

ANCIENT HISTORY

Evaluate the contribution of Pompey to the demise of the Roman Republic.

The stability of the Roman Republic was weakened by multiple factors, however Pompey's unconstitutional actions, such as his non-traditional ways of acquiring power and the unlawful circumstances of his consulships, played a major role in ensuring the fall of the Republic.

Pompey hugely undermined the Republic in his rise to power through un-Republican and non-traditional means. In 83 BCE, at the age of only 23, Pompey was granted the title of *propraetorian imperium* by Sulla, despite the fact that he was seven years younger than the prerequisite age and had never held any qualifying offices beforehand. Pompey also greatly destabilised the Republic through usurping Sulla's power. His demands for military triumphs for his success over the Marians were fulfilled through Pompey's statement that 'more people worship the rising than the setting sun', suggesting that he intended to gain more personal glory than the most powerful man in Rome can achieve. Bradley described Pompey as a 'young man with no previous political or military experience, requesting an honour that was usually the high point of a long career', demonstrating Pompey as a man thirsty for *glorias* and was willing to do anything to achieve it, even if it comes at the expense of the republican government's power.

Additionally, Pompey's actions led to the decline of the Republic through his three consulships. Pompey used his first joint consulship with Crassus in 70 BCE to pass three laws under their own names, which succeeded in reversing many of Sulla's republican reforms. The Licinio and Pompeian Laws restored the tribunate, which has been crippled under Sulla, of its veto and legislative powers, and revived the position of censorship. This not only ensured Pompey's popularity among non-patrician citizens, but also led to the removal of 64 republican senators, who were replaced with those 'loyal to Pompey' (Beard). Furthermore, Pompey's next consulship of 55 BCE was acquired through unconstitutional means, highlighting his belief in personal glory above the stability of the state. By barring the elections of 56 with violence, an interrex (patrician with 5 days to appoint consuls) who supported Pompey was selected, ensuring his election. By resorting to acts of violence, Pompey further exacerbated tensions in Roman society, ensuring the republic's demise. Likewise, Pompey's sole consulship of 52 BCE directly went against the laws of the state. The sole consulship directly contravened the Roman Republic's dual-consul system, which has been established since the expulsion of the kings in 509 BCE, with the specific aim of preserving the Republic. Plutarch described Pompey's actions as 'un-Roman', demonstrating how his tyrannical and unlawful actions undermined the Republic.

Finally, Pompey's actions in his later years were solely driven by personal ambitions with little regard to the state of the republic. Pompey's part in the First Triumvirate allowed him to ratify his eastern settlements and to acquire land for his veterans despite the opposition from the republican senators, showing his refusal to uphold republican values at the expense of his own power. Moreover, Pompey's conflicts with Caesar were highly harmful to the republican government, with Gwynn describing the civil war between the two warlords as 'the beginning of the end for the republic'. Roman poet Lucan declared Pompey as a man who 'would accept no equal', and it was Pompey's struggle for *glorias* and *dignitas* over Julius Caesar which was 'hugely destructive to Rome' (Gwynn), and ensured the demise of the Roman Republic.

Ultimately, Pompey's unconstitutional and ambitious actions delivered a powerful blow to Rome's weakening republican government. His non-traditional rise to power and his pursuit of glory undermined the republican government and Sulla's republican reforms to a major extent, ultimately paving the way to the downfall of the Republic.