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Author(s): Manuchar Gugushvili

Source: Caspian, January 2026, VOL. 3, NO. 5, 63-66.

Published by: Tissaphernes Archaeological Research Group

Stable URL: <https://doi.org/10.22034/cj.2024.492034.1022>



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Rome and Parthia

Manuchar Gugushvili¹ 

Abstract

The relationship between Rome and Parthia is one of the most important issues in ancient history. Still, only some scholars, such as archaeologists, historians, and linguists, have written books and articles about this subject. *Rome, Parthia, and the Politics of Peace, The Origins of War in the Ancient Middle East*, by Jason M. Schlude, is a new book in this field.

Keywords: Parthia; Rome; Politics.



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Article info: Received: 5 September 2025 | Accepted: 8 October 2025 | Published: 1 January 2026

Citation: Gugushvili, Manuchar. (2026). Rome and Parthia. *Caspian*, Vol. 3 (5), 63-66.

<https://doi.org/10.22034/cj.2024.492934.1022>

Introduction

The relationship between Parthia and Rome is one of the most critical issues in ancient history. Still, only some scholars, such as archaeologists, historians, and linguists, have written books and articles about this subject.

Much research has been conducted on the Achaemenid period, as well as its cultural findings, such as pottery, as well as the Achaemenids' relations with Greece (see MehrAfarin, 2021; Rahbar, 2023; Yaghmaei, 2023; Atayi, 2024; Ahmadedee, 2025; Dara, 2025; Khanipour, 2025; Salahshour, 2025; Amanollahi and Alikahi, 2025; Aryamanesh, 2025; Babadi and Zarrinkoob, 2025; Veisi, 2025; Mohsezadeh Karimi and Ahmadi, 2025; Farjami, 2025). There has also been a lot of research into the archaeology and history of the Sasanians, as well as their relations with Rome (see Sauer, 2020; Rostami & Aryamanesh, 2020; Maksymiuk, 2021; Skupniewicz, 2021). However, not much research has been done on the Parthians. Several studies have been published on Roman-Parthian relations, such as the book *The Roman Near East: 31 BC–3372 AD* by Fergus Milla (1995), or the book *Reign of Arrows: The Rise of the Parthian Empire in the Hellenistic Middle East* by Nikolaus Leo Oertoom (2020), which discussed the relations between the Parthians and the Romans. Fortunately, Jason M. Schlude has written a new book on this subject.

Jason M. Schlude is a specialist on the Roman Near East; he has published on Roman-Parthian relations in journals including *Latomus*, and *Anabasis, Studia Classica et Orientalia*; and co-editor of *Arsacids, Romans, and Local Elites: Cross-Cultural Interactions of the Parthian Empire* (2017). Also, he has written a Rome, Parthia, and the Politics of Peace.

Rome, Parthia, and the Politics of Peace offers an analytical, even-handed examination of the relationship between Rome and Parthia, the two ancient superpowers. This volume provides an informed survey of the problematic relationship between Rome and Parthia. Jason Schlude offers a timely reassessment of foreign relations between Rome and Parthia. His conclusions will interest anyone seeking a historical perspective on peace in interstate affairs.

This book consists of 8 chapters with titles: 1. Rome and Parthia Meet: From Sulla to Lucullus; 2. Empires with a Boundary: Pompey and Phraates III; 3. An Opportunist Strikes: Crassus and the Battle of Carrhae; 4. Parthian-Roman Fallout: Orodes II and Mark Antony in the Near East; 5. A Diplomatic Restart: Augustus, Phraates IV, and Phraates V; 6. Instability at Home and Abroad: Diplomacy and War under the Julio-Claudians; 7. Legions on the Euphrates: The Parthian Policy of the Flavians; 8. The Model of Trajan: The Final Stage for Rome and Parthia. Also, at the end of the book are a bibliography and an index.

The first chapter, "The Encounter between Rome and Parthia: From Sulla to Lucullus," examines the earliest interactions and beginnings of Roman relations with Parthia, related to expanding the Eternal City in the East.

Chapters two, three, and four cover the period from Pompey's arrival in the East

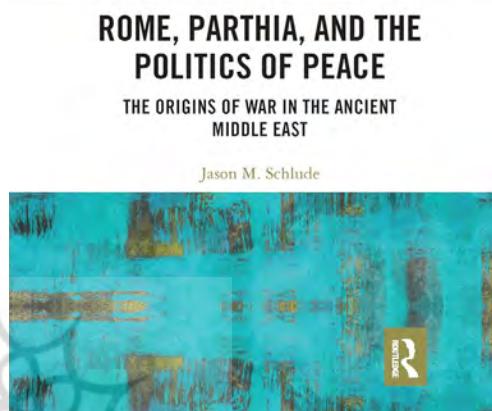
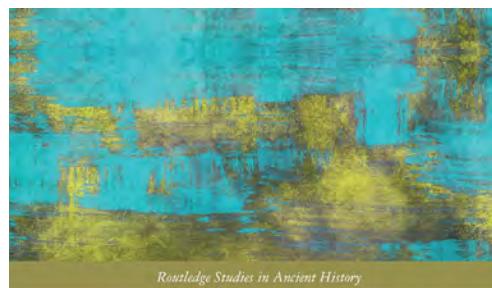
to the end of the final war with Pontus to the reign of Augustus. The author challenges the scholarly consensus that Rome and Parthia were inherently destined for conflict from their inception. He presents evidence of peaceful embassies between a Roman envoy and Phraates III in the 60s CE. The policy's decline and the development of hostility are attributed to Crassus' campaign against the Parthians and the ensuing conflict.

Chapter 5 highlights Augustus' reign as a turning point in Roman-Parthian relations, marked by his peaceful policy to promote Roman interests in the East.

In chapters six and seven, the author describes the continuation of Augustus' strategy towards the Parthians, developing it under the Julio-Claudian and Flavian. According to the author, Armenia played a key role at this time, becoming a point of increasing conflict between the rival powers, ultimately leading to the collapse of the peace policy under Nero. In the final chapter, the author summarizes the content and conclusions of the work and describes the consequences of Roman policy in the late Parthian Empire and its impact on relations with the Sasanians.

Conclusion

Jason Schlude's *Rome, Parthia and the Politics of Peace* comprehensively assesses Roman-Parthian relations. This book is comprehensive as it has thoroughly studied the relationship between Rome and Parthia and presents valuable information about the two ancient superpowers. This volume examines the complex relationship between the Roman and Parthian empires from approximately 96 BCE to 224 CE. Instead of framing Roman-Parthian relations as inherently conflictual, Rome, Parthia, and the Politics of Peace challenges the prevailing scholarship by emphasizing cooperation and offering a balanced perspective.



Rome, Parthia, and the Politics of Peace, The Origins of War in the Ancient Middle East, Jason M. Schlude, Pp. Xvi + 221, ills, maps. London and New York: Routledge, 2020, ISBN: 978-0-8153-5370-6.

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