



**STRATEGY
RESEARCH
PROJECT**

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TEUTOBERG WALD, 9 A.D. – STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

BY

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ABSTRACT

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The Battle of Teutoberger Wald (9 A.D.) in which tribal Germans defeated a highly professional and disciplined Roman Army is not only one of the most decisive battles of the western world, but a historical example of successful asymmetrical warfare. At Teutoberger Wald, the technologically inferior Germans led by Arminius chose the time, place and circumstances that best enhanced the impact of both their tactics and their primitive weapons on a superior army. As a result, they completely destroyed three Roman legions under Publius Quinctilius Varus.

The defeat ended Augustus' plan to extend the Roman empire's frontiers beyond the Rhine to the Elbe River. Four hundred years later, the untamed German threat east of the Rhine would figure greatly in the fall of the Rome Empire. Just as the Romans dominated their world and were compelled to respond politically, economically and militarily to threats to their vital interests of their empire, the United States as today's only super power is obliged respond to threats to its national interests. Ancient Rome and the United States faced similar challenges in employing forward deployed reduced armed forces. Another valuable lesson to be learned from the battle of Teutoberger Wald is that great powers sometimes let the arrogance of their power and capabilities cloud their view of the dangerous asymmetrical options available to a determined enemy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
TEUOBERG WALD, 9 A.D. - STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS.....	1
STRATEGIC SETTING.....	1
THE LEADERS.....	4
THE ANTAGONISTS.....	5
THE BATTLE.....	7
THE RAMIFICATIONS	9
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES.....	10
ENDNOTES	15
BIBLIOGRAPH.....	17

TEUOBERG WALD, 9 A.D. - STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

The Battle of Teutoberger Wald (9 A.D.) in which tribal Germans defeated a highly professional and disciplined Roman Army is not only one of the most decisive battles of the western world, but a historical example of successful asymmetrical warfare. At Teutoberger Wald, the technologically inferior Germans led by Arminius chose the time, place and circumstances that best enhanced the impact of both their tactics and their primitive weapons on a superior army. As a result, they completely destroyed three legions under Publius Quinctilius Varus.

The defeat ended Roman Emperor Augustus' plan to extend the Empire's frontiers beyond the Rhine to the Elbe River. Four hundred years later, the untamed German threat east of the Rhine would figure greatly in the fall of the Roman Empire. Both Creasy and Fuller see an impact far beyond the fall of Rome. They maintain that since the region east of the Rhine was never made Roman, it provided a staging area for the Saxon tribes that invaded the British Isles hundreds of years later. Creasy goes so far as to say that, " This Island of ours would never have borne the name England," if Germany had been made Roman.¹ Fuller suggests that there would have been no Franco-German problem and no Charlemagne, no Kaiser William II and no Hitler.²

There are still some lessons that can be learned today from the battle of Teutoberger Wald. As in that age, today there is only one superpower in the world and the method for its defeat could lie in the simple lessons of this battle. Just as the Romans dominated their world and were compelled to respond politically, economically and militarily to threats to their vital interests of their empire, the United States as today's only super power is obliged respond to threats to its national interests. Ironically, we face many of the some challenges that the Romans did in developing a forward-deployed reduced army. Another valuable lesson to be learned from the battle of Teutoberger Wald is that great powers sometimes let the arrogance of their power and capabilities cloud their view of the dangerous asymmetrical options available to a determined enemy. While the United States should take great pride in its armed forces, it should also realize that not every opponent will want to attack us symmetrically, strength against strength. As the battle of Teutoberger Wald illustrates, an inferior force can win the day by attacking the weaknesses of a superior force by selecting a time and place of the battle that most enhances the effect of its force's capabilities. Recognizing that asymmetrical warfare may be a significant threat to the United States, it should be scrutinized carefully and countered before a conflict begins, so that we can maintain an initiative that enhances our combat power.

STRATEGIC SETTING

The central strategic problem for Augustus was how to establish effective command, control and communications over a vast geographic area that was, in reality, not one but two distinct imperial realms.³ Rome was the political and economic center of the Empire, but the imperial realm to the east was not

connected to the seat of power by a secure road, and routes to the north and west were not always in Roman hands. In fact, during the Roman Civil War, Augustus found that Italy was connected to Greece and Illyricum (the Balkans) by a single seaport. The need for secure land routes between Rome and the eastern empire was both a military and economic necessity because Rome was basically a land power. In the west and north, the way to strategically important Gaul was almost totally dependent upon two roads, neither of which was continually controlled by the Romans. Local tribes living in the Alps continually threatened both these roads and key passes.⁴ It was therefore also important to secure these lifelines to Gaul. If Rome lost control of Gaul, it would not be able to support and supply its legions that were forward deployed on the Rhine River and as a consequence, there would be no buffer between the German barbarian hordes and Italy itself.

Augustus decided to secure these key lines of communications by taking control of the overland routes and mountain passes in northern Italy and then secure the eastern routes by invading the area that is today Austria and Bavaria. Simultaneously, he would cross the Rhine River and extend the border of the empire to the Elbe River. This would secure routes east and west and put the final boundaries of the empire at the Elbe and Danube Rivers.

In 25 B.C., Rome secured the passes in the Alps. In 15 B.C., Augustus sent two armies under command of his two stepsons to extend the northern frontiers to the Danube River. One army commanded by Tiberius marched east from Gaul toward Vienna. Another army under Drusus moved north from Italy towards the same objective. Within a year, the local tribes were subjugated and construction of roads and forts was begun.⁵ This occupation enabled Rome to turn south and complete the conquest of Yugoslavia. All of which would allow the Romans to achieve the most important of their strategic objectives, linking the eastern realm with Italy and preserving the routes to Gaul. It took four years for the Romans under Marcus Vinicius, then Agrippa and finally Tiberius to defeat the most difficult of the local tribes, the Pannonians and take control of the Balkans.

At the same time, Augustus planned an attack on the numerous German tribes east of the Rhine River. He identified these barbarians as the greatest threat to Rome. The German tribes possessed the manpower and geographic location to threaten all the new conquests in Austria-Bavaria and Rome itself.

In 12 B.C., Drusus led an invasion force of six legions across the Rhine. The German terrain presented major challenges to the invasion in that there were no roads, bridges and little agricultural infrastructure to support the Roman Army. The terrain was hilly and overgrown with dense forest and swamps, all of which hampered the Roman heavy infantry. This formidable environment also robbed the Romans of their usual rate of movement, and their ability to maneuver. They were forced to rely on supplies brought up the rivers by boats. Drusus was able to defeat individual tribes in battle and undermine others by the use of alliances with rival tribes.⁶ Unfamiliar with the Roman way of war, the German warriors tended to make frontal assaults against the strength of the Roman heavy infantry and were invariably defeated. Fierce attacks by the light infantry had been the strength of German tribal forces against each other, but it played right into the greater strength of the Roman heavy infantry when

they confronted them directly. A symmetrical attack of strength on strength generally ended in a Roman victory.

Within two years, Drusus had established a Roman presence between the Rhine and Elbe Rivers. It was an occupation of key areas but not total control of the land but, Drusus died before the campaign was completed and his brother, Tiberius was called in to finish the fight. In 7 B.C., He completed the campaign and was rewarded with a command in the east.⁷ Subsequent Roman commanders built more than fifty camps and strong points throughout the area between the rivers, although few could sustain themselves in the winter. It was not uncommon for many garrisons to retreat to camps just across the Rhine River as winter approached. Despite the occupation, little efforts made to build roads. Roman control was maintained only when a garrison was present or by means of alliances with various German tribes.

Diplomacy was Augustus' preferred means of maintaining the peace since the Roman Army had been reduced and was forward deployed to protect the empire's frontiers.⁸ Efforts to co-opt potential enemies was paramount to maintaining peace in the empire since Rome's legions were too few to fight more than one major theater war at a time. German chieftains were often integrated into service in the Roman Army and given citizenship and titles. Germans who had little or no knowledge with the Roman way of war gained valuable experience by serving with the Roman Army over the next several decades. In the service of Rome, they learned to respect Roman military might, but also identified Roman weaknesses.

Shortly before the turn of the millennium, a Germanic leader named Maroboduus responded to the gradual Roman encirclement of southern Germany by moving his tribe to Bohemia. He had served in the Roman army and regarded Rome as a major threat to German tribal independence. The Romans regarded Bohemia as key to keeping the lines of communication open between the Danube and Elbe rivers. Roman armies moved into Bohemia and formed alliances with other German tribes to isolate Maroboduus. Upon suppressing revolts among the German tribes in their rear and making key alliances, Tiberius led twelve Roman legions against him. Just before the battle was engaged, word came that Illyricum was in revolt. Unable to fight both wars, Tiberius quickly came to terms with Maroboduus who was declared special friend of Rome. The Roman legions turned south to fight in Illyricum.⁹

In Illyricum, tribe after tribe joined the revolt to include the tribal auxiliaries under Roman command. It took several years to put down the rebellion during which Rome suffered severe manpower shortages. Conscription failed to meet solve the shortage and the need became so severe that retirees were recalled to their old units and liberated slave companies were raised to fight in Illyricum. Tiberius considered the manpower problem and adapted a strategy that avoided battles. Instead, he seized every important city and port and devastated the countryside, depriving the enemy of food and supplies.¹⁰ He also used diplomacy to splinter the tribes.

The Romans eventually won the day, but their weaknesses became more apparent. Rome had 25 legions assigned throughout the empire, but despite their superior abilities and equipment, the revolt

showed that Rome's legions could barely win in a single major theater of war against a major tribal revolt that fielded 200,000 soldiers. Additionally, Roman legions being forwardly deployed throughout the empire could not always get to the battle quickly and if they did they took great risk elsewhere. In short, they had a small army that lacked a strategic reserve that could move quickly to a trouble spot. The diplomatic skills of Rome were a strength throughout Augustus' reign, but when they failed it revealed a critical weakness.

The fight in Illyricum took forces and resources away from Roman forces in Germany. Cassius Dio indicates the Romans had a hold on parts of Germany, but not whole regions. He states that the barbarians were gradually re-shaping their habits in conformity with the Roman pattern. Cities were being built, markets established and Roman forms of government being implemented. But they had not forgotten their ancestral customs, native manners, their independent way of life, nor the power they had enjoyed through their strength of arms. They were unlearning tribal customs little by little.¹¹

All appeared quiet in the lands between the Rhine and Elbe, but then came Varus to light the fuse and Arminius fan its fire. With the revolt in Illyricum was subsiding, lessons learned by the Germans about the weaknesses in Roman Army were about to be exploited.

THE LEADERS

Arminius : He was the son of a Cheruscus noble named Segimar. Arminius had served in the German auxiliaries of the Roman Army and became a Roman citizen, as it was a custom to receive citizenship upon the completion of service. It was also part of the subtle policy of Rome to confer rank and privileges on the youths of the leading families in nations, which she wished to control. Beyond Roman citizenship, Arminius had been raised to the rank of Equites, the Equestrian Order (usually referred to as Knights) for his outstanding service to Rome.¹²

Arminius studied the Roman way of war carefully from within its ranks. He was sure that they could be surprised and defeated. Most of the men with whom he conspired were also veterans of the Roman Army. Once in Varus' service, Arminius recoiled at Varus' treatment of his people, but stayed in Varus' camp endearing himself to the Roman commander and plotting his revenge. His clever trap of Varus and his legions was masterfully planned and executed. His success in the battle of Teutoburger Wald is a fine example of asymmetrical warfare. Unfortunately, Arminius was not as successful later against other Roman Generals. Tiberius and Germanicus Caesar refused to be lured into the same trap as Varus. To Arminius' credit, these Roman Generals while defeating the Germans in most battles, were never able to totally subjugate the tribes east of the Rhine river.

Arminius continued to be held in high regard by his people and became a Chieftain of the Cherusci. The rest of his life was spent in inter-tribal fighting until his assassination by his own relatives, many of whom remained loyal to Rome.

Publius Quinctilius Varus: Varus was a political appointee, not a soldier. He had obtained Consular status in 13 B.C., probably more on the strength of his marriage to a grandniece of Augustus than to anything else. Varus was a true representative of the higher classes of the Romans. He was

known to have more influence than talent. Varus was Governor of Syria from 6 to 4B.C. where he had a reputation as greedy and corrupt administrator. He left Syria a very rich man. Twelve years later, Varus wangled an appointment to an obscure outpost in Germania. There is some thought that Augustus sent him there to keep him out of trouble and out of Rome.¹³

Prior to Varus' arrival in Germany, it was Roman policy to use diplomacy and civilize the Germans gradually without upsetting them or violating their customs. The situation was delicate but controllable. Varus proceeded to treat the Germans like a conquered people. Extremely proud, the Germans resented his high handed attitude and plotted their revenge. In the Battle of Teutoberger Wald, Varus ignored intelligence about Arminius' treachery and was lured into a battle at the wrong time and place. He did not survive, committing suicide to avoid capture. He is forever vilified in Roman history.

THE ANTAGONISTS

The Germans: They are of numerous tribes and not a single nation. An average tribe numbered 25,000 people living over an area of about 2,000 square miles.¹⁴ Larger tribes comprised of 35-40,000 people. Led by village and tribal leaders, the various tribes subsisted by raising cattle and hunting. Farming was considered woman's work. They fought each other as much as outside peoples. As a warrior society they valued bravery and individual combat. Leaders were selected for their valor, and commanded less through force of authority than by example. They often relied on blood ties to ensure loyalty and family members fought together. The main weapon was a 7-10 foot spear with a short sharp blade called a framea.¹⁵ It could be thrown as well as used in close combat. They also threw wooden javelins with fire hardened tips. Swords were not common and basic protection came from a large shields made of wood or reeds covered in leather. Body armor and helmets were uncommon and expensive.

They used the Cuneus or wedge formation, which was a closely packed formation of warriors, narrow in the front and wider in the back. The German warriors would use shock to penetrate their enemy's ranks. Once penetration was achieved, the warriors excelled at individual combat, but they could be enveloped by a mobile foe with good command and control. Their cavalry and infantry usually fought in one body. The real German strength lay in the cohesive nature of its clan combat groups (Kampfgruppen).¹⁶ They moved quickly through the forest and swamps and could fall with terrible ferocity upon an enemy not yet deployed for battle. They were very skilled at most aspects of guerilla warfare such as ambushes, feigned withdrawals, and surprise attacks, but needed a special leader to use this strength against skilled opponent. Arminius was that leader.

The Romans: At the time of the battle of Teutoberger Wald, the Roman Army was the best army that Rome had ever fielded. It was well trained, better organized and had the most advanced technology of the day. Its strength lay in their heavy infantry, which was a highly organized and disciplined force. They were armed with a two-foot double-edged sword called a gladius as their primary weapon. More soldiers throughout history died of wounds inflicted by the gladius than were killed by any other weapon

except the gun.¹⁷ Roman soldiers also had a full shield for protection. The heavy infantry moved in well-structured battle formations that were able to focus combat power effectively in the face of most enemies. This army was also supported by an excellent logistics network that kept the army continually in the field. Cavalry was a Roman weak point. They never developed a disciplined and integrated cavalry force. They tended to hire mercenary cavalry on a "as needed" basis.

The Roman Civil War that ended with the battle of Actium (31B.C.) and Augustus' defeat of Mark Anthony ushered in the age of the Pax Romana. Rome witnessed a golden age in which economics, literary, artistic and engineering development grew rapidly. In developing a nurturing environment for all these pursuits, Augustus devised a grand strategy for the empire that included reducing the size of the army to an affordable level, deploying of its legions throughout the empire, connecting the political and economic assets through a system of roads that facilitated commerce and the movement of the Roman army to military hot spots.¹⁸ Most important to his strategy was the use of diplomacy as the primary means of preserving the peace and the empire. The grand strategy design of Augustus was an excellent example of the preeminence of political goals and direction over the military.¹⁹

The force structure was driven by this strategy. The concept was to rely on a smaller forwardly deployed military that was highly cohesive, disciplined, mobile and armed with the best technology available to defend the empire. To achieve this goal, the Roman Army was reduced from 65 –75 legions to 25 legions. Some 300,000 soldiers were pensioned off or resettled with land grants.²⁰ Past history had also taught Augustus that armies could make emperors out of legion commanders. The reduction in the number of legions made the army more affordable, but also kept it small and forward deployed far enough away from Rome in order to protect not only the frontiers, but the regime. The oath of allegiance to the state replaced allegiance to individual commanders to reinforce the importance of loyalty to Rome above all else.

The average legion numbered 6,000 soldiers divided into 10 cohorts.²¹ The most important reform of the legion was the close integration of provincial troops, the Auxilia, within the battle formations of the legions themselves. Fully half of the legions were made up of non-Romans, and they were recruited from the provinces where the legion was stationed. This policy also provided the army with veterans who stayed in the province who could be called up in case of an emergency.

While the legions were a source of power, the senior leadership of the legions was often a weakness. Senior leaders were political appointees, often with no military experience. The result was that Rome was not developing professional senior officers, but ones who were picked for their political loyalties. Service was for no more than two years at which time they were often rotated back to the capital. The real strength in leadership rested with the centurions, who were similar to today's company commanders. They spent their entire career with the troops in the same legion. They were promoted from the ranks based on performance. Fortunately for the Roman army, it was traditional for the legion commander to consult with the senior centurions, the Primi Ordines, prior to battle.²² This not to say that

there were not many notable senior commanders as both Drusus and Tiberius proved to be skilled commanders, but weak senior leaders could contribute todisastrous results.

THE BATTLE

To the uneasy calm between the Rhine and Elbe River, comes Publius Quinctilius Varus, the new commander of the Roman army of Germany. A political appointee, a heavy-handed administrator and a greedy man who likes to hear praise. In Varus' camp was Arminius, a German veteran in the Roman Army that fought the Pannonians. He is a Roman citizen and a noble of the Cheruscus tribe. He was also a member of Varus' staff as the leader of the German auxiliary. The situation was delicate, although not dangerous until Varus shows up. The Romans had some areas of Germany under their control, but not all. It was winter quarters for several of the legions, and the inhabitants in the area were becoming used to the Roman ways and rule. Upon his arrival, the new Legate immediately behaved with arrogance and avarice, treating the Germans with disrespect and levying tribute upon them as if they were a conquered people. In his ignorance, Varus failed to see the differences between his former subjects, the Syrians and the proud Germans.

Arminius, offended by the treatment of his people immediately started to plot Varus' demise, while still playing to his Roman commander's vanity. He and his Co-commander Segimerus constantly put themselves in Varus' company and were frequent his guests. On Varus' own turf, Arminius had the opportunity to size up Varus and prepare the trap. News of a plot leaked and Segestes, a fellow German in the service of Rome, warned Varus of Arminius' plot to start an insurrection. Varus ignored the intelligence on more than one occasion and chalked it up to revenge on Segestes' part because Arminius had eloped with his daughter. Varus refused to believe his close friends who loved him could foment such a plot against him.²³

At Arminius' suggestion, Varus then made a deadly mistake. He dispersed his forces in hostile territory among people whom, he was assured, desired protection against possible incursion by other Germans.

In the autumn, 9A.D, Varus planned to move his legions from the Roman summer camp at Minden on the Weser River to winter quarters either at Haltern on the Lippe River or to Xanten on the Rhine. As Varus prepared his legions for movement, Arminius alerted him that there was a revolt among several German tribes in the south, which also happened to be along their projected line of march. Determined to provide a show of force to the insurrectionists and thereby suppress the revolt, Varus led his forces south. Confident in the overwhelming power of his force, Varus anticipated the revolt would collapse at the mere sight of his army, so he marched out of camp in route-step fashion and deployed no security.

From the Roman summer camp near Minden to the Teutoberger Forest was about 23 miles. The route ran east of the Weser River valley whose flood plain and swamps made movement difficult and where dense forests narrow the unimproved trail south on the line of march.²⁴

Varus' command included three Roman Legions (17th, 18th and 19th) and 900 cavalry supported by six cohorts (3500-4000) of allied infantry and 600 cavalry. It is estimated that there were approximately

12,000-18,000 combatants and 8,000-10,000 non-combatants on the march and the column stretched nine miles.²⁵ Although they initially proceeded down a well used path, it was not an improved Roman road and would eventually require the formation to march through dense hilly forest country, frequently flanked by swamp. This multiplied the effect of a route-step march by further stretching the column.

In accordance with Arminius' plan, as Varus marched out of camp, local tribes throughout the countryside rose up and slaughtered the Roman detachments that were to ostensibly there to protect them. This massacre deprived Varus of any reinforcements as the deployment of these soldiers had used up his reserves.

The first day's march was through relatively open country, but on the second day, the Romans moved into heavily wooded and rugged terrain. To compound their problems, it had rained the night before and the path through the forest was muddy and the rate of march slowed to a crawl. In places engineers cut down trees and built causeways in order to make headway. This added to the confusion as soldiers, baggage and the non-combatants began to pile up on the road. At the same time, Arminius and the German auxiliaries, who were the bulk of Varus' light infantry, suddenly disappeared. Despite their unexplained disappearance, Varus did not order his men into battle formation nor did he put out security. Arminius' battle plan got a further boost from a series of terrible rainstorms accompanied by heavy winds that further contributed to the general disorder of the column.

Amid this disarray, the Roman rear guard and flanks were suddenly attacked by a shower of javelins. Taking heavy casualties from the missiles and unable to respond quickly due to the mass desertion of their German light infantry, the Romans attempted to form up for an attack. Just as the Romans were marshaled, the attack stopped and the Germans melted away into the woods. Deprived of their light infantry and encumbered by the terrain and weather, the heavy Roman heavy infantry was unable pursue the lightly clad barbarians and resumed their march.²⁶

By evening of the second day, Roman engineers located began to construct a fortified field camp in an open area. Realizing the desperation of his situation, Varus decided to burn his baggage train and abandon his nonessential supplies in order increase the army's rate of march. In the morning, the Romans marched out of camp in battle formation. With essential supplies and non-combatants in the middle of their formations, they marched into an open terrain, hoping to draw Arminius into a battle where the Roman heavy infantry would have the advantage.²⁷ Astutely, Arminius refused to engage the Romans having learned from his service with the Roman Army that it was foolish to engage the Roman heavy infantry in a head to head battle. Instead, he attacked with skirmishers and set small ambushes at every opportunity in order to bleed the Roman army over time.

As the march continued, the Romans were eventually forced by the terrain to move back into the forest. Throughout the day, German attacks became bolder and bolder as the tribesmen hiding in the dense forest rained javelins upon the Romans at every opportunity. The Romans continued to take heavy casualties, while the barbarians grew stronger and stronger as more German tribes alerted to the

Romans' plight eagerly joined the fight. Finally, as night came the Romans fortified a field camp and attempted to rest and prepare for the next day.

As the legions marched out of camp the next day, their path became even more treacherous as they were forced onto a path that placed the column between swamps on one side and densely wooded hills on the other. Arminius and his soldiers waited on the hills and then blocked the path. In deploying his forces, Arminius selected an area that enhanced his strength while exploiting the Roman's inability to use the power of its heavy infantry, due to the swamp and dense forest. Realizing it was his only way ahead, Varus pressed ahead, attacking down the road and taking heavy casualties.

As the Romans moved down the path, the Germans continually showered them with javelins and repeatedly charged sections of their formations. While beating back these fierce attacks and making some progress down the road, the Romans found themselves more and more engulfed by the terrain around them. Success at a very high cost was only taking them deeper and deeper into the German kill zone. The rain started again, preventing the Romans from moving any further down the track. Their hide shields were soaked and so heavy they could not be wielded for long.²⁸ The forest and the rain combined to render their bows and javelins ineffective, while they slipped and slide in the mud unable to keep their footing. With morale faltering and fatigue draining their fight capabilities, the cohorts in the lead faltered and attempted an orderly retreat back to their camp, only to run into other Roman formations continuing the march. Disorder became general.

At this point, Arminius ordered a full-scale attack. Thousands of barbarians charged down the hills fiercely driving into the Roman ranks. Arminius and his warriors attacked the Roman cavalry wounding numerous horses that ran amuck among the Roman's ranks. Seeing the hopelessness of the situation, the Roman cavalry commanded by Numonius Vala attempted to escape, but the rain and confusion scattered its formation and the horsemen was butchered piecemeal.²⁹

As the German attacks intensified, the Roman infantry were separated into small groups. Many of these isolated pockets of soldiers fought bravely repelling attack after attack, but they were gradually worn down and destroyed one at a time. In the midst of battle, Varus was severely wounded and committed suicide rather than fall into the hands of the Germans. The battle continued throughout the day with some small pockets of Roman infantry resisting until the end. The Romans that were captured were crucified, buried alive or offered as sacrifices to the gods in their sacred groves. Varus' head was sent to Maroboduus, king of the Marcomanni who sent it to Rome.³⁰

At hearing of the disaster, Augustus was said to have torn his clothing and beat his head against a doorpost, shouting, "Quintilius Varus, give me back my legions!"

THE RAMIFICATIONS

An immediate effect of the defeat was that Augustus feared that the way to Rome was open and that a general revolt might spread from Germany to Gaul. Fortunately for Rome, Arminius failed to exploit his success beyond the Rhine River and, in fact, a general revolt did not develop as many German tribes

chose to remain loyal to Rome. Augustus attempted to raise new legions, but had a particularly hard time finding the manpower, given the drain of the recent Pannonian campaign.³¹

Future military operations east of the Rhine failed to subjugate the area and were geared more towards revenge than anything else. Roman armies under Tiberius and later Germanicus ravaged the countryside between the Rhine and the Elbe rivers. These commanders avoided the mistakes of Varus and in most cases, Arminius wisely sidestepped battle with the Romans. It was his conflict with other Germans that led to his assassination.³²

Finally, Rome lost the will to conquer and occupy the area. As a forwardly deployed force with limited number of legions, the Romans could not afford the manpower to occupy all of Germany effectively. To the Roman mind, east of the Rhine was a vast wasteland anyway, without known deposits of gold or silver or any vast tracts of farmland. Future policy dictated that the Rhine River would be the empire's border. The Rhine River border became characterized by small outposts on the frontier staffed by border troops with larger military installations near cities on the interior lines of communication ready to move in whatever direction danger threatened. A later strategy included welcoming a limited number of German settlers into the empire. This policy provided critically needed manpower for the legions. It would also open the floodgates to numerous German tribes in later years, contributing to the end of the empire.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES

The United States like Rome is the sole superpower of our age. Lessons drawn from a battle almost 2000 years ago might seem irrelevant in an age of high technology, but there are some very basic parallels worth considering. Having won the big war and seeing no peer competitor, the political tendency is to minimize the threat, reduce the budget, and downsize the armed forces. After the Roman Civil War, Augustus, much like our politicians after the Cold War, determined that there was a reduced threat to the empire and that there was a high cost associated with a large standing army. Additionally, in this case, a large army often posed a threat to the government itself. Past Army commanders often proved to be politically ambitious as the Roman Civil War proved.

Augustus decided to change Roman strategy from an expansionist to a defensive one.³³ Rome would preserve her empire at the frontier with a forwardly deployed smaller army, thereby reaping the peace dividend and reducing the threat to his regime. His military structure was determined by his political and economic strategy. Following the Cold War, political leaders in the United States came to a similar conclusion about the economic and political benefit of reducing the military. A problem worth remembering is that if you choose to draw down the armed forces too far you can create a peer competitor where none exists.³⁴ Fortunately, the United States has not gone that far yet.

What we have done in reducing the force is to accept risks in our ability to deploy forces and to engage in a two major theater war scenario. Roman strategy likewise took risk in reducing their legions with basic premise that she could redeploy legions to any trouble spot in the empire. Their major problem was how to get there quickly. One of the primary reasons for establishing the Elbe and Danube rivers as

frontiers was to protect the land routes used by their military. Expanding the borders from the Rhine to the Elbe River as a product of this effort led to their defeat at Teutoberger Wald.

The United States has taken a similar route by reducing its military, and using its forwardly deployed forces as the first responder in a crisis with the CONUS based units filling out the force in a major theater war. The same problems apply. How do you get there quickly? The Romans being a land based force had to establish land routes. Our problem is both sea and airlift. While our strategy says our forces will get there, there is plenty of doubt in the ranks over whether it can be done effectively in a lethal environment.

The Roman grand strategy was tested in the Balkans. The Roman army, already engaged with Maroboduus, had to redeploy most its forces to fight the Pannonians and other tribes in Balkans. They discovered that they could not fight in more than major theater of war at a time despite having an army forward deployed in the area. They also found that they had a limited reserve capability and a recruiting problem when life was good in Rome. The United States military has discovered that despite our previous official contentions, that we are not structured to realistically fight two major theater wars at the same time. For example, the USTRANSCOM is equipped for one Major theater of War, but has to support two.³⁵ Like the Romans, we have discovered that at best we would have to fight a holding action in one theater while fighting in another. The holding force is at risk much like it was for those three legions in the Teutoberger Forest while the Romans were completing a major theater war in the Balkans.

Like Augustus, the United States sees diplomacy is the major political tool in maintaining the peace. He used it effectively in gaining allies and buffer states. In Augustus' time, a tight coalition and good intelligence were paramount in winning the fight or maintaining the peace. It is common today to hear both political and military leaders espousing the importance of coalitions in dealing with world crises, especially in an environment where the United States does not have the political, economic or military assets (or even the national will) to do everything itself. The reliability of coalition partners is therefore often key to successful mission accomplishment. The Romans relied heavily on allied light infantry forces and client kings. They made great efforts to co-opt the leadership and the young of formerly hostile nations. Arminius is a good example (with a bad ending).

The United States often goes out of its way to co-opt potential enemies. We protest China's human rights record, but feel confident that over time we can bring them into the world community by economic and political engagement.³⁶ We educate large numbers of Chinese students in technical fields in our colleges and hope that they will institute change in their society. We sell them technology and teach them our methods.³⁷ There is an obvious risk in doing so, but options are limited. In Augustus' time, many barbarians were trained, educated and served in the Roman army in the hopes of Romanizing them. Sometimes they were successful; other times it was used against them. Even members of Arminius' family stayed loyal to the Romans during his revolt. Whether it works on the Chinese or not remains to be seen. It did not work with Arminius.

Allies and those we are attempting to co-opt will always put their own self-interest ahead of ours. Over time even the most loyal allies, can come to resent the big man on the block. Reality dictates that United States needs to promote coalitions and co-opt potential foes, but we should be prepared for the time when we have to go it alone.

For the Romans, timely and accurate intelligence was also key to conducting effective operations using small forces on the frontier. At Teutoberger Wald, Varus ignored intelligence when it conflicted with his intuition. The lesson for the United States is that we are very reliant on intelligence, but it should be not used as a justification for what we think we know nor ignored because it does not fit a strategy. It is also a potential target of asymmetrical warfare.

The Romans learned the hard way; if you are going to have a small forwardly deployed army, you need a credible strategic reserve. After the defeat at Teutoberger Wald, Rome was thrown into a panic because they had not a large enough reserve to stop the Germans had the revolt been widespread. Senior active duty US commanders need to realize that the political strategy that resulted in downsized active military made our reserve forces important in everything we do. We can not even conduct peacekeeping operations without them. Further, reserve forces and those CONUS based active forces need to be able to get to the fight to be effective. Both sealift and airlift capability directly effects the ability of our CONUS based forces to make a timely impact of the battlefield.

One of the most important lessons from the battle of Teutoberger Wald is that a superior force can be defeated by a technologically inferior one. The battle of Teutoberger Wald is a classic example of successful asymmetrical warfare. Arminius having lived among the Romans and learned their way of war, identified Roman vulnerabilities and used his strengths against their weaknesses.

The Roman Army's power lay in its ability to concentrate their heavy infantry in a battle formation, maneuver against an enemy and using their superior weapons and tactics, defeat them. At Teutoberger Wald, the Romans were not only deprived of their strength, it actually became a weakness. Given the terrain and weather, they were unable to use their superior combat power of their heavy infantry against the lightly armored Germans. They could not get close enough to use the gladius nor throw the pilum, nor shoot their bows. The weight of their heavy infantry, usually a strength in open combat became an impediment in the rain, mud and rough terrain. Lightly armored barbarians attacking in a time and place of their choosing, wreaked havoc on the struggling Romans, showering them with javelins and missiles, then quickly melting away into the forest. The full attack came only after the Romans were bled white.

Today, the United States is the most technologically advanced military in the world. There are currently no peer competitors and there is not likely to be one in the near future, if we stop unilaterally reducing our present conventional military force. Like the Romans, the biggest threats to the United States are not symmetrical, but asymmetrical. An asymmetrical capability is realistic approach to defeating an opponent you can not match head to head.

A number of nations are taking a critical look at the United States' center of gravity and vulnerabilities and concluding that asymmetrical warfare is the best method of attaining their goals. They

also perceive rightly or wrongly that our center of gravity is will of the American people. Non-Western militaries understand that the West does possess vulnerabilities: an aversion to casualties and excessive collateral damage, a sensitivity to domestic and world opinion, and an apparent lack of commitment to prepare for and fight wars that are measured in years rather than months.³⁸ By upping the casualties, hurting our pocket books or prolonging the war in an effort to make the war too painful to continue, they believe they can win. And winning does not necessarily mean total victory on the battlefield, it may mean just outlasting us.

Those that employ this method of war will more likely be authoritarian regimes that lack the ethical or cultural restraints to play by our rules. We cannot count on our future opponents to fight us symmetrically, strength to strength. They are already thinking about how to target Western vulnerabilities while capitalizing on their three intrinsic advantages: time, will and the inherent power of the defense.³⁹

Many people point to regional nuclear powers as a threat to the West, but the use of nuclear weapons is problematic for them given our nuclear capabilities. Such a symmetrical attack would be a mismatch, if we chose to respond in kind. However, they may employ terrorism to apply a nuclear capability with some plausible deniability if the weapon is hand carried into the US.

More likely, they could use chemical weapons. Knowing that US forces are heavy and require substantial air and sealift may cause an aggressor nation to target those capabilities both in and out of the United States. Any casualties in such an attack would as a side effect being viewed as an effective attack the will of the American people to continue a war.

For those nations, not interested releasing the Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) genie, investing in relatively cheap weapons, such as shoulder fired ground to air weapons could deprive or impede US forces of airlift capabilities. These weapons had a deadly effect on the Soviets in Afghanistan. Diesel submarines and attack boats operating in coastal waters used in concert with mining could make sealift or amphibious operations very hazardous. Luring us into urban combat or into jungle or mountain warfare would negate our technological advantage. Like the Romans, the United States possesses superior arms and armament, but like the Romans these advantages can be negated if we surrender the initiative and the enemy is able to employ low-tech weapons at the time and place of his choosing. We need to consider counter-measures before the conflict begins.

Another example of cost effective asymmetrical warfare negating high technology is in information technology. The US military loves technology and spends millions developing it, but US forces could have its command and control, communications and intelligence assets targeted either with either information overflow, electromagnetic pulse, or by some off-the-shelf technologies that allow an enemy to hack their way into, not only military systems but civilian infrastructure. How proficient are today's Lieutenants with a map and compass if the Global Positioning System gets taken out? Who can handle the M-10 Plotting Board in the Fire Direction Center when the computer system crashes?

Imagine the effect on the national will if the economy could be attacked through banking and basic business information networks on a large scale. Much like the Romans and their rain soaked shields, we

would find it hard to wield our information technologies in a storm of attacks on our satellites, computers, communications infrastructures. If we have the capability to make such attacks, it is safe to assume that others can do the same in the future. China is investing heavily in information warfare. For more than a year, the People's Liberation Army has been simulating computer virus attacks in military exercises.⁴⁰

Asymmetrical attacks can also target perceived strengths of our society. The media within our democratic system can thwart continued military action. Consider the comment of a former North Vietnamese commander: "The conscience of America was part of its war making capability, and we were turning that power in our favor. America lost because of its democracy; through dissent and protest it lost the ability to mobilize a will to win."⁴¹ Clearly, this attack on our center of gravity required a manipulation of American opinion far from the might of our armed forces. Given this perceived weakness, the government needs to ensure that its military is fighting the right battle at the right time to preserve the national will.

At Teutoberger Wald, the Romans were deprived of their strength and initiative both by a clever enemy and their own arrogance. If we are to be successful in the future, the United States needs to take a step back from admiring our own capabilities and recognize that asymmetrical capabilities of potential enemies are the biggest threat to the United States and require close scrutiny.

WORD COUNT = 7,584,

ENDNOTES

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³ Richard A. Gabriel, Great Battles of Antiquity, (Carlisle Barracks, Pa: U.S. Army War College, Department of National Security and Strategy, 1992), 5.

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⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁶ Ibid., 8.

⁷ Fuller, 244.

⁸ Gabriel, 7.

⁹ Fuller, 245.

¹⁰ John Buchan, Augustus. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Riverside Press, 1937), 324.

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²⁵ Ibid., 32.

²⁶ Ibid., 34.

²⁷ Ibid., 34.

²⁸ Ibid., 36.

²⁹ Creasy, 125.

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³¹ Dio, 239.

³² Creasy, 134.

³³ Gabriel, Great Battles of Antiquity, 119.

³⁴ Lloyd J. Matthews, eds. Can America be Defeated?, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 1998), 333.

³⁵ U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. Congressional Testimony of General Charles T. Robertson, JR., USAF, 26 Oct 1999.

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³⁷ "CIA, FBI Report: China Espionage Threat Against U.S. has Intensified", Associated press, 10 March 2000. 1-4.

³⁸ Robert H. Scales, "America's Army in Transition: Preparing for War in the Precision Age." Army Issue Paper, no. 3, (November 1999), 10.

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