

## Tiberius' Germania Strategy<sup>1</sup>

Gökhan Tekir<sup>2</sup>

Middle East Technical University, Dr, Regional Studies Department, Ankara, Turkey

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Research Article

### Abstract

Tiberius, whose character and retreat to the island of Capri during his reign's last decade, tarnished his reputation and caused controversy, actually had a realist and sound Germania strategy. Instead of extending the Roman borders, he chose to protect the Roman frontiers as the new conquests were both costly and dangerous beyond the Rhine. Therefore, he removed his cousin and possible successor Germanicus, who pursued an expansionist and adventurous policy. Although some authors, such as Cassius Dio and Tacitus condemn him relieving his popular and charismatic cousin Germanicus from the command of Germania legions, Tiberius' this move was justifiable because Germanicus was risking the Roman legions and money for military expeditions, which would boost his popularity rather than the Roman Empire's security. Tiberius' considerations in Germania were, on the other hand, upholding the peace and security.

**Keywords:** Tiberius, Roman Empire, Germania, Germanicus, Rhine Frontier

## Tiberius'un Germanya Stratejisi

### Öz

Tiberius karakteri ve ömrünün son yıllarını Capri adasında geçirmesiyle birçok kendi ününe birçok zarar olmasına rağmen Germanya bölgesine yönelik gerçekçi ve sağlam bir stratejiye sahipti. Ren nehri ötesinde seferlerin riskli ve pahalı olması nedeniyle Germanya bölgesinde genişlemeci bir politikayı tercih etmeyip, Roma sınırlarını koruma yolunu seçti. Bu yüzden genişlemeci ve maceracı bir politikayı tercih eden yeğeni ve vefaatli Germanicus'u Germanya bölgesinden geri çağırdı. Cassius Dio ve Tacitus bu karardan ötürü Tiberius'u eleştirse de Germanicus'un seferlerinin Roma askerlerini ve parasını kendi popülaritesi uğruna riske attığından ötürü Tiberius'un bu karar haklıydı. Tiberius barışı ve Roma İmparatorluğu'nun güvenliğini ön plana almıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler.** Tiberius, Roma İmparatorluğu, Germanya, Germanicus, Ren Sınırı

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<sup>2</sup> tekirgokhan@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0003-3985-7442

## Introduction

Tiberius became the emperor in 14 A.D. when Augustus died. Augustus had married his mother Livia by having Tiberius' father Claudius Nero divorce Livia.<sup>3</sup> Under Augustus' rule, Tiberius served as a military commander against Cantabrians.<sup>4</sup> Then he went to Armenia and placed a Roman client on the throne of Armenia. He fought against Parthians, recovering the standards lost by Marcus Crassus.<sup>5</sup> He served as a governor in Gallia Comata. He led army against the Raeti and Vindelici, and Pannonia<sup>6</sup>, earning victories for the Roman Empire. His final mission was in Germania. He successfully quelled the unrest in the region (Suet, Tib. IX.). The famous historian Tom Holland describes Tiberius as "*Rome's finest general*" (2015, p. 14). Therefore, he was an experienced and able military commander and administrator before he succeeded Augustus as Princeps.<sup>7</sup>

This article focuses on the developments in Germania during Tiberius' rule. The main element which had shaped the military activities in the region was Tiberius' charismatic and popular nephew Germanicus, who was the most powerful commander in Germania. He was a member of Julio-Claudian dynasty<sup>8</sup> and a contender for the title of the emperor. Tacitus, Dio Cassius and Suetonius have an agreement that Tiberius feared and doubted Germanicus' actions. This cannot be dismissed as an imagination (Seager, 2005, p. 53).<sup>9</sup> This existing distrust and awkwardness between two men complicated the Roman movements in Germania, resulting in Germanicus' dismissal from Germania frontier.

This article argues that Germanicus' continuing military incursions in Germania proved to be futile and costly. A decade before Augustus' endeavors to turn Germania is one of the Roman regions resulted in a disaster in the Battle of Teutoburg Forest. Being aware of strategic ramifications of another military disaster in Germania for the Roman Empire, Tiberius' concern for strengthening the Rhine frontier but not pursuing an expansionist policy was strategically sensible policy. However, this policy was darkened by the Roman historians such as Tacitus and Suetonius. These historians accused Tiberius of jealousy and anger for Germanicus' successes. This paper also tries to respond these attacks on Tiberius' Germania policy.

## Early Germania Expeditions and Battle of Teutoburg Frost

While analyzing Tiberius' Germania policy, the early Germania expeditions and the effect of the Battle

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<sup>3</sup> At that time, Livia was pregnant with Drusus Nero (Suet. Tib. IV.).

<sup>4</sup> The Cantabrians comprised of the tribe, who lived in the northern Iberia (Strab.III.7.).

<sup>5</sup> In 53 B.C., during his campaign against the Parthians, Marcus Crassus, who was one of members of triumvirate with Julius Caesar and Pompey Magnus, was defeated at Carrhae by the Parthians. The Roman losses approximated 30.000 soldiers (Overtoom, 2017, p. 416). The capture of military standards by the Parthians caused the disgrace and shame in Rome (Overtoom, 2017, p. 430).

<sup>6</sup> Pannonia was a Roman province, coinciding modern eastern Austria and western half of Hungary(Burghardt, 1979, p. 1)

<sup>7</sup> The word Princeps signifies the leading citizen among equals. Augustus assumed this title to emphasize he was not king or dictator. However, the title's powers were defined clearly (Shotter, 1991, p. 2). Tacitus states that: "*with equality cast aside, all looked the orders of the princeps*" (Ann. 1.4.). This emphasizes princeps has more authority than being a simply first among equals.

<sup>8</sup> Julio-Claudians were the first ruling dynasty of the Roman Empire. The ruling period started with Augustus in the late first century and ended with Nero's death in 68 A.D.(Fertik, 2019, p. 11).

<sup>9</sup> Dio reports that Tiberius "feared Germanicus" (LVII.3.1.).

of Teutoburg forest must be presented. The early Germania campaigns constituted Tiberius' reflection concerning Germania. Tiberius and his brother Drusus Nero<sup>10</sup> were tasked to pacify the German tribes. The Battle of Teutoburg forest in 9 A.D., on the hand, stopped the Roman expansion in Germania because the loss of three legions had devastating consequences. This chapter also discusses the process which brought about one of the worst defeats of the Roman Empire.

The conquest of Gaul had led to the confrontation between several tribes in the east of the Rhine.<sup>11</sup> This confrontation caused several skirmishes between the Roman legions and the Germanic tribes. In 16 B.C. the Germanic tribes crossed the Rhine. They plundered and killed the Romans. This was an important event, which led Augustus to reverse his defensive policy to imperialistic conquest (Wells, 2003, p. 169). Tiberius and Drusus Nero were tasked with subduing Rhaetia and Vindelicia.<sup>12</sup> While Tiberius focuses on the Rhine valley to Lake Constance, Drusus advanced across the Bavarian Alps. The campaign was success despite the heavy losses. The Roman army continued its expedition as far as to the Danube, but this land was not occupied. The main base was not moved on the other side of the river (Seager, 2005, p. 19).<sup>13</sup> This attitude reflects that a defensive policy was preferable to the total conquest of Germania by Tiberius and Drusus. The main military base on the Rhine helped the Romans to watch over troublesome tribes on the other side of the Rhine.

Tiberius was appointed to deal with troublesome tribes in Pannonia (Cass. Dio. LIV.31.4.). Drusus remained in Gaul. He adopted a defensive policy regarding German tribes. He waited the Germans to cross the Rhine, then, repelled them. To set a punitive strike he crossed the Rhine, invaded the country of Chauci.<sup>14</sup> In this expedition, his ships were almost wrecked due to ebb (Cass. Dio. LIV.32.1-3.). This hazardous experience demonstrates that crossing Rhine was always dangerous even for small-scale punitive expeditions. The next year, Drusus invaded the Sugambri<sup>15</sup> and advanced to the Cherusci.<sup>16</sup> His further advance was hindered by the constant harassment by the German tribes and lack of supplies. Therefore, he retreated to the friendlier territory. He fortified the Rhine frontier to deter attacks of German tribes. (Cass. Dio. LIV.33.1-4.). Thus, the expeditions of Drusus show that the advancement beyond the Rhine was difficult. The harassment by the German tribes and lack of supplies, while advancing throughout the territory beyond the Rhine, inhibited the troops' movements.

When Drusus died in 9 B.C., Tiberius continued the war. An amphibious military operation was carried out, extending to the Elbe (Rüger, 1996, p. 526). Tiberius subdued the various tribes including the Cherusci. The

<sup>10</sup> Drusus Nero was the brother of Tiberius (Suet. Tib. IV.). He should not be confused with Tiberius' son Drusus. He died in 9 B.C. while campaigning in Germania due to illness (Cass. Dio. LV.1.4.).

<sup>11</sup> "Gaul's eastern and northern border lay on the Rhine" (Rüger, 1996, p. 517).

<sup>12</sup> Rhaeti with Vindilica settled on the other side of Alps after being driven by the Gauls from their original settlement (Lempriere, 1837, p. 272).

<sup>13</sup> The Roman historian Paterculus states that Tiberius and Drusus "thoroughly subdued these races, protected as they were by the nature of the country, difficult for access, strong in numbers, and fiercely warlike" (II.XCV.).

<sup>14</sup> The Cauci were considered by Tacitus as the noblest German tribes. They held and filled a large part of territory (Ger. 35.).

<sup>15</sup> The Sugambri or Sigambri were the people who submitted to Augustus. They were settled in the adjacent territory of the Rhine (Suet. Div. Aug. XXI.).

<sup>16</sup> The Cherusci were describes as enjoying abnormal and leisurely peace. They lived near the Cauci and the Chatti (Tib. Ger. 36.).

Roman army traversed almost four hundred miles. Tiberius turned it almost a tributary province status (Vell. Pat. II. CVI).<sup>17</sup> Tiberius' eastern flank was threatened by Maroboduus.<sup>18</sup> His army's manpower reached to almost 70.000 foots. Tiberius decided to attack Maroboduus from opposite directions. One leg of the army attacked through Catti into Boiohaemum, while he himself led the attack against the army in Illyricum (Vell. Pat. II. CIX).<sup>19</sup>

Augustus considered that Tiberius and Drusus effectively conquered the region from the Rhine to Elbe, so the next task was to integrate this areas to the Roman Empire (Wells, 2003, p. 83).<sup>20</sup> Tiberius<sup>21</sup> was replaced by Publius Varus<sup>22</sup> for the command (Levick, 1999, p. 15). Varus' primary task was to introduce the Roman system of government such as collecting the taxes, holding census throughout the region between the Rhine and the Elbe, presumably conquered (Wells, 2003, p. 84).

Varus' behavior in Germania concurs Augustus' presumption concerning the region beyond the Rhine. Varus demanded money from the tribes, located on the other side of the Rhine as they were subjects of the Roman Empire. Since the sheer power of the Roman legions prevented these tribes from demonstrating open hostility, they pretended that they were friends of the Romans, waiting for an opportunity (Cass. Dio. LVI.18.3-4.). From this evaluation, we can deduce that the German tribes did not see themselves as the Roman subjects, but the Roman legions possessed enough power to deter an open attack from the German tribes. The endeavors of Tiberius and Drusus strengthened the Rhine frontier and secured the Roman legions on the Roman side of the Rhine.

The eastern flank of the Rhine, however, was in danger. However, believing that the tribes were pacified, Varus distributed his legions and kept many tribes company. While he was marching beyond the Rhine, he acted as he was in friendly territory (Cass. Dio. LVI.19.1-3.). Dio's description of event prior to the Battle of Teutoburg offers us insight about Varus' character. He was over-confident and reckless general as opposed to Tiberius, who preferred a discreet policy. Augustus must have been aware of Varus' character. His appointment reflects that an aggressive policy was adopted by Princeps.

This aggressive policy proved to be fatal for not only Rome's Germania policy but its general security. In September 9 A.D. Varus campaigned to conquer a province beyond the Rhine frontier with three legions,

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<sup>17</sup> Paterculus notes that while campaigning Tiberius ensured that victory was achieved without any loss of the army because it was one of his top concerns. He was presented as a careful and diligent military commander (II. CVII.).

<sup>18</sup> He was the chief of the Marcomanni tribe who live in the territory near Hereynian forest (Vell. Pat. II. CVIII.). Due to Roman pressure, some segments of tribe emigrated (Rüger, 1996, p. 527).

<sup>19</sup> Rüger presents that archeological evidence shows that these operations took place in Mainz and around Main river, 25 km east of Würzburg (1996, p. 526).

<sup>20</sup> Rüger, on the other hand, evaluates these conquests as creating a buffer zone for the security of Roman Gaul (1996, p. 526).

<sup>21</sup> In 6 B.C. Tiberius retreated to Rhodes, imposing self-exile. At that time, he explained the reasons of his self-exile as his fatigue and his desire to not to overshadow the status of his step-sons (Shotter, 2004, p. 11).

<sup>22</sup> Publius Quintilius Varus was a military commander and administrator. He was married with Claudia Pulchra, who was a relative of Augustus. He served as a consul with Tiberius in 13 B.C. (Wells, 2003, p. 81).

consisted of legions XVII, XVIII, IXX. Moreover, three cavalry units and six cohorts accompanied these legions. Arminius, who was a member of the Cherusci tribe, provided guidance for the Roman army. Although being warned of a possible treachery, Varus continued his march, hoping to emulate Caesar's conquest of Gaul, sixty years ago (Wells, 2003, p. 26). When the Romans were proceeding through the forest, they were ambushed by many Germans led by Arminius.<sup>23</sup> The weather and terrain separated Roman forces, making difficult for them to unite and repel the attacks. The Roman legions' attempts to escape encirclement were unsuccessful. Fearing being captured alive, Varus committed suicide. Most of the officers and soldiers followed their commander (Cass. Dio. LVI.21.1-5.). The three legions were annihilated. Total Roman losses are estimated between 18000-20000 (Wells, 2003, p. 203).

The initial response was a shock. After receiving the news, Augustus refused to cut his hair and beard for months. He dashed his head to the wall and yelled: "*Quintilius Varus, give me back my legions*" (Suet. Div. Aug. XXIII.). The effect of Roman loss, however, was beyond psychological. The security of the Roman territories had become under threat of German tribes' invasion. Dio reports that only delay prevented the Germans from taking advantage of the victory and invade Roman Gaul (LVI.22.2.). This threat was fully appreciated by Augustus himself. "*His feelings were not only for sorrow for the soldiers who had perished, but for fear of the provinces of Germany and of Gaul, above all he expected that the enemy would attack Italy and even Rome itself*" (Cass. Dio. LVI.23.1.). Therefore, the expansionist policy in Germania annihilated three legions; resulted in the lives of thousands of the Roman soldiers; and threatened the security of the Roman provinces and even the city of Rome itself.

Tiberius was reassigned to Germania to deal with this threat. He crossed the Rhine and set punitive raids to the German tribes. Although Augustus insisted on imposing Roman rule beyond the Rhine frontier, Tiberius did not engage large scale warfare. Instead, he imposed scorched earth policy by burning crops and shelters of the German tribes, reducing their ability to wage war (Seager, 2005, pp. 36–37). Tiberius, being aware of a single mistake might invite disaster in a hostile territory like Germania, always kept his guard up. He slept without a tent and always made himself available to commanders. When one of his commanders went to a hunting trip with a group of soldiers, Tiberius was so furious that he stripped the man of his command immediately. Augustus was reported to remark: "*The vigilance of one man and one alone has redeemed our affairs from the ruin*" (Holland, 2015, p. 169). When the situation stabilized, Tiberius retained his cautiousness "*Tiberius did not see fit to cross the Rhine, but kept quiet, watching to see that the barbarians did not cross. And they, knowing him to be there, did not venture to cross in their turn*" (Cass. Dio. LVI.24.6.). The next year, Tiberius and Germanicus crossed the Rhine, but did not engage in any war. They celebrated Augustus' birthday by holding horse races (Cass. Dio. LVI.25.2-3.).<sup>24</sup>

This policy demonstrates Tiberius' prudence regarding Roman position in Germania. Germania was a

<sup>23</sup> "*Arminius was a Roman eques and leader of Cherusci tribe*" (Rüger, 1996, p. 527).

<sup>24</sup> Holding horse races beyond the Rhine meant more than celebration of Augustus' birthday. It demonstrated the Roman forces held the ability to set expedition beyond the Rhine.

strange terrain for the Romans due to its territorial and weather conditions, which made the Roman military march difficult. It was occupied by the various hostile tribes. The conquest of this territory would be unnecessary, risky, and costly move. The successes achieved from seasonal campaigns were not enough to conquer this hostile territory. Instead, Tiberius preferred to strengthen defense on the Rhine and to send a message the tribes that the Roman forces were prepared to cross the Rhine when the circumstances required.

The Roman Empire had already paid its reckless policy by losing three legions. Through vigilance Tiberius both secured the frontier and damaged the material capabilities of the German tribes. Thanks to Tiberius' policies the Rhine frontier held up and the Gaul was not invaded by the German tribes. He, thus, managed to recover Roman losses in the Battle of Teutoburg Forest by patience and caution. A defensive strategy was required to protect the Roman territories from the incursion of the German tribes. This strategy guided his policy on Germania during his Principate.<sup>25</sup> However, the existence of Germanicus as a commander in Germania complicated the implementation of this strategy.

### **Germanicus and Tiberius**

Barbara Levick, who wrote Tiberius' biography, describes Tiberius as a realist. He did not have illusions about human nature or human destiny, believing that the institutions and law restrained the ambitions of the individuals (1999, p. 62). Tiberius had a withdrawn character and he was not looking for popularity among general public. On the other hand, Germanicus<sup>26</sup> was well-liked by people and eager to be liked more (Seager, 2005, p. 53). These differences did not necessarily have to create problems, but the succession arrangements complicated the relations between two men, which had contrasting characters. When Augustus' grandsons died, Tiberius was reluctantly adopted by Augustus and became his heir. However, he was firstly forced to adopt his nephew Germanicus, who was married with Agrippina, the granddaughter of Augustus (Seager, 2005, p. 30).<sup>27</sup> Thus, when Tiberius became the emperor, Germanicus was the next in the line. There is a danger of having a presumptive heir like Germanicus. An ambitious and popular heir might not want to wait the presiding emperor's natural death. Any effort which made Germanicus more popular among public, however well-intentioned, could be perceived as action against the presiding emperor.

The fact that Germanicus was the commander of the legions of Germania made Germania as the main contested area between Tiberius and Germanicus. As it is discussed in the previous chapter, the Roman Empire

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<sup>25</sup> Syme argues that the definition of the Principate was confounding. Officially it was a republican institution, but in practice it can be regarded as a legalization of despotic power (1939, p. 323). Succession of the Principate was achieved by adoption and by granting powers to an associate (Syme, 1939, p.346).

<sup>26</sup> Germanicus was the son of Tiberius's brother Drusus Nero (Tac. Ann. 1.3.). He was very much loved by the populace and Augustus (Cass. Dio. LVI.24.7.). Although he had not been a praetor, he soon became consul (Cass. Dio. LVI.26.1.). He was appointed to the Rhine by Augustus in 11 A.D.(Gruen, 1996, p. 185).

<sup>27</sup> Seager argues that Germanicus was the preferred heir by Augustus, but he was inexperienced. In a precarious situation, Augustus needed someone to rule he empire until Germanicus gained experience (Seager, 2005, p. 53). Thus, originally, Tiberius was thought to be a guardian of Germanicus until Germanicus became ready to rule the Empire.

had jeopardized its security for an attempt to expand into Germania. This problem was overcome by the intervention of Tiberius, which strengthened the Rhine frontier. Still, it is difficult for a successful and strong state to get rid of habit of expansion. When a threat is faced, the immediate reaction is to extend or die. However, in Rome's case the overextension regularly exhausts its strength (Gilpin, 1981, p. 192). Tiberius might have found an optimal solution to deter threats posed by the German tribes with minimal costs, but it was not easy task to convince glory hungry generals such as Germanicus even for an emperor. It is important to analyze Germanicus' military campaigns because his military campaigns were almost opposite of Tiberius' previous conduct in Germania and Tiberius' strategy concerning Germania.

### **Germanicus' Military Campaigns**

The outbreak of the revolt among German legions contributed to increase distrust between Tiberius and Germanicus. Augustus died in 14 A.D. Three legions camped near Pannonia and four legions camped in Lower Germania mutinied when they heard Augustus' death and Tiberius' succession (Pettinger, 2012, p. 185).<sup>28</sup> In Pannonia, Drusus, the son of Tiberius, was dispatched to suppress the rebels. The lunar eclipse helped Drusus to quell the revolt in that the legions interpreted this as a sign of divine disapproval (Seager, 2005, p. 51). On the Rhine, he was not lucky. After a series of small skirmishes among legionaries, Germanicus, who was holding census at the time in Gaul, returned and intervened on Tiberius' behalf and quelled the rebellion, emphasizing his loyalty to Tiberius (Tac. Ann. 1.33.-34.).<sup>29</sup> This demonstrates the disturbance of the legions, located at the Rhine frontier. Tiberius was both relieved and worried. He was happy that the mutiny ended, but he was also concerned by the display of the power by Germanicus (Tac. Ann. 1.52.).<sup>30</sup> The offensive led by Germanicus into the territory of Germania further increased this concern.

In 15 A.D., Germanicus, who held much more independence and power on the Rhine frontier, started an offensive, breaking away from the cautious foreign policy, adopted by Tiberius. He firstly aimed at subduing the Chatti<sup>31</sup>, then the Cherusci led by Arminius. He led four legions himself with five thousand auxiliaries and assigned Caecina<sup>32</sup> to lead four legions (Tac. Ann. 1.56.). The aim and the scale of Germanicus' campaign were enormous. So were the risks. The loss of three legions in 9 A.D. had jeopardized the general security of the Roman Empire. Germanicus led eight legions beyond the Rhine to deal with the hostile tribes in a dangerous terrain.

<sup>28</sup> The Pannonian revolt was a manifestation of the intolerable conditions but the Rhine revolt in Germania had political motives (Seager, 2005, p. 53).

<sup>29</sup> When Germanicus engaged in an emotional gesture, which emphasized his loyalty to Tiberius by saying that he would rather stab himself with his sword than betray Tiberius. One soldier offered his sword, stating it is sharper (Tac. Ann. 1.34.). This anecdote demonstrates that Germanicus was thought to be a standard for the discontent against Tiberius. If he declined to fulfil this role, his life could also be in danger.

<sup>30</sup> Dio also notes that Germanicus might have obtained the imperial power if he wanted to but only due to his goodwill he declined (LVII.5.1.).

<sup>31</sup> The Chatti was one of the most powerful German tribes. They have disciplined armed force. The people of the Chatti were known for their shrewdness (Tac. Ger. 30.).

<sup>32</sup> Caecina Severus was a suffect consul in 1 B.C. Then, he served under Germanicus, who was the commander in chief (Seager, 2005, p. 52).

During Germanicus' campaign, Arminius implemented same strategy, which annihilated Varus' legions. He led Germanicus' army into tactless forest while preparing the ambush. Germanicus drew his legions from the ambush at last minute (Tac. Ann. 1.61.). This event demonstrates the precarious situation of the Roman army. Germanicus, more skillful than Varus, managed to save his legions, but at first place he put them into the danger.

The campaign was not more successful for Caecina. German tribes managed to overcome Caecina's forces. Only Germans' desire of plunder instead of slaughter saved Roman legions. Arminius did not act immediately but expected the chaos to be complete, shouting at the Roman soldiers that the fate of Varus' legions was waiting them. The Romans had to spend the night without tents; wounded soldiers were unattended; and despair among the soldiers was widespread. Fortunately for the Romans, the dispute between the leaders Arminius and Inguiomerus<sup>33</sup> emerged and helped the Romans to break the siege (Tac. Ann. 1.62.-68.). Germanicus also suffered another disaster. The two legions that he sent with Vitellius on the river were caught in a storm. Luckily, the next day the wind calmed and they were able to cross (Tac. Ann. 1.70.).

The outcome of this campaign was not shiny. Germanicus did not achieve the objectives of the operation, which was the subjugation of the Chatti and the Cherusci. Germanicus had to compensate the army's losses with his own pocket (Tac. Ann. 1.71.). As the examples show, the Roman legions were brought to the brink of the disaster and only were saved by luck and disagreements among the leaders of the German tribes. The inglorious fate of Varus almost repeated in Germanicus' campaign in 15 A.D. However, this did not stop Germanicus from setting a new military campaign beyond the Rhine frontier.

Shotter evaluates Germanicus' aim of starting this expedition as an effort to relieve the troubles emanated from the mutiny, hoping that the expedition beyond the Rhine would bring a cheap victory. Tiberius did not share Germanicus' confidence in dealing with Arminius. Tiberius was concerned with the dangers and costs posed by the army of Arminius (2004, p. 58). Tiberius was alarmed by this expedition. Therefore, he tried to call Germanicus by offering him a triumph but his endeavor to call him back to Rome was unsuccessful (Levick, 1999, p. 113). An explicit order could have invited an explicit refusal from Germanicus. This would have been a political disaster for Tiberius. Such a clash with popular general could have also evolved into a civil war, so Tiberius acquiesced Germanicus' decision to resume his activities (Seager, 2005, p. 68).

Despite heavy losses and military failures, Germanicus renewed his campaign in Germania in 16, seeing that the previous year's failure was due to logistical problems emanated from muddy and wooden terrain. He decided to move his legions and supplies by using waterways. Therefore, a thousand ships were prepared to transport soldiers and goods. Germanicus sent Silius<sup>34</sup> for an early incursion while he and his six legions were

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<sup>33</sup> Inguiomerus was Arminius' uncle. His influence with the Roman was reported to be enormous (Tac. Ann. 1.60.).

<sup>34</sup> Silius was the legate of the army (Tac. Ann. 1.31.).



blockaded by the River Lupia.<sup>35</sup> Silius also achieved a small plunder, capturing the wife and spouse of Arpus, the leader of the Chatti. The rest of the tribe, taking advantage of the deluge, escaped (Tac. Ann. 2.7.). Germanicus' rearrangement was sound but costly. Again, the Roman Empire's resources were mobilized for a risky expedition. The start of the campaign was not very promising.

Yet, the expedition continued. Germanicus managed to draw the Germans to the war. The war resulted in the Roman victory and the Cherusci suffered heavy losses. Tacitus uses the word of butchering while describing the war. However, both Arminius and Inguiomerus escaped (Tac. Ann. 2.17.). Despite these heavy losses, the victory was from decisive. The next day the Cherusci prepared a surprise attack but Germanicus learned this offensive and prepared counter-offensive. The Romans were again victorious. Germanicus stated that he would not want any captives so many tribesmen from the Cherusci were massacred. The monument was erected in the name of Tiberius Caesar for the celebration of the victory. However, as the winter arrived, Germanicus sent some of his forces to the Roman side of the frontier. While the forces returned, a fleet was destroyed during the storm. When the news of the losses reached, it aroused the Germans hope for another engagement. Germanicus dispatched a unit, which engaged in pillaging and plundering, to deter the Germans, showing that the Roman army did not lose ground even if a fleet was lost (Tac. Ann. 2.23.).

Despite relative success of this campaign, the victory was not decisive. The decisive victory in Germania could be achieved through the destruction of all tribes of Germania as the tribes showed the resilience of fighting despite heavy losses. Germanicus seemed to understand this as his order of taking no captives aimed at annihilating the manpower of the German tribes. Germanicus, however, lacked necessary resources to accomplish this aim. Moreover, the muddy and forested terrain prevented the Romans from pursuing their opponents, enabling the Germans to flee. Constant storms, on the other hand, worked against the Romans, destroying many Roman legions and supplies, constantly.

Tiberius had enough. He congratulated Germanicus' victory, but the losses inflicted by terrain and weather were too heavy. He recalled Germanicus to celebrate his triumph. He reminded Germanicus that he achieved more by diplomacy and planning than force: the Sugambri, the Suebi<sup>36</sup> were forced to surrender; the Cherusci; and other rebels were pacified. The sensible policy would be to leave these tribes should be left in their internal strife. Germanicus begged Tiberius another year to complete his project in Germania, but Tiberius offered him consulship whose requirements needed Germanicus in person. Germanicus gave in and returned to Rome (Tac. Ann. 2.26.).

### **Germania after Germanicus**

Tiberius skillfully managed to withdraw Germanicus from Germania by conferring consulship to Germanicus. Germanicus, despite his hunger for another military campaign, insisted no further wisely because

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<sup>35</sup> River Lupia (Lippe) is one of the tributaries of the Rhine. It was used by Germanicus for the transportation of the soldiers (Campbell, 2012, p. 183).

<sup>36</sup> The Suebi were comprised of several tribes. They occupy the larger part of Germany (Tac. Ger. 38.).

any insistence at this point could be understood as disloyal behavior towards to Princes. The relative success on the second campaign helped the Romans to save the face while leaving Germania to the quarrelsome German tribes. The costly and unnecessary military campaigns which aimed at conquering Germania were abandoned.<sup>37</sup> Seager reminds that it was Augustus, who appointed Germanicus to the Rhine, not Tiberius. Augustus intended to extend the Roman rule to the Elbe, so he encouraged Germanicus to press on the war (Seager, 2005, pp. 99–100).

The stop of military expansion did not mean the end of the Roman Empire's engagement with the German tribes. As Tiberius wrote his letter to Germanicus (Tib. Ann. 2.26.), the diplomatic course was followed for the Rhine frontier. He engaged in setting the tribes beyond the Rhine one against another. For instance, Vannius, the chief of the Quadian<sup>38</sup> tribe was supported by the Roman Empire against Marobuduu's kingdom, who caused disturbance for the Romans in the previous decades. Vannius set out attack against the territories previously held by Marobuduu (Levick, 1999, p. 113).<sup>39</sup> His assessment of leaving Germania for the Germans to fight with each other proved to be correct.

The grand coalitions set by various German tribes to fight with the enemy Romans loosened when the Romans withdrew. In 19 A.D. Marobuduu was overthrown by his rivals. This news was welcomed by Tiberius, who estimated him as one of the greatest Roman rivals (Levick, 1990, p. 151). Marobuduu sought refuge in Tiberius, who made him stay in Ravenna, Italy for the rest of his life. He was kept in Italy in case the Suebi became too powerful (Tac. Ann. 2.63.). Another boogeyman for Romans, who met his demise by his own men was Arminius. Being deprived of a common threat after the Roman Empire's withdrawal, Arminius' leadership started to be questioned among the German tribes. This disturbance caused internecine conflict in Germania and Arminius' death (Tac. Ann. 2.88.).<sup>40</sup> Thus, one of the most dreadful enemy of the Roman Empire was liquidated not by the Romans by his own people.

Tiberius' resort to diplomacy did not mean the cancellation of military encampments at the Rhine frontier. The military bases in Mainz and Cologne were maintained (Rüger, 1996, p. 529). In 23 A.D., there were eight legions located on the Rhine. New fortresses and outposts were established (Levick, 1990, p. 151). These legions engaged in limited scale warfare beyond the Rhine. In a military campaign, Drusus,<sup>41</sup> appointed to Germania after Germanicus, pressured the Germans, enticing them into discord (Tac. Ann. 2.60.).<sup>42</sup> In 28 A.D.

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<sup>37</sup> The perils and costs of the expeditions of Germanicus underlined the dangers of the overextension in Germania (Detwiler, 1999, p. 8).

<sup>38</sup> The Quadi were renowned by their strength. They were described as "*brow of Germany*" (Tac. Ger. 42.).

<sup>39</sup> Claudius, the fourth Princeps, also continued Tiberius' policy of playing one tribe against another beyond the Rhine. In 50, he ordered Palpellius Hister, who was the governor of Pannonia to provide help Vannius' successors for their plunder (Levick, 1990, p. 156).

<sup>40</sup> Arminius was reportedly killed by their own people because the Germans' love of freedom entailed them not to accept his autocratic rule (MagShamhrain, 2012, p. 179).

<sup>41</sup> The son of Tiberius

<sup>42</sup> The overthrow of Marobuduu was precipitated by this pressure. Cataulda, a young noble, was able to convince tribe leaders, who were dissatisfied with Marobuduu's performance to overthrow Marobuduu (Tac. Ann. 2.60.).

the revolt of Frisians<sup>43</sup> challenged the Roman army. They handed over their cattle for the Romans as the treaty concluded in 12 B.C. with Drusus required. However, the Romans demanded more by taking tribes' woman and children into servitude. This created resentment among the Frisians. They seized the soldiers and besieged the fort Flevum. Apronius, the propraetor of Lower Germania crossed the Rhine. Despite Roman losses, the Roman army repelled the Frisians (Tac. Ann. 4.73.).<sup>44</sup> Polak and Kooistra argue that the tributary status of the Frisians demonstrate that the Roman Empire continued to keep allies from the German tribes beyond the Rhine frontier (2013, p. 447). These examples show that the application of a limited military force could be more efficient than a large scale of military expedition. The Roman army preserved its defensive capability. Moreover, the Roman army could have set limited military expeditions beyond the Rhine whenever necessary.

### **Assessment of Germanicus' Campaign and Tiberius' Strategy**

The senatorial view leaned favorably towards Germanicus' side while evaluating Germanicus' campaigns. Cassius Dio claims that Germanicus acquired glory by his campaign in Germania and inflicted a huge defeat to the German tribes (LVII.18.1.). Suetonius reports that "*As to Germanicus, he was so far from appreciating him, that he made light of his illustrious deeds as unimportant, and rallied at his brilliant victories as ruinous to his country*" (Tib. LII.). Cassius Dio and Suetonius overlook the fact that the basic objective of the campaigns was not achieved. Germanicus was not able to conquer Germania. Instead, he dragged several legions with him for useless wars, which caused the loss of money and men. It is true that the German tribes suffered, too, but their ability to resist Roman incursions remained intact.<sup>45</sup> Seager notes that Tiberius learned that conquest requires more than annual victories. After an annual campaign, the German tribes could replenish their men and supply resources. Therefore, the total subjugation required more resources than the Roman Empire could afford (2005, p. 73). From this perspective, Suetonius' report of Tiberius' assessment of the campaigns was correct. These expeditions were futile.

While evaluating Germanicus, Tacitus claims that if Germanicus had been solely in the command, he would have achieved military glory as he achieved excellence in his qualities. He was even equated with Alexander the Great (Ann. 2.73.). This statement is lavish in praising Germanicus' military success. As the heir of Tiberius and the commander of the legions at the Rhine frontier, Germanicus had already considerable discretion in conducting military campaigns. If it had rested on Tiberius' decision, these military campaigns would not have been conducted. Germanicus continued Augustus's expansion project which resulted in the devastation of three legions, without consulting Tiberius. In these campaigns, he did not show any distinguishing military success other than raiding a few German tribes with risky and costly expeditions.

<sup>43</sup> The Frisians lived beyond the Rhine. They had entered an agreement with Drusus Nero in 12 B.C. They were required to supply cow-hides for the Roman army (Polak & Kooistra, 2013, p. 438).

<sup>44</sup> Tacitus criticizes Tiberius for not conducting a large expedition to punish the Frisians severely after quelling the rebellion (Ann. 4.73). Levick argues Tiberius did not want to gamble with soldiers' lives (1990, p. 153).

<sup>45</sup> Germanicus' expeditions changed very little. There was discrepancy between achievement and advertisement. Although the tribes were claimed to be defeated, they still existed beyond the Rhine. Germanicus was offered extravagant honors although he achieved a small success (Gruen, 1996, p. 186).

Then, why were Tacitus and Suetonius so favorable to Germanicus, although his achievements in Germania were scarce and limited? Germanicus as a person had almost complete opposite character qualities comparing to Tiberius.<sup>46</sup> Germanicus cared about popularity whereas Tiberius eschewed it. Germanicus was affable while Tiberius was withdrawn (Seager, 2005, p. 53). When Tiberius celebrated his triumph in Rome, he scorned the entertainment. He advocated old Roman virtues such as self-discipline, duty, and vigilance. Germanicus, on the other hand, aimed at boosting his popularity, charisma, and image (Holland, 2015, p. 170).<sup>47</sup> After Germanicus sent to Asia to reorganize the eastern provinces, not only he visited Alexandria without the permission of Tiberius, he made a speech that he compared himself with Alexander the Great (Shotter, 2004, p.42).<sup>48</sup> The hesitance in advertising his virtues might have contributed to Tiberius' unpopularity while Germanicus' self-aggrandizement even at the expense of the security of the state appeared to be successful.

The concentration of power in the late phase of Tiberius' rule might have created resentment in the senatorial class. It should be remembered that Cassius Dio and Tacitus were both senators. Although Suetonius was not a senator, he was a close friend of the senator Pliny the Younger<sup>49</sup>, who was famous for his opposition to Domitian, another emperor who suppressed the Senate's power. These authors' disdain for the institution of Princeps might have affected their judgement. This disdain of Tiberius might have caused the glorification of Germanicus. Syme notes that: "*Germanicus was inescapable. Tacitus exploits him in every way...The radiant figure compounded of all virtues and excellence (and popular in proportion) to set against the dark soul of Tiberius Caesar*"(1958, p. 254). Moreover, Germanicus' early death at his early contributed to his popularity. According to Dio, Tiberius and Livia overjoyed with his death, but caused grief for everyone else (LVII.18.6.). Dio describes Germanicus:

*"He was a man of most striking physical beauty and likewise of the noblest spirit, and was conspicuous alike for his culture and for his strength. Though the bravest of men against the foe, he showed himself most gentle with his countrymen; as a Caesar he had the greatest power, he kept his ambitions on the same plane as weaker men"* (LVII.18.6.).

This description reminds a mythological character instead of a mortal historical figure. The campaigns

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<sup>46</sup> Cassius Dio depicts Tiberius' character as peculiar. Tiberius was claimed to mean exact opposite what he said (LVII. 1.1.). His time in Capri 27 A.D.-37 A.D. was subject to many rumors. After he retreated to Capri, he was reported to experience all the vices that he neglected (Suet. Tib. XLII.). A very vivid picture of these vices is depicted (Suet. Tib. XLIII.-XLV.).

<sup>47</sup> Germanicus' popularity spread throughout the Roman Empire. Germanicus "*accepted honorary magistracies including the post of praefectus or praefectus quinquennalis at Caesaraugusta, Colonia Augusta Buthrotum, Fulginiae, Hispellum, Interpromium, Priene, and Regium Lepidum...Germanicus could happily reflect on the fact that he had more honorary magistracies than Augustus himself, who held just five*" (Powell, 2013, p. 177).

<sup>48</sup> The province of Egypt was considered as the property of Princeps. Powell argues that as a man of consular status he could not disregard this rule for an excursion. He was met as a Rockstar in Alexandria. Furthermore, when he heard the famine experienced by the population, he ordered the warehouses opened. This act could have led starvation of the Roman people. When Tiberius heard this, he issued a written reprimand to Germanicus (Powell, 2013, p. 331).

<sup>49</sup> Although his career prospered during Domitian's reign, he was praetor and consul and military consul, Pliny condemned Domitian as a tyrant after Domitian's assassination in 96 A.D. (Syme, 1958, p. 82).

in Germania showed that he was far from the perfect man pictured in Dio's account, but even his death contributed to boosting his popularity. Dio, probably, had the same motivation that Tacitus had about Tiberius noted by Syme. Germanicus was depicted as perfect to emphasize the faults of Tiberius.

Less appreciated strategy by the authors such as Tacitus and Cassius Dio, was offered by Tiberius.<sup>50</sup> Tiberius' military experience in Germania during Augustus' reign helped him to shape his strategy as a Princeps. In 9 A.D. Varus' defeat impeded Roman ambitions of turning Germania into a Roman province. Tiberius' efforts after this defeat restored the situation. On the other hand, Germanicus' endeavors contrasted to Tiberius' strategy of the pacification of Germania. Tiberius aborted Germanicus' efforts to return to situation in 13 A.D. Thus, Tiberius' strategy should be evaluated as not the abandonment of the Rhine, but the continuation of status quo in which Roman legions were situated at the left side of the Rhine and intervened in the right side of the Rhine with a minimal military force (Polak & Kooistra, 2013, p. 447). For the Romans, Germania continued to exist despite the abandonment of military expansion. The establishment and maintenance of military camps confirm the Empire's interest in watching the events beyond the Rhine (Rüger, 1996, p. 528).

Tiberius' insight on the Rhine frontier guided the Empire's foreign policy concerning the Rhine in the first century. The Roman military activity beyond the Rhine reduced. Germania did not provide any triumphs between 17 A.D.-83 A.D.<sup>51</sup> (Levick, 1990, p. 152). Claudius responded the disturbance among the German tribes, but he did not consider annexing any territory in Germany (Levick, 1990, p. 151). In 83 A.D. Domitian's<sup>52</sup> Chatti campaign was large in scale. When the powerful Chatti tribe taken arms against the Romans, Domitian had to defend a front of 120 miles. Besides five legions that existed in the region, he raised new legion I Minervia to fight against the Chatti (Syme, 1936, pp. 162–163). However, Domitian did not conquer the Chatti after repelling their attack. He strengthened the Rhine defense and built roads for the movement of the army (Jones, 1993, p. 131). In 85 A.D. two official provinces were established: Germania Superior whose capital was Mainz and Germania Inferior whose capital was Cologne (Rüger, 1996, p. 528). The military bases in Mainz and Cologne had been strengthened during Tiberius' reign (Rüger, 1996, p. 529). Around these bases new provinces were set up.

The perception concerning Tiberius' character and rule appeared to overshadow his Rhine policy. The aggrandizement of Germanicus' personality, on the other hand, won him popularity. Regardless of who was the better man, the correct strategy was followed by Tiberius. While Germanicus was pursuing glory, Tiberius was seeking security. Even the Roman people failed to appreciate his endeavors. When Tiberius was offered a triumph in 12 A.D., it was not for his stabilization attempts for the disaster in Germania. It was for his conquests in Pannonia (Holland, 2015, p. 170). The people wanted glory, dash, and extravagance. Tiberius' policy was not

<sup>50</sup> Tacitus does not mention Germania after the departure of Germanicus except the Frisian revolt in 28 A.D.

<sup>51</sup> In 39 A.D. Tiberius' successor Gaius 'Caligula' led the undisciplined legions beyond the Rhine and attacked an unsuspecting German tribe, which at that time was celebrating the autumn festival (Levick, 1990, p. 152).

<sup>52</sup> The last Flavian emperor Domitian (81 A.D.-96 A.D.) was reported to read enthusiastically Tiberius' speeches, letters, and memoirs (Suet. Dom. XX).

glamorous but necessary. Despite this policy's lack of attraction to the people, Tiberius put security above glamour. Risking legions for military campaigns beyond the Rhine, which proved to be fatal for the security of the Roman Empire in 9 A.D., could not be afforded under his rule. Germanicus' insistence on these campaigns was unnecessary and suspicious for Tiberius. Therefore, the sound strategy was securing the frontier for the German incursions and leaving the warlike German tribes to fight with each other. The basic tenets of this strategy were followed throughout the first century by other emperors in the first century.

### **Conclusion**

This study aimed at capturing Tiberius' Germania strategy. During his generalship during the Principate of Augustus, Tiberius led military raids against the Germanic tribes, but he did not occupy the territory. Augustus, who wished to integrate the territory between the Rhine and the Elbe into the Roman Empire. He appointed Varus, who had a more daring conduct. Varus' expedition, however, resulted in disaster and jeopardized the security of the whole Roman Empire. Tiberius, reassigned to Germania post, stabilized the Rhine frontier and saved the Empire. This experience demonstrated that how risky and precarious the situation could be for the Roman Empire when a daring commander waged an unnecessary war beyond the Rhine frontier. This guided Tiberius' strategy in Germania.

When Augustus' presumptive heirs died, Tiberius was adopted by Augustus. However, this adoption came with a twist. He was forced to adopt his nephew Germanicus, who was married with Agrippina, the granddaughter of Augustus. Germanicus, already popular among the soldiers and people, craved for more popularity. He led two campaigns in Germania to continue Augustus' policy of total subjugation of the territory. However, these campaigns did not achieve their objective. Instead, very small gains caused great cost of men and money. Seeing that annual campaigns did not achieve anything, Tiberius recalled Germanicus to Rome to attend his triumph and his consulship, leaving the German tribes fight with each other. Tiberius correctly assumed that once the Roman Empire stopped large scale of campaigns beyond the Rhine, these various tribes would start internecine wars. He was right. Arminius, the architect of Varus' defeat at Teutoburg, was murdered by his own people. Without a leader which gather all these tribes together, these tribes would not pose credible threat to the security of the Roman Empire. Tiberius' strategy lacked glamour and dash that Germanicus' campaigns, had but it was intelligent and secure.

The major Roman classical writers, Cassius Dio, Suetonius, and Tacitus, favor Germanicus over Tiberius. The disdain of Tiberius led these authors to glorify Germanicus, who had almost an opposite character. Germanicus' charismatic personality and early death might have affected the assessments of his deeds. On the other hand, Tiberius, quite possibly, did not have a pleasant character. His reclusiveness contributed to his ill reputation among the historians. Nevertheless, his strategy in Germania was a sound strategy, which kept the Roman frontier safe.

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