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CHAPTER 36

SUBJECTS AND ALLIES: THE BLACK SEA EMPIRE OF MITHRADATES VI EUPATOR (120-63 BC) RECONSIDERED

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Abstract: Having gained control of almost the entire circuit of the Black Sea including the Bosporan Kingdom, Mithradates VI Eupator strove for a fundamental strengthening of his kingdom. The rising power of Pontos led inevitably to a conflict of interests with Rome that aspired to an absolute hegemony in Asia Minor. At that time, there was another military and political power in Western Asia which must be properly taken into account, namely the Arsakid Parthian empire. Sources point to the existence of strong connections between Eupator and the Arsakid Empire under Mithradates II (123-87 BC), one of the greatest Parthian kings. Roman military expansion posed a threat to the Arsakid domination in Transcaucasia, Mesopotamia and northern Syria.

In 95 BC a new political constellation, initiated by Arsakid Iran, and embracing Pontos, Armenia and Parthia, was formed in Asia. Through diplomacy and skilfull policy, Mithradates Eupator expanded Pontos' network of foreign connections. Creating bilateral and multilateral coalitions was to ensure favorable balances of power and thereby attain regional objectives at less cost than otherwise would be possible.

The decisive Parthian support prompted Eupator to wage an open war on Rome in 89 BC. Initially, the prospects for Pontos were good but the civil war in Parthia in which Tigranes was involved, annihilated the previous political constellation of the 90s and early 80s, in which Pontos, Armenia and Parthia constituted a mighty alliance. After Armenia's defeat at the hands of Lucullus and Pompey, and after the failure of his own military efforts, Eupator found a strategic sanctuary in the Crimea and Bosporos. There, he tried to gain Sirakoi and Aorsoi but his plans were shattered by a rebellion of his son Pharnakes.

Keywords: Mithradates Eupator, Pontos, Black Sea peoples, Parthia, Armenia, Sarmatians, Aorsoi, Sirakoi

A number of studies have been devoted to Mithradates VI Eupator and his long reign (Reinach 1895; Molev 1976; Olshausen 1978; McGing 1986; Heinen 1991; Hind 1994; Ballesteros-Pastor 1996; Saprykin 1996; Strobel 1996; De Callataÿ 1997; Mastrocinque 1999; Olshausen 2000; Olbrycht 2004; Heinen 2005a; Heinen 2005b; Højte (ed.) 2005). That outstanding Pontic ruler formulated a political and military strategy according to which he carried out his policies and conducted wars. Thanks to his correct strategic assessments, Eupator was able to fight Rome for more than 30 years. For it was the Roman state that constituted the major danger. It threatened to subjugate the whole of Anatolia and wished to carry out its intentions. Eupator correctly identified the capabilities and intentions of the Romans. This is why he aimed at consolidation inside Pontos and strengthening its position vis-à-vis the neighboring power.

Mithradates Eupator's political strategy towards Rome as can be deduced from the sources was based upon a program that consisted of the following factors: 1) building up the kingdom and its economic as well as military resources, 2) subjugating new territories, chiefly beyond the Roman

sphere of direct control or interest, in the Black Sea area, and 3) gaining new powerful allies including the Parthian empire and Parthian-dominated Armenia as well as peoples of the Black Sea region.

Point 1) addresses issues which have been investigated for a long time. It should be emphasized that Eupator attached great importance to the erection of fortifications and strongholds. Fortified centres were fundamental to the process of internal consolidation of the kingdom, at the same time becoming the elements of a defense system against the aggression of the neighboring powers. Thus, e.g., Eupator established his hold on Little Armenia and the adjacent country by erecting 75 forts (Strab. 12. 3. 28). Concerning point 2), Mithradates Eupator's first large-scale military operations were in countries around the eastern and northern shores of the Black Sea (Heinen 1991; De Callataÿ 1997, 245-264; Olbrycht 2004). It was only after subjugating those regions including the Bosporos and the Crimea that Eupator turned his attention to the Anatolian kingdoms of Bithynia, Cappadocia, and Paphlagonia directly bordering the Roman sphere of rule. The present study focuses on point 3). In connection with the basic

security objectives of Pontos, the position of the Parthian empire and its long-standing vassal Armenia is addressed. Also, notice is due to the steppe tribes in the Black Sea and Maiotis area, particularly to the peoples of the Sirakoi and Aorsoi to the east of the Tanais and to the north of the Caucasus as important factors in Eupator's political and military strategies.

The growing power of Pontos under Mithradates Eupator, a kingdom bordering the Parthian dominated territories in Transcaucasia, must have attracted the attention of the Arsakids. Such interests were surely mutual for Eupator strenuously strove for support in kingdoms beyond the Roman sphere of influence. Considering its resources, wealth, and military potential, the Parthian empire was a highly desirable ally. Some sources point to the existence of strong connections between Eupator and the Arsakid empire under Mithradates II (123-87 BC), known as 'the Great' (Iust. 42. 2. 3; Trog. Prol. 42), one of the most significant Parthian kings (Debevoise 1938, 40-50; Wolski 1993, 88ff.; Olbrycht 1998, 96-105). Any active policy by Eupator toward Rome would have been impossible if he had not had his eastern frontier, including Armenia and Parthia as the dominating powers, firmly secured. Thus, Eupator's interest in Armenia and Parthia must have been quite early. That close relations between Pontos and Parthia were initiated prior to 102/101 BC, is clearly documented by images and inscriptions in a *heroon* on Delos dedicated to Mithradates Eupator (on the monument and its inscriptions, see McGing 1986, 90-91).

In 95 BC, a powerful alliance, initiated and supported by Arsakid Iran, and embracing Pontos, Parthia-dominated Armenia and Parthia herself, emerged in Asia, and the anti-Roman actions in Anatolia were intensified. After spending about 25 years at the Parthian court, Tigranes was released by his sovereign Mithradates II the Great and appointed king of Armenia (Manandian 1963; Manaserian 1985; Chaumont 1985-8; Schottky 2002). Justin (38. 3. 1) provides a hint that Tigranes' enthronement in 95 BC was not an accidental event but a well-thought move made by the Parthian King of Kings to meet Eupator's wish. Justin underscores that Eupator '*was eager to entice this man (sc. Tigranes) to join him in the war against Rome which he had long had in mind.*' For about 15 years, Tigranes remained a faithful vassal of Parthia. The strategic position of the Armenian kingdom between Anatolia, the Caucasus mountains and Iran, likewise its military and economic potential, were recognized by Mithradates II. That is why the Arsakids made the control of Armenia one of the fundamental targets in their policy toward Rome up to the end of the dynasty (Wolski 1980; Arnaud 1987; Olbrycht 1998, *passim*). Additionally, Parthia had a claim to the areas located to the south of the Taurus range and to the west of the Euphrates, i.e. to Commagene, Cilicia Pedias and northern Syria. In fact, under Mithradates II the Great, northern Syria and Commagene remained for a time under Parthian control. Parthian military operations reached even to Cilicia (Dobias 1931; Wolski 1977; Dąbrowa 1992;

Olbrycht 2009). To the north-west of Commagene and Cilicia lay Cappadocia, a country of essential significance for any effective control of eastern and central Anatolia.

After his enthronement, the very next moves made by Tigranes were an invasion of Sophene (Strab. 11. 14. 15; 12. 2. 1) and an intervention in Cappadocia against Ariobarzanes, a Roman nominee. Moreover, Eupator gave his daughter Kleopatra to Tigranes in marriage. Justin (38. 3. 2) links the marriage between Kleopatra and Tigranes with the latter's action in Cappadocia. All these facts testify to the existence of specific strategic planning on the part of the Arsakid King of Kings and his Pontic partner, in which Armenia played a special role. Tigranes' activities in Sophene, then in Cappadocia, and his close cooperation with Eupator must originally have been a Parthian initiative; the Arsakid king, a politician of broader horizons, was apparently aware of Roman predominance in Anatolia and Roman political appetite.

It is hardly a coincidence that just when Tigranes returned to Armenia, Eupator introduced a new era in Pontos and began a new, aggressive policy directed against his Anatolian neighbours and Rome. Moreover, he made significant changes in his coinage. With the new alliance established, Eupator was able to challenge Roman power in Anatolia. At the same time, the Parthians showed their interest in control of northern Syria, Cilicia and Commagene. It is conceivable that the Parthians tried to secure their sphere of interest by annihilating – with the help of either Pontos or Armenia – Roman influence in Cappadocia, a country stretching on the Euphrates and bordering on Commagene, Armenia, and even Cilicia Pedias, i.e. areas which Parthia controlled or intended to subjugate. Of vital strategic importance for Mithradates Eupator, Parthia and for Rome was Cappadocia. It is thus little wonder that just that kingdom remained the main contentious area in eastern Anatolia in the 90s-70s BC (Sullivan 1980; Sullivan 1990).

Parthian Iran is mentioned in the sources as a major ally of Pontos. That Eupator sought Parthian assistance against Rome, is strikingly confirmed by Memnon of Herakleia: 'He (sc. Mithradates, MJO) increased his realm by subduing the kings around the river Phasis in war as far as the regions beyond the Caucasus, and grew extremely boastful. On account of this the Romans regarded his intentions with suspicion, and they passed a decree that he should restore to the kings of the Scythians their ancestral kingdoms. Mithradates modestly complied with their demands, but gathered as his allies the Parthians, the Medes, Tigranes the Armenian, the kings of the Scythians and Iberia' (*FgrHist* 434 F 22. 3-4 with corrections by McGing 1986, 63, No. 85, and comments by Heinen 2005a, 83-87).

Significantly enough, Parthia is listed first. The Medes are often mentioned in the sources separately from the Parthians for they formed one of the major and richest parts of the Arsakid empire. This applies not only to Greater Media (with Ecbatana), incorporated to the royal Arsakid domain

(Olbrycht 1997, 44), but also to Media Atropatene, ruled by vassal kings (Schottky 1989; Schottky 1990). Armenia was a vassal kingdom of Parthia at this time. Worthy of note is the reference to Iberia (Braund 1994; Lordkipanidze 1996). During the 2nd century BC, Armenia seized some southern parts of Iberia (Strab. 11. 14. 5; cf. Braund 1994, 153). When Armenia was subjugated by the Parthian king Mithradates II in about 120 BC (Schottky 1989), probably also other Transcaucasian lands, including Iberia (and perhaps Albania), were granted to Parthian vassals. A massive influx of Parthian coins beginning from the time of Mithradates II into Armenia, Iberia and Albania (Olbrycht 2001a; Olbrycht 2001b) suggests that these countries were simultaneously incorporated to the Parthian sphere of political and economic domination. The sources testify to the fact that Eupator seized Armenia Minor (Strab. 12. 3. 28; cf. Molev 1979; De Callatay 1997, 253) and Colchis (Strab. 11. 2. 18; Memnon *FgrHist* 434 F 22. 3; cf. Shelov 1980; Lordkipanidze 1996), but he did not try to penetrate and conquer Iberia. Apparently, the Iberian rulers of this time acted as Parthian vassals and supported Eupator as his allies.

The passage by Memnon tallies with another account offered by Appian (*Mithr.* 15) who reports a speech given before the outbreak of the First Mithradatic War by Eupator's envoy Pelopidas. While listing Pontic allies and subjects, the ambassador mentions Colchians, Greeks from the Black Sea, 'and the barbarians beyond them'. As allies he names then the peoples of the North Pontic region – Scythians, Sarmatians, Taurians, Bastarnae, Thracians and all tribes roaming on the Tanais (Don), Ister (Danube) and Lake Maiotis (Sea of Azov). At last, Pelopidas states: 'Tigranes of Armenia is his (sc. Eupator's, MJO) son-in-law and Arsakes of Parthia his friend ("philos").'

Poseidonios of Apamea provides further testimony. According to his account, the supporter of Pontos at Athens, Athenion, claimed that the Armenian and 'Persian' – i.e. Parthian – kings were Eupator's allies (in 88 BC) (Poseidonios ap. Athenaios 213 a = F 253, 75f. Edelstein-Kidd 1989, cf. the comments in Kidd 1988, 874).

The evidence provided by Appian, Memnon and Poseidonios demonstrates that prior to the First Mithradatic War, Eupator was allied with Parthia and Armenia. The Arsacid Empire with its vassal kingdoms, including Armenia, was enormously rich in financial resources. Eupator was aware of the importance of the resource base for any serious conflict with Rome and put particular emphasis on financial preparations to war. In this connection, a glance at royal monetary issues of Eupator in the decade just before the First Mithradatic War against Rome is necessary. In the period from May to November of 95 BC, the production of Pontic coinage rose steeply (De Callatay 1997, 273-274). This increase took place while an alliance with Tigranes, supported by Parthia, was concluded and major military actions were in sight. Another apex in coinage production occurred in 92 BC,

when Tigranes, supported by Parthia and Pontos, intervened in Cappadocia, and Eupator sent Sokrates Chrestos to subjugate Bithynia. In 89-88 BC, issues were abundant due to the outbreak of the First Mithradatic War (cf. the table in De Callatay 1997, 283. See McGing 1986, 86).

Pontos had some natural metal resources (Hind 1994, 135; De Callatay 1997, 242-244), but the huge amount of gold and silver minted in the 90s and 80s may partially be explained by Parthian support for Eupator. A perfect parallel is provided by the situation in Syria in 88-84/3 when the Parthian vassal Philippos minted a large body of coins (Bellinger 1949, 79; Hoover 2007, 298), scarcely comparable with the modest emissions of his predecessors. It is worth noting that Parthian coinage under Mithradates II assumed the dimensions of mass production and Parthian coins were pouring into Transcaucasia. In all probability, then, Mithradates II provided Pontos with additional resources to strengthen his Pontic ally in his military activities.

Politically significant was the introduction of the so-called Bithynian-Pontic era in Pontos, attested in coinage from 95 BC (year 202 of that era) (De Callatay 1997, 29-52; Gabel'ko 2005, 152). From that point onwards, Pontic coins were struck in the name of Mithradates Eupator. This measure must have been linked with the start of a new stage in Eupator's policy. The dated royal issues of Eupator show a number of new features. The obverse depicts the king's portrait, the reverse Pegasos or a grazing stag with star and crescent in the field (McGing 1986, 97; De Callatay 1997).

The support of Parthian dominated Armenia, as well as direct Parthian aid, were in fact a *conditio sine qua non* for Eupator's new policy, initiated in 95 BC. The pro-Roman Ariobarzanes, ruling over Cappadocia, was ousted by Tigranes probably in 95 BC or early in 94 BC (Iust. 38. 3. 2-3; App. *Mithr.* 12. 2. 10.; De Callatay 1997, 274 places the action at the beginning of 94 BC).

Eupator, convinced by the strength of his allies, took the initiative in Anatolia, disrespecting Roman demands (Sherwin-White 1977, 175). The Roman reaction was to send Sulla to Asia (Badian 1959; Brennan 1992; Dmitriev 2006). The real reason for the expedition was not only to reinstate Ariobarzanes but also to check Eupator's intentions. Sulla did not have a large army but made extensive use of his allies' troops. According to Plutarch (*Sulla* 5), Sulla 'After inflicting heavy casualties on the Cappadocians themselves, and even heavier casualties on the Armenians, who came to help the Cappadocians, drove Gordios into exile and made Ariobarzanes king'. Sulla's expeditionary force touched the borders of the Parthian sphere of influence. This is why Parthian envoys came to Sulla's camp. The Parthians attentively observed the affairs in Cappadocia for they stood behind Tigranes and the Arsacid king tried to check out Roman intentions concerning Cappadocia, Anatolia, and Armenia (Olbrycht 2009).

Sulla's intervention in Cappadocia caused the Arsakid king to counter-attack. Operations were conducted by his Armenian vassal and coordinated with Eupator's operations. An agreement was concluded between the rulers of Pontos and Armenia that the subjugated cities and land would belong to Eupator, the captives and all movable goods to Tigranes (Iust. 38. 3. 5 places this passage after Tigranes' first intervention in Cappadocia and before the First Mithradatic War). Ariobarzanes was ousted by an army led by the generals named Bagoas and Mithraas in about 92 BC (App. *Mithr.* 10., cf. Iust. 38. 3. 5; De Callataÿ 1997, 276 proposes the summer of 91 BC). Ariarathes (IX) was again installed in Cappadocia. The names of the commanders, who acted as Tigranes' generals, are purely Iranian. Indeed they could have been Parthian officials in Armenian service.

While Tigranes operated in Cappadocia, Eupator sent Sokrates Chrestos, Nikomedes' own brother, with an army against Bithynia (App. *Mithr.* 10). Thus, one can discern a coordinated anti-Roman action of Pontos and Armenia in Anatolia. But the Parthians did not remain idle neither. At this time they subjugated Commagene (about 92 BC), and probably attacked Cilicia (Olbrycht 2009). It seems that Eupator was ready to a full-scale confrontation with Rome. His rear was now secure, and he had huge financial and military resources at his disposal (Glew 1977).

The Roman general Manius Aquilius reinstalled Ariobarzanes at the end of 90 BC or in 89 BC (cf. McGing 1986, 79-80). According to Appian (*Mithr.* 11), Eupator had his forces in readiness for war, but did not resist the Roman actions. The Pontic king remained inactive even when Nikomedes ravaged western Pontos (App. *Mithr.* 11, 12-14; Liv. *Epit.* 74). Moreover, Eupator had Sokrates killed to display his goodwill toward Rome. Tigranes' troops apparently retreated from Cappadocia. The Pontic king entered negotiations with the Roman legates in Asia and complained of Nikomedes' hostile actions (App. *Mithr.* 12). When the Pontic-Roman talks failed, Eupator sent his son Ariarathes with a large army to seize Cappadocia again. Ariobarzanes was quickly driven out (App. *Mithr.* 15; Hind 1994, 144).

In 89 BC, Eupator was at the height of his power. He was secure in the alliance with Parthian-dominated Armenia and Parthia herself. He received support of many peoples, tribes and cities around the Black Sea. As a whole, Eupator recruited huge military forces, numbering more than 200,000 soldiers (Memnon *FgrHist* 734 F 22. 6; App. *Mithr.* 17). The events of the First Mithradatic War (89-85 BC) are well known and there is no need to repeat the story here (Magie 1950, 210-31, 1100-1110; Glew 1977; Glew 1981; Sherwin-White 1984, 121-48; McGing 1986, 89-131; Ballesteros-Pastor 1996; Mastrocinque 1999; Olshausen 2000a).

While Eupator fought the Romans, the Parthians intervened in Syria and made it their protectorate (88/87 BC). In 87 BC, the mighty Eupator's ally, Mithradates II of Parthia,

died. It was surely a blow to the Pontic king's policies. Under Mithradates II's successors Parthia was to plunge in internal struggles at the very end of the 80s (Ziegler 1964, 20-32; Arnaud 1987). The crisis in Parthia offered a powerful incentive for action and Tigranes felt now free to act against the Parthian kings Orodes and Sinatrukes to expand his kingdom. Thus, he subjugated Syria, northern Mesopotamia and Media Atropatene (Schottky 2002).

During the Third War Mithradates Eupator sought closer ties to the Parthian kings Sinatrukes and Phraates III, but the Arsakids showed a marked reluctance to get involved in Anatolian quarrels.

In 66 BC, Pompey superseded Lucullus in command in the Roman east. Although Eupator was able to mobilize a strong army in 65 BC, Pompey was successful in destroying part of the formidable Pontic cavalry force (Front. 2. 5. 33). The Romans pursued Mithradates as far as Colchis. Then Pompey advanced to Iberia and Albania (Dreher 1996), both kingdoms offering strong resistance (70,000 soldiers were mustered against the Roman army). Military operations of Pompey were directed also against Armenia, Commagene, and Atropatene (App. *Mithr.* 104-106). Apparently, Pompey was not able to chase Eupator up to the Bosphoros for his rear was not secure and the Pontic king's allies were still dangerous. Driven out of Anatolia by Pompey, Eupator marched from Colchis to the Maiotis region through 'Scythian', Heniochian and Achaian territories. The latter's resistance was promptly crushed. Eupator gave his daughters as wives to the local dynast of the Maiotis region and concluded alliances including, in all likelihood, the Dandarioi and Sindoi-Maiotians (65 BC) (App. *Mithr.* 102).

After Eupator retreated to the Crimea and the Bosphoros, he decided to look for new opportunities to rebuild his military potential. He was forced to the strategic defensive action because of a decided inferiority in combat power. His withdrawal from action in 65 BC may be classified as a retrograde movement in order to break contact with the enemy and to regain freedom of action. The aim of the manoeuvre was to exhaust the enemy through political actions as well as intermittent combat against Eupator's former allies in Transcaucasia. Under these circumstances, while in the Bosphoros, Eupator tried to gather new forces, to take the active defense, and, finally, to launch a counteroffensive.

The Bosphoros and Crimea enjoyed a geographically-based, strategic sanctuary because of its isolated position. Eupator made efforts to control the region and to suppress rebellions. Finally, he tried to collect new troops. But the military and economic potential of the Crimea, Bosphoros, and some allied tribes of the eastern Black Sea and Maiotis shore was limited. To accomplish his aims, Eupator had to seek new powerful allies.

Here it is necessary to remember the subjects and allies of Eupator from the northern Black Sea area. We know a lot about the relations between the Crimean Scythians, and the western Sarmatians (including Iazygians and Basileioi) and Eupator. Also, Bastarnoi, Taurians, Celts and Thracians played a role in Pontic policies (Iust. 38. 3. 6-7; App. *Mithr.* 15. 69; See Heinen 1991; Olbrycht 2004).

To the east of the coastal Maiotis and Black Sea peoples, the Sirakoi and Aorsoi lived which were to play an important role under Pharnakes in 48-47 BC (Olbrycht 2001a, 437-438). From the historical sources one can conclude that the Aorsoi and Sirakoi, peoples who came to the Caucasus-Volga steppes in the second half of the 2nd century BC. The first pieces of direct information on them come from the 60s BC, i.e. from the time of the Pompey's campaign in Transcaucasia (Olbrycht 2001a). There is evidence that enables us to trace the history of the Aorsoi and Sirakoi back to the last decades of the 2nd century BC (Olbrycht 2001a). At that time, before the Bosporos was subjugated by Eupator, we hear of tribute paid by the Bosporans to the nomads (Strab. 7. 4. 4; 7. 4. 6), but the names of these nomadic aggressors are not recorded (Gajdukevič 1971, 318). They were apparently a new people in the region, not previously attested in the sources. Conceivably, it was the Aorsoi and Sirakoi who imposed tribute on the Bosporos. This point has been made by Blavatskaia (1959, 142) and Vinogradov (1997, 541f. and 560f.).

In addition, while describing Pontic military activities, Strabo records a cavalry battle on the icy surface of the Maiotis straits in winter when the straits were frozen (Strab. 2. 1. 16) and a sea battle in summer against some invading barbarians. The army of Eupator was led by Neoptolemos (Strab. 7. 3. 18). Clearly, two battles of a different kind are recorded. The character of the cavalry battle and the place between the Asiatic and European Bosporos make it probable to see in the barbarians steppe peoples, like Sirakoi and Aorsoi (Olbrycht 2004; another view in Vinogradov 2007). The second sea battle can be interpreted as fought by nomads apparently supported by the ships of Achaioi who were famous sea pirates (Strab. 11. 2. 12).

Consequently, contrary to the situation in the north Pontic area, Eupator could not count on the support of Sirakoi and Aorsoi. But upon his final defeat in Anatolia, Eupator tried to win over the eastern Sarmatian tribes. Faced by a rebellion in Phanagoreia, Mithradates sent some of his daughters, guarded by eunuchs and 500 soldiers, to the rulers of the 'Scythians'. But the escorting soldiers rebelled and delivered the princesses to the Romans in Transcaucasia (App. *Mithr.* 108). The geographical situation indicates that Eupator tried to win over the Sirakoi from the Kuban area and perhaps the Aorsoi who indeed several years later supported his son Pharnakes II (Strab. 11. 5. 8). The mission was surely not directed to the peoples living on the eastern shore of the Maiotis, for Eupator's rebellious soldiers escaped to Pompey in Transcaucasia, and this implies that the original route of the mission was to the north Caucasus

steppes. Moreover, if we take into account that Eupator concluded separate treaties with the coastal peoples between Colchis and Bosporos, or subjugated them, one possibility remains: the objective of the mission was to visit peoples living not on the sea shore, but in the hinterland; among these, the Sirakoi and Aorsoi were the most powerful (see Strabo 7. 3. 17; 11. 2. 1; 11. 5. 9).

Although defeated in Anatolia, Eupator formulated a new strategic target in 66-65 BC: Appian (*Mithr.* 102) mentions his plans to march to Thrace, Macedonia, Pannonia, and, after passing over the Alps, into Italy. Regardless of whether this was possible or not, one thing is clear: Eupator intended to fight the Romans. But Eupator's subjects and his son Pharnakes preferred to stop the war. Incidentally, the latter adopted his father's strategy; for when he attacked Roman Anatolia in 47 BC, Pharnakes II was backed by an alliance with the powerful Sirakoi and Aorsoi.

Conclusion

In summary: In 95 BC a new political constellation emerged in Asia. It embraced Pontos, Armenia and Parthia. It was decisive support from Parthia that prompted Eupator to wage open war on Rome in 89 BC. Later on events took a turn for the worse, both in Pontos and in Parthia. The civil war in Parthia in which Tigranes was involved annihilated the previous political constellation of the 90s and early 80s, in which Pontos, Armenia and Parthia constituted a mighty alliance. The power of Pontos collapsed for several reasons, but an essential factor was that Eupator lacked of Parthian assistance in the 70s and 60s BC and was dependent on his own and to some extent on Tigranes' resources. The Pontic king, aware of Arsakid power, tried to renew the old alliance with Parthia but the new Parthian rulers, Sinatrukes and Phraates III, were by far more passive in their western policy than Mithradates II the Great. At that time, until the wars between Rome and Parthia under Orodes (57-38 BC), Parthian strategic perspective did not reach beyond the line of the Euphrates in the west.

After the defeat of Armenia at the hands of Lucullus and Pompey, and after the failure of his own military efforts, Eupator found a strategic sanctuary in the Crimea and Bosporos. There, he tried to form an alliance with the Sirakoi and Aorsoi but his plans were shattered by a rebellion of his son Pharnakes.

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