Thucydides On Grand Strategy: Periclean Grand Strategy during The Peloponnesian War[1]

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet essai se penche sur la contribution de Thucydide au domaine de la stratégie. Les écrits de Thucydide sont les premiers de l'histoire à décrire une théorie complète de la stratégie. Comme étude de cas, l'auteur examine la stratégie d'Athènes employée sous la gouverne de Périclès durant la première partie de la Guerre du Péloponnèse. La stratégie de Périclès était une stratégie typique de l'épuisement, dont le but était de dissuader l'ennemi (Sparte) dans ses tentatives continuelles de renverser le *statu quo* existant. L'auteur avance que cette stratégie était excellente et qu'elle assurait de ce fait le succès athénien dans la lutte. Ce n'est que lorsque cette stratégie fut abandonnée qu'Athènes fut défaite.

De plus, cet essai affirme que la stratégie de l'épuisement de Périclès est à l'origine a) "de la méthode de guerre britannique" et b) de la stratégie américaine durant la Guerre Froide. Enfin, cet essai affirme que la stratégie de l'épuisement verra son utilisation accrue au cours des prochaines décennies.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this essay is to present Thucydides' contribution to the study of strategy. It is in Thucydides' text that we find for the first time in history an outline of a complete theory of grand strategy. As a case study, the essay examines the grand strategy that Athens, under Pericles' direction, employed during the first phase of the Peloponnesian War. The Periclean grand stategy was a typical strategy of exhaustion, whose aim was to dissuade the enemy (Sparta) from continuing his attempt to overthrow the existing *status quo*. The essay argues that the Periclean grand strategy was an excellent strategic design, which ensured Athenian success in the struggle. Athens was defeated only when it abandonned this grand strategy; in fact, the departure from the Periclean grand strategy was the very reason for the Athenian defeat.

Furthermore, this essay claims that the Periclean strategy of exhaustion contained the seeds of a) "the British way of warfare", and b) the American Grand Strategy during the Cold War. Last, it argues that in the coming decades the employment of the strategy of exhaustion is bound to become more popular.

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Introduction

It is well-known that outstanding classical treatises in each particular field provide a standard of evaluation for all other field-related works and serve as a cornerstone upon which new theories can be developed. As far as the study of strategy is concerned, Michael Handel has claimed that strategists are fortunate to have access to two enduring classical texts: Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* and Clausewitz's *On War*.[2] However, another classical masterpiece needs to be added in this short list, namely Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. The purpose of this essay, therefore, is to present Thucydides' contribution to the study of strategy.

Undoubtedly, Thucydides stands out prominently as both a great historian and the forefather of the discipline of International Relations. For instance, Robert Gilpin has enquired in earnest whether contemporary scholars of international relations actually know anything about state behavior that was unknown to Thucydides.[3] What has been relatively ignored is that in Thucydides' text we find for the first time in history an outline of a complete theory of grand strategy, a full-fledged theory of how states produce security for themselves. Thucydide's theory incorporates the economic, diplomatic, military, technological, demographic, psychological and other factors upon which a state's security depends in various ways. It is highly interesting that Thucydides did not confine his analysis to traditional strategies which lay stress on the military dimension. He also took into account grand strategies which emphasize dimensions other than the military one, pointing out that they may well provide states with a path to victory.

In this respect, Thucydides may be argued to have anticipated the insights offered by the famous German historian Hans Delbrück. Delbrück outlined two basic forms of strategy, calling them respectively the strategy of annihilation (*Niederwerfungsstrategie*) and the strategy of exhaustion (*Ermattungsstrategie*) respectively.[4] Whereas the aim of the strategy of annihilation is the decisive battle (*Vernichtungsschlacht*), the strategy of exhaustion employs the battle as but one of a variety of means, such as territorial occupation, destruction of crops, blockade, etc. The strategy of exhaustion is neither a variation of the strategy of annihilation, nor inferior to it. Such a strategy can often be the only way for a state to achieve its political aims. The strategy of annihilation has been traditionnaly associated with Clausewitz. His growing influence

(as well as that of whatever passed for Clausewitzian thought) since the second half of the nineteenth century meant that the Germans and the Europeans in general focused primarily on the strategy of annihilation, and comparatively neglected the strategy of exhaustion.[5]

Although Delbrück referred to military strategies, as opposed to grand strategies, his distinction between a strategy of annihilation and a strategy of exhaustion may be of great use in the study of grand strategies. One must also note that in Delbrück's time the term "grand strategy" was used in a much more restrictive sense than at present, that is, as covering merely the overall war policy of a state. However, nowadays the term "grand strategy" is used to encompass all available means (military, economic, diplomatic, etc.) that a state is able to use in order to achieve its long-term political objectives in the face of actual or potential conflict.[6] In a grand strategy of annihilation, the state depends chiefly on military strategy; all other strategies, economic, diplomatic, etc. are essentially subservient to it. On the other hand, a grand strategy of exhaustion makes simultaneous use of all possible means so as to achieve the aims set by state policy.

Returning to Thucydides, in his text both these grand strategies may be seen at work; i.e., while Sparta employed a grand strategy of annihilation, Athens resorted to a grand strategy of exhaustion. The present essay will make use of the strategy that Athens, under Pericles' direction, employed against Sparta during the first years of the Peloponnesian War in order to outline the typical characteristics of such a grand strategy of exhaustion.[7]

To summarize, Thucydides produced the first comprehensive theory of grand strategy in history. This article attempts to highlight his contribution to strategic theory, using as a case study the grand strategy of exhaustion that Pericles conceived and implemented on behalf of Athens.

I. A Framework for Analysing Grand Strategy

Althouth the concept of grand strategy has already been touched upon, it stands in need of further elaboration prior to the examination of the grand strategy adopted by Athens in the beginning of the Peloponnesian War under Pericles' direction.

To begin with, we need to clarify the essence of grand strategy and outline some of its characteristics. Essentially, grand strategy is a state's theory about how it can "cause" security for itself. Indeed, how states choose to produce security for themselves is the very core of grand strategy, and their success in doing so is the crucial test of any particular grand strategy. Ideally, grand strategy must include an explanation of why this security-producing theory is expected to work in a given security environment. Grand strategy can be understood as a state's response to specific threats to its security; a grand strategy must identify potential threats and devise political and other remedies for them. Grand strategy should be viewed as a politico-military means-ends chain in which military capabilities are connected with military strategies in turn connected with political objectives. In theory, grand strategies exploit the advantages that the state possesses and aim at minimizing those of the opponent. Mentioning the existence of an opponent brings us to a very important point: grand strategy (and strategy in general) never exists in a vacuum;[8] it is always addressed against one or more opponents, who, in turn, formulate their own strategy. A central aspect of grand strategy is the establishment of priorities. Priorities must be established among both threats and remedies because in an anarchical international environment the number of possible threats is great and resources to meet them are bound to be scarce.[9]

An elaborate treatment of the concept of grand strategy has been given by Sir Basil Liddell Hart. According to him:

> [T]he role of grand strategy -higher strategy- is to coordinate and direct all the resources of a nation, or band of nations towards the attainment of the political object of the war -the goal defined by fundamental policy. Grand strategy should both calculate and develop the economic resources and man-power of nations in order to sustain the fighting services. Also the moral resources -for to foster the people's willing spirit is often as important as to possess the more concrete forms of power. Grand strategy, too, should regulate the distribution of power between the services and industry. Moreover, fighting power is but one of the instruments of grand strategy -which should take account of and apply the power of financial pressure, of diplomatic pressure, of commercial pressure, and, not least of ethical pressure, to weaken the opponent's will.[10]

This is an excellent description of the various means employed by grand strategy. However, the current usage of the term is not confined to the description of war situations. It is widely accepted

that strategy in general, and grand strategy in particular, covers activities performed in peacetime as well. Strategy is also conducted in the context of potential as well as actual conflict.[11] It is for this reason that grand strategy has been defined as the use of all the available means that a state is able to use in order to achieve its long-term political objectives in the face of actual or potential conflict.

A successful planning at the level of grand strategy needs to address the following four dimensions[12] (see Table 1):

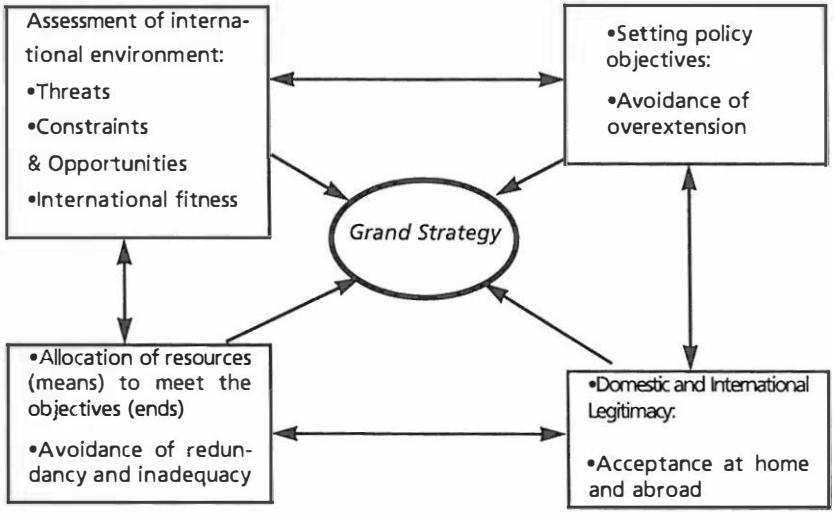
1. Assessment of the international environment, so as to identify potential or actual threats to national security, as well as the various constraints and opportunities for the implementation of the grand strategy that may be present in this environment. Clearly then, the crucial test for a grand strategy in this dimension is international fitness.

2. Identification of the ends that the grand strategy is to pursue, in view of the means available, plus the aforementioned threats, constraints, and opportunities. In view of the ever-present scarcity of resources, there are certain limits to the ends pursued. On the one hand, as it has already been mentioned, priorities must be established among the various aims. On the other, one must make sure that the aims set do not exceed the means available. This is the phenomenon of overextension, on which more will follow. The avoidance of overextension is one important indicator of the performance of a grand strategy in this dimension.

3. Allocation of resources so as to achieve the objectives outlined by grand strategy. The means have to be tailored to the ends so as to avoid both wasting scarce resources and marshalling inadequate resources for the tasks ahead. Thus, the avoidance of redundancy or inadequacy of means is the critical test that a grand strategy has to meet in this dimension.

4. Shaping the "image" of the grand strategy both at the domestic and the international level, so that: (a) the society actively supports the grand strategy of the state; (b) all the parts of the state structure work toward the same purpose; (c) the grand strategy of the state is internationally viewed as legitimate. In other words, to be successful in this dimension, a grand strategy has to be accepted both at home and abroad.

Table 1: Planning of Grand Strategy



II. Periclean Grand Strategy

Let us now turn to the analysis of the grand strategy that Athens followed during the first years of the Peloponnesian war. Since this grand strategy was conceived by Pericles, who also supervised its implementation, it will be called "Periclean grand strategy." The four dimensions of grand strategic planning mentioned above will constitute the conceptual framework with which this grand strategy will be analyzed.

1. Assessment of the International Environment

1.1. The Greek City-State System: Power Distribution and Future Trends

The Greek city-state system[13] in terms of modern international relations theory has been commonly described as "bipolar", its two poles being Sparta and Athens.[14] Of course, everything depends on where one sets the boundaries of the system. For instance, the vast Persian Empire with its ample resources obviously influenced the scene.[15] Still, if the system is confined to mainland Greece or the Greek world in general, then it makes

much sense to talk about a bipolar system, with Sparta and Athens as the respective poles, and this is certainly how contemporaries viewed the situation. According to W.R. Connor, at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, three additional actors of importance in the distribution of power existed: Thebes, Magna Graecia (the Greek colonies of Southern Italy and Sicily), and Corcyra.[16] Although these actors tried to exploit the conflict between Sparta and Athens to their own advantage, they ended up siding with the central protagonists of the conflict. Hence the distribution of power was essentially bipolar. On the other hand, one should always keep in mind that the relative position of Sparta and Athens *vis-à-vis* the other Greek states did not remotely resemble that of the United States and the Soviet Union *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world during the Cold War.[17]

Apart from the static analysis of power distribution in the Greek city-state system, the dynamic one, namely the identification of the various trends in the distribution of power, is of crucial importance as well. Thucydides' famous explanation of the cause of the Peloponnesian War is that "what made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta."[18] Thucydides' statement reveals that Athens, the emerging power, was growing in strength at a faster rate than Sparta, the traditional hegemon in Greece. This indeed sounds plausible, since Athens had founded an extensive empire based on naval strength and maritime trade, whereas Sparta remained an agrarian economy.

Thucydides goes at some length to document the rise of Athenian power in the interval of roughly fifty years between the end of the Persian Wars and the beginning of the Peloponnesian War.[19] To start with, the poverty of the Attic soil coupled with demographic pressures forced the Athenians to turn to the sea, to become a seafaring nation. Thus, as early as the time of the Persian invasion, Athens possessed a powerful navy. Its naval power enabled Athens to assume the lead in pushing Persia out of the Greek coastal cities of Asia Minor. In the process, however, the Athenians also established a progressively firmer control over their allies and the Athenian Empire was born, which gradually proved to be a tremendous source of wealth for Athens. Tributes from the allies, imperial mines, and increased commercial activity enabled the growth of the economic power of the Athenian metropolis.[20] This wealth sustained the efficiency of the Athenian

navy, ensuring the preservation of the Empire and thus bringing more money home, that would once again augment the naval power of Athens. Thucydides put it succintly:

> Because of this reluctance of theirs [the allies-turned-subjects] to face military service, most of them, to avoid serving abroad, had assessments made by which, instead of producing ships, they were to pay a corresponding sum of money. The result was that the Athenian navy grew strong at their expense, and when they revolted they always found themselves inadequately armed and inexperienced in war.[21]

It was a self-perpetuating system that was producing spiralling gains for Athens, unthought-of by an agrarian economy.[22] The obvious difference in wealth that this brought about, would eventually become apparent. Fully cognizant of the economic power of Athens, Pericles, while analyzing the balance of power to his fellow citizens, provided them with an extensive account of the economic resources of Athens -ample resources indeed.[23] Moreover, Pericles confined his account to state funds, and did not mention the immense private wealth that was amassed in the city. With trade and allied revenues continually increasing this wealth, it was evident that the Athenian power would soon reach frightening proportions. Since economic power constitutes the enabling force behind military power and especially naval power,[24] the picture that emerged for the opponents of Athens was a highly alarming one.

In view of these developments, Donald Kagan's claim that the "Athenian power did not grow between 445 and 435"[25] is hard to understand. Relative economic power is an extremely important dimension of state power.[26] Even in the absence of territorial acquisitions, changes in the economic power of states over time may bring about profound shifts in the balance of power. Thucydides shows a remarkable grasp of the link between wealth and power. In this respect, he must be regarded as the originator of a long Realist tradition that paid due attention to the economic sources of national power.[28]

1.2. Athens and Sparta: the Bilateral Balance

Up to this point of the essay, it has been clearly demonstrated that Sparta and Athens were the two strongest states of ancient Greece and that the future trends in the distribution of power were clearly in favour of Athens. What, however, was the

correlation of forces between the two combatants at the time of the outbreak of the war? It seems that Athens was at worst vulnerable to Sparta and its allies and at best superior to them. Three elements of Athenian power accounted for this assessment: the navy, the financial power, and the alliance/empire. This was both stressed by Pericles and acknowledged by the Spartan king Archidamus. It is worth quoting both of them at length. Pericles, trying to persuade the Athenians that they did not need to fear the outcome of a war against the Peloponnesians, stated the following:

> Now, as to the war and to the resources available to each side I should like you to listen to a detailed comparison and to realize that we are not the weaker party. The Peloponnesians cultivate their own land themselves; they have no financial resources either as individuals or as states; then they have no experience of fighting overseas, nor of any fighting that lasts a long time, since the wars that fight against each other are, because of their poverty, short affairs. Such people are incapable of often manning a fleet or often sending out an army, when that means absence from their own land, expense from their own funds and, apart from this, when we have control of the sea. And wars are paid of by the possession of reserves rather than by a sudden increase in taxation. [...] In a single battle the Peloponnesians and their allies could stand up to all the rest of Hellas, but they cannot fight a war against a power unlike themselves. [...] But this is the main point: they will be handicapped by lack of money and delayed by the time they will have to take in procuring it. But in war opportunity waits for no man. [...] And as for seamanship, they will find that a difficult lesson to learn. [...] Seamanship, just like anything else, is an art. It is not something that can be picked up and studied in one's spare time; indeed it allows one no spare time for anything else. [...] If they invade our country by land, we will invade theirs by sea, and it will turn out that the destruction of a part of the Peloponnese will be worse for them than the destruction of the whole of Attica would be for us. For they can get no more land without fighting for it, while we have plenty of land both in the islands and on the continent. Sea-power is of enormous importance.[29]

Pericles' speech reveals his confidence in the outcome of the war. The economic and naval power of Athens ensured that it would not lose, save through blunders of its own making.[30] Peloponnesian land power was largely irrelevant against a sea power, while lack of economic resources would impede operations.

This was no empty boasting on Pericles' part. A surprisingly similar picture emerged at the other side of the hill. Shortly before the speech of Pericles just quoted, the Spartan king Archidamus had made an identical outline of Athenian power, in an attempt to dissuade his compatriots from voting in favour of war with Athens. According to him:

> When we are engaged with Peloponnesians and neighbours, the forces on both sides are of the same type, and we can strike rapidly where we wish to strike. With Athens it is different. Here we shall be engaged with people who live far off, people also who have the widest experience of the sea and who are extremely well equipped in all other directions, very wealthy both as individuals and as a state, with ships and cavalry and hoplites, with a population bigger than that of any other place in Hellas, and then, too, with numbers of allies who pay tribute to them. How, then, can we irresponsibly start a war with such a people? What have we to rely upon if we rush into it unprepared? Our navy? It is inferior to theirs, and if we are to give proper attention to it and build it up to their strength, that will take time. Or are we relying on our wealth? Here we are at an even greater disadvantage: we have no public funds, and it is no easy matter to secure contributions from private sources. Perhaps there is ground for confidence in the superiority which we have in heavy infantry and in actual numbers, assets which will enable us to invade and devastate their land. Athens, however, controls plenty of land outside Attica and can import what she wants by sea. And if we try to make her allies revolt from her, we shall have to support them with a fleet, since most of them are on the islands. What sort of war, then, are we going to fight? [31]

The strategic deadlock is apparent in Spartan strategy. To put it differently, in a contest between a lion and a shark, the lion cannot force a decision, since it cannot reach the sources of the shark's strength.

Thus, the net assessment of the relative balance of power indicated that the situation was not unfavourable to Athens, to say the least. The famous motto "we have the ships, we have the men, we have the money too" could well have been uttered by the Athenians, twenty five centuries before it was coined by the British jingoists.[32]

2. Policy Objectives

2.1. Policy Objectives and Grand Strategic Designs

Setting the political objectives is the next important step in the formulation of a grand strategy. For Athens, these objectives were simply the maintenance of the *status quo*. The existence of the Empire guaranteed the prosperity and power of Athens, both in absolute terms and in comparison to the other Greek states. Moreover, the Thirty Years" Peace, concluded in 445 B.C. after a period of hostilities between Athens and Sparta (and their respective allies), acknowledged the equal status of these two powers. It was perfectly satisfactory for the Athenians to be placed on an equal footing with what had traditionally been the leading Greek state.[33] This does not necessarily mean that Athens did not aim at achieving primacy in Greece. In fact, having in mind the fast rates of growth of the Athenian power, one may well argue that a *status quo* policy on behalf of Athens was the best vehicle for establishing Athenian hegemony over the Greek world. Simply put, Athens merely had to wait and let the law of uneven growth to work in its favour.[34] The differential rates of growth would eventually produce big shifts in the balance of power.

In view of the above, it is clear why Sparta did not have any particular reason to be happy with the *status quo*. Consequently, it resorted to preventive war in order to dissolve the Athenian Empire and thus cripple the Athenian power. Earlier on, Sparta had revealed its intentions by presenting the Athenians with an ultimatum: as war was approaching, a Spartan embassy informed the Athenians that "Sparta wants peace. Peace is still possible if you will give the Hellenes their freedom."[35] This amounts to saying that the Spartan aims were unlimited, since acceptance of the Spartan ultimatum would clearly lead to the dissolution of the Athenian Empire. Since the Spartans could not hope to achieve their aims by peaceful means, they had clearly decided to launch war.

An important point emerges here. Thucydides' analysis of the Spartan motives and their relation to the outbreak of the war makes it evident that he was fully cognizant of the relation between war and politics. Obviously, for Thucydides the Peloponnesian War was an act of force on behalf of Sparta to compel Athens to comply with its will. Sparta's political objectives

could not be attained by peaceful measures, therefore, to use Clausewitzian terms, war came as the continuation of policy by other means. Bernard Brodie has stated that the idea expressed in this famous dictum by Clausewitz must really be an old one.[36] It would seem that the first detailed expression of this idea is to be found in Thucydides.[37]

The grand strategies of the two competing states were shaped by their respective political objectives. Athens, the *status quo* power, formed a defensive grand strategy whose aim was to dissuade the opponent from attempting to change the *status quo*. This would be achieved by convincing the enemy that Athens was unbeatable militarily and that it possessed ample resources to continue the struggle long after the opponent himself would be exhausted. In other words, Athens formulated a grand strategy of exhaustion, in which non-military dimensions such as economic strength played a crucial role.[38]

On the other hand, Sparta, the revisionist power, resorted to an offensive, more "Clausewitzian" grand strategy, centered around the Spartan military might. Initially the Spartans attempted to persuade the Athenians to make concessions under the threat of military defeat (viz. coercive diplomacy). Following the failure of forceful persuasion, they resorted to actual warfare in which they attempted to secure victory through a decisive land battle.

Sparta and Athens with their grand strategic designs fit remarkably with the ideal types of what Liddell Hart has named the acquisitive and the conservative state respectively.

According to Liddell Hart:

> The acquisitive State, inherently unsatisfied, needs to gain victory in order to gain its object -and must therefore court greater risks in the attempt. The conservative State can achieve its object by merely inducing the aggressor to drop his attempt at conquest -by convincing him that "the game is not worth the candle". Its victory is, in a real sense, attained by foiling the other side's bid for victory.[39]

In other words, Athens did not have to beat Sparta in military terms. If the Spartans were made to abandon their quest for overthrowing the Athenian Empire, this would signify the victory of the Athenian grand strategy. It is amazing that Liddell Hart's analysis, perceptive though it is, has in fact added nothing novel to the one produced by Thucydides twenty five centuries earlier.

Apart from anticipating Liddell Hart, Thucydides may be said to operate at the same wave length as his near contemporary, Sun Tzu. Simply put, instead of defeating the might of Sparta, Athens chose to foil the Spartan plan for victory - what Sun Tzu has called the highest form of strategy.[40]

To recapitulate, Athens was satisfied with the *status quo*, whereas Sparta was bent on overthrowing it. Consequently, Athens formulated a grand strategy of exhaustion, whose aim was to make Sparta acknowledge the futility of trying to change the *status quo*, while the latter formulated a strategy of annihilation, trying to force a land battle where its powerful infantry would prove decisive.

2.2. Athenian Grand Strategy: Two Underlying Philosophies

An underlying philosophy of the Athenian grand strategy was rejection of appeasement. Pericles insisted on securing equal status between Athens and Sparta. Any unilateral Athenian concessions, no matter how trivial they might seem in the first place, would erode this status. Thus, immediately before the outbreak of the war, the Spartans stated that peace could be preserved, provided the Athenians revoked the famous Megarian Decree, which excluded the citizens of Megara from the ports of the Athenian Alliance and the market of Attica.[41] Even in this relatively minor issue, Pericles was not prepared to make unilateral concessions. For him, this Spartan request was nothing but a test of the Athenians' will and determination. If Athens backed down on that issue, then Sparta was sure to come up with further demands.

As Pericles himself put it:

> I am against making any concessions to the Peloponnesians. [...] It was evident before that Sparta was plotting against us, and now it is even more evident. [...] They come to us with a proclamation that we must give the Hellenes their freedom. Let none of you think that we shall be going to war for a trifle if we refuse to revoke the Megarian decree. [...] For you this trifle is both the assurance and the proof of your determination. If you give in, you will immediately be confronted with some greater demand, since they will think that you only gave way on this point through fear. But if you take a firm stand you will make it clear to them that they have to treat you properly as equals. [...] When one's equals, before resorting to arbitration, make claims on their neighbours and put those claims in the form of commands, it would still be slavish to give in to them, however big or however small such claims may be.[42]

Consequently, Pericles asked the Spartans to give a *quid pro quo* for the revocation of the Megarian Decree, namely that they would abandon their xenophobic institutions that were hampering the presence and the trading activities of Athenians and their allies in Spartan territory.[43] These terms were rejected by the Spartans and war became inevitable. Rather than submit to coercive demands, Pericles chose war.

This is as good an analysis of the dangers of appeasement as any in modern literature. The lessons that the Western democracies had to learn painfully while dealing with Hitler in the 1930s[44] had already been mastered by Thucydides. Of course, this does not conclude the discussion about appeasement. Appeasement has negative connotations in the West because of Munich, but sometimes it can actually be a very useful instrument. The Byzantines, for example, often resorted to appeasement in order to close secondary fronts and deal with the primary threat undisturbed.[45] However, when a state, especially a hegemonic power, is utilizing appeasement, it runs two risks. First, that its behavior may invite further demands and challenges by its adversary. Second, that it may be perceived as a sign of weakness by the hegemon's allies and thus jeopardize the hegemonic rule. It was precisely for these reasons that Pericles rejected appeasing the Peloponnesians.[46]

Another underlying philosophy of Pericles' strategy was avoidance of overextension. Pericles advised that Athens should not try to expand its dominions. War with a third party during the period of competition with the principal adversary ought to be avoided.[47] The fact that Pericles rejected further territorial aggrandizement is a clear evidence that he had grasped what has now become common knowledge, namely that the collapse of great powers is brought about by overextension.[48] Under this process, a state sets objectives and undertakes commitments beyond the means available to it. Consequently, the costs it incurs in pursuing these objectives and sustaining these commitments are greater than the benefits it extracts from its endeavors (e.g. a costly war in a far-off place that produces little in return) and in the long run its power is sapped.

The international situation prior to the outbreak of war, the political objectives of Athens and Sparta, and the grand strategic plans these objectives generated, have already been examined. Let us now turn our attention to the means employed by the grand strategy of Athens under Pericles' direction.

3. The Means of Periclean Grand Strategy

Periclean grand strategy made use of a variety of means. Apart from the traditional military means, it employed economic, diplomatic, technological, and psychological ones. The particular combination of these means (policy mix) was governed by the following principles:

a. Balance the power of the enemy.

b. Exploit competitive advantages and minimize those of the enemy.

c. Deter the enemy by denial of his success and by the skillful use of retaliation.

d. Erode the international power base of the enemy.

e. Shape the domestic environment of the adversary to your own benefit.

3.1. Balance the Power of the Enemy

The first principle of Periclean grand strategy was typical balancing of the power of Sparta and its allies. Balancing can be done either by utilizing power from abroad (external balancing), and/or by mobilizing and exploiting domestic resources (internal balancing).[49] External balancing is chiefly done through alliances.[50] Athens drew upon the collective resources of its free allies, Chios, Lesbos, and Corcyra. These allies provided ships in wartime.[51] For instance, Thucydides mentions that in the first year of the war, the expedition around Peloponnese by an Athenian fleet consisting of 100 ships was assisted by a powerful squadron of 50 ships from Corcyra.[52]

As far as internal balancing is concerned, it has already been demonstrated that Athens was drawing support from its empire. If the free allies provided Athens with ships, the subordinate ones or, as Thucydides put it, "cities in the tribute-paying class"[53] supported Athens financially and provided a pool of trained sailors in addition to those possessed by Athens itself.[54]

Apart from imperial resources, Athenian internal balancing drew upon resources of Athens proper. Thus, the Athenians created a financial and naval reserve to be used only in extreme emergency:

> They also decided to set aside and keep intact a special fund of 1000 talents from the money in the Acropolis. The expenses of the war were to be paid out of other funds, and the death penalty was laid down for anyone who should suggest or should put to the vote any proposal for using this money in any other way except to defend the city in the case of their enemies coming to attack them with a fleet by sea. To go with this money they set aside a special fleet of 100 triremes, the best ones of each year, with their captains. These, too, were only to be used in the same way as the money and to meet the same danger, if it should ever arise.[55]

One cannot fail grasping the link between wealth and power, in this case naval power. The decision to create this "iron reserve" is important for it suggests that the Athenians had begun mobilization for a long war and wanted to hedge against the possibility of serious depletion of their reserves.[56]

Finally, Pericles also paid attention to the constant training of the Athenians in maritime affairs, which provided the city with a big number of sailors, whose mastery of their craft was superior to that of their enemies.[57]

In sum, balancing in the Periclean grand strategy consisted basically of the mobilization and deployment of Athenian wealth and manpower together with those of the "free allies" and the imperial subjects for the purpose of achieving the goals of policy in wartime.[58]

3.2. Exploit Your Competitive Advantages and Minimize Those of the Enemy

A second principle of Pericles' grand strategy was the exploitation of the competitive advantages of Athens and the respective minimization of those of Sparta. One such advantage was provided by the existence of a comprehensive urban fortification complex, namely the walls around Athens. The Athenians started rebuilding the walls of their city after the Persian invaders withdrew. The Spartans tried to preclude the rebuilding, coming up with an ingenious arms control proposal, namely the demolition of the walls of every city outside Peloponnese, Athens included.

> When the Spartans heard of what was going on they sent an embassy to Athens. This was partly because they themselves did not like the idea of Athens or any other city being fortified. [...] The Spartans proposed that not only should

> Athens refrain from building her own fortifications, but that she should join them in pulling down all the fortifications which still existed in cities outside the Peloponnese. In making this suggestion to the Athenians they concealed their real meaning and their real fears. The idea was, they said, that if there was another Persian invasion, the Persians would have no strong base from which to operate, such as they had in Thebes, and that the Peloponnese was capable of serving the needs of everyone, both as a place of refuge and as a place from which to attack.[59]

The Athenians, under the direction of Themistocles, procrastinated in replying to the Spartan suggestion, until the wall had reached sufficient height.[60]

These walls were to have a catalytic impact on the relations between Athens and Sparta in general and the conduct of the Peloponnesian War in particular, by neutralizing the advantage that the Spartans derived from their highly trained land forces. As Josiah Ober has correctly observed: "Pericles' strategy radically altered the use of force in Greek international relations. The physical obstacle represented by stone and brick fortifications effectively stymied the deployment of military force by human agents who lacked the technological means to overcome the obstacle."[61] Essentially, these walls made Athens an island, which was indeed what Pericles himself suggested:

> Suppose we were an island, would we not be absolutely secure from attack? As it is we must try to think of ourselves as islanders.[62]

This brings us to the second competitive advantage of Athens that the Periclean grand strategy put in good use, namely the navy.[63] In essence, Pericles suggested that, instead of fighting a pitched battle with the Spartan infantry, the Athenians should use their navy for making commando raids on enemy territory. Thus, they would make the war costlier for the Spartans without suffering serious casualties themselves. We have already seen Pericles (and Archidamus) stressing the importance of the Athenian navy in the forthcoming war. At a later instance, Pericles gave his fellow citizens a more general account of the essence of seapower, that has retained its validity throughout history:

> Now, what you think is that your empire consists simply of your allies: but I have something else to tell you. The world before our eyes can be divided to two parts, the land and the sea, each of which is valuable and useful to man. Of the

> whole of one of these parts you are in control -not only of the area at present in your power, but elsewhere too, if you want to go further. With your navy as it is today there is no power on earth -not the King of Persia nor any people under the sun- which can stop you from sailing where you wish.[64]

Interesting analogies may be drawn with later eras. For instance, one may easily argue that the maritime strategy of Athens is a direct predecessor of the similar strategy that was to offer so many benefits to Great Britain.[65] Paul Kennedy has given the following definition of naval mastery:

> a situation in which a country has so developed its maritime strength that it is superior to any rival power, and that its predominance is or could be exerted far outside its home waters, with the result that it is extremely difficult for other, lesser states to undertake maritime operations or trade without at least its tacit consent.[66]

Great Britain enjoyed such a happy situation from the end of the seventeenth century until the end of World War I. Athens was certainly in such a situation from the end of the Persian Wars until the destruction of its fleet at Aegospotami in 405 B.C. The only problem with the Athenian maritime strategy was that the financial costs were appreciable.[67] This was the necessary result of relying on a form of warfare (naval) that made greater demands on resources compared to the traditional one (land). Still, Athens showed that it could well sustain the relevant cost.

3.3. Deter the Enemy by Denial of his Success and by the Skillful Use of Retaliation

The third principle of the Periclean grand strategy envisaged the use of what in modern terminology has been called "deterrence". Athenian deterrence had two dimensions. The first was what would nowadays be called "deterrence by denial". The formidable walls of Athens plus the easy supply of the city by sea ensured that Athens would not be conquered, no matter how powerful Sparta and its allies were on land. In the meantime the Athenians would avoid decisive battle with the enemy, irrespective of how much damage it might cause by its invasion of Attica -what was later called "Fabian strategy".[68] Pericles argued that it would be suicidal for the Athenians to leave their walls and offer battle on land against the invading Peloponnesians. To start with, the

Spartans and their allies were more numerous.[69] In addition, the Spartan infantry was a highly trained force, by far the best in Greece. Simply put, the Peloponnesians were invincible (or, as Sphacteria revealed, near-invincible) on land, a point that Pericles repeatedly emphasized.[70] Even if by a miracle the Athenians managed to win a land battle, the war would still not be over; the following year would once again feature a Peloponnesian invasion. If, on the other hand, the land battle had the most likely outcome, that is, an Athenian defeat, Athens would lose both the war and the empire at a stroke, since it would be unable to retain control of its allies. In Pericles' words:

> We must abandon our land and our houses, and safeguard the sea and the city. We must not, through anger at losing land and homes, join battle with the greatly superior forces of the Peloponnesians. If we won a victory, we should still have to fight them again in just the same numbers, and if we suffered a defeat, we should at the same time lose our allies, on whom our strength depends, since they will immediately revolt if we are left with insufficient troops to send against them. What we should lament is not the loss of houses or of land, but the loss of men's lives. Men come first; the rest is the fruit of their labour.[71]

In Pericles' strategy, the distinction between denial and defense was a clear-cut one. Defense is directed against the enemy's hostile actions. Pericles objected to it and suggested a strategy addressing Sparta's aims -its motivation in undertaking offensive action. Defense seeks to prevent harm to one's self; denial seeks to prevent enemy gains. While these two strategies are frequently similar, they are not synonymous.[72]

Pericles' rationale may look sound nowadays, but one has to understand that it ran counter to the prevailing Greek ethos from Homer onwards, namely the glory of war.[73] To suggest that nothing should be done, as the Spartans were destroying the land outside the city walls, leaves one open to accusations of cowardice. Of course this accusation was far more potent in Ancient Greece than in our era. In this respect, the post-heroic strategy suggested by Pericles was an extremely difficult one. However, Pericles stuck to his strategy, for he sincerely believed that it was the only one that could bring victory - to avoid the critical battle and let time work to the detriment of the adversary. In the meantime, the Athenian navy would keep the Empire together, thus enabling Athens to continue the war indefinitely, precisely as Pericles (and Archidamus) envisaged, in contrast to those in Sparta who were thinking in terms of a short war.[74]

There is an interesting psychological aspect in the deterrence by denial as encountered in Periclean grand strategy. Since the avoidance of battle implicitly consented to the destruction of the Attic mainland, it constitutes an interesting variation of the "scorched earth policy" that is generally construed as an indication of determination to continue the struggle without sparing any sacrifices.[75]

The second dimension of Athenian deterrence, namely "deterrence by retaliation", is a more familiar one. As Pericles had made clear, any Peloponnesian invasion of Attica would provoke reprisal raids on the Peloponnesian coast by the Athenian navy. This was of particular importance to the credibility of the Athenian deterrence, since it carried the threat of imposing potentially substantial costs on Sparta and its allies. Such a threat was lacking in the case of pure defense behind the walls, although the walls were impregnable, such a defense implied no costs for the invading Peloponnesians. This is precisely what Liddell Hart had in mind when he rejected static defense as a military strategy for conservative states and instead stated that economy of force and deterrent effect are best combined in the defensive-offensive method, based on high mobility that carries the power of quick riposte.[76]

As to the retaliatory dimension of Athenian deterrence, it is interesting that retaliation was of moderate proportions at the beginning of the war. Indeed, the level of retaliation has led to accusations of feebleness and lack of strategic purpose that persist to this day. Actually, retaliation was progressively escalating. Thus, in the second year of the war, Pericles, in what was an important organizational innovation, transferred about 300 cavalry to Peloponnese by sea on special horse-transports. "These horsemen had virtually free rein for the Spartans possessed no mounted force to impede them."[77] This escalation increased the danger for Sparta's social order, since it encouraged a revolt of the restless slave population. If Sparta did not comply with the Athenian wishes and keep on with the war, retaliation was bound to escalate to a further point.

In this respect, the capture and fortification of Pylos and subsequent Spartan defeat at Sphacteria in 425 B.C., far from constituting deviations from the Periclean grand strategy,[78] were in fact its logical corollary. The progressive escalation threw the Spartans

out of balance and induced them to commit the blunder of sending a force to the small island of Sphacteria. This presented the Athenians with a golden opportunity that they were quick to exploit by blockading and then capturing the Spartan force. As Pericles himself had stated: "In war opportunity waits for no man".[79]

One might ask why retaliation would ever compel Sparta to yield when the city had not been deterred by the threat of retaliation in the first place. Pericles, however, was determined to demonstrate to the Spartans that the marginal benefits of their aggression were bound to decline over time, whereas the marginal costs of retaliation were bound to increase over time. This is precisely what Pylos and Sphacteria made evident; Sparta could not defeat Athens, while suffering mounting costs in the war. As a result, the Spartans sued for peace -a clear victory for the Periclean strategy.[80]

3.4. Erode the International Power Base of the Enemy

Another principle of the Periclean grand strategy was the erosion of the international power base of the enemy. This was principally achieved through the use of economic warfare and intimidation. Regarding economic warfare, the Athenian navy, apart from raiding the coast of Peloponnese, hampered the trading activities of the Peloponnesians. This was particularly damaging for such states as Corinth and Megara, which depended considerably on maritime trade.[81] Thus, the Peloponnesians were forced to cope with the means provided by the agricultural sector of their economies, in other words with financial means inferior to those possessed by Athens.[82] Furthermore, the international power base of Sparta was weakened by intimidating both its actual and potential allies. Among the various instances of this policy, the most famous one occurred after Pericles' death, namely the Melian Dialogue. Even neutrals that were leaning towards Sparta had to be intimidated in disproportion to what they were doing.[83]

3.5. Shape the Domestic Environment of the Adversary to Your Own Benefit

Finally, another principle of the Periclean grand strategy was that Athens should try to shape the domestic environment of Sparta in a way compatible with the Athenian interests. For this to happen, Athens needed to address the enemy psychologically. Pericles intended to convince the Spartans that war against Athens was futile; even though they might ravage Attica at will, it would become evident to them that they could not force a decision, while in the meantime the Peloponnesian coasts would lie at the mercy of the Athenian navy.[84] This situation would eventually bring about a shift in the domestic balance of power in Sparta; moderate leaders would emerge, who would understand that the war did not make any sense, and they would sue for peace. This was actually how the two opponents reached peace after the tenth year of the war, when king Pleistoanax, a supporter of peace, became the principal figure in Sparta.[85] In terms of modern strategic theory, this attempt of Pericles to influence the domestic balance of power in Sparta by the controlled use of Athenian offensive forces constitutes an example of environment-shaping strategy. Such a strategy enables a state to cope with the reality that its decisions affect the environment. Environmental shaping entails using power to help create security conditions such that render fighting in order to protect one's interests unnecessary.[86]

These were the principles that governed the policy mix of the various means (military, economic, diplomatic, technological and psychological) employed by the Periclean grand strategy in order to attain Athens' political objectives. Thus, a pretty clear outline of the Periclean grand strategy emerges. Aiming at the maintenance of the *status quo*, Periclean grand strategy attempted to dissuade the opponent through a strategy of exhaustion. In military terms, this grand strategy rested upon the deterrent effect that powerful fortifications and naval commando raids would have on the enemy (see Table 2). It now remains to deal with the important dimension of legitimacy, both domestic and international.

Table 2: The Grand Strategies of Athens and Sparta

	ATHENS	SPARTA
POLITICAL OBJECTIVES	Limited aims Maintenance of the *status quo* Preservation of the Athenian Empire	Unlimited aims Change of the *status quo* Dissolution of the Athenian Empire
GRAND STRATEGY	Dissuasion by exhaustion	Persuasion by threatened or actual military annihilation
MILITARY STRATEGY	Deterrence by denial and retaliation	Offense, decisive land battle

4. The Issue of Legitimacy

It is important that the grand strategy of a state must be viewed as legitimate, especially domestically, but also internationally. The American experience in Vietnam should suffice to prove this point; the loss of domestic legitimacy exercised a crippling effect on American grand strategy. How, then, did Pericles cope with the problem of ensuring domestic legitimacy for his grand strategy?

4.1. Domestic Legitimacy

The Periclean grand strategy was inherently unpopular. The fact that Pericles actually managed to persuade the Athenian public to stick to an unpopular policy speaks volumes of his talent as a statesman. It is precisely for this reason that Hans Delbrück has called Pericles one of the greatest statesmen and military leaders in history.[87] Still, even Pericles himself did not find it easy. The Athenians, who had felt that moving behind the walls and thus abandoning their property to the mercy of the enemy was difficult enough, were shattered to see this property being destroyed in front of their eyes:

> Their land was being laid waste in front of their very eyes - a thing that the young men had never seen happen and that the old men had seen only at the time of the Persian invasion. Naturally enough, therefore, they felt outraged by this and wanted, especially the young, to march out and stop it.[88]

Pericles became a convenient scapegoat and a fine was imposed on him -a charasteristic example of the erratic decision-making of the Athenian polity.[89] Nevertheless, the Athenians remained true to the strategy devised by Pericles and did not seriously depart from it until long after his death.[90] Therefore, to put the matter differently, domestic legitimacy is a *conditio sine qua non* for the success of a grand strategy. All strategies, all strategic designs will collapse unless there is domestic legitimacy, and this is particularly true for democracies. In this respect, Pericles' Epitaph, his speech in memoriam of those that fell dead during the first year of the war, deserves special attention. This speech is a tribute to the "Athenian way of life", aiming to persuade the Athenians to rally round the war effort of their city.[91]

The question of domestic legitimacy also included another dimension in the Athenian grand strategy. This was the effort to undermine the domestic power base of Sparta by attempts to foment a revolt of the helots, the indigenous population that the Spartans had enslaved when they first arrived at the Southern Peloponnese. The raids of the Athenian navy were providing the helots with excellent opportunities to wreak havoc on their Spartan masters and the possibility of achieving liberation.[92]

4.2. International Legitimacy

International legitimacy can also be helpful. To be sure, under conditions of international anarchy; i.e., in the absence of a supreme authority that will regulate the interstate antagonism, relations between states are fundamentally conflictual.[93] Consequently, one cannot expect much good will from the international environment. Nevertheless, if the grand strategy of a state is regarded internationally as legitimate, this might at least spare that state some potential enemies and thus enable it to economize on its resources.

Unfortunately for Periclean Athens, things were not promising in this respect. What had begun as the Athenian Alliance, directed against the Persian threat, had turned into the Athenian Empire which, as demonstrated earlier, served primarily as a source of revenue for Athens. All legitimacy had evaporated, and the coercive power of the Athenian navy was the sole factor responsible for holding the alliance together. The Athenians were fully cognizant of this fact. Athenian ambassadors that had visited Sparta shortly before the outbreak of the war had no trouble acknowledging that the Athenians faced "immoderate hostility from the Hellenes -especially so far as our empire is concerned."[94] Pericles himself went as far as calling the Athenian Empire a tyranny, yet a tyranny that it would be unsafe to abandon:

> You cannot continue to enjoy the privileges unless you also shoulder the burdens of empire. And do not imagine that what we are fighting for is simply the question of freedom or slavery: there is also involved the loss of our empire and the dangers arising from the hatred which we have incurred in administering it. Nor is it any longer possible for you to give up this empire. [...] Your empire is now like a tyranny: it may have been wrong to take it; it is certainly dangerous to let it go.[95]

What was a weakness for Athens, constituted a strength for Sparta. The Spartans presented themselves as the liberators of the Greeks from Athenian oppression, thus gaining considerable support. According to Thucydides:

> People's feelings were generally very much on the side of the Spartans, especially as they proclaimed that their aim was the liberation of Hellas. States and individuals alike were enthusiastic to support them in every possible way, both in speech and in action.[96]

This point concludes the examination of the Periclean grand strategy. A more or less complete idea of the relative strengths and weaknesses of each side (see Table 3), as well as the way in which Athens tried to exploit its strengths and minimize the impact of its weaknesses, has been gained. Let us now make an attempt to evaluate the Periclean grand strategy.

Table 3: Athens and Sparta: Relative Strengths And Weaknesses

ATHENIAN STRENGTHS	**SPARTAN STRENGTHS**
Naval Mastery	Powerful Land Forces
Economic Strength	International Legitimacy
Overseas Empire	Low-Cost Strategy
Impregnable Fortifications	
ATHENIAN WEAKNESSES	**SPARTAN WEAKNESSES**
Weak Land Forces	Weak Naval Forces
Lack of International Legitimacy	Limited Financial Resources
High-Cost Strategy	Danger of Internal Revolt
Erratic Decision-making	Difficulty for Long and Distant Campaigns

III. Evaluation of Periclean Grand Strategy

Grand strategy, the theory of a state about how to produce its own security, is tested against political outcomes (viz. survival and well-being of the state). It is well-known that Athens lost the Peloponnesian War. How should we then rate the Periclean grand strategy outlined above? Was it a failure? The literature is divided. We have already cited Delbrück's statement about Pericles' being one of the greatest generals in history. On the other hand, some analysts have called the Periclean strategy "a form of wishful thinking that failed"[97] and have stated that "as a strategist he [Pericles] was a failure, and deserves a share of the blame for Athens' great defeat".[98] Clearly, a more detailed evaluation of the Periclean grand strategy needs to be made.

1. Evaluating Grand Strategies: Four Criteria

There are four criteria that are used for evaluating grand strategies.[99]

The first is the external fit criterion, namely the degree to which a grand strategy fits in with the international environment.

The second criterion is the relation between means and ends. This has to do with the traditional problem of how to avoid overextension, viz. pursue aims beyond one's capabilities, while at the same time finding the best use of the available means -as we have seen above, this is a very important criterion of grand strategy.

The third criterion is the criterion of efficiency. This brings us to the issue of cost-benefit assessment. Each of the different alternatives of strategic depth to victory.

The fourth and most difficult criterion is internal coherence, namely that one pillar or one means of the grand strategy does not hamper the function of another.

2. Periclean Grand Strategy According to the Four Criteria

Undoubtedly the Periclean grand strategy did remarkably well according to these criteria. To start with, it fitted properly in with the international environment. The territorial and political *status quo* was perfectly satisfactory for Athens, while at the same time the Athenian power was continually growing. Consequently, Athens had no need for an offensive strategy; after all, it had already alienated many states and there was no reason to increase its considerable list of enemies.[100] If anything, with the Aegean Sea being solidly in Athenian hands, the targets of an offensive strategy could only be directed towards the mainland, and that meant dealing with the Spartan infantry. Rather than doing this, the Athenians chose a competitive strategy, a strategy where their strengths were applied over the enemy's weaknesses (viz. naval raids directed against the delicate Spartan domestic structure). Pericles explicitly analyzed the comparative strengths and weaknesses of either side (see Table 3) and prepared a strategy to exploit them in favor of Athens.

As to the relation between means and ends, the Periclean grand strategy scored well, too. Firstly, none of the available means was neglected; in other words, the strategy was total. It is striking that, although Athens was in the midst of a great war, the military element did not dominate its grand strategy. Apart from military strategy, the Athenian grand strategy featured economic strategy, diplomacy, psychological pressure, and domestic legitimacy. Second, overextension was carefully avoided; the resources of Athens were certainly considerable, but not unlimited. Pericles

correctly understood the link between economic resources and political ends in two ways: "First, not by downplaying but by accurately emphasizing the great expense at war; and second by implying that such expense was not unanticipated and that Athens had ample funds to meet it".[101]

Now, it is obvious that under the leadership of Alcibiades the Athenians abandoned the Periclean principle to balance means and ends in order to avoid overextension.[102] The outcome was the costly Sicilian expedition, that aimed at extending Athenian control to the remote and populous lands of Sicily (and even beyond), and ended in an unmitigated disaster for Athens.[103] This expedition changed the whole course of the war and, according to Thucydides, this great departure from the Periclean grand strategy was the very reason for the Athenian defeat.[104]

Regarding the criterion of efficiency, one can see that the Periclean strategy once again performed well. Without suffering undue casualties, the Athenians were able to beat off the challenge of the Peloponnesians (as well as some of their own allies) and retain their empire in Greece, at least until the disaster in Sicily. The destruction of Attica was a mere trifle in comparison. Only in financial terms were the costs appreciable. However, this was part and parcel with the capital-intensive maritime strategy that Athens had been following since the days of Themistocles, in contrast to the labor-intensive continental strategy of Sparta. Moreover, Athenian resources were equal to the task of sustaining the war effort.

Finally, the Periclean grand strategy had no difficulty at all to meet the criterion of internal coherence. All the components of this grand strategy reinforced each other and none of them hampered the influence of the other. For instance, the military dimension (naval commando raids) was never allowed to interfere with the diplomatic one (tacit bargaining with the enemy).

A grand strategy that scores so well according to these criteria can be expected to score well when put to test, as in the case of the Periclean grand strategy. All the components of this grand strategy created a grand total which was victory through exhaustion of the enemy. After ten years of war, the Spartans admitted they had had enough, and abandoned their bid for victory. In fact, Athens could have achieved even more. According to Arther Ferrill:

> In the first six years of the war (431-426) Periclean strategy had worked to Athens' advantage. To be sure, Platea had fallen to Thebes and Sparta, and Attica had been at the mercy of the Spartan army, while the plague took a heavy toll; but around Corcyra and the Corinthian Gulf Athens had held its own and inflicted losses on the Peloponnesians. [...] Athens remained strong, and the Spartans seemed unable to use their land power effectively against the naval giant.[105]

Then, in 425 B.C. there came the astonishing Athenian success in Sphacteria. Had the Athenians been more astute in exploiting it, they would have emerged victorious. "In the first six years Periclean strategy had very nearly worked, but the Athenians refused to negotiate."[106] Still, even the Peace of Nikias in 421 B.C. can be regarded as favorable to Athens.[107] Athens retained its profitable empire and discouraged further adventures on behalf of the Spartans, until Alcibiades hit upon the Sicilian expedition.

3. Critiques of Periclean Grand Strategy

Last, we must examine the specific criticisms directed against the Periclean grand strategy. The grand strategy of Pericles has been chiefly criticized on four accounts:[108] first, that by rejecting even minor concessions to the Peloponnesians, Periclean grand strategy brought about war; in other words, it was a high-cost strategy. Second, that the strategy was unforeseen by the enemy; hence it lacked credibility and, consequently, its deterrent value was low (i.e. it provoked war thus a high-cost strategy again). Third, it was too feeble to exploit any opportunities and increase the cost the enemy had to bear (misuse of available means). In the end, the strategy depended on Pericles for its execution and thus was bound to be abandoned after his death (in fact, this criticism does not question the soundness of the strategy itself). Let us deal with each of these criticisms in turn.

As far as the first criticism is concerned, namely that Pericles' rejection of appeasement (viz. refusal to revoke the Megarian Decree) brought about the Peloponnesian war,[109] it should be noted that it is unjustified to put all blame on Pericles. The international situation at the time was very tense, and no one can say with confidence that the war could have been avoided, one way or another. David Baldwin presents a more balanced view:

> Although Pericles' action failed to deter war, the probability of war was fairly great to begin with; and perhaps nothing he could have done would have avoided it. Given the tense and complex situation, the imposition of economic sanctions may well have been the policy option with the highest probability of success -even though it was very low. Taking into consideration the difficulty of the task, the policy alternatives available, and the complexity of the situation, it seems as plausible to say that the Peloponnesian War occurred despite Pericles' prudent -perhaps even ingenious- attempt to head it off via the Megarian Decree as it does to say that the decree "precipitated" the war.[110]

In addition, the Spartan refusal to give the *quid pro quo* asked by Pericles is an indication that Pericles' assessment of the true nature of the Spartan request may have been correct. It seems that Sparta had unlimited objectives, and was essentially impossible to appease; had the Athenians backed down in the face of the Spartan demand, they would probably had faced more pressure from Sparta in the future.

With regard to the second criticism, namely that the Periclean grand strategy was unforeseen by the enemy and thus could not deter him, we have seen that the avoidance of battle, a core principle of the Periclean strategy, was in sharp contrast to the prevailing Greek ethos of the era. Donald Kagan has made much of the contrast between the prescriptions of Periclean strategy on the one hand and the Greek culture on the other, arguing that this contrast made it unlikely in the eyes of the enemy that the Athenians would actually follow such a strategy. Consequently, this strategy, though reasonable, lacked credibility as a deterrent.[111]

Nevertheless, Kagan has overstated his case. To start with, Archidamus had thought it improbable that the Athenians would become "slaves of their own land";[112] Spartan policy makers, therefore, had no difficulty in anticipating that the Athenians would avoid battle. In addition, there had been an even more striking instance in the past where the Athenians had behaved similarly: in 480 B.C., during the Persian invasion, not only did the Athenians avoid battle with the Persians, but in fact they abandoned their very city and continued the war with their navy. It is true that the Periclean grand strategy was a difficult one both to imagine and to implement. However, this is a long way from

saying that it was completely unanticipated by the enemy and therefore of limited deterrent value. Furthermore, the strategy of avoiding battle in Attica was never seriously questioned, even after the death of Pericles. Clearly, it had been endorsed by the Athenians, precisely as Archidamus had predicted.

In order to counter the third criticism, namely that the Periclean grand strategy was too feeble to exploit any opportunities and increase the cost the enemy had to bear,[113] one needs to elaborate upon the deterrent dimension of the Periclean grand strategy, which, for all its importance, has often been improperly understood. Deterrence is a form of coercion that attempts to influence the enemy's behavior in a manner conducive to the interests of the coercer.[114] Coercion involves affecting the relative attractiveness of the various courses of action open to an opponent. This is precisely what the Athenians under Pericles did: they manipulated the threat of negative sanctions (retaliation) that Athens could impose on Sparta. The threat of retaliation is the threat to inflict pain unrelated to the non-desirable activity of the opponent, until the opponent complies.[115] Recall Pericles:

> If they invade our country by land, we will invade theirs by sea, and it will turn out that the destruction of a part of the Peloponnese will be worse for them than the destruction of the whole of Attica would be for us.[116]

Pericles' strategy threatened Sparta with the certain prospect of *higher pain* in the event of Spartan invasion. The administration of this pain, however, was not a "once-and-for-all action"; instead, it was part of an ongoing bargaining process.

This explains Athenian moderation in inflicting damage during the first year of the war and its escalation thereafter.[117] In modern strategic jargon, Pericles was using a strategy of graduated escalation in administering pain as a bargaining tool.[118]

Obviously, badly designed, impulsive retaliation (e.g. massive raids and immediate occupation of outposts, as various critics of Pericles have suggested) might have had the exact reverse impact: removing the Spartan leadership from a cool and rational calculation of marginal costs and benefits to an impulsive conduct permeated by revanchism. As an author otherwise critical of Pericles admits:

> The offensive actions were deliberately unimpressive, for they were intended only as evidence that an extended war would be damaging to the Peloponnesians. To engage in

> offensive actions which were more vigorous would, in fact, conflict with the plan. Offensive actions, while unable to bring about victory, might enrage the enemy.[119]

As to the fourth criticism, namely that the Periclean grand strategy depended solely on Pericles for its execution,[120] one must recall that Athenian reliance on fortifications and naval power existed long before Pericles.[121] It was Themistocles who started it all. In formulating his grand strategy, Pericles built upon past experience and took into account the geopolitical realities [structural imperatives]. Consequently, it is wrong to attribute this particular element of Athenian strategy solely to his influence and thus reach the conclusion that with Pericles gone this strategy would necessarily be abandoned. In contemporary parlance, Athens' maritime strategy was a core strategy, viz. a state strategy consisting of all elements of policy that remain constant regardless of the international environment in which the state finds itself.[122]

All in all, the Periclean grand strategy cannot be blamed for the outbreak of the war; it was not at all unforeseen, and consequently constituted a sound deterrence strategy; it presented the enemy with escalating retaliation as a part of a bargaining process, and therefore it was neither feeble nor lacking in purpose; finally, to a large extent it reflected structural imperatives that were present with or without Pericles.

4. Why Athens lost

In evaluating the Periclean grand strategy, it might not be superfluous to quote the opinion of Thucydides, who must have certainly been in a position to judge accurately. Thucydides asserted that Athens lost the war because it abandoned the strategy devised by Pericles. He went on to say that had Athens kept following that strategy, it could have beaten the Peloponnesians.

> Pericles had said that Athens would be victorious if she bided her time and took care of her navy, if she avoided trying to add to the empire during the course of the war, and if she did nothing to risk the safety of the city itself. But his successors did the exact opposite. [...] So overwhelmingly great were the resources which Pericles had in mind at the time when he prophesied an easy victory for Athens over the Peloponnesians alone.[123]

Colin Gray has summarized the anatomy of the Athenian failure in the Peloponnesian War as follows:

> For Sparta to succeed, Athens had to be weakened by plague, had to suffer irreparable losses in men and prestige in the expedition to Sicily (415-413 B.C.) and, having effected a partial recovery from these calamities, then had to commit major errors in lack of vigilance in the naval campaign for control of the Dardanelles. No less important, massive financial subsidies from Persia were required for Sparta to acquire the naval power that it needed.[124]

Persia, of course, did not dare to subsidize the Spartan naval buildup against Athens before the Athenians ruined themselves through overextension in Sicily.

It is therefore clear that the Athenians lost the war only when they dramatically reversed the Periclean grand strategy that explicitly disdained further conquests. Pericles had not only outlined a theory of victory to his fellow citizens, but had also laid down to them the conditions under which his grand strategy was not expected to work:

> I could give you many other reasons why you should feel confident in ultimate victory, if only you will make up your minds not to add to the empire while the war is in progress, and not to go out of your way to involve yourselves in new perils. What I fear is not the enemy's strategy, but our own mistakes.[125]

The fact that the Athenians chose to bring about these very conditions is definitely not Pericles' fault.

We have seen that in Thucydides' opinion the Periclean grand strategy would have brought victory to Athens if meticulously followed. This is an important tribute to the author of this strategy, Pericles, who not only devised it, but made sure that it was followed, if less than wholeheartedly, by the Athenian public. Hans Delbrück has stated that Pericles deserves a position "not simply among the great statesmen, but also among the great military leaders of world history";[126] this article is in complete agreement with this view.

Epilogue

This essay set out to highlight Thucydides' contribution to the study of strategy. The case study it employed was the grand strategy of exhaustion that Athens implemented under the

direction of Pericles in the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. From this analysis, Thucydides' text emerged as a classic. To start with, it contains the first detailed presentation of a theory of grand strategy.[127] Furthermore, it illustrates graphically how grand strategies are formulated and put to the test. In addition, a great number of central concepts of modern strategic theory have been superbly analyzed in Thucydides' text. To a great extent, contemporary analysts have made no significant contribution to Thucydides' treatment of these concepts. To paraphrase Gilpin, it is doubtful whether modern strategists know anything about strategy that was unknown to Thucydides. True, technology has been profoundly transformed since Thucydides' time. Still, "there is a certain logic of hostility, a dilemma about security that goes with interstate politics in a self-help system. Alliances, balances of power, and choices in policy between war and appeasement have remained similar over the millenia."[128] Thucydides was as well cognizant of this logic as any modern analyst.

However, Thucydides has been comparatively neglected as a strategist. In all probability, this is due to his tremendous success as a historian and international relations analyst. Still, this is unfair. To be sure, perceptive scholars and policy-makers have long ago appreciated Thucydides' qualities as a strategist and his continued relevance to the field.[129] Thankfully, this appreciation is growing, but there is still a lot to be done.

This paper has illustrated that the strategy of exhaustion played a prominent part in Thucydides' analysis. Prior to finishing, a few remarks about this strategy should be made. To start with, this strategy has a glorious past: it can plausibly be argued that the Periclean grand strategy of exhaustion contained the seeds of what was later called "the British way of warfare", which was said to entail the blockade of continental ports, distant maritime operations directed against the colonies and the overseas trade of the rival continental powers, subsidies to allies, symbolic ground forces commitment to the continent, and peripheral raiding around the continental littoral to exploit the flexibility of seapower for surprise maneuver.[130]

Yet, the strategy of exhaustion has been relatively neglected in the last two centuries. The strategy that dominated western strategic thinking from the end of the Napoleonic Wars till the end of the Second World War was the strategy of annihilation, viz. the pursuit of victory through decisive battle. The advent of the

nuclear weapons, however, made the strategy of annihilation increasingly unattractive. Since 1945, although the employment of war as an instrument of policy has not dissapeared, it has been greatly restricted, especially among nuclear powers. In other words, it was no longer possible to regard a nuclear war as a means to achieve political aims,[131] since neither side could avoid devastation. With the current state of technology, this is, to some extent, also true for a protracted conventional war.[132] However, the pursuit of victory was not abandoned. Instead, it led to the rediscovery of the strategy of exhaustion. The American grand strategy *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union during the Cold War constituted a typical example of such a strategy. In fact, there are quite a few similarities between the grand strategy of exhaustion that Pericles suggested to the Athenians in order to deal with the Spartans, and the conduct of the United States of America toward the Soviet Union during the Cold War. In fact, it was through the successful application of the strategy of exhaustion that the United States managed to win the Cold War.

The Cold War is not the only contemporary instance of employment of the strategy of exhaustion. A cursory examination of the strategy followed by the US and its NATO allies in Bosnia will suffice to prove this point; economic warfare, diplomatic isolation, and other means of grand strategy were used in order to bring about the exhaustion of the adversary.[133]

In the coming decades, the employment of the strategy of exhaustion is bound to become more popular. In fact, as the cost of the application of military force increases, and the sensitivity of Western societies to casualties grows, the pursuit of victory is possible mainly through the strategy of exhaustion. Technological trends (viz. "the revolution in military technology") based on the ability to collect, transmit, and intercept information, as well as deliver firepower against any target anywhere, facilitate the military dimension of this strategy, in the same way as the technological developments in Ancient Greece (viz. the triremes) made naval raids an important pillar of the Periclean grand strategy. This post-Clausewitzian, post-heroic warfare, has its origins in the Periclean grand strategy.[134]

NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented in a conference on "War in a Changing World" organized by the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 5-7 November 1996. I would like to thank Constantinos Koliopoulos for his most helpful comments and criticism.

2. Michael Handel, **Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought,** London: Frank Cass, 1992, p. 1.

3. Robert Gilpin, **War and Change in World Politics**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 227.

4. Hans Delbrück, **History of the Art of War** (4 Vols.), Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975-1985. See also Gordon A. Craig, "Delbrück: The Military Historian", pp. 326-353 in Peter Paret (ed.), **Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age**, Oxford: Clarendon, 1986.

5. See Michael Howard, "The Influence of Clausewitz", pp. 27-44 in Carl von Clausewitz, **On War** [edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret], Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989.

6. On the evolution of the terms "strategy" and "grand strategy"cf. Antoine Henry de Jomini, **The Art of War**, quoted in Gerard Chaliand (ed.), **The Art of War in World History**, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994, pp. 738; Basil Liddell Hart, **Strategy**, 2nd rev. ed., London: Meridian, 1991, pp. 321-322; André Beaufre, **Introduction to Strategy**, London: Faber and Faber, 1965; Edward Luttwak, **Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace**, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987; Haralambos Papasotiriou, **Byzantine Grand Strategy**, Ph.D. Diss., Stanford University, 1991, pp. 1-39. For an interesting discussion of the various levels of strategy in the context of strategic surprise see Constantinos Koliopoulos, **Understanding Strategic Surprise: An Inquiry into the Phenomenon of Strategic Surprise**, Ph.D Thesis, Lancaster University, 1996, pp. 9, 83-85.

7. Among others, J.F.C. Fuller has stated that "Pericles relied upon the strategy of exhaustion"; **A Military History of the Western World, Vol. 1: From the Earliest Times to the Battle of Lepanto**, New York: Da Capo Press, 1954, p. 57. As it will be seen at a later point of this essay, the Athenians were eventually to

depart from the strategy devised by Pericles. For an analysis of the various strategies that the city of Athens adopted during the Peloponnesian War see Donald Kagan, "Athenian strategy in the Peloponnesian War", pp. 24-55 in Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox, and Alvin Bernstein (eds.), **The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

8. Strategy implies an opponent, a conflict, a competition, a situation where somebody is trying to achieve a goal against somebody else.

9.This section draws heavily on Barry Posen, **The Sources of Military Doctrine**, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984, p. 13.

10. Basil Liddell Hart, **Strategy**, p. 322.

11. Luttwak, **Strategy**, pp. 4-5.

12. See, among others, Paul Kennedy, "Grand Strategies in War and Peace: Toward a Broader Definition", pp. 1-7 in Paul Kennedy (ed.), **Grand Strategies in War and Peace**, New York: Yale University Press, 1991; Papasotiriou, **Byzantine Grand Strategy**.

13. In fact, the term "city-state system" is not totally accurate, since both city-states and bigger entities, such as the various kingdoms in Epirus and Macedonia comprised ancient Greece. For an analysis of the politics in the Greek city-state system see Raphael Sealey, **A History of the Greek City States**, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.

14. See, for example, Peter J. Fliess, **Thucydides and the Politics of Bipolarity**, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966.

15. One might be tempted to find other additional poles of the system, such as the powerful Odrysian state, situated in Thrace and described with admiration by Thucydides. See Thucydides, **History of the Peloponnesian War**, [transl. by Rex Warner], London: Penguin, 1972, B 95-101.

16. W.R. Connor, "Polarization in Thucydides", in Richard Ned Lebow and Barry Strauss (eds.), **Hegemonic Rivalry from Thucydides to the Nuclear Age**, Boulder: Westview, 1991, pp. 54-57.

17. See the discussion in Carlo M. Santoro, "Bipolarity and War: What Makes the Difference?" in Lebow and Strauss, **Hegemonic Rivalry from Thucydides to the Nuclear Age**, pp. 71-86. Thucydides' narrative suggests several historical parallels to the current reader. On the utility and pitfalls of historical comparisons see Ernest R. May, **The Lessons of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy**, New York: Oxford University Press, 1973; Richard E. Meastand and Ernest R. May, **Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers**, New York: Free Press, 1986. See also Michael Howard, **The Lessons of History**, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991, pp. 6-20.

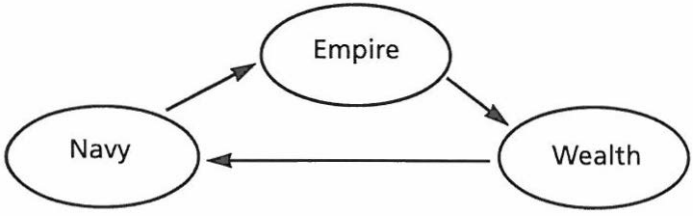
18. Thucydides, **History**, A 23.

19. Thucydides, **History**, A 89-117.

20. This is a very interesting illustration of what today is called "security dilemma", namely the situation that arises when the measures that increase the security of a state decrease the security of others. Thus, the Persian threat prompted the Athenians to establish their empire ("fear of Persia was our chief motive"; Thucydides, **History**, A 75). The empire provided security to Athens, but soon proved to be a threat to Sparta and its allies. For an analysis of the security dilemma see Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under The Security Dilemma", **World Politics**, 30, January 1978, pp. 167-214. For the Athenian Empire see Russell Meiggs, **The Athenian Empire**, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, pp. 23-151.

21. Thucydides, **History**, A 99. Similarly, Pericles stated that the strength of Athens was derived by allied payments; Thucydides, **History**, B 13. The British East India Company used a similar scheme: the Company forced the native Indian states to contribute money which it then used to raise sepoy troops, thus perpetuating both the financial drain of its opponents and its military supremacy in the Indian subcontinent; see Bruce P. Lenman, "The Transition to European Military Ascendancy in India, 1600-1800," pp. 100-130 in John A. Lynn (ed.), **Tools of War: Instruments, Ideas and Institutions of Warfare**, 1445-1871, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990.

22. For the dynamics behind the growth of Athenian power see Robert Gilpin, "The Theory of Hegemonic War", in R.I. Rotberg and T.K. Rabb (eds.) **The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars,** Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 21-23, and Michael Doyle, **Empires**, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1986. Michael Doyle states that "slave agriculture, imperial tribute and imperial mine produced monetary supremacy, which again produced commercial superiority, which in turn, through a stimulation of shipping, produced naval superiority, which in turn sustained the empire. And the empire generated the slaves, the tribute and the mines"; **Empires**, p. 63. This passage shows remarkably well the dynamic inherent in the elements of Athenian power. Still, one must point out that it overvalues the role of slave agriculture as a source of Athenian power. Furthermore, naval superiority was the generator rather than the outcome of the acquisition of the Empire and its concomitant wealth. See table below:



23. Thucydides describes Pericles' account as follows: "Apart from all other sources of revenue, the average yearly contribution from the allies to Athens amounted to 600 talents, then there still remained in the Acropolis a sum of 6000 talents of coined silver. This reserve fund, at its maximum, had been 9700 talents. It had been drawn on to pay for the Propylea and other public buildings, and for Potidea. In addition to this, there was the uncoined gold and silver in offerings made either by individuals or by the state; there were the sacred vessels and furniture used in the processions and in the games; there were the spoils taken from the Persians, and other resources of one kind or another, all of which would amount to no less than 500 talents. To this he [Pericles] added the money in the other temples which might be used and which came to a considerable sum, and said that, if they were ever really reduced to absolute extremities, they could even use the gold on the statue of Athene herself. There was, he informed them, a weight of forty talents of pure gold on this statue, all of which

was removable. [...] Thus he reassured them about their financial position"; Thucydides, **History**, B 13.

24. This truth is captured by Archidamus' statement that "war is not so much a matter of armaments as of the money which makes armaments effective"; Thucydides, **History**, A 83.

25. Donald Kagan, **The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War**, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969, pp. 345-374. For an excellent response see G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, **The Origins of the Peloponnesian War**, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972. Richard Ned Lebow has taken the intermediate position between Kagan and his critics, arguing that "Athens had increased its power under Pericles and had largely recovered from the disasters of the 440s, but in 433 its power and reputation were still not what they had been in 450"; Richard Ned Lebow, "Thucydides, Power Transition Theory and the Causes of War" in Lebow and Strauss, **Hegemonic Rivalry**, pp. 158-159.

26. Economic performance that determines a state's power and military success is always to be measured on a relative and not on an absolute basis. The crucial factor that seems to elude Kagan and his followers, is to be doing better, even if only a little better, than one's rivals. Over the long run, this asymetry will be reflected in the balance of power. This insight is utilized, among others, by Paul Kennedy in his classic volume **The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000**, New York: Random House, 1987.

27. See, among others, Lisa Kallet-Marx, **Money, Expense and Naval Power in Thucydides' History 1-5.24**, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

28. See, among others, Robert Gilpin, **The Political Economy of International Relations**, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987; Edward Mead Earle, "Adam Smith, Alexander Hamilton, Friedrich List: The Economic Foundations of Military Power", pp. 217-261 in Peter Paret (ed.), **Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age**, Oxford: Clarendon, 1986; Alfred Thayer Mahan, **The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783**, London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1892; *idem.*, **The Influence of Sea Power Upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812**, (2 Vols.), London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1893; E. H. Carr, **The 20 Years' Crisis, 1919-1939** (2nd edn., 1946), London: Papermac, 1995 (reprint); Robert G.

Gilpin, "The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism", in Robert O. Keohane (ed.), **Neorealism and its Critics**, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 308-313. In view of this huge amount of perceptive Realist analysis of the importance of economic factors, dating back since the days of Thucydides, it is amazing that Political Realism has been accused of having ignored the economic dimensions of international relations. See Gilpin, **The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism**, pp. 308-313.

29. Thucydides, **History**, A 141-143.

30. Thucydides, **History**, A 144.

31. Thucydides, **History**, A 80-81.

32. Jingoism was the sentiment of vulgar chauvinism that appeared in turn-of-the-century Great Britain in response to the German challenge; see Paul Kennedy, **The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914**, London: Allen and Unwin, 1980.

33. Kagan, **Athenian strategy in the Peloponnesian War**, p. 30.

34. Thucydides, **History**, A 141-142, B 13. For an analysis of the law of uneven growth see Robert Gilpin, **War and Change in World Politics** and *idem.*, **The Theory of Hegemonic War**.

35. Thucydides, **History**, A 139.

36. Bernard Brodie, **War and Politics**, London: Cassell, 1973, p. 1.

37. According to Doyne Dawson: "The most original contribution of the Greeks to military thought was their self-conscious development of the concept of *raison d'État*: They perceived warfare as a rational and utilitarian instrument of politics... **The Origins of Western Warfare: Militarism and Morality in the Ancient World,** Boulder: Westview, 1996, p. 79.

Furthermore in Thucydides one can find the origins of "expected utility theory". See, for instance the following analysis: "That war is an evil is a proposition so familiar to everyone that it would be tedious to develop it. No one is forced to engage it by ignorance, or kept out of it by fear, if he fancies there is anything to be gained by it. To the former the gain appears greater than the danger, while the latter would rather stand the risk than put up with an immediate sacrifice", Thucydides, **History** D 59.

38. See Delbrück, **History of the Art of War**, Vol. 1, pp. 135-143.

39. Liddell Hart, **Strategy**, p. 355.

40. Sun Tzu, "The Art of War", in Thomas R. Phillips (ed.), **Roots of Strategy: A Collection of Military Classics**, London: John Lane the Bodley Head, 1994, Ch. 3, par. 3, p. 13.

41. Thucydides, **History**, A 139.

42. Thucydides, **History**, A 140-141.

43. Thucydides, **History**, A 144.

44. Hitler said to his commander-in-chief shortly before the Polish campaign: "Our enemies are little worms; I saw them at Munich"; Chester Wilmot, **The Struggle for Europe**, New York: Carol and Graf, 1952, p. 21. This statement demonstrates how decision makers use past behavior to predict future irresolution. For an analysis of this point see Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing, "Conflict Among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure" in **International Crisis**, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977, p. 187. Also, Fred Charles Iklé, **How Nations Negotiate**, New York: Harper and Row, 1964, p. 82.

45. See Papasotiriou, **Byzantine Grand Strategy**. For other instances of successful use of appeasement see Peter Karsten, "Response to Threat Perception: Accommodation as a Special Case", pp. 120-163 in Klaus Knorr (ed.), **Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems**, Lawrence, KA: University Press of Kansas, 1976.

46. In all probability, it was for the same reasons that the Americans rejected appeasement as a strategy toward the Soviet Union after the Second World War.

47. Thucydides, **History**, A 144, B 65.

48. For a classic analysis of this process see Paul Kennedy, **The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers**.

49. See Kenneth Waltz, **Theory of International Politics**, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979, p. 168.

50. There is also a second dimension of external balancing, which is essentially to manipulate the international balance of power. A common ploy in this manipulation is to follow the saying "the enemy of the enemy is a friend." The Athenians had repeatedly resorted to this ploy by flirting with Argos, a powerful city in the

Peloponnese and a constant rival of Sparta. Unfortunately for Pericles, he lacked the possibility of a "continental strategy" in order to apply peripheral pressure on Sparta, since the Thirty Years' Treaty of 451 B.C. between Argos and Sparta prohibited Argos from coming into play before 421 B.C. Following that date, though, Athens could once again play the "Argive card". For the conflict between Sparta and Argos that errupted in Peloponnesus after the expiration of the Thirty Years' Treaty and the Athenian role therein see Thucydides, **History**, E 42-82. The Athenian relation with Argos is strongly reminiscent of the similar American relation with China during the Cold War.

51. Thucydides, **History**, B 8, where he gives a detailed description of the allies of both Sparta and Athens, plus the status of the various Athenian allies, i.e. free or tributary states.

52. Thucydides, **History**, B 25.

53. Thucydides, **History**, B 9.

54. Thucydides, **History**, A 143.

55. Thucydides, **History**, B 24.

56. See Kallet-Marx, **Money, Expense and Naval Power**, pp. 110-111.

57. Thucydides, **History**, A 142-143.

58. For a similar approach adopted by Great Britain in the first part of the twentieth century see Michael Howard, **Grand Strategy: Official History of the Second World War**, Vol. 4, London: HMSO, 1973, p. 1.

59.Thucydides, **History**, A 90.

60. Thucydides, **History**, A 90-91.

61. Josiah Ober, "National Ideology and Strategic Defense of the Population, from Athens to Star Wars", in Richard Ned Lebow and Barry Strauss (eds.), **Hegemonic Rivalry from Thucydides to Nuclear Age**, Boulder: Westview Press, 1991, p. 254. One may discern here a similarity between the Athenian fortifications and the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), which was intended to neutralize Soviet strength. The similarity is even more striking if one considers that the Soviets reacted in the same way as the Spartans had done, i.e. coming up with arms control proposals.

62. Thucydides, **History**, A 143.

63. For a description of the qualities of the trireme, the standard warship in the Mediterranean at that time, see Chester G. Starr, "The Athenian Century", in Robert Cowley (ed.), **Experience of War**, New York-London: Norton, 1992, p. 4.

64. Thucydides, **History**, B 62.

65. For the classical analysis of the maritime grand strategy of Great Britain see Mahan, **The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783** and *idem.*, **The Influence of Sea Power Upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812**. Also, Basil Liddell Hart, **The British Way in Warfare**, London, 1932. For a modern scholar drawing the same comparison between Athens and Great Britain see Chester G. Starr, **The Influence of Sea Power on Ancient History**, pp. 40-41.

66. Paul Kennedy, **The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery**, London: Fontana, 1991, p. 11.

67. Donald Kagan puts the estimate at 2000 talents a year -an enormous sum by Greek standards; see **The Archidamian War**, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990 (reprint), pp. 36-40.

68. This term refers to the strategy adopted by Fabius, dictator of Rome, against Hannibal after the latter's victory at Lake Trasimene in 218 B.C. This strategy entailed avoidance of battle and the wearing down of the Carthaginian strength by "military pin-pricks"; see Liddell Hart, **Strategy**, pp. 26-27. Liddell Hart correctly perceived that both the Periclean and Fabian strategies were actually designs at the grand strategic level: "The Periclean plan was a grand strategy with the aim of gradually draining the enemy's endurance in order to convince him that he could not gain a decision"; **Strategy**, p. 10.

69. Thucydides, **History**, A 143.

70. Thucydides, **History**, A 141.

71. Thucydides, **History**, A 143.

72. See Thomas Schelling, **Arms and Influence**, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966, pp. 1-34. Also, Glenn H. Snyder, **Deterrence and Defense**, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961.

73. Cf. Victor Hanson, **The Western Way of War**, New York, 1989, p. 32.

74. For the long war assumption in Periclean strategy see Thucydides, **History**, A 141. For the Spartans' view that the war would be completed successfully within a few years cf. Thucydides, **History**, E 14.

75. Cf. Pericles' statement to his compatriots: "And if I thought I could persuade you to do it, I would urge you to go out and lay waste your property with your own hands and show the Peloponnesians that it is not for the sake of this that you are likely to give in to them"; Thucydides, **History**, A 143. The fact that he could not persuade them to actually do it should not be taken as an indication of the failure of his strategy, as some analysts have thought; cf. Donald Kagan, **On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace**, New York: Doubleday, 1995 p. 65. Pericles' statement was a rhetorical scheme, intended to show to the Athenians that the decision they had actually taken, namely to abandon their land to the mercy of the enemy, was a necessary one.

76. Liddell Hart, **Strategy**, p. 355.

77. This overseas deployment marked a first for the Athenians: For the first time in history, their hippeis and mounts sailed on horse transports; Leslie J. Worley, **Hippeis: The Cavalry of Ancient Greece,** Boulder: Westview, 1994, pp. 87-88. This is an extremely interesting development, since the Athenian force comprising navy, horse transports, and mounted archers, essentially marks the origins of the combined arms operations. After the Athenian seizure of Cythera, an island located just south of Laconia, in 424 B.C., the Spartans were forced to raise a unit of 400 mounted archers; Thucydides, **History**, D 55. See also Oliver Lyman Spaulding and Hoffman Nickerson, **Ancient and Medieval Warfare**, New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1993, p. 57.

78. This view is advanced by Donald Kagan; **Athenian strategy in the Peloponnesian War**, pp. 41-47.

79. Thucydides, **History**, A 142.

80. For an alternative view see Donald Kagan; **Athenian strategy in the Peloponnesian War,** pp. 46-47.

81. For a discussion of the economic dimension of grand strategy in the Peloponnesian war see David A. Baldwin, **Economic Statecraft**, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.

82. Thucydides, **History**, A 141-142, B 13. This might be conceived

as a distant ancestor of the economic and technological denial that the West resorted to in order to isolate and weaken the Soviets during the Cold War.

83. The Melian dialogue took place during the 16th year of the war (416 B.C.). It is covered in Thucydides, **History**, E 84-113. To the question of the Melians: "So you would not agree to our being neutral, friends instead of enemies, but allies of neither side?", the Athenians gave the characteristic reply: "No; because it is not so much your hostility that injures us; it is rather the case that, if we were on friendly terms with you, our subjects would regard that as a sign of weakness in us, whereas your hatred is evidence of our power"; Thucydides, **History**, E 94-95.

84. Thucydides, **History**, A 141-142.

85. Thucydides, **History**, E 16-17.

86. See Benjamin Schwarz, "Strategic Interdependence: Learning to Behave like a Great Power" pp. 79-98 in Norman Levin (ed.), **Prisms and Policy: U.S. Security Strategy After the Cold War**, Santa Monica: RAND, 1994. Also, Paul Bracken, Strategic Planning for National Security: Lessons from Business Experience, **RAND Note**, N-3005-DAG/USDP, February 1990, pp. 12-17.

87. Delbrück, **History of the Art of War**, Vol. 1, p. 137.

88. Thucydides, **History**, B 21. The problem of the Periclean grand strategy was that it depended on loyalty to the city-state taking precedence over individual household and family loyalties; see Lin Foxhall, "Farming and Fighting in Ancient Greece", in John Rich and Graham Shipley (eds.), **War and Society in the Greek World**, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 142.

89. Thucydides, **History**, B 21, B 65.

90. Pericles died two years and six months after the start of the war; Thucydides, **History**, B 65.

91. Thucydides, **History**, B 35-46. A characteristic part of the speech goes as follows: "I declare that our city is an education to Greece, and I declare that in my opinion each single one of our citizens, in all the manifold aspect of life, is able to show himself the rightful lord and owner of his own person, and do this, moreover, with exceptional grace and exceptional versatility. And to show that this is no empty boasting for the present occasion, but real tangible fact, you have only to consider the power which our city possesses and which has been won by those very qualities

which I have mentioned. Athens, alone of the states we know, comes to her testing time in a greatness that surpasses what was imagined of her. [...] Future ages will wonder at us, as the present age wonders at us now. [...] This, then, is the kind of city for which these men, who could not bear the thought of losing her, nobly fought and nobly died"; Thucydides, **History**, B 41. It is interesting to note that during the First World War placecards on London buses displayed extracts from Pericles' *Epitaph*, intended to remind the British public of the values for which they were fighting; see Paul Millett, "Warfare, economy and democracy in classical Athens", in Rich and Shipley, **War and Society in the Greek World**, p. 179.

92. Thucydides, **History**, B 25. The Athenian capture of Pylos was even more helpful in this respect; see Thucydides, **History**, D 3, D 41. See also Josiah Ober, "Classical Greek Times", in Michael Howard, George J. Andreopoulos, and Mark R. Shulman (eds.), **The Laws of War: Constraints on Warfare in the Western World**, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994, p. 22. There is an interesting parallel between the assistance that Athens offered to the helots and the huge campaign of psychological operations that the West had launched toward the nations of the Eastern Europe during the Cold War.

93. See Waltz, **Man, the State, and War,** New York: Columbia University Press, 1959.

94. Thucydides, **History**, A 75.

95. Thucydides, **History**, B 63.

96. Thucydides, **History**, B 8.

97. Kagan, **Athenian strategy in the Peloponnesian War**, p. 54.

98. Barry S. Strauss and Josiah Ober, **The Anatomy of Error: Ancient Military Disasters and Their Lessons for Modern Strategists**, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990, p. 47.

99. See the analysis in Papasotiriou, **Byzantine Grand Strategy**, pp. 34-37.

100. Kagan, for instance, has claimed that "the cult of the defensive dissuaded the Athenians from taking the measures needed for victory". For the various destabilizing side-effects of offensive strategies see Stephen Van Evera, **Causes of War**, Ph.D. Diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1984. For a detailed analysis of

the problems associated with "the cult of the Offensive" see *idem*, "The cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War", **International Security**, 9 (Summer 1984), pp. 58-107 and Posen, **The Sources of Military Doctrine**, pp.16-24.

101. Kallet-Marx, **Money, Expense and Naval Power**, p. 203.

102. See, among others, Steven Forde: "The Ambition to Rule: Alcibiades and the Politics of Imperialism" in **Thucydides**, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

103. Alcibiades himself, after treasonably going to Sparta, gave the Spartans the following account of the Athenian war aims: We sailed to Sicily to conquer first, if possible, the Sicilians, and after them the Hellenes in Italy; next we intended to attack the Carthaginian empire and Carthage itself. Finally, if all or most of these plans were successful, we were going to make our assault on the Peloponnese, bringing with us all the additional Hellenic forces which we should have acquired in the west and hiring as mercenaries great numbers of native troops [...]. In addition to our existing fleet we should have built many more triremes, since Italy is rich in timber and with all of them we should have blockaded the coast of the Peloponnese, while at the same time our army would be operating on land against your cities, taking some by assault, and others by siege. In this way we hoped that the war would easily be brought to a successful conclusion and after that we should be the masters of the entire Hellenic world; Thucydides, **History**, F 90. This grand design (viz. rule over the entire Hellenic world) is as an amazing departure from the original Periclean war aims (viz. maintenance of the *status quo*) as it is chimerical. An analysis of the Sicilian expedition is outside the scope of this essay, but even a cursory look at the speech of Alcibiades by which he convinced the Athenians to authorize the expedition reveals a frivolous attitude and a gross underestimation of the enemy on Alcibiades' part; see Thucydides, **History**, F 16-18. For an analysis see Jacqueline de Romilly, **Alcibiades**, Athens: To Asti, 1995, pp. 85-104 [in Greek].

104. Thucydides, **History**, B 65.

105. Arther Ferrill, **The Origins of War from the Stone Age to Alexander the Great**, London: Thames and Hudson, 1985, p. 127.

106. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

107. As Starr has put it: "...the Spartans acquisced in a peace treaty that led to massive discontent and defection of their allies, whose grounds of complaint against Athens were almost ignored in the treaty. Athens had done as well, or better, than could have been expected. The Aegean Empire was intact; in western waters its power had risen; the Peloponnesian League had been shaken"; Starr, **The Influence of Seapower on Ancient History**, p. 43.

108. See among others Kagan, **The Archidamian War**; Strauss and Ober, **The Anatomy of Error**; Angelos Vlahos, **Comments on Thucydides History**, Athens: Estia, 1992, [in Greek].

109. For a critical discussion of Pericles' decision see Richard Ned Lebow, **Thucydides, Power Transition Theory and the Causes of War**, pp. 147-156. Also, Barry Strauss, "Of Balances, Bandwagons and Ancient Greeks" in Lebow and Strauss, **Hegemonic Rivalry**, pp. 203-204.

110. David Baldwin, **Economic Statecraft**, p. 154.

111. Kagan, **On the Origins of War**, p. 64.

112. Thucydides, **History**, A 81.

113. For exponents of the feebleness theory see Angelos Vlahos, **Comments on Thucydides History,** pp. 401-405, as well as the sources cited in Donald Kagan, **The Archidamian War**, pp. 28-29.

114. See Schelling, **Arms and Influence**.

115. See *ibid.*; also, Stephen Cimbala, **Military Persuasion: Deterrence and Provocation in Crisis and War**, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.

116. Thucydides, **History**, A 143.

117. This also explains why Pericles refrained from creating a fort on Spartan territory; this measure was reserved for the future. It also shows the fallacy of Donald Kagan's statement that "we may therefore disregard the construction of a fortress on the Peloponnese as part of the offensive element of the Periclean strategy"; **The Archidamian War**, p. 28.

118. See Alexander L. George, **Some Thoughts on Graduated Escalation RM-4844-IR**, Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 196.

119. Kagan, **The Archidamian War**, p. 41. For an excellent response to the critique of feebleness similar to that of the present essay, see Delbrück, **History of the Art of War**, Vol. 1, p. 140.

120. See Kagan, **On the Origins of War**, p. 65.

121. See W. Robert Connor, **Thucydides**, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 50.

122. See Bracken, **Strategic Planning for National Security**, pp. 14-15.

123. Thucydides, **History**, B 65.

124. Colin Gray, **The Leverage of Sea Power: The Strategic Advantage of Navies in War**, New York: Free Press, 1992, p. 7.

125. Thucydides, **History**, A 144.

126. Delbrück, **History of the Art of War**, Vol. 1, p. 137.

127. This is recognized, among others, by André Corvisier and John Childs, "Planning/Plans", in André Corvisier (ed.), **A Dictionary of Military History**, London: Blackwell, 1994, p. 654 and Doyne Dawson, **The Origins of Western Warfare**, Boulder: Westview, 1996.

128. Joseph S. Nye, **Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History**, New York: Harper Collins, 1993, p. 1.

129. Witness the insertion of Thucydides' **History** in the syllabus of the U.S. Naval War College by Admiral Stansfield Turner in August 1972. "For many students, that was an unknown book about an apparently irrelevant war by an author with an unpronouncable name. Yet to Turner it was the essence of his approach, "the best example of how you could use historical case studies to teach contemporary or strategic problems"; Harry Summers, **On Strategy II: A Critical Analysis of the Gulf War**, New York: Dell, 1992, pp. 78-79.

130. See Liddell Hart, **The British Way in Warfare**. For a critical presentation of the so-called British way of warfare see Colin Gray, "History for Strategists" in Geoffrey Till (ed.), **Seapower: Theory and Practice**, Ilford: Frank Cass, 1994, pp. 23-25.

131. It goes without saying, of course, that the manipulation of the threat to resort to nuclear war is used as an instrument of policy (i.e. nuclear deterrence, compellance).

132. In theory, however, it is still possible to achieve a swift decisive victory in a conventional war and, therefore, avoid the huge damage associated with a protracted conventional war; see John

M. Mearsheimer, **Conventional Deterrence**, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983, pp. 1-66.

133. Air strikes were but one component of that strategy. Prior to these strikes, the power of the Bosnian Serbs had been eroded by economic warfare, while in the meantime they had been diplomatically isolated. In addition, the U.S. helped manipulate the local balance of power, both through arms supplies to Croatia and through engineering the alliance between Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats. Last, but not least, the U.S. also took good care to rally domestic support for its policies in Bosnia. With all these elements at work, the exhaustion of the opponent was ensured, and, following that, the application of limited military force of an exemplary character was enough to make the Bosnian Serbs submit to the terms imposed by the U.S. and NATO.

134. A similar argument has been advanced by Edward Luttwak, who has argued in favor of a post-heroic concept of war, laying stress on such means as economic embargoes, blockades and air strikes in an attempt to minimize casualties, even at the expense of a swift decision that involves potentially higher casualty rates; Edward N. Luttwak, "Toward Post-Heroic Warfare", **Foreign Affairs,** 74, 3 (May/June 1995), pp. 109-122. Luttwak mistakenly attributes this concept to the Romans; actually, the Periclean grand strategy is the ideal type of post-heroic warfare. An analogy may *inter alia* be drawn between the way in which the Athenians were using their navy and the discussion that is nowadays taking place regarding the utilization of such long range weapons as the bomber aircraft in order to manipulate the cost on the other side without suffering casualties ourselves.