Nikolaus Overtoom. "The Parthians' Failed Vassalage of Syria: The Shortsighted Western Policy of Phraates II and the Second Reign of Demetrius II (129-125 BCE)"

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- 1 In 139 BC, the Seleucid King Demetrius II gathered enough military forces and political support to launch a campaign east of the Euphrates to reconquer all Seleucid lands lost to the Parthians a few years before. Arsacid King Mithridates I defeated him and held him prisoner for a decade until his successor Phraates II decided to release him and send him back to Syria. Overtoom in this paper considers the reasons and the effectiveness of Demetrius' release for the Parthian political plans. The captured king was set free in 129 BC to mine the political consensus of the Seleucid king Antiochus VII, who had himself launched a successful re-conquest of the east. The sudden death of Antiochus and the rising of the nomad threat in the eastern satrapies left Demetrius with substantial autonomy to rule Seleucid Syria without Parthian influence. Overtoom demonstrated that even if there was a plan to use the newly released king as a client monarch for Syria, this plan was not pursued actively. Demetrius' war against Egypt was functional only to strengthen his position on the throne and was not conditioned by Parthian leadership. The only real attempt to help consolidate Demetrius' rule by

the Parthians, that is to say, the restitution of Antiochus' body, resulted in a failure when the remains fell in the hands of Demetrius' rival Alexander Zabinas.

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