon and accepted by the people and the lack of speeches could give the impression that the *lex Manilia* was far less important than its predecessor. However, through the mention of Gabinius in the

⁶⁰ The inclusion of a first name, the positive description, and a mention that this Lucullus had just been *praetor urbanus* demonstrate that this is not the previously described general of the Mithridatic War but rather a minor figure who is mentioned only here. The more famous Lucullus had already been praetor in the first half of the 70s (Cic. *Ac. Pr.* 2.1). Furthermore, Dio is quite consistent in providing a first name when a figure first appears in the narrative: see e.g. 36.14.4 (Clodius), 36.43.1 (Cicero), or 36.44.4 (Catiline).

⁶¹ Plut. *Pomp.* 30.1; Vell. 2.33.1.

above quotation, Dio creates a powerful allusion which brings to mind the previous criticisms from Catulus. This is further supported in Dio's description of Pompey receiving the news as he 'pretended to be annoyed as before, and charged the members of the opposite faction [*ἀντιστασιώταις*] with always loading tasks upon him so that he might meet with some reverse. In reality he received the news with the greatest joy' (36.45.1). Dio here clearly evokes the *lex Gabinia* by the parallel in Pompey's mendacious behaviour and his complaints of being overburdened. The *lex Manilia* was certainly significant but another grand exposition was now unnecessary and would disrupt the narrative. Dio solves this problem by the use of allusions which invest the *lex Manilia* with a central importance that is, however, mainly perceivable through a diachronic approach.⁶²

The aftermath of the proposal of the law highlights the connection between political competition and the problematic transformation of military commands as Caesar supported the measure and hereby 'not only courted the good-will of the multitude, observing how much stronger [*ἐπικρατέστεροι*] they were than the senate, but also at the same time paved the way for a similar vote to be passed some day in his own interest' (36.43.3-4). Dio here explicitly underlines the problematic precedents that the extraordinary commands set, and Dio also plainly notes that the senate is powerless in the face of the people, who are allied to the dynasts. This is a clear demonstration of how political competition, where the dynasts use the people, has completely undermined the traditional authority of the senate. The problems of competition and the weakness of the senate are hereafter rehearsed in the brief narrative of the so-called First Catilinarian Conspiracy (36.44.3-5). Bribery is rife and the attempts to stop it by convicting the perpetrators instead foster the conspiracy which is, however, revealed. The senate is even then powerless in the face of the tribunes and ultimately has to remove one of the conspirators, Piso, by giving him a governorship. This theme of a highly dysfunctional Rome due to problematic competition has been so consistently explored by Dio in the previous narrative that the inclusion here becomes part of a larger institutional problem rather than constituting merely a momentary issue.

The narrative now moves away from Rome and focuses on Pompey's command in the east, attained through the *lex Manilia*, for the remainder of the book. However, this new command in fact undermines Pompey's completion of other military tasks: 'no longer regarding as of any importance Crete or the other maritime points where things had been left unsettled [*ἀδιοίκητον*], he made preparations for the war with the barbarians' (46.45.2). This indifference to Rome's military problems due to ambition is a

⁶² For a parallel use by Tacitus, see Ginsburg (1986).

clear parallel to the previously narrated ambition of Lucullus and Metellus, which likewise had destructive effects on foreign policy. Furthermore, the mention of other ‘unsettled maritime points’ is intriguing. This could be a reference to the pirates since Dio, in contrast to all other sources,⁶³ asserts that Pompey did not finish the job: rather, ‘he subdued *the greater part of it* [the sea] [τὰ πλείω]’ (36.37.3). Moreover, of the year 57 in Book 39, Dio writes that the pirates ‘were flourishing *even then* [καὶ τότε ἤκμαζε]’ (39.56.1). This is of course several years after the *lex Manilia* but it still indicates that the pirates were not eradicated and Dio indeed never mentions a complete victory for Pompey. In short, these elements suggest that Dio’s Pompey abandoned his task of destroying the pirates to focus on more glorious campaigns—another manifestation of the destructive effects of egoistic competition on Rome’s foreign policy.

Furthermore, Pompey’s initial egoistic actions and the portrayal of the *lex Manilia* as born out of competition put the Roman general’s subsequent heroics in the east in a more unflattering light. This is further supported as Lucullus maligns Pompey upon his arrival: ‘Lucullus turned to abuse, stigmatizing him as officious, greedy for war, greedy for office [πολυπράγμονα καὶ φιλοπόλεμον καὶ φιλαρχοῦντα], and so on.’⁶⁴ These accusations of Pompey certainly ring true based on the previous narrative but they also deliberately reflect back on Lucullus, who is guilty of exactly the same charges, and the general political competition where these features were widespread. Pompey’s command is, then, here portrayed as part of the general problem of external competition where generals used commands for their own ambition.

In this last part of Book 36, Dio thus presents a slightly more diverse focus on competition as he begins the section by outlining the increased competition due to the tribunes and then sets out the various aspects, such as the courts and the governing of provinces, which were undermined by competition. However, this also functions as a prelude to the *lex Manilia*, inasmuch as it is exactly political competition, in contrast to the parallel sources, which produces the extraordinary command in Dio. Through this presentation of the causes for the *lex Manilia*, as well as the narrative of commanders previously in Book 36, Pompey’s command becomes intricately connected to the problem of political competition. This is further supported by the accusations from Lucullus which also frame Pompey’s command as another example of how generalships were used for selfish purposes. This last part of Book 36 thus stands in close interrelation with the previous narrative, which shows Dio’s sophisticated crafting of a highly cohesive book centred

⁶³ App. *BC* 2.1; Flor. 1.41; Liv. *Per.* 99; Plut. *Pomp.* 28; Vell. 2.31.2.

⁶⁴ Dio 36.46.1. Cf. Plut. *Pomp.* 31.4.

on competition, and underlines the importance of a diachronic reading of Dio.

6. Conclusion

In the above, I have shown how Dio structures his narrative to present political competition, especially when tied to commands, as the central destructive driving force in the Late Republic, and I have demonstrated how central the diachronic approach is to fully understand this interpretation. Essentially, the problems of this competition permeate the entire narrative. At times, Dio's narrative choices are of course also influenced by convenience, such as when he narrates campaigns continually, or his simple duty as a historian of recording facts, but this does not preclude the simultaneous investment of the narrative or facts with interpretative meaning—evident for example in the narrative of Lucullus.

In the first parts of Book 36, Dio narrates the command of Lucullus and the Cretan War and presents competition among the generals as deeply destructive. This competition creates the problem of the pirates which in turn creates the need for the *lex Gabinia* and Catulus here instructively fails to offer any viable solutions. The *lex Gabinia* hereby functions as a landmark where only a non-Republican measure can solve the problems of the Republic. Dio's attention then switches more markedly to internal politics but here also the focus is on political competition and its highly deleterious effects; and this competition ultimately creates the *lex Manilia*. Through this previous narrative, and the accusations of Lucullus, Pompey's campaigns which finish the book are framed as another example of Roman commanders' use of generalships for selfish competition. Book 36 is, then, essentially focused on institutional competition and how this causes both extraordinary commands, which are ultimately paramount in destroying the Republic, and military setbacks.

Corrupt competition is of course canonical in the ancient historiography of the Late Republic, but Dio's presentation of this competition as an institutionally generated problem rather than centred on a few individuals is distinctive.⁶⁵ This distinctive approach is, for example, clearly seen in Dio's narrative leading up to the *lex Gabinia*, in which every single player presented (rather than merely an individual or two) is involved in selfish competition. The competition hereby becomes a general Late Republican problem. Dio's lead-up to and treatment of the *lex Gabinia* is, then, not simply a comment on the specific piratical issue but rather part of a grander argument that the Republic had become unworkable as a system of government: Dio shows

⁶⁵ Lindholmer (2016) 20–38; id. (2019a).

that the problems created by institutionally generated political competition had made the extraordinary command unavoidable, but this command in turn plays an important role in the downfall of the Late Republic. These interpretative points are presented clearly, and cumulatively strengthened through Dio's skilful structuring of his narrative, where chronological manipulation plays a significant role. Likewise, Dio's consistent and conscious rejection of the dominant source tradition is fundamental in order to advance his institutional interpretation.

Earlier studies have suggested that the *decad*⁶⁶ was used as a structuring device by Dio as he attempted to end each one with monumental events,⁶⁷ but no scholarly work has hitherto concentrated on a specific book. However, this study suggests that individual books also were used as important self-contained explorations of significant elements, exemplified by the focus of Book 36 on institutional competition tied to commands and on the deeply problematic extraordinary commands which were part of and resulted from this competition. The Book for Dio was thus not only tied to aesthetics or used as a 'blunt instrument'⁶⁸ interpretatively: rather it was a central tool as Dio used this structural unit to present a coherent and compelling interpretation of the malfunctioning Late Republic, centred on competition.

Yet we should of course not view Dio's books in complete isolation, since Book 36 plays an important part in the grander evolution of the *Historia Romana*: Pompey, upon his return from the extraordinary command against Mithridates, is opposed by the senate in Book 37, driving him into the triumvirate that in turn ensures more extraordinary commands, such as the *lex Trebonia* of Book 39, and these play an important part in the eventual downfall of the Republic. However, to understand the origins of this eventual downfall, an in-depth study of Book 36 is fundamental since this is where Dio presents his interpretation of the problematic interconnection between competition and commands. Furthermore, this whole development started with the corrupted, competitive imperialism that led to the pirates, which caused the *lex Gabinia*, and with the degraded internal competition that resulted in the *lex Manilia*. However, only through a diachronic approach is this causal interrelation of Book 36 apparent.

Through the analysis offered here, Dio's work emerges as a complex source for the Late Republic, and this in turn highlights the problematic use of his work by modern historians. As noted above (§1), Dio has often been carelessly used as a quarry for miscellaneous details; yet our examination of

⁶⁶ The 'decad' refers to groups of ten books, that is books 1–10, 11–20, and so on.

⁶⁷ Millar (1964) 38–9; Rees (2011) 41–3; Urso (2013) 9–10; Rich (2016) 276–7.

⁶⁸ Levene (2010) 33.

his chronological manipulations demonstrates the problems with this approach. However, Dio also gives invaluable insights into the highly problematic competition of the political class and provides numerous details regarding this problem which are found nowhere else. He is, for instance, the only source to include the destructive competition among the generals during the Mithridatic War, which in turn is essential for understanding Mithridates' subsequent successes. Through an appreciation of Dio's interpretative framework, the modern historian can thus more safely use Dio as a source for the Late Republic. This has been realised by Urso who employs Dio to reconstruct constitutional developments for the Early Republic,⁶⁹ since Dio generally is keenly interested in and well-informed about constitutional matters.⁷⁰ However, this more differentiated use of Dio has not yet penetrated general scholarship.⁷¹ Furthermore, modern scholars have often focused on institutional aspects and discounted the importance of individuals when attempting to explain the fall of the Republic.⁷² Through his focus on institutional competition rather than on individuals, Dio is thus in fact the ancient source that most closely resembles modern opinions. This indicates that the criticisms of Dio's understanding of the Republic are excessive and that modern scholars would gain from according Dio's interpretation attention in its own right.⁷³

In conclusion, Dio appears to have an interpretative framework centred on institutional competition, governing both Book 36 and, arguably, the Late Republic.⁷⁴ This undermines both older views⁷⁵ as well as the more cautious criticisms that Dio was essentially writing history from a third century AD perspective and offered little innovation in his narrative of the Late Republic.⁷⁶ Book 36 is highly focused on the destructiveness of political competition, as well as the very Republican problem of controlling this aspect. This focus on Republican institutional competition challenges both

⁶⁹ Urso (2005) and (2011).

⁷⁰ As noted by e.g. Hinard (2005); Lachenaud in Lachenaud and Coudry (2011) LXVIII. See also Lindholmer (2016).

⁷¹ The institutional focus of Dio demonstrated above also resonates with Lange and Madsen's brief recent suggestion that Dio approaches Roman history in a structural fashion: (2016b) 2–3.

⁷² Meier (1966) sees a crisis without alternative, at least for the period from 49; Brunt (1971) argues for social conflicts; Millar (1998) concentrates on the people; Steel (2013) focuses on the senate.

⁷³ E.g. Schwartz (1899) 1690–1; Millar (1964) 47–9; Lintott (1997) 2514–17.

⁷⁴ On the importance of competition in Dio's Republic see, e.g., Lindholmer (2016) and (2018d).

⁷⁵ E.g. Millar (1964); Lintott (1997).

⁷⁶ E.g. Rees (2011) 4; Kemezis (2014) 90–4, 103.

the argument that Dio was overly influenced by his own time and that he was an unoriginal historian.⁷⁷ In short, Dio offers a distinct interpretation of the Republic on its own terms, focused on institutional competition, and structures and manipulates his narrative to support it.

University of St Andrews

MADS ORTVING LINDHOLMER
mol@st-andrews.ac.uk

⁷⁷ E.g. Rees (2011) 4.

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