

# LEAD LIKE JULIUS CAESAR

**TIMELESS LEADERSHIP  
LESSONS FROM HISTORY'S MOST  
INFLUENTIAL LEADER**

Paul Vanderbroeck



Springer

Lead Like Julius Caesar

Paul Vanderbroeck

# Lead Like Julius Caesar

Timeless Leadership Lessons  
from History's Most Influential Leader

 Springer

Paul Vanderbroeck  
Geneva, Switzerland

ISBN 978-3-031-83223-9 ISBN 978-3-031-83224-6 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-83224-6>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2025

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG  
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

If disposing of this product, please recycle the paper.

To my family

# Preface

With my publisher, Dr Prashanth Mahagaonkar, I have been thinking about the right title for this book. We have been particularly mulling over whether to call Julius Caesar the ‘most influential’ or ‘one of the most influential’ leaders of history. Finally, I chose the former and let me tell you why.

Certainly, there have been leaders who conquered more territory or established a state or an organisation that lasted longer than the Roman Empire. Others have constructed more impressive buildings and founded a greater number of cities. Furthermore, Caesar is not the only leader who has inspired playwrights and other artists. We also know of great leaders who, unlike Caesar, had an uneventful end to their careers and managed a smooth transition of power to their successors. Yet what makes Julius Caesar stand out is the accumulation of his achievements and the legacy he left as a consequence. Indeed, as far as I can tell, he is the only one whose name became eponymic for the title of top leader: Caesar for the Roman Emperor, Kaiser for the senior monarch in the German-speaking world and Czar in Russia (plus the current quaint usage of ‘czar’ in the US government). Because of Julius Caesar, the concept of dictator received its modern pejorative meaning of illegitimate autocrat, even if that is not what he had intended, as will be revealed later in this book. Caesar’s influence becomes tangible in the archetypes he created and the ‘firsts’ that are attributed to him. Crossing the Rubicon—referring to the moment when he started the civil war that propelled him to sole ruler of Rome—has become the mother of all points of no return. Caesar’s dictum at that event—‘let the die be cast’—is the archetype of risk-taking. ‘I came, I saw, I conquered’ is the archetype of the victory speech. Caesar and Cleopatra formed the archetypal power couple. Caesar initiated the first triumvirate, the mother of all political coalitions. Finally, on the Ides of March 44 BC, he

left us with the mother of all political assassinations and the archetype of treacherous backstabbing. To be sure, history has produced leaders who have written letters, memos, diaries and pieces of literature. Yet Caesar wrote his *Commentaries on the Gallic War* in the saddle while it was all happening, making him the first to engage in embedded journalism. In short, Julius Caesar was a giant.

Caesar has been the object of my attention several times during my career. He was one of the individuals I researched for my PhD on the interaction between leaders and followers during Caesar's lifetime. He is central to my 2012 article, which compares the crisis of the Roman Republic with the financial crisis of 2008. Then, in 2014, he figures as Cleopatra's manager in *Leadership Strategies for Women*, my book on four historic queens. I also had the opportunity to discuss him at length with master's students during my Leadership Made in Italy course at LUISS Business School in Rome. As I have learned more about leadership, my view of him has changed over time, allowing me to see him as a more multidimensional person than I had originally thought, which deserves a study of its own.

My publisher and I thus landed on *Lead Like Julius Caesar* as the title, and this book brings together my competencies both as a historian and as a leadership expert. As the former, I can access and interpret the historical data we have at our disposal. As a leadership expert, I can evaluate Julius Caesar as I usually do in my leadership consulting and executive coaching practice. Finally, the motivation for my research is to discover what really works for leaders to make them successful in their careers and in exercising their leadership. This is also what drives me in my professional practice as a leadership expert and educator. I'm interested in identifying what gets practical results, and this book provides answers to just that.

This book would have been difficult to achieve without the generous help and support I have received from the individuals mentioned here. First of all, I am greatly indebted to Oriane Kets de Vries, Managing Director of KDVI, and to Dr Maria Brown, Head of Research and Education at MRG<sup>\*</sup> for permitting me to use their respective instruments experientially. However, it is important to note that this should not be interpreted in any way as an endorsement or a recommendation on their part for using KDVI's and MRG's instruments as I have done in this book.

Numerous coaching colleagues—expert in using KDVI's GELM—have given me helpful and generous feedback on applying this instrument to Julius Caesar's behaviour, without limiting themselves to this aspect, for which I owe them my sincere thanks: Coen Aalders, Alicia Cheak, Peter Boback, Fabiana Diaz-Gufler, Claire Finch, Dr Elizabeth Florent Treacy, Hanneke Frese,

Margot Schumacher, Martine Vandenkoel and Christina von Wackerbath. Maria Brown kindly gave me access to MRG's research material, and she and her colleagues at MRG\* provided helpful feedback, for which I am grateful.

I am honoured and most obliged that Professor Robert Morstein-Marx from the University of California, Santa Barbara, read the manuscript draft. As an historian myself, I consider Professor Morstein-Marx as Julius Caesar's foremost contemporary biographer, and his comments, feedback and corrections have given me confidence that at least this book's historical aspect is sound. Thank you, Bob, your input has been most precious. I am indebted to Professor Martin Gutmann from the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, with whom I share an interest in the history of leadership, for his encouragement and for sharing his knowledge on the theory and methodology of bringing history and leadership studies together.

Four leaders from different generations and professions—Elizabeth Armstrong, Joëlle Comé, Jack Horsburgh and Arjan Overwater—graciously read the manuscript. Their comments and suggestions have been immensely helpful. My wife Joëlle and my children Magdalena and Joseph have encouraged me greatly and consistently to pursue this project, and I am glad they did. Joseph's feedback, notably on how to use illustrations, demonstrates well that his talent matches his ambition to become a teacher. Finally, here's a shout-out to the numerous members of my network who have helped me choose the title and the cover of this book.

To conclude this preface, I would like to emphasise that if there are any errors or inaccuracies in this book, they are my own and I bear full responsibility.

Geneva, Switzerland  
Rome, Italy  
December 2024

Paul Vanderbroeck

**Competing Interests** The author has no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this manuscript.

# Endorsements

‘This book stands out because it systematically analyses Caesar’s behavior, career and personality through the lens of modern leadership theories. As a result, its conclusions are more profound and insightful than you usually get from a biography of a successful leader. A must-read for both junior and senior leaders who are looking for an inspiring benchmark.’

—Jean-François Manzoni, *Professor of Leadership & Organizational Development and former President, IMD International, Lausanne, Switzerland*

‘This book about the making of Julius Caesar is an enlightening exploration into leadership development. The lesson for our times is that leaders are made as much from their low points as their “highs”. That they learn as much from failure as from success, and harness the lessons to master the next challenge. You’ll never read history quite the same again...’

—Avivah Wittenberg-Cox, *CEO, 20-first, London, UK*

‘It is a brilliant idea to teach leadership through the life of probably the most famous leader in history—Julius Caesar. Paul Vanderbroeck pulls this off with the insights of a leadership expert combined with the eye for detail of a historian.’

—Alex Hungate, *President & COO, Grab Holdings Inc., Singapore*

‘Lead Like Julius Caesar: Timeless Leadership Lessons from History’s Most Influential Leader masterfully bridges the ancient and modern worlds, delivering a fresh take on Caesar’s legendary life and leadership. By blending rich historical context with contemporary leadership models and frameworks, this book offers a rare dual perspective that brings to life Caesar’s behavioural complexities that led to his extraordinary triumphs and contributed to his ultimate downfall. With its engaging narrative and

actionable insights, this is a must-read for those seeking to learn from the past to lead more collaboratively and effectively in today's dynamic world.'

—Rev. Dr. Susan Goldsworthy OLY, *Affiliate Professor, Leadership, Communications & Organizational Change, IMD International, Lausanne, Switzerland*

'Paul Vanderbroeck's comprehensive exploration of Julius Caesar's leadership is an exceptional fusion of history and leadership theory. By delving into Caesar's remarkable journey—from his turbulent early years to his pinnacle as a powerful leader—this book offers a profound and actionable case study for leaders at all stages of their careers. Through rigorous application of proven leadership models, Paul dissects Caesar's strengths, vulnerabilities, and transformative decisions. Readers are invited not to imitate but to learn from Caesar's successes and missteps, applying these insights to their own leadership challenges. The book is particularly valuable for its nuanced exploration of how Caesar's leadership evolved across distinct phases, from ambitious young strategist to a leader navigating the complexities of absolute power. By combining academic depth with practical application, this book transcends a mere historical narrative. It serves as a strategic guide for leaders, offering tools to reflect, adapt, and grow. Whether you are a seasoned executive or an aspiring leader, this engaging and insightful read promises to sharpen your understanding of leadership dynamics and inspire your personal development.

A must-read for mastering the art of leadership.'

—Artur Umerkaev, *Director Life Sciences, Capgemini, Switzerland*

'Self-to-prototype comparisons are a powerful tool for deciding whether to become a leader or what kind of a leader to be. This book is a fascinating self-development tool that invites the reader to use Caesar not as an example of effective or ineffective leadership, but rather an opportunity to look at oneself as an emerging, established, or evolving leader.'

—Prof. Konstantin Korotov, PhD, *Professor of Organizational Development, Founder of the ESMT Coaching Colloquia, ESMT Berlin, Germany.*

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Mapping a Leadership Biography: Set-Up and Approach</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Why This Book and Why Julius Caesar?	1
1.2	The Context of a Leader: Rome in the First Century BC	3
1.3	Methods and Theories: Evaluating a Leader and a Leader's Career	10
1.3.1	Leadership Behaviour: The Global Executive Leadership Mirror	11
1.3.2	Leadership Career: The Leadership Pipeline	14
1.3.3	Leadership Personality: The Individual Directions Inventory™	16
1.3.4	History, Leadership and Organisational Behaviour	16
1.4	What Is in this Book and What Is Not	18
	Bibliography	19
<b>2</b>	<b>The Making of a Leader: Caesar's Early Life and Education</b>	<b>23</b>
2.1	Caesar's Youth and Early Life Experiences	24
2.2	Career Beginnings	31
2.3	Expectations and First Achievements	33
2.4	Leadership Behaviours	38
2.4.1	Leading Self	39
2.4.2	Leading Stakeholders and Networks	40

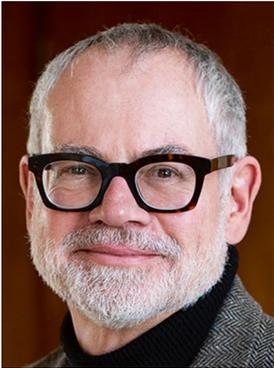
2.5	Career Development: The Identification of a High Potential	41
2.6	What Aspiring Leaders Can Learn from the Dawn of Caesar's Career	44
	Bibliography	46
<b>3</b>	<b>Rising Above the Fray: From High Potential to Leader</b>	<b>47</b>
3.1	Caesar's Life and Mid-Career	48
3.2	Caesar's Mid-Career Achievements	54
3.2.1	Performance in Different Roles	54
3.2.2	Building a Leadership Organisation to Mobilise Followers	58
3.3	Caesar's Mid-Career Leadership Behaviours	63
3.3.1	Leading Self	63
3.3.2	Leading Teams	66
3.3.3	Leading Organisations	66
3.3.4	Leading Stakeholders and Networks	68
3.4	Caesar's Career Development	68
3.4.1	Career Competition	68
3.4.2	Leadership Brand and Reputation	76
3.4.3	Leadership Pipeline	78
3.5	What Leaders Can Learn from the Middle Stage of Caesar's Career	84
	Bibliography	86
<b>4</b>	<b>Proving His Mettle: The Conquest of Gaul</b>	<b>89</b>
4.1	Life Abroad	90
4.2	Caesar's Achievements in Gaul and in Rome	91
4.2.1	Winning the War	92
4.2.2	Winning the Peace	99
4.2.3	Winning the Home Front	101
4.3	Caesar's Leadership During the Gallic War	105
4.3.1	Leading Self	106
4.3.2	Leading Teams	107
4.3.3	Leading the Organisation	111
4.3.4	Leading Stakeholders and Networks	112

4.4	Caesar's Career Development During the Gallic War	113
4.5	What Leaders Can Learn from Caesar's Assignment in Gaul	118
	Bibliography	120
<b>5</b>	<b>No Turning Back: How Followers Can Push a Leader into Crossing the Rubicon</b>	123
5.1	Caesar's Challenges and Achievements in the Civil War	124
5.1.1	Preventing a Civil War	124
5.1.2	Winning the Civil War	129
5.2	Caesar's Leadership During the Civil War	137
5.2.1	Leading Self	137
5.2.2	Leading Teams	138
5.2.3	Leading Organisations	140
5.2.4	Leading Stakeholders and Networks	143
5.3	Caesar's Career Development During the Civil War	143
5.4	What Leaders Can Learn from Caesar as a Military Leader During the Civil War	145
	Bibliography	148
<b>6</b>	<b>Alone at the Top: Chairman and CEO</b>	151
6.1	The Final Stretch to the Top	153
6.2	Caesar's Vision and Achievements	159
6.2.1	Establishing Order in Italy: Winning the Peace	159
6.2.2	Establishing Peace in the Provinces: Safeguarding the Empire's Security and Stability	165
6.2.3	Establishing Prosperity in the Empire: Creating a Sustainable Future	167
6.3	Caesar's Leadership Behaviours at the Top	168
6.3.1	Leading Self	168
6.3.2	Leading Teams	172
6.3.3	Leading the Organisation	179
6.3.4	Leading Stakeholders and Networks	180
6.4	The End of a Career	181
6.5	What Top Leaders Can Learn from the Final Chapter of Caesar's Career	185
	Bibliography	187

<b>7</b>	<b>Becoming a Leader: Caesar's Leadership Development</b>	<b>189</b>
7.1	Leading Self	190
7.1.1	Emotional Intelligence	190
7.1.2	Being Exemplary	191
7.1.3	Tenacity and Courage	191
7.2	Leading Teams	191
7.2.1	Coaching and Feedback	191
7.2.2	Empowering	192
7.2.3	Team Building	192
7.3	Leading the Organisation	193
7.3.1	Ability to Execute	193
7.3.2	Change Orientation	193
7.3.3	Energising	194
7.3.4	Visioning	194
7.4	Leading Stakeholders and Networks	195
7.4.1	Clients and Stakeholders	195
7.4.2	Networks and Alliances	195
7.5	How Did Caesar's Leadership Develop over Time?	196
	Bibliography	197
<b>8</b>	<b>Being a Leader: Caesar's Leadership Personality</b>	<b>199</b>
8.1	Affiliating	201
8.1.1	Giving	201
8.1.2	Receiving	202
8.1.3	Belonging	202
8.1.4	Expressing	202
8.2	Attracting	203
8.2.1	Gaining Stature	203
8.2.2	Entertaining	203
8.3	Perceiving	204
8.3.1	Creating	204
8.3.2	Interpreting	204
8.4	Mastering	204
8.4.1	Excelling	205
8.4.2	Enduring	205
8.4.3	Structuring	205
8.5	Challenging	206
8.5.1	Manoeuvring	206
8.5.2	Winning	206
8.5.3	Controlling	206

8.6	Maintaining	207
8.6.1	Stability	207
8.6.2	Independence	207
8.6.3	Irreproachability	207
8.7	Caesar's Motivational Pattern	208
	Bibliography	211
<b>9</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>213</b>

## About the Author



**Paul Vanderbroeck, PhD** is a Swiss-Dutch historian, leadership scholar, and executive coach. He has accompanied many leaders and high-potential individuals across the world in their leadership careers. Among his publications are two business books: *Leadership Strategies for Women* (Springer, 2014) and *The International Career Couple Handbook* (2021). He has co-created a theatre play on women leaders. He is married, father of two adult children and currently lives in Geneva.

Mail: [paul@pvdb.ch](mailto:paul@pvdb.ch)



# 1

## Mapping a Leadership Biography: Set-Up and Approach

As a reader, you have the option to read specific sections of this introductory chapter. If you are interested in understanding the historical context before diving into Caesar's life and career, Sect. 1.2 is your guide. Section 1.3 explains the leadership concepts that serve to evaluate Caesar's career and leadership. You can learn about them now or revisit them once you see them being applied in the subsequent chapters. For those with a particular interest in the theoretical underpinning of this book, Sect. 1.4 is indispensable. For a comprehensive understanding of this book's essence and structure, the first and the last sections are recommended.

### 1.1 Why This Book and Why Julius Caesar?

Writing about Julius Caesar, one of history's most compelling figures, presents a challenge and an opportunity. His name alone conjures images of military genius, political manoeuvring and both spectacular triumph and tragic downfall. But why is Caesar still relevant for a modern audience, particularly for today's leaders? Why does he deserve yet another biography, especially one aimed at leadership development? These are the questions this book aims to address and answer.

As a biographer, it is impossible not to form a connection with one's subject. Whether it is a fascination with the ruthless ambition of a figure like Stalin or the admiration that might be felt for Napoleon's monumental achievements, the biographer is inevitably drawn into the lives he or she

chronicles. My connection to Caesar is no different. I hold a positive view of him, a man whose talent for leadership I find both captivating and instructive, as I am fascinated by all talented leaders and how they interact with their followers. But this book is not merely an expression of my admiration. By looking at Caesar's life and work through a modern lens, I attempt to understand the leadership of one of history's most successful and ultimately tragic figures.

The book you hold in your hands is unique because it profiles Julius Caesar and approaches him through the rigorous application of three well-recognised leadership, personality and career development models. Systematically comparing Caesar to the many leaders that lie at the basis of these models allows for a deeper understanding of Caesar's strengths and successes, as well as his weaknesses and failures. In addition, this approach helps identify explanations for behaviour from the perspective of motivational drivers and how that personality was forged by life and professional experiences as strongly as it was by professional development. Finally, by applying a model for career development in an organisational setting, we can understand the career path of an individual whose professional ambition was to reach the top of his organisation.

As someone who has spent years helping leaders maximise their potential, I have found that the key to effective leadership is leveraging strengths while acknowledging vulnerabilities. With all his brilliance and flaws, Caesar provides a perfect case study for this kind of reflection. His rise to power and, ultimately, his assassination—at the hands of those he trusted—illustrate how even the most talented leaders can falter if they fail to become aware of their own weaknesses.

Moreover, this book does not limit itself to Caesar's leadership in a particular period (e.g. 'the Gallic War') or during a specific event (e.g. 'the Battle of Pharsalus') but considers how it changed over time. In this way, it offers a comprehensive review of Caesar's leadership throughout his career, examining how his personal attributes, experiences, choices and professional context shaped his approach to leadership and, ultimately, his fate. As Yuval Noah Harari claims, history is the study of change.

This approach is valuable for today's leaders because it emphasises learning. By observing Caesar's behaviours and decisions and applying proven leadership models to interpret them, we can distil actionable insights. This is not a call to imitate Caesar—it is risky to generalise behaviour from a single case study with its unique features, context and events. Instead, this book invites readers to engage with Caesar's life as a benchmark, as one of many possible case studies of the complexities of leadership. By examining what drove his decisions, what behaviours led to his success and what missteps precipitated his downfall, readers are encouraged to reflect on their own leadership

journeys. When working with groups of leaders, I have seen how effective comparing oneself to the successes, failures, vicissitudes and drivers of other leaders can be for learning. Benchmarking against Julius Caesar is of particular value because his is an imperfect success story, which makes him both an inspirational and a realistic case study.

This book's methodology is grounded in a practical approach to leadership development. The leadership models employed throughout this book are not merely theoretical; they have been tested and proven through years of application in the context of modern leadership development. By evaluating Caesar's career using these models, we go beyond mere biography and create a compelling case study in leadership behaviour and career development that resonates with the challenges of leadership today.

Therefore, this book allows leaders, both novice and accomplished, to develop personal scenarios for their professional future. By approaching Caesar's biography as a case study to analyse his career, personality and leadership competencies, one can discover one's own drivers and learn how to become an effective leader and develop a successful career. Leadership development professionals can use Caesar as a benchmark for the leaders they are supporting so as to be better equipped to foresee the potential outcomes of particular behaviours, understand how personality drives action and help construct a career strategy.

This introduction offers an overview of the context in which Caesar lived and worked; an explanation of the models employed to evaluate Caesar's behaviour, career and personality; an account of where this study fits in academic research and, at the end, a few words on how to read the book.

## 1.2 The Context of a Leader: Rome in the First Century BC

The context in which a leader develops and operates provides both challenges and opportunities. However, context should not be seen as unchangeable. My work with many leaders has confirmed the value of Situational Leadership theory, as espoused by Hershey and Blanchard. This theory demonstrates how leadership success depends on adapting one's behaviour to the situation, that is, one's context. Importantly, I have also observed the opposite: some exceptionally talented leaders can adapt the context to their behaviour, thus creating an entirely new context. This was what happened with Julius Caesar towards the end of his career, although he may not have fully realised it.

The different sub-contexts, in which Caesar developed and exercised his leadership as well as the important changes within these sub-contexts are explained. Of all of these, the organisational context is the most relevant for studying the interplay between leader and followers and between leader and stakeholders; this holds for leadership development in an organisational setting as well. This book analyses the career development of an individual whose professional ambition was to develop a formal leadership career at the highest levels, which by definition requires an organisational structure. In Caesar's case, that was the Roman Republic.

**Spatial Context:** Rome's emergence as the only superpower on both shores of the Mediterranean in the century before Caesar's birth (100 BC), after eliminating Carthage as its main competitor, was a significant contextual development. In that period, Roman territory had tripled; during Caesar's lifetime, the empire doubled in size yet again, effectively ruling the entire Mediterranean basin and a significant portion of Western Europe. Well before Caesar's birth, the Mediterranean had become busy with maritime traffic, and trade routes flourished. The Romans built a network of roads through Italy (Italia in Latin) that transported troops, goods and people rapidly across the peninsula and to and from its ports. They had also started expanding this network into the provinces.

According to Dionysius, a Greek author who relocated from Halicarnassus in Asia Minor to Rome in the First Century BC, the Roman empire's extraordinary greatness manifested itself above all in three things: its aqueducts, paved roads and drainage or sewer system. Indeed, the Roman Republic's capital was well on its way to becoming the largest urban centre in the Mediterranean world, its growth made possible by the expansion of the empire. The Tiber River and the highways Rome built connected the capital to the sea and the rest of Italy. Interestingly, the city, where Caesar grew up, lacked a protective wall since the Romans relied on their armed forces for protection. Rome had approximately 750,000 inhabitants, most of whom lived densely packed in high-rise apartment blocks in busy streets lined with shops and street-food stalls. The houses of the rich were built on the cooler hilltops, whilst the Roman Forum occupied the city's centre. The Forum had open spaces, temples and government buildings such as the Senate House. Pop-up theatres and arenas offered performances and gladiator combats. The one permanent entertainment structure was the massive Circus Maximus, used for chariot racing and live animal hunts.

**Economic Context:** The Roman economy was to a large extent based on agriculture, which depended on manual labour. As a pre-industrial economy, there was little opportunity to increase productivity. Furthermore, Rome,

Italy and the conquered territories functioned as a single market, which did stimulate growth through trade; pottery manufacture; and oil, wine and wool production. Raw materials and commodities—but also objects of art—were transported across the Mediterranean. Landownership was the primary source of wealth.

During the second and first centuries BC, however, the economy changed significantly—conquests brought great wealth to Rome in the forms of booty, foreign taxes, confiscated land and slaves. Its citizens drew substantial dividends, both direct and indirect, from the empire, mainly through three channels. First, annexed land and taxes went into the state treasury and were redistributed as plots of land for veterans, food subsidies and tax relief for the Roman people. Next, many private businesses created jobs by providing supplies and services to the Roman government and military and through corporate growth because of increased trade opportunities. Third, generals and provincial governors reinvested their revenues in the military, construction projects and putting on public games or spectacles, thus providing dividends to the ‘shareholders’ through generating jobs, town planning and providing entertainment. Rome’s citizens, who had an active say in political decision-making, were acutely aware of their power and had a strong sense of ownership regarding the Roman empire. They were proud to belong to a winning organisation, or the ‘Number One’ empire.

**Institutional Context:** The Roman Republic was governed by a hierarchy of elected public officials (magistrates), an advisory council (the Senate) and popular assemblies. Only male citizens could hold public office, be a senator or vote in the popular assemblies. Magistrates included consuls, praetors, aediles, quaestors and tribunes of the plebs. Consuls held the highest office and were responsible for the state’s general administration and military command. In contrast, the tribunes of the plebs, whose role was to balance the power distribution by representing the lower classes’ interests, wielded significant influence through their veto rights. All Roman magistrates were subject to annuity (one-year tenure) and collegiality (sharing power with at least one colleague). In this way, the one kept the other in check; thus, no one could exercise the same authority for too long. The magistrates, including the tribunes of the plebs, were members of the Senate. Magistrates did not receive a salary. They were, however, allocated a small staff of civil servants and in the execution of their office they often had to contribute from their own private means.

The Senate was the most powerful institution, with lifelong membership reserved for those who had held public office. The Republic was oligarchic in practice, with the Senate controlling foreign affairs and finances and advising

on legislation. However, the People had a significant voice in elections and legislation; hence, decisions were formally in the name of the Senate and People of Rome (SPQR). Rome’s voting system in the popular assemblies was highly stratified and skewed towards the wealthy. The *comitia centuriata*, which was organised hierarchically by wealth and property, elected the highest officials with votes favouring the propertied classes. The *comitia tributa*, in contrast, was more representative of the citizenry and handled most legislation. Figure 1.1 gives an overview of the key institutions of the Roman Republic.

Another significant change that impacted Caesar’s context was increased competition for the Roman government’s top two positions (consul and praetor). Recently, the pool of citizens and therefore candidates for office had increased by granting citizenship to most inhabitants of Italy. This change was particularly relevant for those who had the time and money to travel to Rome and participate in politics. Some of these men saw their careers benefit from the number of senators doubling from 300 to 600 and the number of junior—though not senior—offices increasing. Consequently, the odds of any given senator winning the consulship, the highest position, rose from 1:150 each year to 1:300. This boost in competition led to a more dynamic political landscape, with more voices and perspectives being represented in the government.

Despite all this, the processes and procedures remained at the level of a city-state. Boundaries between roles and responsibilities sometimes blurred and therefore could have been clearer. This worked well when it was possible to oversee the organisation and when critical stakeholders could meet and

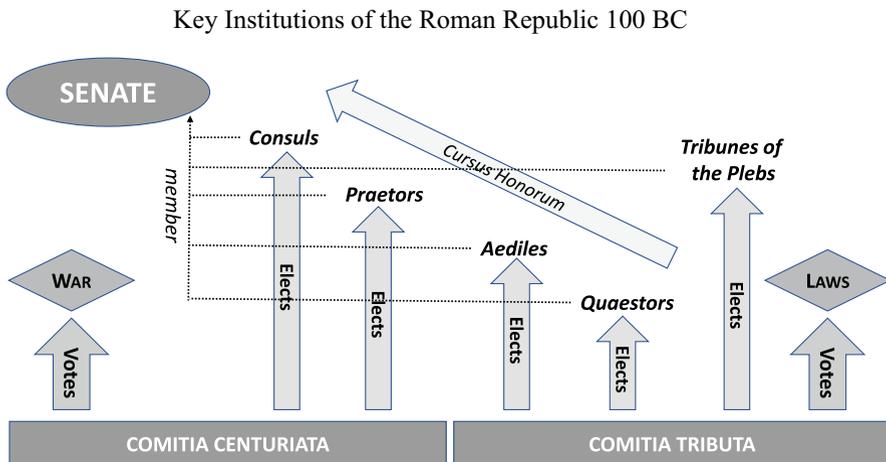


Fig. 1.1 Key institutions of the Roman Republic 100 BC. Author’s own illustration