

Characterization and Politics in Thucydides

by

Drew C. Stimson

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Classical Studies)
in The University of Michigan
2018

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Sara L. Forsdyke, Chair
Associate Professor Ian S. Moyer
Professor Arlene W. Saxonhouse
Professor Arthur M. F. W. Verhoogt

Drew C. Stimson

stimsond@umich.edu

ORCID iD: 0000-0002-8532-376X

© Drew C. Stimson 2018

For my family

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my family for their unwavering love and support as I worked on this project, as well my wife Jacqueline for her patience and understanding, as well as her untiring efforts in directly aiding my writing process. Without the support of my family I never would have completed this project, and I owe them my undying gratitude for making it possible for me to reach this step in my career.

I would also like to thank the Rackham Graduate School and the Department of Classical Studies at the University of Michigan, both of which treated me exceptionally well, and in the process made my life easier by removing external worries so that I could focus on research. I would especially like to extend my gratitude to the professors in my department, who in their approach to teaching and mentoring found that perfect balance of support and rigor that consistently challenged to improve, but never make me feel as though I did not belong.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of my committee—and especially my chair Prof. Sara Forsdyke—for their tireless efforts in reading and commenting on this work as it was in progress. Their feedback has proven truly invaluable both to the completion of this dissertation, and more generally to my development as a scholar. I stand forever in their debt.

Table of Contents

Dedication	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	v
Introduction	1
CHAPTER I. Athens and Sparta	15
CHAPTER II. Thucydides on Effective Leadership	72
CHAPTER III. Thucydides on Ineffective Leadership	121
CHAPTER IV. Alcibiades: The Form of the Athenian?	228
CHAPTER V. Conclusions and Political Thought	261
Works Cited	281

Abstract

This dissertation focuses on Thucydides' deployment of characterization (both of cities and of individuals) to problematize the political systems of his time. I argue that Thucydides' narrative guides readers to the conclusion that both the Athenian and Spartan political systems are flawed (each in its own, particular way), and that each therefore requires the intervention of leaders capable of moderating its weaknesses and excesses. At the same time, however, by presenting the vast majority of Athenian and Spartan leaders as failing to meet these standards, Thucydides makes clear that the emergence of such individuals cannot actually be relied upon. Readers, therefore, are presented with an untenable situation: Athens and Sparta need great leaders, but cannot expect them. This incongruity leaves one looking for a middle way: a system of government that does not require the intervention of exceptional individuals, but is instead capable of self-moderation. Such a system, I argue, he briefly proposes in his praise of the government of the Five Thousand at Athens (8.97.2), which he depicts as a moderate alternative to the bipolar model of democracy or oligarchy. I then conclude by discussing the relationship between Thucydides' political thought and that of other ancient Greek authors, demonstrating that there are a number of similarities between his conception of governmental moderation and later, more systematic discussions of the "mixed constitution."

Introduction

When I first came to Thucydides' text, I was, as many other students before me, looking to it primarily as a source of historical information on the Peloponnesian War. Upon reading his work, however, I was immediately struck by its artistry.¹ Numerous episodes left me feeling invested in the action of the text, hoping for a particular outcome or dreading the result of a decision that seemed poorly made. I found myself in deep suspense after the Mytilenean debate as one Athenian ship chased another to save the Mytileneans from total destruction,² alternately horrified and fascinated by the arguments made in the Melian Dialogue, and feeling sorrow at the pitiable fate of the Athenian forces—and of Demosthenes and Nicias in particular—at the end of the Sicilian Expedition.

The more I became aware of this artistry, the more interested I became in both the work, and in Thucydides as an author. Indeed, Thucydides' text offers something for everyone, and the body of scholarship on Thucydides reflects this fact: it has value to both ancient historians and classical philologists, as well as to political scientists and students of international relations theory (where he is often viewed as the father of Realism).

The interests of such scholars have, however, not been stagnant. Indeed, recognition of and research into Thucydides' literary artistry is a relatively recent development in modern scholarship. I thus turn briefly to an examination of the history of Thucydidean scholarship in the modern era, and the trends that have, over time, come to dominate.

¹ It must be noted, however, that Thucydides never calls his work a history (ἱστορία), and thus, as Hornblower argues, “we have no easy clue as to the kind of enterprise he thought he was engaged in” (1987: 7–8).

² Grant (1974: 86) argues this account likely exaggerates the drama and danger of the situation.

*History of Scholarship, Position of this Dissertation*³

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, two discussions dominated Thucydidean scholarship (with the notable exception of Cornford and his book *Thucydides Mythistoricus*, to which I will return later). The first went hand in hand with attempts to define the broader field of history as a precise and scientific discipline, along the lines of von Ranke's call for history to be written "wie es eigentlich gewesen." In looking back at the origins of their field, many scholars of this school identified Thucydides as the progenitor of such "objective" history (Connor 1977: 289; Forsdyke 2017: 19), and thus often described him as an unbiased historian who was, to the exclusion of literary ornament, recording facts accurately for posterity.

The second discussion of this period centered on what is now often referred to as the "Thucydidean Question," which concerns the stages of composition of the work. Indeed, the incompleteness of several of the books (certainly Book 8, and many argue book 5 as well), as well as the presence of his famous "second introduction" at 5.26, have led multiple scholars to posit that Thucydides wrote and revised various sections of the text at different times (Hunter 1977: 269–70). Based on these observations, a great and lively debate developed between the "Analysts" (or "Separatists," according to Connor 1984b: 10) such as Ullrich (1846) and Schwartz (1919), who ran with this idea but proposed competing models for the stages of the work's composition, and "Unitarians" such as Meyer (1899: 269–436), who maintained the overall unity of the work.

This debate reached a critical point by the mid-20th century, as an abundance of answers to this "Thucydidean Question" were proposed, but none was accepted as the consensus solution. It was at this time that unitarian scholars such as de Romilly and Finley acquired the upper hand

³ Many previous scholars have undertaken reviews of the scholarship on Thucydides. For more detailed examinations of this topic, see de Ste. Croix (1972: 295–6) and Hunter (1977: 269–74).

in this debate.⁴ In looking at the state of scholarly attempts to determine the stages of composition of the work, these unitarians argued that researchers of Thucydides were faced with a problem with no solution. Indeed, de Romilly stated that, “All that remained of so many efforts was a confused tangle of all kinds of hypotheses, contested opinions and arguments twisted in every conceivable sense” (1963: 6), and went on to argue that this project “does not necessarily admit of an exact answer” (1963: 154). They instead proposed viewing the work as a unity instead, with Finley, for example, writing an essay titled “The Unity of Thucydides’ History,” and arguing that Thucydides worked in one, sustained period of composition (1967, esp. p. 121; see Hunter 1977: 272–4).

The strength of these and other unitarian scholars’ arguments effectively ended discussion of the compositional question, save for a few exceptions (Hunter 1977: 274).⁵ Two related developments followed the resolution of this debate in Thucydidean scholarship: the rejection of the idea of pure Thucydidean historical “objectivity,”⁶ and a new focus on the literary aspects of Thucydides’ history,⁷ including, for example, his use of vividness and emotionality to impart not just facts, but experiences to readers (Connor 1977: 289, 1984b: 6; Greenwood 2006: 19–41; Grethlein 2010: 248–52; Forsdyke 2017: 20, 31).⁸ Observers of the

⁴ Hunter describes these scholars as follows: “If de Romilly can be described as a cautious and rather embarrassed unitarian, Finley is a bold and assertive one” (1977: 274).

⁵ Connor also states that “it was clear by the 1950s that this effort had bogged down and was unlikely ever to fulfill its promise,” and that it “seemed, if not dead, at least moribund” (1984b: 4).

⁶ “Few these days will regard Thucydides as a ‘scientific’ historian, ...” (Gribble 1998: 70). See also Grethlein, who states that, “... by and large, in the last decades interest has shifted from Thucydides *historicus* to Thucydides narrator” (2013: 91).

⁷ Connor ties this questioning of authority among Anglophone scholars to the Vietnam War (1977: 289).

⁸ The ancient commentators appear to have been fully aware of many of the literary qualities of Thucydides’ history, and found commenting on them totally unproblematic. For example, Dover (2009: 49) notes that Dionysius of Halicarnassus questions Thucydides’ placement of the Pericles’ Funeral Oration in Book 2 (*Th.* 18), and appears not to have considered the answer, “because that is when it occurred” satisfactory, and Grethlein (2013: 92) points out that Plutarch directly refers to Thucydides’ “vividness” (ἐνάργεια), as well as his desire to make the reader a spectator (θεατήν; *De glor. Ath.* 347a5–9).

literary aspects of the work now recognize the influence these aspects of the work have on readers' interpretations (Connor 1984b: 7–8).⁹

This trend in scholarship led to many new and insightful works on Thucydides and his historical method, with individuals such as Cornford (1907; obviously writing well before the more literary approach to Thucydides had been widely accepted), Hunter (1973), Macleod (1983), Connor (1984b), Rood (1998), and Greenwood (2006), to name only a few, offering new perspectives on the various ways in which Thucydides' use of selection, characterization, or narrative shapes his history for his audience.¹⁰ In addition, his role in and contribution to political or international relations theory has been readdressed by scholars such as Orwin (1994), Ahrens Dorf (1997), Lebow (2003), Balot (2006, 2017), Mara (2009), and Jaffe (2017a, 2017b). This new and exciting research has certainly answered a number of lingering questions, but it has likely introduced just as many new ones. It is within this relatively new scholarly tradition that the current work places itself, and I turn now to a more specific discussion of my own approach to the text.

Approach to the Text, Methodology

A useful place to begin in orienting myself within the body of scholarship is with Thucydides' statement concerning his methodology in recording speeches. Scholars' arguments concerning this passage have varied greatly, with some maintaining that he is claiming a much higher level of fidelity and accuracy than others. I find that individual positions on this specific issue often seem to reflect their larger approach to the text as a whole. To review, Thucydides here states: καὶ ὅσα μὲν λόγῳ εἶπον ἕκαστοι ἢ μέλλοντες πολεμήσειν ἢ ἐν αὐτῷ ἤδη ὄντες,

⁹ See also Hunter, who argues that the reader of Thucydides experiences “subliminal persuasion” (1973: 115).

¹⁰ For a more thorough discussion of modern scholarly approaches to Thucydides, see Forsdyke 2017.

χαλεπὸν τὴν ἀκρίβειαν αὐτὴν τῶν λεχθέντων διαμνημονεῦσαι ἦν ἐμοὶ τε ὧν αὐτὸς ἤκουσα καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοθεν ποθεν ἐμοὶ ἀπαγγέλλουσιν· ὡς δ' ἂν ἐδόκουν ἐμοὶ ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστα εἰπεῖν, ἐχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς ζυμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων, οὕτως εἴρηται (“and however many things each person said either when they were about to make war or when they were already in it, it was difficult both for me to remember precisely the things that were said which I myself heard, and for those reporting things to me from elsewhere. As it seemed to me each would have said what was necessary concerning their present circumstances, holding as closely as possible to the whole idea of what was truly said, thus it has been reported”; 1.22.1).

The meaning of this passage, and especially of τῆς ζυμπάσης γνώμης, has been extensively debated in scholarship. Is Thucydides claiming that his account of speeches in the text is as close to the exact truth as humanly possible, or is he allowing himself freedom for independent composition? Again, one’s stance on this passage is often indicative of one’s perception of Thucydides as an author in general. Those who saw Thucydides as a scientific, objective, and unbiased recorder of past events were generally inclined to emphasize his rigor even in something as hard as discovering and reporting the exact words which individuals used. Most scholars since the second half of the twentieth century, however, have accepted to some degree that Thucydides is here stating his willingness to add to, subtract from, or alter speeches. This is not to say that most scholars now view them entirely as free compositions and insertions, but simply that he was working within an intellectual movement that saw no need for exact, word-for-word transcription.¹¹

¹¹ For a discussion of 1.22.1, see Gomme (1959: 140–1), de Ste. Croix (1972: 10–11), and Marincola (2007: 120–2).

My own interpretation of this passage may already be clear from my rendering of the Greek into English, but to be clear, I take the latter approach, and agree largely with de Ste. Croix (1972: 10–11), who argues that when Thucydides says that he held to τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης of what was really said, he meant that he tried to maintain “the main thesis” of the argument. Thus, he felt free to include any information relevant to reader understanding of this thesis, or to omit points he found extraneous to it, but was largely unwilling to deviate entirely from what a speaker actually wished to argue.

I approach the text more generally in this way, seeing it as reporting a reality which Thucydides has not fundamentally altered, but which he has subtly shaped to fit the argument which he wishes to express. My position is greatly influenced by Connor’s (1984b) approach to the text, as well as by Pelling’s more general discussion of ancient historiography, in which he argues that the simple act of constructing a narrative, and of selecting what information to include, exclude, emphasize, or gloss over, necessarily involves the author imposing their own interpretation on events, and then trying to persuade readers of the correctness of that interpretation (2000:1–2, 6–7). Indeed, such an approach to Thucydides is largely in agreement with Hobbes, who provides an oft-quoted discussion of this methodology in his introduction to his translation of Thucydides: “the narrative doth secretly instruct the reader, and more effectually than can possibly be done by precept” (1843: xxii).¹²

Based on these influences, I approach Thucydides as both history and literature, and, as my own emphasis lies on his use of characterization, regularly address the historical individuals

¹² See Taylor 2002: 91–2 for this citation. Forde also makes the following note: “That is what Thomas Hobbes, who translated and admired Thucydides, meant when he said that Thucydides is ‘accounted the most politic historiographer that ever writ’; for ‘he filleth his narrations with that choice of matter, and ordereth them with that judgment’ that the reader is allowed, indeed compelled, to ‘draw out lessons to himself’” (Forde 1989: 3; quoting Hobbes 1975: 7).

whose lives and actions he records as “characters.” This is because, as just noted, his process of selecting what information to include, emphasize or omit inevitably demonstrates his own interpretation of that figure. Thus, just as Forde states that he does not discuss the historical Alcibiades, but rather “Thucydides’ Alcibiades” in his book *The Ambition to Rule* (1989: 1), I will focus not on the historical Pericles, Cleon, Brasidas, or Alcibiades, but rather on the portrait of them which Thucydides creates.¹³

This process of characterization, however, is often very subtle, often relying not on periodic direct authorial interventions (though these do exist and will certainly be discussed), but instead on indirect elements of the narrative, such as verbal or thematic repetition, or an authorial emphasis on repetitious patterns of behavior. Thus, in an attempt to capture the full force of this long process, and influenced in no small part by Connor (1984b), I adopt an approach derived from reader response theory, treating the text as it exists as a unified whole, and tracing what, at any given moment, readers making their way linearly through the text could be expected to know, and how this information may shape their reading of a given passage. Through this analysis, I hope to make a series of important observations concerning Thucydides’ discussion of the large-scale, collective behavioral dynamics of Athens and Sparta, the roles and requirements of individual leaders within these *poleis*, and what in turn this may tell us about Thucydides’ outlook on the dominant governmental systems of his time: democracy and oligarchy.¹⁴

¹³ When appropriate, however, I will discuss observable discrepancies between Thucydides’ portrayal of individuals and historical reality as a means of identifying the author’s methods of shaping his narrative.

¹⁴ On this opposition, see, for example, Thucydides’ comments at 3.82.1, and Finley (1967: 143). See also Jaffe, who claims that “The issue of domestic politics goes to the heart of Thucydides’ ambitions as an analyst of political life” (2017a: 405), Johnson Bagby, who states that the Peloponnesian War was when the “Greeks started thinking in terms of democracy versus oligarchy, that is, in *ideological* terms” (2011: 117), and Balot, who states that the caused strong polarization between oligarchs and democrats (2006: 89). For more on this point, see Chapter 1.

Argument and Organization

In the scholarship on both Thucydides' treatment of individuals and of politics, I believe there have been several oversights and key oversimplifications. For example, debate concerning Thucydides' politics have variously identified him as a supporter of democracy, oligarchy, a mixed constitution, or even kingship,¹⁵ though a great many have adopted a binary choice, attempting to identify him as either a supporter democracy or of oligarchy. While these are, as scholars have noted, the primary two systems of government which readers may observe at work in his history,¹⁶ this merely reflects the reality of his time and of the political environment in Greece during the Peloponnesian War. As such, we need not interpret this emphasis on democracy and oligarchy as limiting Thucydides himself to a choice between these two constitutional types. In fact, the ongoing nature of this debate results largely from the fact that Thucydides both praises and faults each form of government at different points in his text. Rather than weighing the author's negative statements against his positive ones in order to take a strong, absolute position in favor of one form of government or the other, I propose that it is more productive to view Thucydides as presenting both political organizations as possessing their own, unique sets of strengths *and* weaknesses, and thus both as imperfect.¹⁷ This complication in Thucydides' discussion of politics must be addressed, and is, I argue, somewhat clarified when placed in conversation with his use of characterization.

¹⁵ On this variability of opinion, see Connor 1984b: 237–8, Ober 1998: 52 n. 1 and Raaflaub 2006: 220. Finley (1942: 237) identifies him as a democrat, McGregor (1956: 102) calls him an oligarch, Balot (2006: 91) sees him as a critic of democracy, de Romilly (1976: 94) and von Fritz (1975: 77–8) posit that he was a supporter of a sort of mixed constitution, and Hobbes (1975: 13) argues that he favored monarchy.

¹⁶ See, for example, Finley (1967: 143) and Johnson Bagby (2011: 116–17).

¹⁷ In fact, there appears to have been a recognition that all “pure” forms of government were flawed at least as early as the constitutional debate in Herodotus (3.80–3), and an awareness of the possibility of finding a “middle path” (von Fritz 1975: 77) between the various conflicting interests within the *polis* dates back at least to Solon (see Sol. *Fr.* 5 for his claim to have favored neither the *demos* nor the wealthy; Szegedy-Maszak 1993: 207; Balot 2006: 41–6, 258; Hahn 2009: 179).

Turning from political systems to Thucydides' treatment of individual leaders, many scholars have focused on universal skills and attributes (such as rhetorical ability and moral uprightness) which he attributes to successful leaders in the text, seemingly looking at his history as a sort of a treatise on leadership.¹⁸ While these attributes may be identifiable, I do not believe they tell the whole story of positive leadership in Thucydides' *History*. Instead, as I will argue, such attributes represent a baseline set of requirements for an individual to *lead*, but it is the interaction of an individual's character with that of his *polis* that determines whether he will lead *effectively*.

In an attempt to remedy these gaps in scholarship, I examine Thucydides' use of characterization (both of cities and of individuals) to problematize the political systems of his time. I argue that Thucydides' narrative guides readers to the conclusion that both the Athenian and Spartan political systems are flawed (each in its own, unique way), and that each therefore requires the intervention of leaders capable of moderating its weaknesses and excesses, while simultaneously maintaining its strengths. At the same time, however, by presenting the vast majority of Athenian and Spartan leaders as failing to meet these standards, Thucydides makes it clear that the emergence of such individuals cannot actually be relied upon. Readers therefore are presented with an untenable situation: Athens and Sparta need great leaders, but cannot expect them. In presenting this incongruity as existing in both systems of governance, Thucydides leaves readers looking for a middle way: a system of government that does not require the

¹⁸ See for example the lists of Periclean attributes provided by Luginbill (1999: 190) and Finley (1942: 203). While not specifically referring to leaders, Ober sees 1.22.4 as suggesting that the work is a "political systems user's manual" (2006: 132). Stahl argues against the view that Thucydides' *History* may be treated as a handbook for statesman, arguing instead that the historian is attempting to demonstrate the limitations on human agency in determining the outcomes of history (2003: 16).

intervention of exceptional individuals, but is instead capable of self-moderation. This, I argue, he briefly gives readers in his praise of the government of the Five Thousand at Athens (8.97.2).

In order to make these points, I divide my dissertation into five chapters, which will be organized as follows. In Chapter One, I discuss the role of “national character” in Thucydides’ *History*. I argue that Thucydides maintains a high level of consistency in describing the large-scale, collective behavioral patterns of Athens and Sparta. In so doing, I push back against the recently proposed view that the distinction between Athenian and Spartan character breaks down over the course of the work,¹⁹ positing instead that episodes in which the *poleis* appear to act contrary to established behavioral patterns result not from fundamental changes in character at the collective level, but from the intervention of prominent leaders whose individual characters differ from those of their *poleis*, and who thus drive their populace to *temporarily* alter its behavior. Indeed, upon removal of such prominent individuals, both Athens and Sparta quickly revert to their previous patterns of behavior.

In addition, in this chapter I examine Thucydides’ presentation of the origin of national character. Through this analysis, I conclude that Thucydides sees political environment (much as Hippocrates sees physical environment) as the primary determinant of collective character.

Finally, I demonstrate that Thucydides clearly identifies the national characters of both Athens and Sparta as fundamentally flawed: the former because of its propensity for rash, excessively risky action, and the latter because of its extreme hesitancy, often to its own detriment. I then argue that, since Thucydides proposes political structure as the source of these behavioral traits, he implicitly indicts both Athenian democracy and the oligarchic system which he identifies with Sparta. Thus, the flawed characters of these two city-states are tied to their

¹⁹ See, for example Debnar 2001 and Connor 1984b: 41.

flawed political systems. Moreover, his portrayal of this reality leads readers to recognize these *poleis*' need for the intervention of prominent individuals, who must contend with, and attempt to remedy, these inherent weaknesses.²⁰

After this discussion of national character, I turn in Chapter Two to an analysis of Thucydides' portrayal of effective leadership. Before discussing these historical individuals as Thucydidean characters, however, using Pericles as a case study I argue that we may observe the author, by emphasizing and selecting key passages related to this Athenian general, creating his own, unique portrait of him.

I then go on to discuss Pericles and Brasidas, the two leaders from Athens and Sparta whom I believe Thucydides portrays as providing the type of corrective leadership that their *poleis* need, given their flawed collective characters. I then examine what specifically makes these leaders successful, and posit that it is not a set of universally attainable skills or qualities, but rather the way in which their individual characters (which are notably different from one another) interact with those of their home city-states. Thus, while, upon examination, these two leaders are very different from one another, each possesses the correct combination of traditionally "Athenian" and "Spartan" attributes *for the specific context in which they operate*, therefore allowing each to serve as a moderative, corrective force. Based on this conclusion, I make one final point to close this second chapter: the likelihood of Athens and Sparta obtaining multiple such leaders, possessing just the right, context-determined combination of character traits, appears exceedingly small.

In Chapter Three I turn to an examination of other prominent Athenian and Spartan leaders, and demonstrate that Thucydides portrays each as failing to live up to the examples of

²⁰ Raaflaub (2006: 208) notes the Athenian democracy's need for strong leadership in order to maintain good policies and restrain the *demos*.

Pericles and Brasidas, and instead possessing individual characters which do not successfully complement those of their *poleis*. I then argue that Thucydides' presentation of this set of ineffective leaders, representing the vast majority of influential individuals in his work, ultimately confirms for readers that he does not think that Athens and Sparta can actually expect the regular emergence of leaders of this mold.

In making these points, I begin with a discussion of Demosthenes, the Athenian general known best for his role in the Athenian victory at Pylos and Sphacteria, and for his death alongside Nicias at the end of the Sicilian Expedition. I argue that Thucydides strongly associates him with Athenian daring and risk-tolerance, resulting in his participation in one resounding success, but also in several overly-ambitious and ultimately failed undertakings. Due to this characterization, Thucydides identifies him as ill-fitted to provide the leadership required in his model.

I then shift the lens of my examination to Cleon, whom I argue Thucydides also portrays as far too "Athenian" to provide the leadership which his Athenian context required. Indeed, he is ambitious, bold, and often impatiently rash, attributes that ultimately cost him dearly in his defeat at Amphipolis.

The final Athenian leader addressed in this chapter is Nicias, whom I argue Thucydides portrays as, in many cases, possessing a character that is strikingly similar to that associated with Sparta. He is hesitant and lacks daring, primarily preferring military undertakings with a highly limited scope and which, even when successful, accomplish little of lasting significance to the Athenian war effort. At the same time, however, I note that Thucydides does not hesitate to make clear that there are times when Nicias does in fact take risks. In all of these instances, however, Nicias' risk-taking backfires, thus identifying the successful utilization of calculated risks as

outside of his repertoire. Thucydides' treatment of Nicias, then, makes it clear that, despite Athens' often excessive boldness, a Spartan commander is not what the city needs to correct its weaknesses. Instead, such a commander temporarily instills his countrymen with the excessive hesitancy of their enemy, while simultaneously eliminating the benefits afforded by the well-timed utilization of daring.

In the final section of this chapter on ineffective leadership, I undertake an analysis of Thucydides' portrayal of the Spartans Archidamus, Alcidas, Cnemus, and Agis II. In so doing, I demonstrate that these leaders share much in common with Nicias, including their crippling hesitancy, and their general preference for low-risk engagements with little possibility for effecting meaningful shifts in the war's balance of power. Moreover, when these leaders do appear to break with traditional Spartan character and take risks, these endeavors ultimately fail. Thus, they display the same inability as Nicias to successfully use Athenian risk-taking to their advantage. As such, I argue that this shared attribute is yet another aspect of Spartan character, and thus that these generals are all portrayed as possessing characters that are too similar to the collective character of the city-state they represent to eliminate its inherent excesses.

Finally, in Chapter Four I turn to an analysis of Alcibiades, arguing that Thucydides characterizes him as the most unrestrainedly "Athenian" character in the work, especially in his extreme ambition and daring. As a result, just like his home city of Athens, he is capable of great accomplishments, but also of disastrous failures. Additionally, Thucydides identifies Alcibiades' ambition as directed primarily toward his own, private gain, a reversal of the supposed subordination of the individual good to the public good which Pericles espoused. While Alcibiades attempts to justify this reversal, Thucydides makes clear that the high value which he placed on his own, private good eventually turned the Athenian *demos* against him. Based on

these observations, I argue that Thucydides ultimately identifies Alcibiades as incapable of providing the leadership needed in any of the contexts in which he operates, because he is both too Athenian to act as a corrective force, and too concerned with his private profit to maintain the people's trust, or a leadership position.

Finally, in Chapter Five I review all that has been discussed up to this point, and remind readers that Thucydides has presented readers with a far greater number of ineffective leaders than effective ones, thus implicitly demonstrating that Athens and Sparta, though standing in dire need of corrective leadership, cannot actually rely upon finding it. I then turn to an analysis of whether Thucydides provides a solution to this problem, in which flawed political environments consistently fail to receive needed correction. I argue that, while Thucydides certainly is not writing a work of systematic political theory, he does briefly discuss what he sees as a possible solution to this problem: the moderate government of the Five Thousand, which he describes as existing somewhere between democracy and oligarchy (8.97.2). After making this claim, I turn to a brief analysis of where Thucydides' political thought lies in reference to the poets and philosophers of the sixth, fifth, and fourth centuries BCE, and I conclude by pointing out that many of the points which Thucydides makes appear to be in conversation with those expressed by these other authors, and that thus these ideas appear to have been "in the air" at the time he was writing, even if they were not systematized until the fourth century.

Through this analysis, I hope to drive readers to rethink some of their assumptions about Thucydides, and to adopt a more nuanced view of his use of characterization, and of his politics. This historian continues to hold great interest for me, and I hope this fascination is passed on to readers of this dissertation.

CHAPTER I.

Athens and Sparta

While Thucydides is generally not recognized for his character development (Herodotus has historically received greater praise in this category), his portrayal of Athenian and Spartan *polis*-wide behavioral tendencies (commonly known as “national character”) has received a significant amount of scholarly attention.²¹ Discussion of this topic has centered largely on determining three things: the explanatory value of national character in the *History*, whether this characterization is consistent throughout the work, and what to make of episodes where individual Spartans or Athenians behave in a way that is significantly different from their home-*poleis*’ tendencies. Connor, for example, argues that, after the Corinthian ambassador’s discussion of national character in Book 1, the reader is left to assess the validity of this description on his or her own until Thucydides’ direct agreement with it in Book 8. In the meantime, however, the reader has seen individual leaders (like Pausanias, Brasidas, and Nicias) who differ significantly from their *poleis*’ national characters, and who thus force readers to acknowledge that the Corinthian’s analysis is a generalization, and that their own understanding of national character in the work must be adjusted (1984b: 41).

Pelling, on the other hand, sees the representation of national character as largely unchanged at the end of Thucydides’ work: the Athenians are still enterprising, while the

²¹ See, for example, Marincola 2001: 91–3. Orwin goes so far as to claim that, “The primary actors in Thucydides are not individuals but cities ...” (1994: 1).

Spartans are still sluggish. At the same time, however, he believes that events over the course of the text (such as the appearance of the thoroughly un-Spartan Brasidas) have complicated these categories (1997: 65). Debnar, meanwhile, argues that the Spartans undergo a major shift during the Peloponnesian War, especially in their use of rhetoric (2001: 233). Thus, she believes that the strict antithesis between the Athenians and the Spartans breaks down over the course of the *History* (2001: 234). At the same time, however, she admits that Thucydides reiterates the opposition between the two groups throughout the text, and that national character is therefore persistent as a feature (2001: 3, 234).

Additionally, Cartledge and Debnar (in a collaborative chapter) assert that, while some of what the Corinthian says in Book 1 is borne out by the narrative (or directly affirmed by Thucydides at 8.96.5), the Athenian/Spartan antithesis in Thucydides must be treated with caution (2006: 561). They go on to note several complicating factors, such as the fact that some Spartans (like Brasidas) are actually rather Athenian in their characterization and some Athenians (like Nicias) rather Spartan, and that both groups demonstrate the ability to adapt to changing circumstances over the course of the work (Cartledge and Debnar 2006: 562). Still further, Marincola believes that Thucydides' use of national character is essential to the work, and calls attention to the fact that the Corinthian perspective is largely endorsed by Thucydides himself in Book 8 (2001: 92). He recognizes, however, that individual characters may differ significantly from the Athenian/Spartan antithesis set up in Book 1, and argues that national character provides the backdrop against which individuals must be viewed (2001: 94–7). Marincola also notes that, at times, groups may act in a way that is contrary to their national character, but claims that this is always due to the intervention of an extraordinary individual, such as Brasidas leading the Spartans in northern Greece (2001: 92).

Finally, Luginbill directly claims that, “in Thucydides’ opinion, the causes and the courses of human conflict are directly linked to the behavioral tendencies of these large, national collectives” (1999: 5). Thus, for him national character is integral to Thucydides’ explanation of both the causes and the course of the Peloponnesian War, and the behavior of the Spartans and Athenians remains largely consistent throughout the *History* (1999: 15–16). He then goes on to see national character as determined by historical experience, which predisposes groups of people to either hope (as is the case with the Athenians) or fear (as with the Spartans) (1999: 70, 75).

Thus, most scholars view national character as an integral and persistent part of Thucydides’ project, but at the same time recognize numerous features of the text that complicate the Athenian/Spartan antithesis (for example, individual leaders who clearly deviate from their home-city’s national character, and who thus direct their *polis* to act outside of its defined collective norms). While recognition of such complexity is important to the development of our understanding of Thucydides’ work, I believe that many previous analyses of national character have placed too much emphasis on the examination of individual leaders and their consistency or inconsistency with the national character of the *polis* they represent.²² I would argue that national character should be interpreted *collectively*; that is to say, every individual Athenian or Spartan need not exactly match the Corinthian’s description of his or her *polis*’ behavioral tendencies. Instead, the idea of national (or collective) character is meant to represent a general, strong habit of *group* behavior that may be temporarily altered, but which will always trend back to its default state.²³ Based on this distinction, I believe that portraits of leaders in the

²² See, for example, Luginbill’s regular analysis of the behavior of Spartan *leaders* (such as Archidamus, Cnemus, and Astyochus) when discussing Spartan national character (1999: 105–26).

²³ As an example, Marincola notes that after the death of Brasidas and the departure of Alcibiades the Spartans revert to their “true” character (2001: 92).

History do not so much help us to confirm or deny representations of a *polis*' national character as they do help us to understand what happens when a leader of a certain character (individual character) interacts with a people of particular behavioral tendencies (national character). Thus, we may separate individual and collective (or "national") character, while at the same time recognizing that the relationship between the two carries important explanatory power in the text.

With these points in mind, I will in this chapter examine Spartan and Athenian national character in Thucydides' *History*, giving preference to episodes that specifically illustrate *group* behavioral dynamics (without the intervention of prominent leaders, whose influence may bring about temporary alterations in collective behavior).²⁴ Through this analysis, this chapter will establish three points. First, close examination of the text demonstrates that the collective characters of Athens and Sparta are surprisingly consistent throughout the work. Indeed, as will be shown, the Spartans are repeatedly depicted as slow to action, while the Athenians are restive and acquisitive. Second, while scholars have largely focused on the advantages of Athenian character over Spartan as presented by Thucydides, it will be shown that the national characters of both Athens and Sparta contain weaknesses as well as strengths: the Athenian desire to acquire more—the very desire that led them to acquire their empire—also leads them to overreach dangerously, while the same attributes of Spartan character that prevent them from pressing the advantage when they have it also drive them to avoid the excesses of the Athenians.²⁵ Finally, these collective characterizations, established and reaffirmed throughout the text (together with their strengths and weaknesses), stand as a backdrop against which the

²⁴ Both Marincola (2001: 92) and Luginbill (1999: 105) acknowledge that individual, exceptional leaders may temporarily alter Spartan or Athenian behavioral tendencies.

²⁵ See, for example, Connor's note that the Corinthian's analysis of national character focuses heavily on the advantages of Athenian character (1984b: 40). On the potential for Spartan character to be advantageous, see Luginbill 1999: 120 and Marincola 2001: 92–3.

behavior, character, and success or failure of leading individuals, as they interact with their *polis*, may be viewed.²⁶

In order to demonstrate these points, this chapter will begin with an examination of the first in-depth discussion of national character in Thucydides' *History*: that of the Corinthian speaker in Book 1. It will then briefly address the background of national character in the text, noting the important role that political environment plays in the formation of collective behavioral tendencies. After this digression, the remainder of the chapter will move on to analyze episodes displaying the Athenian, and then the Spartan, national character in action.

The Corinthian Comparison

In Book 1 of Thucydides' *History*, the Corinthians, tired of the harm they claim to have received at the hands of the Athenians, present a speech designed to spur the Spartans to action on their behalf. In the course of this speech, the Corinthian speaker presents a comparison of the opposing national (collective) characters of Athens and Sparta. This passage provides us with a critical starting point for this study, because it is the first extended expression of national character in the text.²⁷ It must be noted, however, that this speech is not presented in Thucydides' own voice, and that its speaker has a specific persuasive aim (to drive the Spartans to invade Attica) (Debnar 2001: 3). As a result, it has been noted that the Corinthian does not provide an impartial analysis of each city-state, but instead emphasizes how Athenian attributes are likely to bring success, and how those of Sparta are old-fashioned (Connor 1984b: 40, Marincola 2001:

²⁶ It is interesting to note the importance Ober has placed on the interaction of the masses and elite leadership in the functioning of the Athenian democracy (while focusing on the orators of the fourth century), and the important role Thucydides has left for leaders of both Athens and Sparta in his history. See Ober 1989: *passim*.

²⁷ Debnar points out, however, that the Athenian/Spartan antithesis originally occurs in the Archaeology at 1.6.3–4, when Thucydides claims that the Athenians adopted a more luxurious lifestyle while the Spartans pursued more egalitarian practices, and at 1.10.2 when he discusses the different impressions of power Athenian and Spartan ruins will provide to future generations (2001: 3).

92). Readers therefore must be careful not to accept the Corinthian's words *prima facie* as a systematic account of Thucydides' own views concerning each city-state's character. At the same time, however, we cannot simply reject this passage as purely rhetorical with little importance to the rest of the text, because it introduces a theme that any reader will recognize as recurring throughout the work. Let us, then, carefully examine the main points presented in the Corinthian's speech, so that, when we move on to an examination of later passages in which national character plays a prominent role, we may use them as a basis for comparison in order to analyze the consistency of collective behavior in the text.

The Corinthian ambassador sets up his comparison by first focusing on Spartan weaknesses. He states, ... **σωφροσύνην** μὲν ἔχετε, ἀμαθία δὲ πλεονί πρὸς τὰ ἔξω πράγματα χρῆσθε (“... you have **prudence**, but you enjoy more ignorance with respect to external matters”; 1.68.1).²⁸ This Spartan ignorance, in the Corinthian's eyes, is manifested in their inability to recognize the need for military action against the Athenians. The speaker expresses anger that the Spartans have allowed the Corinthians to actively suffer at the hands of the Athenians without taking any action to aid them (1.68.2). Moreover, he blames Sparta for the current state of affairs—καὶ τῶνδε ὑμεῖς αἴτιοι (“And you are the cause of these things”; 1.69.1)—because, as he claims, Sparta's inaction allowed Athens to build and consolidate its power in Greece. This Spartan passivity is further censured, as the Corinthian asserts that the Athenians believe they can encroach on their neighbors with impunity because of Spartan indifference (1.69.3). Finally, in wrapping up his diatribe against Spartan inaction, the Corinthian bemoans the fact that the Spartans are attempting to ward off attack from Athens through hesitation rather than through an actual show of force (1.69.4).

²⁸ All translations, unless otherwise noted, are the author's own.

Up to this point, then, the Spartans have been characterized as prudent but inactive (a characterization that, as will be shown, persists throughout the text), and the Athenians, through implicit comparison, are depicted as active pursuers of their own benefit who regularly take advantage of Spartan lethargy. The Corinthian ambassador then goes on, after noting that he does not believe the Spartans have considered just how different the Athenians are from themselves (1.70.2), to make his comparison of the two *poleis* explicit.

In this juxtaposition of the opposing powers, the speaker claims: οἱ μὲν γε νεωτεροποιοὶ καὶ ἐπινοῆσαι ὀξεῖς καὶ ἐπιτελέσαι ἔργω ἃ ἂν γνῶσιν· ὑμεῖς δὲ τὰ ὑπάρχοντά τε σῶζειν καὶ ἐπιγνῶναι μηδὲν καὶ ἔργω οὐδὲ τἀναγκαῖα ἐξικέσθαι (“*They are innovators and swift to invent and to bring about by their action those things which they decide, but you are accustomed to preserve what exists and to recognize nothing and not to accomplish what is necessary by your action*”; 1.70.2). As in his earlier implicit comparison, the Corinthian now comes out and directly describes Athens as swift in deliberation and action, and Sparta as mired in inaction and defensive preservation of the status quo. He then continues, αὐθις δὲ οἱ μὲν καὶ παρὰ δύναμιν τολμηταὶ καὶ παρὰ γνώμην κινδυνευταὶ καὶ ἐν τοῖς δεινοῖς εὐέλπιδες· τὸ δὲ ὑμέτερον τῆς τε δυνάμεως ἐνδεᾶ πράξει τῆς τε γνώμης μηδὲ τοῖς βεβαίοις πιστεῦσαι τῶν τε δεινῶν μηδέποτε οἶεσθαι ἀπολυθήσεσθαι (“*And again they are daring beyond their strength and run risk beyond [good] judgment and are hopeful in dire straits, but it is your nature both to act short of your power and not to trust the certainties of your judgment and to think that you will not ever be released from dire straits*”; 1.70.3).

Until this comparison, a reader may have assumed that Athenian daring was being presented solely in a positive light, whereas Spartan inaction was its negative counterpart. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, Connor notes that the Corinthian speaker largely portrays Athenian

attributes as likely to bring success, and those of the Spartans as old fashioned (1984b: 40). At this point, however, it becomes clear that the character of *both* city-states is potentially harmful. Indeed, the same daring that drives the Athenians to expand their *polis*' power also makes them *παρὰ δύναμιν τολμηταὶ* (“daring beyond their strength”), and *παρὰ γνώμην κινδυνευταὶ* (“run risks contrary to [good] judgment”).²⁹ The Spartans, on the other hand, are defined by a lack of trust in their own judgment (*τῆς τε γνώμης μηδὲ τοῖς βεβαίοις πιστεῦσαι*) and an inability to live up the potential that their military strength affords them (*τῆς τε δυνάμεως ἐνδεῆ πρᾶξιαι*). Acting quickly is not always a good thing in the Corinthian ambassador's eyes. Equally damaging, however, is refusing to act in a timely manner and deliberating for too long.

The Corinthian ambassador's discussion of Spartan and Athenian tendencies then continues, with the speaker further emphasizing Athenian speed and daring, and the Spartan tendency to hesitate and remain at home: *καὶ μὴν καὶ ἄοκνοι πρὸς ὑμᾶς μελλητὰς καὶ ἀποδημηταὶ πρὸς ἐνδημοτάτους· οἴονται γὰρ οἱ μὲν τῇ ἀπουσίᾳ ἄν τι κτᾶσθαι, ὑμεῖς δὲ τῷ ἐπελθεῖν καὶ τὰ ἐτοῖμα ἂν βλάψαι* (“And in fact they also are **unhesitating** in comparison to you who are **delayers**, and **they go abroad** whereas **you are most likely to stay at home**; for they think that **they could acquire something by their absence**, but you think that **you could harm what is readily at hand by going somewhere**”; 1.70.4). Thus, Athenian daring leads them always to seek gain, while the Spartans remain at home, intent on protecting what they already have. This is because, as the speaker has expressed, the Athenians begin with positive expectations of gain (hope), while the Spartans, because of their fear of loss, are entirely risk-averse (Luginbill 1999: 94–6). These divergent attitudes help to explain the internal mechanisms

²⁹ While Luginbill does not discuss the danger inherent in the Athenian national character when examining this passage, he does make note of it in later passages where Athenian daring (though often of individual generals) leads them into risky undertakings with disastrous results (1999: 144).

by which Athenian power has increased so rapidly, and the reasons why the Spartans fear their ascension (1.23.6, reiterated at 1.88.1), but have failed to take action against them (1.118.2).

Immediately following this point, the Corinthian continues: κρατοῦντές τε τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἐπὶ πλείστον ἐξέρχονται καὶ νικώμενοι ἐπ’ ἐλάχιστον ἀναπίπτουσιν (“When they prevail over their enemies **they pursue their advantages to the utmost**, and when they are defeated **they give ground least of all**”; 1.70.5). While the Spartans are not mentioned here, the implicit comparison is that, while the Athenians press their advantage when they are successful, the Spartans *do not*; moreover, while the Athenians do not give ground when they are defeated, the Spartans *do*. Thus will it happen throughout the work that the Spartans will fail to take advantage of opportunities, especially at moments of key importance, such as when the Spartans fail to follow up on a bold plan to sail into the Piraeus, despite the fact that Thucydides claims it could easily have been accomplished (2.93.1–94.1); when, despite Athenian fears, the Spartans and their allies fail to move against the Athenians after the Sicilian expedition (8.1.2); and again when the Spartans fail to capitalize on Athenian weakness after their defeat at Eretria (8.96.1–4).

Following this discussion, the Corinthian speaker notes the Athenian willingness to sacrifice their bodies for their *polis* (1.70.6), and then goes on to further address the Athenian love of acquisition:

καὶ ἂ μὲν ἂν ἐπινοήσαντες μὴ ἐπεξέλθωσιν, οἰκείων στέρεσθαι ἡγοῦνται, ἂ δ’ ἂν ἐπελθόντες κτήσωνται, ὀλίγα πρὸς τὰ μέλλοντα τυχεῖν πράξαντες. ἦν δ’ ἄρα του καὶ πείρα σφαλῶσιν, ἀντελπίσαντες ἄλλα ἐπλήρωσαν τὴν χρεῖαν· μόνοι γὰρ ἔχουσί τε ὁμοίως καὶ ἐλπίζουσιν ἂ ἂν ἐπινοήσωσι διὰ τὸ ταχεῖαν τὴν ἐπιχείρησιν ποιεῖσθαι ὧν ἂν γνῶσιν (1.70.7).

And if they think of anything but do not carry it out, **they believe they are deprived of their own possessions**; but whatever they go out and acquire, they believe that **they happen to have done little in comparison to the things to come**. And even if they stumble in an attempt on something, hoping instead for other things they make good their loss. **For they alone both have and expect [to have] alike whatever they set their mind on, because they quickly attempt**

whatever they decide.

In making these comments, the Corinthian ambassador reemphasizes both the rapidity with which the Athenians act and their hope for acquisition, but also goes on to introduce a new feature of the Athenian psyche: a sense of entitlement. Indeed, the moment the Athenians decide to make an attempt on something, they immediately consider the target of that attempt their possession.

In his next statement, the Corinthian then goes on to argue that the Athenian acquisitiveness with which he has familiarized his audience is insatiable and neverending: καὶ ταῦτα μετὰ πόνων πάντα καὶ κινδύνων δι' ὅλου τοῦ αἰῶνος μοχθοῦσι, καὶ ἀπολαύουσιν ἐλάχιστα τῶν ὑπαρχόντων διὰ τὸ αἰεὶ κτᾶσθαι καὶ μήτε ἐορτὴν ἄλλο τι ἡγεῖσθαι ἢ τὸ τὰ δέοντα πρᾶξαι ξυμφορὰν τε οὐχ ἦσσον ἡσυχίαν ἀπράγμονα ἢ ἀσχολίαν ἐπίπονον (“And among labors and dangers they work hard at all these things through their whole life, and **least of all do they enjoy what they already have because of their constant engagement in acquisition**, and because they consider a **holiday** nothing other than **doing what is necessary, and easy-going rest no less a disaster than toilsome activity**”; 1.70.8). This characterization places the Athenian condition in an interesting light: while their constant activity can (and often does) lead them to increase their power and wealth, it also renders them incapable of ever being satisfied with what they accomplish. Thus, there will never come a point when the Athenians consider putting an end to their exertions, and making it nearly impossible for them to make peace. This behavioral trait exerts itself multiple times in the *History*, as the Athenians, in their moments of success (such as after Sphacteria), will continually shun the peace process in the hope that they may acquire more (4.41.3–4).

Wrapping up his comments on national character, the Corinthian ambassador attempts to succinctly state his take on the Athenians: ὥστε εἴ τις αὐτοὺς ξυνελὼν φαίη **πεφυκέναι ἐπὶ τῷ μῆτε αὐτοὺς ἔχειν ἡσυχίαν μῆτε τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους ἔαν**, ὀρθῶς ἂν εἴποι (“With the result that if someone speaking concisely should say that **they are naturally inclined neither themselves to be at rest nor to allow other people to**, he would speak rightly”; 1.70.9). Thus, in summing up his position on Athenian collective character, he centers his view on the Athenian distaste for inactivity (mentioned just one sentence earlier). This time, however, he goes even further than before, directly pointing out that the Athenians as a collective group not only view rest as a bad thing, but are also by nature unable to maintain a state of inactivity.³⁰ These Athenian traits become critically important over the course of the work, particularly in displaying why the Periclean strategy cannot succeed without Pericles himself there to lead.³¹

To summarize, then, the contrast between these two national characters may be defined at its most basic level as an antithesis between Spartan hesitancy and Athenian inventiveness, activity, and speed.³² Before concluding this analysis, however, it is worth noting that, while the Corinthian speaker does emphasize the advantages of the Athenian character over that of the Spartans, he nevertheless also demonstrates that *both* have weaknesses. The Spartans are prudent but inexperienced in foreign affairs and generally slow and hesitant to act. The Athenians, on the other hand, are driven (or even compelled) to expand their power and possessions, but have a

³⁰ Carter (1986: 42–3) points out, however, points out that many other authors, especially poets, present ἡσυχία in a positive light. For example, Pindar praises it (*O.* 4.16, *P.* 1.70) and says that it punishes *hubris* (*P.* 8.1), and Theognis (43–7) and Aeschylus (*Pers.* 820–2, 840–2; *Ag.* 750ff) identify it as the opposite of *hubris*.

³¹ For more on the role of ἡσυχία in Pericles’ strategy, see this chapter pp. 40–1 and the next chapter pp. 89–92.

³² Debnar summarizes the contrast as between “the Spartans’ sluggish conservatism” and “the Athenians intelligence and innovation” (2001: 3), while Marincola tells us, “the Athenians are daring, resourceful, acquisitive, resilient, and energetic; the Spartans are slow, hesitant, defensively minded” (2001: 92). Luginbill, on the other hand, notes that, “... the Spartans avoid risks and proceed slowly, while the Athenians rush into them” (1999: 96). Carter (1986: 44–5), meanwhile, argues that the Spartan preference for conflict-avoidance and ἡσυχία (and thus subscription to the world-view of Pindar) is contrasted with Athenian dynamism.

tendency to act rashly and are incapable of enjoying peace. Thus, while it does appear that the speaker, in attempting to persuade the Spartans to go to war, portrays the Athenians as having a comparatively advantageous national character, he nevertheless makes it clear that *both* characters are immoderate, and that the two exist on opposite ends of a spectrum between hesitation and rash, swift action. Thus, while Athens may appear to have the advantage at the outset of the war (Connor 1984b: 40–1), we as readers are nevertheless set up to expect both the Athenians and the Spartans to make mistakes in its course. This expectation forms a crucial explanatory background for readers as later events unfold.

Before moving on to an examination of the passages displaying Athenian and Spartan collective tendencies (and their respective strengths and weaknesses) in action, however, it is worthwhile to further explore Thucydides' conception of the background of national character. Indeed, before we may *observe* the expression of national character, we must understand where it comes from, and the factors that form it in Thucydides' *History*.

The Background of National Character

Numerous ancient Greek texts of varying genres (literary, historical, and technical) propose, in some form, the idea that environment plays a decisive role in the formation of individual or collective character. Authors like Herodotus utilize this relationship to help explain differences between East and West, Asian and Greek, and subject and free peoples. Indeed, the Persian King Cyrus famously discusses environment as a determinant of national character at the very end of the work, when he notes that soft lands breed soft people (Hdt. 9.122.3). Scholars such as Lateiner (1989: 158) and Thomas (2000: 32, 97) have recognized the importance of contemporary medical theory in the development of the relationship between environment and

ethnic character in Herodotus' text, particularly that found in the *Airs, Waters, Places* of the Hippocratic corpus.

I argue here that Thucydides' understanding of national character and its determinant forces, much like Herodotus' schema, bears a strong resemblance to contemporary ancient medical theory. Rather than interpreting character, however, as influenced by the entirety of one's environment (both physical and political, as is the case in the *Airs, Waters, Places* and in Herodotus' text), he instead focuses entirely on the role of one's political environment as a determinant of character. To demonstrate these points, I will briefly discuss the *Airs, Waters, Places* and Herodotus' *History*, and the importance of physical and political environment in the development of collective character in those texts. I will then compare these texts with Thucydides' presentation of the relationship between environment and national character, and in doing so will demonstrate that he utilizes *political* environment as the primary determinant of national character in his *History*.³³

In the *Airs, Waters, Places* (hereafter referred to as *Aër.*), there is a regular differentiation between Asians and Europeans, with the Asians commonly described as softer than their western counterparts. For example, it is stated about the Asians that τὰ ἥθεα τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἡπιώτερα καὶ εὐοργητότερα (“The characters of their men are gentler and better-tempered”; Hp. *Aër.* 12). Moreover, it is claimed that τὸ δὲ ἀνδρείον καὶ τὸ ταλαίπωρον καὶ τὸ ἔμπονον καὶ τὸ θυμοειδὲς οὐκ ἂν δύναίτο ἐν τοιαύτῃ φύσει ἐγγίνεσθαι οὔτε ὁμοφύλου οὔτε ἀλλοφύλου, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἡδονὴν ἀνάγκη κρατεῖν (“Bravery and hardihood and laboriousness and passion would not be able to

³³ Luginbill (1999: 15–16, 75), on the other hand, argues that historical experience and the resultant ingrained psychological attitudes of a people determine their national character. I do not necessarily disagree with this point, except to say that I believe that political environment is a key part of this shaping experience.

exist in such a nature, whether of someone of the same race or of a foreigner, but it is necessary that pleasure rule”; Hp. *Aër.* 12).

This difference in character between inhabitants of the East and West is first attributed in the text to features of their natural environment, such as weather patterns:

περὶ δὲ τῆς ἀθυμίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τῆς ἀνανδρείης, ὅτι ἀπολεμώτεροί εἰσι τῶν Εὐρωπαϊῶν οἱ Ἀσιηνοὶ, καὶ ἡμερώτεροι τὰ ἥθεα, αἱ ὥραι αἴτιαι μάλιστα, οὐ μεγάλας τὰς μεταβολὰς ποιούμεναι, οὔτε ἐπὶ τὸ θερμὸν, οὔτε ἐπὶ τὸ ψυχρὸν, ἀλλὰ παραπλησίως. οὐ γὰρ γίνονται ἐκπλήξεις τῆς γνώμης οὔτε μετάστασις ἰσχυρὴ τοῦ σώματος, ἀφ’ ὅτων εἰκὸς τὴν ὀργὴν ἀγριοῦσθαί τε καὶ τοῦ ἀγνώμονος καὶ θυμοειδέος μετέχειν μᾶλλον ἢ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ αἰεὶ ἐόντα. αἱ γὰρ μεταβολαὶ εἰσι τῶν πάντων αἱ ἐπεγείρουσαι τὴν γνώμην τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ οὐκ ἐῶσαι ἀτρεμίζειν (Hp. *Aër.* 16).

But concerning the lack of spirit of the people and their cowardice, that the Asians are less warlike than the Europeans, and tamer in their character, the seasons especially are to blame, because they don’t change greatly (neither toward heat, nor toward cold), but evenly. For neither consternations of the will nor strong changes in the body occur, from which it is likely that the temper becomes wild and has a share of the senseless and high-spirited rather than always being in the same state. For changes of all things arouse the will of men and do not allow them to keep still.

Thus, *physical* environment is mentioned first as a major determinant of group character. More specifically, according to this text, the easy weather of the east makes inhabitants of Asia soft and even-tempered, whereas inhabitants of the western world tend to be more aggressive. One may note the similarity of this understanding of national character and the aforementioned assertion by King Cyrus in Herodotus that soft lands breed soft people.³⁴

Shortly after this discussion of the importance of natural environment in determining character, however, the text goes on to state that νόμοι (which W. H. S. Johnson translates as “institutions”) also play a prominent role in developing the behavior of an area’s denizens.

³⁴ See p. 26.

Indeed, while discussing the character of Asia and its inhabitants, the author directly alleges that the preponderance of kingship in the region makes the inhabitants weak and unwarlike:

διὰ ταύτας ἐμοὶ δοκέει τὰς προφάσις ἀναλκας εἶναι τὸ γένος τὸ Ἀσιηνόν· καὶ προσέτι διὰ τοὺς νόμους, τῆς γὰρ Ἀσίας τὰ πολλὰ βασιλεύεται. ὅκου δὲ μὴ αὐτοὶ ἐωυτέων εἰσὶ καρτεροὶ ἄνθρωποι μηδὲ αὐτόνομοι, ἀλλὰ δεσπύζονται, οὐ περὶ τουτέου αὐτέοισιν ὁ λόγος ἐστίν, ὅκως τὰ πολέμια ἀσκήσωσιν, ἀλλ' ὅκως μὴ δόξωσι μάχιμοι εἶναι. οἱ γὰρ κίνδυνοι οὐχ ὅμοιοι εἰσίν· τοὺς μὲν γὰρ στρατεύεσθαι εἰκὸς καὶ ταλαιπωρέειν καὶ ἀποθνήσκειν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ὑπὲρ τῶν δεσποτέων, ἅπο τε παιδίων καὶ γυναικὸς ἐόντας καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν φίλων· καὶ ὀκόσα μὲν ἂν χρηστὰ καὶ ἀνδρεία ἐργάσωνται, οἱ δεσπύται ἀπ' αὐτέων αὖξονται τε καὶ ἐκφύονται· τοὺς δὲ κινδύνους καὶ θανάτους αὐτοὶ καρποῦνται· ἔτι δὲ πρὸς τούτοις τῶν τοιούτων ἀνθρώπων ἀνάγκη ἐρημοῦσθαι τὴν γῆν ὑπὸ τε πολεμίων καὶ ἀργίης· ὥστε, καὶ εἴ τις φύσει πέφυκεν ἀνδρείος καὶ εὐψυχος, ἀποτρέπεσθαι τὴν γνώμην ἀπὸ τῶν νόμων. μέγα δὲ τεκμήριον τουτέων· ὀκόσοι γὰρ ἐν τῇ Ἀσίῃ Ἑλληνας ἢ βάρβαροι μὴ δεσπύζονται, ἀλλ' αὐτόνομοί εἰσι καὶ ἐωυτέοισι ταλαιπωρεῦσιν, οὗτοι μαχιμώτατοί εἰσι πάντων· τοὺς γὰρ κινδύνους ἐωυτέων πέρι κινδυνεύουσιν, καὶ τῆς ἀνδρείης αὐτέοι τὰ ἄθλα φέρονται, καὶ τῆς δειλίας τὴν ζημίην ὡσαύτως. εὐρήσεις δὲ καὶ τοὺς Ἀσιηνούς διαφέροντας αὐτοὺς ἐωυτέων, τοὺς μὲν βελτίονας, τοὺς δὲ φαυλοτέρους ἐόντας (Hr. *Aēr.* 16).

On account of these causes the Asian race seems to me to be feeble, and also because of their laws; for many parts of Asia are ruled by kingship. Wherever men do not have power over themselves and are not independent, but are ruled by masters, there is no value for them concerning this: to train in matters of war; but [there is instead concern] to not seem to be warlike. For the dangers are not the same: it is likely that they be forced to serve in the army and suffer hardship and die for the sake of their masters, away from their children and wife and the rest of their loved ones. And however many good and brave things they do, their masters are both supported by them and increased, but they themselves [the soldiers] reap the dangers and death. But still, in addition to these things it is necessary that the land of such men be stripped bare by both their enemies and laziness, with the result that, even if someone is born brave and courageous by nature, his disposition is altered by the laws. There is a great proof of these things: for however many Greeks in Asia are not ruled by masters, but are independent and suffer hardship for themselves, these are the most warlike of all. For they run risks for themselves, and they themselves carry off the prizes of their bravery, and likewise the penalty for their cowardice. But you will also find the Asians themselves differ amongst themselves, some being better, others worse.

As can be seen here, the author has shifted approaches and now addresses the effects of manmade political institutions on character. His opinion is clear: when men fight for another and not for themselves, this situation will negatively impact their martial ability and morale.

In the above passage Hippocrates' focus was on the character of the Asians. Later in the text, when his emphasis has shifted to the Europeans, he largely echoes his earlier sentiments:

διὰ τοῦτό εἰσι μαχιμώτεροι οἱ τὴν Εὐρώπην οἰκέοντες καὶ διὰ τοὺς νόμους, ὅτι οὐ βασιλεύονται ὥσπερ οἱ Ἀσιηνοί. ὅκου γὰρ βασιλεύονται, ἐκεῖ ἀνάγκη δειλοτάτους εἶναι. εἴρηται δέ μοι καὶ πρότερον. αἱ γὰρ ψυχὰι δεδούλωνται καὶ οὐ βούλονται παρακινδυνεύειν ἐκόντες εἰκῆ ὑπὲρ ἀλλοτρίας δυνάμιος. ὅσοι δὲ αὐτόνομοι—ὑπὲρ ἐωυτῶν γὰρ τοὺς κινδύνους αἰρεῦνται καὶ οὐκ ἄλλων—προθυμεῦνται ἐκόντες καὶ ἐς τὸ δεινὸν ἔρχονται. τὰ γὰρ ἀριστεῖα τῆς νίκης αὐτοὶ φέρονται. οὕτως οἱ νόμοι οὐχ ἥκιστα τὴν εὐψυχίην ἐργάζονται (Hr. *Aēr.* 23).

On account of this those inhabiting Europe are more warlike, and because of the laws, because they are not ruled by kings like the Asians. For wherever men are ruled by kings, there it is necessary that they be most cowardly (and I have said this also earlier). For their spirits have been enslaved and do not wish to undergo risk willingly or at random for the sake of another's power. But however many [people] are independent—for they take up dangers for themselves and not for others—zealously and willingly enter into dire circumstances. For they themselves carry off the prizes of the victory. Thus the laws not least of all create good courage.

Once again Hippocrates asserts that Asians, due to their common utilization of kingship, are simply less courageous in warfare than their European counterparts. In both places the argument boils down to the following: because kings and despots generally rule Asian peoples, and because the citizens therefore do not run risks for their own benefit, but instead on behalf of their kings, they are necessarily less warlike than free peoples. While the author does admit the possibility of variation among the inhabitants of Asia (*Aēr.* 16), he nevertheless presents his assessment as generally true when the condition he proposes (rule by a king/despot) is met. Thus, in arguing for the importance of governmental system in determining character, the author creates a strong, generalized, bifurcated division between the two regions: one is either under a

kingship and a slave (and resultantly less warlike), or one is autonomous and free (and therefore superior in warfare). These two political environments, then, produce citizens of vastly different characters.

This division in behavioral patterns between slaves living under a tyrannical government and autonomous free peoples can be observed in Herodotus as well.³⁵ One of the clearest examples occurs when, in his own voice, Herodotus discusses the effects that the establishment of democracy had on the Athenians, who became much more successful as soon as they began fighting for themselves:

δηλοῖ δὲ οὐ κατ' ἓν μόνον ἀλλὰ πανταχῇ ἢ ἰσηγορίῃ ὡς ἐστὶ χρῆμα σπουδαῖον, εἰ καὶ Ἀθηναῖοι τυραννεύομενοι μὲν οὐδαμῶν τῶν σφέας περιοικεόντων ἦσαν τὰ πολέμια ἀμείνονες, ἀπαλλαχθέντες δὲ τυράννων μακρῶ πρώτοι ἐγένοντο. δηλοῖ ὧν ταῦτα ὅτι κατεχόμενοι μὲν ἐθελοκάκεον ὡς δεσπότη ἐργαζόμενοι, ἐλευθερωθέντων δὲ αὐτὸς ἕκαστος ἐωυτῷ προεθυμέετο κατεργάζεσθαι (Hdt. 5.78).

But it is clear, not just from one thing alone, but in every way, that political equality is an excellent thing, if the Athenians, when they were ruled by tyrants, were stronger in war than none of those living around them, but when they were freed from the tyrants they became the greatest by far. And so these things make it clear that when they were being held down they intentionally did not do their best because they were working for a master, but when they had been freed each man was zealous to work on his own behalf.

The differentiation Herodotus makes in this passage is largely the same as that made in the *Airs, Waters, Places*: individuals living under a tyranny (τυραννεύομενοι) are not great warriors because they labor for a master (δεσπότη ἐργαζόμενοι), but free men (ἀπαλλαχθέντες; ἐλευθερωθέντων) become greater (μακρῶ πρώτοι ἐγένοντο) because they toil for their own

³⁵ Lichtenhaeler (1965: 153) argues, however, that while parallels may be observed between the *Airs, Waters, Places* and particular episodes in Herodotus' text, it is impossible that the former directly influenced the latter, because the *Airs, Waters, Places* was composed at the end of the fifth century.

benefit (αὐτὸς ἕκαστος ἐωυτῷ προεθυμέετο κατεργάζεσθαι). Thus, the Athenian political environment determines its residents' attitude toward, and behavior in, conflict.

We may also see many of these same ideas echoed in Demaratus' conversation with the Persian King Xerxes in Book 7 of Herodotus (though Demaratus speaks specifically about the Spartans, rather than the Greeks as a whole). After Demaratus' opening comments, in which he claims that the Spartans intend to stay and fight regardless of the odds against them, Xerxes responds in disbelief, first questioning how free men with no single, unifying leader could be expected to fight against an army as large as his: κῶς ἂν δυναίατο χίλιοι ἢ καὶ μύριοι ἢ καὶ πεντακισμύριοι, ἐόντες γε ἐλεύθεροι πάντες ὁμοίως καὶ μὴ ὑπ' ἑνὸς ἀρχόμενοι, στρατῷ τοσῶδε ἀντιστῆναι; ("How would a thousand or ten thousand or even fifty thousand—all alike being free and not ruled by one man—be able to stand against so great an army?"; 7.103.3). He then goes on to claim that only men compelled by the whip would dare such a thing, presenting kingship and fear as forces that improve soldiers' bravery: ὑπὸ μὲν γὰρ ἑνὸς ἀρχόμενοι κατὰ τρόπον τὸν ἡμέτερον γενοίαιτ' ἂν δειμαίνοντες τοῦτον καὶ παρὰ τὴν ἐωυτῶν φύσιν ἀμείνονες, καὶ ἴοιεν ἀναγκαζόμενοι μάστιγι ἐς πλέονας ἐλάσσονες ἐόντες· ἀνειμένοι δὲ ἐς τὸ ἐλεύθερον οὐκ ἂν ποιοῖεν τούτων οὐδέτερα ("For if they were ruled by one man in our way, fearing this man they would both become better, contrary to their natures, and forced by the whip they would go against greater numbers, though they are fewer. But released to freedom they would do neither of these things"; 7.103.4).

Xerxes' presentation of the effects of kingship and freedom on martial ability contrasts strongly with that in the *Airs, Waters, Places*. Indeed, the Persian king here asserts a directly inverted version of the effects of despotic rule on its subjects' military prowess: he claims that kingship emboldens soldiers through their collective fear of their ruler, rather than weakening

their morale because they risk life and limb with little to no chance to gain anything personally by their efforts.

The Spartan exile Demaratus, however, famously counters Xerxes' position by explaining that the Lacedaemonians are not fully free, and that they fear their law much more than Xerxes' subjects fear him (7.104.4–5). The validity of Demaratus' position is then demonstrated by the fact that the Spartans do indeed stay and fight, and in doing so display incredible effectiveness and valor against their eastern adversaries. Thus readers may take away from this passage that the Spartan combination of freedom and law does, in fact, make them better warriors, a conclusion much closer to the *Airs, Waters, Places* than Xerxes' position.

It must be admitted, however, that the discussion in this passage specifically pits *Lacedaemonian* government and character against Persian systems of rule and warfare (in which the ruler exercises unrestricted and despotic power, and subjects must bend to his arbitrary will), rather than the more general opposition of western and eastern νόμοι in the *Aër*.³⁶ While this difference is certainly worth keeping in mind, it is nevertheless the case that the principle underlying the juxtaposition of peoples presented in this exchange bears a strong similarity to the *Airs, Waters, Places*: a population's governmental system has a profound effect on its behavioral tendencies. The only element that has changed is the *level* of the comparison; that is to say, Herodotus here compares more specific and restricted groups of people, rather than discussing Easterners and Westerners in general terms.

In both the *Airs, Waters, Places* and Herodotus' *Histories*, then, there exists the assertion that the environment, both natural and political, has a profound effect on the behavior of those who live in it. Both of these texts also primarily delineate their comparison as between West and

³⁶ See pp. 27-31 for more on this dichotomy in the *Aër*.

East, and, moreover, as between free or autonomous peoples and those living under despotic or tyrannical forms of government.

What if, however, an author intends to examine the interactions of different groups from within the *same* region, and, more importantly, two *poleis* that are both considered free and autonomous, thus eliminating the highest-level regional and governmental distinctions drawn upon in the *Airs, Waters, Places* (and to some extent in Herodotus as well)? The possibility for more nuanced and granular intra-regional distinctions is actually alluded to in the *Airs, Waters, Places*: εὐρήσεις δὲ καὶ τοὺς Ἀσιηνοὺς διαφέροντας αὐτοὺς ἑωυτέων, τοὺς μὲν βελτίονας, τοὺς δὲ φαυλοτέρους ἔόντας (“But you will also find the Asians themselves differ amongst themselves, some being better, others worse”; *Aër.* 16).³⁷ The author, however, never undertakes a systematic treatment of the differences he mentions. It is in fact Thucydides who takes up this perspective when he, in establishing the national characters of Athens and Sparta, compares not eastern and western peoples, and not a slave population to a free one, but rather two autonomous, free Greek *poleis*, thus focusing on intra-regional differences. At the same time, however, he keeps in mind the ideas established in ancient medical thought concerning the formation of national character, and especially the role of governmental systems in this process.³⁸

I believe, therefore, that while Thucydides shifts his focus to the contrasting national characters of two free Greek city-states, building a new antithesis between oligarchy and democracy (the same antithesis around which he presents the entire war as revolving), he nevertheless sees these sets of collective tendencies as shaped by the political environments in

³⁷ See p. 29 for the full quotation of this passage.

³⁸ Looking at Thucydides’ historical method as a whole, Luginbill (1999: 16–17) sees ancient medical thought as a key influence on the historian’s “empiricism.” Lichtenthaeler also notes a number of passages in Thucydides that he feels show a strong resemblance to Hippocratic treatises, but he focuses on specifically medical content, such as the plague at Athens (1965: 50–1, 93).

which they exist.³⁹ This argument may be most effectively made through an examination of Thucydides' discussion of Syracusan character and its relationship to the behavioral patterns of the Athenians and Spartans.

Thucydides twice compares the characters of the Athenians and the Syracusans in his *History*: once at 7.55.2 and again at 8.96.5. Let us begin with the latter of these two passages. In leading up to this comparison, Thucydides has been discussing the differences between Spartan and Athenian behavioral patterns in the war, claiming that Spartan tendencies have consistently benefited the Athenians (8.96.5). To make this point the author turns to the Syracusans: ἔδειξαν δὲ οἱ Συρακόσιοι· μάλιστα γὰρ ὁμοιότροποι γενόμενοι ἄριστα καὶ προσεπολέμησαν (“And the Syracusans showed this, for being especially similar in character [to the Athenians] they fought against them best”; 8.96.5). Thus, Thucydides argues that the Syracusans were more successful in combatting the Athenians *because* they were behaviorally similar to them, unlike the Spartans. The reader will have, at this point in the text, a good idea of what it means to be similar to the Athenians (especially given the recapitulation of character immediately preceding the discussion of the Syracusans). The reader may wonder, however, what it is that makes the Syracusans so similar to the Athenians?

This question is answered by referring to the former passage (7.55.2), when Thucydides, after explaining that the Athenians have come to regret their expedition to Sicily (πολὸν δὲ μείζων

³⁹ On Thucydides' presentation of the conflict in Greece as centering on the opposition between democratic and oligarchic elements, see 3.82.1: οὕτως ὁμῆ <ή> στάσις προυχώρησε, καὶ ἔδοξε μᾶλλον, διότι ἐν τοῖς πρώτῃ ἐγένετο, ἐπεὶ ὕστερόν γε καὶ πᾶν ὡς εἰπεῖν τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ἐκινήθη, διαφορῶν οὐσῶν ἑκασταχοῦ τοῖς τε τῶν δήμων προστάταις τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἐπάγεσθαι καὶ τοῖς ὀλίγοις τοὺς Λακεδαιμονίους (So fierce was the discord, and it seemed greater because it was among the first, when later in fact almost the whole Greek world was stirred up, with disagreements occurring everywhere between the leaders of the people who were trying to bring in the Athenians, and the few who wanted to bring in the Spartans). On the importance of internal political forms in determining the dissimilar behaviors of Athens and Sparta see Roscher 1842: 379–96 (cited by Luginbill 1999: 19 n. 2).

ἔτι τῆς στρατείας ὁ μετάμελος; 7.55.1), enumerates for readers the reasons the Athenians have struggled against their enemy:

πόλεσι γὰρ ταύταις μόναις ἤδη ὁμοιοτρόποις ἐπελθόντες, δημοκρατουμέναις τε, ὥσπερ καὶ αὐτοί, καὶ ναῦς καὶ ἵππους καὶ μεγέθη ἐχούσαις, οὐ δυνάμενοι ἐπενεγκεῖν οὔτ' ἐκ πολιτείας τι μεταβολῆς τὸ διάφορον αὐτοῖς, ᾧ προσήγοντο ἄν, οὔτ' ἐκ παρασκευῆς πολλῶ κρείσσονος, σφαλλόμενοι δὲ τὰ πλείω, τά τε πρὸ αὐτῶν ἠπόρουσαν, καὶ ἐπειδὴ γε καὶ ταῖς ναυσὶν ἐκρατήθησαν, ὃ οὐκ ἂν ᾔνοντο, πολλῶ δὴ μᾶλλον ἔτι (7.55.2).

For having come upon these cities alone that were **of similar character**, both **democratic (just as they themselves were)**, and possessing ships and horses and greatness of size, when they were unable to bring upon them either some discord from a constitutional change (by which they might bring them over to their side), or from a significantly greater armament, and being tripped up in the majority of things, they were both at a loss in matters before these things [their loss at sea], and when in fact also they were defeated at sea (which they would not have thought), yet even more [were they at a loss].

While some of the Greek in this passage is quite difficult and has merited a significant amount of commentary, one important element is quite clear: just as at 8.96.5 Thucydides identifies the inhabitants of Sicily as similar in character (ὁμοιοτρόποις; the exact same word) to the Athenians.⁴⁰ Classen and Steup argue that the term ὁμοιοτρόποις is here looking to the political and social culture of Athens (1905: 138). Indeed, when Thucydides then goes on to explain the basis for this similarity, he gives preference of place to the fact that the Sicilians are democratic, just like the Athenians (δημοκρατουμέναις τε, ὥσπερ καὶ αὐτοί).⁴¹ It would appear, then, from this passage that political structure is of primary importance in the formation of Syracusan (and therefore also Athenian) behavioral tendencies. More specifically, democracy has made them

⁴⁰ The meaning of this passage, and especially of οὐ δυνάμενοι ... πολλῶ κρείσσονος is discussed by Classen and Steup 1905: 138–9; Dover 1965: 46; and Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1970: 431. The interpretation of τι, τὸ διάφορον, and αὐτοῖς offer the greatest difficulty.

⁴¹ Cartledge and Debnar point out that, despite their similarity to the Athenians, the Syracusans were actually Dorian colonists (2006: 562). Their implicit argument seems to be that these two groups' shared character is problematic because of their differing ethnic origins, and that this passage therefore complicates reader understanding of national character in the *History*. I believe, however, that this overlooks Thucydides' emphasis on their shared democratic governmental institutions.

just as bold and swift as their enemies, while the other similarities listed (horses, ships, and greatness of size) provide them with the means to be competitive on the battlefield.⁴² Boldness by itself, after all, could never win a war.

Based on this conclusion, if we look back to 8.96.5, we may conclude that, if governmental structure is the leading force driving the Syracusans to resemble the Athenians, then it is Spartan oligarchy that creates an environment encouraging the Spartan tendencies of hesitation and risk-aversion.

From these arguments it becomes clear that Thucydides looks primarily to *poleis*' political structures, not to other factors such as ethnic identity, to explain the similarities and differences in their behaviors. Therefore, I argue that political environment serves as the basis of Thucydides' formulation of national character.⁴³ Sparta, operating under an oligarchic government, is hesitant and risk-averse, while democratic Athens is swift and willing to enter upon high-risk, high-reward undertakings. Syracuse, meanwhile, even though its inhabitants identify as Dorians (and thus as ethnically closer to Sparta), behaves in a way that is much more similar to the Athenians due to its democratic government. To summarize, it may be argued that, in Thucydides' *History*, certain political environments breed certain strong behavioral tendencies.

⁴² "This Thucydidean confirmation which contrasts Athens and Sparta and strongly emphasizes the similarity between Athens and Syracuse, suggests that the History's account of Athens is representative of democracy altogether" (Jaffe 2017a: 397).

⁴³ On the importance of regime type in determining the behavioral patterns of the war's primary belligerents, see Johnson Bagby 2011: 110–12. See also Raaflaub on these two *poleis* representing their regime types: "The two 'superpowers' came to be seen as representing two constitutional alternatives, two radically different ways of life and, at least initially, two different models of leadership and attitudes towards allies. Rightly or wrongly, in contrast to the often hated and feared Athenian democracy, Sparta was perceived as an antithetical ideal: the model of aristocracy" (Raaflaub 1989: 40).

Consistency of Character

Having established political environment as the primary factor determining a city-state's national character in Thucydides, it is now appropriate to discuss the consistency of national character in Thucydides' *History*. While some scholars have questioned this consistency (as noted above), close examination of the text demonstrates that the key traits attributed to the Athenians and Spartans in Book I, and the resultant strengths and weaknesses particular to each *polis*, regularly express themselves over the course of the narrative.⁴⁴ Indeed, time and again the Athenians are driven by their daring and acquisitiveness to undertake risky but potentially highly profitable enterprises (sometimes with disastrous results, the prime example being, of course, the Sicilian expedition), and the Spartans consistently act in a hesitant manner, regularly failing to act at opportune moments or to press their advantage and force a conclusion to the war.

The reader is first presented with a description of the Athenians and Spartans in agreement with the Corinthian's assessment when Thucydides summarizes the fifty years after the Persian Wars by saying: ἐν οἷς οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι τὴν τε ἀρχὴν ἐγκρατεστέραν κατεστήσαντο καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐπὶ μέγα ἐχώρησαν δυνάμεως, οἱ δὲ Λακεδαιμόνιοι αἰσθόμενοι οὔτε ἐκόλυον εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ βραχύ, ἡσύχαζόν τε τὸ πλεόν τοῦ χρόνου, ὄντες μὲν καὶ πρὸ τοῦ μὴ ταχεῖς ἰέναι ἐς τοὺς πολέμους, ἦν μὴ ἀναγκάζονται ... ("In which [years] the Athenians both made the empire stronger and themselves advanced to a great position of strength, but the Lacedaemonians, perceiving this, did not prevent it except for a short time, and **they kept quiet** most of the time,

⁴⁴ It must be noted, however, that I am speaking at the collective level. What I mean by this is that, when Thucydides discusses the Athenians or the Spartans as a group, or when he implicitly makes a point about them, they consistently adhere to the most important points of the Corinthian characterization. Individuals, however, may (and often do) differ from these collective characterizations. This multi-level characterization provides readers with important interpretive information when judging the efficacy of leadership in Athens, and will be discussed further shortly. For a confirmation of my view on the consistency of national character, see Luginbill 1999: 105.

being even before this **not swift** to go to wars, unless compelled”; 1.118.2). A few points are worth noting here.

First, the language of the first sentence makes it clear that Athenians actively advanced their own cause in enlarging and strengthening their empire (οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι τὴν τε ἀρχὴν ἐγκρατεστέραν κατεστήσαντο καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐπὶ μέγα ἐχώρησαν δυνάμεως). This Athenian predilection toward continuous action and acquisition is a key component of the Corinthian characterization of their *polis*, as described at 1.70.4 (οἴονται γὰρ οἱ μὲν τῇ ἀπουσίᾳ ἄν τι κτᾶσθαι), 1.70.7 (ἃ δ' ἂν ἐπελθόντες κτήσονται, ὀλίγα πρὸς τὰ μέλλοντα τυχεῖν πράξαντες), and 1.70.8 (καὶ ἀπολαύουσιν ἐλάχιστα τῶν ὑπαρχόντων διὰ τὸ αἰεὶ κτᾶσθαι).

The Spartans, on the other hand, are yet again portrayed as hesitant. Indeed, Thucydides here presents Spartan slowness in entering into wars as a general, habitual truth, noting both that they didn't prevent the Athenian rise to power in the present circumstances, and that this hesitancy was a trait they possessed “even before this” (καὶ πρὸ τοῦ). Additionally, his description of the Spartans as “keeping quiet most of the time” (ἡσύχαζόν τε τὸ πλεόν τοῦ χρόνου) appears to enter into a dialogue with the Corinthian's earlier discussion of the two *poleis*. As noted above, the Athenians are specifically described as “naturally inclined **neither themselves to be at rest** nor to allow other people to” (πεφυκέναι ἐπὶ τῷ **μήτε αὐτοὺς ἔχειν ἡσυχίαν** μήτε τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους ἔαν; 1.70.9). This inability to have or enjoy inactivity (referenced also one sentence earlier at 1.70.8) is arguably the most important Athenian attribute, since it is the point around which the Corinthian speaker bases his summation of their national character. At 1.118.2, however, we are presented with the idea that the Spartans, on the other hand, can be (and often are) inactive. This inactivity, however, appears to be yet again presented in a negative way, because it allows the Athenians to accumulate power, and looks more like

hesitation and lethargy than any true state of peace.⁴⁵ Thus, the characterizations of the two city-states provided by the Corinthian speaker appear to be at least partially confirmed by this passage, and readers are reminded, at least in the case of the Spartans, that these characterizations carry with them possible negative consequences.

Athens

Having seen the author discuss the Athenians and Spartans together, let us begin to focus on episodes that highlight the characterization of individual *poleis*, beginning with Athens. Numerous passages demonstrate the explanatory power of the Corinthian ambassador's assessment of Athenian collective tendencies in Thucydides' narrative. For instance, at 2.65.7 Thucydides directly compares Pericles' wartime strategy with the actions of his successors: ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἡσυχάζοντάς τε καὶ τὸ ναυτικὸν θεραπεύοντας καὶ ἀρχὴν μὴ ἐπικτωμένους ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ μηδὲ τῇ πόλει κινδυνεύοντας ἔφη περιέσεσθαι· οἱ δὲ ταῦτά τε πάντα ἐς τοῦναντίον ἔπραξαν ... ("For *he* [Pericles] said that, **if they kept quiet** and saw to the fleet and did not acquire more empire during the war and did not endanger the city, they would succeed. But *they* [his successors] did all these things in the opposite way ..."). While this quote may bear more importance in an analysis of Thucydides' construction of the relationship between Pericles and his successors, it must be noted that the first condition for Athenian success presented here is ἡσυχάζοντας ("if they kept quiet"). As noted above, the Corinthian ambassador closes his speech by firmly stating that the Athenians have a distaste for inactivity, and can neither be at rest nor can allow others to (1.70.9). Then, at 1.118.2, keeping quiet (ἡσύχαζον) is associated with the

⁴⁵ This discussion of "inactivity" and "keeping quiet" must be kept in mind moving forward, as it will come up time and again at key passages dealing with Spartan and Athenian national character, and the role of leadership in managing them.

Spartans, who sat on the sidelines while the thoroughly active Athenians expanded their power. Thus, up to this point in Thucydides, ἡσυχία has been a thoroughly un-Athenian characteristic. It is, then, not insignificant that the success of Pericles' strategy relies on Athenian tranquility, because for Pericles to enforce this strategy, he must drive the Athenians to consistently act in a way that is contrary to their defined character.⁴⁶

Indeed, that this strategy ran counter to Athenian character is made abundantly clear when Thucydides tells us that, after Pericles' death, the Athenians, led by Pericles' successors, did just the opposite of his recommendation.⁴⁷ As such, they ceased to keep quiet, but instead pursued further gain. Moreover, Thucydides goes on to explicitly state that this shift back to their natural tendencies had a number of disastrous consequences for the Athenians (2.65.11). In Thucydides' post-Periclean Athens, then, the state reverted back to its natural collective character as presented by the Corinthian ambassador in Book 1, including its potential for self-inflicted harm (1.70.3).

The above passage is certainly not the only one where we see the Athenians live up to their established national character. Indeed, time and again in the *History* Thucydides emphasizes Athenian daring and speed to action. Moreover, in each case the narrative makes

⁴⁶ Rood notes that the terms of this summary (primarily the use of ἡσυχάζοντες) suggest the impracticality of the advice (1998: 140). Gomme argues that this was “just what Athenians were incapable of doing” (note *ad loc.*). For a further discussion of the inherent problems of the Periclean war strategy because of its opposition to the Athenian national character, see chapter 2, p. 94.

⁴⁷ A key point in Thucydides' juxtaposition of Pericles and later leaders is that Pericles led the *demos* rather than being led by it, and that he did not acquire power from saying what was pleasurable to hear (2.65.8), while later leaders entrusted matters to the *demos* in their competition for primacy (2.65.10). In Thucydides' conception, then, the drive to revert to an active, acquisitive strategy originated from the *masses*, who in turn drove leaders seeking to curry favor with them to implement it. Thus, without a Pericles to lead them, the Athenians took back the reigns of government and began to live up to their collective characterization. Readers may here wonder about the historicity of Thucydides' eulogy of Pericles, observing that some scholars have questioned both the significance often assigned to this passage (Rusten 1988: 212–13) and the truthfulness of such a strong opposition between Pericles and his successors (Azoulay 2010: 155–7). Whether or not this passage truly represents the differences between Pericles and his successors, however, the story the passage tells Thucydides' readers remains the same: Pericles led the Athenians away from their natural tendencies, and without him they reverted back to them.

clear whether this Athenian daring had positive or negative consequences.⁴⁸ For example, at 3.36.1–5 Thucydides discusses the original Mytilenaeen decree, and puts a clearly identifiable emphasis on the rapidity and rashness with which it was passed. Indeed, he notes that the Athenians immediately (εὐθύς) put Salaethus to death (despite his promises to end the siege of Plataea; 3.36.1), and that they made their decision while still angry (ὕπὸ ὀργῆς; 3.36.2). Additionally, the message itself they send to Paches after reaching their decision emphasizes the rapidity with which he is to carry out their decree: **κατὰ τάχος** κελεύοντες διαχρήσασθαι Μυτιληναίους (“... bidding him to **swiftly** kill the Mytilenaeans; 3.36.3). Here, then, we see the Athenians acting with the rapidity readers have been conditioned to expect from them. Summary judgment has been passed and will be acted upon in short order. The potential rashness of this decision, however, also becomes immediately apparent both to readers and, in this case, to the Athenians themselves: as Thucydides relates: καὶ τῇ ὑστεραία μετάνοιά τις **εὐθύς** ἦν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἀναλογισμὸς ὡμὸν τὸ βούλευμα καὶ μέγα ἐγνώσθαι (“and on the next day they **immediately** had some regret and reckoned they had pronounced a great and severe punishment”; 3.36.4). Once again Athenian speed is demonstrated, but in this instance Thucydides uses it to point out how quickly the populace realizes that they acted rashly.⁴⁹ The Athenians’ speed, then, appears to have led them into acting in a way that is contrary to good judgment (παρὰ γνώμην).⁵⁰

The sentiment that the Athenians’ original judgment was both rash and excessively harsh is carried over in Thucydides’ description of the two triremes headed to Mytilene. Here the author’s narrative emphasizes both the speed of the second trireme chasing after the first, and the slowness of the first because of its reservations about its task:

⁴⁸ Cf. 1.70.3 for the Corinthian’s discussion of Athenian daring and its negative side.

⁴⁹ Connor notes that the Athenians become immediately aware that their decision was “inappropriate” (1984b: 85).

⁵⁰ See 1.70.3.

καὶ τριήρη εὐθύς ἄλλην ἀπέστειλλον **κατὰ σπουδὴν**, ὅπως μὴ φθασάσης τῆς προτέρας εὐρώσι διεφθαρμένην τὴν πόλιν· προεῖχε δὲ ἡμέρα καὶ νυκτὶ μάλιστα. παρασκευασάντων δὲ τῶν Μυτιληναίων πρέσβων τῇ νηὶ οἶνον καὶ ἄλφιστα καὶ μεγάλα ὑποσχομένων, εἰ φθάσειαν, ἐγένετο **σπουδὴ** τοῦ πλοῦ τοιαύτη ὥστε ἥσθιον τε ἅμα ἐλαύνοντες οἶνω καὶ ἐλαίῳ ἄλφιστα πεφυραμένα, καὶ οἱ μὲν ὕπνον ἤροῦντο κατὰ μέρος, οἱ δὲ ἤλαυνον. κατὰ τύχην δὲ πνεύματος οὐδενὸς ἐναντιωθέντος καὶ τῆς μὲν προτέρας νεὸς **οὐ σπουδῇ** πλεούσης ἐπὶ πρᾶγμα ἀλλόκοτον, ταύτης δὲ τοιούτῳ τρόπῳ **ἐπειγομένης** ... (3.49.2–4)

And **immediately** they **hastily** dispatched another trireme, so that they might not find the city destroyed because the earlier ship arrived before them; it was ahead by about a day and a night. But with the Mytilenaeans having provided wine and barley-groats and promising great things if they should get there first, there was such **zeal** for the voyage that they were eating barley-groats mixed with wine and oil at the same time as they rowed, and some got some sleep in turns, and others rowed. And, according to fortune, with no adverse wind and with the earlier ship not sailing **with haste** to an unwelcome deed, but with this [ship] **hastening** in such a way ...

Thus, we see Athenian speed highlighted yet again, but in this case they are attempting to correct their earlier wrong. This emphasis is apparent in Thucydides' language, as the second ship sets out immediately (εὐθύς) and in haste (κατὰ σπουδὴν). Then, in describing the progress of this ship, the author tells us of the zeal (σπουδὴ) its crew has for their task, and again notes the speed with which it drives on to its destination (ἐπειγομένης). At the same time, Thucydides ever so briefly focalizes on the feelings of the crew members of the first ship, pointing out that, while their countrymen sail as quickly as possible to catch them, they sail slowly (οὐ σπουδῇ) to an “unwelcome deed” (πρᾶγμα ἀλλόκοτον). As noted by Connor, these two racing ships and the vividness with which they are portrayed “draw us into the action and direct our responses,” forcing readers to *want* the second ship to arrive in time to save the Mytilenaeans (1984b: 86).⁵¹ Thucydides, then, through his presentation of the narrative makes it clear to readers that the original decision, though swift, was also rash and incorrect. While, in this case, Athenian

⁵¹ Grant also argues that the presentation of this passage exaggerates its drama (1974: 86).

political discourse does actually succeed in avoiding what Thucydides makes clear was a rash decision, and the Mytilenaeans narrowly escape the severity of the original Athenian decree against them, they escape only by the thinnest of margins.⁵² This fact demonstrates clearly the potential danger in the swiftness with which the Athenians deliberate and act, a danger which will become all too real when the Athenians debate the Sicilian expedition.⁵³

Athenian speed and activity exercised at the collective level continue to play an important role in Thucydides' description of the Peloponnesian War in the fourth book of his history. For example, when a storm drives the Athenian fleet to Pylos, Demosthenes attempts to convince the other generals that they should fortify the spot, but fails to win them over (4.3.2–3). Unable to sail out due to bad weather, however, the soldiers themselves are seized by an urge to take up the task: ὡς δὲ οὐκ ἔπειθεν οὔτε τοὺς στρατηγοὺς οὔτε τοὺς στρατιώτας, ὕστερον καὶ τοῖς ταξιάρχοις κοινώσας, **ἠσύχαζεν** ὑπὸ ἀπλοίας, μέχρι αὐτοῖς **τοῖς στρατιώταις σχολάζουσιν ὄρμη ἐνέπεσε** περιστᾶσιν ἐκτειχίσαι τὸ χωρίον (“But when he convinced neither the generals nor the soldiers, and later sharing [the plan] with the squadron commanders, he **kept quiet** because of the impossibility of sailing, until **an impulse fell upon the soldiers themselves who were at leisure** to encircle and fortify the place”; 4.4.1). Thus, despite the fact that it is originally Demosthenes who recognizes the advantages this location offers, it is the Athenian soldiers themselves who, unable to tolerate their inactivity and struck by a desire for work, take up the task.⁵⁴

⁵² Balot argues that Thucydides includes this episode in his work to “illustrate certain problematic features of democratic discourse” (2004: 89).

⁵³ It has been pointed out, however, that despite the feeling that the Mytilenaeans are “saved” at this point, the actual punishment they receive is by no means light. See Connor 1984b: 86–8.

⁵⁴ It must be noted that it is during Demosthenes' inactivity (*ἠσύχαζεν*) that the Athenians are overcome with a desire for work. The un-Athenian connotations of this word have been noted above (see, for example, pp. 24–5).

After the decision to fortify the spot has been reached, Thucydides then passes into a swift and vivid description of the Athenian soldiers carrying out their work:

καὶ ἐγχειρήσαντες εἰργάζοντο, σιδήρια μὲν λιθουργὰ οὐκ ἔχοντες, λογάδην δὲ φέροντες λίθους, καὶ ξυνετίθεσαν ὡς ἕκαστόν τι ξυμβαίνοι· καὶ τὸν πηλόν, εἴ που δέοι χρῆσθαι, ἀγγείων ἀπορία ἐπὶ τοῦ νότου ἔφερον, ἐγκεκυφότες τε, ὡς μάλιστα μέλλοι ἐπιμένειν, καὶ τὸ χεῖρε ἐς τοῦπίσω ξυμπλέκοντες, ὅπως μὴ ἀποπίπτοι. **παντί τε τρόπῳ ἠπεύγοντο** φθῆναι τοὺς Λακεδαιμονίους τὰ ἐπιμαχώτατα ἐξεργασάμενοι πρὶν ἐπιβοηθῆσαι (4.4.2–3).

And taking the task in hand they were working, on the one hand not having stone-mason's tools, but bringing picked-out stones, and they put them together as each thing went together. And the clay, if it should be necessary to use it somewhere, they were carrying on their backs because of the lack of vessels, both having stooped down, so that it was especially likely to stay there, and interlocking their hands behind them, so that it not fall off. **And in every way they were hurrying** to complete work on the most assailable places before the Lacedaemonians came against them.

Here the historian emphasizes Athenian zeal for the task by noting the incredible amount of effort and ingenuity they showed in accomplishing their work. Indeed, rather than simply noting that the soldiers worked hard and quickly completed the fortification and then moving on with the narrative, he includes a detailed description of the project, and highlights for readers the fact that the Athenians, lacking tools and resources, voluntarily undertook intense physical labor. It is particularly interesting to note, however, that Thucydides nowhere hints that the Athenians did this work because they changed their minds and saw the value in Demosthenes' plan; rather, they simply were delayed for so long that their restlessness got the better of them, and they were struck with a desire to fortify the place.⁵⁵

Thucydides' depiction here of the Athenian soldiers closely echoes the Corinthian's description of the Athenians as a whole at 1.70.8, where he points out: ... μήτε ἑορτὴν ἄλλο τι

⁵⁵ See 4.4.1 above.

ἡγεῖσθαι ἢ τὸ τὰ δέοντα πράξει ξυμφορὰν τε οὐχ ἦσσον ἡσυχίαν ἀπράγμονα ἢ ἀσχολίαν ἐπίπονον (“... they consider a holiday nothing other than doing what is necessary, and easy-going rest no less a disaster than troublesome business”). As noted above, the Athenians are portrayed as viewing rest and inactivity in a negative light, equating ἡσυχίαν ἀπράγμονα and ἀσχολίαν ἐπίπονον. In the buildup to Pylos, we see Demosthenes keeping quiet (ἡσύχαζεν) because of the impossibility of sailing, but this may be just as easily be said of the Athenian soldiers who are delayed there with him. Indeed, shortly after his description of Demosthenes, Thucydides describes the Athenian soldiers as at leisure (σχολάζουσιν) when the desire falls upon them to fortify the spot. Thus, the vocabulary of rest/leisure is common to the two passages, and, more importantly, the Athenian aversion to it.

In this passage, Thucydides provides no direct authorial intervention openly that the Athenians lived up to their previously defined collective national character. Through his construction of the narrative, however, and his emphasis on the fact that an inability to stay still drove the Athenians to carry out this task, Thucydides implicitly leads readers to see the Athenians in the same light as in the Corinthian’s speech in Book 1: active, and unable to keep still. Once again, the Athenians, when acting as a group, show a strong tendency to behave in a way that is actually fairly consistent with the Corinthian definition of Athenian group dynamics.

In Book IV yet another echo may be found of the Corinthian’s comments on Athenian collective tendencies. At 4.55 Thucydides discusses Spartan morale after their defeat at Sphacteria, noting that they are uncomfortable with the current naval struggle in which they are engaged, and that they are especially fearful of their enemies the Athenians. To explain the Spartans’ reasoning for this, Thucydides’ adds, ... καὶ τούτῳ πρὸς Ἀθηναίους, οἷς τὸ μὴ ἐπιχειρούμενον αἰεὶ ἐλλιπέες ἦν τῆς δοκίσεώς τι πράξειν (“... and this against the Athenians, for

whom not to attempt a thing was always to fall short of their expectations of achievement”;

4.55.2).⁵⁶ This point, emphasizing the Athenian inability to overlook an opportunity, is reminiscent of the Corinthian speaker’s portrayal of Athenian character in Book 1. Indeed, in their commentaries both Hornblower (1996: 218) and Gomme (1956: 511) note the similarity between this passage and 1.70.7: *μόνοι γὰρ ἔχουσί τε ὁμοίως καὶ ἐλπίζουσιν ἃ ἂν ἐπινοήσωσι διὰ τὸ ταχεῖαν τὴν ἐπιχείρησιν ποιῆσθαι ὧν ἂν γνῶσιν* (“For they alone both have and expect [to have] alike whatever they set their mind on, because they quickly attempt whatever they decide”). While 4.55.2 is negatively defined (in that it discusses *inaction* as a failure to live up to expectations) and 1.70.7 positively (in that it notes Athenian expectations in the case of *successful action*), both of these passages remind us of the Athenian inability to keep quiet, and, what is more, they both point out that not only do the Athenians feel compelled to act whenever presented with an opportunity, they always expect that activity to result in success and acquisition. It must be noted, however, that each of these passages is placed in the mouth (or mind) of a different, non-Athenian group (the Corinthians and then the Spartans), and not of the author.⁵⁷ The agreement between them, however, leads one to conclude that this assessment of Athenian collective behavior may be in the text more than a rhetorical construction by the Corinthian ambassador. Moreover, as noted by Hornblower (and as will be discussed shortly), at 8.96.5 Thucydides expresses a sentiment very similar to the comments at 1.70.7 and 4.55.2 in his own authorial voice, making it appear to readers that this characterization of the Athenians is the author’s own (Hornblower 1996: 218).

⁵⁶ Gomme (1956: 511), Hornblower (1996: 218), and Graves (1982: 201) all take *τι πράξειν* to mean either “achievement” or “success.” I have adopted this interpretation in my translation. For more on the Spartan mental condition after their defeat at Sphacteria, see pp. 66–8.

⁵⁷ The fact that 1.70.7 and 4.55.2 are not expressed in Thucydides’ own voice is noted by Hornblower 1996: 218.

In Book 6—and more specifically in the speeches leading up to the Sicilian expedition—yet another passage may be found that illustrates the consistency of Athenian collective characterization in Thucydides. Indeed, while these speeches and the argumentative techniques deployed in them tell us a great deal about Nicias’ and Alcibiades’ *individual* characterizations (a point that will be addressed in the next chapter), what is more important to this chapter is that both speakers directly address what appears to be a well-known Athenian collective character defined by a distaste for inaction.

Nicias is the first to reference the Athenian collective character in his remarks at 6.9.3, where he admits, καὶ πρὸς μὲν τοὺς τρόπους τοὺς ὑμετέρους ἀσθενὴς ἄν μου ὁ λόγος εἴη, εἰ τὰ τε ὑπάρχοντα σφάζειν παραινοίην καὶ μὴ τοῖς ἐτοίμοις περὶ τῶν ἀφανῶν καὶ μελλόντων κινδυνεύειν (“And against your customs my argument would be weak, if I should advise you to preserve what you already have and not to run risks with what is at hand for uncertain future things”).⁵⁸ In this quotation, Nicias defines what τοὺς τρόπους τοὺς ὑμετέρους means negatively, admitting that, if he calls upon his countrymen to be inactive (the opposite of their custom), he will be unsuccessful. As Nicias understands it, then, the native Athenian tendency is toward activity and acquisition. His discussion of *inaction*, however, is strikingly similar to the language used at 1.70.2 (ὕμεις δὲ τὰ ὑπάρχοντά τε σφάζειν) and at 1.70.4 (ὕμεις δὲ τῷ ἐπελθεῖν καὶ τὰ ἐτοῖμα ἄν βλάψαι) to describe *Spartan* tendencies. Thus, not only does Nicias appear to recognize an Athenian character in this speech, but he also understands that asking the Athenians to act like *Spartans* would be an unsuccessful rhetorical strategy.

⁵⁸ The striking similarity between the language of this passage and the Corinthian’s description of Spartan habits at 1.70.2, 4, and this fact’s ramifications for our understanding of Nicias’ *individual* character, are discussed in more detail on pp. 91 and 197.

Following Nicias' speech, Alcibiades, while arguing that the Athenians should *not* abandon the Sicilian expedition, references this same Athenian inability to preserve what it has and be inactive: καὶ οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἐπισκεπτέον ὑμῖν τοῖς ἄλλοις τὸ ἥσυχον, εἰ μὴ καὶ τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα ἐς τὸ ὁμοῖον μεταλήψεσθε (“And you must not consider keeping quiet from the same perspective as others, unless you also change your customs to be the same”; 6.18.3). Here he defines keeping quiet (τὸ ἥσυχον) as something for people of other cities, and insinuates that it is contrary to Athenian custom. He then goes on to tell the Athenians to make the journey to Sicily, ... ἵνα Πελοποννησίων τε στορέσωμεν τὸ φρόνημα, εἰ δόξομεν ὑπεριδόντες τὴν ἐν τῷ παρόντι ἥσυχίαν καὶ ἐπὶ Σικελίαν πλεῦσαι (“... so that we lay low the pride of the Peloponnesians, if we seem, despising the present **quiet**, to sail to Sicily”; 6.18.4). Alcibiades' proposition (for the Athenians to show the Spartans that they have no regard for their present peace) hearkens back to the Corinthian ambassador's claims at 1.70.8, namely that the Athenians are unable to enjoy what they already have (ἀπολαύουσιν ἐλάχιστα τῶν ὑπαρχόντων), and that they “consider ... easy-going rest no less a disaster than troublesome business” (ἡγεῖσθαι ... ξυμφορὰν τε οὐχ ἥσσον ἥσυχίαν ἀπράγμονα ἢ ἀσχολίαν ἐπίπονον). Thus, Alcibiades' appeal to the Athenians to send an expedition to Sicily directly references their inability to ever be at rest.

The similarity between these two passages becomes even clearer as Alcibiades' speech continues: παράπαν τε γινώσκω πόλιν μὴ ἀπράγμονα τάχιστα ἂν μοι δοκεῖν ἀπραγμοσύνης μεταβολῇ διαφθαρήναι, καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀσφαλέστατα τούτους οἰκεῖν οἱ ἂν τοῖς παροῦσιν ἤθεσι καὶ νόμοις, ἣν καὶ χεῖρω ἦ, ἥκιστα διαφόρως πολιτεύωσιν (“And I recognize absolutely that a city that is **not inactive** would seem to me most quickly to be ruined by a change to **inactivity**, and that, of men, they live most safely who govern least of all differently from their

customs and laws, even if they are inferior”; 6.18.7).⁵⁹ This characterization of Athens as “not inactive” (μὴ ἀπράγμονα) once again calls to mind the Corinthian’s assertion that the Athenians consider easy-going rest (ἡσυχίαν ἀπράγμονα) no less a disaster than troublesome business, and his claim that the Athenians are constantly engaged in acquisition (1.70.8). Thus, Alcibiades (who is, of course, himself an Athenian) echoes earlier *external* characterizations of his own *polis*. Rather than admitting his powerlessness in the face of Athenian character as Nicias did, however, Alcibiades actually encourages his fellow citizens to be true to their expansionist and aggressive tendencies (Balot 2004: 90).

In these speeches, Nicias and Alcibiades appear to reference an accepted Athenian *self*-characterization in which the *polis* feels a natural aversion to inactivity. Indeed, when Alcibiades characterizes the city as “not inactive” (μὴ ἀπράγμονα), and calls on his audience to manage the state according to their present customs and laws (παροῦσιν ἤθεσι καὶ νόμοις ... ἥκιστα διαφόρως πολιτεύωσιν), we may note that this argument can only be persuasive if his listeners actually identify their customs as Alcibiades has defined them.⁶⁰ If his listeners disagree with this characterization, they will feel no urge to action, because inactivity will, in their minds, not be contrary to their customs and laws. Thus, the reader of Thucydides can at this point add Athenians to the list of groups, together with the Corinthians and Spartans, identifying continual activity and restiveness as uniquely Athenian character traits.

Interestingly, Thucydides’ portrayal of the Athenian mindset after Nicias fails to dissuade them from sailing against Sicily continues to echo the characterization attributed to them by the

⁵⁹ Alcibiades’ argument here that a city is safest if it lives according to its own character actually appears to run counter to the implicit argument I believe is present in Thucydides: that good leadership will temper a city’s weaknesses and bolster its strengths. Thus, it is my position that Thucydides does *not* speak through Alcibiades’ voice. These points will be discussed further in a later chapter dedicated to Alcibiades as a leader (see pp. 247–8).

⁶⁰ Thucydides does indeed present this speech as being persuasive and successful, as it leaves the Athenians even more eager than before for the expedition (6.19.1).

Corinthian ambassador in Book 1. Indeed, after Nicias argues that the Athenians will need an overwhelmingly large force for their expedition to Sicily, Thucydides tells us the following:

οἱ δὲ τὸ μὲν ἐπιθυμοῦν τοῦ πλοῦ οὐκ ἐξηρέθησαν ὑπὸ τοῦ ὀχλώδους τῆς παρασκευῆς, πολὺ δὲ μᾶλλον ὄρμηοντο, καὶ τοῦναντίον περιέστη αὐτῶ· εὖ τε γὰρ παραινέσαι ἔδοξε καὶ ἀσφάλεια νῦν δὴ καὶ πολλὴ ἔσεσθαι. καὶ ἔρωσ ἐνέπεσε τοῖς πᾶσιν ὁμοίως ἐκπλεῦσαι· τοῖς μὲν γὰρ πρεσβυτέροις ὡς ἢ καταστρεψομένοις ἐφ’ ἃ ἔπλεον ἢ οὐδὲν ἂν σφαλεῖσαν μεγάλην δύναμιν, τοῖς δ’ ἐν τῇ ἡλικίᾳ τῆς τε ἀπούσης πόθῳ ὄψεως καὶ θεωρίας, καὶ εὐέλπιδες ὄντες σωθήσεσθαι· ὁ δὲ πολὺς ὄμιλος καὶ στρατιώτης ἐν τε τῷ παρόντι ἀργύριον οἴσειν καὶ προσκτήσεσθαι δύναμιν ὅθεν αἰδίον μισθοφορὰν ὑπάρξειν (6.24.2–3).

But they [the Athenians] were not deprived of their zeal for the expedition by the troublesome preparation, but they were much more eager, and the opposite happened for him. For it both seemed that he had advised well and that now there would be great security [for the preparation]. And desire fell upon all equally to sail out. [It fell upon] the old because they thought that they would either overturn the things against which they were sailing or that the great force would in no way fail, and it fell upon those in the prime of life because of both their desire for far off sight and spectacle, and being hopeful that they would be kept safe. And the great crowd and soldiery thought that they would both carry off money in the present, and that they would acquire more power whence there would be never-ending pay.

The verbal and thematic correspondences between this passage and the Corinthian speaker’s description of Athenian national character in Book 1 are striking. More specifically, each passage places an emphasis on Athenian expectation and hopefulness, and on Athenian acquisitiveness. First, the Athenians are described as hopeful (εὐέλπιδες) in dire straits at 1.70.3. At 1.70.7 the Corinthian speaker tells us that, when they fail in an attempt, they hope instead (ἀντελπίσαντες) for other things, and that the Athenians, because of their speed to action, equally have and expect (ἐλπίζουσιν) to have whatever they set their mind to. Thus, the Athenians are depicted as consistently hopeful and full of expectations, whether they have just thought of an undertaking or even if they have just failed. Similarly, at 6.24.3 it is made implicitly obvious that the older Athenians expect success in the Sicilian expedition, but the Athenian youths, struck with a desire

for far-off sights, explicitly feel hopeful (εὐέλπιδες) that, due to the greatness of the expedition, they will return safely. The Athenian people, then, convinced to act, feel hopeful for the expedition whether it succeeds or not: either they will achieve something, or they will at least remain safe because of the greatness of their force (6.24.3).

Athenian acquisitiveness, on the other hand, is highlighted at 1.70.4, when the Corinthian ambassador argues that the Athenians are unhesitating and go abroad, thinking that they could acquire (κτᾶσθαι) something by their absence. Again at 1.70.7 Athenian acquisition is discussed, this time to point out that the Athenians think whatever they acquire (κτίσονται) is little in comparison to future acquisitions. Finally, in 1.70.8 the speaker discusses Athenian acquisitiveness in his strongest terms, claiming they do not enjoy what they already have because of their constant acquisition (τὸ αἰεὶ κτᾶσθαι). This constant desire for acquisition is reflected in the Athenian attitude at the end of 6.24.3, when Thucydides tells us, ὁ δὲ πολλὸς ὄμιλος καὶ στρατιώτης ἔν τε τῷ παρόντι ἀργύριον οἴσειν καὶ προσκτήσεσθαι δύναμιν ὅθεν αἰδίων μισθοφορὰν ὑπάρξειν (“And the great crowd and soldiery thought that they would both carry off money in the present, and that they would acquire more power whence there would be never-ending pay”). Acquisition, both of money and of power, is a key contributor to the Athenian excitement for this expedition.⁶¹

Other verbal correspondences are notable as well. For example, when Thucydides tells readers that the older generation thought that the great force would in no way fail (οὐδὲν ἄν σφαλῆσαν μεγάλην δύναμιν) (6.24.3), one may recall that at 1.70.7 this verb (σφαλῶσιν) is used in the protasis of a condition expressing the idea that the Athenians retain their hopefulness even

⁶¹ Balot argues that there existed at Athens a proper way to pursue wealth, but that the *polis*' expressions of unbridled greed caused it societal damage. Additionally, he states that, over the course of the work, readers observe the Athenians focusing more and more on personal gain rather than considering the overall good of the *polis* (2001: 139–40).

when they fail. Additionally, when readers see that the Athenian youth falls in love with the expedition because of “desire for far off sight and spectacle” (τῆς τε ἀπούσης πόθῳ ὄψεως καὶ θεωρίας; 6.24.3), one calls to mind the Corinthian ambassador’s argument that they can acquire something by their absence (τῇ ἀπουσίᾳ; 1.70.4).

The linguistic and thematic reflections between this passage and earlier descriptions of Athenian character, as well as Alcibiades’ appeal to the Athenians to live up to their national character (which itself seems to assume Athenian self-identification with a characterization that is remarkably similar to that in Book 1) come together to leave us feeling that the deliberation leading up to the Sicilian expedition displays a moment in which Athens, in many ways, behaved at its most “Athenian.”⁶²

Of course, as any reader of Thucydides (or student of ancient history, for that matter) knows, the Sicilian expedition, despite all the Athenian confidence and excitement at its outset, ends as an unmitigated disaster. Thucydides himself argues that poor Athenian leadership at later stages of the Peloponnesian War led to a number of mistakes being made, and specifically notes the Sicilian expedition as an example (2.65.11). Moreover, Thucydides’ narrative description at the end of Book 7 drives home the magnitude of the disaster and the greatness of the suffering it caused to those involved in it. Indeed, we learn that Nicias was least deserving of the death he suffered after his capture (7.86.5), we see the Athenian prisoners serving as forced labor in quarries and eventually being sold into slavery (7.87.1–4), and Thucydides finally closes the book, so to speak, on the Sicilian expedition by telling his readers:

ξυνέβη τε ἔργον τοῦτο [Ἑλληνικὸν] τῶν κατὰ τὸν πόλεμον τόνδε μέγιστον
γενέσθαι, δοκεῖν δ’ ἔμοιγε καὶ ὧν ἀκοῇ Ἑλληνικῶν ἴσμεν, καὶ τοῖς τε κρατήσασιν
λαμπρότατον καὶ τοῖς διαφθαρεῖσι δυστυχέστατον· κατὰ πάντα γὰρ πάντως

⁶² As will be demonstrated in Chapter 4, this occurred through the persuasion of a leader whose *individual* character is, in many ways, extremely Athenian.

νικηθέντες καὶ οὐδὲν ὀλίγον ἐς οὐδὲν κακοπαθήσαντες πανωλεθρία δὴ τὸ λεγόμενον καὶ πεζὸς καὶ νῆες καὶ οὐδὲν ὅτι οὐκ ἀπόλετο, καὶ ὀλίγοι ἀπὸ πολλῶν ἐπ' οἴκου ἀπενόστησαν. ταῦτα μὲν τὰ περὶ Σικελίαν γενόμενα (7.87.5–6).

And this Hellenic undertaking happened to be the greatest of those during this war, and it seems to me also [to be the greatest] of those Hellenic [undertakings] we know by report, both the most illustrious for the victors and most unfortunate for the vanquished. For conquered entirely in all things and having suffered greatly in every matter, in utter ruin, as the saying goes, the army and the ships and everything else was destroyed, and few out of the many [who went] returned home. These were the things that happened around Sicily.

The disaster described here is so great, in fact, that the Athenians originally don't believe that it could have happened (8.1.1). When they finally do accept the news, however, Thucydides represents the Athenians as truly despondent: πάντα δὲ πανταχόθεν αὐτοῦς ἐλύπει τε καὶ περιεστήκει ἐπὶ τῷ γεγενημένῳ φόβος τε καὶ κατάπληξις μεγίστη δὴ (“Everything was grieving them from all quarters and after what had happened fear encircled them as well as the greatest consternation”), and they even lose hope (... ἀνέλπιστοι ἦσαν ἐν τῷ παρόντι σωθήσεσθαι; 8.1.2). The Athenians are shocked and vulnerable, and all appears lost.

At this moment, however, defeated and shaken, they resolve not to give in (μὴ ἐνδιδόναι), and instead formulate a plan to recover. Thucydides takes this opportunity of Athenian perseverance to tell readers, πάντα τε πρὸς τὸ παραχρήμα περιδεές, ὅπερ φιλεῖ δῆμος ποιεῖν, ἐτοῖμοι ἦσαν εὐτακτεῖν (“And they were ready to put everything in good order because of their present fear, which very thing the people tend to do”; 8.1.5). This direct authorial intervention presents us with a Thucydidean view of Athenian collective character, since it deals with the proclivities of the δῆμος. What it actually tells us, however, is remarkably consistent with the Corinthian ambassador's statement that the Athenians, when victorious, pursue their advantage to the utmost, but when defeated, give ground least of all (κρατοῦντές τε τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἐπὶ πλείστον ἐξέρχονται καὶ νικώμενοι ἐπ' ἐλάχιστον ἀναπίπτουσιν; 1.70.5). While these two

passages do not share any particular linguistic similarities, the thematic correspondence is clear: Athenians don't give up. Despite suffering their greatest disaster up to this point in the war, brought on by the previously discussed Athenian tendency to take extreme risks, the Athenians do not become despondent and give up. Instead, they attempt to put their affairs in order and persevere.

Finally, near the end of Book 8 Thucydides describes the difference between the Athenians and the Spartans in his own voice. This occurs immediately after the Athenian loss at Euboea (8.95), and despite Athenian fears, the Spartans fail once again to sail into the Piraeus (8.96.3–4). In this passage, Thucydides notes the following:

ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐν τούτῳ μόνῳ Λακεδαιμόνιοι Ἀθηναίοις πάντων δὴ ξυμφορώτατοι προσπολεμῆσαι ἐγένοντο, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις πολλοῖς· διάφοροι γὰρ πλείστον ὄντες τὸν τρόπον, οἱ μὲν ὄξεις, οἱ δὲ βραδεῖς, καὶ οἱ μὲν ἐπιχειρηταί, οἱ δὲ ἄτολμοι, ἄλλως τε καὶ ἐν ἀρχῇ ναυτικῇ πλείστα ὠφέλουν. ἔδειξαν δὲ οἱ Συρακόσιοι· μάλιστα γὰρ ὁμοιότροποι γενόμενοι ἄριστα καὶ προσεπολέμησαν (8.96.5).

But not in this alone were the Lacedaemonians the best of all for the Athenians to fight against, but also in many other things. For being extremely different in character, the one hasty, the other slow, the one enterprising, the other lacking daring, both otherwise and especially in a nautical empire they helped [the Athenians]. And the Syracusans showed this. For being especially similar in character they fought against [the Athenians] best.

This passage, given in Thucydides' own authorial voice, bears a number of similarities to the Corinthian comparison of Athenian and Spartan character. First, his emphasis on Athenian speed (describing them as ὄξεις) directly echoes 1.70.2, where they are also ὄξεις, and it thematically matches 1.70.4, where the Athenians are described as ἄοκνοι.⁶³ Additionally, when Thucydides describes the Athenians as ἐπιχειρηταί in this juxtaposition of Spartan and Athenian character,

⁶³ The Spartans, on the other hand, are described as μελλητὰς at 1.70.4, echoed by their characterization as βραδεῖς at 8.96.5.

one may recall that earlier in Book 1 the Corinthian speaker identified the Athenians as simultaneously having and expecting to have whatever they set their mind to, attributing this to the speed with which they attempt whatever they decide (διὰ τὸ ταχεῖαν τὴν ἐπιχείρησιν ποιεῖσθαι ὧν ἂν γνώσιν; 1.70.7). Moreover, at 8.96.5 the Spartans are contrasted with the ἐπιχειρηταί Athenians as being ἄτολμοι. Compare this description to that of the Athenians at 1.70.3, where they are the opposite: τολμηταί. The agreement between this later statement in the author's own voice and the Corinthian speaker's claims in Book 1 are notable, and multiple scholars have admitted to varying degrees the correspondence between the two passages.⁶⁴ Once again Thucydides echoes the collective characterization of the Spartans and Athenians, this time (much as the Corinthian speaker did) emphasizing the advantages of the Athenian character in a direct conflict with the Spartans.

Thus, the Athenians as a group once again behave in a way that is strikingly similar to how they were defined at the outset of Thucydides' text by the Corinthian speaker. It would appear after all of these examples, then, that the Athenians, when viewed and discussed as a collective and without the intervention of a prominent individual leader, behave in a very consistent way. Even when Alcibiades persuades the Athenians to send out the Sicilian

⁶⁴ Cartledge and Debnar, while approaching the idea of "national character" in a cautious and somewhat skeptical way (see 2006: 561–2), do admit that some of what the Corinthian says is borne out in the narrative, specifically pointing to 8.96.5 (2006: 561). Hornblower approaches this passage much more firmly, stating that this passage shows Thucydides endorsing the picture painted by the Corinthian speaker in Book 1 (2008: 1031). Connor also notes the correspondence, claiming that this is the first time Thucydides expresses direct agreement with the Corinthian speaker's analysis in Book 1 (1984b: 41). Lazenby, on the other hand, argues that this passage is not "wholly fair to the Spartans" (2004: 193). His counter-argument, however, is the same as noted above, namely that Spartan "national character" does not apply to individual Spartans such as Brasidas and Gylippus. This point echoes Connor's, who claims that events in the text and leaders who don't live up to their *poleis'* national character force readers to recognize that the Corinthian judgment is a generalization (1984b: 41). It is my argument, however, that such conflict between individual and collective character is not necessarily a complication, but that instead the implicit comparison bears explanatory value for understanding the role of leadership in a *polis*.

expedition, he attempts not to *change* Athenian behavior, but instead entreats his audience to live up to their *normal* character.⁶⁵

As has been shown, this consistency of group behavior applies in the text whether Thucydides puts his analysis in the voice of the Corinthians, Spartans, Athenians, or even in his own authorial voice. This suggests that this characterization is meant to be taken as more than a passing sophistic antithesis, and I argue that we may view it instead as an important analytical tool in the work for understanding the relationships between both leaders and the populations of their cities, and between governmental systems and group behavior. Thus, the strengths and weaknesses in this collective characterization that were clear beginning with the Corinthian's description of Athenian group behavior are consistent as well. Indeed, Athenian acquisitiveness, risk-taking, and activity all lead the city to achieve great things, but also to overreach and suffer disastrous reversals. They consistently press the advantage when they succeed (possibly to their own detriment, in that they fail to make peace with the Spartans immediately after their victory at Sphacteria, when they most likely could have obtained the most favorable terms), but when defeated, as at Sicily, they refuse to give way to their enemies. And most of all, the Athenians simply cannot keep themselves from action. This Athenian group characterization is consistent both in its portrayal throughout the work, and in its positive and negative consequences for the *polis*. As we will now see, this is true of the Spartans as well.

Sparta

⁶⁵ Moreover, Alcibiades is himself an individual expression of the Athenian national character, so his influence cannot be expected to change the behavior of his countrymen. See Chapter 4 for more on Alcibiades.

The characterization of the Spartans presented in Book 1 by the Corinthian ambassador has been discussed above at length.⁶⁶ The question now becomes, as it was for the Athenians, whether this collective characterization is merely a rhetorical stance taken by the Corinthian speaker to convince his Spartan audience that they must go to war against the Athenians, or whether it is the reader's first introduction to a character that will be consistent throughout the work, serving an explanatory purpose. It is necessary, therefore, to examine passages in the text that either implicitly illustrate or explicitly discuss Spartan collective characterization in order to demonstrate that this attribution of particular tendencies and traits to the Spartans *as a group* is in fact consistent.

The passage at 1.118.2—which compares Athenian and Spartan activity in the years leading up to the Peloponnesian War—has already been discussed above, but it is here appropriate to examine it again, shifting our emphasis to the characterization of Sparta. To review, in this passage Thucydides discussed the growth of Athenian power and Sparta's response to it, saying, ἐν οἷς οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι τὴν τε ἀρχὴν ἐγκρατεστέραν κατεστήσαντο καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐπὶ μέγα ἐχώρησαν δυνάμεως, οἱ δὲ Λακεδαιμόνιοι αἰσθόμενοι οὔτε ἐκώλυον εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ βραχύ, ἡσύχαζόν τε τὸ πλεον τοῦ χρόνου, ὄντες μὲν καὶ πρὸ τοῦ μὴ ταχεῖς ἰέναι ἐς τοὺς πολέμους, ἦν μὴ ἀναγκάζονται ... (“In which [years] the Athenians both made the empire stronger and themselves advanced to a great position of strength, but the Lacedaemonians perceiving this did not prevent it except for a moment, and they kept quiet most of the time, being even before this not swift to go to wars, unless compelled”; 1.118.2).

Thucydides here identifies the Spartans as slow to action even before the outbreak of the war, thus corroborating the Corinthian description earlier in Book 1. Indeed, Spartan inaction and

⁶⁶ See above, pp. 19–26.

its perceived role in the growth of Athenian daring is specifically lambasted by the Corinthian speaker, who claims that the Spartans themselves are to blame for the current state of affairs (1.69.1–4). In this verbal condemnation of Spartan lethargy, the Corinthian speaker accuses the Spartans of being the only Greeks to keep quiet (ἡσυχάζετε; 1.69.4), the very same language with which Thucydides describes their behavior (ἡσύχαζόν) during Athens' rise to prominence (1.118.2). Moreover, Thucydides' use of this word sets the Spartans, who habitually do nothing, at direct odds with the Athenians, who, as discussed above, are described as naturally incapable of keeping peaceful (1.70.9).

This theme of Spartan conservatism and inaction, especially as compared to Athenian ingenuity and action, is apparent throughout the Corinthian comparison. For example, the Corinthian speaker says of the Spartans, ... ὑμεῖς δὲ τὰ ὑπάρχοντά τε σῶζειν καὶ ἐπιγνῶναι μηδὲν καὶ ἔργῳ οὐδὲ τὰναγκαῖα ἐξικέσθαι (“... but *you* are accustomed to preserve what exists and to think of nothing new and not to accomplish what is necessary by your action”; 1.70.2). He then goes on two sections later to identify the Spartans as delayers (μελλητὰς) and as preferring to stay at home (ἐνδημοτάτους) rather than go abroad, finally finishing by telling the Spartans, ὑμεῖς δὲ τῷ ἐπελθεῖν καὶ τὰ ἐτοῖμα ἂν βλάψαι (“but you [think that] you could harm what is readily at hand by going somewhere”; 1.70.4). Thus, the growth of Athenian power before the war is attributed by Thucydides to Spartan characteristics strikingly similar to those for which the Corinthian speaker faults his Lacedaemonian listeners. At this point in the text, then, we have now seen that the major characteristics of Spartan collective behavior before the war (as presented by the author) are consistent with the way they are portrayed at its outset by an external speaker.

This emphasis on Spartan collective hesitancy and their inability to undertake risky but potentially rewarding enterprises continues in Book 2. At the behest of the Megarians, a group of Peloponnesian captains, including Cnemus and Brasidas, form a plan to seize the Piraeus, which has been left unguarded (2.93.1). The language of the plan emphasizes the speed with which it must be carried out to be successful, pointing out that they must drag the ships down to Megara quickly (κατὰ τάχος), and then sail straightaway (εὐθύς) against the Piraeus (2.93.2). The plan, therefore, requires the Peloponnesians—and in particular the Spartans—to act in a way that is drastically different from the characterization that has been attributed to them up to this point in the work. Thucydides also emphasizes to readers how unguarded the Piraeus was at the time and how unexpected such an attack would have been: οὔτε γὰρ ναυτικὸν ἦν προφυλάσσον ἐν αὐτῷ οὐδὲν οὔτε προσδοκία οὐδεμία μὴ ἂν ποτε οἱ πολέμιοι ἐξαπιναίως οὕτως ἐπιπλεύσειαν, ἐπεὶ οὐδ’ ἀπὸ τοῦ προφανοῦς τολμῆσαι ἂν καθ’ ἡσυχίαν, οὐδ’ εἰ διεννοῦντο, μὴ οὐκ ἂν προαισθῆσθαι (“for there was neither any fleet standing guard in it, nor was there any expectation that their enemies would ever sail against it so suddenly, since they did not [think that] they would dare [to sail against it] openly [when they were] at leisure [i.e. when they had plenty of time to prepare], nor if they decided to do it [was there any expectation] that it would not be perceived beforehand”; 2.93.3).⁶⁷

This description speaks volumes about Athenian perceptions of their enemies’ characteristic tendencies in Thucydides’ text. First, it is noteworthy that the Athenians fully do not expect the Spartans to mount an attack so suddenly (ἐξαπιναίως οὕτως). This expectation (or lack thereof) appears to betray an Athenian-held belief that their enemies were consistently slow to operate and were incapable of mounting a surprise attack against them. This impression is

⁶⁷ For more on the translation of this passage, and especially on the interpretation of καθ’ ἡσυχίαν, see Rusten 1989: 238–9.

strengthened when Thucydides gives the Athenians' reasoning for not expecting an attack of this sort. Indeed, when he notes that the Peloponnesians would not dare to attack even if operating καθ' ἡσυχίαν—a phrase which, as mentioned, Rusten interprets to mean “even with considerable time for preparation” (1989: 238)—readers are forced to recognize just how great a departure from normal Spartan tendencies the actions planned by Cnemus and Brasidas are. Implicit in this passage is the idea that the Athenians believe that their enemies would *never* attack *suddenly*, because they wouldn't even do it if they had taken the time for preparation. Moreover, the use of the word ἡσυχία calls to mind the juxtaposition of Spartan and Athenian given by the Corinthian speaker at 1.70. Indeed, it was the Athenians who despised leisure and were incapable of being quiet at 1.70.8 and 1.70.9, with the implicit comparison identifying the Spartans with this concept. As noted above, Thucydides then *directly* associates the Spartans with leisure and slowness (ἡσύχαζόν τε τὸ πλεόν τοῦ χρόνου) at 1.118.2. It would appear, then, that in his description of Athenian unpreparedness and the reasons for this unpreparedness, Thucydides expresses an Athenian perception of Spartan hesitancy and slowness that coincides with earlier Corinthian criticism of their collective character. In doing this, however, Thucydides also subtly directs his readers to conclude that this attack, since everything about it was so contrary to Athenian expectations, had every reason to be successful.

When the crucial moment arrives, however, the Peloponnesians do *not* sail directly to Athens, but instead to Salamis. This is because, as Thucydides tells us, they feared the danger of their original plan (καταδείσαντες τὸν κίνδυνον; 2.93.4). This hesitation gives the Athenians time to light the fire signals, warning their fellow-citizens of the Peloponnesian threat. Thucydides then emphasizes for a second time how successful this attempt could have been by noting the Athenian reaction to the beacons. According to our author they create a terror (ἔκκληξις) in the

city, because everyone believes the Piraeus has already been taken or will shortly. Thucydides then directly and openly claims, ὅπερ ἄν, εἰ ἐβουλήθησαν μὴ κατοκνήσαι, ῥαδίως ἐγένετο ... (“Which very thing, if they had been willing not to hesitate, would easily have happened ...”; 2.94.1).

This episode, then, puts two things on display for readers: the overwhelming Spartan tendency toward hesitation in action, and the *possibility* for effective action through the intervention of leadership. Indeed, as Thucydides presents it, it is the leaders Cnemus and Brasidas who introduce what he identifies as a plan that very likely would have succeeded. We will further discuss the temporary influence of individuals on collective character later, but its possibility can be felt here, just as it was temporarily for the Athenians under Pericles.⁶⁸ What is more important to note here, however, is that, despite excellent planning, the collective character of the Spartans wins out. Indeed, the language of swiftness and suddenness noted earlier disappears, and instead we see the language of fear (καταδείσαντες; 2.93.4) and of hesitation (κατοκνήσαι; 2.94.1). Thucydides’ verbal choices at this point return us to the Corinthian description of Spartan behavior, where they are identified as delayers (μελλητὰς), while the Athenians are unhesitating (ἄοκνοι; 1.70.4). This reversion to their earlier defined character allows the Athenians to seize the initiative, and indeed they drag down and man their ships in haste (κατὰ σπουδὴν), leaving the Spartans able to do only one thing with any speed (κατὰ τάχος): sail away (2.94.2–3).

Thus, despite the attempted intervention of the leaders Cnemus and Brasidas, the Spartans fail to carry out their planned attack, and instead live up to their collective character as defined by the Corinthian speaker in Book 1. Moreover, while this episode very nearly results in

⁶⁸ For more on the effects of the leadership of Pericles and Brasidas, see, respectively, Chapter 2.

disaster for the Athenians, the Spartans live up to Athenian expectations, which in fact are shown to be consistent with the Corinthian's viewpoint.

Spartan collective character can also be observed in Thucydides' description of the Lacedaemonian reaction to the Athenian occupation of Pylos. As discussed above, the Athenian soldiers themselves, struck with an urge to act, quickly fortify the location, demonstrating their inability to exist in a state of inaction.⁶⁹ The Spartans, however, are originally slow to react to the Athenians' presence, underestimating the threat it presents and being unwilling to step away from the festival they are currently observing: οἱ δὲ ἐορτήν τινα ἔτυχον ἄγοντες καὶ ἅμα πυνθανόμενοι ἐν ὀλιγοῦρίᾳ ἐποιοῦντο, ὥς, ὅταν ἐξέλθωσιν, ἢ οὐχ ὑπομενοῦντας σφᾶς ἢ ῥαδίως ληψόμενοι βία (“But they happened to be conducting a certain festival and at the moment they heard about it they made little of it, believing that, whenever they went out, either they [the Athenians] would not stand up to them or they would easily take it by force”; 4.5.1). Such slowness to battle caused by a festival is certainly not unheard of for the Spartans, and, as Parker notes, “it is well known how determined they were to hold the traditional festivals at the traditional times, even at the risk of military disadvantage” (2002: 170).⁷⁰ Indeed, while Spartan

⁶⁹ See above, pp. 44–6.

⁷⁰ For earlier examples we need only look to Herodotus. The Spartans cannot immediately come to the aid of the Athenians at Marathon, because they need to wait until there is a full moon (Hdt. 6.106.3), and arrive too late and simply go home (Hdt. 6.120). Again at Thermopylae they must wait to send the rest of their forces until after they complete observance of the Carneia (7.206.1). As we will see later in Thucydides, there are other instances of religious observance causing military delays, such as when the Spartans on three separate occasions (5.54.1, 55.3, 116.1) turn back from expeditions into the Argolid because of unpropitious border-crossing sacrifices. Parker, while admitting that the alteration of military plans by divination was common to all Greeks, argues that border-crossing sacrifices, as an obstacle to overcome during military expeditions, appear have been unique to the Spartans (2002: 165). Jameson, too, notes that, “Διαβατήρια are attested only for the Spartans, with the single exception of a reference to the legendary Heraclidae attacking Sparta (ὑπερβατήρια, Polyaeus *Strat.* 1.10)” (2014: 103 n.14). It is interesting to note, however, that while the Spartans turn back from expeditions into the Argolid three times due to unfavorable sacrifices, there is no evidence that such inauspicious divination ever turned them back from entering Attica (Parker 2002: 170).

religion was not necessarily different from Greek religion in general, it appears in the sources as distinct in how seriously they took the sanctity of festivals (Parker 2002: 172).⁷¹

The description that follows, however, could lead one to question the consistency of Spartan character, because those currently out of the area devastating the countryside in Attica, hurry back to Sparta: οἱ δ' ἐν τῇ Ἀττικῇ ὄντες Πελοποννήσιοι ὡς ἐπύθοντο τῆς Πύλου κατειλημμένης, ἀνεχώρουν κατὰ τάχος ἐπ' οἴκου ... (“But the Peloponnesians that were in Attica, when they heard that Pylos had been seized, quickly went back home”; 4.6.1). One notes the inclusion of κατὰ τάχος to emphasize the speed with which the Spartans return home. Moreover, in 4.8.1 Thucydides tells readers that the Spartiates came to help against Pylos immediately (εὐθύς). At first reading, this could lead a reader to say their group characterization is not consistent, and that they are, in fact, capable of acting with speed. There are numerous problems with such a conclusion, however, that must be discussed.

First, it is quite interesting to note that the Spartans whom Thucydides describes as acting quickly (κατὰ τάχος) are coming back from Attica for the protection of the Peloponnese. Earlier in the text the Spartans are specifically described as concerned primarily with preserving what they already have (ὕμεις δὲ τὰ ὑπάρχοντά τε σώζειν; 1.70.2), and as most eager to stay at home (ἐνδημοτάτους; 1.70.4). This is because, according to the Corinthian speaker in Book 1, ὕμεις δὲ τῷ ἐπελθεῖν καὶ τὰ ἐτοιμα ἂν βλάψαι (“you think that you could harm what is readily at hand by going somewhere”; 1.70.4). Thus, the speed with which the Spartans act is a *defensive* speed, rather than a proactive one. To explain more clearly, the Spartan soldiers’ fear of losing their

⁷¹ Jameson echoes this sentiment in his chapter discussing sacrifice before battle, arguing that other Greeks likely observed religious practices similar to the Spartans, though “no doubt less rigidly and with their own distinctive practices” (2014: 98).

possessions and harming their *polis* by their absence, not any innate swiftness, appears to be what forces them to rush back from Attica to defend the Peloponnese.

Additionally, while Spartan collective slowness to action is obviously emphasized throughout the work, it is not unconditional. Indeed, at 1.118.2 (as discussed above) Thucydides describes the Spartans in his own voice as ὄντες μὲν καὶ πρὸ τοῦ μὴ ταχεῖς ἰέναι ἐς τοὺς πολέμους, ἦν μὴ ἀναγκάζονται (“being even before this not swift to go into wars, **if they are not forced**”). While this passage deals specifically with Spartan hesitation to enter a *war*, the condition provided here, when combined with the passages just discussed at 1.70.2 and 1.70.4, allows for some Spartan speed. Indeed, while they are not swift to action, as emphasized throughout 1.69–70, they may be swift to *reaction* when their hand is forced, as appears to be the case in the Athenian fortification of Pylos.

As it would appear, then, there is some room in Spartan collective character for a reactive swiftness when they are forced to act. In the case of the Athenian fortification of Pylos, the Spartans were indeed compelled to respond, because Athenian actions threatened the security of their own territory. Such a threat played directly into Spartan fears, and thus had to be addressed. To conclude, then, the speed displayed by Sparta here is precisely in keeping with their collective character as established up to this point in the text, because the undertaking is not new or inventive, but is instead a response to Athenian provocation and a perceived direct and imminent danger to Spartan interests.

Again when the Spartans attempt to assault the Athenian position at Pylos we see them suffer from hesitation. Indeed, focalizing his narrative through Brasidas’ eyes, Thucydides tells us that this Spartan commander, ὄρων τοῦ χωρίου χαλεποῦ ὄντος τοὺς τριηράρχους καὶ κυβερνήτας, εἴ που καὶ δοκοίη δυνατόν εἶναι σχεῖν, ἀποκνοῦντας καὶ φυλασσομένους τῶν νεῶν

μη ξυντρίψωσιν, ἐβόα λέγων ὡς οὐκ εἰκὸς εἶη ξύλων φειδομένους τοὺς πολεμίους ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ περιδεῖν τεῖχος πεπονημένους ... (“seeing the trireme captains and the pilots, because of the place being difficult, even if somewhere should seem to be possible to hold, hesitating and being careful lest they break up the ships, he shouted out saying that it was not fitting for them, sparing wood, to overlook the enemies having built a fortification in their land ...; 4.11.4). Thus, while the Athenians are being attacked from both sides (ἀμφοτέρωθεν) and those at sea are described as showing great zeal (προθυμία) (4.11.3), the attack at sea nevertheless stalls because the Spartan captains are hesitating (ἀποκνοῦντας) until Brasidas’ intervention (4.11.4). The role of Brasidas in changing Spartan behavior will be discussed further later, but it is important to note two things here: the persistence of the language of hesitation to describe collective Spartan behavior (see their description as μελλητὰς in comparison to the Athenians who are ἄοκνοι at 1.70.4, for example), and the need for the intervention of a prominent, leading individual to alter this habitual and expected behavior.

Additionally, the Spartan collective character defined in Book 1 can be detected when Thucydides discusses Spartan morale after the Athenian capture of Cythera in 424:

... φοβούμενοι μὴ σφίσι νεώτερόν τι γένηται τῶν περὶ τὴν κατάστασιν,⁷² γεγενημένου μὲν τοῦ ἐν τῇ νήσῳ πάθους ἀνελπίστου καὶ μεγάλου, Πύλου δὲ ἔχομένης καὶ Κυθήρων καὶ πανταχόθεν σφᾶς περιεστῶτος πολέμου ταχέος καὶ ἀπροφυλάκτου, ... ἔς τε τὰ πολεμικά, εἶπερ ποτέ, μάλιστα δὴ ὀκνηρότεροι ἐγένοντο, ξυνεστῶτες παρὰ τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν σφῶν ἰδέαν τῆς παρασκευῆς ναυτικῷ ἀγῶνι, καὶ τούτῳ πρὸς Ἀθηναίους, οἷς τὸ μὴ ἐπιχερούμενον αἰεὶ ἔλλιπες ἦν τῆς δοκίσεώς τι πράξειν· καὶ ἅμα τὰ τῆς τύχης πολλὰ καὶ ἐν ὀλίγῳ ξυμβάντα παρὰ λόγον αὐτοῖς ἔκπληξιν μεγίστην παρεῖχε, καὶ ἐδέδισαν μὴ ποτε αὐθις ξυμφορὰ τις αὐτοῖς περιτύχη οἷα καὶ ἐν τῇ νήσῳ. ἀτολμότεροι δὲ δι’ αὐτὸ ἔς τὰς μάχας ἦσαν, καὶ πᾶν ὅτι κινήσειαν ὄνοντο ἀμαρτήσεσθαι διὰ τὸ τὴν γνώμην ἀνεχέγγυον γεγενῆσθαι ἐκ τῆς πρὶν ἀηθείας τοῦ κακοπραγεῖν (4.55.1–4).

⁷² Classen and Steup (1900: 111), Gomme (1956: 510), and Hornblower (1996: 218) all note the similarity of this line to 4.41.3, in which Thucydides specifically mentions the helot threat.

... fearing lest some revolution come about, because of the great and unexpected suffering that had happened on the island, and because of Pylos and Cythera being held [by the Athenians] and because a swift and unpredictable war was surrounding them on all sides, ... and toward matters of war, if ever [they were timid], they really became extremely timid, being involved in a nautical contest, contrary to the existing form of their preparation, and this against the Athenians, for whom not to attempt a thing was always to fall short of their expectations of achievement. And at the same time many matters of fortune having in a short span turned out contrary to reason presented them with the greatest consternation, and they feared that at some point some disaster would again befall them like that on the island. And they were less daring with respect to battles on account of this, and they thought that whatever they set in motion would fail, on account of their having become unsure in their judgment from their earlier inexperience in faring badly.

This description of the Spartan state of mind after major setbacks at Pylos/Sphacteria and Cythera bears a number of striking resemblances to the description of Spartan collective character in Book 1. Proceeding through this passage, one first notes that one of the reasons for Spartan fearfulness is the speed of the war (πολέμου ταχύος; 4.55.1), and that their response to their current situation is to become more hesitant than ever (ὀκνηρότεροι; 4.55.2) and even less daring (ἀτολμότεροι; 4.55.4).⁷³ With reference to 4.55.1, Gomme notes that, “strategically, as well as tactically, the Spartans for the moment fell short of Athenian initiative and courage” (1956: 510). While this low point in daring and initiative is temporary, this characterization of collective slowness and timidity has been largely consistent, and was first introduced in Book 1. Indeed, as has been noted multiple times the Corinthian speaker specifically attacks the Spartans for their hesitation and timidity throughout his speech.⁷⁴ What is more, it is noteworthy that the comparative adjectives provided here (ὀκνηρότεροι, ἀτολμότεροι) are very close to being direct inversions of the adjectives used to describe the *Athenians* in Book 1 (ἄοκνοι; 1.70.4, τολμηταί;

⁷³ It may be noted that the war’s swiftness and unpredictability (mentioned at 4.55.1) are being dictated by Athenian lack of hesitancy and fondness for going abroad (see 1.70.4).

⁷⁴ See, for example, 1.70.3–4.

1.70.3). Here, then, the Spartans actually appear to live up to the strict antithesis set up much earlier in the work, being discussed in a way that is not only consistent with earlier Spartan characteristics, but that is also the exact opposite of the Athenian character.

Additionally, Spartan fear of further disasters (4.55.3) and their belief that anything they undertake will be fouled up (4.55.4) recall passage from the Corinthian speech as well.

Specifically, this Spartan fear to enter upon any new enterprise and accompanying fear of resultant disasters cannot but remind readers of two of the Corinthian speaker's claims: that the Spartans feel as though they will never be released from dire straits (τῶν τε δεινῶν μηδέποτε οἴεσθαι ἀπολυθήσεσθαι; 1.70.3), and that they think that by going abroad they will actually do harm to themselves (ὁμεῖς δὲ τῷ ἐπελθεῖν καὶ τὰ ἐτοῖμα ἂν βλάψαι; 1.70.4).

Finally, again looking back to 1.70.3, it must be noted that the Spartans are there described as not trusting in the certainties of their judgments (τῆς τε γνώμης μηδὲ τοῖς βεβαίοις πιστεῦσαι). In the passage under current discussion we again see the Spartans losing faith in their judgment when Thucydides tells us ... διὰ τὸ τὴν γνώμην ἀνεχέγγυον γεγενῆσθαι ("on account of their judgment becoming insecure"; 4.55.4). While this insecurity in judgment is presented as a new development in response to Spartan misfortune in the war, this mindset is actually not new to readers. In fact, is remarkably consistent with what has been defined as their general attitude earlier in the history.

Upon examination, then, this passage at 4.55, depicting the low point for Spartan fortunes in the war, does not present readers with anything particularly new. Instead, it shows the Spartans taking their established collective character to a more extreme level. In doing this, they actually appear more "Spartan," as defined in the Corinthian's strict antithesis, than at any other point in the work. Indeed, while the Spartans have consistently been displayed as hesitant and more

reactive than innovative (as has been shown throughout this chapter), they now exist at the complete opposite end of the spectrum from the Athenians, temporarily losing any initiative and daring they may have previously had. In essence, then, at this point in the text readers see the Spartans, as a group, at their most Spartan.

While there is little discussion of Spartan group dynamics in Book 6–7 due to the text’s focus on the Athenian expedition to Sicily, Thucydides’ emphasis on the slowness and hesitancy of Spartan character appears again in Book 8. This comes through most clearly in a passage already discussed: 8.96.⁷⁵ As a reminder, Thucydides here tells readers that the Peloponnesians, when the Athenians were weakened by their loss at Euboea, failed once again to seize the Piraeus. He then goes on to specifically note that they easily could have accomplished this goal if they were more daring (εἰ τολμηρότεροι ἦσαν; 8.96.4).⁷⁶ Following this point, Thucydides claims, in his own authorial voice, that the Lacedaemonians were extremely convenient enemies for the Athenians (ξυμφορώτατοι προσπολεμῆσαι ἐγένοντο), and explains that this was due to the differences between the two groups (διάφοροι γὰρ πλείστον ὄντες τὸν τρόπον). In delineating these character differences, he identifies the Athenians as swift (ὄξεις) and enterprising (ἐπιχειρηταί), and the Spartans as slow (βραδεῖς) and lacking daring (ἄτολμοι) (8.96.5).

The resonances between Thucydides’ statement here and the Corinthian speaker’s analysis of Spartan behavior in Book 1 are so striking that they led Connor to point to this passage as Thucydides’ first direct authorial agreement with the Corinthian’s analysis (1984b: 41). The direct agreement is certainly demonstrable, as may be observed by comparison with the

⁷⁵ See p. 55 for the text and translation of this passage.

⁷⁶ The Spartans previously failed to take an unguarded Piraeus because of their hesitation at 2.93.4–94.1. See pp. 59–62.

juxtaposition between the Athenians, who are ἄσκητοι and the Spartans who are μελλητὰς in 1.70.4.

As has been demonstrated in this chapter, however, I would argue that between the Corinthian's description of Spartan and Athenian characters and Thucydides' discussion of the two patterns of behavior in 8.96.5, numerous passages bearing strong verbal and thematic similarities to the collective character introduced in Book 1 occur. Indeed, Spartan hesitancy is apparent, and even emphasized, on a repetitive basis in Thucydides' history, and plays an important role, as it does at 8.96, in helping to explain why the war unfolded as it did, and why the Spartans failed numerous times to capitalize on Athenian weakness. Thus, the author's use of national character has, as Raaflaub puts it, explanatory power in the text (2006: 196). We may, therefore, conclude that the representation of Spartan collective character, without the intervention of prominent individuals, is strikingly consistent throughout Thucydides' history.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to demonstrate that Thucydides' depiction of national (or collective) character is largely consistent. As has been shown, numerous passages spread throughout the text reaffirm time and again that the citizens of these two *poleis*, when left to their own devices and without the intervention of prominent, leading individuals, behave in a persistent way.

Moreover, each group's collective character contains both strengths and weaknesses.⁷⁷ In the case of the Athenians, their strength is their quickness, which played a role in their rise to

⁷⁷ Jaffe recognizes this state of affairs, stating, "Both Athens and Sparta, then, are representative or illustrative of more general political possibilities, which have real advantages but also corresponding disadvantages" (Jaffe 2017a: 404).

power (1.118.1), and can be baffling for the Spartans (4.55.1). Their weaknesses, however, are their constant acquisitiveness and their inability to be at rest even for a moment—tendencies that, at times, drive them to overreach and expose themselves to danger.⁷⁸ Spartan strength, on the other hand, is based on their stability and their ability to avoid such overreaching, but their weaknesses are their slowness, hesitancy, and risk aversion. These faults lead them to fail to capitalize on Athenian weakness on multiple occasions during the war.⁷⁹

This situation, then, in which both belligerents have strengths *and* weaknesses, leads readers to two conclusions that must be kept in mind. First, since these collective characters are derived from the political environments in which they exist, we may begin to suspect that, of the two systems in conflict in the text (democracy and oligarchy), *neither* is without flaw, and both possess weaknesses. Second (and dependent on the first point), this leaves a prominent role to be played by individual leaders, who may, as has been hinted at in this chapter, temporarily alter the behavior of the *poleis* they lead. Since, however, both *poleis* have flawed characters, we may begin to suspect that the most successful leaders will not be those whose individual traits most closely resemble the behavioral tendencies of their *polis*, but rather those with the proper balance of characteristics to guide their city-state away from its weaknesses and toward its strengths. This second idea will be explored further in the next chapter.

⁷⁸ See 1.70.3–9.

⁷⁹ Such as at 2.93–94.1 and 8.96.

CHAPTER II.

Thucydides on Effective Leadership

In the previous chapter the role of national character in Thucydides' *History* was discussed, and it was established that both Athens' and Sparta's collective characters have strengths as well as weaknesses. Additionally, it was shown that, in Thucydides' presentation, political environment was the most important factor in determining the collective tendencies making up these *poleis*' national characters. Therefore, the flaws existing in the national characters of Athens and Sparta—since they are collective expressions of character traits formed by democratic and oligarchic political environments—indicate to readers that the political systems from which they are derived are themselves flawed.

It is against this background of imperfect national characters and political environments that we must view the numerous leaders who play prominent roles in the *History*. These leaders, each with their own unique combination of attributes (variously similar to or different from their *poleis*' collective character), can profoundly affect the fortunes of their *poleis*; this is because, as numerous scholars have noted, exceptional leaders are capable of temporarily shifting the behavior of their *poleis* away from their natural tendencies (Marincola 2001: 92, Luginbill 1999: 99 n. 25; 105).

In examining Thucydides' presentation of such leaders (especially Pericles), scholars have often focused on the specific skills or abilities that appear to make them successful. For example, Luginbill sees Pericles' leadership qualities as divisible into three categories:

perceptual, persuasive, and personal; that is to say, he plans prudently, he successfully persuades his audience to adopt his proposals, and he looks to the public benefit while remaining morally incorruptible and avoiding the influence of his personal passions (Luginbill 1999: 190).⁸⁰ While I do not dispute that successful leaders in Thucydides' *History* often possess these attributes, these criteria do not fully capture the complexity of positive leadership in the text. Instead, I would argue that Thucydides looks beyond absolute skills or personal qualities (such as rhetorical competence or moral incorruptibility), and places a great deal of emphasis on the interaction between leaders' individual characters and those of the *poleis* they govern. As will be shown in this chapter, the proper formulation of this relationship requires that a leader's personal qualities complement those of their *polis*. Thus, what makes a leader "good" is relative to the political structure and collective behavioral tendencies of the city-state in which he exists.

To expand on this point, because each of the primary actors in Thucydides' *History* (Athens and Sparta) possesses a flawed collective character, we must recognize that leaders who represent individual expressions of this character will be equally flawed, as they will merely exacerbate their *polis*' inherent weaknesses. By the same token, leaders whose individual characterizations stand in stark opposition to that of their *polis* (such as very "Spartan" Athenians) will also falter, because they will simply cause their city-state to temporarily adopt the weaknesses existing at the other end of the political spectrum. Therefore, only leaders whose behavioral tendencies complement those of their *polis* by correcting its weaknesses and enhancing its strengths—and thus driving it to some middle ground between the unbridled democratic acquisitiveness of Athens and the oligarchic hesitancy of Sparta—will bring about the greatest prosperity for their city and its people.

⁸⁰ See also Finley's similar list of Periclean attributes (1942: 203).

For Athens, then, on top of the previously mentioned (Periclean) attributes, we must look for a moderate leader who can channel and direct Athenian energy to productive ends, while concurrently checking the *polis*' tendency to enter upon excessively bold and needlessly risky undertakings. Sparta, meanwhile, needs a leader who will not lead it too far from its general prudence, caution, and military acumen, but who will at the same time drive the city to be more active and to press the advantage when it has it.

These traits may be most clearly observed in two individuals in the *History*: Pericles for Athens, and Brasidas for Sparta. Through an analysis of these two leaders, this chapter will demonstrate that, in Thucydides' representation of history, absolute characteristics such as foresight, persuasive ability, and moral uprightness do not fully explain what makes particular leaders more effective than others. Instead, one must also examine the way their unique, individual characters interact with and moderate the national characters of their *poleis*.

After examining these leaders, we will then move on to discuss a further point: Pericles and Brasidas, though each seemingly displays the requirements of good leadership specific to their *polis*, only play prominent roles in the text for relatively short periods of time. Indeed, Thucydides represents the deaths of both individuals as leaving their city-states, which had achieved relative success under their leadership, in the hands of inferior leaders.⁸¹ Indeed, while Thucydides' *History* unfortunately ends in 411 BCE (well before the end of the war), in the text as it exists no other Athenian or Spartan leader appears who fully lives up to the examples of Pericles or Brasidas. As a result, the behavioral tendencies of these two *poleis* go unchecked for a majority of the work. Thus, Thucydides' treatment of Pericles and Brasidas in his history demonstrates the following three things: his idea that the specific qualities required of a "good

⁸¹ This point is argued below at pp. 85–7.

leader” are relative to the *polis* in which he operates, the unlikelihood of the appearance of individuals who fully meet these requirements, and the inherently problematic nature of any system that requires the intervention of leaders on whose existence it cannot reasonably rely.

Pericles and Good Governance

Let us begin our examination of good governance in Thucydides by turning to the author’s portrait of Pericles. It is difficult to read the presentation of Pericles in the early years of the Peloponnesian War—especially his eulogy at 2.65—without receiving the impression that Thucydides portrays him as an overwhelmingly positive figure.⁸² Before moving into an analysis of the reasons behind the effectiveness of Pericles as an Athenian leader, however, let us briefly discuss the historicity of Thucydides’ portrait of him in the *History*.

Pericles as Historical Figure or Thucydidean Construct

While the authoritative tone of Thucydides’ writing makes it easy to accept his representation of Pericles as entirely accurate, scholars have for a long time recognized the difficulty in building a truly historical portrait of this Athenian statesman. This difficulty results from the fact that the Pericles described by Thucydides differs significantly from representations in other ancient authors.

For example, despite Thucydides’ seeming admiration for Pericles, both Ion of Chios (cited Plu. *Per.* 5.3) and Stesimbrotus of Thasos (cited Plu. *Per.* 13.16) criticize him harshly, and he is mocked repeatedly in Old Comedy by Aristophanes (Ar. *Ach.* 530–2) and Cratinus (fr. 73,

⁸² This is not to say that Pericles’ judgment in the war is error-free. In fact, as discussed below (p. 80 n. 92), numerous scholars have argued that certain Periclean decisions prove to be incorrect. I believe, however, that while such evidence may make the *historical* Pericles a more problematic figure, it does nothing to change the fact that Thucydides’ carefully selected presentation of Pericles is extremely favorable.

118, 258–9), primarily for what appears to be his tyrannical conduct (Azoulay 2010: 14; Storey 2003: 123).⁸³ Plato’s Socrates finds fault with Pericles, who claims that he was not a true statesman because he failed to make the people better (Pl. *Grg.* 502e–519d), and he is identified in the *Constitution of the Athenians* as corrupting the people by introducing pay to the democratic process (Arist. *Ath.* 27.3–4; Azoulay 2010: 16). Additionally, Plutarch casts him as deeply involved in the factional conflicts of Athens, whereas this is absent in Thucydides (Christodoulou 2013: 246–7).⁸⁴ Thus, there are, to a large extent, two versions of Pericles that have been passed down to posterity: one negative and one positive.

These two versions of Pericles have alternated in occupying the dominant position in shaping our reception of him. Speaking generally, until the end of the 18th century the negative view of Pericles was the predominate one. Starting in the 19th century, however, (linked by Azoulay to the rise of parliamentary systems of governance) he regained a positive reception, with a return to prominence of Thucydides’ much rosier view of the politician. Thus, while many current students of Greek history may be familiar with the Thucydidean “idealized” version of Pericles, this appears to be largely a product of our time, and of the text in which we currently choose to put our trust. Indeed, as Azoulay notes, “Le mythe péricléen est une (re)création récente” (The Periclean myth is a recent (re)creation; 2010: 20).⁸⁵ During this period in which

⁸³ We must, however, be careful not to identify attacks on Pericles as a universal feature of Old Comedy. Eupolis’ *Demes*, for example, appears to feature Pericles as one of four Athenian leaders brought back to life to correct the problem that have developed in Athens (see especially fr. 102; Storey 2003: 111, 114–16). Moreover, the fragmentary state of all Old Comic authors except Aristophanes makes it difficult to judge precisely the intent of a line or series of lines seemingly “mocking” Pericles.

⁸⁴ Azoulay points out, however, that scholars have questioned the strength of Plutarch’s *Life of Pericles* as a historical source (2010: 13).

⁸⁵ Azoulay also notes that Thucydides is the primary source for our modern, positive view of Pericles: “Si ces multiples attaques furent à la source d’une tradition hostile à Périclès, Thucydide fut indéniablement à l’origine de la représentation idéalisée du stratège” (If these multiple attacks were the source of a hostile tradition toward Pericles, Thucydides was undeniably the originator of the idealized representation of the general; 2010: 15).

Thucydides' version of Pericles was the dominant one, many scholars believed the historian portrayed the leader "in a factual way" (Vogt 2009: 220).

Relatively recently, however, a certain selectivity in Thucydides' portrayal of Pericles has come to be recognized. For example, it has been pointed out that the historian appears largely to suppress Pericles' role in Athenian policy prior to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War (and especially during the Pentecontaetia) (Foster 2010: 111–12).⁸⁶ While some scholars would respond to this observation by arguing that Thucydides' regular practice is to bring characters in and out of the narrative as he feels they are relevant (Gribble 2006: 440–1), others see the removal of Pericles as dishonest, claiming that it is impossible to provide a balanced version of events while leaving out his role in Athenian policy in the prewar years (Badian 1993: 161; Foster 2010: 119).

Scholars' complaints are not limited to the period before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. Indeed, some have also argued that Thucydides' suppression of other prominent individuals and of political infighting during the height of Pericles' influence may warp readers' impression of the period. Saïd, for example, notes that during the period of Pericles' leadership, the ongoing conflict between mass and elite (and their representatives) is hidden, and that readers only see the leader interacting with his citizen body (2012: 212). In fact, there is no real record in Thucydides of opposition to Pericles: we are sometimes told that other speeches were given before Pericles addressed the populace, but only Pericles' words are actually reported. This practice leaves audiences with the impression that there were few policy

⁸⁶ He does appear in three episodes during the Pentecontaetia: 1.111.2, 1.114, and 1.116–17.

disputes in Athenian politics of this time, and that Pericles played an incontestably dominant leadership role (exactly the image Thucydides presents at 2.65.8) (Gribble 2006: 448–9).⁸⁷

Additionally, some scholars have seen the stark difference that Thucydides develops between Pericles and his successors and the resulting deterioration in the quality of Athenian leadership as an exaggeration, arguing instead that Pericles was likely much more similar to his successors than Thucydides lets on (Raaflaub 2006: 205; Azoulay 2010: 155–7).⁸⁸ Azoulay, for example, claims that Pericles was one part of a larger transition (to the domination of popular ideology) that had begun before his leadership, and that he was, in fact, not all that different from Cleon (2010: 157, 162). De Romilly's echoes this sentiment when she claims that Thucydides was eager to defend the optimism that Pericles had at the beginning of the war, and thus wanted to show that he was essentially rational in his assessment of Athens' capabilities, and that there was a stark contrast between him and later leaders (1965: 560–1). Hornblower also argues against a strong differentiation between Pericles and later politicians (1991: 346), going so far as to state that Thucydides is almost certainly incorrect in making this claim (1991: 340).

As a result of the seemingly selective nature of Thucydides' portrait of Pericles, scholars have questioned its historicity, though to varying degrees. Foster, for example, claims that Thucydides' portrait of Pericles is essentially historical, but that it is simply fragmentary (2010: 133). Christodoulou, however, is more willing to accept that there is an element of literary invention in Thucydides' portrayal of the Athenian leader, arguing that Thucydides is moving back and forth between the historical Pericles and a literary portrait of the ideal statesman, and

⁸⁷ This point is echoed in Strauss 1964: 213 and Taylor 2010: 50. Gribble goes on to argue that Thucydides' suppression of individuals in general is noteworthy, pointing out that (apart from the description at 8.73) there is no discussion of the ostracism of Hyperbolus, of the Athenian "demagogues" other than Cleon, or of the specific individuals who oppose Alcibiades other than Nicias (2006: 448).

⁸⁸ For more on this transition in leadership, see Azoulay 2010: 152–7. It is worth noting that, despite the numerous texts that appear to disagree with Thucydides' presentation of this degradation in Athenian leadership, the *Constitution of the Athenians* (28.1) echoes it.

that we may thus no longer identify the Thucydidean Pericles with the historical figure (2013: 227–8).⁸⁹ Finally, Connor feels that the work as a whole was, “polemical and revisionist,” and that Thucydides, “...knew that his treatment of almost every major figure, Pericles, Cleon, Demosthenes, Nicias, Alcibiades, would in his own day be controversial and would cut against conventional wisdom and judgments” (1984b: 233). Thus, we as readers are left to decide for ourselves between three options: either Thucydides is essentially providing us with an accurate representation of the historical Pericles (simply leaving out details he views as irrelevant), he is actively crafting a narrative that runs counter to conventional judgment, or he is doing something in between these two extremes.

Despite these difficulties in determining the “historical” character of Pericles, one key point saves us from this sense of *aporia* and allows us to move forward with this study: whether Thucydides is selectively reporting factual information or artfully crafting a new, unorthodox Pericles, he is still constructing a narrative. Indeed, as discussed earlier (and as specifically noted by Pelling 2000: 7), the presentation of pure “facts” with no interpretation whatsoever is impossible—the mere act of stringing events together into a narrative introduces authorial choice, and thus interpretation.⁹⁰ Accepting this as true, we may argue that, regardless of whether Thucydides’ Pericles is historical, semi-historical, or fictional, he still presents us with *his version* of the Athenian politician. Therefore, while it is obviously important to keep in mind that we cannot blindly accept Thucydides’ presentation of Pericles (or other prominent individuals) as purely historical, we may in any case undertake a literary analysis of his use of characterization in the text, understanding that Thucydides’ authorial choices play a large role in

⁸⁹ Interestingly, Christodoulou also sees Thucydides as responding in his text to Cratinus’ negative portrayal of Pericles (2013: 233).

⁹⁰ See Introduction, p. 6 for more on the role of selection in the construction of a narrative.

shaping the way in which we perceive Pericles, his effectiveness as a leader, and his relationship to his city.⁹¹ In this strain, we will first move on to discuss the characteristics attributed to Pericles in the work that contribute most to his success as an Athenian leader.

The Qualities of Pericles

Of the Athenian political leaders in Thucydides' *Histories*, Pericles is often recognized as the most consistently successful, and as having the most positive influence on the *polis* and its policies.⁹² Vogt (2009: 224) and Raaflaub (2006: 204), for example, both argue that for Thucydides, Pericles represents the ideal democratic statesman.⁹³ The grounds on which this is claimed are most clearly stated during Thucydides' brief description of Pericles at 1.139.4, and especially during his eulogy of the leader at 2.65, in which Thucydides gives the most extended direct character evaluation in his text.⁹⁴ In the former passage our author briefly introduces the

⁹¹ It is in this manner that I will approach all individuals in Thucydides' text, examining their portrayal through Thucydides' historiographical lens.

⁹² This is not to argue that Pericles is necessarily a universally positive figure. Indeed, numerous scholars have undertaken to discuss possible flaws in his judgment in the work. For example, Foster is of the opinion that Thucydides, knowing that the war would turn out disastrously for Athens, implicitly blames Pericles for his role in the outbreak of the war by portraying him as the primary force driving his fellow citizens to into it (2010: 134, 149–150). Moreover, she claims that Pericles is portrayed as both misrepresenting the Spartans to his Athenian audience in Book 1, and as either incorrectly or deceptively evaluating Athenian monetary resources before the war (2010: 166). Connor also believes that there may in fact be a problem with Pericles' arguments in favor of the war (1984b: 41). Hornblower (1991: 341–2) and Taylor (2002: 92) echo the latter point, noting that Pericles' spending in the early years of the war necessitated tribute increases, and that the text therefore questions his financial judgment. While these assessments are all valid, I believe that many of them are made with the benefit of hindsight; that is to say, scholars see that the war turned out contrary to the Athenians' expectations, and thus conclude that Pericles' judgment in forcing the city-state into the war was misguided. Such an approach largely ignores Thucydides' own authorial statements concerning Pericles, which often directly contradict such a reading. Moreover, I believe it is not inaccurate to state that, even admitting that Pericles made some mistakes during his time as a leader (which he surely did), he is nevertheless portrayed consistently as the *best, most positive, and most successful* Athenian leader during the Peloponnesian War. Thus, Pericles does not have to be perfect to be the exemplar of positive leadership in the text.

⁹³ On Thucydides' approval of Pericles and his leadership of the Athenian populace, see also Nichols, who states that "Pericles serves as Thucydides' model of leadership for free government" (2017: 460), and Parry, who argues that Thucydides was very favorable toward Periclean Athens (Parry 1972: 48).

⁹⁴ It is interesting to note a further point that Thucydides brings up together with his praise of Pericles: the fickleness of the *demos*. While the people fine Pericles as a result of the harm they suffered from the plague, they elect him as general again shortly after. In relating this to us, Thucydides notes: ὕστερον δ' αὖθις οὐ πολλῶ, ὅπερ φιλεῖ ὄμιλος ποιεῖν, στρατηγὸν εἶλοντο καὶ πάντα τὰ πράγματα ἐπέτρεφαν ... ("But again not very much later—which very thing

influence of Pericles, describing him as ἀνὴρ κατ' ἐκεῖνον τὸν χρόνον πρῶτος Ἀθηναίων, λέγειν τε καὶ πράσσειν δυνατότατος (“a man who was at that time first of the Athenians, most capable both in speaking and acting”; 1.139.4), and in the latter he provides us with a lengthy catalogue of Pericles’ positive attributes, as well as a direct comparison with later Athenian leaders.⁹⁵ According to Raaflaub, we may identify the following qualities of good leadership from this passage: “moderation, intelligence, foresight and thorough knowledge, personal distinction and charisma, absolute integrity, respectful firmness in dealing with the *demos*, lack of excessive ambition and thus independence that makes it possible to contradict popular sentiment, courage even to provoke anger, disdain of flattery, and psychagogic skills to balance extreme popular emotions” (2006: 204–5). Luginbill combines all of these qualities into three categories: the perceptive (the ability to form a good plan), the persuasive (the ability to implement this plan by persuading others), and the personal (moral and ethical control over himself) (1999: 190). For clarity of discussion, I adopt this division for the remainder of this analysis.

Let us begin with the first of these categories: his perceptive ability. Thucydides’ praise for Pericles’ perceptive capacity is most clearly apparent in his emphasis throughout the eulogy on the general’s foresight (πρόνοια; 2.65.6).⁹⁶ It is specifically referenced twice near the beginning of the eulogy, when Thucydides tells readers, ἐπειδὴ τε ὁ πόλεμος κατέστη, ὁ δὲ φαίνεται καὶ ἐν τούτῳ προγνούς τὴν δύναμιν. ἐπεβίω δὲ δύο ἔτη καὶ ἕξ μῆνας· καὶ ἐπειδὴ

the mass loves to do—they elected him general and turned all matters over to him ...”; 2.65.4). This fickleness persists, as the people often become suspicious of leaders (such as Alcibiades) and change their plans under persuasion. Indeed, as note by Pelling, the *demos* is presented as irresponsible, and as requiring strong leadership (2000: 22).

⁹⁵ Raaflaub (2006: 204) notes that the ability in speaking and acting attributed to Pericles (1.139.4) recalls “the heroic ideal of being both a speaker of words and doer of deeds” (*Iliad* 9.443).

⁹⁶ Pericles’ foresight is hinted at even earlier in Book 2, when the Athenians are angry with him after seeing their countryside devastated for the second time, and are driven by their current suffering to send ambassadors to Sparta. At this point Thucydides tells readers: ὁ δὲ ὄρων αὐτοὺς πρὸς τὰ παρόντα χαλεπαίνοντας καὶ πάντα ποιούντας ἄπερ αὐτὸς ἤλπιδε (“but he [Pericles], seeing that they were angry at the present state of affairs and that they were doing all the things which he himself expected...”; 2.59.3).

ἀπέθανεν, ἐπὶ πλείον ἔτι ἐγνώσθη ἡ πρόνοια αὐτοῦ ἢ ἐς τὸν πόλεμον (“And when the war was established, he clearly **foresaw** the force in it. He lived after this for two years and six months; and when he died, still more was his **foresight** with respect to the war recognized”; 2.65.5–6). This foresight, then, was a key part of Pericles’ military wisdom (especially as related to the strategy he is said to have proposed) (Gomme 1956: 190).⁹⁷

It was also, however, a key element in his ability to maintain political control in Athens. During the first Spartan invasion of Attica, for example, the Athenians (and especially the Acharnians) desire to march out against the Lacedaemonians, and grow extremely angry at Pericles for hindering them: παντί τε τρόπῳ ἀνηρέθιστο ἡ πόλις, καὶ τὸν Περικλέα ἐν ὀργῇ εἶχον, καὶ ὧν παρήνεσε πρότερον ἐμέμνητο οὐδέν, ἀλλ’ ἐκάκιζον ὅτι στρατηγὸς ὧν οὐκ ἐπεξάγοι, αἴτιόν τε σφίσι ἐνόμιζον πάντων ὧν ἔπασχον (“And the city was stirred up in every way, and they held Pericles in anger, and they remembered none of the things he had advised earlier, but they censured him because, being a general, he didn’t lead them out [against the Spartans], and they considered him to blame for all of the things they were suffering”; 2.21.3). Pericles, however, is fully aware of this anger and, foreseeing its possible negative consequences, recognizes that the only way to prevent the Athenians from abandoning his plan is not to suppress debate of the topic entirely: Περικλῆς δὲ ὀρῶν μὲν αὐτοὺς πρὸς τὸ παρὸν χαλεπαίνοντας καὶ οὐ τὰ ἄριστα φρονοῦντας, πιστεύων δὲ ὀρθῶς γινώσκειν περὶ τοῦ μὴ ἐπεξιέναι, ἐκκλησίαν τε οὐκ ἐποίει αὐτῶν οὐδὲ ξύλλογον οὐδένα, τοῦ μὴ ὀργῇ τι μᾶλλον ἢ γνώμη ξυνελθόντας ἐξαμαρτεῖν, τήν τε πόλιν ἐφύλασσε καὶ δι’ ἡσυχίας μάλιστα ὅσον ἐδύνατο εἶχεν (“But Pericles, seeing on the one hand that they were angry at the present circumstance and that they were not thinking well, and, on the other hand, trusting that he knew rightly concerning

⁹⁷ Gomme also points out that readers are presented with the importance of foresight in military wisdom in the character of Themistocles (1.138.3) (1956: 190).

not going out [to meet the Spartans], he did not bring together any assembly of them nor any meeting, fearing that they, coming together in anger rather than in a state of good judgment, would make some mistake, and he guarded the city and he especially kept it at rest as much as he was able"; 2.22.1).⁹⁸ In this case, then, Pericles' foresight, though not directly referenced in the Greek, is apparent from his ability to recognize the current situation, and based on this information, to form a plan that, in the end, successfully allows him to maintain his political control and to enforce his military strategy. In essence, then, Thucydides' Pericles has the foresight to realize the limitations of his own persuasive ability.

This capacity for foresight, however, is not sufficient in and of itself for Pericles to direct his state to success. Indeed, as Cassandra teaches us (as well as Nicias later in Thucydides' history), the ability to foresee is useless without the ability to persuade others to follow one's advice. Leadership requires the persuasive capacity, which is the second major ability attributed to Pericles. This persuasive ability is first made clear in Book 1 when, before relating Pericles' comments on the Spartan ultimatum shortly before the outbreak of the war, Thucydides tells us that the leader was, ἀνὴρ κατ' ἐκεῖνον τὸν χρόνον πρῶτος Ἀθηναίων, λέγειν τε καὶ πράσσειν δυνατώτατος ("a man who was at that time first of the Athenians, most capable both in speaking and acting"; 1.139.4). While Pericles has appeared in the text before this, it was only to briefly mention his role in the events of the Pentecontaetia. At this point, when readers are introduced to the leader as a key player in the narrative, they are led to believe that Pericles was, in fact, the most persuasive leader at the time.

⁹⁸ On the meaning of this passage in terms of Pericles' (or other generals') power to prevent assemblies, Classen and Steup posit that in dire circumstances (especially in the case of an invasion of Attica), assemblies could only be called by the *strategoí* (1914: 60–1). Rusten, however, states that generals possibly had the power to stop special assemblies from meeting and to delay previously scheduled ones, but goes on to say that the passage in question could be emphasizing that he refused to allow *debate* about the issue rather than specifically forbidding any meetings (1989: 129). See also (as referenced by Rusten) J. Christensen and M. H. Hansen 1983: 20–1.

The information that is omitted in this passage, however, is just as important to our impression of Pericles as Thucydides' direct description of the leader. Indeed, the narrative immediately preceding the notation that Pericles was the most influential Athenian at the time very briefly mentions that other speakers addressed the assembly before Pericles: καὶ παριόντες ἄλλοι τε πολλοὶ ἔλεγον ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρα γιγνόμενοι ταῖς γνώμας καὶ ὡς χρὴ πολεμεῖν καὶ ὡς μὴ ἐμπόδιον εἶναι τὸ ψήφισμα εἰρήνης, ἀλλὰ καθελεῖν ("and coming forward many others were speaking, being on both sides in their opinions, both [recommending] that it was necessary to make war, and that the decree should not be an impediment to peace, but to remove it"; 1.139.4). These individuals' actual speeches are, however, omitted, and their speakers are relegated to obscurity by Thucydides' single sweeping statement. As Gribble notes, this technique of suppressing the other speakers' words and reporting only Pericles' oration strengthens readers' impression of the dominant role in Athenian policy played by Pericles (2006: 449). Thus, Thucydides' construction of the narrative implicitly supports his direct claim that Pericles was at this time first of the Athenians (πρῶτος Ἀθηναίων). As a result, for readers of this passage there is never any real threat that Pericles' advice may be passed over in favor of that given by another Athenian speaker: other individuals spoke, but then the speaker who *mattered* addressed the Athenians and the issue was decided.

This persuasive ability is again on display after the second devastation of the Athenian countryside. As we have seen, when this first happened Pericles (apparently correctly) judged that the best course of action was to prevent meetings of the assembly from being held. After the second invasion, however, even though we see the Athenians yet again direct their anger towards Pericles personally, he decides to directly address his countrymen in an effort to convince them to continue to heed his advice. This approach is reportedly successful:

τοιαῦτα ὁ Περικλῆς λέγων ἐπειρᾶτο τοὺς Ἀθηναίους τῆς τε ἐς αὐτὸν ὀργῆς παραλύειν καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν παρόντων δεινῶν ἀπάγειν τὴν γνώμην. οἱ δὲ δημοσίᾳ μὲν τοῖς λόγοις ἀνεπαίθοντο καὶ οὔτε πρὸς τοὺς Λακεδαιμονίους ἔτι ἔπεμπον ἕς τε τὸν πόλεμον μᾶλλον ὄρμηντο (2.65.1–2).

By saying such things Pericles tried to detach the Athenians from their anger toward him and to lead their thought away from the presently terrible circumstances, and publicly they obeyed his words and still did not send to the Lacedaemonians and they set themselves more to the war.

Thus, by directly emphasizing the success of Pericles' rhetoric, and describing the Athenians as obeying (*ἀνεπαίθοντο*) him, Thucydides demonstrates that his persuasive ability as capable even of overcoming a hostile audience. This is, as we will see shortly, starkly different from Thucydides' depiction of the mode of interaction between later leaders and the Athenian populace.

Particular emphasis is placed on Pericles' persuasive power in Thucydides' famous eulogy of the leader at 2.65. Indeed, his considerable influence is described in three successive sentences with increasing force. First, Thucydides contrasts Pericles' policy with the Athenians' actions under his successors: ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἡσυχάζοντάς τε καὶ τὸ ναυτικὸν θεραπεύοντας καὶ ἀρχὴν μὴ ἐπικτωμένους ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ μηδὲ τῇ πόλει κινδυνεύοντας ἔφη περιέσεσθαι· οἱ δὲ ταῦτά τε πάντα ἐς τοῦναντίον ἔπραξαν ... ("For *he* [Pericles] said that, if they kept quiet and saw to the fleet and did not acquire more empire during the war and did not endanger the city, they would succeed. But *they* [his successors] did all these things in the opposite way ..."; 2.65.7). As noted in the previous chapter, Pericles' plan as it is characterized in this passage, predicated on Athenian restraint (*ἡσυχάζοντάς*), is not in keeping with the Athenian national character.⁹⁹ Thus, the stark contrast between Pericles' policy and the behavior of his successors (and the Athenians under their leadership) here claimed by Thucydides presents readers with the impression that

⁹⁹ See pp. 89–92.

Pericles' persuasive ability was the only thing restraining Athenian ambition, and maintaining their observance of his wartime policy.

Immediately after this point, Thucydides goes on to further discuss the nature and power of Pericles' persuasive ability, which is again sharply contrasted with other leaders of the period:

αἴτιον δ' ἦν ὅτι ἐκεῖνος μὲν δυνατὸς ὢν τῷ τε ἀξιώματι καὶ τῇ γνώμῃ χρημάτων τε διαφανῶς ἀδωρότατος γενόμενος κατεῖχε τὸ πλῆθος ἐλευθέρως, καὶ οὐκ ἤγετο μᾶλλον ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἢ αὐτὸς ἤγε, διὰ τὸ μὴ κτώμενος ἐξ οὐ προσηκόντων τὴν δύναμιν πρὸς ἡδονὴν τι λέγειν, ἀλλ' ἔχων ἐπ' ἀξιώσει καὶ πρὸς ὀργὴν τι ἀντειπεῖν (2.65.8).

The reason was that he [Pericles], being powerful both in reputation and in judgment, and being clearly most incorruptible by money, held down the mass freely, and instead of being led by it he himself led, on account of his not saying anything with an eye towards pleasure, acquiring power from unfitting means, but being able, based upon his reputation, to say speak against [the mass] angrily.

Yet again Pericles' ability to persuade “angry” the populace is strongly emphasized.¹⁰⁰ First, we see that he “held down the mass freely” (κατεῖχε τὸ πλῆθος ἐλευθέρως). This is, of course, a fascinating turn of phrase because of the seemingly mutually exclusive connotations of the words κατεῖχε and ἐλευθέρως.¹⁰¹ Indeed, the former term plays a prominent role in the vocabulary of tyranny, while the latter plays an important role in the Athenian democratic ideology, as freedom is the basis for every citizen's claim to a share in the *polis*' governance.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ It is interesting to note that Rusten, in his commentary on Book 2, states that Thucydides' speaking ability, as well as the inability of later politicians to live up to his example, became a commonplace in fourth century literature. He goes on, however, to argue that this commonplace pre-existed Thucydides, and that he took it and incorporated into his general explanation of Athens' defeat (1988: 209–11).

¹⁰¹ The language of this description of Pericles is worth comparing to that of Solon, who, in describing his work for Athens, says, κέντρον δ' ἄλλος ὡς ἐγὼ λαβών, / κακοφραδῆς τε καὶ φιλοκτιμῶν ἀνὴρ, / οὐκ ἂν κατέσχε δῆμον (“If another man had taken up the goad as I did, both a foolish and greedy man, he would not have **held down the demos**”; fr. 36.20–2). The obvious implication in this quote is that Solon *did* manage to “hold down the *demos*.” Thus, there appears to be a precedent for describing great Athenian leaders who act with exceptional powers but with the consent of their peers in such terms.

¹⁰² For the role of freedom in democratic ideology see, among other passages, Arist. *Pol.* 3.1280a9–31. Gomme and Andrewes (1956a: 192) attempt to resolve the paradoxical nature of this language by translating ἐλευθέρως “without hesitation” or “as a free man should.”

The nature of Pericles' influence, however, is here implicitly presented as different from other Athenian leaders. Indeed, Pericles is supremely persuasive, despite the fact that he does not gain the favor of the Athenian people by saying what they want to hear, but instead says what they *need* to hear. He is thus depicted as exercising a type of persuasive ability that is qualitatively different from that of later Athenian leaders.¹⁰³ The specific differences underlying this comparison are then made explicit shortly after, when Thucydides tells us that οἱ δὲ ὕστερον ἴσοι μᾶλλον αὐτοὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους ὄντες καὶ ὀρεγόμενοι τοῦ πρώτου ἕκαστος γίγνεσθαι ἐτρέποντο καθ' ἡδονὰς τῷ δήμῳ καὶ τὰ πράγματα ἐνδιδόναι (“but those later, being themselves more equal to one another, and each striving after primacy, began, according to pleasure, even to entrust matters to the people”; 2.65.10).

Finally, Thucydides makes his strongest statement about Pericles' influence and persuasive ability at 2.65.9, saying: ἐγίγνετό τε λόγῳ μὲν δημοκρατία, ἔργῳ δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ πρώτου ἀνδρὸς ἀρχή (“And it became on the one hand a democracy in name, but in deed rule by the first man”). Thus, readers are left with the impression that Pericles exercises what effectively amounts to monarchical (or tyrannical) rule, although he holds this position over a group of free individuals who consent (except for one instance in the text, described at 2.65.3–4) to be led in such a way.¹⁰⁴ In effect, then, this government is no longer a pure democracy, but temporarily combines elements of both individual rule and democracy.¹⁰⁵ Within this hybrid system, Pericles

¹⁰³ See, for example, Pericles' tone in addressing the population after the outbreak of the plague, especially in telling them that, if they blame him for unforeseen disasters, they must also give him credit for unforeseen windfalls (2.64.1–2).

¹⁰⁴ McGregor (1956: 97) argues that this presentation of Pericles' power is inconsistent with reality, pointing to the continued importance of the assembly in determining matters. This may very well be, but the point only serves to draw further attention to the image of the relationship between Pericles and Athens which Thucydides is trying to create.

¹⁰⁵ In his examination of the development of the idea of the “mixed constitution,” von Fritz (1975: 80–1) brings up Plato's discussion in the *Laws* of the benefits of the middle ground between monarchy and democracy, in which an individual or small group leads with their wisdom, but the people exercise some control to avoid corruption (6.756e). Aristotle explicitly corrects this point in his *Politics*, claiming that what Plato really meant was the middle

leads by means of his foresight, and the people trust him to act for the good of the state (Balot 2001: 143).

This idea of trust brings us to the final category of Periclean attributes: his personal integrity. Luginbill (1999: 91) views this quality of Pericles as the most important in Thucydides' estimation, because it differentiates him from all other Athenian leaders, even those who enjoy some success such as Themistocles. Indeed, Thucydides goes to great lengths to demonstrate the altruism of Pericles' motivations and his willingness to put the good of the city above his own. As mentioned above, he is described by Thucydides as "clearly most incorruptible by money" (χρημάτων τε διαφανῶς ἀδωρότατος), and as preferring to speak for the good of the city, rather than attempting to preserve his power by saying what his audience wants to hear (2.65.8).

Moreover, Pericles is portrayed as actively endorsing the valuation of the communal good below individual advantage (Pelling 1990: 260). Indeed, he makes this position explicit in his speech to the Athenians after the plague, when he goes so far as to claim that an individual can only do well in a community that prospers:¹⁰⁶

ἐγὼ γὰρ ἠγοῦμαι πόλιν πλείω ζύμπασαν ὀρθομένην ὠφελεῖν τοὺς ἰδιώτας ἢ καθ' ἕκαστον τῶν πολιτῶν εὐπραγοῦσαν, ἀθρόαν δὲ σφαλλομένην. καλῶς μὲν γὰρ φερόμενος ἀνὴρ τὸ καθ' ἑαυτὸν διαφθειρομένης τῆς πατρίδος οὐδὲν ἦσσαν ζυναπόλλυται, κακοτυχῶν δὲ ἐν εὐτυχούσῃ πολλῶ μᾶλλον διασώζεται. ὁπότε οὖν πόλις μὲν τὰς ἰδίας ξυμφορὰς οἷα τε φέρειν, εἷς δ' ἕκαστος τὰς ἐκείνης ἀδύνατος, πῶς οὐ χρὴ πάντας ἀμύνειν αὐτῇ, καὶ μὴ ὃ νῦν ὑμεῖς δρᾶτε (2.60.2–4).

For I think that a whole city that is succeeding benefits the private citizens more than when it does well according to individual citizens, but all together is tripped up. For on the one hand a man while he is doing well in his own matters is no less ruined if the fatherland is ruined, but an unfortunate man in a fortunate city is

ground between oligarchy and democracy (2.1266a1–7). Thucydides' picture of Athens under Periclean rule may prefigure this formulation of a middle ground between rule by a leading man and democracy. Aristotle does, however, refer to kingship by consent as a form of government in Book 3 of the *Politics* (1285a–b).

¹⁰⁶ See Ober 2006: 151 for more on the significance of this passage for Pericles' character.

much safer. And so since a city is able to provide private benefits, but each individual is not able to provide those of that city, how is it not necessary that all guard it, and do not do what you now do?

As pointed out by Balot (2001: 142–3), self-sacrifice was key to Athenian success during the Persian Wars, and here Pericles calls upon the Athenians to continue to see their own good as dependent upon the good of the state. Ober argues that Pericles fully endorses this view, and recognizes that the individual can only flourish in a community that does as well (2006: 151). Thus, one of Pericles' defining characteristics in Thucydides' text is the motivation behind his actions: he truly appears to act with the best interests of the state in mind, not for his own advantage.

We can, therefore conclude that Thucydides' Pericles does possess attributes from the three qualities outlined by Luginbill: the perceptive, persuasive, and personal (1999: 150). These attributes are, however, very general; that is to say, they present a universally applicable set of characteristics for positive leadership. The question then becomes, what about Pericles makes him successful in his specifically Athenian context? How does his individual character positively impact the collective behavioral tendencies attributed to Athens? The result of such an inquiry becomes particularly interesting because, as I will now argue, it is the very fact that Pericles' character does *not* match the Athenian national character that, in Thucydides' estimation, makes Pericles such an effective leader. Indeed, as noted by Connor (1984b: 62), some Periclean attributes are actually at odds with the characterization of Athens; as a result, instead of exacerbating the negative behavioral tendencies of his *polis*, Pericles is portrayed as a moderating force.

The fact that there is something markedly un-Athenian about Pericles' influence on Athens is first apparent in the war strategy that he proposes. This strategy is described twice in

the work, once in a speech attributed to Pericles, and once by Thucydides in his eulogy of the politician. In the former instance, Pericles tells his fellow Athenians,

σκέψασθε δέ· εἰ γὰρ ἡμεν νησιῶται, τίνες ἂν ἀληπτότεροι ἦσαν; καὶ νῦν χρὴ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τούτου διανοηθέντας τὴν μὲν γῆν καὶ οἰκίαν ἀφείναι, τῆς δὲ θαλάσσης καὶ πόλεως φυλακὴν ἔχειν, καὶ Πελοποννησίοις ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ὀργισθέντας πολλῶ πλέοσι μὴ διαμάχεσθαι (1.143.5).

But look, for if we were islanders, who could be harder to overcome? And now it is necessary that you, having in mind as near a thing to this as possible, abandon your land and homes, and hold guard over the sea and city, and that you not, becoming angry over these things [i.e. your land and homes], fight with the much more numerous Peloponnesians.

In Pericles' estimation, it is necessary that the Athenians give up some of the land they control to the Peloponnesians (Attica, no less), and to "hold guard" (φυλακὴν ἔχειν) over the city and the sea. As we will see, observance of this strategy, requiring the Athenians to hold themselves back from their acquisitive ways, requires his countrymen to act counter to their established collective behavioral tendencies.

This disconnect becomes particularly apparent in the parallel Pericles builds between his own strategy and the Athenian abandonment of Attica during the Persian Wars. Indeed, he describes the previous generation as τὰ ὑπάρχοντα ἐκλιπόντες ("leaving behind their possessions"; 1.144.4).¹⁰⁷ If we look back to the Corinthian speaker's description of the Athenians, we note that he uses similar terms when pointing out that they are never happy with what they already have, and instead constantly desire more: ἀπολαύουσιν ἐλάχιστα τῶν ὑπαρχόντων διὰ τὸ αἰεὶ κτᾶσθαι ("least of all do they enjoy what they already have because of

¹⁰⁷ Pericles also states that the earlier Athenians pushed back the Persians by their daring (τόλμη; 1.144.4), a trait also associated with the current generation by the Corinthian speaker (τολμηταί; 1.70.3); in the latter context, however, Athenian daring was related to their willingness to undertake risky endeavors for *gain*. Thus, Pericles associates a typically Athenian attribute (daring) with his strategy even though, upon examination, we may note that his advice endorses behavior that is actually quite un-Athenian.

their constant engagement in acquisition”). Then again later in the text, Nicias, in his speech before the Sicilian expedition, acknowledges the fact that his arguments are unlikely to succeed, εἰ τὰ τε ὑπάρχοντα σῶζειν παραινοίην (“if I should advise you **to preserve what you already have**”; 6.9.3). In fact, the preservation of possessions as a habitual behavior is specifically attributed to the *Spartans*, who are described at 1.70.2 as accustomed τὰ ὑπάρχοντά τε σῶζειν (“to preserve what exists”). Pericles’ advice, then, is much more in line with Spartan national character, and thus will not come naturally to his audience.¹⁰⁸

The presentation of Pericles’ war strategy as Spartan in character continues when Thucydides restates it at 2.65.7: ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἡσυχάζοντάς τε καὶ τὸ ναυτικὸν θεραπεύοντας καὶ ἀρχὴν μὴ ἐπικτωμένους ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ μηδὲ τῇ πόλει κινδυνεύοντας ἔφη περιέσεσθαι (“For he said that, **both keeping calm** and looking after the fleet and not extending their empire nor running risks for the city in the war, they would succeed”; 2.65.7). As noted above, this strategy of preservation, while praised by Thucydides because for its foresight, fits rather better with the text’s characterization of Sparta than with that of Athens. It is Sparta with whom ἡσυχία is associated in the text (1.118.2). Athens, on the other hand, is characterized by acquisitiveness, a habitual tendency to encroach upon its neighbors (1.69.3), and a strong distaste for anything resembling inactivity (1.70.8–9).¹⁰⁹ Thus, the first requirement of Pericles’ strategy actually relies on the Athenians consistently acting contrary to their collective behavioral tendencies. In other words, then, Pericles’ strategy, as depicted by Thucydides, involves the leader temporarily

¹⁰⁸ Indeed, we see the Athenians grow angry at the sight of the Peloponnesians devastating their land and openly question Pericles’ leadership on multiple occasions (2.21.2–3, 2.59). Moreover, Thucydides explicitly states that his successors did the exact opposite of Pericles’ strategy (2.65.7), implying that this strategy was untenable without his leadership. Azoulay, however, while acknowledging that Pericles’ approach to the war was hotly contested (2010: 48), argues that it was in fact observed even after his death, and must therefore have been roughly in line with the interests of the citizens (2010: 50).

¹⁰⁹ See Ch. 1, pp. 24–5 for more on this point.

altering Athenian character, checking their acquisitiveness. As such, he acts as a moderating force.¹¹⁰

While Pericles does regulate Athenian eagerness for gain, it is important to note that the leadership attributed to him is not fully un-Athenian. This point is made explicitly clear when Thucydides tells readers: ὁπότε γοῦν αἴσθοιτό τι αὐτοὺς παρὰ καιρὸν ὕβρει θαρσοῦντας, λέγων κατέπλησεν ἐπὶ τὸ φοβεῖσθαι, καὶ δεδιότας αὖ ἀλόγως ἀντικαθίστη πάλιν ἐπὶ τὸ θαρσεῖν (“consequently, when he perceived them [the populace] being, contrary to their advantage, hubristically overbold in something, by speaking he terrified them to the point of being afraid; and again when they were afraid unreasonably he put them back into a state of boldness”; 2.65.9). While Pericles is capable of checking Athenian acquisitiveness, he is also portrayed as just as capable of restoring their spirits when they become overly hesitant. While Pericles’ willingness to forsake active conquest is markedly un-Athenian when compared to the *polis*’ collective behavioral tendencies elsewhere in the work, his ability to inspire boldness and action is, at the same time, markedly un-Spartan. Thus, Thucydides’ Pericles exists at neither end of the spectrum of character occupied by Athens and Sparta, but can instead be found somewhere in the middle. This point is of key importance: in Thucydides’ presentation, Pericles is neither too Athenian (as this would cause him to bring the weaknesses inherent in Athenian national character to the fore), nor too Spartan.¹¹¹ Instead, he is in Thucydides’ characterization the leader that Athens *needs* because of its tendencies to overreach and to overreact, and the fact that Pericles is not fully “Athenian” in his characterization allows him to counterbalance these negative tendencies (Connor 1984b: 65). As noted by Balot, “Athens needs a Pericles to make its

¹¹⁰ Just as Thucydides notes about Pericles’ leadership role in peacetime: ὅσον τε γὰρ χρόνον προύστη τῆς πόλεως ἐν τῇ εἰρήνῃ, μετρίως ἐξηγεῖτο καὶ ἀσφαλῶς διεφύλαξεν αὐτήν (“And for as long as he was at the head of the city in peace, he led it moderately and maintained it safely”; 2.65.5).

¹¹¹ We will see this latter point in the case of Nicias. See chapter 3, pp. 170–209.

intelligence and courage work in unison” (2001: 147). In effect, then, the character and leadership of Pericles combine with the tendencies of democratic Athens to bring about a balanced, moderate, and effective system of governance (Pelling 2000: 22).¹¹²

Thus, in Pericles, we may observe the attributes required for positive Athenian leadership. As we have seen, however, this combination of qualities and characteristics, which allows him to lead Athens away from its weaknesses and toward its strengths, is extremely specific in its requirements: the leader needs foresight, persuasive ability, and unselfish motivation, and can be neither too Athenian nor too Spartan. Upon examination, such quality of leadership appears to be too much to ask for, and is in fact shown in the text itself to be nigh unattainable.¹¹³ Indeed, as Thucydides explicitly tells readers (and as will be explored in more depth in the next two chapters), no Athenian leader after Pericles lives up to his example: οἱ δὲ ταῦτά τε πάντα ἐς τοῦναντίον ἔπραξαν καὶ ἄλλα ἕξω τοῦ πολέμου δοκοῦντα εἶναι κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας φιλοτιμίας καὶ ἴδια κέρδη κακῶς ἕς τε σφᾶς αὐτοὺς καὶ τοὺς ζυμμάχους ἐπολίτευσαν, ἃ κατορθούμενα μὲν τοῖς ἰδιώταις τιμὴ καὶ ὠφελία μᾶλλον ἦν, σφαλέντα δὲ τῇ πόλει ἐς τὸν πόλεμον βλάβη καθίστατο (“But they [his successors] did these things all in the opposite way, and in other matters that seemed to be extraneous to the war, looking to private ambition and private profit, they managed the city badly both for themselves and for their allies. These things, if they were successful, were more a source of honor and profit for private citizens, but, if unsuccessful, created harm for the city in the war”; 2.65.7).¹¹⁴ Thus, while Periclean leadership

¹¹² See also Vogt (2009: 222), who argues that Thucydides sees in Pericles the harmonious coexistence of the Athenian democratic constitution and personal political leadership.

¹¹³ As Johnson Bagby puts it, “Clearly, Thucydides sees Pericles as the exception to the rule in democracy” (2011: 135). Macleod also argues that only Pericles “could restrain the self-destructive tendencies of a democracy, unreason in the people (ii 65.9), irresponsibility and dissension among the leaders (ii 65.8, 10–12)” (1983: 93).

¹¹⁴ Some scholars, such as Raaflaub (2006: 205) and Azoulay (2010: 155–7) believe that the contrast between Pericles and later leaders is exaggerated. I argue, however, that, even if this is the case, Thucydides’ choice to present matters in the way that he does speaks volumes about his conception of good leadership and its role in the Athenian democracy.

represents the specific combination of attributes that Athens needs, the *polis* cannot actually rely on the emergence of such leaders.¹¹⁵

This point leaves readers in a state of *aporia*. As was shown in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, Athenian national character (which is directly related to its democratic political environment) contains both strengths and dangerous weaknesses. This situation leaves room for the intervention of exceptional leaders, who can temporarily alter Athenian behavior, and thus act as a corrective force. Such leadership is then attributed to Pericles, whom Thucydides portrays as the most effective Athenian leader in the work due to his ability to moderate Athenian character, and to direct his *polis* away from its negative tendencies and toward its strengths.

As was mentioned, however, the effect of such leadership is temporary. After Pericles is removed from the scene, therefore, the emergence of another such leader is necessary, or Athens will revert to its general behavioral tendency of rash acquisitiveness. In fact, we actually see this play out in the case of the Periclean war strategy. As mentioned above, this strategy requires that the Athenians act in a markedly un-Athenian way—namely, that they give up adding to their empire. As noted by Connor (1984b: 61, 63), Luginbill (1999: 138), and Rood (1998: 140–2), it thus relies on the intervention of an exceptional leader like Pericles for its observance. As Thucydides presents matters, however, Athenian leaders after Pericles abandon his advice (2.65.7, given above). Moreover, the narrative built by Thucydides reinforces this point: no leaders of Pericles' quality actually *do* emerge to fulfill his role of moderating force.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ As observed by Orwin, “Rather than focus on the alleged ‘decline of Athens,’ it is probably more sensible to emphasize the exceptionality of Pericles” (1994: 28)

¹¹⁶ This will be argued in the following two chapters. It is also interesting to note Pericles' idealized view of the Athenian democracy—and especially of political deliberation and decision-making in it—presented in the Funeral Oration (2.35–46; esp. 2.40.2–5). While Pericles can claim that these processes work well under his leadership, as noted by Raaflaub (2006: 221), this praise proves illusory in the rest of the work.

Thus, we are left viewing Athens as a system that relies on the emergence of positive leaders characterized by very specific attributes to correct the faults in its character. At the same time, however, through his presentation of events Thucydides makes it clear that the emergence of such leaders cannot actually be expected. Pericles is unique in his exceptionality, and thus the Athenian democracy will lack the presence of a truly moderating force, and will, in general, trend toward the behavioral tendencies discussed in Chapter One.

Brasidas as a Force of Moderation

From antiquity to modernity, readers of Thucydides' *History* have noted Brasidas' exceptionality. He has often been recognized as a Spartan with universally Athenian characteristics—a sort of Alcibiades born in Sparta.¹¹⁷ Here I argue, however, that while Brasidas is certainly remarkable among Spartan leaders for his energy, daring, speed, and speaking ability, a number of passages demonstrate that he remains capable of deploying markedly Spartan behaviors, such as hesitation and prudence. Thus we may argue that, as in the case of Pericles, Brasidas actually acts as a moderating, corrective force. As such, he both corrects the weaknesses specific to his *polis*' character, and at the same time maintains its strengths.

Before going on to discuss the specific combination of “Athenian” and “Spartan” qualities that renders Brasidas an effective Spartan leader, however, an important distinction must be made concerning what is meant by “good” or “effective” leadership. Scholarly discussions of Brasidas as a leader have generally followed two connected—but nevertheless different—approaches. First, there has been debate over whether Brasidas, as portrayed in

¹¹⁷ Palmer 2015: 80.

Thucydides, is a positive figure. This line of analysis is generally concerned with whether or not Thucydides presents Brasidas and his actions as praise-worthy, and whether or not he is meant to offer readers an imitable, didactic example.¹¹⁸ The second approach, however, is concerned only with whether Brasidas is an effective leader for Sparta; that is, whether or not he, as a character, is beneficial to his *polis*. The difference between these two approaches can, in large part, be summed up as follows: the first is primarily concerned with the justifiability of the means by which Brasidas acts, while the second focuses on the effectiveness of the results. This work's analysis of Thucydides' characterization of Brasidas will center on the second of these two approaches, as it is primarily concerned with how his character complements that of Sparta, and thus benefits his *polis*. Before undertaking this more specific analysis, however, it is appropriate to briefly review the debate over the general positivity of Brasidas' character.

Opinions on whether Brasidas is or is not an imitable “good leader” have varied widely. On the one hand, a great deal of praise and admiration has been heaped on this Spartan commander. For example, Thucydides reports that the Amphipolitans honored Brasidas as a hero after his death (5.11.1).¹¹⁹ In Plato's *Symposium*, Alcibiades compares Brasidas to Achilles: οἷος γὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς ἐγένετο, ἀπεικάσειεν ἄν τις καὶ Βρασίδαν καὶ ἄλλους (“For such a man as Achilles was, one could compare Brasidas and others”; Pl. *Smp.* 221c). In more modern scholarship, it has been argued that, “Brasidas ... excelled [all Spartans], if not other Greek generals ... in grasp of military principles, in energy, enterprise, leadership, in military genius” (Harley 1942: 68; cited thus in Wylie 1992: 76). Palmer calls him the “most resplendent” Spartan and the most resplendent human being in Thucydides (2015: 65, 78), and goes on to point out that Orwin

¹¹⁸ This approach likely finds its origin in the long-held belief that Thucydides' history could educate its readers in the proper exercise of power. For a response to this view, see Stahl 2003, *passim*.

¹¹⁹ Aristotle mentions sacrifices to Brasidas as well (*EN* 1134b23–4).

(1994: 79), Finley (1942: 198), and de Romilly (1963 [1942]: 43) all believed that Brasidas was the Spartan who best knew how to defeat the Athenians.¹²⁰ Hornblower recognizes Brasidas as one of the war's few outstanding heroes (1991: 39). Heilke, meanwhile, argues that, in terms of realist international relations theory (i.e., acting in a way that benefits his *polis*' security interests), Brasidas is the best Spartan leader in Thucydides' history (2004: 127).

Despite this positive trend in the historical reception of Brasidas, and the Thucydidean passages that appear to directly praise him (e.g. 4.81.2–3, 108.1–3), there is now some disagreement over the nature of his character, and whether he is truly a positive figure. One primary point of difficulty is the dishonesty that Thucydides directly attributes to Brasidas. Indeed, his willingness to lie to break allies away from Athens has been puzzled over a great deal in scholarship.¹²¹ This discussion is centered around (but not limited to) his (mis)representation of his confrontation with the Athenians at Nisaea: καίτοι στρατιᾶ γε τῆδ' ἦν νῦν [ἐγὼ] ἔχω ἐπὶ Νίσαιαν ἐμοῦ βοηθήσαντος οὐκ ἠθέλησαν Ἀθηναῖοι πλείονες ὄντες προσμεῖζαι, ὥστε οὐκ εἰκὸς νηίτη γε αὐτοὺς τῷ ἐν Νισαίᾳ στρατῷ ἴσον πλῆθος ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἀποστεῖλαι (“And yet when I came to help at Nisaea with this army which I now have, the Athenians, though being more numerous, were not willing to engage me, with the result that it is not likely that they will send out a force by ship equal to the army in Nisaea”; 4.85.7).

Brasidas' version of events, then, has the Athenians declining battle despite outnumbering his army. Shortly before this speech, however, Thucydides actually provides an account of this confrontation in which he explicitly states that it was the *Peloponnesians* who enjoyed numerical superiority at Megara: λογιζόμενοι καὶ οἱ ἐκείνων στρατηγοὶ μὴ ἀντίπαλον

¹²⁰ Palmer looks back to Orwin 1994: 79 for the phrase “most resplendent.”

¹²¹ Palmer (2015: 79), Heilke (2004: 126), and Connor (1984b: 132) all bring up Brasidas' willingness to lie in their discussion of his character. Hornblower (1991: 55) also points out that Connor (1984b: 131) isn't convinced that Thucydides actually means for Brasidas to be a positive character.

εἶναι σφίσι τὸν κίνδυνον, ἐπειδὴ καὶ τὰ πλείω αὐτοῖς προουκεχωρήκει, ἄρξασι μάχης πρὸς πλέονας αὐτῶν ἢ λαβεῖν νικήσαντας Μέγαρα ἢ σφαλέντας τῷ βελτίστῳ τοῦ ὀπλιτικοῦ βλαφθῆναι (“and their [the Athenians’] generals, reckoning that the danger was not equal for them—after the majority of things had gone favorably for them—if they entered battle against a greater number than themselves; either being victorious they would take Megara, or failing they would suffer harm to the best of their heavily armed forces ...”; 4.73.4). Thus, Thucydides sets up a clear juxtaposition between his own version of events and the claims Brasidas makes in his speech shortly thereafter, and a reader could reasonably be expected to recognize that his claims at Acanthus about Athenian strength and resolve are false: the Athenians did not fail to attack an inferior force, but instead declined to engage a numerically superior enemy after having already accomplished most of the goals for which they had come.

After leaving this point to inference, Thucydides later goes on to make the falsity of Brasidas’ claims explicit. First, he points out that the northern Greek allies had mistakenly underestimated Athenian power when they revolted (4.108.4),¹²² and then he directly attributes this underestimation, at least in part, to Brasidas’ misleading rhetoric: ἅμα δὲ τῶν Ἀθηναίων ἐν τοῖς Βοιωτοῖς νεωστὶ πεπληγμένων καὶ τοῦ Βρασίδου ἐφορκὰ καὶ οὐ τὰ ὄντα λέγοντος, ὡς αὐτῷ ἐπὶ Νίσαιαν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ μόνη στρατιᾷ οὐκ ἠθέλησαν οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι ξυμβαλεῖν, ἐθάρσουν καὶ ἐπίστευον μηδένα ἂν ἐπὶ σφᾶς βοηθῆσαι (“And at the same time, with the Athenians recently defeated in Boeotia, **and with Brasidas saying enticing but untrue things, namely that the Athenians were not willing to enter battle with him at Nisaea with just his own army**, they took heart and they believed that no one would come to help against them”; 4.108.5). Thucydides directly tells his readers that Brasidas’ claims were “enticing but untrue,” and indeed, as pointed

¹²² The word used to describe the Athenian allies as “mistaken” is ἐψευσμένοις, which could also be taken to mean that they had been *deceived* about Athenian strength.

out by Connor, it becomes painfully clear to Athens' revolted allies by the end of Book 4 that none of Brasidas' claims (especially concerning the Athenians' unwillingness to defend their interests in northern Greece) are true (1984b: 138).

What to do, then, with a character who is at one point described as possessing virtue (4.81.2–3) but who also knowingly lies to get what he wants, is, undoubtedly, a difficult question. Scholars have offered numerous possible resolutions to this problem. First, in response to the position that all of Brasidas' promises to the northern Greeks are shown to be false by the end of Book 4 (Connor 1984b: 138), Palmer comes to the Spartan general's defense by arguing that this is the result of hindsight, and that Brasidas would not have allowed the northern Greek cities that came over to his side to be betrayed (2015: 79). This defense is somewhat conjectural, but the text does insinuate that Brasidas' aims in northern Greece were, at least to some extent, different from those of the Spartan leadership at home. For example, Brasidas is portrayed as the primary opponent to peace among the Spartans, going so far as to accept the revolt of Mende in 423 BCE, despite the fact that the Spartans and Athenians had already agreed to an armistice (4.123.1–2). This suggests that, had he survived the Battle of Amphipolis, he would likely have been unwilling to return control of these *poleis* to Athens.¹²³

Even if Brasidas was knowingly lying to the northern Greeks, however, it is unclear whether this point would in any way diminish the positivity of his role as a Spartan general. First, it must be pointed out that numerous mythic Greek heroes (especially Odysseus) possess a certain cunning deceitfulness, and that in such cases this quality is not treated as negative, but

¹²³ On the tension between Brasidas and the Spartan leadership at home, see, for example, 4.108.7: οἱ δὲ Λακεδαιμόνιοι τὰ μὲν καὶ φθόνῳ ἀπὸ τῶν πρώτων ἀνδρῶν οὐχ ὑπηρετήσαν αὐτῷ, τὰ δὲ καὶ βουλόμενοι μᾶλλον τοὺς τε ἄνδρας τοὺς ἐκ τῆς νήσου κομίσασθαι καὶ τὸν πόλεμον καταλύσαι (“But the Lacedaemonians did not attend to him in some matters because of envy from the leading men, and in other matters because they preferred to get back the men from the island and to end the war”). In arguing for the independence of Brasidas' plans for this campaign, Palmer goes so far as to propose that Brasidas may have wanted to found his own kingdom in Thrace (2015: 78).

rather as an asset. This point may also be applied to later Greek historical figures such as Themistocles, who famously uses his cleverness to force the Greeks into battle at Salamis before they can withdraw to the Isthmus of Corinth (Hdt. 8.75–6). Cleverness and deception, then, may be viewed as positive attributes, so long as they are used in the right context and for the right reasons (usually to help one’s friends and/or to hurt one’s enemies). Palmer explores this point in the case of Brasidas by referencing a discussion of deception in Plato, where three acceptable reasons for lying are given:

τί δὲ δὴ τὸ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις [ψεῦδος]; πότε καὶ τῷ χρήσιμον, ὥστε μὴ ἄξιον εἶναι μίσους; ἀρ’ οὐ πρὸς τε τοὺς πολεμίους καὶ τῶν καλουμένων φίλων, ὅταν διὰ μανίαν ἢ τινα ἄνοιαν κακόν τι ἐπιχειρῶσιν πράττειν, τότε ἀποτροπῆς ἕνεκα ὡς φάρμακον χρήσιμον γίγνεται; καὶ ἐν αἷς νυνδὴ [382δ] ἐλέγομεν ταῖς μυθολογίαις, διὰ τὸ μὴ εἰδέναι ὅπη τάληθες ἔχει περὶ τῶν παλαιῶν, ἀφομοιοῦντες τῷ ἀληθεῖ τὸ ψεῦδος ὅτι μάλιστα, οὕτω χρήσιμον ποιοῦμεν; (Pl. *R.* 382c).

What about lying in words? When is it useful for someone, so that it is not worthy of hatred? Is it not [useful] both against enemies and as a means of prevention for those who are called friends, whenever on account of madness or some folly they try to do something bad, then does it become useful as a cure? And in the fictions we were just now talking about, because we do not know what the truth is concerning ancient times, by making the lie as similar to the truth as possible, thus do we make it useful?

According to Palmer, the first two conditions of this assessment are met in Brasidas’ case, and thus there is not necessarily anything “unjust” about his lie (2015: 70). Indeed, these criteria correspond to both Odysseus and Themistocles as well, the former regularly deceiving his enemies, and the latter deceiving both his enemies and his friends (who plan to “do something bad” by abandoning their position at Salamis to retreat to the Isthmus). We may thus conclude that the fact that Brasidas lies would not have been, to an ancient Greek audience, a reason to condemn him.

Brasidas' individual excellence (especially as a general) has also been questioned. Wylie, for example, focusing primarily on Brasidas' abilities as a general, claims that he delayed his final attack at Amphipolis too long (Thuc. 5.10), and that, had he faced a more experienced general than Cleon (such as Demosthenes), he likely would only have succeeded in getting himself killed, and would not have won the battle (1992: 93–5). Moreover, while it has been pointed out that Brasidas, in both temperament and martial ability, generally stands in stark opposition to the Athenian Cleon (who is sent to curb his efforts in Thrace, the two are in fact grouped together after their death in their shared opposition to peace (though their individual reasons differ; Connor 1984b: 140)).¹²⁴

The argument has also been made that Brasidas' military career is not entirely outstanding. Indeed, Brasidas is actually involved in a number of unsuccessful Spartan military undertakings, such as the battle of Naupactus (where he served as an adviser to Cnemus; 2.85.1), the aborted Spartan attempt on the Piraeus (mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation; 2.93), and the failed forced landing at Pylos after the Athenians, led by Demosthenes, fortified the spot (4.11.4–12.1). In response to this point, however, it can be argued that in each of these instances Brasidas played a subordinate role, and thus lacked the autonomy required to fully influence Spartan action (Heilke 2004: 125).

The point has also been made that the role of fortune is emphasized in a number of Brasidas' successful military encounters. For example, he “happened” (ἔτυχε; 2.25.2) to be near Methone for his first victory in the war (Heilke 2004: 125). His presence at Megara later in the war is described in much the same way: Βρασίδας δὲ ὁ Τέλλιδος Λακεδαιμόνιος κατὰ τοῦτον

¹²⁴ “Cleon and Brasidas are sharply defined opposites: the one a military man never presented in a political role, the other a politician who seems to stumble into military command; one the advocate of violence and terror, the other an example of the practical advantages of moderation and gentleness” (Connor 1984b: 129; see also Heilke 2004: 124).

τὸν χρόνον ἐτύγχανε περὶ Σικυῶνα καὶ Κόρινθον ὄν (“Brasidas son of Tellis, a Lacedaemonian, at this time **happened to be** around Sicyon and Corinth”); 4.70.1). While this emphasis on chance could be interpreted as detracting from his own excellence, the counter-argument has been proposed that Brasidas possesses the necessary qualities to seize the opportunity when it is presented to him.¹²⁵

From all of these points we may reasonably conclude that Thucydides makes no concerted effort to lead readers to a negative judgment of Brasidas: while his actions may cause problems for the Athenians, he is neither a bad person nor a negative exemplum. With that having been established, it is now appropriate to move on to a more specific analysis of Brasidas’ character and how it compares with that of his *polis*.

Brasidas the Athenian?

That Thucydides’ Brasidas is portrayed as much more Athenian than Spartan has been emphasized and repeated a great deal in scholarship.¹²⁶ Three Brasidean attributes have been the primary focus for scholars making this point: his un-Spartan speed, daring, and speaking ability.¹²⁷ Thus, he has often been described as the Athenian Spartan, a man born in the wrong

¹²⁵ “While his fame or glory may begin with the lucky occurrence of a military encounter, Brasidas possesses the necessary qualities for taking hold of happenstance and succeeding. His ‘daring exploit’ wins him the ‘thanks of Sparta,’ ...” (Heilke 2004: 125).

¹²⁶ For instance, Palmer (2015: 65) argues that Thucydides uses key words and themes to portray Brasidas as more Athenian than Spartan, and refers back to J. B. Bury, who says both that Brasidas is, “a character more Athenian than Spartan, yet with the good qualities of Athens predominant” (1959: 445), and that, “Brasidas was a Spartan by mistake” (1958: 350). Connor refers to Brasidas as a “most untypical Spartan” (1984b: 129), and also gives him as a prime example (together with Nicias) of individuals whose characterization does not resemble that of their *polis* (1984b: 41). Heilke likens Brasidas to Nicias, in that both are characterized in a way that more closely resembles their opposing *polis* (2004: 124), Wylie calls his behavior un-Spartan (1992: 76), and Strauss calls him “the Athenian among the Spartans” (1964: 213). For others, see Luginbill (1999: 116) and Westlake (1968: 148).

¹²⁷ “Brasidas is the antithesis of the conventional Spartan leader. Wherever he appears in the narrative of Thucydides, there is action, energy and enterprise” (Westlake 1968: 148). Palmer calls him a man of motion from a city of rest (2015:77), and Heilke notes that his energy is always contrasted with conventional Spartan cautiousness and hesitancy (2004: 125), and goes on to list his peculiar attributes: “Brasidas’ virtues include an ability to speak, initiative and speed, alertness and audacity, courage, strategic skill, and intelligence” (Heilke 2004: 126).

city whose character more closely resembles that of an Alcibiades than it does that of an Archidamus. It will be argued, however, that this position oversimplifies his characterization, and that Brasidas actually possesses the positive Athenian qualities, but none of the negative ones. Thus, he is not *fully* Athenian according to the schema applied to the group in Thucydides' history, and serves instead as a figure that can lead the Spartans away from their negative tendencies (hesitancy and total risk-aversion), while avoiding the excesses of unchecked Athenian acquisitiveness. Before complicating our picture of Brasidas, however, let us briefly examine some of the passages that have led scholars to view him as an "Athenian" Spartan.

Brasidas' "Athenian" speed and energy are on full display from his first appearance in the work, when he confronts an Athenian force that has landed in the Peloponnese and attacked Methone (2.25.1). As Thucydides tells it:

ἔτυχε δὲ περὶ τοὺς χώρους τούτους Βρασίδης ὁ Τέλλιδος ἀνὴρ Σπαρτιάτης φρουρὰν ἔχων, καὶ αἰσθόμενος ἐβόηθει τοῖς ἐν τῷ χωρίῳ μετὰ ὀπλιτῶν ἑκατόν. **διαδραμῶν** δὲ τὸ τῶν Ἀθηναίων στρατόπεδον ἐσκεδασμένον κατὰ τὴν χώραν καὶ πρὸς τὸ τεῖχος τετραμμένον ἐσπίπτει ἐς τὴν Μεθώνην καὶ ὀλίγους τινὰς ἐν τῇ ἐσδρομῇ ἀπολέσας τῶν μεθ' αὐτοῦ τὴν τε πόλιν περιεποίησε καὶ ἀπὸ τούτου τοῦ **τολμήματος** πρῶτος τῶν κατὰ τὸν πόλεμον ἐπηνέθη ἐν Σπάρτῃ (2.25.2).

But Brasidas the son of Tellis, a man who was a Spartiate, happened to be holding guard around these areas. And having perceived this he came to help those in the place with one hundred hoplites. **Having run through** the Athenians' camp, which was scattered throughout the land and turned toward the wall, he rushed into Methone and, having lost a certain few of those with him in the attack, he both preserved the city and, because of this **daring act**, he first of those in the war was praised in Sparta.

Brasidas thus acts with an urgency that would immediately strike readers as at odds with the characterization collectively applied to Spartans throughout the work. Indeed, the text emphasizes the speed with which Brasidas reacts after learning of what is happening in his region, describing him as running through (διαδραμῶν) the Athenian camp, and then attributing

to his actions the rather Athenian attribute of daring (τολμήματος).¹²⁸ Indeed, as was extensively discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation, the Athenians are regularly described as daring (τολμηταί; 1.70.3), while the Spartans are characterized as resting when they should be active (ἡσύχαζον; 1.118.2), and as inactive delayers (μελλητὰς; 1.70.4). We may see, therefore, why scholars such as Palmer refer to Brasidas as a man of motion from a city of rest (2015: 77).

This contrast between Brasidas and the established Spartan collective character is reinforced by the fact that his first appearance occurs shortly after Thucydides' description of Archidamus' slow march to Attica. In this passage it is revealed that the Peloponnesians wasted time (ἐνδιέτριψαν χρόνον) around Oenoe, and that they blamed Archidamus for this (2.18.2–3) because he had earned a reputation for slowness; this was due to of the army's delay (ἐπιμονή) at the Isthmus and the leisureliness (σχολαιότης) of the march to Attica (2.18.3). Thucydides emphasizes the role this hesitation at Oenoe played in creating further antipathy towards Archidamus among the Peloponnesian allies, mentioning the delay two more times (ἐπίσχεσις, μέλλησις; 2.18.3, 4). While Thucydides does give reasons for Archidamus holding up the army's advance (he thought the Athenians would give in from the threat of seeing their land harmed; 2.18.5), the fact remains that the Peloponnesian allies, just like the Corinthian ambassador in Book 1, are presented as quite prepared to see Archidamus as just another hesitant Spartan. Thus, readers are confronted in rapid succession with Archidamus, a commander who, in his hesitancy, seemingly embodies Spartan national character, and then Brasidas, whose speed and daring make

¹²⁸ It could be argued that, at least in this section, Brasidas' rapid action is the same *reactive* speed we have seen attributed to the Spartans elsewhere in the work, such as after the Athenians fortify Pylos (see p. 64). I believe, however, that the attribution of daring to Brasidas' action indicates to readers his agency in developing and executing this plan, rather than that he was acting un-creatively under force of necessity. Additionally, Brasidas is consistently credited with speed, energy, and daring elsewhere in the work, making it clear that he actually possesses these character traits, rather than being forced by circumstances to temporarily behave this way.

it immediately clear that he differs in several key ways from general Spartan behavioral tendencies.¹²⁹

After Brasidas' victory at Methone, his next several appearances with the Spartan military are much less successful.¹³⁰ For example, he is sent to Cnemus as an adviser before the Battle of Naupactus (2.85.1; 429 BCE), and he is present with the Peloponnesian forces that plan, but fail to carry out, a daring attack on the Piraeus (2.93.1–3). Throughout these episodes, however, it remains the case that Brasidas' individual behavior stands in stark contrast to that associated with the Spartan collective, and to that of his commanding officers. What is more, Thucydides makes it clear that this singular Spartan's characteristic speed would actually have had a positive impact on the result of these military undertakings. For example, during the revolution at Corcyra, the oligarchic party receives support from a Peloponnesian fleet commanded by Alcidas, who has Brasidas with him as an adviser (3.76.1). In the sea battle that ensues, the ships sent out by the Corcyraean democratic faction are bested by those of the Peloponnesians, and Thucydides tells us that, at this point, the Corcyraeans were afraid that the Peloponnesians would follow their victory up with further, more decisive action (3.79.1).¹³¹ As Thucydides tells us, however, the Peloponnesians did not dare to sail against the city, despite their victory at sea (οἱ δ' ἐπὶ μὲν τὴν πόλιν οὐκ ἐτόλμησαν πλεῦσαι κρατοῦντες τῇ ναυμαχίᾳ; 3.79.2). Thus, just as the Spartans decline to sail into the Piraeus at 2.93.1–3 and fail to capitalize

¹²⁹ See Heilke (2004: 125) for more on this specific contrast.

¹³⁰ It has been argued that the cause of this reduced level of success is the fact that Brasidas is consistently subordinated to other Spartan leaders (Heilke 2004: 125; Palmer 2015: 66).

¹³¹ καὶ οἱ Κερκυραῖοι δέισαντες μὴ σφίσιν ἐπιπλεύσαντες ἐπὶ τὴν πόλιν ὡς κρατοῦντες οἱ πολέμοιοι ἢ τοὺς ἐκ τῆς νήσου ἀναλάβωσιν ἢ καὶ ἄλλο τι νεωτερίσωσι, τοὺς τε ἐκ τῆς νήσου πάλιν ἐς τὸ Ἱεραῖον διεκόμισαν καὶ τὴν πόλιν ἐφύλασσον (“And the Corcyraeans, fearing that their enemies, since they were victorious, would sail against their city and either retrieve the men from the island or attempt some other political change, they brought the men back from the island to the temple of Hera and they guarded the city”; 3.79.1).

on their success at Euboea much later in the work (8.96.5), here we see the same occur: the Spartans lack the daring to press the advantage.

At the same time, however, Brasidas' behavior directly contrasts with this depiction of the Peloponnesians under the leadership of Alcidas. On the day after the battle, Thucydides tells readers that the Peloponnesian forces yet again failed to sail against the city, *καίπερ ἐν πολλῇ παραχῇ καὶ φόβῳ ὄντας καὶ Βρασίδου παραινοῦντος, ὡς λέγεται, Ἀλκίδα, ἰσοψηφου δὲ οὐκ ὄντος* ("although [the inhabitants] were in very great state of confusion and fear, and Brasidas, who did not have equal voting power, was advising it, as is said, to Alcidas"; 3.79.3). This Spartan delay gives the Athenian fleet that is en route to Corcyra time to arrive, and the Peloponnesians are forced to sail home.

This episode is, then, demonstrative both of a typical pattern of Spartan behavior after being victorious, where they fail to turn victory on the battlefield into a decisive strategic victory in the war, and of Brasidas' exceptional character. Indeed, the sole Peloponnesian voice in favor of taking immediate action is his, and he is therefore absolved of any guilt for the typical Spartan hesitancy and lack of daring that Alcidas here displays. Additionally, by noting that Brasidas did not have equal voting power with Alcidas, and was thus his subordinate, Thucydides further exonerates Brasidas of any blame for the result of this encounter.

Brasidas' energy and daring are next on full display during the failed Spartan attempt to force the Athenians from their fortification at Pylos. During this battle, Thucydides tells readers that the Spartans attacking from the sea were *προθυμία τε πάση χρώμενοι καὶ παρακελευσμῶ, εἴ πως ὡσάμενοι ἔλοιεν τὸ τεῖχος* ("using both all eagerness and exhortation, in case somehow by pressing forward they could take the fort"; 4.11.3). Brasidas notices, however, that many of the ships are hanging back to avoid damage, and gives a speech of exhortation to his fellow

Lacedaemonians and their allies, bidding them not to hesitate (ἀποκνήσαι), and to break up their ships and force a landing in any way they can (ὀκείλαντας δὲ καὶ παντὶ τρόπῳ ἀποβάντας τῶν τε ἀνδρῶν καὶ τοῦ χωρίου κρατῆσαι; 4.11.4). The specific language of delaying used in this passage is strongly associated with Spartan behavior in Thucydides, and Brasidas is thus depicted as calling upon his compatriots to act contrary to their character.¹³² He even goes so far as to force a landing with his own ship, which results in him being gravely wounded (4.12.1).

After this defeat Brasidas is absent from the work until 4.70, when he appears near Megara and subsequently becomes the center of the narrative until his death. Indeed, Hornblower describes 4.70–5.24 as Brasidas’ “time of glory,” and, moreover, as his *aristeia* (1991: 41). Throughout this extended description of Brasidas’ exploits in northern Greece, Thucydides continues to emphasize his characteristic speed, daring, and speaking ability. Let us briefly examine some important passages that demonstrate the continued consistency of this characterization.

For example, when Brasidas first sets out on his expedition to northern Greece, his path is blocked by a group of Thessalians who claim he is acting unjustly by passing through their territory without permission (4.78.3). Brasidas displays his speaking ability by persuading them that he means them no harm (4.78.4), and as soon as the Thessalians depart, Thucydides

¹³² Words based on this delaying root (ἄκνυμι) appear in the work most often to describe Spartan behavior, or in speeches given by others in which they advise Sparta *not* to delay: at 1.120.3–4 the Corinthian ambassador at the final council before the war advises the Spartans not to hesitate to go to war; at 1.142.9 Pericles claims the Spartans’ lack of naval experience will make them more hesitant to face the Athenians; at 3.30.4 an Elian speaker advises the Peloponnesian forces under Alcidas to sail to Mytilene as quickly as possible, and that they should not shrink (ἀποκνήσωμεν) from danger (but Alcidas doesn’t listen and simply sails back home); at 4.55.2 the Spartans are described as becoming “more hesitant” (ὀκνηρότεροι) after their loss at Pylos; at 6.92.5 Alcibiades advises the Spartans not to hesitate to go on campaigns to Attica and Sicily; and at 8.12.1 Alcibiades urges the Spartans not to hesitate after their loss at Spiraëum in 411 BCE. In a few other cases hesitation is given as a specifically un-Athenian behavior: at 2.40.3, in his funeral oration, Pericles says that consideration of risk makes others delay, but not Athenians; and at 7.21.4 Hermocrates tells the Syracusans that the Athenians use their daring as a weapon and that they fare worse against opponents who use equal daring, and thus encourages his fellow Syracusans not to delay to engage them. Finally, it is interesting to note that at 7.49.4 Nicias (who will be discussed further in Chapter 3) is described as causing delay (ἄκνυμι) among the Athenians in Sicily after their defeat at Epipolae (413 BCE).

emphasizes Brasidas' speed in proceeding on to meet Perdiccas: ἐχώρει οὐδὲν ἐπισχὼν **δρόμῳ** (“He went on **at a run**, delaying not at all”; 4.78.5).¹³³

We again hear of Brasidas' energy and daring shortly after this exploit, when Thucydides describes him as the force behind this expedition and as an active Spartan: αὐτόν τε Βρασίδαν βουλόμενον μάλιστα Λακεδαιμόνιοι ἀπέστειλαν ... ἄνδρα ἔν τε τῇ Σπάρτῃ δοκοῦντα **δραστήριον** εἶναι **ἐς τὰ πάντα** καὶ ἐπειδὴ ἐξῆλθε πλείστου ἄξιον Λακεδαιμονίοις γενόμενον (“The Lacedaemonians sent out Brasidas, who was himself especially wishing it ... a man who in Sparta seemed to be **active in all things**, and who, when he went out, was of very great value to the Lacedaemonians”; 4.81.1). Brasidas is, then, according to Thucydides, the one who pushes the normally hesitant Spartans into undertaking this expedition, which requires significantly more daring than their usual invasions of Attica. Moreover, he is identified as the right man for the job, as he is explicitly described as active in all things (**δραστήριον ... ἐς τὰ πάντα**). As noted by Hornblower (1991: 46), the word δραστήριος only occurs one other time in Thucydides' work, and that is in Pericles' post-plague speech to the Athenians. In this passage, Pericles attempts to convince his audience not to give up the war effort or their empire, and advises against inaction: τὸ γὰρ ἄπραγμον οὐ σφίζεται μὴ μετὰ **τοῦ δραστηρίου** τεταγμένον, οὐδὲ ἐν ἀρχούσῃ πόλει ξυμφέρει, ἀλλ' ἐν ὑπηκόῳ, ἀσφαλῶς δουλεύειν (“For inaction is not preserved unless it is arranged with **activity**, nor is it beneficial in a ruling *polis* to serve safely, but it is [beneficial] in a subservient one”; 2.63.3).¹³⁴ In a way, then, activity is given as the necessary counter to inactivity in both cases: Pericles calls for a necessary balancing of inaction with activity, while Brasidas, as an individual, counters traditional Spartan inactivity with his

¹³³ See, for example, Heilke 2004: 126 on this episode. Hornblower (1996: 42) also mentions that this passage is full of the language of speed.

¹³⁴ In his commentary *ad loc.*, Marchant notes that the terms used here (σφίζεται, τεταγμένον) are military in nature.

energy.¹³⁵ Thucydides further inserts a subtle point of judgment on the usefulness of Brasidas' energy, noting that he was of very great value to the Lacedaemonians (πλείστου ἄξιον Λακεδαιμονίοις γενόμενον).¹³⁶ And finally, we may note that it was when he went out (ἐπειδὴ ἐξῆλθε) that Brasidas fully demonstrated his value to his *polis*. Compare this to Book 1, in which the Corinthian speaker claims that the Spartans fear that they will harm their interests by being away from home (ὁμειῖς δὲ τῷ ἐπελθεῖν καὶ τὰ ἐτοῖμα ἂν βλάψαι; 1.70.4), an attitude that is confirmed time and again by leaders such as Alcidas who are always eager to get back to the safety of the Peloponnese (3.31). We may therefore conclude that Brasidas strongly contrasts with traditional Spartan character in this passage's brief but significant description of his initiative, energy, and daring.

These "Athenian" qualities of Brasidas continue to be highlighted as long as he remains as a character in the history. After reaching Thrace (and having a disagreement with Perdiccas), he sets out to Acanthus immediately (εὐθὺς; 4.84.1), and once there he gives a speech by which he convinces the Acanthians to come over to the Spartan side in the war. Indeed, it is at this point that Thucydides explicitly notes Brasidas' speaking ability, saying that he "was not without skill

¹³⁵ Just before his comments on the necessity of activity, Pericles warns his audience of the dangers of giving up their empire, and tells them not to listen to those who advise them to give it up in favor of inactivity (ἀπραγμοσύνη). In doing this, he states that such people, if they convince others to follow suit, would most swiftly ruin the city (τάχιστ' ἂν τε πόλιν οἱ τοιοῦτοι ἐτέρους τε πείσαντες ἀπολέσειαν; 2.63.3). The similarity of this statement to Alcibiades' statements before the Sicilian expedition must be noted. There, Alcibiades makes the following claim: παράπαν τε γινώσκω πόλιν μὴ ἀπράγμονα τάχιστα ἂν μοι δοκεῖν ἀπραγμοσύνης μεταβολῇ διαφθαρῆναι, καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀσφαλέστατα τούτους οἰκεῖν οἱ ἂν τοῖς παροῦσιν ἦθεσι καὶ νόμοις, ἣν καὶ χεῖρω ἢ, ἥκιστα διαφόρως πολιτεύωσιν ("And I recognize absolutely that a city that is not inactive would seem to me most quickly to be ruined by a change to inactivity, and that, of men, they live most safely who govern least of all differently from their customs and laws, even if they are inferior"; 6.18.7). Thus, both leaders (using very similar terminology) advise the Athenians not to suddenly become inactive. At the same time, however, an important difference must be noted: while Alcibiades uses this argument to convince the Athenians to expand their reach into Sicily, and thus directs Athenian energy toward further acquisitiveness (exactly in line with their national character), Pericles' rhetoric is focused on directing the Athenians not to give up what they *already have*. Moreover, Pericles nowhere attempts to identify inaction as patently un-Athenian, but instead simply proposes that it must be properly matched with activity. For more on this Alcibiades passage and its relationship to Athenian national character, see Chapter 1 (pp. 49–50) and Chapter 4 (pp. 247–8).

¹³⁶ Heilke argues that Brasidas is the best Spartan leader in terms of realist international relations theory (the leader who accomplishes most toward Sparta's security) (2015: 127).

in speaking, for a Lacedaemonian” (ἦν δὲ οὐδὲ ἀδύνατος, ὡς Λακεδαιμόνιος, εἶπεῖν; 4.84.2). Then, his speed is on display when he rushes (ὥρμησε) up to Amphipolis (4.103.2), and yet again when he suddenly (ἄφνω) crosses a nearby bridge, throwing the Amphipolitans into a tumult (θόρυβον) (4.104.1).

After Amphipolis, Brasidas’ journey to Eion is described as happening suddenly (ἄφνω), although this undertaking fails to take the city (4.107.2). Then, at 4.108, Thucydides relates the reaction of Athens’ northern allies to recent developments in Thrace: they are more willing to take risks, and thus to attempt to free themselves of Athenian rule, “because, for the first time, the Lacedaemonians were acting with urgency” (τὸ πρῶτον Λακεδαιμονίων ὀργόντων; 4.108.6). The cause of this change in Spartan behavior, and thus of the allies’ newfound trust and confidence in the Spartans, is Brasidas.¹³⁷

The language of speed is present yet again in Thucydides’ description of Brasidas’ attack on Torone: when he saw the gates were open, he “ran at a swift pace” (ἔθει δρόμῳ; 4.112.1) and, once inside, he immediately (εὐθὺς) made a move against the upper part of the city (4.112.3). After this Brasidas addresses the Toroneans, and by repeating many of the comments he made previously at Acanthus he convinces his audience to ally themselves with Sparta (4.114.3–5). This passage reinforces the strength of his speaking ability, mentioned earlier at 4.84.2. Then, when Brasidas moves against the Athenian garrison on the outskirts of the city at Lecythus after the expiration of a two-day truce, he sees some of the Athenians start to abandon their posts, charges forward, and takes the place immediately (εὐθὺς; 4.116.1).

¹³⁷ This contrast between Brasidas’ behavior and the general Spartan tendency to act with extreme caution is strengthened almost immediately afterwards, when Thucydides relates that Brasidas sent back to Sparta for reinforcements, οἱ δὲ Λακεδαιμόνιοι τὰ μὲν καὶ φθόνῳ ἀπὸ τῶν πρώτων ἀνδρῶν οὐχ ὑπηρέτησαν αὐτῷ, τὰ δὲ καὶ βουλόμενοι μᾶλλον τοὺς τε ἄνδρας τοὺς ἐκ τῆς νήσου κομίσασθαι καὶ τὸν πόλεμον καταλύσαι (“but the Lacedaemonians paid him no mind, partly because of the envy of their chief men, and partly because they preferred both to bring back the men from the island and to put an end to the war”; 4.108.7).

Although a complete catalogue of the passages that display Brasidas' Athenian qualities would be much longer, the episodes discussed above are sufficient to demonstrate that the language of speed, energy, and daring is routinely associated with Brasidas in Thucydides' history. Observing the strength of this connection, we may easily understand why Brasidas has commonly been referred to as the "Athenian Spartan." Yet there remains a further element of Brasidas' characterization that must be discussed, and which is most apparent in the way scholars discuss Brasidas' "Athenian" character. Palmer (2015: 65), for example, quotes Bury's claim that Brasidas is "a character more Athenian than Spartan, *yet with the good qualities of Athens predominant* [emphasis added]" (1959 [1900]: 445). Palmer himself picks up on this point, arguing that, while Brasidas is Athenian rather than Spartan in character, he is actually among the most outstanding Athenians (2015: 77). These scholars' observations, however, lead us to an important question: if an individual displays only the good qualities associated with Athens, is he actually purely Athenian? As I have demonstrated in this dissertation, the national character attributed to Athens in Thucydides' history actually contains both positive *and* negative attributes.¹³⁸ Brasidas, then, cannot be purely Athenian if, as these scholars argue, he embodies only the *polis'* positive characteristics. In fact, while—as we just saw—Brasidas is certainly daring, speedy, and energetic (all Athenian qualities), there are also key episodes in the text where Thucydides demonstrates Brasidas' more Spartan ability to control this energy, wait, and use *inaction* to his advantage. As a result, Brasidas' energy and daring are restrained in a way that separates him from the Athenian model of uncontrolled (and possibly self-harming) acquisitiveness.

¹³⁸ See Ch. 1.

This Brasidean moderation appears prominently in a number of episodes in Thucydides' history (often immediately preceding or following displays of his speed and daring). For example, he displays a unique combination of energy, daring, and caution in Thucydides' description of the action around Megara and Nisaea in 424 BCE. Indeed, while the language of speed is associated with Brasidas in this passage (he bids the Euboeans to come *κατὰ τάχος*, “swiftly” (4.70.1); he moves up to the city *πρὶν ἔκπυστος γενέσθαι*, “before being discovered” (4.70.2)), when he actually lines his forces up against the Athenians he keeps still (*ἡσύχαζον*; 4.73.1) and waits for his opponents to make the first move.¹³⁹ Thucydides' use of the verb *ἡσυχάζω* creates a link between Brasidas' behavior in this passage and the established Spartan tendency to avoid combat wherever possible.¹⁴⁰ Brasidas, then, after having leveraged his speed and daring to put him in a position of strength outside Megara, follows this up by using Spartan hesitation to his advantage. Indeed, his gambit is successful and the Athenians withdraw, granting him a bloodless victory.¹⁴¹ In this passage, then, Brasidas displays a restrained energy, which allows him to be in the right place at the right time and to seize the advantages and opportunities that are present, but which also allows him to avoid taking undue risks.¹⁴²

Brasidas' restraint is addressed again shortly after this passage, at 4.81.2. There, immediately following a reference to Brasidas' energy and its usefulness to normally hesitant Sparta (4.81.1), Thucydides turns around and discusses his moderation, and its important role in his effectiveness: *τό τε γὰρ παραυτικά ἑαυτὸν παρασχὼν δίκαιον καὶ μέτριον ἐς τὰς πόλεις*

¹³⁹ Thucydides reports that he does this because he recognizes that it is possible for him to be victorious without engaging the Athenians in battle (4.73.2).

¹⁴⁰ For example, at 1.118.2 the author accuses the Spartans of keeping quiet before the outbreak of the war (*ἡσύχαζόν τε τὸ πλέον τοῦ χρόνου*) while the Athenians increased their power. See Ch. 1, pp. 38–40 and 58–9 for more on this passage and its relationship to Spartan national character.

¹⁴¹ His combination of swift action and then rest in front of Megara so effectively shifts the burden of risk to the Athenians that they actually keep quiet (*ἡσύχαζον*; 4.73.4) in response, and then withdraw.

¹⁴² Brasidas also keeps quiet (*ἡσύχαζεν*; 4.111.1) when waiting for his opportunity to attack Torone.

ἀπέστησε τὰ πολλά, τὰ δὲ προδοσία εἶλε τῶν χωρίων (“For immediately, after presenting himself as just and moderate to the cities, he caused many places to revolt, and other places he took by betrayal; 4.81.2”). Thucydides then goes on to cite Brasidas’ virtue (ἀρετή) and understanding (ξύνεσις) as creating a lasting pro-Spartan attitude among the Athenian allies (4.81.2–3). Thus readers are informed that Brasidas, despite his energy and personal desire to undertake this expedition, maintains at least the appearance of restraint, and that his moderation is just as much of an asset as his energy.¹⁴³ Yet again, then, Brasidas deploys the best Athenian qualities (energy) alongside the best Spartan ones (restraint).

At 4.83.2 we may observe Brasidas continuing in his role as a restraining figure: after his forces join those of Perdiccas in northern Greece and begin their march into the territory controlled by Arrhabaeus, Brasidas tries to engage the enemy diplomatically before initiating open hostilities: Βρασίδης λόγους ἔφη βούλεσθαι πρῶτον ἐλθὼν πρὸ πολέμου Ἀρραβαῖον ξύμμαχον Λακεδαιμονίων, ἢν δύνηται, ποιῆσαι (“Brasidas said that, before war, he wished, if possible, to go and make Arrhabaeus an ally of the Lacedaemonians”; 4.83.2). He again chooses to leave open the possibility of accomplishing his goals without conflict, despite Perdiccas’ insistence that he invited Brasidas north as a destroyer (καθαίρετην) of his enemies, not as a judge of their differences (δικαστήν ... τῶν σφετέρων διαφορῶν; 4.83.5).

¹⁴³ As one might expect, this passage has been discussed a great deal. Connor (1984b: 131) claims that it is neither an encomium nor criticism of Brasidas, but rather that it simply stresses his importance. I disagree, and feel that it plays a primary role in establishing exactly *how* he was so useful to the Spartans as a leading figure. Palmer (2015: 69), on the other hand, lends much more weight to this passage, and points out just how rarely virtue (ἀρετή) is attributed to someone in Thucydides: only Brasidas, the Peisistratids (6.64.5), Nicias (7.86.5), and Antiphon (8.68.1) are directly associated with this trait. Additionally, he emphasizes the importance of Thucydides’ description of Brasidas as μέτριον, which he says has the specific nuance of calculated moderation, and is generally reserved for Athenians. The term for virtuous moderation, he argues, is instead σωφροσύνη, which is attributed almost entirely to Spartans, with the exception of Nicias (4.28.5). Thus, he believes the terminology used here to describe Brasidas is key to understanding his character as an Athenian Spartan. I argue, however, that the direct attribution of virtue (ἀρετή) to Brasidas in this passage and the description of Pericles as governing moderately (μετρίως) in Book 2 make this differentiation between “calculated moderation” and the “virtue of moderation” difficult to maintain.

Then, at 4.103–5 (the capture of Amphipolis), Thucydides again returns to his technique of depicting Brasidas’ energy and speed right alongside his ability to restrain himself and use moderation. Let us briefly trace the sequence of events in this passage, and then move on to a discussion its implications. As noted above, his speed in rushing up to Amphipolis is emphasized (103.2), as well as the suddenness of his arrival and the confusion this caused in the city (104.1). When Brasidas actually gets right up to the city, however, he stops, and his troops plunder the countryside. Of this development, Thucydides reports the following: καὶ λέγεται Βρασίδαν, εἰ ἠθέλησε μὴ ἐφ’ ἀρπαγὴν τῷ στρατῷ τραπέσθαι, ἀλλ’ εὐθὺς χωρῆσαι πρὸς τὴν πόλιν, δοκεῖν ἂν ἐλεῖν (“And it is said that it seems like Brasidas, if he had been willing not to turn himself to plunder for his army, but [had been willing] to go straight to the city, would have taken it”; 4.104.2). In fact, he had arranged with some in the city to betray it to him, but they are prevented from doing this, and therefore Brasidas remains outside (4.104.3). Then, afraid of the approach of Athenian support (led by Thucydides), he offers moderate terms (τὴν ζύμβασιν μετρίαν; 4.105.2), and is received into the city before Athenian relief can arrive (4.106).

This passage has offered some difficulty to scholars, as some have found fault with Brasidas’ hesitation outside of the city (noted above), considering it a blunder.¹⁴⁴ If this is true, then this episode is actually an example of Spartan hesitancy expressing itself in Brasidas’ behavior. Others, however, have come up with various reasons why it made perfect sense for Brasidas and his men to stop and plunder, either arguing that they needed food after a rapid, long march to Amphipolis (Palmer 2015: 71; Gomme 1956: 577), or that this city, walled and opposing surrender, would not have been so easy to capture, especially by Spartans who were notoriously bad at siege-warfare (Wylie 1992: 82).

¹⁴⁴ On this point see Palmer (2015: 71).

First, if Brasidas' failure to immediately attack Amphipolis was in fact a blunder, we must note that it is not depicted as a very costly one: it costs no one their lives, and Brasidas is still able to break the city away from its alliance with Athens before the arrival of Thucydides and his relief forces. Moreover, his moderation is actually what allows him to win the favor of the Amphipolitans and thus to capture the city, leaving it difficult to actually condemn his restraint. Additionally, we must recognize that Thucydides takes no personal responsibility for the claim that Brasidas could have taken the city if he had acted immediately, but instead reports it only as something that "is said" (λέγεται). Even the actual claim he reports is not very strong: the people who take this position say only that, "it seems like Brasidas ... would have taken it" (Βρασίδαν ... δοκεῖν ἂν ἐλεῖν). Thucydides therefore does not present Brasidas' hesitation as a blunder, but only reports that some people think that, because he marched so quickly and took Amphipolis by surprise, he could have taken it by force if he so chose.

The narrative, however, makes it clear that his plan was never to assault the city; just as at Megara, Brasidas preferred, if possible, to achieve his goals while avoiding violence. Indeed, he had originally arranged for Amphipolis to be handed over to him by parties within the city. When this doesn't work, he instead offers moderate terms and gains entry before Athenian reinforcements can arrive. Thus, he yet again achieves victory without any protracted struggle, utilizing instead his restraint and moderation. In this passage, then, we see Brasidas' energy and speed in his march up to the city, his acquisitiveness in wanting to transfer another Athenian ally to the Peloponnesian camp, and yet, in the actual capture of Amphipolis, his willingness, when appropriate, to act with restraint and moderation. As such, while his conquest of Amphipolis is not strictly a *military* success, it is his greatest achievement, and causes a great deal of harm to Athens (to Sparta's benefit) (Wylie 1992: 84). Moreover, his restraint and moderation in dealing

with cities like Amphipolis actually bring him further success: his perceived fair treatment of the *poleis* that have already revolted causes others in northern Greece to want to come over to his side as well, and inspires fear in the Athenians.¹⁴⁵

As a final example, we may yet again observe Brasidas' ability to restrain his energy and acquisitiveness in the campaign he undertakes with Perdikkas following Mende's revolt. After an initial victory in Lynceus, Perdikkas and Brasidas disagree on the best course of action: ἔπειτα ὁ Περδίκκας ἐβούλετο προῖεναι ἐπὶ τὰς τοῦ Ἀρραβαίου κώμας καὶ μὴ καθῆσθαι, Βρασίδης δὲ τῆς τε Μένδης περιορώμενος, μὴ τῶν Ἀθηναίων πρότερον ἐπιπλευσάντων τι πάθῃ, καὶ ἅμα τῶν Ἰλλυριῶν οὐ παρόντων, οὐ πρόθυμος ἦν, ἀλλὰ ἀναχωρεῖν μᾶλλον (“Then Perdikkas wished to advance against the villages of Arrhabaeus and not to sit still, but Brasidas, anxiously considering Mende, [fearing] that it would suffer if the Athenians should sail against it before [he got back], and at the same time because the Illyrians were not present, was not eager [to advance], but instead to go back”; 4.124.4).

In this passage (similar to 4.83.2) it is Perdikkas who pushes for relentless (and possibly reckless) conquest, while Brasidas worries about Mende, and wishes to go back and try to prevent its being retaken by the Athenians. He is therefore portrayed in this instance as wishing not to be away from the cities he has conquered, and to preserve what he already has. This description is remarkably similar to that of the Spartans discussed in Chapter One, who are

¹⁴⁵ καὶ τοὺς ξυμμάχους ἐφοβοῦντο μὴ ἀποστῶσιν. ὁ γὰρ Βρασίδης ἔν τε τοῖς ἄλλοις μέτριον ἑαυτὸν παρεῖχε, καὶ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις πανταχοῦ ἐδήλου ὡς ἐλευθερώσων τὴν Ἑλλάδα ἐκπεμφθεῖη. καὶ αἱ πόλεις πυνθανόμεναι αἰ τῶν Ἀθηναίων ὑπήκοοι τῆς τε Ἀμφιπόλεως τὴν ἄλωσιν καὶ ἃ παρέχεται, τὴν τε ἐκείνου πραότητα, μάλιστα δὲ ἐπήρθησαν ἐς τὸ νεωτερίζειν, καὶ ἐπεκηρυκεύοντο πρὸς αὐτὸν κρύφα, ἐπιπαριέναι τε κελεύοντες καὶ βουλόμενοι αὐτοῖ ἕκαστοι πρῶτοι ἀποστῆναι (“And they [the Athenians] feared that the allies would revolt. For Brasidas both showed that he was moderate in other matters, and in his speeches everywhere he made it clear that he had been sent out to free Greece. And the cities that were subjects of the Athenians, learning of the capture of Amphipolis and the terms that were offered, and his mildness, were extremely stirred to revolt, and they secretly sent heralds to him, bidding to come to their aid, and each of them wishing to revolt first”; 4.108.1–3).

regularly identified as eager to preserve what they already have (ὕμεις δὲ τὰ ὑπάρχοντά τε σῶζειν; 1.70.2). At the same time, Brasidas differs from the Athenian propensity for constant, uninterrupted acquisition (1.70.3–4, 7–9), leaving that role to Perdikkas. Thus, even though he fails to reach Mende in time to save it from the Athenians, Thucydides directly attributes a Spartan attitude to him here, as he is eager to preserve rather than to acquire.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, even if we consider his decision to go on this expedition in the first place a mistake caused by reckless acquisitiveness, since he leaves Mende and Scione behind to be recaptured by Athens, there remains a key difference between Brasidas' risk-taking and that associated with Athens: when Brasidas takes risks, it is either with his own life (his attack on Pylos at 4.12.1), or with the well-being of former Athenian allies. As a result, Brasidas does not put Spartan interests at risk, but instead endangers himself or others in situations that could *benefit* his city-state. Athens, on the other hand, takes risks beyond her power (1.70.3), which sometimes results in great harm to Athens herself and her military forces.¹⁴⁷

From all of these passages, it becomes clear that Brasidas is not as easy to label as some have argued. While he certainly does prominently display “Athenian” qualities on a great many occasions, and is thus much more “Athenian” than any other Spartan figure in the work, there are also a number of instances in which he behaves in a markedly “Spartan” way. At the same time, however, Brasidas never exhibits the negative attributes associated with either *polis*. Thus, he is fast, energetic, and willing to take risks, but he never overextends himself to the point that he endangers Spartan interests; at the same time, he can be cautious, but is not so hesitant as to miss opportunities when they present themselves. Based on these observations, we may argue that

¹⁴⁶ There is also a certain similarity between Brasidas' attitude in this passage and Pericles' strategy for the war, in which he encourages the Athenians to give up some of their possessions to preserve their empire (1.143.5, 144.4).

¹⁴⁷ See, for example, Demosthenes' campaign against the Aetolians (3.94–8) and, of course, the Sicilian expedition.

Brasidas, while exceptionally Athenian in many ways, actually serves as a force of moderation: he drives the chronically hesitant and slow Spartans to act with speed and energy, but can, when appropriate, deploy Spartan judgment and hesitation to his advantage.

As in the case of Pericles and Athens, however, Thucydides clearly takes the position that leaders possessing this Brasidean combination of qualities required to effectively lead Sparta are not easy to come by. While he is alive and playing a role in the work, Brasidas is directly or indirectly compared numerous times to Spartan leaders such as Archidamus, Alcidas, and Cnemus, all of whom lack his energy and daring. Moreover, after his death, the Spartans very quickly abandon Brasidas' plans in the north and make peace. In fact, when the Spartan Ramphias—who had been leading reinforcements north—hears that Brasidas has died, he turns back because he thinks his opportunity has passed, and because he thinks he and his forces are not capable of doing what Brasidas had planned (5.13.1) It is not until the arrival in Sparta of an actual Athenian, Alcibiades, that the Lacedaemonians become active again.¹⁴⁸

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined the characterizations of two prominent individuals in Thucydides' history: Pericles and Brasidas. While certain abilities such as foresight and rhetorical skill are associated with both of them (and thus with effective leadership), I have argued that Thucydides implicitly expresses a much more complicated set of requirements for good leaders, one that depends on the collective behavioral tendencies of the *polis* in which said leader exists. Thus, the role of positive leadership in Thucydides' history is not simply to be

¹⁴⁸ This is not, of course, to argue that the Spartans cease all activity between the establishment of peace and the arrival in Sparta of Alcibiades; indeed, they win a key battle at Mantinea in 418 BCE (5.66–74). They do, however, become much more *reactive*, focusing on maintaining their own security in the Peloponnese in the face of shifting alliances and Athenian incursions.

persuasive or to have generally good judgment, but to successfully utilize a city-state's characteristic strengths while at the same time directing it away from its inherent weaknesses. Based on this model, a leader from a city such as Athens, which possesses the advantages of energy, innovation, and daring, but which also has a tendency to overreach and thus to do itself harm, must have just the right combination of energy and restraint in order to act as a moderating force. Enter Pericles, who attempts to channel (and even redefine) Athenian daring into preserving their empire in the face of Peloponnesian resistance, while at the same time restraining the Athenian urge to actively add to its empire. The requirements of a Spartan leader, on the other hand, are nearly the opposite, because the *polis* is shown throughout the work to be prudent but excessively hesitant, and cautious to the point of missing key opportunities.¹⁴⁹ Brasidas' role, therefore, is to bring energy, speed, and daring to Sparta while maintaining an appropriate amount of cautiousness and prudence.

The requirements for positive leadership, therefore, are quite specific: each *polis*, with its unique set of behavioral tendencies, requires a certain type of leader with the correct combination of "Athenian" and "Spartan" character traits to complement its strengths and correct its weaknesses. At the same time, however, by portraying the leadership that appears in Athens and Sparta after Pericles and Brasidas as consistently of an inferior quality (however ahistorical this image may be), Thucydides makes it clear that the emergence of such leaders cannot actually be relied upon.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, he leaves readers with the following picture of the dominant Greek

¹⁴⁹ See, for example, their aborted plan to sail into the Piraeus at 2.93.4, their failure to follow up their victory at Corcyra with further action (3.79.1–3), and Thucydides' seemingly scathing critique of Spartan hesitancy after their victory at Euboea (8.96.4–5).

¹⁵⁰ For a discussion of whether Pericles was actually as different his Athenian successors as Thucydides claims, see Azoulay 2010: 157, 162. The next chapter will focus on Thucydides' description of leaders who fail to live up to the Periclean and Brasidean examples. Speaking in general terms, however, we may note 2.65.10, where it is explicitly stated that the Athenian leaders after Pericles were not able to control the *demos*, and 5.13.1, where the Spartan Ramphias determines that he and his forces are incapable of carrying on Brasidas' plans.

city-states of his time: both Athens and Sparta need leaders such as Pericles and Brasidas to correct the flaws existing in their respective national characters, but neither of them can actually rely on the emergence of such leaders. It is the leaders who actually do emerge—those whose behaviors do not properly complement those of their *polis*—on whom the next chapter will focus.

CHAPTER III.

Thucydides on Ineffective Leadership

In this chapter I turn to an examination of several leaders who Thucydides portrays as failing to live up to the context-specific requirements of effective leadership established in the previous chapter. This is, however, not to say that all of these individuals are failed generals, or poor planners or public speakers, or even universally unsuccessful—indeed, all of them experience at least limited success during their careers. My commentary in this chapter, however, as in the last, focuses not on absolute skills or attributes, but rather on how a leader's individual character and behavioral patterns interact with those of the *polis* he attempts to lead, and how he will thus affect its behavior in the long-term.

For this analysis, I will discuss Demosthenes, Cleon, and Nicias from Athens, and several Spartan kings and generals (such as Archidamus, Alcidas, Cnemus, and Agis II).¹⁵¹ In so doing, I will demonstrate that Thucydides portrays each in such a way as to demonstrate that his characteristic behaviors make him ill-suited to provide the sort of moderating force which his *polis*' character actually requires. Thus, each of these leaders proves ineffective in the long run in accomplishing what I have argued Thucydides views as necessary for an effective leader: correcting his *polis*' weaknesses while maintaining its strengths.

Additionally, in putting this parade of leaders on display, all of whom fail to live up to

¹⁵¹ Due to his complexity, I save a discussion of Alcibiades for the next chapter.

the standards set by Pericles and Brasidas, Thucydides makes a further (and larger) point: Pericles and Brasidas were anomalies. While these two provided effective—yet individually distinct—leadership to their *poleis*, Thucydides’ portrayal of other Athenian and Spartan commanders makes it clear that such leadership, though these city-states require it to check their more damaging tendencies, cannot reasonably be expected to emerge with any consistency. It is with these notes in mind that we may begin with an examination of Demosthenes’ character.

Demosthenes

Whereas Thucydides’ depiction of Cleon (to be discussed in the next section of this chapter) primarily (though not exclusively) illustrates the effect on Athens of a *political* leader whose individual character directly reflects that of his *polis*, the historian’s portrait of Demosthenes provides a case study in unrestrained Athenian *military* leadership. Indeed, while this commander displays a great deal of martial skill and an ability to learn from military failures and adapt to new methods of warfare that has been noted and even praised in scholarship, he is largely absent from the Athenian political scene.¹⁵² Thus, given the limited scope of Thucydides’ dealings with Demosthenes, the historian never develops a fully fleshed out, personal picture of him the way he does with Brasidas, for example.¹⁵³ Be that as it may, by analyzing the decision-making and behavioral patterns that Thucydides emphasizes in his portrayal of Demosthenes, we may develop a picture of the character that the author implicitly attributes to him. He is, in essence, a truly Athenian figure: bold, energetic, and willing to take risks to the point of being reckless. He does not, therefore, act as a corrective force for Athenian national character, but

¹⁵² On Demosthenes’ military prowess and his adaptability, see Woodcock 1928: 107 and Wylie 1993: 28–9. For more on his political insignificance, see Woodcock 1928: 97, 103 and Westlake 1968: 98.

¹⁵³ See Westlake 1968: 97 and Wylie 1993: 20.

instead encourages—and even at times relies upon—the *polis*' collective behavioral tendencies, both good and bad. In fact, Demosthenes actually bears a number of striking similarities to Brasidas in his energy and military acumen, but lacks his Spartan counterpart's military restraint.

In order to demonstrate these points, we will begin by examining Demosthenes' first appearance in the work, and how Thucydides, by emphasizing the general's acquisitiveness and magnifying the disaster that ensues, shapes our impression of the leader. We will then move on

Demosthenes in Aetolia

Demosthenes' first appearance plays a critically important role in the narrative of Thucydides' history. Indeed, it is his intervention in Aetolia that marks the first clear Athenian divergence from Pericles' strategy of caution, leading Woodcock to note, "It is significant that with the entry of Demosthenes the war took on a new and more vigorous character" (1928: 94). Indeed, it is Demosthenes who first openly and unabashedly returns the Athenians to their acquisitive and risk-tolerant ways, and in so doing seemingly reveals to readers a great deal about his individual character.¹⁵⁴

This dynamic entrance occurs in Book 3 of Thucydides' history, when Demosthenes and Procles sail around the west coast of Greece to help the Acarnanians, who want the Athenians to assist them in walling off and capturing Leucas (3.91.1, 94.1).¹⁵⁵ The Messenians appear, however, and request that Demosthenes instead carry out a much larger-scale attack on the

¹⁵⁴ The "Athenian," and therefore democratic character associated with Demosthenes makes his name—"strength of the *demos*"—remarkably appropriate.

¹⁵⁵ Thucydides specifically notes that the town was hard-pressed at the time and unable to react militarily: ... τῆς τε ἔξω γῆς δηουμένης καὶ τῆς ἐντὸς τοῦ ἰσθμοῦ, ἐν ἧ Ἐλευκὰς ἐστὶ καὶ τὸ ἱερόν τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος, πλήθει βιαζόμενοι ἡσύχαζον ("... although both the land outside and inside the isthmus—in which were Leucas and the temple of Apollo—was being ravaged, they kept quiet, compelled by the mass of enemies"; 3.94.2). The implication is that the Acarnanian plan would have been safe and relatively easy to accomplish.

Aetolians (3.94.3).¹⁵⁶ In order to win him over, they make grand promises of further Athenian acquisition (... ἦν κρατήση αὐτῶν, ῥαδίως καὶ τὸ ἄλλο Ἑπειρωτικὸν τὸ ταύτη Ἀθηναίους προσποιήσειν: "... [saying that] if he overcomes them, he [Demosthenes] will also easily add for the Athenians the other part of Epirus there"; 3.94.3), and by claiming that the Aetolians will be subdued with little effort because they are disorganized and lightly armored (3.94.4).¹⁵⁷ Thus, Demosthenes is given a choice between two options: a safe undertaking that is likely to succeed but offers limited rewards (helping the Acarnanians subdue Leucas), or a much larger-scale and riskier enterprise—although the Messenians significantly downplay the risk—with the potential for rapid, expansive conquest. The former plan is much more in keeping with Pericles' strategy of limited engagement, while the latter is much more consistent with the ambition and daring characteristic of Athens' unrestrained collective behavioral tendencies.

Demosthenes is seduced by the Messenians' promises of easy conquest and agrees to their plan. His appetite for acquisition stretches beyond Aetolia, however, and Thucydides notes that he is already considering the conquest of Boeotia as well: ὁ δὲ τῶν Μεσσηνίων χάριτι πειθεὶς καὶ μάλιστα νομίσας ἄνευ τῆς τῶν Ἀθηναίων δυνάμεως τοῖς ἡπειρώταις ξυμμάχοις μετὰ τῶν Αἰτωλῶν δύνασθαι ἂν κατὰ γῆν ἐλθεῖν ἐπὶ Βοιωτοῦς ... ("Persuaded by his goodwill toward the Messenians and especially believing that, accompanied by the mainland allies together with the Aetolians, he would be able to attack the Boeotians by land without Athenian forces ...");

¹⁵⁶ The actual word here is ἀναπαίθεται, so the sense may be not only that he was convinced, but that he was misled. The word is specifically associated with bribery in Aristophanes (*Pax* 622, *Eq.* 473). See LSJ ἀναπαίθω 3.

¹⁵⁷ Note the similarity between the promises of the Messenians concerning the Aetolians' lack of organization and Alcibiades' diminution of possible Sicilian resistance at 6.17.2–5. While there are, admittedly, differences in content, and Alcibiades' speech goes into a great deal more detail, it is still interesting to note that this "minor" episode, eventually ending in disaster, appears to represent a sort of mini-Sicilian expedition in which the Athenians are again convinced to over-reach by false promises of easy acquisition. Interestingly, this is just the sort of rhetoric attributed to Mardonius in his praise of Xerxes' decision to send an expedition to Greece (Hdt. 7.9).

3.95.1).¹⁵⁸ This description of Demosthenes as driven to undertake a risky expedition by the lure of even further conquest immediately calls to mind the reasons attributed to Alcibiades for pushing the Athenians to invade Sicily: ἐλπίζων Σικελίαν τε δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ Καρχηδόνα λήψεσθαι καὶ τὰ ἴδια ἅμα εὐτυχήσας χρήμασί τε καὶ δόξῃ ὠφελήσειν (“hoping that through him both Sicily and Carthage would be conquered, and that, at the same time, by succeeding he would privately benefit himself in money and reputation”; 6.15.2). In the latter case Alcibiades looks beyond the expedition at hand to the further conquest of Carthage, even when he has yet to leave for Sicily. In much the same manner as Alcibiades, then, Demosthenes dreams big, even looking past his present expedition to what he may accomplish after its assumed success.

Thucydides, however, does not appear to approve of Demosthenes' plan. Westlake (1968: 100), for example, argues that the author presents it unfavorably and as far too optimistic. Woodcock, meanwhile, states that, “Thucydides' account of the Aetolian expedition on which he immediately embarked, is full of implied criticism,” and goes on to claim that the Boeotian goals attributed to Demosthenes paint him as “a reckless megalomaniac” (1928: 94–5). It is clear therefore that Thucydides' description of this expedition paints it as ambitious and daring, but also as risky bordering on reckless. Thus, Thucydides' depiction of Demosthenes' decision-making and risk-tolerance is comparable with the Corinthian speaker's description of Athenian national character in Book 1. For example, at 1.70.3 the Corinthian speaker describes the Athenians as “daring beyond their strength” and claims they “run risk beyond good judgment.” With his goals and decision-making on display, Demosthenes meets both of these criteria. Additionally, the fact that Demosthenes immediately looks past the Aetolian expedition to additional conquest, as if he assumes the invasion of Aetolia will be successful, is comparable to

¹⁵⁸ Wylie (1993: 21) argues that there is no evidence apart from Thucydides that Demosthenes actually had the invasion of Boeotia in mind when he attacked Aetolia.

two further Corinthian assertions at 1.70.7: that “they alone both have and expect [to have] alike whatever they set their mind on,” and, “whatever they go out and acquire, they believe that they happen to have done little in comparison to the things to come.” In this circumstance Demosthenes certainly seems both to “expect to have” possession of Aetolia and to think this acquisition is not enough, since he is already considering an invasion of Boeotia. Thus, from the very first time readers are introduced to Demosthenes, and it immediately becomes clear just how much his approach to the war differs from the Periclean strategy, and that his individual tendencies very closely reflect those established in the work for Athens at the collective level.

After explaining the circumstances leading to this undertaking, Thucydides swiftly moves on to a narrative of the expedition’s progress. Demosthenes first sails out and attempts to recruit the Acarnanians at Sollium, who refuse to accompany him on the grounds that he refused to blockade Leucas. He then begins his march on Aetolia (3.95.1–2) and takes three cities in as many days: Potidania, Crocylum, and Tichium (3.96.2). The rapidity with which Demosthenes acts after he decides on his course of action is noteworthy, and it again calls to mind the Corinthian description of Athenian character. For instance, at 1.70.4 the Athenians are described as “unhesitating” (ἄοκνοι), and at 1.70.7 the Corinthian speaker emphasizes the speed with which the Athenians act after deciding on a policy. Thus, Demosthenes is yet again depicted as behaving in a very Athenian way, and his energy results in some early successes for the campaign.

Despite these early successes, however, Thucydides makes it clear that this expedition did not surprise the Aetolians, and that they were not as disjointed and disorganized as the Messenians originally led Demosthenes to believe: τοὺς δὲ Αἰτωλοὺς οὐκ ἐλάνθανεν αὕτη ἡ παρασκευὴ οὔτε ὅτε τὸ πρῶτον ἐπεβουλευέτο, ἐπειδὴ τε ὁ στρατὸς ἐσεβεβλήκει, πολλῇ χειρὶ

ἐπεβοήθουν πάντες ... (“But this preparation did not escape the notice of the Aetolians, not even when it was first being plotted, and when the army had come into [their territory], they all came to help in a great body ...”; 3.96.3). The Messenians, however, continue to promise Demosthenes an easy conquest of the region, and advise him to continue pushing forward as quickly as possible (ὅτι τάχιστα) and not to wait (μὴ μένειν; 3.97.1). This he does despite the fact that, according to Thucydides, much-needed reinforcements are on their way:

ὁ δὲ τούτοις τε πεισθεὶς καὶ τῇ τύχῃ ἐλπίσας, ὅτι οὐδὲν αὐτῷ ἠναντιοῦτο, τοὺς Λοκροὺς οὐκ ἀναμείνας οὐς αὐτῷ ἔδει προσβοηθῆσαι (ψιλῶν γὰρ ἀκοντιστῶν ἐνδεὴς ἦν μάλιστα) ἐχώρει ἐπὶ Αἰγιτίου ... (3.97.2)

And he, convinced by these things and putting his hope in fortune¹⁵⁹ (because nothing was opposing him), not waiting for the Locrians whom he needed to come to his aid (for he was especially lacking in light-armed darters), he advanced against Aegitium ...

We may observe from this passage that Demosthenes displays none of the Brasidean restraint discussed in the previous chapter. Brasidas, when faced with a similar situation in northern Greece, preferred to wait for the arrival of his reinforcements.¹⁶⁰ Demosthenes, on the other hand, is utterly consistent in his lack of hesitation and his display of Athenian speed.

Unfortunately for him and his soldiers, it is at this point in the narrative that it becomes absolutely clear that Demosthenes has become “daring beyond [his] strength” and has “run risk contrary to good judgment” (1.70.3).¹⁶¹ Indeed, the attack on Aegitium results in defeat for the Athenians, whom the light-armed Aetolians attack repeatedly from the hills until they put them to flight (3.97.3–98.2).

¹⁵⁹ For more on the significance of Thucydides’ mention of “fortune” here, see below, pp. 135–41.

¹⁶⁰ See pp. 147–50 for an expanded comparison of Demosthenes and Brasidas.

¹⁶¹ Westlake argues that, “few passages in the *History*, except for those condemning demagogues, are so critical of an individual” (1968: 101). Woodcock refers to Demosthenes’ decision to proceed without Locrian reinforcements as “the only great blunder of his career” (1928: 95). I disagree with the latter position, and point readers to this dissertation’s discussion of Demosthenes’ second attempt to invade Boeotia (pp. 141–4).

In his description of the aftermath of this battle, Thucydides emphasizes the suffering that the Athenian soldiers experienced as a result of their defeat, as well as the difficulty of their withdrawal: *πάσα τε ἰδέα κατέστη τῆς φυγῆς καὶ τοῦ ὀλέθρου τῷ στρατοπέδῳ τῶν Ἀθηναίων, μόνις τε ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὸν Οἰνεῶνα τῆς Λοκρίδος, ὅθεν περ καὶ ὠρμήθησαν, οἱ περιγενόμενοι κατέφυγον* (“And there was every form of flight and of destruction for the army of the Athenians, and scarcely did the survivors escape to the sea and Oeneon in Locris, the very place from which they had set out”; 3.98.3).¹⁶² After allowing readers this opportunity to vividly relive the suffering of the Athenian soldiers, Thucydides then steps back to directly address the broader implications of this defeat for the Athenian war effort. In so doing he states that the Athenians killed in this battle (one hundred and twenty in number) were the best men (*βέλτιστοι δὴ ἄνδρες*) who died in this war (3.98.4).¹⁶³ Thus, Thucydides’ description of the encounter stresses the suffering the Athenian forces experienced in defeat, and the quality of the troops lost.

Thucydides’ reason for so clearly emphasizing—and perhaps even magnifying—the damage this defeat inflicted on the Athenian cause has been questioned by some scholars. Woodcock, for example, simply states that it is a mystery why Thucydides dwells on the loss of these hoplites when so many more were lost elsewhere in other battles (1928: 95). Westlake, however, believes that Thucydides intentionally inflates the importance of the episode (which he

¹⁶² One cannot help but call to mind Thucydides’ description of the massacre at Mycalessus, in which he states there was “every form of destruction” (*ἰδέα πάντα ... ὀλέθρου*; 7.29.5), or perhaps even the ending of the Sicilian expedition, with Thucydides’ vivid description of the Athenian attempt at withdrawal and of the immense suffering of their forces (7.75–87). Indeed, at the very end of Book 7 the Athenians are described as suffering a “total destruction” (*πανωλεθρία*; 7.87.6), which we may compare to his description here of the Athenians experiencing “every form ... of destruction” (*πάσα τε ἰδέα ... τοῦ ὀλέθρου*; 3.98.3). For further discussion of Thucydides’ such use of such language, see Flory (1988: *passim*) and Forsdyke (2017: 32–5).

¹⁶³ By “in this war,” Thucydides is most likely referring only to the Archidamian war (Gomme 1956b: 408). There is a stylistic similarity between Thucydides’ description of these events and others throughout the text, as he often emphasizes events as the greatest suffering of a people or the greatest loss of life in a single day. See 3.113.6, where Thucydides describes the Ambraciot double-defeat as the greatest suffering for one city in an equal number of days, and his note at 7.29.5 after the massacre at Mycalessus, where Thucydides tells us that the disaster this city suffered was less than no other. On Thucydides’ strong statements on suffering during the war, see Forsdyke 2017: 32–4.

argues was not a huge disaster and did not seriously harm the Athenian war effort) because he saw Demosthenes as optimistic to the point of being irresponsible, and was therefore “determined to impress upon his readers that Demosthenes sustained a defeat through his own errors” (1968: 101–2). He therefore presents Demosthenes’ ambitious and enterprising behavior (yet again very Athenian) as excessively risky, and as resulting in an extremely costly disaster.

In this passage, then, Thucydides depicts the combination of truly Athenian leadership with Athenian national character as resulting in unrestrained, risk-tolerant acquisitiveness, and therefore as inherently dangerous. This point is emphasized all the more by the fact that, as noted above, this episode represents the first Athenians divergence from the Periclean strategy of limited engagement and empire preservation. While, as argued in the previous chapter of this dissertation, Thucydides depicted Pericles and his leadership as successful largely because of his ability to restrain and redirect Athenian behavioral tendencies, in Book 3 the Athenians, led by the active and ambitious Demosthenes, fully revert to their actively acquisitive ways. The result of this restoration of unbridled Athenian behavior is, as Thucydides presents it, disaster.¹⁶⁴ This narrative, therefore, is presented in a manner that emphasizes the danger of Athenian character when it is not tempered by appropriate restraint.

Moreover, Thucydides’ description of the ill-advised and ill-fated expedition into Aetolia attributes a great deal of blame to Demosthenes. In fact, the author tells us that, after his defeat, Demosthenes stayed in the area of Naupactus because he was afraid to return to Athens:

Δημοσθένης δὲ περὶ Ναύπακτον καὶ τὰ χωρία ταῦτα ὑπελείφθη, τοῖς πεπραγμένοις φοβούμενος

¹⁶⁴ The reader has been conditioned to expect this outcome: Thucydides specifically claims in his eulogy of Pericles that the Athenian leaders who succeeded him failed to follow his strategy (2.65.7), and more generally failed to live up to his example of leadership (2.65.10), ἐξ ὧν ἄλλα τε πολλά, ὡς ἐν μεγάλῃ πόλει καὶ ἀρχὴν ἔχουσα, ἡμαρτήθη καὶ ὁ ἐς Σικελίαν πλοῦς ... (“from which things, in a city that was great and had an empire, both many other errors were made, and the expedition to Sicily ...”; 2.65.11).

τοὺς Ἀθηναίους (“Demosthenes remained behind around Naupactus and these places, fearing the Athenians because of what had happened”; 3.98.5). This description may leave readers with the impression that Demosthenes is a universal failure as an Athenian general; this is, of course, not the case. His level of success varies highly in his other appearances in the text: he saves Naupactus from a Peloponnesian attack and then achieves a double-victory in Amphilocheia in 426/5 BCE (3.102.3–5; 3.105–113), plans and defends the Athenian fortification at Pylos (4.2.4–15.1), and plays a key role in the subsequent capture of 120 Spartiates trapped on the island of Sphacteria (4.26.1–9, 29–39); at the same time, however, his elaborate and ambitious plan to invade Boeotia in 424 BCE fails miserably (4.76–77, 89–101.4), and he is captured and executed at the end of the disastrous Sicilian expedition (4.85–86.3). While Demosthenes’ success as a general may vary in these episodes, it will be demonstrated that his behavior is largely consistent: he continues to be energetic, daring, and highly risk-tolerant. Thus, as I will now argue, while the *outcomes* of these episodes differ, Thucydides’ *characterization* of Demosthenes remains largely unchanged.

First, we see Demosthenes’ speed, decisiveness, and energy on display in his move to save Naupactus from capture. This passage begins by focusing on the progress of Eurylochus, whose march from Delphi to Naupactus seems inexorable: he manages to remove most of the Ozolian Locrians from their alliance with Athens (3.101), and captures two towns (Oeneon and Eupalium) that refused to join him (3.102.1); he is then reinforced by the Aetolian army, and upon his arrival in the area of Naupactus he devastates the countryside and captures the parts of the city lying outside its walls (3.102.2).

It is only at this point in the narrative, when Eurylochus’ capture of Naupactus seems almost assured, that Demosthenes suddenly reappears to save the town. As Thucydides reports,

Δημοσθένης δὲ ὁ Ἀθηναῖος (ἔτι γὰρ ἐτύγχανεν ὄν μετὰ τὰ ἐκ τῆς Αἰτωλίας περὶ Ναύπακτον) προαισθόμενος τοῦ στρατοῦ καὶ δείσας περὶ αὐτῆς, ἐλθὼν πείθει Ἀκαρνᾶνας, χαλεπῶς διὰ τὴν ἐκ τῆς Λευκάδος ἀναχώρησιν, βοηθήσαι Ναυπάκτῳ (“But Demosthenes the Athenian (for he still happened to be around Naupactus after the business in Aetolia), becoming aware of the army and fearing for it [Naupactus], went and convinced the Acarnanians—with difficulty on account of his withdrawal from Leucas—to come to Naupactus’ aid”; 3.102.3).¹⁶⁵ He then takes the forces provided by the Acarnanians secures Naupactus, whose residents had worried their forces were insufficient to protect her long walls (3.102.4). After learning of the sudden arrival of these reinforcements, Eurylochus withdraws, leaving Naupactus securely under Athenian control (3.102.5).

In this passage, then, Thucydides’ narrative at first gives the impression that Naupactus’ capture as inevitable: Eurylochus and his forces continually march toward it, using diplomacy or military conquest to break each village they encounter away from Athens, until they even control the parts of Naupactus that lie outside its walls. The reader next expects to hear about Eurylochus besieging and capturing the *polis* (and the notion that he might have captured the city easily is reinforced by Thucydides’ note at 3.102.4 that its inhabitants themselves thought they had insufficient forces for its defense), but instead Demosthenes suddenly reappears, and in two sentences Thucydides shows him convince a group of Greeks whom he had recently alienated to allow him to use their military forces, and sail into and secure Naupactus before Eurylochus can move on the city proper. Thus, the author shows Demosthenes acting with the same Athenian

¹⁶⁵ Westlake remarks on the diplomatic skill Demosthenes displays by convincing the Acarnanians (whom he had recently alienated by refusing to besiege Leucas and instead invading Aetolia with the Messenians) to come to his aid in defending Naupactus (1968: 102). Additionally, the language of chance utilized in this passage to describe Demosthenes’ presence in the area recalls that used to describe Brasidas’ opportune presence at Methone and Megara. For a more in-depth discussion of this topic, see below pp. 135–41.

decisiveness and swiftness to action as he did in Aetolia.¹⁶⁶ In this instance, however, his speed is an asset, and results in the preservation of Athenian control over Naupactus.

Demosthenes in Amphilochia

During the next winter Eurylochus and the Ambraciots go on the offensive again, marching into Amphilochia. Demosthenes takes up the defense of this region, and in so doing again displays much of the same behavior. While his speed is certainly still apparent in this episode—for example, he moves “immediately” (εὐθύς) to take a strong position after hearing that a second Ambraciot force is setting out (3.110.1–2)—it is Demosthenes’ risk-tolerance that is most prominently on display during his exploits in Amphilochia.¹⁶⁷

This Demosthenean willingness to take risks is apparent in his first direct engagement with Eurylochus. After encamping across from each other, the two armies sit still for five days before drawing up in order of battle. At this point, Thucydides relates the following: μείζον γὰρ ἐγένετο καὶ περιέσχε τὸ τῶν Πελοποννησίων στρατόπεδον (“For the Peloponnesians’ army was larger and outflanked them”; 3.107.3). Demosthenes makes preparations to counter the Peloponnesian advantage, placing 400 soldiers in an ambush with instructions to attack their enemy from behind when the armies meet (3.107.3).

In the end this plan proves successful because the timing of the ambush is good and, just as the Peloponnesians begin to encircle Demosthenes’ forces, the soldiers lying in wait attack and rout their foes (3.108.1).¹⁶⁸ Despite this victory, however, it must be noted that Demosthenes

¹⁶⁶ Compare again the Corinthian description of the Athenians as “unhesitating” (ἄοκνοι) at 1.70.4, and as acting quickly on whatever they decide (διὰ τὸ ταχεῖαν τὴν ἐπιχείρησιν ποιείσθαι ὃν ἂν γνώσιν) at 1.70.7.

¹⁶⁷ His speed and energy may also be observed in Thucydides’ description of the battle that follows, where he moves out when night falls, and attacks the Ambraciots just before dawn when they are still sleeping (3.112.2–4).

¹⁶⁸ Westlake argues that Thucydides gives credit for this victory (as well as for the secret alliance with the Spartans to allow them to withdraw after the battle) entirely to Demosthenes (1968: 103–104, 104n1). Luginbill remarks that

undertakes a great risk in willingly engaging in battle with an enemy that he knows outnumbered him and could encircle his army. While the historian does note that Demosthenes takes precautions to improve his situation, readers would likely recognize that, on numerous other occasions in Thucydides' text (and even in other episodes where Demosthenes specifically appears), complicated plans that rely on multiple units working together with precise timing often go wrong.¹⁶⁹ Therefore, in electing to engage in a decisive battle, Demosthenes accepts what is ultimately an extremely risky situation.¹⁷⁰

Additionally, Thucydides provides a brief reminder that Demosthenes' ambition, which defined his expedition into Aetolia (and which later defines his expedition into Boeotia), is a persistent feature of his character. After Demosthenes' crushing victory over a second Ambraciot army, which had come to reinforce Eurylochus (unaware that this force had already been defeated), Thucydides tells us, Ἀμπρακίαν μέντοι οἶδα ὅτι, εἰ ἐβουλήθησαν Ἀκαρνᾶνες καὶ Ἀμφίλοχοι Ἀθηναίοις καὶ Δημοσθένει πειθόμενοι ἐξελεῖν, αὐτοβοεὶ ἂν εἶλον· νῦν δ' ἔδεισαν μὴ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι ἔχοντες αὐτὴν χαλεπότεροι σφίσι πάροικοι ᾧσιν (“In fact I know that, if the Acarnanians and Amphilocheians had been convinced by the Athenians and Demosthenes and had been willing to take Ambracia, they would have taken it without a blow. But at present they were afraid that the Athenians, if they held it, would be more troublesome neighbors for them”; 3.113.6).

In this passage, Demosthenes' voice is given a leading role in attempting to persuade the

the same patterns of behavior that caused his downfall in Aetolia (boldness and an unwillingness to delay) help him at Olpae (1999: 144–5).

¹⁶⁹ For more, see the discussion of Demosthenes' failed invasion of Boeotia (pp. 141–4), and of his night attack on Epipolae in Sicily (pp. 144–5).

¹⁷⁰ A willingness to take risks is, of course, an important part of the Athenian national character in Thucydides (see pp. 19–26). Such behavior is presented as a double-edged sword in Thucydides' text, playing an important role in the rapid expansion of Athenian power, while at the same time contributing directly to Athens' costliest disasters. Thus, Athenian risk-tolerance does not always have negative results, but Thucydides makes it clear time and again that it is dangerous.

Athenian allies to continue their campaign by attacking Ambracia, which had just lost two armies in rapid succession. In this short aside, then, Thucydides demonstrates that Demosthenes was not immediately satisfied with the substantial success he has experienced up to this point, and wishes to continue to push forward. While Thucydides actually attests to the fact that Ambracia could easily have been conquered at this point, we must, however, admit that Demosthenes' behavior is yet again very Athenian. Indeed, referring back to the Corinthian comparison of Athenian and Spartan character in Book 1, we may observe that Demosthenes here behaves exactly in line with that description: when the Athenians succeed, "they believe that they happen to have done little in comparison to the things to come," (ἡγοῦνται ... ὀλίγα πρὸς τὰ μέλλοντα τυχεῖν πράξαντες; 1.70.7). Up to this point, he had simply been defending Athenian allies (and thus Athenian interests) in the region. These accomplishments, however, are not enough, and he desires to press his advantage and add Ambracia to Athens' sphere of influence. This again is perfectly in line with descriptions of Athenian collective behavioral tendencies in the work: κρατοῦντές τε τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἐξέρχονται ("When they prevail over their enemies they pursue their advantages to the utmost"; 1.70.5). Thucydides thus emphasizes Demosthenes' Athenian character yet again in his description of the campaign in Amphilochia, focusing on his risk-tolerance and his ambition.

Demosthenes at Pylos

In the fourth book of Thucydides' history, he provides a detailed description of the action that occurred at and around Pylos in 425 BCE. The occupation of this site and the subsequent capture of 120 Spartan citizens trapped on the nearby island of Sphacteria have often been recognized as Athens' (and Demosthenes') crowning achievements during the Archidamian phase

of the Peloponnesian War.¹⁷¹ Indeed, this victory smashed previous conceptions of Spartan military virtue, allowed Athens to continually harass the Spartans from this position, and therefore put itself (at least temporarily) in a position of power for peace negotiations.

At the same time, however, in his discussion of these events, Thucydides places a great deal of emphasis on the role of “fortune” (τύχη) and its contributions to Demosthenes’ success. Indeed, as Cornford notes, “There is hardly a sentence in the whole story which is not so turned and so disposed as to make us feel that design counted for nothing and luck for everything” (1907: 90).¹⁷² Let us turn to a few examples of the important role that chance plays in this passage. First, Thucydides gives readers the impression that this whole episode almost never took place, and that it was only a random confluence of events that brought it to pass: when Demosthenes sails with the Athenian fleet around western Greece, he fails in his attempts to convince the generals Eurymedon and Sophocles to land at Pylos. At this point, however, Thucydides relates, ἀντιλεγόντων δὲ κατὰ τύχην χειμῶν ἐπιγερόμενος κατήνεγκε τὰς ναῦς ἐς τὴν Πύλον (“but while they were opposing him by chance a storm came upon them and forced the ships into Pylos; 4.3.1). It is thus only due to a chance storm that the fleet even lands at this site in the first place.

Demosthenes’ struggles do not end when this fortuitous storm forces the Athenian ships to shore, however. Once at Pylos he attempts to persuade the Athenian generals to fortify the spot, but they once again turn him down (4.3.3). He then turns to the *taxiarchs* (squadron commanders), but fails to win them over as well (4.4.1). It seems at this point, then, that his plan is dead in the water. Stuck at Pylos and unable to sail because of the storm, however, a sudden urge to fortify the location falls upon the soldiers themselves, who then work tirelessly to

¹⁷¹ See Westlake 1968: 111, who also thinks Thucydides downplays Demosthenes’ contribution to this enterprise.

¹⁷² On the role of fortune in this passage, see also Stahl 2003: 139–42.

accomplish this.¹⁷³ Thus, Thucydides' portrayal of events gives the impression that it was only due to the chance combination of an unexpected storm and a sudden whim of the soldiers that Demosthenes' plan was ever put into effect.

Even after the soldiers finally fortify Pylos, fortune continues to play an important role in determining how events unfold. Indeed, despite the fact that Demosthenes had thought Pylos an ideal place to garrison because of its abundance of stone and wood (4.3.2), when the Spartans prepare to attack the fortification Thucydides relates that Demosthenes and his men were insufficiently armed: οὐ γὰρ ἦν ὄπλα ἐν χωρίῳ ἐρήμῳ πορίσασθαι (“for it was not possible to procure arms in the deserted location”; 4.9.1). Thucydides goes on to note that even the weapons the Athenians did have—as well as a few much needed reinforcements—had been received from some Messenian ships that just happened to be in the area: ἀλλὰ καὶ ταῦτα ἐκ ληστρικῆς Μεσσηνίων τριακοντόρου καὶ κέλητος ἔλαβον, οἳ ἔτυχον παραγενόμενοι. ὀπλίται τε τῶν Μεσσηνίων τούτων ὡς τεσσαράκοντα ἐγένοντο, οἷς ἐχρήτο μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων (“but even these [weapons] they received from a piratical Messenian triaconter and a light ship which happened to be there; and these Messenians had about forty hoplites whom they used with the others”; 4.9.1). This description of events gives readers the distinct impression that Demosthenes' desire to fortify Pylos was in no way a well-developed plan.¹⁷⁴ Instead, he fortified the site and, when confronted with a shortage of men and weapons, was aided by the sudden and unexpected arrival of these Messenian ships. Several scholars have, in fact, disputed Thucydides' narrative here, arguing that the arrival of the Messenians at Pylos was not a chance occurrence, but instead that Demosthenes must have arranged it beforehand (Woodcock 1928: 108; Wylie 1993: 23–4). The

¹⁷³ This passage is discussed in greater detail in Ch. 1, pp. 44–6.

¹⁷⁴ See below for a discussion of scholarship on the role of τύχη in this passage.

fact remains, however, that the version of events that Thucydides records give the distinct impression that Demosthenes was *lucky*.

Finally, fortune may again be observed intervening in favor of Demosthenes after Spartan forces become trapped on the island of Sphacteria. Thucydides notes that Demosthenes had previously been hesitant to make an attack on the island because it was heavily wooded, and he feared that his forces would be unable to see their enemies and would therefore be destroyed (4.29.3–4).¹⁷⁵ Fortunately for Demosthenes, however, a fire breaks out on the island, clearing the forest and granting him visibility: τῶν δὲ στρατιωτῶν ἀναγκασθέντων διὰ τὴν στενοχωρίαν τῆς νήσου τοῖς ἐσχάτοις προσίσχοντας ἀριστοποιεῖσθαι διὰ προφυλακῆς καὶ ἐμπρήσαντός τινος κατὰ μικρὸν τῆς ὕλης ἄκοντος καὶ ἀπὸ τούτου πνεύματος ἐπιγενομένου τὸ πολὺ αὐτῆς ἔλαθε κατακαυθέν (“The soldiers were forced because of lack of space to put in at the edges of the island to have their breakfast (making use of guard-troops), and a certain person unintentionally set fire to a small part of the forest, and after this a wind came on and the whole of it [the forest] was unwittingly burnt down”; 4.30.2). Through his use of the words “unintentionally” (ἄκοντος) and “unwittingly” (ἔλαθε), Thucydides makes it clear that these were not deliberate acts, but rather the result of random happenstance.¹⁷⁶ At the same time, however, the author emphasizes that this chance occurrence was exactly what the Athenian troops needed to happen for them to be able to make a successful attack on Sphacteria. Thus, Demosthenes once again benefits not from foresight and planning, but from fortune working to his advantage.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Thucydides attributes Demosthenes’ hesitancy to attack the wooded island to his experiences in Aetolia (4.30.1).

¹⁷⁶ Woodcock (1928: 101) directly asserts that, despite Thucydides’ presentation of events, Demosthenes actually ordered the fire to be set. Wylie (1993: 24) hints at this same point.

¹⁷⁷ See Stahl 2003: 139–42 (who also mentions the Athenian good fortune that the Spartans happened (ἔτυχον; 4.13.4) not to carry out their plan to blockade both entrances to the harbor) for an excellent description of the role of fortune in the way these events unfold.

As is clear, then, Thucydides' emphasis on the role of "fortune" (τύχη) in this passage is undeniable. At the same time, however, there has been a considerable effort in scholarship to understand *why* Thucydides features this inhuman force so prominently in his narrative. Cornford, for example, argues that the historian saw "fortune" as having real agency in determining the outcome of these events, periodically intervening to override plans based on human judgment (γνώμη) (1907: 88–9, 97–8, 106).¹⁷⁸ Woodcock, on the other hand, takes the position that Thucydides intentionally emphasizes the role of fortune to downplay Demosthenes' achievement. This is because, as he argues, Demosthenes and Cleon were politically aligned, and Thucydides opposed them and wished to diminish their achievements (Woodcock 1928: 101–4). In much this same strain, Wylie refers to Thucydides' description of this episode as "generally agreed to be seriously biased," (1993: 22).¹⁷⁹ As such, he revises Thucydides' account by attributing to Demosthenean interventions events which Thucydides portrays as resulting from chance. For example, he claims "it is fairly obvious that the occupation of Pylos was no casual venture but brilliantly planned and conceived," (1993: 23), and that the "accidental" fire that broke out on Sphacteria was actually intentionally set on orders from Demosthenes (1993: 24). Westlake, meanwhile, admits that there is the appearance of bias in this passage, and that Thucydides "seems determined to suggest that the situation leading eventually to a victory for which Cleon received most of the credit was to a large extent brought about by a series of accidents" (1968: 107–8). At the same time, however, he posits that the role of fortune in this passage has "perhaps been exaggerated by some modern scholars" (Westlake 1968: 107).¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Stahl somewhat similarly argues that Thucydides creates a historical pattern in which random chance has an immense amount of influence over the lives of humans, who can only intervene at key points and in a limited manner (2003: 218–19).

¹⁷⁹ In making this claim, he directly cites Woodcock's work (1928: 98–9, 101–2) on the topic.

¹⁸⁰ It is worth noting that Demosthenes is described as happening to be by Naupactus (ἐτύγγαθεν ὄν ... περὶ Ναύπακτον) when the Peloponnesians and Aetolians attempt to move against the city at 3.102.3.

While Connor sees Thucydidean shaping in this narrative, he argues that it does not result from political or personal bias, but instead that the historian is attempting to replicate for readers the emotional experience (primarily surprise) of the Greeks at the way matters turned out (1984b: 113).¹⁸¹ While I agree that this passage does seem to convey a strong sense of surprise at the outcome of events, I find Stahl's position (that this narrative falls into a Thucydidean pattern of presenting human agency as extremely limited in its ability to control the outcome of events) the most compelling (2003: 218–19).¹⁸²

All of these proposals offer interesting answers to the question of why Thucydides stresses the influence of fortune on events at Pylos. At the same time, however, I propose that these explanations have been somewhat too narrow in their analysis of this event, taking it largely in isolation, and focusing primarily on the ramifications of Demosthenes' possible political connection to Cleon. Because of this limitation, none of these previously mentioned explanations fully captures the significance of *τύχη* in this episode. When several other passages are taken into account, however, I believe that what Thucydides is doing with “fortune” in this passage becomes clear.

To begin, it must be noted that Thucydides in fact consistently attributes to Demosthenes a willingness to take risks, and a certain reliance on “fortune.” For example, in his ambitious, risky, and ultimately failed expedition into Aetolia he chooses to move forward and continue on his expedition without waiting for his Locrian allies. At this moment, Thucydides describes Demosthenes as “putting his hope in fortune” (*τῆ τύχῃ ἐλπίσας*; 3.97.2).¹⁸³ While at Pylos

¹⁸¹ Debnar (2013: 277) largely agrees with this position.

¹⁸² In addition, I believe that Thucydides' clear distaste for high-risk, high-reward undertakings actually makes it likely he intends to demonstrate that, due to the uncertainties of war, Demosthenes' undertaking could just as easily have ended in disaster.

¹⁸³ See above (p. 127) for more on this passage.

Demosthenes is never directly described as putting his hope in fortune, as discussed above, Thucydides' narrative does rather strongly implicitly depict him as yet again dependent on chance for his success.¹⁸⁴ Thus, in these two passages Thucydides demonstrates both that Demosthenes has a strong propensity to undertake risky enterprises, and that fortune plays an important role in determining his success or failure.

This association between risk and fortune is, in fact, part of a larger pattern in the history. Indeed, chance is argued to play a key role in determining the outcome of large-scale undertakings very early in the text. For instance, before the commencement of hostilities, an Athenian ambassador warns the Spartans of the role chance plays in war: τοῦ δὲ πολέμου τὸν παράλογον, ὅσος ἐστί, πρὶν ἐν αὐτῷ γενέσθαι προδιάγνωτε· μηκυνόμενος γὰρ φιλεῖ ἐς τύχας τὰ πολλὰ περιίστασθαι, ὧν ἴσον τε ἀπέχομεν καὶ ὁποτέρως ἔσται ἐν ἀδήλῳ κινδυνεύεται (“Consider how great is the unexpected element of war before you are in it! For when [war] grows long, it is accustomed to become dependent in many ways on fortune, over of which we equally no control, and we run the risk in the dark as to how things will turn out”; 1.78.2). While this earlier speaker discusses temporally long wars, a war that takes a long time will almost certainly also be so because it is also large in scale. Thus, the inclusion of this comment not only prompts readers to simply be on the lookout for the role of fortune in the war, but also lays the foundation for a model in which there is a direct relationship between the size and riskiness of an activity and the influence of random chance.

Thus, in creating this association between risk and chance, the historian demonstrates that the riskier the enterprise, the more its success or failure is inevitably left up to chance. He

¹⁸⁴ The text, in fact, expresses a linkage between these two passages: Thucydides tells readers that Demosthenes hesitates to attack Sphacteria in part because of his experiences in Aetolia (4.30.1). While his tactics may have changed, his ambition has not.

therefore shows the danger inherent in unchecked risk-tolerance (such as that ascribed to the Athenians at 1.70, and demonstrated by them throughout the text) by giving readers the impression that large, risky enterprises may just as easily fail as be successful. To bring this back to the level of Demosthenes, we may conclude by saying that this general, with his hyper-Athenian behavior, demonstrates at the individual level the riskiness of such unchecked behavior in the Athenian national character.

After having discussed this crucial and oft-cited passage, I turn now to one that has received somewhat less examination in scholarship, but which, upon examination, is equally telling about both Demosthenes' individual character, and his influence on Athenian risk-tolerance: his expedition to Boeotia.

Demosthenes' Expedition to Boeotia

In discussing Demosthenes' military exploits, multiple scholars have emphasized his ability to learn from mistakes, and particularly his forward-thinking incorporation of light-armed troops and peltasts into his military repertoire.¹⁸⁵ The development of his military acumen is noteworthy, as we see it deployed in his successes in Amphilochia and at Pylos. At the same time, however, Demosthenes' description of his failed invasion of Boeotia in Book 4 demonstrates that there is one lesson that he did not learn (or that he chooses to ignore): the danger of exceptionally ambitious plans.

As noted above, when Demosthenes began his earlier expedition into Aetolia, it was partly because the Messenians convinced him he would have an easy time conquering this area itself, and partly because, as Thucydides attests, he believed that conquering Aetolia would

¹⁸⁵ See, for example, Woodcock (1928: 101) and Wylie (1993: 24).

provide him with a clear path to invade Boeotia (3.95.1). As noted above, it has largely been recognized that Thucydides presents Demosthenes as overly ambitious and his plan as ill-advised in this episode.¹⁸⁶ Be that as it may, however, it is to this goal that he returns in Book 4 when he is apparently approached by Boeotians interested in overthrowing their governments and installing democratic regimes (4.76.2). He and his colleague Hippocrates then form an exceedingly ambitious, complicated plan that relies upon numerous events taking place on the same day, and on no one betraying any part of the plan to the Boeotians. In summary, the plan consisted of three parts: the betrayal of Siphac to the Athenians, the betrayal of Chaeronea to the Athenians, and Athenian forces marching across the border of Boeotia and occupying Delium (4.76.3–4). Moreover, for the plan called for each of these undertakings to occur at the same time on a prearranged day, so that the Boeotians forces would be divided and could not make use of their combined strength in any one place. Thucydides reports that the conspirators believe that, if their plan succeeds, they will eventually gain control of Boeotia (4.76.4–5).

That Thucydides seemingly disapproves of this plan and emphasizes its weakness in his description of its numerous requirements has been argued by Westlake (1968: 115–16). Indeed, both he and Woodcock before him note that this plan, being as large-scale as it was, took a significant amount of time to put into practice, and moreover depended on the cooperation of numerous Boeotians and Phocians to whom it had to be disclosed well ahead of time, thus making the chances of its being discovered very high (Westlake 1968: 116, Woodcock 1928: 104).¹⁸⁷ Unfortunately for Athens, this is precisely what happens, and when Demosthenes arrives

¹⁸⁶ See above, pp. 123–32.

¹⁸⁷ Interestingly, Woodcock (1928: 104) seems to take both sides on this issue, arguing that this was actually a well-laid plan, but then admitting that it took too long to implement and so caught no one by surprise.

by ship he discovers that the plot has been betrayed and that the Boeotians have reinforced both Siphae and Chaeronea (4.89.1–2).

This was not the only thing to go wrong with this planned invasion of Boeotia, however. First, Thucydides reports that the timing of the operation failed, resulting in disjointed activity: Demosthenes sails to Siphae and Chaeronea first, and then later Hippocrates moves into Boeotia to occupy Delium (4.89.1–90.1). A battle ensues in which the Athenians are defeated and Hippocrates himself is killed (4.96.1–9, 101.2), and later the Thebans take back Delium (4.101.1). The last we hear of the expedition, Demosthenes attempts to make a landing at Sicyon, but his forces are routed and driven back without accomplishing anything (4.101.3–4).

This was the last major command for Demosthenes related in the work until 413 BCE in Sicily, and it appears that due to this major loss he was once again out of favor at Athens (Westlake 1968: 118, Woodcock 1928: 105). While Demosthenes was not at Delium, and therefore bears no individual responsibility for the conduct or outcome of that specific battle, Westlake argues that “... there was every justification for holding him largely accountable for the unsoundness of the general scheme against Boeotia” (1968: 118–19). Indeed, just as in the case of his expedition into Aetolia (in which case Thucydides tells readers that Demosthenes was already looking toward the conquest of Boeotia), Demosthenes is convinced by the prospect of great, rapid success to undertake an extremely risky venture. Moreover, this approach yet again results in a major Athenian defeat, and in Demosthenes falling out of favor among the Athenians. As stated above, then, while the point may be argued that Demosthenes learns his lesson in terms of battlefield tactics, recognizing the importance of light-armed troops, he certainly does not learn to check his propensity to accept high-risk, high-reward scenarios. He thus demonstrates a consistency of character that is undeniably Athenian. He certainly displays Athenian speed and

ingenuity, but also a willingness to undertake risks and to be daring beyond his strength (cf. 1.70.2), an unflinching willingness to go abroad and conquer (cf. 1.70.4), and a desire for constant Athenian acquisition (cf. 1.70.7). These attributes *can* be advantageous, leading to his convincing and damaging (to the Spartans) victories in Amphilochia and at Pylos. They can also, however, be detrimental, leading to disastrous military undertakings in Aetolia and Boeotia.

Demosthenes in Sicily

After his defeat in Boeotia, Demosthenes does not play a major role in the history again until he is sent with Athenian troops to reinforce his *polis*' ill-fated Sicilian expedition. In this episode, Demosthenes' energy and daring are particularly apparent, as he offers a direct foil to Nicias' indecisiveness and hesitancy.¹⁸⁸

This contrast is apparent immediately after Demosthenes' arrival in Sicily. The Syracusans had just come to think they had the upper hand over Athenian forces, and Thucydides notes that the arrival of a large force of reinforcements caused them extreme consternation (*κατάπληξις*; 7.42.2), while it renewed the Athenians' confidence. Demosthenes recognizes this situation and wishes to act as quickly as possible (*ὅτι τάχος*; 7.42.3), and so rushes (*ἠπείγετο*; 7.42.5) to put his plan—an attack on the fortified hill Epipolae—into action. Interestingly, Thucydides reports that Demosthenes himself contrasts his own plan to the hesitancy of Nicias when he first arrived in Sicily, whom Demosthenes believes squandered the fear his massive force originally inspired (7.42.3).¹⁸⁹ Thus, Nicias' hesitancy is immediately contrasted with Demosthenes' speed, daring, and preference for decisive action.

¹⁸⁸ See below, pp. 170–209 for an in-depth analysis of Nicias.

¹⁸⁹ Thucydides provides an extended description of all of the mistakes Nicias made when he first came to Sicily. These points will be discussed in further depth when we turn to the characterization of Nicias on pp. 170–209 below.

Thucydides' description of the ensuing night attack on Epipolae emphasizes its speed and daring. For example, when the Syracusans first realize the attack is happening and respond in force they are routed and put to flight, and immediately (εὐθὺς) continues his advance.¹⁹⁰ Then, during a second confrontation with the Syracusans, their allies, and the Spartan Gylippus, readers are informed that this attack had the following effects: καὶ ἀδοκίτου τοῦ τολμήματος σφίσιν ἐν νυκτὶ γενομένου προσέβαλόν τε τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις ἐκπεπληγμένοι καὶ βιασθέντες ὑπ' αὐτῶν τὸ πρῶτον ὑπεχώρησαν (“and because **their daring was not expected** at night they were panic-stricken when they attacked the Athenians, and at first they were forced back by them and withdrew”; 7.43.6). Thus, the plan's daring catches the enemy by surprise, and they are at first unable to respond.

Demosthenes' forces continue to press their advantage, believing they have already won and wishing to push through the remaining forces as quickly as possible (ὡς τάχιστα). This quick advance, however, puts them in a state of disorder (ἀταξία; 7.43.7), and when the Boeotians move up to attack, it is this time the Athenians who are put to flight.

At this point in his narrative, Thucydides makes it clear that, despite this plan's initial success, its daring carried great risk. Indeed, because this operation occurred at night, the defeated Athenians fall into complete disarray, are unsure where to go, and have trouble differentiating between friend and foe. Thucydides spends the entirety of 7.44 describing the difficulty they faced as they attempted to withdraw, fighting amongst themselves, falling off the steep cliffs of the plain, or getting lost in the countryside, only to be cut down the next day by the Syracusan cavalry. Thus, just as in the case of his attacks on Aetolia and Boeotia, a daring and innovative Demosthenean plan yet again ends in disaster. Moreover, this unexpected victory

¹⁹⁰ Compare 1.70.5: κρατοῦντές τε τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἐπὶ πλείστον ἐξέρχονται ... (“When they prevail over their enemies they pursue their advantages to the utmost ...”).

does away with the consternation the Syracusans had initially felt at Demosthenes' arrival (7.46.1).

After this defeat, Demosthenes maintains his swift decisiveness, but directs it to a new end: withdrawing Athenian troops from Sicily. Indeed, at 7.47.3 Demosthenes advises that, now that his bold attempt has failed, the Athenians must not waste time (τρίβειν) in Sicily, but must return to Attica where they can face the Peloponnesians who have fortified Decelea. This push for immediate action is again contrasted with the hesitancy of Nicias, who orders that the army remain where it is and take no action because, according to Thucydides, he cannot decide what should be done (7.48.3).¹⁹¹

The Athenians come to directly regret their delay in Sicily (7.50.3), and this boldest of expeditions results in utter defeat, with Demosthenes suffering capture and execution. Be that as it may, from his arrival in Sicily in 413 BCE with reinforcements Demosthenes displays the same boldness, energy, and speed with which he is consistently associated in the work. Moreover, his plan for a nighttime attack against Epipolae is yet another elaborate act of daring, just as previously in Aetolia and Boeotia. Just as in those cases as well, this undertaking also unravels and leads to defeat. Thus, readers may yet again see the danger in such high-risk, high-reward behavior.

This discussion of Demosthenes' quickness to action and risk-tolerance may, in many ways, remind readers of another prominent leader previously discussed in this dissertation: Brasidas. I turn now to a comparison between these two leaders.

¹⁹¹ For more on Nicias' hesitancy here, see the section dedicated to him below, pp. 170–209.

Demosthenes and Brasidas

Upon examination, one may note that Brasidas and Demosthenes appear to share a number of similarities. Thucydides emphasizes both men's speed and energy, as well as their daring. The emphasis on fortune (τύχη) and its role in their enterprises is consistent as well: twice in the work Brasidas happens to be in the right place at the right time (2.25.2, 4.70.1), and his speed and skill allow him to take advantage of the opportunity; in the case of Demosthenes, fortune plays an extremely prominent role in Thucydides' presentation of events at Pylos, since it is only after a storm forces the fleet ashore that he is able to fortify the spot (4.3.1), and only after a group of Messenians happen to sail in do the Athenians acquire desperately needed weapons (4.9.1).¹⁹²

At the same time, however, there is one key difference between these two leaders. As I have argued, Brasidas shows an ability to restrain himself and his forces when appropriate. For example, he uses this technique to drive the Athenians (actually led by Demosthenes) away from Megara without risking battle (4.73), and on his second expedition with Perdiccas, Brasidas is hesitant to march on after an initial victory because, among other reasons, he does not think they should advance before the expected Illyrian reinforcements arrive (4.124.4). Brasidas, for all his energy and daring, finds ways to limit his exposure to risk.

This picture of Brasidas stands in stark contrast to Demosthenes, who is portrayed as regularly entering on extremely risky undertakings in Thucydides' history, in some cases ignoring concerns that Brasidas is directly described as considering. For example, Demosthenes' invasion of Aetolia (and his further plans to invade Boeotia) are described, as almost universally recognized in scholarship, in such a way as to prevent them as overly ambitious.¹⁹³ Moreover,

¹⁹² See above, p. 136.

¹⁹³ Woodcock 1928: 94–5, Westlake 1968: 100–1.

during this invasion, his decision not to wait for light-armed Locrian reinforcements before the battle of Aegitium is given as the primary reason for the disastrous result of the expedition (3.97.2). Thus, Demosthenes' impatience and inability to hesitate when necessary prove to be weaknesses. Furthermore, it is noted that he chooses not to wait for the Locrians on the advice of the Messenians, who continue to promise him an easy victory (3.97.1). We may compare this as well to the case of Brasidas, who resists Perdiccas' call for him to march on. In the latter case, Brasidas demonstrates restraint in the face of Athenian-like zeal, while Demosthenes shows no such restraint, but instead is seduced by the rhetoric of easy acquisition.

Then in Book 4, Demosthenes' second expedition against Boeotia proves too ambitious to succeed. Just as Brasidas is presented as the driving force behind the Spartan expedition to Thrace (4.81.1), this complex operation is identified as being arranged by Demosthenes and his colleague Hippocrates (4.76). This latter plan, however, ends in disaster for the Athenians, and Demosthenes therefore appears to take much of the blame for it, as he does not appear in a leading role again until the Sicilian expedition.¹⁹⁴

It would appear, therefore, that the key difference between Brasidas and Demosthenes boils down to one thing: their approach to risk. Thucydides portrays Brasidas as willing to take appropriate risks, but at the same time as not endangering Spartan interests with moonshot operations. Demosthenes, on the other hand, demonstrates on multiple occasions that he is entirely willing to undergo extreme risks for a chance at high rewards. As such, he reaches the heights of success in his victories in Amphilochia (3.105–113) and at Pylos (4.2.4–15, 29–39), but also the devastating lows of his defeat in Aetolia (3.94.3–98.4) and the failure of the Athenian expedition into Boeotia (4.76–77, 89–97.1). We may reasonably conclude, therefore,

¹⁹⁴ Westlake (1968: 118–19) argues that Demosthenes' reputation was hurt all the more by this failure because Hippocrates died at the battle of Delium, leaving Demosthenes with no one with whom to share the blame.

that Demosthenes is markedly more “Athenian” in his often overzealous boldness, and even recklessness, as compared with Brasidas’ appropriately restrained energy.¹⁹⁵

We may note, however, that the exact opposite opinion has been expressed in scholarship. Wylie (1992: 75, 1993: 20) has argued that, of the two, Brasidas is the more reckless commander. This position, however, fails to recognize that there are different types of recklessness. While Brasidas may be more willing to take risks with his own person, forcing his pilot to land at Pylos and being wounded (4.12.1), and leading the key charge at Amphipolis that costs him his life (5.10.5–10), we may also note that he avoids taking unnecessary risks that endanger Spartan interests or the lives of his men. Indeed, time and again he shows a desire to avoid direct military engagement wherever possible, instead calling for diplomacy (e.g. on his first expedition with Perdiccas) or simply taking an advantageous position and waiting for his enemies to retire from the battlefield. Moreover, when he does endanger his own life, Thucydides presents his actions as directed toward the benefit of Spartan interests: at Pylos he attempts to encourage the Spartans who are hesitating offshore to land, and at Amphipolis he leads a charge to drive the Athenians into disarray.

Demosthenes, on the other hand, is more reckless with his development of overly ambitious goals, and in his use of Athenian resources and manpower. As noted above, he regularly takes risks that endanger Athenian forces, and which on two occasions (Aetolia and Boeotia) result in losses that Thucydides marks as significant. Thus, we may conclude that, in Thucydides’ estimation, Brasidas may be more reckless with his own life, but Demosthenes is more willing to take risks that may harm Athens at large. These qualities are consistent with Orwin’s estimation of Athenian and Spartan character, as he notes that the Athenians show a

¹⁹⁵ For more on Demosthenes’ boldness and its negative consequences, see Luginbill 1999: 144 and Westlake 1968: 97.

distinct willingness to “expend rivers of Athenian blood,” while the Spartans consistently attempt to minimize their losses (1994: 76). Thus, we may note that Demosthenes subscribes to a much more Athenian approach to warfare, while Brasidas yet again shows, at times, a more restrained, Spartan approach.

Conclusion

Scholars have often praised Demosthenes as a general, noting especially his willingness to use innovative tactics and his ability to adapt to his present circumstances.¹⁹⁶ As discussed in this section, however, this perspective only takes into account Demosthenes’ low-level tactical decisions, and leaves aside his larger-scale behavioral trends, which remain remarkably consistent in each of his appearances in the text: he is bold, energetic, ambitious in a way that runs contrary to Pericles’ military strategy, and is highly risk-tolerant. This characterization is largely in line with the Athenian national character discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation. As such, Demosthenes represents an individual expression of Athenian national character, and fails to serve as a moderating force in the way Pericles does for Athens. Instead, he only has access to Athens’ inherent strengths (speed and daring), while exacerbating its customary weaknesses (primarily excessive risk-taking). The similarity of Demosthenes’ character to that of democratic Athens results in the strong ebbs and flows in fortune typical of unrestrained Athenian behavior: they reach the heights of success in their victory at Pylos/Sphacteria, but also the depths of failure in Demosthenes’ expeditions into Aetolia and Boeotia (at least as depicted by Thucydides, who, as noted above, may be overstating the cost of these losses). Moreover, he represents the first Athenian to fully depart from the Periclean war

¹⁹⁶ See Woodcock 1928: 101 and Wylie 1993: 24.

strategy, and thus represents a return to unrestrained Athenian behavior.

While Thucydides never depicts Demosthenes as directly participating in the political decision-making process at Athens, he clearly exercised great influence in his *polis* (see, for example, his apparent ability to acquire special permission to establish a fort at Pylos; 4.2.4), and also made several decisions as a general that had far-reaching consequences for Athens' fortunes in the war, and for its citizen-soldiers. Thus, he may be discussed as both a general and, more generally, an Athenian leader. In this leadership role, however, Thucydides' Demosthenes does not provide the corrective, moderating force which the historian depicts his democratic context as requiring, but instead individually exhibits the chief elements of the Athenian, democratic collective character. As such, he represents the first evidence Thucydides provides in support of his position that Athenian leaders after Pericles failed to live up to his example, that the Athenian democracy from that point on failed to receive the corrective leadership it required, and that the regular emergence of leaders with the specific combination of character attributes needed to effectively lead at Athens is not something upon which the Athenians could rely. I turn now from the general Demosthenes to the politician Cleon, in whom we will observe largely the same pattern of behavior.

Cleon

A study of Cleon presents an interesting counterpoint to the previous discussion of Demosthenes. While the latter's character was primarily on display in his military actions, Cleon is largely portrayed as a failed Athenian *political* leader, providing the ultimate foil to Pericles. Indeed, he embodies everything that Thucydides identifies as wrong with post-Periclean influential Athenians, and thus becomes evidence supporting the historian's model of

degenerating Athenian leadership (2.65.7, 10).¹⁹⁷ In fact, Thucydides attributes nearly every unflattering, negative attribute at his disposal to Cleon. Woodhead notes, for example, when discussing Cleon's overconfident behavior at Amphipolis, that, "All that is worst in a demagogue is somehow and somewhere packed into these two chapters ..." (1960: 314).

This overwhelmingly negative portrayal has led some scholars to propose that Thucydides bore personal enmity toward Cleon,¹⁹⁸ and further to surmise that his version of the Athenian demagogue may not be historically accurate.¹⁹⁹ Whether or not this is the case, it is certainly true that the version of Cleon which Thucydides leaves for his readers is not a positive one, and, as will be discussed shortly, it quickly becomes clear that the historian severely disapproved of Cleon and his positions.

From Cleon's first appearance in the work, Thucydides is at pains to demonstrate the degree to which he fell short of the Periclean model of effective Athenian leadership. As we shall see, the historian does this by implicitly inviting the reader into a comparison between the two leaders, and making it clear that Cleon uses his influence for entirely different purposes: to encourage his countrymen to act without restraint and in accordance with their national character, rather than to moderate them.

¹⁹⁷ See Westlake (1968: 8–9) for Cleon as a "successor" to Pericles.

¹⁹⁸ Pearson states concerning Cleon that, "... one usually finds Thucydides less violent in his prejudice" (1947: 53).

¹⁹⁹ Finley (1962), for example, argues in favor of the rehabilitation of "demagogues." Azoulay, meanwhile, directly claims that the difference between Pericles and his successors (especially Cleon) was most likely not as strong as Thucydides portrays it (2010: 154–7). Westlake states that Thucydides shows an obvious bias against Cleon (1968: 60, 83), and goes on to say that, while there is no clear evidence that Thucydides is wrong, his obvious negativity toward Cleon should cause us to be careful (1968: 73). Woodhead makes perhaps the strongest claim: "I have long been convinced that Cleon, one of the most notable and familiar figures of the Peloponnesian War, was a wiser and more intelligent statesman, with a better reputation and a more just entitlement to fame and honour, than our principal authorities lead us to suppose" (1960: 290).

Mytilenean Debate

Cleon's first appearance in Thucydides' history occurs during the Mytilenean debate, and it represents an important moment in the text: of all the Athenians who appear after Pericles, he most strongly parallels (and even, perhaps, directly embodies) the historian's description at 2.65.7 and 10 of post-Periclean leaders who lack the capacity to check the negative behavioral tendencies of their countrymen.²⁰⁰

Thucydides cleverly elucidates the differences between these two Athenian politicians by creating surface-level similarities between their abilities and rhetorical techniques that invite deeper comparison.²⁰¹ These similarities include, for example, Thucydides' description of Cleon as ὄν ... τῷ τε δήμῳ παρὰ πολὺ ἐν τῷ τότε πιθανώτατος ("being by far the most persuasive to the *demos* at that time"; 3.36.6). This comment recalls Thucydides' introduction to Pericles, whom he identifies as ἀνὴρ κατ' ἐκείνον τὸν χρόνον πρῶτος Ἀθηναίων, λέγειν τε καὶ πράσσειν δυνατώτατος ("a man who was at that time first among the Athenians, most capable in both speaking and acting"; 1.139.4).

Additionally, in his speech in favor of destroying Mytilene, Cleon famously chastises his Athenian audience for acting like spectators rather than members of the assembly, for being more interested in pleasing speech than good plans, and for being unable, as a democracy, to rule

²⁰⁰ For a discussion of Pericles, see Chapter 2.

²⁰¹ See Hornblower 1991: 334–5 and 425, Connor 1984b: 79, Macleod 1983: 93 n.20, and Zahn 1934: 65. De Romilly (1963: 165–7) disputes this connection, however, as she believes the resonances between the two speeches reflect a shared vocabulary of empire, rather than an attempt by Thucydides to create a connection between the specific characters of Pericles and Cleon. She bases this position on a belief that no clear distinction is drawn between the positions of the two politicians, and that readers are unable to easily see what makes Pericles right and Cleon wrong. I agree with Andrewes, however, when he states that, "In Thucydides' careful style such echoes cannot be accidental," (1962: 75), and I believe, moreover, that the resemblances between the two speeches extend too far beyond simply the vocabulary of empire for readers not to be drawn into a comparison. What is more, as I argue below, Thucydides actually does make the difference between the two individuals clear: one uses these arguments and rhetorical positions to moderate Athenian collective behavioral tendencies, while the other encourages his fellow citizens to exercise them without restraint.

an empire (3.38.4, 7).²⁰² Cleon's seemingly direct reproach of his audience appears to closely mirror Pericles' ability to avoid pandering and to speak to his audience angrily (2.65.8).

Additionally, throughout his speech Cleon calls on his audience to stand by their previous decision, saying, ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν ὁ αὐτός εἰμι τῇ γνώμῃ ... (“And so I am the same in my opinion ...”; 3.38.1).²⁰³ This call for consistency is reminiscent of Pericles, who at the beginning of the war calls on the Athenians to maintain and enforce the Megarian decree: τῆς μὲν γνώμης, ᾧ Ἀθηναῖοι, αἰεὶ τῆς αὐτῆς ἔχομαι, μὴ εἶκειν Πελοποννησίοις (“Athenians, I always hold on to the same opinion, not to yield to the Peloponnesians”; 1.140.1), and after the plague says, with regards to his position on the war: καὶ ἐγὼ μὲν ὁ αὐτός εἰμι καὶ οὐκ ἐξίσταμαι (“I am both the same and I have not changed”; 2.61.2).²⁰⁴

Finally, the terms in which both leaders describe Athenian control of the Aegean are extremely similar. Cleon tells the Athenians to remember ... ὅτι τυραννίδα ἔχετε τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ πρὸς ἐπιβουλεύοντας αὐτοὺς καὶ ἄκοντας ἀρχομένους (“... that you have an empire that is a tyranny and over individuals who are plotting against you and are ruled unwillingly”; 3.37.2), while Pericles earlier states, ὡς τυραννίδα γὰρ ἤδη ἔχετε αὐτήν (“For you now hold it [your empire] like a tyranny”; 2.63.2).²⁰⁵

²⁰² Westlake (1968: 63 n.1) reminds readers that despite Cleon's comments, he is himself a skilled speaker, and Pelling (2000: 5) points out that at this very moment Cleon is in the act of presenting a highly bombastic speech, rendering this statement more of a rhetorical flourish than a serious accusation.

²⁰³ See 3.37.4–38.1, 40.2 for the full extent of this rhetoric.

²⁰⁴ On Cleon's words at 3.38.1, see Zahn 1934: 65. Gomme (1956a: 302) and Classen and Steup (1892: 68) both note the similarity between 3.38.1 and 2.61.2. See also 2.13.2, when the Peloponnesians are preparing for their first invasion of Attica, and Thucydides reports that Pericles παρήνει δὲ καὶ περὶ τῶν παρόντων ἄπερ καὶ πρότερον (“Advised concerning the present matters just what he had earlier”; 2.13.2), and 2.60.1, when Pericles tells his audience that he has called an assembly after the plague ὅπως ὑπομνήσω ... (“in order to remind you ...”; 2.60.1).

²⁰⁵ See Hornblower 1987: 56 n.40, 172. An important distinction may be drawn here, however: while Pericles uses a simile to describe the empire as being “like a tyranny” (ὡς τυραννίδα), and thus identifies the two as *comparable*, Cleon directly equates the two through his use of apposition (τυραννίδα ἔχετε τὴν ἀρχὴν). Hornblower (1987: 46 n.40) marks this difference.

These elements of Cleon's first appearance cause Thucydides' portrayal of Pericles to re-enter readers' minds, and therefore implicitly lead to a direct comparison between the two Athenian politicians. These surface-level similarities, however, quickly break down upon examination, and it becomes clear that Cleon, despite his similar rhetorical tactics, is an anti-Pericles: while he shares Pericles' persuasive ability, he uses it not to moderate the impulsiveness attributed to Athenian national character, but instead to attempt to unleash it.²⁰⁶ Indeed, throughout his speech Cleon diminishes the usefulness of deliberation, and instead encourages the Athenians to act quickly, based on their emotions.

Numerous examples of this point appear in Cleon's speech from the Mytilenean debate, but two make this distinction most clear. First, returning to Thucydides' introduction to Cleon, while the historian describes him as "most persuasive to the demos at that time" (3.36.6), which reminds readers of Pericles' dominant rhetorical influence, he also provides the following description: Κλέων ὁ Κλεαινέτου, ὅσπερ καὶ τὴν προτέραν ἐνεκικήκει ὥστε ἀποκτείνειν, ὄν καὶ ἐς τὰ ἄλλα βιαίωτατος τῶν πολιτῶν ("Cleon the son of Cleaenetus, who also had won the previous judgment to kill [them], being with respect to other things the most violent of the citizens ...; 3.36.6). While Pericles' ability in speaking had been paired with his ability in acting (1.139.4), and elsewhere with his foresight, integrity, and ability to moderate the *demos* (2.65.8), Cleon's speaking ability is linked solely with violence.²⁰⁷ The first introduction to this leader in the text, therefore, conditions readers to see Cleon as anything but a positive influence.

²⁰⁶ Connor (1971: 120) notes that Cleon often appears as a distorted version of Pericles, and Balot mentions that speakers like Cleon are regularly shown as manipulating the Athenian character "to produce devastating practical effects" (2004: 89). See also De Romilly 1963: 163–66 and Cairns 1982: 203, the second of whom argues that in Greek literature, *who* says something makes just as much difference as what it is that they say.

²⁰⁷ This theme continues, as Thucydides makes it clear after the end of the Mytilenean debate (in his description of the second Athenian ship chasing the first to cancel its orders) that he found the original judgment abhorrent. See Ch. 1, pp. 42–4 for more on this episode.

Furthermore, in the speech itself that follows this introduction, Cleon directly disparages aspects of the Athenian democracy which Pericles portrays in a positive light. Indeed, whereas Pericles in his funeral oration identifies Athenian deliberation as an integral and praiseworthy part of democratic decision-making (2.40.2), and elsewhere directly discourages the Athenians from acting based on their emotions (2.59.2–62.1), Cleon lambasts his audience for their deliberation, calling it a source of delay (διατριβήν), and encourages them not to act with duller anger (ἀμβλυτέρῳ τῇ ὀργῇ) (3.38.1). Thus, instead of moderating the Athenians' collective tendency to act quickly and rashly (1.70.3, 7), he drives them to make (or in this case, to adhere to) a rapidly made, emotional decision (Pelling 2000: 9–10).²⁰⁸

In combination with his description of Cleon as βιαίτατος, then, Thucydides demonstrates that this leader lacks a key component of Periclean governance: his moderate management of public matters, and especially of the *demos*.²⁰⁹ Cleon therefore comes off as an imitator of Pericles, and, as Andrewes argues, adopts Pericles' rhetoric "for violent and (in comparison) trivial purposes" (1962: 75). In Thucydides' presentation of leadership, however, this use of persuasion to drive the Athenians to live up to their national character is anything but trivial.

²⁰⁸ See Finley (1963: 172), who argues that "... Cleon attacks not only debate but the whole faith in reason and education that underlies it." The growth of the emotional and subjective in speeches has been noted by Immerwahr (1973: 31). See also Grant (1974: 93), who states that while Thucydides admired Pericles' ability to suppress the violent tendencies of the Athenian *demos*, he portrays Cleon as actually encouraging such behavior. We also see such emotion-based decision making in the Athenian response to the proposed expedition to Sicily, which Raaflaub (2006: 203–4) identifies as entirely consistent with their collective character.

²⁰⁹ See Macleod's remark, "Only the older man's [Pericles'] unobtrusive rule could restrain the self-destructive tendencies of a democracy, unreason in the people (ii 65.9), irresponsibility and dissension among the leaders (ii 65.8, 10–12)" (1983: 93).

Cleon and Pylos/Sphacteria

In the events leading up to the Athenian victory at Sphacteria, Thucydides yet again presents Cleon as a problematic Athenian leader and a typical Athenian demagogue. Most importantly, he is seen encouraging Athenian ambition, convincing his countrymen not to make peace with Sparta, and making promises that are so bold they drive his audience to laugh at him.

Cleon first appears in this episode after the Athenian forces, led by Demosthenes, have trapped a Spartan contingent on the island of Sphacteria. The Spartans send ambassadors to Athens to sue for peace, who call on the Athenians not to grasp at further successes (4.17.4), but instead to see their gains as provisional and liable to reversal (4.18.4).²¹⁰ The Athenians are in a state of extreme confidence, however, and believe this offer of peace will be there for them any time they may want it. Thucydides closes his description of this Athenian attitude by noting, τοῦ δὲ πλέονος ὠρέγοντο (“and they were grasping at more”; 4.21.2). This verb is repeated from the Spartan speech above, and as such identifies the Athenians as directly ignoring the Spartans’ advice.²¹¹ The Athenians, despite (or perhaps because of) their present success, refuse to stop engaging in acquisition. This places the current Athenian behavior perfectly in line with previous descriptions of their national character, as they grasp for ever more, never satisfied with what they currently have (1.70.8).²¹²

²¹⁰ These entreaties seem directed at the established Athenian collective character (specifically their tendencies to constantly press for more and to never be happy with their present successes; 1.70.5, 7–8), and therefore serve as a Spartan request that the Athenians temporarily suspend their national character. The language used by the Spartans at 4.17.4 is particularly striking: αἰεὶ γὰρ τοῦ πλέονος ἐλπίδι ὠρέγονται διὰ τὸ καὶ τὰ παρόντα ἀδοκίμως εὐτυχήσαι (“For because of their hope they always **grasp at more**, on account of also being unexpectedly successful in present matters”).

²¹¹ Mynott points out that the verb ὠρέγοντο is repeated from 4.17.4, and states that this is a reminder that Athenian overreach contributed to their downfall (2013: 247 n.3).

²¹² καὶ ἀπολαύουσιν ἐλάχιστα τῶν ὑπαρχόντων διὰ τὸ αἰεὶ κτᾶσθαι (“and least of all do they enjoy what they already have because of their constant engagement in acquisition”; 1.70.8).

On this occasion, however, the Athenian collective is not identified as acting on its own devices; instead, Thucydides squarely places the blame for this Athenian disposition at Cleon's feet: μάλιστα δὲ αὐτοὺς ἐνήγε Κλέων ὁ Κλεαινέτου, ἀνὴρ δημαγωγὸς κατ' ἐκείνον τὸν χρόνον ὧν καὶ τῷ πλήθει πιθανώτατος ("and Cleon the son of Cleaenetus especially drove them on, a man who was a popular leader and at that time most persuasive to the multitude"; 4.21.3). Just as before in the Mytilenean debate, Cleon uses his influence to drive the Athenians to act on their emotions and desires and, moreover, to live up to their national character. In this instance, however, he succeeds.

Since the Athenians feel no urgent need to establish peace, Cleon convinces them to demand extremely harsh terms. When the Spartan ambassadors ask to speak with a smaller group of Athenians, Cleon then proceeds to lambast them, claiming that, if they refuse to speak openly before the entire Athenian populace, they must have insidious motives. The Spartans therefore withdraw without accomplishing anything, and the opportunity to make peace is lost. While scholars have questioned whether a peace established at this point in the war would actually have accomplished anything meaningful for Athens, it is clear from the text that Thucydides presents this as a squandered opportunity.²¹³ He does this not only by quickly moving from the Athenians' success at Pylos to the series of reversals they suffer at the hands of Brasidas, but also

²¹³ Woodhead, for example, argues that the Spartan peace offer was worth little and would have resolved none of the underlying forces that led to war in the first place, and that Cleon therefore may not have been completely unreasonable for opposing it (1960: 311). While that may be an accurate portrayal of the historical reality of the situation, it does not change the fact that Thucydides *presents* this decision as a blunder, a point which Woodhead admits (1960: 311). Westlake agrees that Thucydides clearly believes that the Athenian refusal of peace was a major error in judgment, and blames Cleon for this result (1968: 68–9). Raaflaub states that the peace terms offered by Sparta were equivalent to a victory based on the Periclean strategy, and that Cleon squanders the opportunity (2006: 206). Indeed, such a peace would have forced the Spartans to recognize the validity and extent of the relatively young Athenian empire, and would have amounted to a cessation of hostilities without giving up territory and without incurring heavy losses in a direct engagement with the Spartans.

by continuing to discredit Cleon, to whom he attributes all responsibility for the Athenian decision to spurn peace.²¹⁴

For example, when the Athenian finds it difficult to make inroads against the Spartans trapped on Sphacteria, they begin to regret their decision to reject peace (4.27.2). Cleon disputes reports of these difficulties, but when the Athenians elect to send him with a party to investigate, Cleon realizes that his approach has backfired:

καὶ γνοὺς ὅτι ἀναγκασθήσεται ἢ ταῦτὰ λέγειν οἷς διέβαλλεν ἢ τάναντία εἰπὼν
ψευδῆς φανήσεσθαι, παρήνει τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις, ὁρῶν αὐτοὺς καὶ ὠρμημένους τι τὸ
πλέον τῇ γνώμῃ στρατεύειν, ὡς χρὴ κατασκόπους μὲν μὴ πέμπειν μηδὲ
διαμέλλειν καιρὸν παριέντας, εἰ δὲ δοκεῖ αὐτοῖς ἀληθῆ εἶναι τὰ ἀγγελλόμενα,
πλεῖν ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄνδρας (4.27.4).

And knowing that he would either be forced to say the same things as those whom he was attacking, or, saying the opposite, be revealed as a liar, he advised the Athenians, seeing that they were also eager in their judgment to make another expedition, that it was necessary neither to send scouts nor to delay and let their opportunity pass; but if the things being announced seemed to be true to them, [he advised them] to sail against the men.

While Cleon deftly talks his way out of this corner, Debbar points out that the insertion of the terms διέβαλλεν and ψευδῆς into Cleon's own, internal thought process appears to reveal a point of authorial judgment, and allows him to implicitly inform readers that Cleon knew that what he had said was not true (2013: 277–8).

In addition, when Cleon personally attacks the current general Nicias and claims that, given the opportunity, he could easily overcome the Spartans on Sphacteria, Thucydides makes him look thoroughly ridiculous. Nicias baits Cleon into accepting command when he thinks the offer is not serious, but then tries to backpedal when he realizes that it is (4.28.2). Thucydides relates that Cleon is “frightened” (δεδιῶς), but nevertheless the Athenians press him into

²¹⁴ See Thucydides' note at 5.14.1 on the Athenians' loss of confidence after their defeats at Delium and Amphipolis. For more on Brasidas' exploits, see Ch. 2.

accepting command (4.28.2–3). Cleon then publicly claims to be unafraid (despite having just been described as frightened), and promises to overcome the Spartans on Sphacteria within twenty days (4.28.4).

Thucydides reports the Athenian response to this boast as follows:

τοῖς δὲ Ἀθηναίοις ἐνέπεσε μὲν τι καὶ γέλωτος τῇ κουφολογίᾳ αὐτοῦ, ἀσμένους δ' ὅμως ἐγένετο τοῖς σώφροσι τῶν ἀνθρώπων, λογιζομένοις δυοῖν ἀγαθοῖν τοῦ ἑτέρου τεύξεσθαι, ἢ Κλέωνος ἀπαλλαγῆσεσθαι, ὃ μᾶλλον ἤλπιζον, ἢ σφαλεῖσι γνώμης Λακεδαιμονίους σφίσι χειρώσεσθαι (4.28.5).

And on the one hand laughter fell upon the Athenians because of his empty speech, but nevertheless it happened that the prudent men were happy, reckoning that they would obtain one of two good things: either they would be rid of Cleon (which they rather expected), or if they erred in their opinion he would subdue the Lacedaemonians for them.

This description, identifying Cleon's claims as "empty speech" (κουφολογία) and mentioning that the Athenians laugh at him, seems designed to paint Cleon as a joke. Moreover, the fact that Thucydides identifies those who wish to be rid of Cleon as "prudent" (σώφροσι) appears to convey a further authorial judgment: those in Athens with sense do *not* approve of Cleon.²¹⁵ Thus, the author intentionally directs readers to see him as a blowhard and a braggart.

Even after Cleon takes command of the expedition, Thucydides grants him very little credit for the Athenians' success. While he is mentioned as present for some negotiations (4.38.1, e.g.), most of the planning and leadership of the operation is attributed to Demosthenes (4.29.2–30.1). Moreover, the prominent role of luck in determining the outcome of this confrontation has often been discussed, and although scholars have proposed various

²¹⁵ Said (2012: 199) believes the "wise" who laugh at Cleon are the elite. This sentence may also serve the rhetorical goal of inviting readers who self-identify as "prudent" to share this opinion of him.

interpretations for this feature of the text,²¹⁶ I argue that, at least in part, it serves to deprive Cleon of credit for the operation's success.²¹⁷

Finally, when the Athenians shock the world by forcing the Spartans to surrender, Thucydides mentions that Cleon fulfilled his promise to the Athenians. He does this, however, in the following terms: καὶ τοῦ Κλέωνος καίπερ μανιώδης οὔσα ἡ ὑπόσχεσις ἀπέβη (“And Cleon’s promise, although being crazy, came to pass”; 4.39.3). The author’s insertion of a concessive with a negative value judgment serves to diminish Cleon’s accomplishment in keeping this promise. It also neatly bookends the actual battle narrative—in which, as Westlake notes, Cleon actually does not come off badly (1968: 74–5)—with statements that are openly hostile toward Cleon and his promises to the Athenians.²¹⁸

In this way, Thucydides consistently portrays Cleon as a dishonest rabble-rouser and an object of derision. These points, when combined with the string of reversals in Books 4 and 5 that drive the Athenians from their acme, lead readers to conclude that the Athenians made a dire mistake by listening to Cleon and rejecting peace. Yet again Cleon is highly persuasive among the Athenians, and yet again he uses this influence to encourage the Athenians to act on their natural proclivities, rather than attempting to restrain them.

²¹⁶ See above during my discussion of Demosthenes for a summary of the different interpretations of this passage held by scholars such as Cornford (1907), Woodhead (1960), Connor (1984b), and Stahl (2003). See the following note for the current author’s interpretation of the passage.

²¹⁷ I have never thought it necessary to confine Thucydides to *one* reason for emphasizing the role fortune plays during events at Pylos/Sphacteria. I find it wholly reasonable that Thucydides is, at least in part, attempting to replicate for readers the genuine surprise that the Athenians felt at their success at Pylos (Connor 1984b: 118, Debnar 2013: 277). At the same time, however, we must note that Thucydides has directly portrayed the Athenians as laughing at Cleon when he promises victory over the Spartans, has described the promise itself as empty speech (4.28.5) and later as mad (4.39.3), and has stated that the “prudent” Athenians do not expect him to succeed and hope to be rid of him (4.28.5). Thus, while the role of fortune certainly may help readers experience the Athenians’ surprise at their success, part of this surprise hinges on the fact that *Cleon*, whom Thucydides has portrayed as a violent braggart, helps bring it about. Readers are then both generally surprised at the Athenians’ success, and at the same time get the impression that Cleon must not have played a very large role in making this success happen—events simply resolved themselves in his favor.

²¹⁸ Westlake sums this up nicely: “Yet, as soon as Thucydides has completed his account of the military operations, he resumes his tone of patent hostility against Cleon” (1968: 75).

Cleon in Northern Greece (the Death of Cleon)

In this episode—the last one in which Cleon appears—Thucydides gives readers a final, unfavorable view of him as an Athenian leader. The negativity of this portrayal does not center solely on his military failure, but extends to his personal character and his ability as a leader. This portrait is in many ways consistent with the character established for him in the previous episodes discussed in this chapter (and with that attributed to Pericles’ successors at 2.65.5–13): he is violent, brashly overconfident, and forced to act in accordance with the will of those whom he is meant to lead (cf. 2.65.8).

Cleon reappears near the end of Book 4, when Thucydides mentions that the Athenians pass a motion to recapture Scione and put its inhabitants to death, Κλέωνος γνώμη πεισθέντες (“persuaded by Cleon’s opinion”; 4.122.6). Thus, upon his reintroduction Cleon’s persuasiveness is immediately highlighted, in addition to his tendency to use it for violent ends.²¹⁹

Next, after swiftly reporting Cleon’s actions at Torone, Stagirus, and Galepsus (two of which are successful), Thucydides moves on to describe the Athenians’ journey to Amphipolis.²²⁰ Cleon temporarily establishes himself at Eion to await reinforcements from Perdiccas and Thrace (5.6.2), but his soldiers become restless:

ὁ δὲ Κλέων τέως μὲν ἡσύχαζεν, ἔπειτα ἠναγκάσθη ποιῆσαι ὅπερ ὁ Βρασίδας προσεδέχετο. τῶν γὰρ στρατιωτῶν ἀχθομένων μὲν τῇ ἔδρᾳ, ἀναλογιζομένων δὲ τὴν ἐκείνου ἡγεμονίαν πρὸς οἴαν ἐμπειρίαν καὶ τόλμαν μετὰ οἴας ἀνεπιστημοσύνης καὶ μαλακίας γενήσοιτο καὶ οἴκοθεν ὡς ἄκοντες αὐτῷ ξυνῆλθον, αἰσθόμενος τὸν θροῦν καὶ οὐ βουλόμενος αὐτοὺς διὰ τὸ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ καθημένους βαρύνεσθαι, ἀναλαβὼν ἦγεν (5.7.1–2).

And during that time Cleon was keeping quiet, but then he was forced to do what Brasidas expected. For with the soldiers upset because of their inactivity, and

²¹⁹ See this chapter, p. 155, and compare Thucydides’ description of Cleon as βιαίτατος at 3.36.6.

²²⁰ Scholars have noted that Thucydides’ account of Cleon’s campaign in northern Greece may be truncated, and that Cleon likely recovered numerous other Athenian allies before engaging in battle with Brasidas. See Westlake 1968: 77 and Woodhead 1960: 304–6.

reflecting on the leadership of that man, against what sort of experience and daring [the contest] would be, and in comparison with what incompetence and cowardliness, and that they unwillingly came with him from home—hearing this murmur and not wishing them to be distressed on account of sitting in the same place, he led them with him.

Though comprising only two sentences, this passage imparts to readers a wealth of interpretive material. First, the Athenian soldiers' inability to keep still in this episode is both consistent with their continually active collective characterization (cf. 1.70.8–9), and strikingly similar to their previous actions at Pylos in 425 BCE. There, despite Demosthenes' failure to convince the Athenian commanders to fortify the spot, the soldiers, chafing at remaining idle, took the task upon themselves (4.4.1). Here again the Athenian soldiers are depicted as simply incapable of keeping still, but with no constructive task at hand with which to busy themselves, they simply complain about their leadership.

Next, the terms in which the Athenian soldiers describe Cleon and Brasidas further shape reader interpretation of these leaders. Thucydides makes it abundantly clear that Cleon lacks the respect of his soldiers, as they describe him as “inexperienced” and “cowardly” (attributes that Cleon's behavior in the ensuing battle will confirm), and leads readers to expect blundering and failure, despite his previous success at Pylos.²²¹ Due to the similarity of this negative treatment of Cleon to previous passages, this description may represent yet another instance of the author placing his own disapproval in the mouths and minds of others.²²²

²²¹ “Das Urteil über Brasidas, wie über Kleon bleibt sich gleich, auch nach des letzteren Erfolg bei Pylos” (“The judgment concerning Brasidas, and that concerning Cleon, remains the same, even after the last success at Pylos”; Classen and Steup 1911: 11).

²²² Compare the Pylos episode, in which the Athenians laugh at Cleon and hope to be rid of him. Gomme (1956b: 637) notes at length that the Athenians would have no reason (at least from episodes reported in the text up to this point) to be particularly afraid of Brasidas, having previously faced him in battle with success at Pylos, nor to suspect Cleon's leadership ability. Thus Hornblower's conclusion, “the opinions and comparisons are offered as the soldiers' but the reader is left feeling that Th. endorses the unfavourable comparison” (1996: 438).

Additionally, Thucydides further guides readers to interpret Cleon's leadership ability (and character) through his ultimate decision (though apparently "forced"—more on this momentarily) not to wait for reinforcements. Indeed, whether a commander has the patience to wait for reinforcements has played an important role in understanding the character of military commanders elsewhere in Thucydides, as in the cases of both Brasidas and Demosthenes. When on campaign with Perdiccas in northern Greece, Brasidas chooses to wait for reinforcements rather than press on, demonstrating his ability to restrain himself (and his men). Demosthenes, on the other hand, chooses not to wait for reinforcements during his expedition in Aetolia, and suffers a defeat, the severity of which Thucydides heavily emphasizes (3.98.3–4).²²³ Cleon's ultimate decision to move forward before the arrival of auxiliaries thus paints him as similar to Demosthenes: a commander lacking the ability to avoid rash action.

Lastly, the fact that Thucydides describes Cleon as being "forced" by his soldiers to move to Amphipolis provides the final damning blow against him in this short passage. By depicting him as easily moved by the whisperings of his men, Thucydides portrays Cleon as lacking the ability to control the impulses of those whom he is meant to lead. This attribute firmly aligns Cleon with the later, inferior Athenian leaders described in Thucydides' eulogy of Pericles. Indeed, one of the author's key differentiators between Pericles and his successors is his ability to lead rather than be led: καὶ οὐκ ἤγετο μᾶλλον ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἢ αὐτὸς ἦγε ("and he was not lead by it [the *plethos*] more than he led it"; 2.65.8).²²⁴ Cleon directly fails this test, as he immediately gives in to the will of those he is meant to lead when he perceives that they do not

²²³ On Brasidas, see Ch. 2; on Demosthenes, see this chapter's previous discussion, pp. 122–51.

²²⁴ See also 2.65.9, where Thucydides attributes to Pericles the ability to check the Athenians when they grow overbold, but states that his successors entrusted matters to the *demos*.

approve of his decision.²²⁵ He therefore lacks a key requirement of positive Athenian leadership: the ability to check the impulses of the people.²²⁶

In his narrative of the battle that follows, Thucydides largely confirms the impression of Cleon readers have just received.²²⁷ His inexperience costs his troops dearly as he exposes their unshielded side during their withdrawal (5.10.4; Luginbill (1999: 150) blames this mistake on Cleon being “unnecessarily bold”, while Wylie (1992: 91) simply refers to him as “impatient”), and his death is particularly ignoble and cowardly. Indeed, despite the fact that the soldiers with him on the right wing stand their ground and fight, Thucydides vividly describes Cleon being struck down as he flees: τὸ δὲ δεξιὸν τῶν Ἀθηναίων ἔμενέ [τε] μᾶλλον, καὶ ὁ μὲν Κλέων, ὡς τὸ πρῶτον οὐ διανοεῖτο μένειν, εὐθὺς φεύγων καὶ καταληφθεὶς ὑπὸ Μυρκινίου πελταστοῦ ἀποθνήσκει (“The right of the Athenians stood its ground more, and Cleon, since from the beginning he did not have in mind to stand his ground, immediately took flight and, caught by a Myrkinian peltast, died” (5.10.9). This description stands in direct contrast to the bravery of Brasidas, who leads the charge against the Athenian center, and eventually succumbs to wounds he suffers after he turns to attack the right wing, though not until he learns of his victory (5.10.6–8, 11).

Thus, Cleon’s final actions are characterized by ineptitude and cowardice, and leave a lasting impression on the reader. As Woodhead mentions, however, this is not the only account of the Battle of Amphipolis, with Diodorus Siculus’ being much friendlier to Cleon and his conduct (D.S. 12.74; Woodhead 1960: 309–10). While this later account is sometimes

²²⁵ As described in Gomme’s note, he “was compelled to a reconnaissance by unrest among his men which he had not the character to control” (1956b: 637), and “his first failure (as far as we know) was his inability to withstand the restlessness of his soldiers, and, even more clearly, to inspire confidence in them” (1956b: 638).

²²⁶ Brasidas’ extreme confidence that he will not be attacked when he moves closer to Amphipolis (5.7.3–5) is also very much in line with Athenian national character (esp. 1.70.3–5).

²²⁷ See Westlake (1968: 78), who argues the account of the battle shows that Thucydides most likely agrees with the complaints he places in the mouths of the Athenian soldiers.

disregarded as conventional battle narrative (Gomme 1956b: 653), we may question whether Thucydides' version, or at least his description of its commanders, is entirely trustworthy. Whether or not it is, however, the effect of the passage on the reader of Thucydides is the same: to find Cleon entirely lacking as a leader.

Cleon is mentioned only one other time in Thucydides' history, when the author famously notes that he and Brasidas had been the primary opponents to peace in their respective *poleis*: ... ἐτεθήκει Κλέων τε καὶ Βρασίδας, οἵπερ ἀμφοτέρωθεν μάλιστα ἠναντιοῦντο τῇ εἰρήνῃ, ὁ μὲν διὰ τὸ εὐτυχεῖν τε καὶ τιμᾶσθαι ἐκ τοῦ πολεμεῖν, ὁ δὲ γενομένης ἡσυχίας καταφανέστερος νομίζων ἂν εἶναι κακουργῶν καὶ ἀπιστότερος διαβάλλον (“... both Cleon and Brasidas had died, who on either side were especially opposed to peace, the one both on account of his success and his receiving honor from making war, the other thinking that, if a period of rest were established, he would be more clear as a wicked man and less trustworthy in his attacks”; 5.16.1). Scholars have commented extensively on this passage, and particularly on the relationship they perceive Thucydides as creating between these two leaders by identifying both as opponents of peace. It is important to recognize, however, that Thucydides' statement, equating the *positions* of the two leaders with regards to the war, does not necessarily equate the two leaders themselves. Indeed, as I have argued in this dissertation, leadership is relative in Thucydides, because what is positive for one city is not necessarily so for another. These two individuals both opposed peace, but two key differences must be accounted for: their motivations, and the effect of their opposition on their *polis*' fortunes in the war.

Let us start with the latter concern—how Thucydides portrays the delay of peace from 425 to 421 BCE as affecting Athens' and Sparta's respective positions in the war. When the Spartans first offered peace they were at a low point, while the Athenians were near their highest

point in the war: the Athenians had trapped a group of Spartan soldiers on the island of Sphacteria, and the Lacedaemonians were extremely afraid their men would be killed or captured (4.15.1–2). This left the Athenians in an extremely advantageous position, with the opportunity to offer peace terms favorable to themselves.²²⁸

After the Athenians refused peace (at Cleon’s urging) and were victorious at Pylos, however, the Spartans, led by Brasidas, went on the offensive, capturing or luring to the Peloponnesian side a number of cities in northern Greece previously allied with Athens. These successes brought Sparta back to a position of relative parity with Athens at the negotiating table. Brasidas and Cleon’s opposition to peace, therefore, produce drastically different results: whereas Cleon’s is presented as a massive error in judgment and a missed opportunity, Brasidas’ results in the Spartans acquiring important bargaining chips. Thus, by opposing peace, Brasidas benefitted Sparta, while Cleon, by encouraging his Athenian audience’s urge to strive for ever more, significantly diminished Athens’ bargaining power.

Finally, we may consider the motivations attributed to these two leaders for opposing peace. As noted above, Brasidas is identified as opposing peace “on account of his success and his receiving honor from making war” (διὰ τὸ εὐτυχεῖν τε καὶ τιμᾶσθαι ἐκ τοῦ πολεμεῖν), while Cleon was “thinking that, if a period of rest were established, he would be more clear as a wicked man and less trustworthy in his attacks” (γενομένης ἡσυχίας καταφανέστερος νομίζων ἂν εἶναι κακουργῶν καὶ ἀπιστότερος διαβάλλον; 5.16.2). While scholars have often noted that Thucydides attributes markedly personal motivations to both leaders, many, such as Gomme (1956b: 660) and Westlake (1968: 82), identify Cleon’s motives as much less honorable than

²²⁸ See above (p. 158 n. 213) for my response to the historical argument that a peace established at this point in time would have accomplished nothing for the Athenians.

those of Brasidas.²²⁹ These deeply problematic reasons for opposing peace (which very closely resemble the reasons he opposes sending an embassy to appraise the situation at Pylos at 4.27.4) yet again cast him in an intensely negative light.²³⁰

This description is the final portrait Thucydides provides of Cleon, and his pairing with Brasidas is not accidental; just as the author implicitly juxtaposes Cleon and Pericles in his first appearance, here he directly invites readers to compare Cleon and Brasidas.²³¹ The narrative of the history has just made clear to readers that Brasidas' opposition to the war, even if for personal reasons, benefitted Sparta and brought it out of its low point in the war. At the same time, they have followed Thucydides' description of Cleon's career, in which he has encouraged the Athenians to forego reason and act on their emotions and acquisitiveness (and thus to continue the war despite their accomplishments at Pylos and Sphacteria; 3.38.1, 4.21.3), knowingly misled his countrymen in order to maintain his influence (4.27.4), and (most recently) proved drastically inferior to Brasidas in both military acumen and bravery (5.10.4, 9). Thus, while the policy of these two leaders may be similar, it produced drastically different results for their two cities. In terms of characterization, Brasidas' Athenian qualities are depicted as leading Sparta out of its nadir, while Cleon encourages the Athenians' pre-existing tendency to never be

²²⁹ For more on the personal nature of Brasidas and Cleon's motivations, see Gomme (1956b: 660), de Ste. Croix (1972: 153), Kallet-Marx (1993: 179–80), and Hornblower (1996: 462). At the same time, however, Brasidas' motivations closely resemble those of Nicias for supporting peace (5.16.1), and for opposing the Sicilian expedition (6.9.2). What is more, seeking honor was originally a Homeric virtue, but was alive and well in the fifth century (Carter 1986: 17), and was not mutually exclusive to benefitting one's state (Palmer 2015: 76). For more on Brasidas' motivations see Ch. 2, where I argue that his motivations are markedly *Athenian*, and that he therefore again provides an impetus the Spartans are identified as generally lacking, whereas here, as will be argued, Cleon is described as providing nothing of the sort.

²³⁰ "Notoriously, not the most objective-sounding sentence in all Th[ucydides]" (Hornblower 1996: 462). Westlake argues that Thucydides develops these motivations based on his assessment of Cleon's character (1968: 82).

²³¹ See Gribble 2006: 449 for more on this function of the passage.

satisfied with its accomplishments, and therefore causes them miss their most favorable opportunity for peace.²³²

Conclusion

Cleon is not an easy leader to assess; arguments can be made that history has been unfair to him, and that Athens actually achieved a great deal under his leadership. While these points must be acknowledged, when one is specifically discussing Thucydides, it becomes extremely difficult to conclude anything other than that Cleon appears as an extremely negative leader for Athens: he openly disparages reason and debate in favor of emotional responses, leads the Athenians to miss what Thucydides portrays as their best opportunity for peace, and does all of this based not only on personal, but deeply problematic motivations. Even when he is associated with an Athenian accomplishment, Thucydides downplays his role or rapidly moves past it.²³³ The question, then, ceases to be *whether* Cleon is a failed Athenian leader, and instead becomes, in Thucydides' model, *what makes him one*. I argue that, while he also lacks some key Periclean traits (particularly Pericles' moral uprightness; cf. 2.65.8), Cleon's failure ultimately stems from the fact that he is simply too Athenian in character to be a positive Athenian leader. As such, he is incapable of providing the moderating force that Thucydides portrays Athens as needing (and only Pericles as truly providing), and instead drives his city to act on the excesses inherent in its national character. There may have been a context in which Cleon could have been a successful and even positive leader, but Athens was not it.

²³² Connor sums up the differentiation between Cleon and Brasidas nicely: "While Cleon carries to an extreme the restless vigor of the Athenians, Brasidas, in his vigor, persuasiveness, decisiveness, and boldness, is a most untypical Spartan and seems to possess the qualities badly needed if his city is to succeed against Athens" (1984b: 129).

²³³ See my discussions of Cleon's role at Pylos/Sphacteria (pp. 157–61) and his activities in northern Greece before the Battle of Amphipolis (pp. 161–3).

Nicias

It is a somewhat difficult task to discuss the character of Nicias. His status as “Spartan” and “un-Athenian” in character has often been discussed, with scholars emphasizing the hesitation and self-doubt he displays during the Sicilian Expedition, as well as these behaviors’ disastrous consequences for the Athenians.²³⁴ Such an approach, however, overemphasizes one (albeit important) passage of the text, and overlooks the many other episodes in which Nicias participates. Indeed, presenting Nicias as synonymous with failure ignores the relative success with which he operates in multiple episodes prior to the ill-fated Sicilian Expedition. In fact, Alcibiades, Nicias’ political rival, cites this very reputation for success in his speech encouraging the Athenians to sail against Sicily (6.17.1). We must therefore develop a fuller portrait of Nicias, accounting for his actions and behavior throughout the entire work, not simply during the Sicilian Expedition. This chapter will, therefore, be divided into three sections: an analysis of Nicias’ actions in the war before the establishment of the peace bearing his name, a discussion of his motivations and behaviors during the establishment and observance of this peace, and finally an in-depth examination of his role in the buildup to and prosecution of the Sicilian Expedition. I argue that Thucydides’ depiction of Nicias before this doomed military undertaking allows readers to become acquainted with the Athenian politician and general’s individual character and tendencies, and to observe his risk-aversion, hesitancy, old-fashioned style of leadership, and desire to preserve the status quo; in essence, then, they become familiar with his generally “Spartan” tendencies. In Books 6 and 7, readers may then observe the result when such leadership is combined with the most “Athenian” of undertakings: the Sicilian expedition. This result is, of course, less than optimal, and demonstrates that Nicias’ leadership, rather than

²³⁴ Strauss (1964: 213) and Connor (1984: 41), for example, both identify Nicias as possessing a character that is much more Spartan than Athenian.

successfully moderating the Athenian tendency to swift, rash action (as I have argued that Pericles' leadership did), temporarily pushes it too far to the other extreme, resulting in a hesitancy and aversion to decisive action reminiscent of Spartan conduct in the first half of the war. This observation demonstrates that, just as leaders whose individual character is too close to that of their own *polis* cannot moderate its weaknesses, likewise a leader who possesses a character too close to that of his enemy will not provide the necessary, moderating corrective force, but will simply replace one set of flaws with another.

Nicias before Peace

Nicias' role in the work is relatively limited until his disagreement with Cleon concerning the Spartan soldiers trapped on Sphacteria in Book 4. He is mentioned numerous times as a general, but apart from seeing him listed as a commander, readers learn little about him. Unlike the other Athenians discussed in this chapter, he rarely seems interested in adding territory to the Athenian empire, and his only decisive action in the first half of the war is the establishment of the peace bearing his name (which Cleon prevents until his death). The military undertakings he leads are often successful (hence his reputation for good luck), but they are conducted in an entirely conventional way and rarely make any significant change in the power balance of the war. For example, he either leads the fortification of strategic positions, walls off an enemy, or raids the countryside. For example, at 3.51 he attacks the island of Minoa, off the coast of Megara, capturing the towers there and fortifying it with an Athenian garrison. Later in Book 3 he leads an expedition against Melos which fails to capture the city, and so ravages their land and departs (3.91.1–3). He joins the full Athenian army at Tanagra (commanded by Hipponicus and Eurymedon) where their combined forces win a battle over the Tanagrans and Thebans (3.91.4–

5).²³⁵ The rest of the army departs, but Nicias and his forces sail to Locri, lay waste to the coastal areas, and then return to Athens (3.91.5–6).

In all of these episodes Nicias is largely successful, and readers may understand the source of his reputation for good fortune. At the same time, however, all of his successes are extremely limited in their scope, and in their effect on the course of the war as a whole.²³⁶ His tactics are extremely conventional, and look strikingly similar to how Spartans like Archidamus conduct the war: devastate the countryside or establish a small garrison and go home.²³⁷ Moreover, when Nicias does score a victory in battle, he does not follow it up by pressing his advantage. He lacks the larger goals attributed to Demosthenes, Cleon, or Alcibiades, all of whom Thucydides describes as looking beyond the present to larger future goals—for Demosthenes, the capture of Aetolia leading to the conquest of Boeotia (3.94.3–95.1); for Cleon, turning the advantageous situation at Sphacteria into a total Athenian victory (4.21.3, 22.2–3); and for Alcibiades, seeking the conquest of Sicily while simultaneously looking past it to Italy and Carthage (6.15.2).

Thus, despite Nicias' limited role early in the work, readers have the opportunity to begin forming an impression of him. His lack of daring, and his marked inability to press the advantage contrast sharply with other Athenian leaders, as well as with the Corinthian depiction of

²³⁵ This begins a theme to which I will return in this chapter: Nicias' greatest successes almost always occur when he shares the command with other Athenian generals. One may, for example, cite his fortification of Cythera and harassment of the Spartan countryside together with Nicostratus and Autocles (4.53–7), or his recapture of Mende and Scione with Nicostratus (4.129.2–133.4). This trend places him in sharp contrast with Brasidas, for whom cooperation with or service under other Spartan generals consistently results in failure.

²³⁶ On this point, see Westlake, who argues that Nicias' undertakings produced victories of no real import, going on to say, "... while he escaped defeat, his half-successes afforded small compensation for the outlay involved" (1941: 59–60).

²³⁷ On the conventionality of the devastation of an opponent's countryside, see Hanson, who points out that "ravaging of cropland was central to warfare of most societies of the past," and that "for nearly 300 years war in Greece was inaugurated and often defined by a struggle to destroy, or protect, grain, vines, and olive trees" (1998: 4–5). For a more general discussion of Greek warfare at the time of the Peloponnesian War, see Gomme 1959: 10–15.

Athenian national character.²³⁸ The first impressions of Nicias which Thucydides provides, therefore, lead readers to suspect that his leadership differs significantly from other Athenian generals and politicians, such as Demosthenes and Cleon. The question then becomes, does Nicias represent a return to Thucydides' depiction of Periclean leadership, or is he something entirely new?

It is in Books 4 and 5 where the character of Nicias begins to come into focus, especially in his personal and political conflict with Cleon concerning the Spartans trapped on Sphacteria, and in his role in establishing peace. In the former episode Nicias appears relatively briefly, but Thucydides' portrayal of him confirms his conservatism in comparison to other Athenian leaders, and demonstrates his tendency to employ ineffective (and often counter-productive) rhetorical stratagems.²³⁹

When Nicias enters the narrative, Cleon has begun to fear that the Athenians blame him for the difficulties the army is facing, since he played the most important role in turning away the Spartans' previous overtures for peace (4.27.3). In an attempt to redirect the animus of the Athenian *demos*, he faults the current generals, referring directly to Nicias: καὶ ἐς Νικίαν τὸν Νικηράτου στρατηγὸν ὄντα ἀπεσήμαιεν, ἐχθρὸς ὢν καὶ ἐπιτιμῶν, ῥάδιον εἶναι παρασκευῆ, εἰ ἄνδρες εἶεν οἱ στρατηγοί, πλεύσαντας λαβεῖν τοὺς ἐν τῇ νήσῳ, καὶ αὐτός γ' ἄν, εἰ ἦρχε, ποιῆσαι τοῦτο ("And to Nicias the son of Niceratus, a general, he pointed, being his personal enemy and censuring him, [he said that] it was easy by preparation, if the generals were men, having sailed there to capture those on the island, and he himself would do this, if he were in command"; 4.27.5).

²³⁸ Compare Nicias' behavior to the description of the Athenians at 1.70.3–9.

²³⁹ Lateiner (1985: 202) notes that all of Nicias' bold political strategies end badly.

Having previously been introduced to the character of Cleon (especially during the Mytilenean debate), readers here learn that Nicias is his personal enemy and political opponent, and may therefore see the latter's conservatism set in stark relief with Cleon's energetic yet bombastic demands for immediate success.²⁴⁰

In what follows, Thucydides sets up and then undermines reader expectations, a literary technique which seems designed to mirror the experience of the Athenians (at least as the author presents it) and, more importantly, that of Nicias.²⁴¹ Indeed, when Nicias sees that the Athenians, instead of turning on him, are challenging Cleon to sail if he feels so confident, he offers to cede his position as general to his opponent (4.28.1). At this point, as discussed previously in this chapter, Thucydides' text makes it clear that Cleon is caught off guard and goes on the defensive. Moreover, he looks quite ridiculous, to the point that many scholars have noted the visibility of the historian's bias against him in this passage.²⁴² Nicias' gambit appears to have paid off, as Cleon finds himself in the seemingly impossible position of accepting a difficult command or withdrawing his objections and looking like a coward.

Two points must be noted, however. First and most obvious is the fact that, contrary to reader expectations, operations at Sphacteria result in a resounding victory for the Athenians (including the famously shocking capture of the Spartiates on the island) after Cleon assumes command.²⁴³ Thus, Nicias' risky rhetorical and political maneuver produces a result completely antithetical to its intention: rather than discrediting Cleon (or even removing him entirely from the political scene by his death), it ends with his opponent being bathed in glory. It appears, then,

²⁴⁰ See this chapter, pp. 151–79, for a more thorough examination of the character of Cleon.

²⁴¹ Connor (1984: 113) argues that Thucydides shapes the entire narrative surrounding the events at Pylos and Sphacteria to replicate the emotions (primarily surprise) experienced by the Athenians at the time.

²⁴² See, for example, Westlake 1941: 60. For a discussion of this passage focusing on Cleon, see this chapter, pp. 159–60.

²⁴³ See this chapter, pp. 157–61, for an in-depth discussion of Thucydides' construction of Cleon's role in the Athenian victory at Sphacteria.

that when Nicias puts aside his normally conservative behavior and attempts bold action, it results in absolute failure.

The second point in need of consideration is that while Thucydides certainly portrays Cleon negatively in his account of this confrontation, many scholars have noted that Nicias does not come away much better: he appears willing to allow the city and his fellow citizens to suffer in order to harm his political opponent, behavior that Westlake calls “not at all creditable” (1968: 60; see also Hornblower 1996: 188, Westlake 1941: 60, Woodhead 1960: 313–14, Gomme 1956b: 469, Henderson 1927: 216–17).²⁴⁴ The oft-proposed explanation for this passage is that Thucydides’ focus is on Cleon, not Nicias, and that as a result he passes over Nicias’ behavior without explicitly judging it.²⁴⁵

While the focus of this passage does indeed seem to be on Cleon, the modern reader is nevertheless likely to be struck by Nicias’ seemingly callous lack of concern for the suffering he and the “prudent men” (τοῖς σώφροσι τῶν ἀνθρώπων; 4.28.5) at Athens reserve for their soldiers serving at Pylos. Nicias appears to be more concerned with maintaining his own τιμή—and with politically damaging the man who has attacked him—than with the general well-being of his *polis*’ citizens. This appears to fly in the face of longstanding associations of Nicias with civic-

²⁴⁴ Plutarch (*Nic.* 8.1–2) states that public opinion deemed Nicias a coward for his willingness to give up command, citing Aristophanes *Av.* 639–40 and fr. 102 (in the first of which Aristophanes appears to chide Nicias’ characteristic hesitancy by deploying the clever verb μελλονικιάω). In addition, Plutarch claims that Alcibiades used Nicias’ behavior during the Pylos episode as a means to verbally attack him (*Alc.* 14.4–6).

²⁴⁵ Gomme, for example, argues that, “the light-hearted dereliction of duty by Nicias, though not concealed, is not explicitly condemned,” though he later states that Thucydides surely realized that Nicias’ decision contributed directly to the (disastrous) rise of Cleon (1956b: 469). Westlake takes a slightly softer view, simply stating that, “Thucydides neither condemns nor defends the attitude of Nicias; he ignores it. He is following his normal practice of directing the attention of the reader to the most significant aspect of an episode—in this instance the mixture of reprehensible qualities exhibited by Cleon—and avoiding all distractions” (1968: 88).

mindedness,²⁴⁶ and, moreover, turns on its head Pericles' claim that the individual citizen cannot prosper without first securing the success of his *polis* (2.60.2–4).²⁴⁷

It is at this point, then, that it first becomes truly clear that Nicias, although maintaining some of the policies and positions of Pericles, differs significantly from his predecessor.²⁴⁸ Passing over the fact that Nicias' political maneuver eventually backfires (which in and of itself appears entirely un-Periclean), this passage makes two related points clear. First, that Nicias' public position on the proper relationship between the individual and the state differs greatly from that which Pericles is portrayed as directly espousing. Indeed, while Pericles had claimed as a defining Athenian feature the placement of the community's well-being above personal gain (2.40.1–2, 42.4), and that individual citizens cannot prosper without the success of the *polis* (2.60.2–4), Nicias is visibly concerned with his own τιμή,²⁴⁹ to the apparently likely detriment of numerous Athenians.²⁵⁰

Second, this passage provides evidence that Nicias subscribes to what may be termed and “old-fashioned” idea of leadership, at least for Athens. This is because his emphasis lies on maintaining and defending his own honor when insulted by an opposing leader, Cleon (2.27.5,

²⁴⁶ See, for example, Rood (1998: 185–6), who claims that Nicias successfully combines the civic and the personal. Gribble (2006: 460), however, sees Nicias as regularly putting the personal before the civic, and identifies this as a flaw in his character.

²⁴⁷ Alcibiades in Book 6 (6.16.2–4) proposes his own version of the relationship between the individual and the city-state, arguing (it seems shockingly) that the individual's achievements can bring both glory and success to the *polis*. For more on this reversal, see De Bakker 2013: 35).

²⁴⁸ Nicias' position as being either a follower of Pericles or an opponent of his policies has been debated. West (1924: 125–34), for example, argues essentially that Nicias was “following in the footsteps of Pericles” (1924: 134). Müller-Strübing (1873: 390–6) and Burns (2012: 221), on the other hand, each argues that Nicias represented a departure from both the Periclean model of leadership and his approach to the war.

²⁴⁹ Thucydides uses the participle ἐπιτιμῶν to describe Cleon's rebuke of Nicias (2.27.5), and then repeats the same word when he describes Nicias' response: ὁ δὲ Νικίας ... ὁρῶν αὐτὸν ἐπιτιμῶντα ... (“And Nicias ... seeing [Cleon] rebuking him ...”; 2.28.1).

²⁵⁰ Whether or not Pericles' claims are meant to reflect the reality of Athens or, as I think more likely, were instead statements of democratic ideology is highly debatable. The behavior attributed to virtually all Athenian leaders after Pericles, however, seems to indicate that self-concern continued to play a primary role in decision-making.

28.1).²⁵¹ Nicias' concern with honor and identification with the older ways of his city-state are both consistent in Thucydides: one of Nicias' reasons for supporting the establishment of peace in 421 BCE is to maintain his position of honor (5.16.1); in trying to stop the Sicilian expedition, he appeals to the older generation to help him (6.13.1); after the failed raid on Epipolae in Sicily (7.48) he states his preference for an honorable death rather than returning to Athens and being blamed for the failure of the expedition; and he displays consistent religious reverence to an extent unobserved in most other Athenian leaders.²⁵² Focusing specifically on Nicias' concern for defending his individual honor, even if it means his fellow Athenians must suffer, such behavior is thematically reminiscent of Achilles' withdrawal from the Trojan War in the *Iliad*. After warning Agamemnon that he would regret his actions because without him many Greeks would die (Hom. *Il.* 1.239–44), and then complaining to his mother Thetis that he is not receiving the honor that is his due (Hom. *Il.* 1.352–6), Achilles goes so far as to send her to Zeus with the following request:

τῶν νῦν μιν μνήσασα παρέζεο καὶ λαβὲ γούνων
αἴ κέν πως ἐθέλησιν ἐπὶ Τρώεσσιν ἀρῆξαι,
τοὺς δὲ κατὰ πρύμνας τε καὶ ἀμφ' ἄλα ἔλσαι Ἀχαιοὺς
κτεινομένους, ἵνα πάντες ἐπαύρωνται βασιλῆος,
γυνῶ δὲ καὶ Ἀτρείδης εὐρὺ κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
ἦν ἄτην ὃ τ' ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν οὐδὲν ἔτισεν (Hom. *Il.* 1.407–12).

Sit by him, remind him of the things happening now, and take him by the knees
If somehow he is willing to give help to the Trojans,
And to hem in the Achaeans at their ships and around the sea
Dying, in order that all may enjoy their king,
And the son of Atreus wide-ruling Agamemnon may know
His folly, because he did not honor the best of the Achaeans at all.

²⁵¹ Indeed, Carter argues that the Homeric drive to fame and honor were as strong at the end of the fifth century as they were earlier (1986: 17).

²⁵² With reference to this last point, Westlake (1968: 203) calls Nicias' belief that the war in Sicily will turn around because of his religious observance old-fashioned, and goes on to claim that such views were incongruent with the intellectual movement current at Athens during the time Thucydides was writing. One could also reference, of course, his hesitation to depart after the solar eclipse (7.50.4). Such hesitation based on religious grounds identifies Nicias not only as old-fashioned, but—as demonstrated in Chapter 1—also as quite “Spartan.”

Achilles moves from claiming that Greeks will die to actively requesting that Zeus *cause* this to happen, all in the name of his own honor. This may strike modern readers as completely inappropriate behavior, but we must remember the regard in which the *Iliad*, and particularly the hero Achilles, were held in the ancient world.²⁵³ Just as Gomme (1956b: 459) and Westlake (1968: 88) argued, then, Thucydides is not necessarily passing moral judgment on Nicias. I argue that he is instead offering readers their first clear glimpse at the “old-fashioned” nature of his leadership, in an Athens that had largely moved past this model.²⁵⁴ He is, therefore, out of step both with Pericles, and with the other leaders of his day. What is more, this model of leadership identifies him as much more Spartan than Athenian. Indeed, one should not forget that in the *Republic*, Plato’s Socrates identifies Sparta as a timocracy inhabited by timocratic men (544c1–3, 545a2–3, 545b3–7).

At this point in the narrative, then, Thucydides has made clear to readers that Nicias maintains a cautious conservatism in war which insulates him from failure but limits the impact of his successes, and that he observes an outdated and (according to Pericles) un-Athenian model of leadership. In addition, readers have seen that Nicias can at times be associated with larger successes, but only when he shares command with other Athenian generals. The episodes that follow serve to strengthen and confirm this impression.

Such is the case in Thucydides’ description of events at and around Corinth in 425 BCE (4.42.1–45.2). With Nicias in command (4.42.1), the Athenians score an initial, hard-fought victory over the Corinthians (4.43.1–44.3), but withdraw when they learn of the imminent arrival

²⁵³ Zadorojnyi cites Homer as an “important factor” for Thucydides, and goes on to claim that the historian would have seen him as one of his predecessors (1998: 298–9). Pelling, meanwhile, notes that the worlds of Homer and Thucydides are sometimes “curiously close to one another” (1990: 260).

²⁵⁴ “The tragedy of Nicias lies with his attempt at applying traditional values in a world that has already outgrown them” (Zadorojnyi 1998: 302).

of enemy reinforcements (4.44.4–6). They then sail to the neighborhood of Crommyon and proceed to lay waste to its countryside. Next, they wall off Methana’s isthmus and establish a garrison, plunder the areas of Troezen, Halieis, and Epidaurus, and finally sail home.

Nicias does not serve as sole commander of this expedition, however. Indeed, the historian introduces this episode by stating that Nicias serves as general together with two others: ἐστρατήγει δὲ Νικίας ὁ Νικηράτου τρίτος αὐτός (“And Nicias the son of Niceratus was general, with two others”; 4.42.1). Thus, while the historian focuses the narrative on Nicias by naming him alone, readers may also note that Nicias again finds success while serving with other Athenian generals, just as earlier when he and the combined Athenian army defeated the Tanagrans and Thebans (3.91.4–5).

In addition, apart from the initial Athenian victory in direct battle with the Corinthians, Athenian forces exhibit largely conventional, risk-averse military behavior: they withdraw when faced with the arrival of reinforcements, and they then focus on devastation and investment of other territory. Thus, this expedition results in no decisive shifts in the balance of power in the war; in fact, it actually seems much more in line with the restrained Periclean strategy of ongoing military harassment.

Finally, Thucydides even appears to minimize Nicias’ role in this passage. After the historian identifies him as general at 4.42.1, he does not mention him again in this episode, whether by name or position. Instead, in his narrative of the battle and of the subsequent devastation of enemy territory, Thucydides simply attributes actions to “the Athenians” (4.42.3–4; 43.2–5; 44.1, 3, 5–6). This absence is conspicuous, and serves to diminish Nicias’ contribution

to the success of this operation—Thucydides is not untruthful, in that he mentions Nicias’ command, but he then quickly allows him to disappear into the background.²⁵⁵

The next passage in which Nicias appears—his expedition against Cythera (4.53.1–57.4), in which he and the Athenians capture and garrison the island of Cythera and attack the Laconian seaboard—shares many of these features as well. Indeed, this expedition is highly successful, as well as extremely effective in psychologically rattling the Spartans, coming as it does on the heels of the Athenian victory at Pylos and Sphacteria. Thucydides is explicit in stating the importance of Cythera to the Spartans, describing the consistent presence of a Spartan garrison there, the attention they paid to the island, and its role as both their primary port for merchant traffic and as a buffer against piracy in Laconia (4.53.2–3). In addition, Thucydides includes a lengthy description of Spartan morale after the Athenian capture of Cythera in which he makes it abundantly clear that they felt—at least temporarily—overwhelmed by seemingly endless Athenian (naval) aggression and good fortune:

ὥστε παρὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς ἰππέας τετρακοσίους κατεστήσαντο καὶ τοξότας, ἕξ τε τὰ πολεμικά, εἶπερ ποτέ, μάλιστα δὴ ὀκνηρότεροι ἐγένοντο, ξυνεστῶτες παρὰ τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν σφῶν ἰδέαν τῆς παρασκευῆς ναυτικῷ ἀγῶνι, καὶ τούτῳ πρὸς Ἀθηναίους, οἷς τὸ μὴ ἐπιχειρούμενον αἰεὶ ἐλλίπες ἦν τῆς δοκίσεώς τι πράξειν· καὶ ἅμα τὰ τῆς τύχης πολλὰ καὶ ἐν ὀλίγῳ ξυμβάντα παρὰ λόγον αὐτοῖς ἔκπληξιν μεγίστην παρεῖχε, καὶ ἐδέδισαν μὴ ποτε αὐθις ξυμφορὰ τις αὐτοῖς περιτύχη οἷα καὶ ἐν τῇ νήσῳ. ἀτολμότεροι δὲ δι’ αὐτὸ ἐς τὰς μάχας ἦσαν, καὶ πᾶν ὅτι κινήσειαν ὄνοντο ἀμαρτήσεσθαι διὰ τὸ τὴν γνώμην ἀνεχέγγυον γεγενῆσθαι ἐκ τῆς πρὶν ἀηθείας τοῦ κακοπραγεῖν. τοῖς δὲ Ἀθηναίοις τότε τὴν παραθαλάσσιον δηοῦσι τὰ μὲν πολλὰ ἠσύχασαν ... (4.55.1–56.1).

The result was that, contrary to their custom, they raised 400 horsemen and archers, and they became even more hesitant with respect to matters of war, if ever they were, having become involved in a naval contest, contrary to the existing form of their preparation, and this against the Athenians, for whom to not attempt a thing always fell short of their expectation that they would accomplish

²⁵⁵ Westlake (1968: 89–90) also notes that Nicias is not mentioned by name after 4.42.1 in this passage, but argues that this demonstrates that Thucydides was not focused on what this episode reveals about Nicias, as a person or as a leader. As above, I argue that the omission itself is demonstrative.

something. And at the same time many matters of fortune having in a short span turned out contrary to reason presented them with the greatest consternation, and they feared that at some point some disaster would again fall upon them like that on the island. And they were less daring with respect to battles on account of this, and they thought that whatever they set in motion would fail, on account of their having become unsure in their judgment from their earlier inexperience in faring badly. They very much kept still while the Athenians ravaged the seaboard ...

Thus, as mentioned above, this expedition proves extremely effective in further eroding Spartan morale, and is possibly the most thoroughly successful expedition in which Nicias takes part.²⁵⁶

The Athenian incursion drives the Spartans to give up on their one strength, and the very thing they had been trying to force the Athenians into from the very beginning of the war: a decisive land battle.

Despite the positive effects of this incursion against Cythera (for the Athenians), several important observations may be made concerning Nicias' role in the episode. First, he is introduced as sharing command with the generals Nicostratus and Autocles (4.53.1). Yet again, as mentioned above, Nicias' greatest successes come when he is paired with other commanders.²⁵⁷ He appears to have something to offer during a military expedition, but, as will become clear through an examination of his actions during the Sicilian Expedition, his leadership impulses move beyond being a moderating force for Athenian national character, and instead need to themselves be countered.

In addition, it is important to note the specific contexts in which Thucycides directly mentions Nicias. Indeed, the historian mentions him by name three times between 4.53.1 and 4.57.4: first, as mentioned above, in identifying him as a general (4.53.1); second, as negotiating the terms of surrender with the Cytherians (4.54.2); and finally to note the fact that Nicias had

²⁵⁶ For an extended discussion of the consequences of this expedition on Spartan morale, see Westlake 1968: 91.

²⁵⁷ See above, p. 172 n. 235.

previously negotiated with the Cytherians, which in this instance allowed the Athenians to agree to terms with them more quickly (4.54.3).

While an argument that Thucydides is suppressing Nicias' role in this passage would be difficult to make, given the fact that Nicias is the only general mentioned more than once,²⁵⁸ I believe we may surmise that the historian is in fact associating him with a specific set of behavioral tendencies. Nicias does not play a direct role in the aggressive, attacking style characteristic of Athenian warfare, but instead displays his desire to rapidly end hostilities on moderate terms. Thucydides actually breaks from his narrative to state that the terms Nicias offered to the Cytherians were better than those which other Athenians would have pursued, stating, δι' ὃ καὶ θάσσον καὶ ἐπιτηδειότερον τό τε παραυτίκα καὶ τὸ ἔπειτα τὰ τῆς ὁμολογίας ἐπράχθη αὐτοῖς· ἀνέστησαν γὰρ <ἄν> οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι Κυθηρίους, Λακεδαιμονίους τε ὄντας καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ Λακωνικῇ τῆς νήσου οὕτως ἐπικειμένης (“On account of which, the terms of the agreement, with respect to both the present and the future, were made more quickly and more advantageously for them. For the Athenians would have removed the Cytherians, both since they were Lacedaemonians and because the island lay so close to Laconia” (4.54.3).

Such aggressive behavior at its most extreme occurs, of course, after the Melians refuse to accept Athenian domination (5.1163–4). It seems, then, that Thucydides is informing his readers that Nicias' presence and intervention restrained his countrymen's treatment of the Cytherians.²⁵⁹ Well before the establishment of the peace of Nicias, therefore, the historian provides information that allows readers to associate Nicias not with conquest at any cost, but

²⁵⁸ Westlake directly remarks that Nicias plays a larger role in the narrative of this passage than in Thucydides' descriptions of previous expeditions (1968: 90–1).

²⁵⁹ Westlake (1968: 91) argues that the Athenians would have benefitted more from military action without negotiation.

with deal-making and putting a stop to direct hostilities. His individual tendencies are again antithetical to those generally associated with Athens.

The final episode in which Nicias appears before his role in the establishment of the peace accord bearing his name—his expedition to recapture Mende and Scione from Brasidas and the Peloponnesians—again bears many similarities to these previous episodes. For example, despite several setbacks, the expedition is largely successful: the Athenians recapture Mende, and successfully wall off Scione after the Peloponnesian garrison departs (4.129.2–131.2). As such, Nicias maintains his reputation for success.²⁶⁰ As Luginbill (1999: 149–50) notes, however, a hurried attack on a hill outside Mende by Nicias and then Nicostratus nearly results in the destruction of the whole army: καὶ ἐς ὀλίγον ἀφίκετο πᾶν τὸ στράτευμα τῶν Ἀθηναίων νικηθῆναι (“And the whole army of the Athenians came very close to being defeated”; 4.129.4). It is only after the popular party in the city attacks the Peloponnesians there and leaves the gates open that Nicias and the Athenians capture Mende (4.130.2–6). Indeed, Thucydides makes it clear in his narrative that the opening of the gates had not been arranged beforehand: οἱ δὲ Ἀθηναῖοι (ἤδη γὰρ καὶ ὁ Νικίας ἐπαναστρέψας πρὸς τῇ πόλει ἦν) ἐσπεσόντες ἐς τὴν Μένδην πόλιν, ἅτε οὐκ ἀπὸ ξυμβάσεως ἀνοιχθεῖσαν, ἀπάσῃ τῇ στρατιᾷ ὡς κατὰ κράτος ἐλόντες διήρπασαν (“And the Athenians—for Nicias had already turned around and was by the city—bursting into the city of Mende, because it had not been opened up based on an agreement, with their whole army plundered it as if having taken it by force ...”; 4.130.6). While the operation does ultimately result in the recapture of Mende, Thucydides presents Nicias’ success as a reflection of his good fortune.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ These setbacks were, however, almost very costly. As described by Thucydides, Nicias and Nicostratus’ attack on a hill outside Mende almost resulted in the loss of their entire army (Luginbill 1999: 149–50).

²⁶¹ On the attribution of Nicias’ capture of Mende to good fortune, see Westlake 1968: 92. For other passages mentioning Nicias’ good fortune, see 5.16.1, 6.17.1, and 7.77.2.

Additionally, readers may observe that Nicias yet again does not operate alone as general, but works alongside Nicostratus (4.129.2). Thus, the trend continues of seeing Nicias' more meaningful successes occurring when he shares the command with another general. This trend will be revisited in this chapter's discussion of the depiction of Nicias' leadership during the Sicilian expedition.

Before the establishment of the peace, then, despite the fact that Thucydides has spent very little time directly discussing Nicias' character, he has indirectly displayed certain important aspects of his personality. The conservatism of the majority of the expeditions he leads is apparent when compared with the adventurous, risky undertakings of Demosthenes and Cleon. While these last two Athenian generals and politicians look beyond their undertakings to greater conquest (at least as Thucydides reports it in his discussion of their internal motivations), when left to his own devices Nicias consistently achieves some minimal success, such as the devastation of a region's land (essentially the same strategy which the Spartans employ against Athens during the Archidamian War), and returns home to avoid disaster. Indeed, it is only when he works with other generals that the military enterprises with which he is associated achieve greater, more meaningful successes.

At the same time, the conservatism of Nicias' approach to the war is matched by his old-fashioned view of leadership, at least as viewed against the statements of democratic ideology which Thucydides places in the mouth of Pericles.²⁶² Instead of placing the good of the city before his own, Nicias clings to the notion that he must defend his own honor and good fortune in the face of insult from other politicians, even if it means many other citizens of his *polis* will suffer.

²⁶² See above, pp. 88–9.

The result of all of these observations is that, despite the fact that Nicias' regular appearance in the narrative makes it clear that he played a prominent and recurring role in the war, readers are left with the impression that this role may not have been particularly consequential. As Westlake describes it, "The record of the part played by Nicias in the history of the war up to this point is somewhat colourless, even superficial. It suggests that, although no other Athenian was so frequently entrusted with duties which offered opportunities to display powers of leadership, his contribution did not appear to Thucydides to be particularly important, original or instructive ... the reader is left with the feeling that his leadership was not such as was likely to bring about final victory in the war ..." (Westlake 1968: 93).²⁶³ While Westlake takes his observations to mean that Thucydides' "colourless" portrayal of Nicias reflects the author's belief that his interventions were not interesting and do not contribute much to a general understanding of the larger lessons of the war, I believe all of this contributes to Thucydides' larger portrayal of Nicias. In essence, Nicias is boring because he is supposed to be boring; he is a leader who lacks dynamism in the most dynamic of *poleis*, and thus whose individual character differs about as strongly as possible from that of Athens collectively. He is hesitant, extremely risk averse, and conservative—essentially, Spartan. At the same time, however, he does very occasionally attempt bold strategies, but they prove to be ill-timed or poorly implemented, and result in failure. It is on this note that we move on to Thucydides' depiction of Nicias during the establishment of the peace bearing his name and the buildup to the Sicilian Expedition.

²⁶³ In his earlier article on Nicias, Westlake also claims that Nicias' activities during the Archidamian war produced no important results, and that, "... while he escaped defeat, his half-successes afforded small compensation for the outlay involved" (1941: 59–60).

Nicias and the Peace

Just after listing Cleon and Brasidas as the primary opponents to peace during the Archidamian war, Thucydides lists those who supported the cessation of hostilities: Pleistoanax the Spartan and, of course, Nicias son of Niceratus. The reasoning which Thucydides provides for Brasidas and Cleon's opposition, and what this information tells readers about their character, has already been discussed. We now turn to the historian's explanation for why Nicias (and his Spartan counterpart) favored the establishment of peace:

τότε δὴ ἑκατέρῃ τῇ πόλει **σπεύδοντες τὰ μάλιστα τὴν ἡγεμονίαν** Πλειστοάναξ τε ὁ Πausανίου βασιλεὺς Λακεδαιμονίων καὶ Νικίας ὁ Νικηράτου, πλεῖστα τῶν τότε εὖ φερόμενος ἐν στρατηγίαις, πολλῶ δὴ μᾶλλον προουθυμοῦντο, Νικίας μὲν βουλόμενος, ἐν ᾧ ἀπαθὴς ἦν καὶ ἡξιούτο, διασώσασθαι τὴν εὐτυχίαν, καὶ ἕξ τε τὸ αὐτίκα πόνων πεπαῦσθαι καὶ αὐτὸς καὶ τοὺς πολίτας παῦσαι καὶ τῷ μέλλοντι χρόνῳ καταλιπεῖν ὄνομα ὡς οὐδὲν σφήλας τὴν πόλιν διεγένετο, νομίζων ἐκ τοῦ **ἀκινδύνου** τοῦτο ξυμβαίνειν καὶ **ὅστις ἐλάχιστα τύχη αὐτὸν παραδίδωσι, τὸ δὲ ἀκίνδυνον τὴν εἰρήνην παρέχειν** ... (5.16.1).

In fact at that time in each city, being **especially zealous for political supremacy**, Pleistoanax the son of Pausanias, king of the Lacedaemonians, and Nicias the son of Niceratus (who was most successful of his contemporaries in his generalships) were much more eager [for peace]; Nicias wishing to preserve his good fortune while he was still honored and without suffering, and in the present both to put a stop to his toils and to stop them for his citizens, and to leave as his reputation for the future that he lived his life having led his city to no error, believing that this came about from **a lack of danger and for the person who least hands himself over to fortune, and that peace offered this lack of danger** ...²⁶⁴

Thucydides' description of Nicias' internal reasoning for supporting peace is crucial in helping readers better understand the character that is being assigned to him. First, this passage reinforces the importance which Nicias places on his own station and honor in the *polis*.²⁶⁵ While some have read this as a character flaw, I argue, as earlier, that it is instead consistent with Nicias'

²⁶⁴ Despite the desire to avoid entrusting himself to chance which Thucydides attributes to Nicias, it has been noted in this chapter that on several occasions the historian portrays him as its beneficiary.

²⁶⁵ Gomme does point out, however, that Thucydides' discussion of Nicias' desire to end the toils of his countrymen makes clear that his motivations were not entirely personal (1956b: 663).

larger trend of being “old-fashioned”: while during the Sicilian Expedition Thucydides confronts readers with Nicias’ firm belief in the power of omens, in this passage he demonstrates his subscription to an earlier idea of political leadership, in which his own honor takes pride of place.²⁶⁶

In addition to Nicias’ observance of an older, heroic standard of leadership, Thucydides’ description also places a great deal of emphasis on his absolute rejection of risk. As has been noted, the expeditions over which Nicias exercises sole command often end quickly, taking on very limited goals (such as the devastation of enemy territory), and accomplishing little of lasting value.²⁶⁷ Again in the present passage, whether or not readers consider the establishment of peace to be a good thing, Thucydides describes Nicias’ desire to put a stop to the war as resulting from his deep-seated aversion to risk, and his desire to maintain a reputation for never leading his *polis* to disaster.²⁶⁸ This portrayal is completely at odds with the behavioral tendencies which have been attributed to the Athenians throughout the work, especially in the Corinthian comparison in Book 1. There, in describing the Athenians the Corinthian speaker says, αὐθις δὲ οἱ μὲν καὶ παρὰ δύναμιν τολμηταὶ καὶ παρὰ γνώμην κινδυνευταὶ καὶ ἐν τοῖς δεινοῖς εὐέλπιδες (“And again they are daring beyond their strength and run risk beyond [good] judgment and are hopeful in dire straits”; 1.70.3), and goes on, καὶ ἃ μὲν ἂν ἐπινοήσαντες μὴ ἐπεξέλθωσιν, οἰκείων στέρεσθαι ἠγοῦνται (“And if they think of anything but do not carry it out, they believe that they are deprived of their own possessions”; 1.70.7). He then informs readers that the Athenians are constantly engaged in acquisition, and actively abhor inactivity (ἡσυχία; 1.70.8).²⁶⁹ As

²⁶⁶ For an earlier example of this Nician character trait, see above, pp. 176–8.

²⁶⁷ See above (p. 185) for Westlake’s (1968: 93) comments on the disconnect between Nicias’ high level of participation in the Archidamian War, and the minimal effects he had on its progress.

²⁶⁸ Hornblower argues that this latter sentiment is ironic, since Nicias later acts as general during the Sicilian Expedition, the greatest Athenian disaster of the war (1996: 464).

²⁶⁹ For a fuller discussion of Athenian national character, see the first chapter of this dissertation.

mentioned above, Thucydides states that the Spartans have received just this impression from the Athenians after events at Pylos/Sphacteria and Cythera. Indeed, the historian identifies the Spartans as fearing their present circumstances because they feel unprepared for the war in which they find themselves involved, being naval in nature, καὶ τούτῳ πρὸς Ἀθηναίους, οἷς τὸ μὴ ἐπιχειρούμενον αἰεὶ ἐλλειπὲς ἦν τῆς δοκίσεώς τι πράξειν (“and this against the Athenians, **for whom the thing not attempted was always lacking their expectation that they would accomplish something**”; 4.55.2).

Nicias, however, shows no such concern for missing opportunities for further acquisition. Instead, Thucydides attributes to him a desire to preserve his good fortune and to avoid failure.²⁷⁰ Nicias therefore does not see future action as an opportunity for further accomplishment, but as a source of risk to be avoided. To summarize, one might say he wishes to preserve what he already has—a position which may be recognized as markedly Spartan.²⁷¹ As we will see, this impulse will not result in Nicias acting as a moderating force for Athens, as was the case with Pericles, but will instead—especially when he serves as general alone or acts as the dominant commander—turn the Athenian forces serving under him into habitual delayers, often with disastrous consequences.

Many of the same features of Nicias’ character persist in his other appearances during the peace. For example, during the cessation of direct hostilities between Athens and Sparta, there is a famous confrontation between Nicias and Alcibiades which puts the contrast in their characters in sharp focus. Alcibiades, because he wants to make an alliance with the Argives, Eleans, and Mantineans, seeks to discredit Spartan ambassadors who have arrived at Athens. As such, he

²⁷⁰ Pointing to passages such as 1.144.3 and 2.63.2–3, Gomme argues that this attitude is very different from that of Pericles (1956b: 663).

²⁷¹ See, for example, 1.70.2, where the Corinthian speaker says to the Spartans, ὑμεῖς δὲ τὰ ὑπάρχοντά τε σφύζειν (“but *you* are accustomed to preserve what exists”; 1.70.2).

convinces them to falsely claim in the Assembly that they have not been granted plenipotentiary powers, and when they do he publicly attacks them, and in the process turns the Athenian people against them (5.45.1–4).

What this passage tells readers about Alcibiades, his motivations, and his character will be discussed in detail in the next chapter; what is of interest at present is Nicias' reaction to this development. The next day, Nicias addresses the assembly and states that postponing the war is in the Athenians' advantage: λέγων ἐν μὲν τῷ σφετέρῳ καλῷ, ἐν δὲ τῷ ἐκείνων ἀπρεπεῖ τὸν πόλεμον ἀναβάλλεσθαι (“Saying that delaying the war was in their favor, and unfavorable for them [the Spartans]”; 5.46.1). He then goes on to claim that σφίσι μὲν γὰρ εὖ ἐστώτων τῶν πραγμάτων ὡς ἐπὶ πλείστον ἄριστον εἶναι διασώσασθαι τὴν εὐπραγίαν, ἐκείνοις δὲ δυστυχοῦσιν ὅτι τάχιστα εὖρημα εἶναι διακινδυνεύσαι (“with matters going well for them [the Athenians] as long as possible, it was best to preserve their success, but that for them [the Spartans], since they were doing poorly, it was necessary to make a desperate chance attempt as quickly as possible”; 5.46.1).

In these statements attributed to Nicias, Thucydides persists in emphasizing three important characteristics: the politician's recurrent desire to delay action; his related, deep-seated desire to avoid risk wherever possible; and his particularly un-Athenian desire (or perhaps one should simply say willingness) to preserve the status quo. Just as before when the historian discussed Nicias' internal motives for supporting the establishment of peace, here Thucydides has him directly voice many of the same sentiments. As such, he attempts to convince his fellow Athenians to eschew their tendency to desire more (a tendency to which Alcibiades' policy appeals), and, moreover, attempts to invert the traditional behavioral patterns of Athens and

Sparta: Sparta seeks risky gain to improve their situation, but we Athenians would be served best by simply holding onto what we have.

Nicias' actions following his address to the Athenians also reflect his established character. After advising the Athenians to delay war, maintain their friendship with Sparta, and preserve their current general good fortune, he proceeds to Sparta as part of an embassy to demand that they return Panactum and Amphipolis, and renounce their alliance with the Boeotians, unless the latter group accepts the current treaty (5.46.2). This attempt to strengthen the fraying peace fails almost completely, however. Thucydides describes the Spartan response, and Nicias' weak attempt to salvage the embassy as follows:

τὴν μὲν ξυμμαχίαν οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι Βοιωτοῖς οὐκ ἔφασαν ἀνήσειν, ἐπικρατούντων τῶν περὶ τὸν Ξενάρη τὸν ἔφορον ταῦτα γίνεσθαι καὶ ὅσοι ἄλλοι τῆς αὐτῆς γνώμης ἦσαν, τοὺς δὲ ὄρκους δεομένου Νικίου ἀνεπέσσαντο• ἐφοβεῖτο γὰρ μὴ πάντα ἀτελεῖ ἔχων ἀπέλθῃ καὶ διαβληθῆ, ὅπερ καὶ ἐγένετο, αἴτιος δοκῶν εἶναι τῶν πρὸς Λακεδαιμονίους σπονδῶν. ἀναχωρήσαντός τε αὐτοῦ ὡς ἤκουσαν οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι οὐδὲν ἐκ τῆς Λακεδαίμονος πεπραγμένον, εὐθὺς δι' ὀργῆς εἶχον, καὶ νομίζοντες ἀδικεῖσθαι (ἔτυχον γὰρ παρόντες οἱ Ἀργεῖοι καὶ οἱ ξύμμαχοι) παραγαγόντος Ἀλκιβιάδου ἐποιήσαντο σπονδὰς καὶ ξυμμαχίαν πρὸς αὐτοὺς τήνδε (5.46.4–5).

The Lacedaemonians refused to dissolve their alliance with the Boeotians, with Xenares the ephor and his partisans bringing about that these things happen, and however many others were of the same opinion; but with Nicias requesting it they renewed the oaths, for he feared lest he go away having accomplished nothing and be slandered (which very thing even happened), seeming to be the cause of the treaty with the Lacedaemonians. And so after he returned, when the Athenians heard that nothing had had been accomplished in Lacedaemon, immediately they were angry with him, and believing that they had been wronged (for the Argives and their allies happened to be present), with Alcibiades bringing them forward they made the treaty and alliance with them.

The first thing that may strike readers about this passage is just how thoroughly Alcibiades outmaneuvers Nicias in this episode.²⁷² Nicias' inability to persuade the Athenians to follow his advice will, of course, again play a decisive role in their decision to enter upon the Sicilian Expedition. Moving beyond the immediate issue of the comparative rhetorical and political skill of these two political and military commanders, however, it is also necessary to access what this statement tells us about the deeper characterization which Thucydides applies to Nicias.

Three familiar observations may be taken from Thucydides' description of Nicias' internal deliberations and actions while in Sparta. First, just as in his public spat with Cleon in Book 4 during the Pylos/Sphacteria episode, and just as he will do in his debate with Alcibiades just before the Sicilian expedition, here again Nicias makes the rare (and ill-fated) decision to adopt a risky strategy, this time by publicly asking the Athenians to wait while he goes with an embassy to Sparta, thus making himself personally responsible for its results. Yet again, his attempt at risk backfires, and in this case, Alcibiades gets exactly what he wants: an alliance with the Argives, Eleans, and Mantineans. As will be argued is the case with Spartan leaders, on the rare occasion when a leader whose personality skews strongly toward extreme hesitation attempts to be bold or take a risk, such an undertaking almost always ends in failure. Time and again it simply seems like Nicias lacks the ability to properly deploy boldness in the way that has made Athens so generally successful.

Additionally, when Nicias fails to obtain the concessions he hoped from the Spartans, he yet again displays his concern for his own position in Athens. This concern, which leads Nicias to ask the Spartans to renew their oaths—a move which Mynott describes as a “hollow gesture” (2013: 352 n.1)—is part of his antiquated view of Athenian leadership based on older heroic

²⁷² The character of Alcibiades is discussed at length in the next chapter.

models. Moreover, as has been demonstrated, it brought about Nicias' impulse to turn over command to Cleon in the above-mentioned Pylos episode, and as will be discussed momentarily, plays a major role in preventing him from withdrawing from Sicily after the tide turns against the Athenians.

Finally, Thucydides yet again displays Nicias' tendency to do just enough to allow him to claim success, or at least that he was not unsuccessful. As mentioned above, in describing Nicias' participation in the war before the peace of Nicias, Westlake says, "the reader is left with the feeling that his leadership was not such as was likely to bring about final victory in the war" (1968: 93), and that, "while he escaped defeat, his half-successes afforded small compensation for the outlay involved" (1941: 59–60). Nicias brings such "success" to his embassy to Sparta, although this time it simply is not enough to placate the Athenians, whom Alcibiades has stirred up.

To summarize, Nicias' appearances in Book 5 serve to reinforce many of the character traits which Thucydides' narrative attributed to him indirectly and largely piecemeal in Books 3 and 4. It thus helps readers in their transition from this earlier, sporadic characterization of Nicias into Books 6 and 7, in which Thucydides will enter into a much more extended examination of his old-fashioned, "Spartan" behavioral tendencies, and their effect on the most acquisitive, risk-tolerant, and "Athenian" of all undertakings: the Sicilian expedition.

Nicias and the Sicilian Expedition

Moving into Books 6 and 7, Nicias' character becomes of primary importance to the development of the narrative. Indeed, his participation in the war becomes a focal point for Thucydides, beginning with his two speeches just before the outset of the Sicilian Expedition.

These speeches have been discussed quite often, reflecting both scholars' general analytical emphasis on the speeches in Thucydides, and, more specifically, their fascination with the contrast that the historian creates between Nicias and Alcibiades, and their respective relationships with the *demos*. For the moment, I will focus on what these speeches demonstrate about the character of Nicias. I will return to this passage in the next chapter for a more in-depth discussion of Alcibiades.²⁷³

Even before Nicias' first speech in opposition to the expedition, Thucydides makes his position clear to readers. He reports that the Athenians chose Nicias to serve as general for the expedition against his will, and describes Nicias' opinion as follows: νομίζων δὲ τὴν πόλιν οὐκ ὀρθῶς βεβουλευῆσθαι, ἀλλὰ προφάσει βραχείᾳ καὶ εὐπρεπεῖ τῆς Σικελίας ἀπάσης, μεγάλου ἔργου, ἐφίεσθαι (“thinking that the city was not counseled rightly, but that it aimed at all of Sicily—a great deed—on a slight and convenient pretext”; 6.8.4). At this point in the narrative Thucydides has already confirmed that the conquest of Sicily is indeed the true aim of this expedition (6.6.1),²⁷⁴ and thus readers will see that Nicias' judgment is at least partially correct. At the same time, however, readers will also recall his oft-established aversion to risk, and see this as yet another episode in which he desires to temper Athenian acquisitiveness. Whether one believes that the Sicilian Expedition was a good or bad idea,²⁷⁵ Nicias sees it as an unnecessary and avoidable risk, and opposes it largely on this basis—a response that is consistent with his

²⁷³ Specifically, see pp. 236–48.

²⁷⁴ τοσαῦτα ἔθνη Ἑλλήνων καὶ βαρβάρων Σικελίαν ᾗκει, καὶ ἐπὶ τοσὴνδε οὖσαν αὐτὴν οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι στρατεύειν ὄρμητο, ἐφίεμενοι μὲν τῇ ἀληθεστάτῃ προφάσει τῆς πάσης ἄρξαι, βοηθεῖν δὲ ἅμα εὐπρεπῶς βουλόμενοι τοῖς ἑαυτῶν ξυγγενέσι καὶ τοῖς προσγεγενημένοις συμμαχοῖς (“So many races of Greeks and barbarians inhabited Sicily, and against this [island] being of such a size the Athenians rushed to make an expedition, the truest cause being that they desired to rule the whole [island], but at the same time speciously wishing to come to the aid of those who were related to them and the allies who were attached to them”; 6.6.1).

²⁷⁵ Thucydides' own opinion has been remarkably hard to pin down, due to the contrast between his remarks at 2.65.11–12 and 6.15.4 in which he appears to believe it could have succeeded, and his seeming agreement with Nicias' judgment that the Athenians grossly underestimated the size of Sicily and the amount of resistance they would encounter upon arrival.

established character, and which is clearly at odds with Athenian collective behavioral tendencies.²⁷⁶

Moving into Nicias' first speech, readers see him resort to a number of arguments which either recall statements he made earlier in the work, or which reflect internal attitudes which Thucydides has previously attributed to him. For example, at 6.9.2, in excusing himself for opposing the expedition, Nicias claims that a leader may look to his own interests while still being a good citizen. In fact, he goes so far as to say that individuals who give thought to their own good will be *particularly* good citizens: καίτοι ἔγωγε καὶ τιμῶμαι ἐκ τοῦ τοιούτου καὶ ἦσσον ἐτέρων περὶ τῷ ἑμαυτοῦ σώματι ὀρρωδῶ, νομίζων ὁμοίως ἀγαθὸν πολίτην εἶναι ὃς ἂν καὶ τοῦ σώματός τι καὶ τῆς οὐσίας προνοῆται· μάλιστα γὰρ ἂν ὁ τοιοῦτος καὶ τὰ τῆς πόλεως δι' ἑαυτὸν βούλοιοτο ὀρθοῦσθαι (“And though I am even honored for such a thing, and I shrink from things out of concern for my own body less than others, nevertheless I believe that he is equally a good citizen, whoever gives some thought to his body and his wealth; for such a person would especially wish for the matters of the *polis* to be set right, on his own account”; 6.9.2).

At first glance, this claim appears similar to that which Thucydides attributes to Pericles earlier in the work:

ἐγὼ γὰρ ἠγοῦμαι πόλιν πλείω ζύμπασαν ὀρθομένην ὠφελεῖν τοὺς ἰδιώτας ἢ καθ' ἕκαστον τῶν πολιτῶν εὐπραγοῦσαν, ἀθρόαν δὲ σφαλλομένην. καλῶς μὲν γὰρ φερόμενος ἀνὴρ τὸ καθ' ἑαυτὸν διαφθειρομένης τῆς πατρίδος οὐδὲν ἦσσον ξυναπόλλυται, κακοτυχῶν δὲ ἐν εὐτυχουσίᾳ πολλῶ μάλλον διασώζεται. ὁπότε οὖν πόλις μὲν τὰς ἰδίας ξυμφορὰς οἷα τε φέρειν, εἷς δ' ἕκαστος τὰς ἐκείνης ἀδύνατος, πῶς οὐ χρὴ πάντας ἀμύνειν αὐτῇ, καὶ μὴ ὃ νῦν ὑμεῖς δρᾶτε (2.60.2–4).

For I believe that the entire *polis*, when upright, benefits the private citizens more than when it prospers according to individual citizens, but suffers as a whole. For a man who is doing well in his own matters is no less destroyed if the fatherland is ruined, but an unfortunate man in a successful [*polis*] is preserved to a much greater degree. And so since a *polis* is able to bear private misfortunes, but each

²⁷⁶ Cf., for example, 1.70.7 or 4.55.2. For more on Athenian national character, see Chapter 1.

individual is unable [to bear] those [of the *polis*], how is it not necessary for all to guard it, and not [to do] what you are presently doing?

Both Athenian generals prioritize the collective good over that of the individual, but there are a few key differences between their positions. For Pericles, individual success is meaningless without ensuring the success of the state, and so must be the focus of the citizen's efforts; for Nicias, on the other hand, the successful citizen who is also reasonable—and who therefore realizes the importance of collective success—will inevitably work hard to ensure that his *polis* “when upright” (ὀρθοῦσθαι; 6.9.2). Thinking of one's own good is thus completely acceptable, because the desire to preserve one's good fortune leads to positive action for the city-state. In fact, this position justifying looking to his own good is strangely similar to the claim which Alcibiades makes in the speech that follows: that the deeds which he does for himself contribute to the greatness of Athens (6.16.2–4). In a certain way, Alcibiades is also claiming that thinking of himself leads him to benefit his *polis*. It seems that Nicias may address this issue (though not necessarily intentionally) when he accuses Alcibiades (though not by name) of harming Athens by thinking *only* of himself (6.12.2).²⁷⁷

Further consideration of the context in which Pericles and Nicias make these claims, and what specifically they are asking from their citizens, will help in understanding what makes them different. Pericles, speaking after the Athenians have suffered from the outbreak of the plague in 430 BCE, is emphasizing the importance of the collective good in relation to the private good to convince his fellow citizens to continue to persevere and sacrifice in the cause of the war. In Pericles' speech, then, the *polis* “being set right” (ὀρθουμένην) is one that is not defeated in an active war with the Peloponnesians.

²⁷⁷ For an extended discussion of Alcibiades' take on the relationship between public and private interests, see the next chapter.

In Nicias' case, however, peace has been established between the Athenians and the Spartans (however tenuous it may be), and the ultimate goal of his speech is to *prevent* the Athenians from entering upon an expedition which he views as unnecessary and risky. Thus, while Pericles encourages continued sacrifice on behalf of the city, Nicias attempts to justify asking the Athenians to do *nothing*; the version of "setting the *polis* right" (ὀρθοῦσθαι) which results from Nicias thinking of his own good—the preservation of his own good fortune and safety—involves the Athenians sacrificing nothing other than their own acquisitive desires. Therefore, while most readers would agree that Nicias' judgment concerning the Sicilian Expedition is actually prudent, it is nevertheless necessary to recognize that what he asks of the Athenians here, and the reasons for which he asks it, differ significantly from the positions attributed to Pericles: the latter calls on the Athenians to continue their suffering and action, the former calls on them to *avoid* these things and, in so doing, preserve their present fortune.

This approach to leadership, in which Nicias publicly claims his right to look to his own personal good in decision-making, is highly reminiscent of the *internal* reasons for supporting the establishment of peace which Thucydides attributes to him at 5.16.1. As previously discussed,²⁷⁸ these reasons were predominantly personal, and centered on his own honor and position in Athens. Here, then, in directly claiming his right to think of his own good in public deliberation, Nicias confirms the impression of himself that Thucydides had given readers when he claimed to know his reasons for supporting the peace. This position is, as I have claimed several times, part of his subscription to an older standard of leadership—a point reflected in the fact that he is also depicted as calling on the older generation of Athenians to support him by providing the benefit of their forethought, and voting against the expedition (6.13.1).

²⁷⁸ See above, pp. 186–7.

In addition to his outdated ideas on leadership, it is worth noting that in this passage Nicias yet again effectively calls on the Athenians to preserve what they have—in this case, their current position, which he argues is advantageous to them and detrimental to Sparta. It goes almost without saying, at this point, that such an approach to international relations is actually quite “Spartan,” and reveals yet again Nicias’ risk-aversion.²⁷⁹ This after he directly addresses Athenian collective character, staying, καὶ πρὸς μὲν τοὺς τρόπους τοὺς ὑμετέρους ἀσθενῆς ἂν μου ὁ λόγος εἴη, εἰ **τά τε ὑπάρχοντα σώζειν** παραινοίην καὶ μὴ τοῖς ἐτοίμοις περὶ τῶν ἀφανῶν καὶ μελλόντων κινδυνεύειν (“And against your ways my speech would be weak, if I should advise you both to preserve what you have and not to run risks with things that are already at hand for unsure things in the future”; 6.9.3).²⁸⁰ He then promises that he plans simply to demonstrate that what the Athenians are zealous to do is neither easy nor coming at an opportune moment (6.9.3), but in reality Nicias is in fact doing exactly what he claims would be ineffective: he asks them to turn away from risk-taking and to be happy with what they have already accomplished. It seems that even Nicias should not be surprised, then, when Alcibiades’ speech in response (which directly appeals to the Athenians to be *true* to their character) is much more persuasive.²⁸¹

After Alcibiades’ speech, Thucydides reports that the Athenians were even more enamored of the expedition. Nicias, recognizing the present state of affairs, rises and addresses his countrymen again. In so doing, he provides what appears to be quite prudent advice, informing the Athenians that Sicily is much larger than they believe, and that many of the

²⁷⁹ See 1.70.2, 4, as well as the extended discussion of “preservation” as a Spartan attribute in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

²⁸⁰ See Chapter 1 (p. 48) for a discussion of this passage’s implications for readers’ understanding of Athenian national character.

²⁸¹ See Chapter 1 (pp. 49–50) for a specific examination of Alcibiades’ comments on the Athenian character, and Chapter 4 (pp. 236–48) for more on Alcibiades’ speech as a whole, and what it tells readers about his individual character.

Sicilians will not come over to their side willingly (6.20.2–4).²⁸² Thucydides reports, however, that this is all part of a rhetorical gambit, in which Nicias demands such a large force that he believes he will either deter the Athenians from the expedition or ensure its safety (6.24.1).²⁸³

Yet again, however, Nicias' decision to take a risk backfires. Indeed, he misjudges his Athenian audience, and not only does he further inflame the Athenian desire for conquest in the present (6.24.3), but later when the expedition is just about to set out and the magnitude and risk of the undertaking begins to hit home for the Athenians, it is its overwhelming size from which they draw courage (6.31.1). Thus, Thucydides portrays Nicias, whose opposition to the expedition the historian makes clear throughout the beginning of Book 6, as actually *causing* it to be launched. In addition, when the expedition fails, he becomes responsible for its costliness in Athenian resources and lives. It seems, then, that whenever Nicias, habitually hesitant and risk-averse general that he is,²⁸⁴ adopts a bold strategy, readers should expect it to fail.²⁸⁵

After Nicias fails to prevent the Sicilian Expedition, he reluctantly accompanies it to its destination.²⁸⁶ In the examination that follows, I will divide the expedition into three periods: the

²⁸² A point which turns out to be true.

²⁸³ Nicias also claims that he desires to entrust himself to fortune as little as possible (ὅτι ἐλάχιστα τῇ τύχῃ παραδοὺς ἑμᾶντὸν βούλομαι ἐκπλεῖν; 6.23.3). One may compare this statement to the belief, attributed to him by Thucydides at 5.16.1, that the surest way to preserve his security and reputation is to avoid entrusting himself to fortune.

²⁸⁴ In fact, Thucydides reports that, after Nicias' second speech, an unnamed Athenian comes forward and directly accuses him of hesitation: καὶ τέλος παρελθὼν τις τῶν Ἀθηναίων καὶ παρακαλέσας τὸν Νικίαν οὐκ ἔφη χρῆναι προφασίζεσθαι οὐδὲ διαμέλλειν, ἀλλ' ἐναντίον ἀπάντων ἤδη λέγειν ἦντινα αὐτῷ παρασκευὴν Ἀθηναῖοι ψηφίσωνται ("And finally a certain Athenian, having come forward and called upon Nicias, said that it was necessary not to make excuses or delay, but in the presence of all to now say what sort of preparation the Athenians should vote for him"; 6.25.1).

²⁸⁵ For more on the failure of Nicias' bold strategies, see Lateiner 1985: 202. The sole exception I have found to this trend occurs at 6.102.2–3, when the Syracusans attack the Round Fort, where Nicias has been left due to illness. In order to defend his position, he sets fire to the siege equipment and the wood by the wall, which turns his enemies away. In the next section of this chapter I argue that this attribute (incorrect/unsuccessful utilization of risk) is a consistent feature of "Spartan" character, as it also holds true for many of the Spartan commanders in the Peloponnesian War. Indeed, at times it seems as though Thucydides is demonstrating that some individuals simply cannot deploy boldness in a winning way.

²⁸⁶ Indeed, at 6.23.3 he offers to resign his command. Hermocrates in Syracuse is somehow aware of this fact, as he reports the following to his countrymen: ἄλλως τε καὶ τοῦ ἐμπειροτάτου τῶν στρατηγῶν, ὡς ἐγὼ ἀκούω, ἄκοντος ἡγουμένου καὶ ἀσμένου ἂν πρόφασιν λαβόντος, εἴ τι ἀξιοχρεῶν ἀφ' ἡμῶν ὀφθεῖν ("especially since the most

first phase (before the death of Lamachus), the second phase (while Nicias commands, before the arrival of Demosthenes), and the final phase. In each phase I will point out a few specific examples that best demonstrate Nicias' character, and its effect on the expedition.

For the first phase, we may begin with the war council which the generals Nicias, Lamachus, and Alcibiades hold at Rhegium before the commencement of hostilities in Sicily. Nicias proposes his recommended approach to operations first: he believes that the Athenians should sail against Selinus, and if Egesta can produce the money they have promised, the generals can then make further plans.²⁸⁷ If the Egestans do not have the money, they will provision the 60 ships which they requested, the Athenians will force the Selinuntians to come to terms, sail along the coast to demonstrate their power and commitment to their allies, and then go home (unless an easy means of helping the Leontines presents itself in the meantime). The report of Nicias' opinion closes with the following: καὶ τῇ πόλει δαπανῶντας τὰ οἰκεῖα μὴ κινδυνεύειν (“and not to run a risk, consuming the city's own resources”; 6.47.1).

The strategy which Nicias espouses here reflects numerous elements of his character that have already been discussed in this chapter. For example, as noted above, in Thucydides' narrative of the Archidamian War readers have seen Nicias operate in conventional, highly limited ways time and again, finding some minimal success that will allow him to return home without being accused of accomplishing nothing, but which makes little difference in the overall war effort.²⁸⁸ Here again Nicias clearly seeks to limit the goals of the expedition as much as possible.²⁸⁹ Moreover, in the reasoning he provides for such a limited approach to the Athenians'

experienced of their generals, as I hear, is leading [the expedition] unwillingly, and would seize upon a pretext of weakness, if something worth reporting should be seen from us”; 6.34.6).

²⁸⁷ Mynott (2013: 415 n. 2) and Hornblower (2008: 424) both point out that the objectives of the Sicilian Expedition are identified inconsistently. For example, cf. 6.20.3 (Selinus and Syracuse) and 7.11.2 (Syracuse).

²⁸⁸ See above, esp. pp. 172, 178–9.

²⁸⁹ Mynott simply says, “It suits Nicias here to limit the purpose as far as he can” (2013: 415 n.2).

undertaking, Nicias calls on the other generals not to risk the Athenians' resources (6.47.1). His risk-aversion (and his desire to preserve what the Athenians already have)²⁹⁰ is the basis which has determined his strategy, and remains a consistent feature of his character.

The other generals do not, of course, adopt this plan, as Lamachus and Alcibiades each propose their own, more aggressive approaches to the expedition, with the former eventually lending his support to the latter (6.48–50.1).²⁹¹ Thus, a more "Athenian" strategy wins out, and, as we will see, eventually leave the more "Spartan" Nicias alone in charge of an expedition he is ill-equipped to manage.

The final point indicative of Nicias' character during the first phase of the Sicilian Expedition is that he is actually mentioned very little during this early, largely successful period. Indeed, after providing a brief exhortation to the Athenian forces before their first battle with the Syracusans (6.68) and subsequently leading the army into the field (6.69.1), there is a gap in which Thucydides refers only to "the Athenians" or "the generals" until 6.101.6, when the historian describes the death of Lamachus. After this point, Nicias assumes sole command of Athenian forces (6.103.3), and individually takes on a much more prominent position in the narrative.

Why, then, would Nicias fade to the background for much of the first phase of the Sicilian Expedition? As I have discussed above, Nicias' most successful enterprises during the

²⁹⁰ Cf. 1.70.2,

²⁹¹ It is interesting to note that, at 6.63.2, Thucydides reports in his own authorial voice that the Syracusans' confidence grows daily because the Athenians fail to attack right away, which is exactly what Lamachus predicted. Scholarly opinion on the merits of each general's strategy are divided. Lazenby (2004: 139) thinks there is reason to believe that Nicias' opinion was correct. Hornblower, on the other hand, claims, "Surely the only sound conclusion from this modern disagreement is that in bk. 6, at least, Th. did not, for the moment, want to tilt his presentation obviously in favour of any one of the three" (2008: 424). See also Gomme, Andrews, and Dover 1970: 315 (who believes Lamachus is likely correct) and Cawkwell 1997: 83 (who finds Alcibiades' plan preferable).

Archidamian War occur when he works with other, more aggressive generals.²⁹² Based on this observation, I believe Thucydides here wishes to portray Nicias as contributing little to the expedition's most successful phase, and instead to show that he is propped up by the presence of Lamachus, which is then removed.²⁹³

This leads naturally into a discussion of the second phase, in which Nicias is mentioned as commander much more commonly, and thus takes on the blame for the series of mistakes and reversals that punctuate it. Indeed, Nicias begins his tenure as sole commander with an immediate mistake, as he makes little of Gylippus' approach (6.104.3), and when he finally responds by sending four ships to intercept him, they arrive at Rhegium too late to prevent his arrival (7.1.2). This blunder displays Nicias' often crippling hesitation, but may also reflect the earlier, delayed response at Sparta to news that the Athenians were fortifying Pylos (4.5.1).²⁹⁴

After this mistake, Nicias' next major decision is to fortify Plemmyrium and move his forces there, a choice he makes because he feels that Gylippus' arrival has worsened their prospects by land, and so wishes to focus more on naval engagements (7.4.4–5). Thucydides comments that this decision had the following result: ὥστε καὶ τῶν πληρωμάτων οὐχ ἥκιστα τότε πρῶτον κάκωσις ἐγένετο· τῷ τε γὰρ ὕδατι σπανίῳ χρώμενοι καὶ οὐκ ἐγγύθεν, καὶ ἐπὶ φρυγανισμόν ἅμα ὁπότε ἐξέλθοιεν οἱ ναῦται, ὑπὸ τῶν ἱππέων τῶν Συρακοσίων κρατούντων τῆς γῆς διεφθείροντο· τρίτον γὰρ μέρος τῶν ἱππέων τοῖς Συρακοσίοις διὰ τοὺς ἐν τῷ Πλημμυρίῳ, ἵνα μὴ κακουργήσοντες ἐξίοιεν, ἐπὶ τῇ ἐν τῷ Ὀλυμπιεῖ πολίχνη ἐτετάχατο (“With the result that then especially the suffering of the crews first came about. For they had water that was both

²⁹² See, for example, my discussion of his operations in northern Greece (pp. 183–4) and around Cythera (pp. 180–83).

²⁹³ The role of Lamachus in the expedition, and the effect of his removal on its fortunes, have been discussed extensively in scholarship. See, e.g. Westlake 1941: 62 and 1968: 184–6.

²⁹⁴ See Ch. 1, pp. 62–5 for more on this episode.

scarce and not nearby, and at the same time when the sailors went out to gather firewood, they were killed by the Syracusan cavalry, which commanded the land. For a third of the Syracusan horsemen had been stationed at the fort in Olympieum on account of those at Plemmyrium, so that they not go out and ravage [the country]"; 7.4.6).²⁹⁵

After this move, Thucydides reports that Nicias centers his focus on providing for the security of the camp, rather than on risky undertakings (7.8.3).²⁹⁶ Realizing that his situation is dire, he sees the need to act swiftly, and so sends a letter to Athens requesting advice, a letter which Westlake both calls "pathetic" (1941: 62), and identifies as providing the clearest picture of Thucydides' view of Nician leadership (1968: 190).²⁹⁷

In this letter, Nicias claims that the expedition was successful until the arrival of Gylippus and the Peloponnesians,²⁹⁸ and goes on to admit that he and the Athenians have stopped worked on the siege wall, and are now standing idle (ἡσυχάζομεν). Thus, Nicias openly admits that his leadership is causing the Athenians to act in a way that is identifiably "Spartan," and which reflects his hesitant, often indecisive leadership style.²⁹⁹ This lull in activity, combined with Nicias' focus on the security of the camp, results (as he openly admits in his letter) in a reversal of the original situation: the once besieging Athenian army has now become the besieged (7.11.4). The Athenians, who as recently as 6.103 (immediately after the death of Lamachus) seemed assured of victory, have rapidly become the reactive party rather than the

²⁹⁵ In describing Demosthenes' thoughts upon his arrival, Thucydides attributes similar judgments to him (7.42.3).

²⁹⁶ ὁ δὲ τὰ κατὰ τὸ στρατόπεδον διὰ φυλακῆς μᾶλλον ἢ δι' ἔχων ἢ δι' ἐκουσίων κινδύνων ἐπεμέλετο ("And he [Nicias] was looking to matters in the camp, keeping more to guarding it than to taking willing risks"; 7.4.6).

²⁹⁷ Nicias' decision to request advice via letter merits comment, since he effectively offloads the decision-making for the expedition to the Athenian assembly, which seems ill-advised given his reported recognition that his circumstances require swift action. For more on this point, see Burns 2012: 227, who claims that Nicias' use of a letter shows him again acting for his own interest, as he is trying to avoid the shame of going home defeated unless the assembly itself recalls him.

²⁹⁸ He neglects that, at least according to Thucydides, he actively failed to prevent Gylippus' arrival (Westlake 1968: 193).

²⁹⁹ See Chapter 1 for more on the "Spartan-ness" of ἡσυχάζω/ἡσυχία.

active one, and there is now only one commander to blame.³⁰⁰ In the closing of his letter, Nicias again asks to be replaced as general (7.15.2), thus reminding the Athenians—and readers—that he never wished to lead the Athenians to Sicily in the first place. The Athenians, however, elect not to relieve Nicias, but instead assign Menandrus and Euthydemus to share command, and Demosthenes and Eurymedon to lead reinforcements to Sicily (7.16.1–2).

This brings us to the third phase of the expedition, after the Syracusan capture of Plemmyrium,³⁰¹ and the arrival of Demosthenes. Before beginning a discussion of this period, however, a brief review of the attributes of Nicias which were emphasized in Thucydides' description of each of the first two stages of the invasion of Sicily. In the first phase, while Lamachus was still alive, the historian displayed Nicias' risk-aversion and desire to avoid large undertakings. In the second, he displays Nicias' indecision and hesitancy, and the effects these have on an actively acquisitive mission such as the Sicilian Expedition. It becomes clear very quickly that Nicias' character and leadership are ill-suited to the operation with which they have been paired. In the final phase of the war, as we will now see, Thucydides' continues to emphasize Nicias' hesitancy and indecisiveness, attributes which become amplified due to the presence of Demosthenes, whose own behavioral tendencies stand in stark juxtaposition to those of Nicias.³⁰² In addition, Nicias' "old-fashioned" views return to the fore, as he allows considerations of both religion and honor to shape his tactical decisions.

³⁰⁰ With reference to Nicias' letter, Westlake says, "It makes even more abundantly clear his [Thucydides'] conviction that the leadership of Nicias since the death of Lamachus had lacked vigour and firmness and was a major factor in bringing about the transformation of the military position" (1968: 194).

³⁰¹ Thucydides describes this event in the following terms: μέγιστόν τε καὶ ἐν τοῖς πρώτων ἐκάκωσε τὸ στράτευμα τὸ τῶν Ἀθηναίων ἢ τοῦ Πλημμυρίου λήψις ("the capture of Plemmyrium was among the primary things—and even the greatest—which harmed the army of the Athenians"; 7.24.3).

³⁰² For more on the contrast between Demosthenes and Nicias, especially right after the former's arrival in Sicily (and his thoughts on the expedition's squandered opportunities at 7.42.3), see this chapter, pp. 144–6.

These attributes become clear quickly, as, upon his arrival, Demosthenes pushes for the Athenians to take immediate and decisive action to take Epipolae, thinking that he will either win and improve the Athenian situation, or lead the army back home if the attempt fails (7.42.4–5). Thucydides briefly mentions, however, that Nicias takes no part in this daring attack, and instead remains behind within the fortifications (7.43.2). One may presume this was due to the illness which has been ascribed to Nicias (6.102.2) and from which he directly claims to suffer (7.15.1), but Thucydides here makes no mention of it, and instead leaves readers to infer what they will.³⁰³

This attack ultimately fails, however, and afterwards Demosthenes expresses his belief that the Athenians should withdraw from Sicily. Nicias, however, adamantly opposes the idea, claiming special knowledge of Syracusan weakness and of parties in the city who still wish to turn it over to the Athenians (7.48–9). Thucydides’ presentation of this passage is fascinating, as he switches rapidly back and forth between a report of Nicias’ claims in indirect discourse, and his own comments on Nicias’ true thoughts and reasoning. Indeed, after Nicias’ adamant claim at 7.48.2 concerning the pro-Athenian party in Syracuse, Thucydides turns around and tells readers, ἂ ἐπιστάμενος τῷ μὲν ἔργῳ ἔτι ἐπ’ ἀμφοτέρωθεν ἔχων καὶ διασκοπῶν ἀνείχε, τῷ δ’ ἐμφανεῖ τότε λόγῳ οὐκ ἔφη ἀπάξειν τὴν στρατιάν (“knowing which things, he still kept holding and examining them from both directions in his mind, but he openly denied that he would lead the army away”; 7.48.3). He then returns to reporting Nicias’ arguments in favor of remaining where they were. As such, Thucydides actively undermines the apparent strength of Nicias’ convictions at the same time as he reports his positions. When the Athenians give in to his claims because of his apparent confidence, therefore, readers see instead a combination of “irresolution” and “obstinacy” (Westlake 1941: 63). The result of such leadership is, to Demosthenes’ dismay,

³⁰³ See Hornblower 2008: 624.

another delay: ἀντιλέγοντος δὲ τοῦ Νικίου ὄκνος τις καὶ μέλλησις ἐνεγένετο καὶ ἅμα ὑπόνοια μή τι καὶ πλέον εἰδὼς ὁ Νικίας ἰσχυρίζεται. καὶ οἱ μὲν Ἀθηναῖοι τούτῳ τῷ τρόπῳ διεμέλλησάν τε καὶ κατὰ χώραν ἔμενον (“but with Nicias speaking in opposition, there was both a certain delay and at the same time a certain suspicion that, knowing even something more, Nicias persisted. And the Athenians in this way both delayed and remained in the place”; 7.49.4).³⁰⁴

In addition to the indecisiveness which Thucydides here attributes to Nicias, readers may observe the reappearance of another of the features of his character: his willingness, based on outmoded heroic models, to put others at risk for the sake of preserving his own position of leadership. Indeed, in the comments attributed to him, Nicias directly claims that, based on the Athenian character, he knows that his countrymen (and the very soldiers who serve with him and now wish to return home) will turn on him if he withdraws from Sicily, and therefore, οὐκ οὖν βούλεσθαι αὐτός γε ἐπιστάμενος τὰς Ἀθηναίων φύσεις ἐπ’ αἰσχροῦ τε αἰτία καὶ ἀδίκως ὑπ’ Ἀθηναίων ἀπολέσθαι μᾶλλον ἢ ὑπὸ τῶν πολεμίων, εἰ δεῖ, κινδυνεύσας τοῦτο παθεῖν ἰδίᾳ (“[He said that he] certainly did not wish, himself knowing the natures of the Athenians, to die for a shameful reason and unjustly at the hands of the Athenians rather than, if necessary, having run the risk, to suffer this privately at the hands of the enemy”; 7.48.4).

Here, just as in his competition with Cleon (4.28.1, 5), Nicias is willing to make a decision that he finds personally preferable, but which may harm many of the Athenian rank and file.³⁰⁵ In the former case, Cleon failing at Sphacteria would not certainly not have resulted in only his suffering, and in this case, Nicias will assuredly take many Athenians with him. In essence, then, he asks the Athenians to sacrifice for him, rather than offering to sacrifice himself for the Athenian benefit. As discussed above, this runs counter to the relationship between

³⁰⁴ Lateiner points out that the only times Nicias succeeds in persuading others, he is wrong (1985: 202).

³⁰⁵ For more on this episode, see above, pp. 174–8.

individual and *polis* which Pericles espouses, and which he uses to direct Athenians' innate acquisitiveness to productive ends (Balot 2001: 149). Nicias' conservative leadership is, then, inadequate for his present circumstances, and begins the process which leads to the expedition's near total destruction (a possibility he hoped he had eliminated by requesting such a large force).

Shortly after this passage a lunar eclipse occurs, and Nicias' response reinforces both his hesitancy and his "old-fashioned" character. In describing this reaction, Thucydides states:

καὶ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι οἷ τε πλείους ἐπισχεῖν ἐκέλευον τοὺς στρατηγοὺς ἐνθύμιον ποιοῦμενοι, καὶ ὁ Νικίας (ἦν γάρ τι καὶ ἄγαν θειασμῶ τε καὶ τῷ τοιοῦτῳ προσκείμενος) οὐδ' ἂν διαβουλεύσασθαι ἔτι ἔφη πρὶν, ὡς οἱ μάντιες ἐξηγοῦντο, τρὶς ἐννέα ἡμέρας μεῖναι, ὅπως ἂν πρότερον κινηθεῖη. καὶ τοῖς μὲν Ἀθηναίοις μελλήσασι διὰ τοῦτο ἡ **μονή** ἐγεγένητο (7.50.4).

And the majority of the Athenians, becoming worried, were bidding the generals to hold off, and Nicias (for he was even somewhat excessively inclined to both superstition and such things) refused to deliberate until, as the diviners prescribed, he waited thrice nine days; there was no way that he would move earlier. And a **delay** occurred for the Athenians having intended [to depart] on account of this.

The damage that this delay caused for the Athenians has long been noted; for example, Hobbes says, "he overthrew himself and his army, and indeed the whole dominion and liberty of his country, by it" (1975: 12), and Westlake argues that Thucydides feels that the withdrawal could have been successful if not for Nicias' superstition (1968: 200).

Indeed, it seems obvious from the wording (especially his use of ἄγαν) that Thucydides looks down on this superstition, as argued by Finley (1942: 310–11) and Westlake (1968: 200).³⁰⁶ Such an act—similar to Nicias' later discussion of his faith that, because of his virtuous life, the gods will now end the Athenians' suffering and come to their aid (7.77.2–4)—is out of

³⁰⁶ In fact, in an earlier article Westlake calls Thucydides' description of Nicias' superstition a "contemptuous parenthesis" (1941: 63).

step with the intellectual milieu of Athens, and in which Thucydides himself takes part.³⁰⁷

Moreover, as has been shown in Chapter 1, the tendency to allow religious observance to dictate policy and military decision-making is identifiably Spartan.³⁰⁸ Thus, Nicias again brings Spartan-style leadership to this most Athenian of undertakings, and yet again he does this at an inopportune moment, when the Athenian drive to swift action does not need to be restrained, but actually appears as though it would be useful.³⁰⁹

The End of Nicias and Conclusions

After two subsequent naval defeats for the Athenians, Nicias' above-mentioned speech claiming the likelihood of the support of the gods, and a failed attempt at an overland withdrawal, the expedition, of course, ends in disaster. Nicias and his troops are forced to surrender, and, despite the urgings of Gylippus, the Syracusans execute Nicias (as well as Demosthenes) (7.86.2). In the aftermath of the failure of the expedition, Thucydides does something that has surprised many scholars, when considering his portrayal of Nicias' leadership in Sicily: he eulogizes him. In so doing, Thucydides says: *καὶ ὁ μὲν τοιαύτη ἢ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα*

³⁰⁷ Westlake (1968: 203) makes this argument concerning 7.77.2–4. Scholars have discussed in great detail the influence of fifth-century intellectual trends—such as sophistic rhetoric, scientific advancements, and even medical theory—on Thucydides. For example, Finley (1942: 36–73) provides a detailed discussion of Thucydides' intellectual background, especially p. 70, where he says, “in the latter half of the fifth century, similar tendencies appeared at the same time in different fields of investigation and the ideas proper to one subject proved fruitful in another.” Parry, meanwhile, specifically discusses Thucydides' use of medical language (1969: 106–18), as does Thomas (2006). On the topic of Thucydides' rhetorical influences, one may see Macleod, who states that, “It is obvious that Thucydides is well-versed in rhetorical theory and practice, and his speeches make use of them in a sophisticated and self-conscious way” (1983: 52) Finley (1967: 57), who discusses elements of Pericles' speeches which have been received as “Gorgian,” and Hornblower (1987: 46–8) who cites what he sees as parallels between speeches in Thucydides and the *Rhetoric to Alexander*. While all of these discussions differ in the level of influence they claim, it is generally accepted that Thucydides was at least aware of, and to some degree participating in, the intellectual revolution that was happening at this time.

³⁰⁸ See Ch. 1, p. 63 (esp. n. 70). The Spartans abandon military undertakings due to unpropitious border sacrifices on multiple occasions in Book 5 (e.g. 5.54.1, 55.3, and 116.1).

³⁰⁹ Thucydides actually states that the Syracusans learn of the delay which the eclipse causes, and that it makes them even more eager to put pressure on the Athenians (7.51.1).

τούτων αἰτία ἐτεθνήκει, ἥκιστα δὲ ἄξιος ὢν τῶν γε ἐπ’ ἐμοῦ Ἑλλήνων ἐς τοῦτο δυστυχίας ἀφικέσθαι διὰ τὴν πᾶσαν ἐς ἀρετὴν νενομισμένην ἐπιτήδευσιν (“And for such a reason, or as close as possible to this things, he died, in fact being least worthy of the Greeks in my life to arrive at this extremity of misfortune, on account of his entire character having been directed toward virtue”; 7.86.5).

The unexpectedness of this description has led some scholars to argue that it is ironic or sarcastic.³¹⁰ I see no reason, however, to interpret this statement as sarcastic. Indeed, while Thucydides does portray Nicias as an ineffective leader, he does not portray him as an evil man, nor does he ever hint that he deserves to meet a terrible fate. The historian is much clearer, in fact, in displaying his distaste for Cleon, and emphasizes his cowardice in defeat (5.10.9). Nicias, on the other hand, appears as much more of a pathetic, tragic character (Rood 1998: 185). I find, therefore, that one need not see a conflict in Thucydides both portraying Nicias as not providing the type of leadership that Athens needed at this moment in history, and in saying that, as an individual, he did not deserve the horrible fate that he met.

At the same time, one may look at this conclusion from the opposite perspective: the fact that Thucydides believes Nicias did not deserve his pitiable death does not necessarily mean that he found him to be an effective leader for his fellow Athenians. Indeed, as has been discussed, the historian shows time and again that Nicias is hesitant, indecisive, risk-averse, and generally old-fashioned in his leadership. He continually wishes to limit the goals applied to military undertakings, and appears to exist at the opposite end of the spectrum of character from his *polis*, standing instead much closer to Spartan collective character.

³¹⁰ The proper interpretation of this passage has been hotly debated. Many scholars, such as Shorey (1893: 87), Green (1970: 346), Edmunds (1975: 142), Connor (1984: 205), Bender (1938: 51), and Murray (1961: 35) see Thucydides’ comments as either sarcastic or implicitly critical of Nicias, while Rood (1998: 183–5, 198) and Westlake (1968: 210) take them as serious.

Such tendencies would not necessarily be negative in the correct context. The problem, however, is that Nicias was unable to adapt his behavior as circumstances changed (as I have shown that Pericles and Brasidas did),³¹¹ and did not draw the Athenians to a moderated middle ground. Instead, he maintained his obstinate hesitancy even when it was inappropriate. The Sicilian Expedition, for example, as Thucydides depicts it, called for decisive action on a number of occasions, but without the help of other generals (a factor which contributed significantly to Nicias' greatest successes), he was unable to provide this leadership. In fact, even when he was victorious Thucydides depicts Nicias as contributing little to the Athenian cause due to his cautious approach to warfare, and on the rare occasions when he did take risks, he did so at the wrong time or in the wrong situation, and thus suffered the opposite result of what he intended.³¹²

In essence, then, Nicias' character made him ill-suited to provide the leadership that Athens needed. Indeed, he was too Spartan to effectively lead the Sicilian Expedition, that most ambitious and "Athenian" of undertakings, and to effectively moderate the deliberation or behavior of his *polis*. Instead, Thucydides portrays him as existing so far at the other end of the spectrum of character from his home city of Athens that, when left in a leadership position, he replaced its traditional combination of strengths and weaknesses with those its adversary, Sparta.

Spartans Leading Sparta

Thus far this dissertation has largely focused on Thucydides' characterization of Athenians (with the exception of Brasidas). This reflects Thucydides' own emphasis on, and

³¹¹ See Ch. 2 for more on these two leaders.

³¹² On the failure of all of Nicias' bold political strategies, see Lateiner 1985: 202. I argue in the next section of this chapter that poor use of risky behavior is actually a common Spartan attribute.

knowledge of, internal operations in his home *polis* prior to his exile (5.26.5).³¹³ That is not to say, however, that individually identified Spartans do not play an important part in the work; several of course do, and this section will address several of those who do: Archidamus, Cnemus, Alcidas, and Agis II.

This section will be organized somewhat differently from the rest of this dissertation, as it will not follow the narrative arcs of each of these leaders individually, but will instead be arranged thematically. This is because, as Westlake (1968: 122) argues, Thucydides does little to individuate these generals, but instead makes them so similar to one another that they all seem to fall into a single character “type”—the ineffective Spartan commander.³¹⁴ Indeed, the historian’s narrative attributes to each of these Spartans largely the same set of behavioral patterns: they are all predominantly cautious, hesitant, and risk-averse to the point that the historian sometimes directly identifies them as missing opportunities; each of them wages war in similarly limited and outmoded ways; and on the rare occasions when they do attempt to seize the initiative or take risks, their activities either backfire, or are clearly identified as resulting from the intervention of another individual.³¹⁵ Thus, I will focus on identifying important aspects of this generalized characterization, and cite relevant examples from Thucydides’ description of Archidamus, Cnemus, Alcidas, Agis II, and Astyochus in order to establish how each of them

³¹³ Cartledge and Debnar (2006: 572–3), for example, discuss where Thucydides received his information on the internal motivations of Spartan commanders before he went into exile. See also Gribble (2006: 458) on the prevalence of Athenians and Athenian internal disputes in the *History*, and Raaflaub (2006: 218), who argues that Thucydides’ omission of an analysis of the internal political dynamics of Sparta is a weakness of the work.

³¹⁴ For more on the identification of these Spartan leaders as non-individuated “types,” see Westlake (1968: 131, 136). These Spartan commanders have been received largely unfavorably by historians. See, for example, Beloch, who references “die Unfähigkeit des lakedaemonischen Admirals” (“the inability of the Lacedaemonian admirals” (1897: 73), and Cloché, who describes Thucydides’ take on these generals as, “un jugement méprisant et dur (peut-être même parfois injuste)” (“a scornful and harsh judgment (perhaps even sometimes unjust)”) (1943: 105).

³¹⁵ For example, Thucydides clearly identifies Agis’ fortification of Deceleia, which did so much damage to the Athenian cause in the war, as Alcibiades’ idea. See below, pp. 224–5, and Ch. 4 (pp. 249–50) for more on this episode.

fits this pattern. In addition, I will demonstrate that, in possessing this generalized character, these Spartan commanders share a number of traits in common with the just-discussed Athenian general Nicias, such as their inability to properly manage risk-taking for successful results. At the same time, however, they bear one striking difference: while, as discussed in the previous section of this chapter, Nicias was more successful when he operated with others, these Spartans are consistently shown as holding back those with whom they work, such as Brasidas.

Through this examination I will demonstrate two things: first, that stereotypical “Spartan” behavior is not *always* risk-averse, but that Thucydides portrays these leaders as consistently failing when they attempt more ambitious enterprises, and thus as ill-suited to command undertakings of a more aggressive, Athenian nature; second, that by portraying all of these Spartan generals as possessing individual characters similar to that of their *polis*, and as failing to accomplish any lasting success for their city, Thucydides demonstrates once again the need which both Sparta and Athens had, possessing the flawed political structures and national characters which they did, for their leaders to possess individual characters specifically fitted to their context, and which allowed them to moderate their more problematic behavioral tendencies. (Mention falling back into this pattern, respond to Debnar who argues there is a fundamental change in Spartans over the course of the work?)

Hesitation and Risk Aversion

I begin my discussion of the character type associated with these ineffective Spartan commanders with the most easily identifiable and commonly emphasized behavioral tendency which they display: their extreme hesitancy and risk avoidance. From Archidamus’ desire to delay a war with Athens (1.80–4), to Cnemus’ abandonment of a planned surprise attack against

the Piraeus (2.93–4), to the mutinous complaints of Astyochus’ soldiers that he must finally force a decisive battle (8.83.3), this trait—originally attributed to the Spartans collectively by the Corinthian speaker in Book 1—is consistently displayed by these individual Spartans.

In response to the very speeches at Sparta in which the Corinthian speaker originally sets out the stark contrast between the Athenian and Spartan collective characters, Archidamus rises to give his opinion on the proper course for Sparta and her allies. Thucydides introduces him by describing him as intelligent (ξυνετός) and prudent (σώφρων), but in the speech which he attributes to him it begins to become clear that these traits are not paired with any “Athenian” qualities such as daring or enterprise, but instead with thoroughly Spartan risk-aversion and conservatism.³¹⁶ Indeed, while he demonstrates what scholars have deemed a great deal of foresight about the difficulties of the war to come (Westlake 1968: 125), he proposes no sea change in Spartan tactics or character to counter the Athenian menace (Millender 2017:), but instead simply calls on his fellow Spartans to delay and accumulate resources and allies (1.82.1) while they are still at peace (καθ’ ἡσυχίαν; 1.83.3).³¹⁷

Additionally, Archidamus defends his position by calling on his audience not to consider a desire not to attack “cowardice” (ἀνανδρία; 1.83.1), and instead proceeds to directly praise what he sees as the benefits of conventional Spartan hesitancy, telling his fellow Spartans, καὶ τὸ βραδὺ καὶ μέλλον, ὃ μέμφομαι μάλιστα ἡμῶν, μὴ αἰσχύνεσθε (“And with respect to the slowness and hesitation for which they especially fault us, do not be ashamed”), and calls these

³¹⁶ Mynott (2013: 48 n. 3) notes that Thucydides directly attributes intelligence only to Theseus (2.15), Themistocles (1.138.3), Brasidas (4.81.2), and Phrynichus (8.27.5), while he implicitly identifies Pericles as possessing a reputation for being “not unintelligent” (μὴ ἀξύνετος; 2.34.6), and the statesman seems to claim the quality for himself at 1.140.1. He goes on to state that Archidamus is the only person described as “prudent” (σώφρων), but compares Pericles’ description as governing moderately (μετρίως) at 2.65.5.

³¹⁷ The desire for “peace” or “rest” (ἡσυχία) is, as identified in this dissertation (Chapter 1) as a Spartan attribute. In addition, ἡσυχία is precisely what the Corinthian ambassador recently claimed the Athenians are able neither to have or to allow others to have (1.70.9).

traits examples of Spartan σωφροσύνη ἔμφρων (“rational prudence”; 1.84.1). Archidamus then goes on to present his own version of the Athenian/Spartan contrast, emphasizing the Spartans’ tendency to remain even-keeled in extreme circumstances, their good judgment, and their inability to be swayed by flattery (1.84.2), all of which derives from their “good order” (τὸ εὖκοσμον; 1.84.3). Thus, Archidamus demonstrates his conservative risk aversion by calling on his countrymen to hesitate to make war, and then singing the virtues of this hesitation, a behavior for which the Corinthians had just attacked the Spartans as poor allies.³¹⁸

Two other points from this speech also demonstrate Archidamus’ conventional Spartan character. First, at the outset of his speech he alludes to the fact that members of the older generation, because of their experience, will not be eager for war (1.80.1). This is somewhat reminiscent of Nicias’ repeated appeals to the older generation in his first speech attempting to dissuade the Athenians from undertaking the Sicilian Expedition (). In particular, we may compare Nicias’ call for the older generation not to fear accusations of seeming cowardly (in this case μαλακός) if they vote against making war with Archidamus’ call for the Spartans not to consider hesitating to make war an act of ἀνανδρία (1.83.1). Both appeal to the experience of the older generation over the excitement of those younger and inexperienced in war, and both feel the need to preemptively address possible charges of cowardice (though their vocabulary is different).

Additionally, Archidamus closes his call for the Spartans to put off war with the Athenians in the immediate term by calling on them to be true to their inherited character: ταύτας οὖν ἄς οἱ πατέρες τε ἡμῖν παρέδοσαν μελέτας καὶ αὐτοὶ διὰ παντὸς ὠφελούμενοι ἔχομεν μὴ παρῶμεν, μηδὲ ἐπειχθέντες ἐν βραχεὶ μορίῳ ἡμέρας περὶ πολλῶν σωμάτων καὶ χρημάτων καὶ

³¹⁸ Millender (2017: 84) calls this Archidamus’ “lengthy eulogy of Sparta’s rigid conservatism.”

πόλεων καὶ δόξης βουλευσώμεν, ἀλλὰ καθ' ἡσυχίαν (“And so let us not give up these practices which our fathers handed down to us and which we ourselves have and benefit from in every matter, nor let us rush to counsel in the brief space of a day concerning many bodies and resources and cities and reputations, but [let us counsel] at our leisure”; 1.85.1). In one sentence, Thucydides manages to present Archidamus as calling on his countrymen to be true to the established Spartan collective character, to hesitate in their decision-making, and manages to again use what has been argued is a by-word for Spartan behavior in the work: ἡσυχία.³¹⁹ Whether or not his advice may have been useful, Thucydides presents the nature of his advice and the terms in which he gives it as unabashedly in line with the Spartan national character that his text has just laid out in opposition to Athenian collective behavior. Interestingly, however, his approach here is more like that of Alcibiades in Book 6 rather than Nicias, in that he attempts to persuade his audience by calling on them not to abandon the national character that has helped them be successful thus far (cf. 6.18.7).³²⁰ In this speech, therefore, Archidamus is shown as a precursor to Nicias in his “Spartan” risk-aversion and hesitation to undertake a large-scale military undertaking,³²¹ but not also not unlike Alcibiades in his method of trying to achieve his goals: a direct appeal to his *polis*’ national character.³²²³²³

³¹⁹ For more on the relationship between ἡσυχία and Spartan character, see Ch. 1.

³²⁰ Depending on how one looks at it, Alcibiades is either the exact opposite of the Spartans discussed in this chapter (possessing an unrestrained Athenian character in contrast to these generals’ hyper-Spartan tendencies) or the same as them (an individual who possesses the same character as his *polis*, and thus causes it to be unreservedly expressed in international affairs).

³²¹ In his leadership of the first invasions of Attica, Archidamus becomes an even stronger precursor for Nicias as an unwilling leader of a military operation he opposes.

³²² Sthenelaidas’ response is also interesting, in that he uses conventionally Laconic speech patterns and an appeal to their characteristic distaste for elaborate orations (1.86.1) to argue in favor of what may at first glance appear to be a radically un-Spartan position: the need to make war immediately. In his speech, however, he argues for no large-scale change in Spartan character or tactics, and is, as Millender argues, “mired in the past” (2017: 85), and demands conformity with traditional Spartan norms. See also Crane 1998: 216, 220.

³²³ In these paired orations, Thucydides appears to present the Spartan deliberative version of the debate of Nicias and Alcibiades in Book 6 before the Sicilian expedition. The result is, of course, different, as Archidamus’ appeal to the Spartans to be true to their character fails to keep them out of the war, while Alcibiades succeeds in stirring the

Thucydides also displays Archidamus' conventionally Spartan attributes in his description of the first Peloponnesian incursion into Attica. Indeed, in his speech at the invasion's outset he urges caution (2.11.3, 5), and once he sets out he stops and delays multiple times. For example, he and the Peloponnesians spend a great deal of time preparing at Oenoe on the border of Attica and Boeotia,³²⁴ a deed which Thucydides reports led the Peloponnesians to respond as follows:

αἰτίαν τε οὐκ ἐλαχίστην Ἀρχίδαμος ἔλαβεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, δοκῶν καὶ ἐν τῇ ξυναγωγῇ τοῦ πολέμου μαλακὸς εἶναι καὶ τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις ἐπιτήδειος, οὐ παραινῶν προθύμως πολεμεῖν· ἐπειδὴ τε ξυνελέγετο ὁ στρατός, ἢ τε ἐν τῷ Ἴσθμῳ ἐπιμονὴ γενομένη καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἄλλην πορείαν ἢ σχολαιότης διέβαλεν αὐτόν, μάλιστα δὲ ἢ ἐν τῇ Οἰνότη ἐπίσχεσις, οἱ γὰρ Ἀθηναῖοι ἐσεκομίζοντο ἐν τῷ χρόνῳ τούτῳ, καὶ ἐδόκουν οἱ Πελοποννήσιοι ἐπελθόντες ἂν διὰ τάχους πάντα ἔτι ἔξω καταλαβεῖν, εἰ μὴ διὰ τὴν ἐκείνου μέλλησιν. ἐν τοιαύτῃ μὲν ὀργῇ ὁ στρατὸς τὸν Ἀρχίδαμον ἐν τῇ καθέδρᾳ εἶχεν. (2.18.3–5).

And Archidamus received not the least blame from this. He seemed even in the assembly for war to be soft and friendly to the Athenians (since he was not eagerly recommending war), and after the army was collected, both the delay which occurred at the isthmus and his leisureliness on the rest of the march discredited him, but especially the stoppage at Oenoe. For the Athenians were carrying things in during this time, and the Peloponnesians thought that if they had attacked, they would quickly have caught everything still outside, if not for that man's delay. In such anger the army held Archidamus while idle.

While Thucydides does not directly endorse this view, and some scholars have actually come to the Eurypontid king's defense by noting that he seems to have had strategic reasons for his behavior,³²⁵ the author's emphasis on the language of delay (ἐπιμονή, σχολαιότης, ἐπίσχεσις) throughout the narrative is apparent.³²⁶ Thucydides need not use his authorial voice to condemn

Athenians' passions for conquest. For more on the character and position of Alcibiades in Thucydides' history, see Chapter 4, and more specifically on his appeals to Athenian national character, see pp. 247–8.

³²⁴ τὰς τε οὖν προσβολὰς ἠὲ τρεπίζοντο καὶ ἄλλως ἐνδιέτριψαν χρόνον περὶ αὐτήν ("And so they were preparing their incursion and were wasting time on other things around there [Oenoe]"; 2.18.2).

³²⁵ He states these reasons at 2.11.6–8, and Thucydides later reiterates that he delayed (ἀνεῖχεν) because he thought the Athenians would come to terms when they saw the Peloponnesian army threatening their fields (2.18.5).

³²⁶ Westlake (1968: 128). identifies this passage as remarkable for its collection of words signifying hesitation or delay.

the actions of Archidamus for the narrative to lead readers to interpret his behavior as conventionally Spartan.

This behavior continues throughout the campaign, as Archidamus encamps his forces at Acharnae in the hope that the Athenians, led by the Acharnians, will march out against him in outrage (2.20).³²⁷ This plan fails, however, and after devastating the countryside he and the Peloponnesians withdraw and disperse (2.23). This approach to warfare, as quickly becomes apparent to readers of Thucydides, is entirely conventional for Sparta (especially during the first half of the war) when confronted by an enemy that refuses to face them in the field.³²⁸ Indeed, in his speech at the prewar assembly Archidamus assumes this is the method of warfare which his fellow citizens are considering utilizing against the Athenians (and directly argues it will be ineffective; 1.81.1–2). It is also the Spartan response which Pericles expects, and against which his strategy for the war is designed to work (1.142.4, 143.3).³²⁹

Archidamus leads two additional incursions of this sort into Athenian territory (2.47.2, 3.1.1–3) and an ineffectual attack on Plataea (2.71–5) before he exits the narrative. Archidamus' second and third invasions of Attica receive only the most cursory of descriptions from Thucydides, marking them as unremarkable and as having accomplished little worth noting. This is, of course, not dissimilar from Thucydides' presentation of many of Nicias' campaigns during

³²⁷ On this plan and its relative merits, see Debnar and Cartledge (2006: 571), Pelling (1991: 128–9), De Romilly (1962) and Bloedow (1983: 28–36).

³²⁸ It is also Nicias' primary approach to war when left to his own devices. For more on this point, see the previous section of this chapter. On the conventionality of the devastation of an opponent's countryside, see Hanson, who points out that "ravaging of cropland was central to warfare of most societies of the past," and that "for nearly 300 years war in Greece was inaugurated and often defined by a struggle to destroy, or protect, grain, vines, and olive trees" (1998: 4–5). For a more general discussion of Greek warfare at the time of the Peloponnesian War, see Gomme 1959: 10–15.

³²⁹ Hunt describes this invasion as follows: "... when the Spartans did the obvious and attacked the territory of their enemy ..." (2017: 130).

the first half of the Peloponnesian War, and serves to highlight the similarity between this Athenian general and Spartans who act according to their established character.

After Archidamus' third invasion of Attica he ceases to play a role in the *History*, but the next Spartan commander who appears, Cnemus, behaves in much the same way, to the point that the transition from one Spartan commander to the other in the war appears quite seamless.³³⁰ Indeed, while leading an expedition to assist the Acarnanians and the Chaonians, a setback for one portion of his army at the town of Stratus leads him to withdraw his entire force, and he then allows it to disperse (2.82.1).³³¹ This action demonstrates Cnemus' willingness to immediately abandon an undertaking at the first sign of adversity, behavior that, as readers may remember, stands in direct opposition to the Corinthian description of the *Athenian* tendency described at 1.70.5: ... νικώμενοι ἐπ' ἐλάχιστον ἀναπίπτουσιν (“... when they are defeated they give as little ground as possible”). Cnemus' desire to depart, therefore, marks him as decidedly “un-Athenian” and thus “Spartan” in character.

Cnemus displays this same fearful hesitancy when the Peloponnesians, with him as commander, abandon a planned surprise attack on the Piraeus (2.93–4). This episode has already been discussed in this dissertation,³³² but two things bear noting again: first that Thucydides states that Cnemus and the Peloponnesians sail to Salamis instead of the Piraeus καταδείσαντες τὸν κίνδυνον (“because they fear the danger”; 2.93.4), and that Thucydides expresses in his own voice his severe judgment for the Peloponnesians' inability to carry out what was he viewed as a bold and likely successful plan, saying ὅπερ ἂν, εἰ ἐβουλήθησαν μὴ κατοκνήσαι, ῥαδίως ἐγένετο, καὶ οὐκ ἂν ἄνεμος ἐκόλυσεν (“Which very thing would easily have happened, **if they had been**

³³⁰ Indeed, his portrayal fits perfectly into the character type, “Spartan general.”

³³¹ On this episode, see Westlake 1968: 138, who argues that Cnemus demonstrates a lack of perseverance.

³³² See Chapter 1, pp. 59–62.

willing not to hesitate, and the wind would not have prevented them; 2.94.1).³³³ As Thucydides presents this episode, then, the Peloponnesians (led by their admiral Cnemus) fall back into their established pattern of questioning their own judgment (1.70.3), fearfully focusing on the possible negative outcomes of their undertakings, and of hesitation (1.70.4), and the result is a clearly identified missed opportunity.

Alcidas and Agis share similar patterns of behavior as well. Alcidas, for example, looks much like Cnemus in his appearances in the work.³³⁴ Sent with a force of 40 ships to support Mytilene during its revolt from Athens, Alcidas arrives too late, as the city has already capitulated (3.27.1, 29.1–2). Thucydides emphasizes the slowness of this fleet’s approach, relating to readers that the fleet “wasted time” (ἐνδιέτριψαν) and was “sailing at a leisurely pace” (σχολαῖοι κομισθέντες; 3.29.1). Moreover, when the Peloponnesians reliably learn that the Mytilenean revolt has failed, Alcidas rejects two plans for follow-up action in the area which are proposed to him (3.30–31.1). Thucydides then directly describes his reason for doing so: ἀλλὰ τὸ πλεῖστον τῆς γνώμης εἶχεν, ἐπειδὴ τῆς Μυτιλήνης ὑστερήκει, ὅτι τάχιστα τῇ Πελοποννήσῳ πάλιν προσμεῖξαι (“but he had as the chief concern of his mind, since he had been too late for Mytilene, to get back to the Peloponnese as quickly as possible”; 3.31.2).³³⁵ Such an attribution appears designed to lead readers to recall the earlier established contrast between Athenians who spend their time away from home, and Spartans who fear to be away from it (1.70.4).³³⁶

This turn of events results in Brasidas being sent as an advisor (3.69.1), but even he, acting as a subordinate to Alcidas, cannot fully check his hesitancy. Indeed, as mentioned earlier

³³³ Thucydides’ comment on the wind responds to a claim he reports as having been made that the wind held the Peloponnesian ships back. It comes off as somewhat biting here. See also Millender 2017: 90.

³³⁴ “As presented in Thucydides, they are almost indistinguishable” (Westlake 1968: 136). Roisman, meanwhile, argues that Alcidas’ career likely did much to justify Thucydides’ interpretation of Spartan character (1987: 385).

³³⁵ On his way home Alcidas is spotted by the *Salamina* and the *Paralus*, and flees across the open sea to avoid a confrontation (3.33.1).

³³⁶ Millender argues that Thucydides is “perhaps unfairly emphasizing Alcidas’ fear and caution ...” (2017: 90).

in this dissertation,³³⁷ after a victory at sea over the Corcyraeans and Athenians during the Corcyraean *stasis*, Alcidas ignores encouragement to follow up his success by sailing against the city—an action which Thucydides claims the Corcyraeans greatly fear, and which Brasidas supports³³⁸—and instead sail to back to the mainland, whence they eventually depart due to reports of the imminent arrival of Athenian reinforcements (3.79.1–81.1).³³⁹ Just as at the Piraeus and at Mytilene, Thucydides portrays the Peloponnesians as missing an opportunity to do something that would have a lasting effect on the course of the war because of the hesitancy of their commander.

Agis, too, shows similar avoidance of confrontation on multiple occasions. Aside from his cancelation of seemingly necessary military undertakings due to inauspicious border sacrifices (which I will discuss in the next section), at 5.57–60 Agis leads a full-scale expedition against Argos in which he makes a series of skilled maneuvers to avoid being put in a disadvantageous position, only to unilaterally decide to lead his army away after a discussion with two Argives (Thrasyclus and Alciphron) who claim their *polis* is ready to submit to arbitration. This departure, as Thucydides reports, earns Agis the censure of his allies: οἱ δὲ Λακεδαιμόνιοι καὶ οἱ ξύμμαχοι εἶποντο μὲν ὡς ἠγεῖτο διὰ τὸν νόμον, ἐν αἰτία δ' εἶχον κατ' ἀλλήλους πολλῇ τὸν Ἄγιν, νομίζοντες ἐν καλῷ παρατυχὸν σφίσι ξυμβαλεῖν καὶ πανταχόθεν αὐτῶν ἀποκεκλημένων καὶ ὑπὸ ἰπέων καὶ πεζῶν οὐδὲν δράσαντες ἄξιον τῆς παρασκευῆς ἀπιέναι ... τὸ μὲν οὖν στρατόπεδον οὕτως ἐν αἰτία ἔχοντες τὸν Ἄγιν ἀνεχώρουν ... (“And the Lacedaemonians and their allies followed his lead because of the law, but amongst themselves

³³⁷ See the discussion of Brasidas in Chapter 2.

³³⁸ Millender (2017: 91) and Westlake (1968: 122) note that Thucydides repeatedly contrasts Brasidas' character with that of other Spartan commanders.

³³⁹ Thucydides' description of the Peloponnesian departure appears designed to emphasize their fear of the coming Athenian fleet: οἱ μὲν οὖν Πελοποννήσιοι τῆς νυκτὸς εὐθὺς κατὰ τάχος ἐκομίζοντο ἐπ' οἴκου παρὰ τὴν γῆν (“And so during the night the Peloponnesians immediately sailed back home along the coast”; 3.81.1).

they very much blamed Agis, thinking that, although it was possible for them to fight in a good place, and with [their enemy] shut in on all sides by both cavalry and infantry, they went away having done nothing worthy of the armament ... and so, blaming Agis in this way the army withdrew ...”; 5.60.2–4). Agis’ reception does not improve when he reaches Sparta, either. Indeed, they censure him and resolve to both fine him and destroy his house, and only after he appeals these rulings do they agree to instead send with him a council of ten advisers, whose approval he must seek in the future prior to withdrawing an army from enemy territory (5.63.1–4).

One might argue that Agis erases this reputation after his victory at Mantinea in 418 BCE. While Thucydides does report that this military triumph did result in a restoration of Sparta’s reputation for military valor (Millender 2017: 83), it must be noted that the narrative largely paints the Spartans as winning in the field *despite* Agis, rather than because of him. First, Agis attempts to force a battle when the enemies are on high ground (a detail on which I will expand shortly), which his advisers have to dissuade him from doing (5.65.2–3), then later, just as the Spartans are about to engage the Argives, Mantineans, and Athenians, he orders his forces to shift their position in order to reinforce his left wing (5.71). He orders other polemarchs to bring up reserve forces to fill the gap in his line this maneuver produces, but they refuse because they receive the command so late (5.72.1). The gap in his line is therefore not filled and his left becomes hard pressed, and it is only due to the Spartans’ superior bravery that they eventually win the day. As Thucydides reports: ἀλλὰ μάλιστα δὴ κατὰ πάντα τῇ ἐμπειρίᾳ Λακεδαιμόνιοι ἔλασσωθέντες τότε τῇ ἀνδρείᾳ ἔδειξαν οὐχ ἦσσον περιγεγόμενοι (“But in fact the Spartans, thoroughly bested at that time in skill, showed that they were no less superior in their bravery”;

5.72.2). Thus, the military planning, provided by Agis, is lacking, and the reason the Spartans are victorious is instead the bravery (ἀνδρεία) of the Spartan soldiers themselves.

Spartan Conventionality

Another prominent aspect of these leaders is the glaring conventionality in their methods of pursuing the war with Athens, both with respect to their tactics and their religious observance. Most likely related to their just-discussed tendency to avoid risk, the Spartan generals under discussion all regularly utilize the devastation of enemy territory as one of their primary tools in the field, or when they do enter battle, they settle for limited skirmishes that accomplish little of note in the larger war effort. In addition, as discussed in Chapter one of this dissertation, these Spartan generals alone (with the exception of Nicias) allow religious considerations to deter them from undertaking seemingly important expeditions.

For examples of this behavior, one need look no further than Archidamus' three invasions of Attica, all of which make use of the same tactic: devastation of the countryside (which Archidamus himself had warned would be ineffective against the Athenians, 1.81.1–2). Thucydides' descriptions of these invasions shorten dramatically after the first, and state simply the fact that the Peloponnesians yet again invaded and encamped in Attica. The historian identifies the second invasion as being “just like the first time” (ὡσπερ καὶ τὸ πρῶτον; 2.47.2), and his description of the third attack, and the Athenians' response to it, in terms that make it sound entirely conventional—especially when he notes, καὶ ἐγκαθεζόμενοι ἐδήουν τὴν γῆν· καὶ προσβολαί, ὡσπερ εἰώθεσαν, ἐγίνοντο τῶν Ἀθηναίων ἱππέων (“and after encamping they were devastating the land, and there were the attacks of the Athenian cavalry, just as they were accustomed”; 3.1.2). Cnemus too uses this tactic on multiple occasions, leading an expedition to

devastate the area around Zacynthus (2.66), and wasting the land on Salamis when he and the Peloponnesians abandon their plan to sail into the Piraeus (2.93.4). Agis, too, leads an expedition into Attica which focuses on the devastation of the country side (4.2.1, 6.1–2), only departing when he hears of the Athenian occupation of Pylos.

As a final, but different, example of Spartan conventionality, I take the cancelation of Agis' expedition against Leuctra. In this episode, Agis leads out a full-scale Peloponnesian force, but due to unfavorable border sacrifices the Spartans return home and tell their allies that they must wait until after the sacred month of Carneius (5.54.1–2).³⁴⁰ Three things are notable about this particular episode: the first is that such behavior is largely unique to, but common among, the Spartans in the work;³⁴¹ second, Herodotus gives this same month as the reason the majority of the Spartan forces were held back from Thermopylae in 480 BCE (Hdt. 7.206.1);³⁴² the third is that the only non-Spartan individual who allows religious considerations to influence his actions (and more specifically to stop him from doing something that seems necessary) is Nicias.³⁴³ Thus, Agis and the Spartans act as a precursor for Nicias' actions in Sicily. Moreover, the Argives use this delay as an opportunity and march against Epidaurus and lay waste to their territory (5.54.3). By including this information immediately after describing the Spartan abandonment of their expedition, Thucydides makes it clear to readers that delays such as this have consequences.

³⁴⁰ See Cartledge and Debnar 2006: 582–3.

³⁴¹ Inauspicious border sacrifices turn Peloponnesian expeditions back on two other occasions in Thucydides' *History* (5.55.3, 116.1). For more on this attribute of Spartan behavior, see Chapter 1, p. 63 (esp. n. 70).

³⁴² The Carneia is also identified as the reason the Spartans claim to be unable to help the Athenians at Marathon (Hdt. 6.106.3). See, e.g., Evans (1993: 301) and Richer (2009: 219).

³⁴³ For more on this point, see the previous section of this chapter on Nicias.

Looking beyond this episode, it becomes clear that Thucydides portrays these Spartan leaders as reinforcing stereotypical Spartan conventionality, a fact which continually harms their position in the war.

Ineffective Risk-Taking

While the above sections have identified these Spartan leaders as generally hesitant, risk-averse, and conservative leaders for their *polis*, it must be noted that they do not *always* avoid risk. As discussed in the introduction to this section, however, and as discussed in the context of Nicias, what is unique to “Spartan” leadership is that their utilization of risky or bold tactics almost always produces adverse results. Indeed, just as Nicias’ bold rhetorical gambits each generate the exact opposite of his desired results,³⁴⁴ when the Spartan generals currently under discussion attempt to act with boldness, they fail (or, on occasion, lack the fortitude to fully implement a bold plan).

We may find multiple examples of this fact in the events that Thucydides relates about the Spartan leaders under discussion. For example, Cnemus, Brasidas, and the other Peloponnesian commanders actually wish to force Phormio and the Athenians into a sea battle after their previous defeat at Rhium (2.84.1–4, 86.6). When they see that the Athenians do not sail out to engage them in the narrows, the Peloponnesians sail toward Naupactus to force them to respond. The plan is a good one, and they win the early stages of the engagement, but they grow over-confident in their victory, and when an Athenian ship wheels around and rams the lead pursuer, the Peloponnesians fall into confusion and are forced to retreat (2.90–2). This act of

³⁴⁴ On Nicias’ failed risk-taking, see above, pp. 174–5, 191.

Spartan boldness, then, although appearing promising at first, ends with the Peloponnesian fleet departing for Corinth, and the Athenians maintaining their control over Naupactus and the gulf.

Agis continues the Spartan trend of taking of improperly utilizing risk-taking. Before the Battle of Mantinea, Agis and the Peloponnesians face the Argives, who have taken up position on steep, difficult ground (5.65.1). Despite the Argives possessing the clear advantage, Thucydides states that, καὶ οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι εὐθὺς αὐτοῖς ἐπῆσαν· καὶ μέχρι μὲν λίθου καὶ ἀκοντίου βολῆς ἐχώρησαν, ἔπειτα τῶν πρεσβυτέρων τις Ἄγιδι ἐπεβόησεν, ὁρῶν πρὸς χωρίον καρτερόν ἰόντας σφᾶς, ὅτι διανοεῖται κακὸν κακῶ ἰᾶσθαι, δηλῶν τῆς ἐξ Ἄργους ἐπαιτίου ἀναχωρήσεως **τὴν παροῦσαν ἄκαιρον προθυμίαν** ἀνάληψιν βουλόμενον εἶναι (“And the Lacedaemonians **immediately** moved against them, and advanced as far a stone or javelin’s throw, but then one of the older men shouted at Agis (seeing that they were moving against a strong position) that he had in mind to cure one evil with another, indicating that he wished to make amends for his blameworthy departure from Argos with **his present inopportune eagerness**”; 5.65.2). While Agis turns his troops back at the last second (5.65.2), and so ultimately avoids this mistake, Thucydides makes clear that he comes dangerously close to making a risky attack for the sake of his own reputation.

Agis again make a similar mistake, advancing up to the walls of Athens during the revolution of the Four Hundred (even though Thucydides relates that he does not think the Athenians will easily give up their liberty) in the hope that his presence will force the Athenians to come to terms, or that it will cause such confusion that he will be able to seize the long walls (8.71.1). Thucydides reports, however, that his approach caused no confusion, and that the Athenians attack and kill the Peloponnesians who advance closest to the walls, forcing Agis to withdraw to Deceleia (8.71.2–3).

This leads to a possible counter-argument, however. Indeed, one may raise the point that it is Agis who presides over the fortification of Deceleia (7.19.1–2), and thus shows some successful enterprise and initiative. While Agis does in fact serve as commander of this operation, it must be noted that Thucydides directly attributes the plan to fortify Deceleia to Alcibiades (6.91.6–7). Thus, Agis acts without independent enterprise, instead following up on the advice of one of the most “Athenian” individuals in the work.

Conclusion

While I do not in this section address every episode in which a Spartan commander not named Brasidas appears (far from it),³⁴⁵ this review of their typical behaviors demonstrates that the vast majority of Spartan leaders, including Archidamus, Cnemus, Alcidas, and Agis, conform in many ways to the characterization attributed to their *polis* at large. They all consistently demonstrate their risk-averse, cautious tendencies, as well as their largely conventional and unimaginative approaches to the war.³⁴⁶ When they do take risks, however, they are either ill-advised (as in the case of Agis), or simply do not turn out as intended (as with Cnemus). In all of these traits, they both identify themselves as belonging to a character type that is typically “Spartan,” and they closely resemble Nicias (discussed in the previous section).

What, then, does extremely “Spartan” leadership accomplish for its *polis* during the war? Very little of consequence, it would seem. Archidamus’ invasions of Attica, while coming close

³⁴⁵ We could, for example, also address Astyochus, whom Westlake describes as possessing “defects of leadership similar to those of Cnemus and Alcidas,” and as lacking “enterprise in conducting military operations” (1968: 290), and whom Hornblower describes as appearing “mostly rigid, incompetent, arrogant, tactless and short-tempered” (2009: 806). Indeed, as mentioned earlier, his behavior is such that, near the end of his time as *nauarchos*, his troops confront him and demand that he force a decisive battle (8.83.3).

³⁴⁶ Some scholars, such as Debnar (2001: *passim*, but esp. 2–3), argue that the *History* shows the antithesis between the Athenians and Spartans gradually breaking down. As I hope to have shown, however, this is to mistake the intervention of prominent individuals who *temporarily* alter the behavior of their *polis* with large-scale, lasting changes in national character.

to driving the Athenians to come out against him in battle (2.21.2–22.1), ultimately do not accomplish this goal; Cnemus and Alcidas operate with limited success, focusing largely on avoiding costly defeats rather than on winning meaningful victories; and the greatest accomplishment over which Agis presides—his victory at the Battle of Mantinea—is largely presented as occurring *despite*, rather than because of, his leadership. This is because, as I have argued, in Thucydides’ conception of positive leadership, all of these individuals are simply too “Spartan” for their Spartan context, exacerbating the weaknesses identified as dominating their *polis*’ national character, and providing no moderation. Just as “Athenians” leaders were ill-suited to lead Athens away from its excesses, Thucydides portrays these commanders as too similar to the mold of their *polis* to alter its behavioral tendencies; while not inherently stupid or bad leaders, none of them properly fits the context in which he exists.

Additionally, it is important to note that these individuals represent the vast majority of Spartan leaders in the work. Again, just as in the case of Athens, it appears that the emergence of a leader capable of successfully moderating the behavior of his *polis*, driving it away from its excesses while simultaneously avoiding those of its opponent, is, at best, a once in a generation occurrence. As such, the intervention of an individual such as Brasidas cannot safely be expected, nor can it be relied upon if change is to occur.

Finally, since, as argued earlier in this dissertation, Thucydides’ conception of national character is inextricably tied up with politic structure,³⁴⁷ one may conclude two things: 1) that “oligarchic” Sparta is likely to produce individuals with an “oligarchic” mindset; and 2) that, if large-scale, persistent change in behavioral patterns is to occur, it will require more than the

³⁴⁷ On this point, see Ch. 1, pp. 26–37.

temporary intervention of a leading individual. Instead, it will require a change as fundamental as a shift in political structure.

CHAPTER IV.

Alcibiades: The Form of the Athenian?

In this chapter I turn to an examination of the extremely important but very complicated figure of Alcibiades in Thucydides' *History*—important because of his prominent role in some of the most important decisions which Athens makes during the war (such as the decision to undertake the Sicilian Expedition), and complicated because, depending on where one looks in the text, he is either brilliant and persuasive, foolhardy and overambitious, or downright traitorous. As Forde notes, these variations in the text allow Alcibiades, despite actively working against his home *polis* for a time, to come off as "... ambiguous rather than simply sinister," (1989: 7), and the impression one receives is that he is simultaneously immensely capable and incredibly dangerous.

In addition, even individual passages have proved difficult to interpret, such as Thucydides' comments on the harm the *demos* did to itself in turning on Alcibiades due to his personal behavior (6.15.4), which immediately follow his discussion of Alcibiades' self-serving reasons for supporting for the Sicilian Expedition (6.15.3). Is this passage meant as a judgment on the *demos*, Alcibiades, or both? This seemingly wide variation in Thucydides' presentation of Alcibiades has led scholars to argue a great deal over what the historian's actual view of him was, and whether he may or may not have changed his mind about him over the course of his

compositional process.³⁴⁸ This seemingly inconsistent portrait of Alcibiades is further complicated by the incompleteness of Thucydides' *History*, which leaves readers to draw conclusions from a half-formed portrait; indeed, Thucydides' narrative does not actually reach Alcibiades' most famous military successes, nor his second ouster from Athens.

Despite these difficulties, however, the crucial role which Alcibiades plays in events in the second half of Thucydides' text,³⁴⁹ as well as in Thucydides' ongoing investigation into the nature and requirements of leadership (Forde 1989: 1) makes it necessary to address Thucydides' portrait of him, however incomplete it may be. In this chapter, therefore, I argue that, in his *History*, Thucydides presents Alcibiades as a man driven to constant, energetic action by his ambitions, which themselves result primarily from private motivations. This relentless and unchecked ambition identifies Alcibiades as possessing an individual character that is extremely "Athenian," and thus—in much the same way as Demosthenes and Cleon (discussed in the previous chapter)—due to the similarity of his own character to that of his *polis*, Alcibiades proves too unrestrainedly "Athenian" to successfully moderate its collective behavioral tendencies—a major failing in Thucydides' contextually-based construction of positive leadership.

In addition, Alcibiades' decision to direct his Athenian ambition toward almost entirely personal ends proves to be unacceptable to the Athenian *demos* (despite Pericles' claims that Athenians allow each other to do as they please (2.37.2), and Alcibiades' own attempts to

³⁴⁸ For a discussion of the difficulty scholars have had in forming their attitudes toward Alcibiades, see Jaffe (2017a: 401). For a good summary of the scholarly tradition receiving Alcibiades as outstandingly brilliant, see Bloedow (1992: 139 n. 2), who cites Holm (1895: 401), Finley (1942: 218, 225), Bengtson (1979: 5), and Kagan (1981: 371). See also Connor, who places Alcibiades among "the most brilliant men of their time" (1984b: 165 n. 18). Bloedow himself, however, opposes this reception of Alcibiades, arguing that he was not brilliant in the modern meaning of intelligent (1992: 139–40, 155).

³⁴⁹ Bleckman (2006: 562) goes so far as to say that Alcibiades *dominates* the events of the second half of Thucydides' work.

reformulate the accepted relationship between public and private pursuits (6.16)), and ultimately turns them against him. These developments demonstrate yet another failure of Alcibiades' character: his unwillingness to heed the restraints placed on leaders by the Athenians themselves, and his resultant inability to maintain a leadership role. Indeed, Alcibiades cannot provide the leadership which his city requires if the city will not allow him to lead.

This alienation of the Athenian people results in Alcibiades' exile and flight to Sparta, a development which then allows Thucydides to examine the effect of placing such a purely "Athenian" leader in a *Spartan* context. In so doing, he makes it clear that, because of his lack of restraint, Alcibiades is too "Athenian" even for Sparta: while his presence does, as one might expect, drive the Spartans away from their characteristic hesitancy, he also encourages the development of rivalries between the *polis*' leaders and, because of his own personal ambitions, forms powerful personal enmities which contribute directly to his second removal from power. As such, Thucydides ultimately demonstrates that Alcibiades and his hyper-Athenian character are not effectively suited to leadership of either of the primary contexts (Athens and Sparta) in which he attempts to operate.

Alcibiades in Book 5

Alcibiades first enters Thucydides' narrative in Book 5, during the Peace of Nicias.³⁵⁰ In this first appearance, Thucydides immediately presents Alcibiades as being in direct conflict with Nicias and his policies, and in so doing provides a description of him and his motivations that lays the groundwork for establishing his characterization.³⁵¹

³⁵⁰ It could be argued that Alcibiades first appears at 2.65.11, but he is not named there.

³⁵¹ Rood (1998: 157–8) argues that Thucydides takes his use of characterization to a new level with his portrait of Alcibiades (as well as with Nicias).

In this first named appearance, Thucydides begins by naming Alcibiades as an opponent of the current treaty with Sparta: οἱ ἐν ταῖς Ἀθήναις αὖ βουλόμενοι λῦσαι τὰς σπονδὰς εὐθὺς ἐνέκειντο. ἦσαν δὲ ἄλλοι τε καὶ Ἀλκιβιάδης ὁ Κλεινίου (“... those who wished to dissolve the treaty immediately began pressing for this. There were others and especially Alcibiades, son of Cleinias”; 5.43.1–2). Thucydides’ construction of this introduction immediately sets Alcibiades apart as a particularly prominent anti-peace partisan, since the historian elects to name him alone among those in opposition. In fact, one may compare this passage with Thucydides’ description of the Athenian assembly concerning whether to acquiesce to Sparta’s prewar demands (1.139.4), where he begins by stating that “many others” (ἄλλοι τε πολλοὶ) spoke, but then proceeds to identify Pericles by name, and to report his speech in direct discourse. Both passages appear designed to give readers the impression that the named individual (Alcibiades or Pericles) occupies a place of particular prominence among his peers.³⁵²

After quickly establishing the prominence of Alcibiades—as well as the unusual nature of his position given his youth³⁵³—Thucydides goes on to report that his opposition results both from his belief that it would be better to side with the Argives, and, moreover, for the following reason: οὐ μέντοι ἀλλὰ καὶ φρονήματι φιλονικῶν ἠναντιοῦτο, ὅτι Λακεδαιμόνιοι διὰ Νικίου καὶ Λάχητος ἔπραξαν τὰς σπονδὰς, ἑαυτὸν κατὰ τε τὴν νεότητα ὑπεριδόντες καὶ κατὰ τὴν παλαιὰν προξενίαν ποτὲ οὔσαν οὐ τιμήσαντες ... (“but he also opposed it out of the competitiveness of his spirit, because the Lacedaemonians made the treaty with Nicias and Laches, both overlooking him on account of his youth and not honoring him in accordance with the old *proxenia* that there

³⁵² This impression is strengthened by Thucydides’ comment that Alcibiades was held in a place of honor, though this is because of his ancestors (ἀξιώματι δὲ προγόνων τιμώμενος; 5.43.2). Westlake argues that Thucydides may overstress both the importance of Alcibiades and the intensity of his rivalry with Nicias at this point in the narrative because he is looking forward to the young Athenian’s future importance in determining the outcome of the Peloponnesian War (1968: 215). For a more in-depth discussion of 1.139.4, see Chapter 2, pp. 80–1.

³⁵³ ἀνὴρ ἡλικία μὲν ἔτι τότε ὄν νεός ὡς ἐν ἄλλῃ πόλει (“A man in his prime, who was at that time still young for another city”; 5.43.2).

had once been”; 5.43.2). Thus, while Alcibiades’ opposition to the treaty is based in part on what he views would be best for Athens, it also derives in no small part from the fact that his pride is hurt.³⁵⁴ Thucydides repeats this latter reason for Alcibiades’ opposition in the next section, when he reports, πανταχόθεν τε νομίζων ἐλασσοῦσθαι τό τε πρῶτον ἀντεῖπεν (“And believing that he was being made little of in every way, he first spoke against it”; 5.43.3). Finally, readers are informed that Alcibiades even privately (ἰδίᾳ) sent for the Argives and their allies to come to Athens to make a new treaty.

As many scholars have noted, this introduction to Alcibiades is extremely personal, both in its discussion of Alcibiades’ age and his family background, and in its description of his motivations.³⁵⁵ Alcibiades’ position in this important matter is not determined (at least not entirely) by prudent planning, but by his emotions and desire for status within the city. At readers’ first introduction to this young leader, therefore, they may already begin to place him among the successors of Pericles, who are driven by private concerns and focus on their contests with other leaders for supremacy at Athens, rather than on sound policy (2.65.7, 11).

After this introduction, Thucydides states that both the Argives and Spartans sent representatives to Athens, and proceeds to describe Alcibiades’ political machinations. After the Spartan envoys initially meet with the Athenian council and announce that they have been endowed with full powers, Alcibiades worries they will win over the assembly and cause the Athenians to reject his alliance with Argos (5.45.1). As a result, he approaches the Spartans and, to convince them not to admit that they have plenipotentiary power, promises to use his personal influence to have Pylos returned to them (5.45.2).

³⁵⁴ Hornblower notes, I believe rightly, that, “it is the second and more personal motive which is developed, so we feel it weighs more in the balance, on Th.’s estimate” (2008: 101).

³⁵⁵ See, for example, Westlake 1968: 212–13 and Luginbill 1999: 150. We may note, however, that Alcibiades is not entirely dissimilar from Nicias in his concern for his own standing in the *polis*. See the previous chapter, pp. 175–8.

Thucydides immediately informs readers of Alcibiades' true intentions, however, stating that he simply wished to distance the envoys from his political opponent Nicias, and planned to discredit them in the assembly for their dishonesty (5.45.3).³⁵⁶ His plan works almost perfectly, as the Athenian assembly grows angry at the Spartan envoys when they deny that they have full powers and Alcibiades turns against them, but is prevented from making a new alliance by the sudden occurrence of an earthquake (5.45.4).

Nicias attempts to restrain the Athenians' angry impulse, asking them to delay their decision so that he can go to Sparta to negotiate. When he accomplishes nothing there apart from the renewal of the treaty's original oaths, however, the Athenians again grow angry and ally themselves with the Argives (5.46).³⁵⁷

An important inference concerning Alcibiades' character may be drawn from Thucydides' description of this trick. As presented in the text, he acts privately, without the knowledge of his fellow citizens, and is driven largely by personal motivations, as well as his conception of his own rightful place in the *polis*.³⁵⁸ Indeed, Alcibiades clearly thinks he deserves to have much more influence than he feels that he currently exerts. Based on this observation, readers may be led to conclude that not only is Alcibiades focused on personal, rather than public, concerns, he is also highly ambitious. What is more, the fact that he knowingly deceives not only the Spartans ambassadors, but also the members his own *polis* indicates that he is willing to do whatever it takes to satisfy this personal ambition.

³⁵⁶ Tsakmakis (2006: 165) finds it noteworthy that readers' first encounter with Alcibiades is his deceptive trick to create a treaty with Argos and undermine Nicias' talks with Sparta.

³⁵⁷ The rapid establishment of this alliance is facilitated, as Thucydides notes, by the presence of the Argives in Athens: εὐτυχὸν γὰρ παρόντες οἱ Ἀργεῖοι καὶ οἱ ξύμμαχοι ("For the Argives and their allies happened to be present; 5.46.5). Mynott (2013: 354 n. 2) points out that their presence was most likely not the result of happenstance, as the wording of this passage would seem to imply, but was instead probably arranged by Alcibiades.

³⁵⁸ On this point, see Westlake 1968: 2213 and De Romilly 1963: 196.

After this maneuver to establish an alliance with Argos, Alcibiades becomes somewhat less prominent in the text until his reappearance in 416, just prior to the Sicilian Expedition (Westlake 1968: 215).³⁵⁹ His personality and, more specifically, his grand ambition, however, maintain their importance in the episodes in which he does appear, albeit less directly, since Thucydides provides no further authorial interventions on Alcibiades until Book 6.

For example, when war breaks out between the Epidaurians and the Argives, ostensibly due to the Epidaurians' failure to send a sacrifice for Apollo Pythaeus, Thucydides reports to readers: ἐδόκει δὲ καὶ ἄνευ τῆς αἰτίας τὴν Ἐπίδουρον τῷ τε Ἀλκιβιάδῃ καὶ τοῖς Ἀργείοις προσλαβεῖν, ἣν δύνωνται, τῆς τε Κορίνθου ἕνεκα ἡσυχίας καὶ ἐκ τῆς Αἰγίνης βραχυτέραν ἔσεσθαι τὴν βοήθειαν ἢ Σκύλλαιον περιπλεῖν τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις ("But, even without this reason, it seemed good both to Alcibiades and to the Argives to take Epidaurus, if they were able, both for the sake of keeping Corinth quiet and because aid from Aegina would be faster than sailing around Scyllaeum for the Athenians"; 5.53.1).

Thucydides makes clear that Alcibiades (and his Argive allies) were *looking* for an opportunity to attack Epidaurus, and that this perceived wrong simply served their purposes.³⁶⁰ Readers would assuredly observe the ambition in Alcibiades' attempt to extend the power and

³⁵⁹ Westlake (1968: 216–18) devotes a significant amount of time to discussing why this may be the case. He cites and then dismisses multiple previously stated theories, such as de Romilly's idea that Thucydides' brevity indicates his disapproval of Alcibiades' policy (1963: 195–200), and Brunt's argument that Alcibiades fading into the background is a result of the unrevised state of Book 5, and that it would have been expanded later (1952: 69–70). Westlake, however, simply sees brevity as more indicative that Thucydides finds an event less an important than others, and, argues that Thucydides seized the opportunity of Alcibiades' first appearance to give an extended introduction to him, since the historian saw his personality as very important to the outcome of later events (1968: 217–18).

³⁶⁰ Earlier in 5.53.1, Thucydides describes the situation between Argos and Epidaurus using the term πρόφασις rather than αἰτία (as in the text cited above). The two terms, as noted by Mynott (2013: 359 n. 2), are here treated as meaning roughly the same thing. Context makes clear, especially after the description of Alcibiades and the Argives' motivations, that they mean more than a simple, precipitating cause for the war, and are instead the publicly presented grounds on which it was made, even though Thucydides directly informs readers that its leaders were driven by a different set of underlying motivations. One may compare Thucydides' statement on the causes of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War itself at 1.23.6. For more on the significance of the latter passage, see Robinson 2017 (esp. pp. 116–18), as well as the discussions in Hornblower 1991: 65, Wick 1975, and Smith 1941.

effectiveness of the new alliance into which he had led the Athenians, and may compare his inability to be at rest, even during what is supposed to be a time of established peace, to previous descriptions of Athenian character in the text (e.g. 1.70.8–9).³⁶¹

Alcibiades' interventions in Book 5 continue in this strain, with him continually agitating for movement against Sparta. He not only convinces Athens to act against Spartan interests, however, but when two private Argive citizens negotiate a truce with Agis during a Spartan invasion (5.59–60), he personally addresses the citizens of Argos and convinces them that this truce should not have occurred, and calls on the Argives to engage in war (καὶ νῦν ... ἄπτεσθαι χρῆναι τοῦ πολέμου; 5.61.2). The Argives then join the alliance in besieging Orchomenus and bringing it to terms (5.61.3–5).

Even after the defeat of this alliance at the Battle of Mantinea (5.70–3) Alcibiades does not cease agitating against Sparta. Indeed, Thucydides reports that the post-battle treaty which the Argives and Spartans sign was hotly debated, in part because of the presence of Alcibiades (5.76.3). The historian's inclusion of this note appears specifically designed to imply to readers that Alcibiades actively fought against its establishment, though he failed to prevent it.

In each of these Book 5 episodes in which Alcibiades participates, Thucydides portrays him as consistently and continually pursuing his ambitious plan to build an anti-Spartan alliance, and to expand Athenian influence in the Peloponnese—with little concern for possible negative consequences. Thucydides also makes it clear that Alcibiades does this for largely personal reasons, and with an eye to his own private benefit. The characterization of Alcibiades as a hyper-Athenian politician, but whose energies and ambition are directed primarily toward private

³⁶¹ Alcibiades also convinces the Athenians to inscribe on the stele of the treaty that the Spartans had not honored their oaths, and to send helots back to Pylos (5.56.3), actions that were obviously not intended to strengthen the peace.

ends, introduced at his first appearance, then, is strengthened by the events and details which the historian chooses to subsequently relate. As we will see, Thucydides maintains—and further expands upon—this portrait in the remainder of his *History*.

Alcibiades in the Speeches before the Sicilian Expedition

After Alcibiades' activities in Book 5, he reappears at the beginning of Book 6 to play his most important role in Thucydides' recorded text: convincing the Athenians to invade Sicily. His speech is reported in contest with that of Nicias (in competition with whom he first appeared), and the two leaders' approaches to this ambitious enterprise place their personalities in stark contrast (Westlake 1968: 171).³⁶² The oration itself is also preceded by two passages to which it more or less directly responds: Nicias' first address, which is designed to discourage the Athenians from undertaking this expedition, and a direct aside from Thucydides on Alcibiades' character and its reception by the Athenians. In each of these passages, the intensely personal nature of Alcibiades' motives is clear, and Alcibiades himself makes no attempt to deny this fact, but instead attempts to justify his practice of putting his own interests first.

Nicias' speech not only attacks the wisdom (or lack thereof) of sailing against Sicily, but also its supporter Alcibiades (albeit not directly by name), claiming that he simply desires the command for his own gain.³⁶³ He then goes on to describe the effect which such a commander can have on a city: εἴ τε τις ἄρχειν ἄσμενος αἰρεθεὶς παραινεῖ ὑμῖν ἐκπλεῖν, τὸ ἑαυτοῦ μόνον σκοπῶν, ἄλλως τε καὶ νεώτερος ὢν ἔτι ἐς τὸ ἄρχειν, ὅπως θαυμασθῆ μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς ἵπποτροφίας, διὰ δὲ πολυτέλειαν καὶ ὠφεληθῆ τι ἐκ τῆς ἀρχῆς, μηδὲ τούτῳ ἐμπαράσχητε τῷ τῆς πόλεως

³⁶² See also Tompkins 1972: 181. More generally, on the contrast between these two individuals, see Raaflaub 2006: 205–7 and Burns 2012: 222.

³⁶³ It is clear that Nicias is referring to Alcibiades not just from context, but also from the fact that, when Alcibiades begins his speech, he states that he must defend himself since he has been attacked (6.16.1).

κινδύνῳ ἰδία ἐλλαμπρύνεσθαι, νομίσατε δὲ τοὺς τοιούτους τὰ μὲν δημόσια ἀδικεῖν, τὰ δὲ ἴδια ἀναλοῦν, καὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα μέγα εἶναι καὶ μὴ οἶον νεωτέρῳ βουλευσασθαί τε καὶ ὀξέως μεταχειρίσαι (“And if someone who is glad at being chosen to command advises you to sail out, looking only to his own good (especially since he is still rather young for command), so that he may be admired because of his breeding of horses, and so that, on account of the great expense, he may take some benefit from the command, do not allow this man to gain distinction privately by endangering the city, and understand that such men wrong public matters and consume private resources ...”; 6.12.2).

Nicias’ speech places Alcibiades—a leader who he claims benefits at the expense of the collective good—in opposition to the position which Thucydides previously attributed to Pericles, in which the individual cannot prosper without the success of the *polis* (2.60.2–4). In addition, this accusation would, if true, place him squarely in the company of the leaders whom Thucydides describes in his own authorial voice as harming the city: οἱ δὲ ταῦτά τε πάντα ἐς τοῦναντίον ἔπραξαν καὶ ἄλλα ἔξω τοῦ πολέμου δοκοῦντα εἶναι κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας φιλοτιμίας καὶ ἴδια κέρδη κακῶς ἔς τε σφᾶς αὐτοὺς καὶ τοὺς ξυμμάχους ἐπολίτευσαν, ἃ κατορθούμενα μὲν τοῖς ἰδιώταις τιμὴ καὶ ὠφελία μᾶλλον ἦν, σφαλέντα δὲ τῇ πόλει ἐς τὸν πόλεμον βλάβη καθίστατο (“But they [his successors] did all these things in the opposite way, and in other matters that seemed to be extraneous to the war, looking to private ambition and private profit, they managed the city badly both for themselves and for their allies. These things, if they were successful, were more a source of honor and profit for private citizens, but, if unsuccessful, created harm for the city in the war”; 2.65.7). In attempting to discredit Alcibiades by accusing him of personal motives, therefore, Nicias also identifies him for readers as a successor of Pericles.

One may also note that Nicias' description of Alcibiades as a leader who desires command solely for his private benefit, while willfully endangering the city and its resources, is not at all in conflict with Thucydides' own presentation of Alcibiades up to this point. Indeed, as discussed above, Thucydides expressly identifies Alcibiades' motives for seeking to undermine the Peace of Nicias as largely private (5.43.2–3).³⁶⁴ Thus, the comments attributed to Nicias build and expand upon what readers have already seen and come to expect from Alcibiades—ambition based on intensely personal motivations. At the same time, they much more directly place his character in line with one that Thucydides has described as doing “the opposite” (τοῦναντίον) of Pericles, thinking only of their own good while losing sight of the public benefit.³⁶⁵

After Nicias' speech, and before reporting Alcibiades' response, Thucydides discusses Alcibiades' motivations for supporting the expedition. In so doing, he states that Alcibiades supports the expedition because of his political opposition and enmity toward Nicias, καὶ μάλιστα στρατηγήσαι τε ἐπιθυμῶν καὶ ἐλπίζων Σικελίαν τε δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ Καρχηδόνα λήψεσθαι καὶ τὰ ἴδια ἅμα εὐτυχήσας χρήμασί τε καὶ δόξῃ ὠφελήσειν (“and especially because he was eager to serve as general, and he hoped that, through him, they would take both Sicily and Carthage, and at the same time that if he was successful he would profit privately both in wealth and in reputation”; 6.15.2).³⁶⁶ This matter-of-fact statement by Thucydides, providing Alcibiades' internal motivations, appears designed to confirm Nicias' claim that Alcibiades is

³⁶⁴ On this passage see above, pp. 231–2.

³⁶⁵ See Balot 2001: 141. I will discuss this point further below.

³⁶⁶ Note the reappearance of the term ἴδιος in connection with Alcibiades' motivations and actions, just as at 5.43.3 and 6.12.2.

focused on his own, private good—a charge which, as previously noted, places him among a group of leaders whose rise Thucydides laments.³⁶⁷

Thucydides' description of Alcibiades' motivations, however, goes further than Nicias' accusation that he operates based on a desire for personal profit, claiming that he is also intent upon the conquest of both Sicily and Carthage.³⁶⁸ This intention bears a striking similarity to those of several Athenian leaders discussed in the previous chapter. Indeed, in looking past the original goal of this expedition (to support the Egestans and Leontines in Sicily; 6.8.2) to other, larger conquests, Alcibiades mirrors Demosthenes, who, when invading Aetolia, was already planning to conquer Boeotia (3.95.1).³⁶⁹ Thus, this passage not only generally identifies Alcibiades as among the Periclean successors described at 2.65.7, but also aligns him with the specific leaders of Athenian character whom Thucydides has already introduced, and who lack the capacity to restrain their ambitions and urges for continual conquest.

After this description of Alcibiades' motivations, Thucydides goes on to comment on the lifestyle of Alcibiades, and its effect on his standing among the Athenian *demos*:

ὄν γὰρ ἐν ἀξιώματι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀστῶν, ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις μείζουσιν ἢ κατὰ τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν οὐσίαν ἐχρήτο ἕς τε τὰς ἵπποτροφίας καὶ τὰς ἄλλας δαπάνας· ὅπερ καὶ καθεῖλεν ὕστερον τὴν τῶν Ἀθηναίων πόλιν οὐχ ἥκιστα. φοβηθέντες γὰρ αὐτοῦ οἱ πολλοὶ τὸ μέγεθος τῆς τε κατὰ τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σῶμα παρανομίας ἐς τὴν δίαιταν καὶ τῆς διανοίας ὧν καθ' ἕνα ἕκαστον ἐν ὄτῳ γίγνοιτο ἔπρασσαν, ὡς τυραννίδος ἐπιθυμοῦντι πολέμιοι καθέστασαν, καὶ δημοσίᾳ κράτιστα διαθέντι τὰ τοῦ πολέμου ἰδίᾳ ἕκαστοι τοῖς ἐπιτηδεύμασιν αὐτοῦ ἀχθεσθέντες, καὶ ἄλλοις ἐπιτρέψαντες, οὐ διὰ μακροῦ ἔσφηλαν τὴν πόλιν (6.15.3–4).

For being [held] in honor by the townspeople, he enjoyed greater zeal than his existing wealth afforded for both the raising of horses and for other expenses. And not least of all did this very thing later destroy the city of the Athenians. For the many, fearing the greatness of both the lawlessness in his way of life (with respect

³⁶⁷ On the role of this passage in confirming Nicias' claim, see Heath 1990: 160 and Westlake 1968: 172.

³⁶⁸ Later, in his speech at Sparta, Alcibiades directly claims these were—and continue to be—the goals of the Sicilian Expedition, though there he also includes Italy among its targets (6.90.2).

³⁶⁹ For more on Demosthenes' ambitious goals, see Ch. 3, pp. 122–51. See also Wylie 1993: 21.

to his own body) and of his intentions in the things he did, one by one, in whatever happened, became his enemies on the grounds that he was eager for tyranny, and although in public he was managing matters of war extremely well, everyone grew angry at his private practices, and entrusting [matters] to others, destroyed the city after a short time.

This passage brings the dichotomy inherent in Thucydides' portrayal of Alcibiades to the fore, and, when combined with the historian's other direct comments on his personality and military capabilities, has contributed significantly to scholars' difficulty in clearly identifying Thucydides' opinion of this Athenian leader.³⁷⁰ Is Alcibiades to blame for being motivated by personal ambitions to the detriment of the city, and thus alienating the populace, or is the *demos* to blame for not properly utilizing a talented leader? I will address this question below in the final section of this chapter, but, suffice it to say for now, the dichotomy which Thucydides presents here, in its most basic form, is that he found Alcibiades to be an extremely capable commander,³⁷¹ but saw that his private behavior undermined his political position, and lent credibility to his opponents' accusations that he sought tyranny.³⁷²

Thus, while in Book 5 Thucydides exposed readers to Alcibiades' lack of restraint in the context of his pursuit of status in the *public* sphere (though this was often based on private motivations), the author now extends this attribute to include Alcibiades' behavior in his private life. Readers may at this point see, then, that Alcibiades acts without reservation on *all* of his

³⁷⁰ It is the last point in this passage (that, despite his faults, the Athenians harmed themselves by removing Alcibiades from office) that has most troubled scholars, giving the impression that he is shifting blame from Alcibiades to the Athenian populace (De Romilly 1965: 563). I address this point further below, at pp. 254–8.

³⁷¹ Bloedow (1992: 154–5) argues that there is actually no direct evidence of the truth of this statement (Alcibiades' skill in war) in Thucydides' text. In so doing, he points to 8.86.4, where Thucydides claims, when Alcibiades stops the Athenians at Samos from sailing against the Piraeus, that he benefited the *polis* for the first time.

³⁷² For more on these points, see Gribble 2006: 463–4. In addition, Westlake (1968: 9–10, 219) argues that here and elsewhere readers receive more information about Alcibiades' private life than with any other leader, and that this is because his private life (and its effect on the Athenians) played an influential role in history. Jaffe (2017a: 400), meanwhile, comments on the contrast between the description of Athenian distaste for Alcibiades' private behavior and Pericles' description of Athenian indifference to each other's private lives (2.37.2, 39.1).

desires equally, both public and private.³⁷³ This inability to check his own desires, and, moreover, this willingness to place private desires on an equal footing with—or even on a higher footing than—public pursuits, though Alcibiades attempts to defend them in the speech that immediately follows this passage, ultimately cause the Athenians to become suspicious of Alcibiades, and to support his removal from Athens.

Additionally, as discussed previously in this dissertation (especially in Chapter 2), the ability to check the more problematic impulses of a *polis*' national character is a crucial part of Thucydides' model of positive leadership. For example, the historian greatly emphasizes Pericles' ability to moderate the Athenians' characteristic impulses to rash action and conquest (e.g., 2.65.1–2, 8–9), and portrays Brasidas as deploying Spartan restraint in his own activities when appropriate. Alcibiades, on the other hand, described as managing public matters based on private ambitions and living his private life according to his unchecked desires, cannot reasonably be expected by readers to provide such restraint to others. Indeed, the speech which immediately follows these comments by Thucydides confirms these suspicions, as rather than attempting to check Athenian acquisitiveness, Alcibiades fans the flames of his audience's emotions, and calls on them to be true to their established national character.³⁷⁴

In addition to these more general problems with Alcibiades' lack of restraint within Thucydides' larger schema of positive leadership, the author also discusses the result of this

³⁷³ As Forde argues, "... he lived in blatant disregard of conventional standards of modesty and self-restraint" (1989: 7).

³⁷⁴ This conclusion raises a very interesting parallel, one to which I will return later: the similarity between Alcibiades' behavior, and Plato's description of the "democratic man" in the *Republic* (559d–562a). There, Plato identifies the man who resembles democracy as spending a great deal of money on unnecessary pleasures, and pursuing whatever desire he happens to have (561b), believing all pleasures to be of equal value. Additionally, according to Plato's Socrates, such a man will convince others also to pursue their desires as well, and will invert what is bad and good, calling reverence foolish and moderation cowardice. Readers see Alcibiades doing both of these things, inflaming the Athenians' love (*eros*) of conquest and reformulating the relationship between the individual and the *polis*, in his speech that follows. For more on Alcibiades' role in eliciting the desire of the populace, see Wohl (2002: 124–70).

unchecked ambition in its current, specifically Athenian context. This information may be accessed by focusing on Thucydides' description of the *demos*' reaction to Alcibiades' lifestyle at 6.15.4.³⁷⁵

While some scholars have seen this passage as shifting blame from Alcibiades to the Athenians (as mentioned previously)—and I do not contest that Thucydides clearly identifies this Athenian behavior as producing negative result—I believe that it holds yet greater significance.³⁷⁶ Indeed, when readers acknowledge that Thucydides is describing Alcibiades as a politician operating in the specific context of democratic Athens, we may move beyond the question of whether the Athenian response is problematic, and move on to ask what this passage says about Alcibiades' effectiveness as a leader *in this context*. This inquiry inevitably leads to the answer that he cannot be effective, since, of course, any individual who is mistrusted to such a degree that he must flee his city cannot (due to his loss of influence and political power) provide the leadership necessary to help his city flourish. Thus, Alcibiades' personal lack of restraint, which sours the populace against him, not only prevents him from providing the moderation required Athenian national character, but from even having the requisite political influence to attempt to do so. In summation, then, since Thucydides' notion of positive leadership is context-specific, and he here describes Alcibiades as unable to operate within Athens as it exists, the fault lies *both* with Athens for mistrusting a useful leader, *and* with Alcibiades for being unable or unwilling to recognize and adapt to this Athenian reality.

³⁷⁵ For the text of this passage, see above, pp. 239–40.

³⁷⁶ On the main target of criticism for this passage, see, e.g., De Romilly 1965: 563, Orwin 1994: 119, Raaflaub 2006: 207–8, and Hornblower 2008: 340 (who directly states, "... Th.'s criticism is of the people who suspected Alcibiades beyond reason and thus brought about precisely the results they hoped to avoid"). While not referring specifically to this passage, Stahl identifies behavior such as this by the Athenian *demos*, acting out of suspicion and fear in order to preserve its own power, as parallel to that of the tyrants whose return it so fears (2003: 7–8, 10).

After this aside reminding readers of Alcibiades' tendency to act based on personal motivations and grand ambitions, Thucydides then reports his speech in support of the Sicilian Expedition. This speech relays a great deal of information about the young Athenian politician, as it addresses Alcibiades' views on the proper relationship between private and public concerns, the role of ambition in politics, and the management of Athenian collective character. As Westlake argues, its rhetoric contrasts sharply with Nicias' caution, instead showcasing Alcibiades' "youthful ambition," and representing him as, "... a brilliant and self-assured man whose judgement does not match his enthusiasm" (1968: 221), an individual description strikingly similar to that of the Athenian national character at 1.70.3 ("... daring beyond their strength").³⁷⁷

As we will now see, much of this speech serves to either defend Alcibiades' personal ambition and seeming lack of restraint in the eyes of his Athenian audience (an effort which may achieve its goals in the short term, but which readers will already know from 6.15.4 will ultimately fail to stop the Athenians from turning on him), or to advance his ambitious agenda, sometimes by presenting information of dubious accuracy.

Alcibiades begins his speech by responding to the charges which Nicias made against him (discussed above). In this defense, he asserts that it is more fitting for him to command than others (*προσῆκει μοι μᾶλλον ἐτέρων ... ἄρχειν*; 6.16.1) and that he is worthy (*ἄξιος*) to do so, and goes on to claim that the behaviors for which Nicias criticizes him actually reflect well on both himself and his city. Alcibiades explains his position by starting from the specific and working to more general conclusions. First, he claims that, while the Greeks expected Athens to be worn out by war, his entry of seven chariots at Olympia changed this perception, and now

³⁷⁷ "The speech of Alcibiades at the meeting of the assembly, as reported by Thucydides (6.16–18), is largely a study of character" (Westlake 1968: 220).

causes their fellow Hellenes to *overestimate* Athenian power (6.16.2). Turning to his activities within Athens itself, he goes on to state, καὶ ὅσα αὖ ἐν τῇ πόλει χορηγίας ἢ ἄλλω τῷ λαμπρύνομαι, τοῖς μὲν ἀστοῖς φθονεῖται φύσει, πρὸς δὲ τοὺς ξένους καὶ αὕτη ἰσχὺς φαίνεται (“And however much I distinguish myself in the city by paying for choruses or by some other means, this is naturally envied by the townspeople, but to foreigners this also comes off as strength”; 6.16.3). Alcibiades then closes his defense by stating that it is not wrong for him to be treated differently from other Athenians if he deserves it (which he clearly thinks he does; 6.16.4), and that successful individuals are always resented while alive, but are claimed as honored descendants by later generations (6.16.5).

In this series of claims, one may first note that, just as Thucydides implied at 6.15.4, Alcibiades is shown directly demonstrating his unwillingness to change his behavior, despite the negative impact which he perceives it to be having on his fellow citizens. Instead, he attempts to use his rhetorical skill to reshape public perception of himself. In so doing, Alcibiades does something perhaps even more important: he attempts to reformulate the accepted relationship between public and private interests. This shift is particularly striking, as Alcibiades directly argues that gratification of his own, private desires and ambitions benefits the state as a whole (Pelling 1990: 260; De Bakker 2012: 35). This stance stands in stark contrast with Pericles’ previously stated position on the proper relationship between the individual and the *polis*, in which he claimed that the individual could not flourish without ensuring the success of his city: ἐγὼ γὰρ ἡγοῦμαι πόλιν πλείω ζύμπασαν ὀρθουμένην ὠφελεῖν τοὺς ἰδιώτας ἢ καθ’ ἕκαστον τῶν πολιτῶν εὐπραγοῦσαν, ἀθρόαν δὲ σφαλλομένην (“For I think that the whole city succeeding benefits private citizens more than when it does well with respect to individual citizens, but

stumbles as a whole”; 2.60.2).³⁷⁸ Alcibiades here, despite seemingly sharing Pericles’ overall persuasive ability, places himself in direct contrast with the *content* of Pericles’ speeches.³⁷⁹ Through his own words, then, Alcibiades identifies himself as doing the opposite (τοῦναντίον; 2.65.7) of Pericles.

Alcibiades’ eventual downfall at Athens appears to demonstrate that this position was never fully accepted.³⁸⁰ The main focus of this passage, however, and of much of the speech that follows, is Alcibiades’ continued defense of individuality. Indeed, he again focuses on his own position in the *polis* (especially at 6.16.4), on his right to do as he pleases, and on his own exceptionality. This emphasis on his own worth to the city—and worthiness to be treated differently—is actually somewhat reminiscent of Nicias’ approach to leadership, and demonstrates that, while Thucydides depicts the two leaders as sharing few other character traits in common, both subscribe to a more traditional notion of leadership in which the most important thing is one’s position relative to others.³⁸¹ This observation yet again places him firmly in the category of the leaders whom Thucydides describes at 2.65.11, and identifies him as combining more traditional ideas of leadership with the newer, incessantly active character of Athens.

After this defense of his private life, Alcibiades moves on to attempt to provide another example of how he has personally benefitted the *polis*. In order to do this, he turns to his work on the Argive alliance. This may seem a strange place to turn, given that it was soundly defeated by

³⁷⁸ This sentiment continues throughout 2.60.2–4.

³⁷⁹ On this contrast, see Carter (1986: 99–100), who argues that Alcibiades is turning Pericles’ comments on their head. See also Burns 2012: 222 and Nichols 2017: 467. Balot (2006: 45) looks further back to lyric poetry, and points out that Solon repeatedly emphasizes the importance of self-restraint and mutual respect among citizens, and states that public evil comes to every man (see esp. Solon fr. 4.26–9).

³⁸⁰ Ober (2006: 152) argues that Alcibiades did not understand the necessary relationship between the individual and the community, and Balot (2006: 61) posits that, while Athenian standards for individual behavior were generally loose, they did maintain certain normative ideas.

³⁸¹ Pelling sees an implicit comparison between Alcibiades and Achilles, as each’s individuality places him in conflict with his community. He goes on to note that the worlds of Homer and Thucydides are sometimes “curiously close to one another” (Pelling 1990: 260).

the Spartans and their allies, but, as Nichols (2017: 467) points out, Alcibiades attempts to turn the defeat at Mantinea into a victory. Indeed, he frames his deeds as follows: he formed an alliance with two of the greatest powers in the Peloponnese and forced the Spartans to stake everything on the outcome of one battle, while the Athenians risked nothing. He closes this discussion by claiming that the Spartans have still not recovered from his actions, despite their victory (6.16.6).

This rhetorical position appears to be specifically contradicted by the narrative, in which Thucydides points out that this one victory at Mantinea entirely restored the Spartans' reputation (5.75.3), and eventually lead Argos to: 1) back out of its alliance with Athens, Mantinea, and Elis (signing one instead with Sparta; 5.76–9), 2) order the Athenians to depart from Epidaurus (5.80.3), and 3) temporarily end its own democracy (5.81.1–2).³⁸² This has led Bloedow to refer to this passage as mere “bravado” (1992: 142), Hornblower to call it “almost insolently unconvincing” (2008: 347), and Dover to label it “a thin rhetorical guise for failure” (Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1970: 242). His seemingly dishonest reformulation of events recalls Alcibiades' willingness to deceive to accomplish his own ends (observed before in his trick against the Spartan envoys in Book 5), but this time, perhaps more insidiously, he directly attempts to mislead his Athenian audience.

In the section that follows (6.17), Alcibiades proceeds to malign the strength of the Sicilians, claiming, among other things, that they are no great power (6.17.2), that they have insufficient arms for their protection (6.17.3), and that they will be unwilling to work together (6.17.4). As Tsakmakis argues, Alcibiades is taking advantage of his audience's ignorance of

³⁸² For a detailed examination (and refutation) of Alcibiades' claims, see Bloedow 1992: 142–3. See also Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover (1970: 248) and Hornblower (2008: 347–8).

Sicily, and actively misleads them in order to convince them to attack (2006: 165).³⁸³ As such, he assuages Athenian concerns by providing a false sense of security, and, as Burns (2012: 222), Raaflaub (2006: 203), and Bloedow (1992: 146–7) all argue, inflames the Athenian ἔρωσ for the expedition which Thucydides describes them as experiencing (6.24.3).³⁸⁴ Thus, he encourages the Athenians to make their decision on emotional and irrational grounds, based solely on their characteristic desire for acquisition (πλεονεξία).³⁸⁵ This is, of course, not the action of a leader attempting to provide corrective guidance.

The last argument which Alcibiades makes that is worthy of discussion is his appeal to the Athenians to live according to their national character (6.18.6–7). I have already discussed this passage in this dissertation and, more specifically, the similarities between Alcibiades’ language and other descriptions of Athenian collective behavioral tendencies,³⁸⁶ but let us briefly review his words before moving on to a discussion of their significance. First, he calls on the Athenians not to be still, given their character: καὶ οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἐπισκεπτέον ὑμῖν τοῖς ἄλλοις τὸ ἥσυχον, εἰ μὴ καὶ τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα ἐς τὸ ὁμοῖον μεταλήψεσθε (“And you must not consider keeping quiet from the same perspective as others, unless you also change your customs to be the same”; 6.18.3). Then, he makes a much more direct claim that the Athenians are by nature an active people, and must continue to be in order to ensure their safety: παράπαν τε

³⁸³ Tsakmakis posits that this willing deception is another difference between Pericles and Alcibiades, as Pericles never did this (2006: 165). As an additional difference, we may note that, at 6.17.7, Alcibiades invokes the Athenians’ ancestors, saying that they, despite having numerous enemies including the Persians, managed to claim their empire. Pericles, meanwhile, invoked the Athenian’s ancestors in order to persuade the current generation to abandon the countryside and to preserve their current holdings (1.144.4). For more on the latter passage, see Chapter 2, pp. 90–1. As a final note, one may also compare Mardonius’ speech downplaying Greek resistance before the second Persian invasion in Herodotus (7.9α–γ).

³⁸⁴ While Alcibiades here inflames the *demos*’ passion for external acquisition (compare Pericles’ call for his fellow citizens to become lovers (ἐραστάς; 2.43.1) of their *polis*), Victoria Wohl discusses what she sees as a much more general Athenian desire (ἔρωσ) for Alcibiades, based on his charisma and appearance, which contributes directly to his political authority (2002: 124–5).

³⁸⁵ Cf. Cleon’s demand during the Mytilenean debate that the Athenians act while their anger is fresh (3.38.1).

³⁸⁶ See especially Chapter 1, pp. 49–50.

γιγνώσκω πόλιν μὴ ἀπράγμονα τάχιστα ἂν μοι δοκεῖν ἀπραγμοσύνης μεταβολῇ διαφθαρῆναι, καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀσφαλέστατα τούτους οἰκεῖν οἳ ἂν τοῖς παροῦσιν ἤθεσι καὶ νόμοις, ἦν καὶ χεῖρω ἦ, ἥκιστα διαφόρως πολιτεύωσιν (“And I recognize absolutely that a city that is **not inactive** would seem to me most quickly to be ruined by a change to **inactivity**, and that, of men, they live most safely who govern least of all differently from their customs and laws, even if they are inferior”; 6.18.7).³⁸⁷ This argument actually runs counter to the position that I argue Thucydides is implicitly taking in his *History* (that the Athenian and Spartan characters are inherently flawed and in need of moderation, and that positive leaders are individuals who can provide this moderation), and thus yet further strengthens readers’ impression that Alcibiades is uninterested in restraining himself or the tendencies of his *polis*.³⁸⁸ This is the final impression with which readers are left of Alcibiades in this episode, as he concludes his speech with this call for the Athenians to be true to their character.

In his portrayal of the deliberation before the Sicilian expedition, then, Thucydides strengthens his presentation of the character traits he has previously attributed to Alcibiades, and builds upon them by providing, both directly and implicitly, yet more information about him. Readers see Alcibiades continue to be extremely ambitious, to be motivated by private interests and feuds, and to be willing to risk Athenian resources and manpower to achieve his ends. At the same time, Thucydides makes it much clearer that Alcibiades lacks restraint of any form in any aspect of his life, and thus is unable to serve his *polis* as a moderating force.

³⁸⁷ On these passages and, more generally, Alcibiades’ call for the Athenians to live up to their character, see Balot 2004: 90; Carter 1986: 99–100; and Luginbill 1999: 85 and 155.

³⁸⁸ Luginbill (1999: 99 n. 25) points out that, while Alcibiades claims that the Athenians should not deviate from their established character, Thucydides actually praises Pericles for altering Athenian behavioral patterns.

Early Sicily, Recall, and Time in Sparta

Alcibiades' active, ambitious nature remains on display after the Sicilian Expedition departs from Athens and reaches its target, especially in his proposal during the war congress at Rhegium (6.48), and in his subsequent attempts, immediately after this policy is agreed upon, to bring Messina and Catana over to the Athenians (6.50–1). It also results however, together with the other attributes discussed above, in his recall from Sicily,³⁸⁹ and in his exile and arrival at Sparta (6.28–9, 53, 60–1, 88.9).³⁹⁰

Alcibiades' behavior remains unchanged in this new context, and at first it appears that his active, acquisitive, and ambitious personality provides much-needed balance to the chronically hesitant Spartan character. Indeed, when the Syracusans, Corinthians, and Alcibiades arrive to ask the Spartans to send help to the Syracusans, they originally wish only to send envoys to encourage Syracuse not to give in, not to send armed assistance (6.88.10). It is at this point that Alcibiades rises to speak,³⁹¹ and the words attributed to him yet again shed a great deal of light on his individual character (Westlake 1968: 225–6). As expected, he encourages the Spartans to act and, in so doing, provides greatly beneficial advice to them—his insistence that they send help to Sicily, for example, and that they take the war to the Athenians by fortifying Deceleia (6.91).³⁹² In this same speech, however, he undertakes another lengthy defense of his

³⁸⁹ While it is of little importance the current discussion, it is worth noting that numerous scholars have discussed whether Alcibiades' recall from Sicily represents a significant turning point in the outcome of the expedition. For more information on this, see, among others, Bloedow 1992: 149; Connor 1984b: 165; Finley 1942: 203; Kagan 1991: 371; Bengtson 1979: 14; Ellis 1989: 64; and Kern 1989: 79.

³⁹⁰ Especially interesting is Thucydides' aside on Harmodius and Aristogeiton (6.53.3–59), and his statement at 6.60.1 that this is what the Athenians had in mind when they grew suspicious that the profanation of the mysteries was a sign of an oligarchic or tyrannical plot.

³⁹¹ Westlake (1968: 225) notes that the Syracusans, Corinthians, and Alcibiades were all present and attempting to get the Spartans to act in Sicily, but Thucydides only reports Alcibiades' speech. It seems that Thucydides found Alcibiades' speech the most instructive.

³⁹² This call to action in the face of hesitation is, of course, very "Athenian." Gribble (2006: 465) argues that it is this very Athenian-ness that allows Alcibiades to be one of the most effective Spartan leaders. As I argue, however, this effectiveness was limited by other aspects of his character which are also identifiably "Athenian." As an additional

fierce individualism, claiming that he was right to work against Sparta previously because of the personal dishonor (ἀτιμίαν) which he received from them, that in the present circumstances he is well within his rights to act against Athens because it has now wronged him, and that he as a true patriot may reclaim his position there by any means at his disposal (6.92.2–4).³⁹³

Thus, while Alcibiades, bringing his Athenian character with him to Sparta, provides a jolt of energy to the wavering Spartans, he also maintains his raw, individualistic ambition, unabashedly identifying perceived personal slights as determinants of his policy stances, and openly stating his goal of working with his previous enemies to recover his position in Athens.³⁹⁴

These dual attributes of Alcibiades' hyper-Athenian character continue to be on display during his time working with the Spartans. He continues to fight against their tendency toward hesitation and self-doubt, insisting that the Spartans complete their fortification of Deceleia and keep the pressure on Athens (7.18.1), and convincing them not to abandon their naval efforts in the Aegean when they grow distraught after a setback at Chios (8.11.3–12.1). At the same time, he also continues to act with an eye to his own position (as well as those of his personal allies), attempting to reassert himself as a major player in the Greek world (Westlake 1968: 234). For example, Thucydides tells readers that Alcibiades wished to add the Milesians as allies before the arrival of other Peloponnesian ships because, ἐβούλετο ... καὶ τοῖς Χίοις καὶ ἑαυτῷ καὶ Χαλκιδεῖ καὶ τῷ ἀποστείλαντι Ἐνδίῳ, ὥσπερ ὑπέσχετο, τὸ ἀγώνισμα προσθεῖναι (“He wanted ... to add this achievement, just as he had promised, for the Chians and **for himself** and for

note, Alcibiades plays off Spartan fear to prod them into action (Luginbill 1999: 121), continuing his trend of motivating audiences by means of their emotions.

³⁹³ Ferrario (2012: 185) argues that Alcibiades' success in Sparta doesn't make sense, given that he double-crossed the Spartan ambassadors at 5.43.1–46.5. It against this very charge that Alcibiades here defends himself.

³⁹⁴ Funnily enough, at 6.89.5 Alcibiades blames his ouster in part on a lack of temperance (τῆς δὲ ὑπαρχούσης ἀκολασίας) in Athens, and claims that he attempted to be more moderate (μετριώτεροι) in political matters than others, but was driven out by those focused on baser things (πονηρότερα). While Thucydides does clearly show that Alcibiades' political opponents actively worked to remove him from the scene at Athens, few readers can be expected to feel that he has been the temperate, moderate one up to this point.

Chalcideus and for Endius who had sent him out"; 8.17.2). In addition, he encourages the development of internal disputes and personal competitions between his Spartan colleagues, convincing Endius to vie with Agis for honor and status, and involving him in his own dispute with the Spartan king (8.12.2).³⁹⁵ As a result, despite the general effectiveness of Spartan naval operations during Alcibiades' presence,³⁹⁶ by 8.45.1 he is a personal enemy (ἐχθρός) of King Agis, and the Spartans have grown suspicious of his trustworthiness to such a degree that they send a letter to Astyochus with instructions that he kill Alcibiades. Due to this development, he is forced to take refuge with Tissaphernes.

To conclude our discussion of Alcibiades' time in Sparta, then, we may note that, while his energetic Athenian character does benefit Sparta, counter-balancing the *polis*' traditional hesitancy, the limited good he does is not enough to declare him a fully effective leader. This is because, in Thucydides' presentation, such a leader must be able both to check the flaws characteristic of the *polis* in which he operates while maintaining its strengths, and to *consistently* provide this guidance. The fact that Alcibiades encourages the sort of individualistic competition which Thucydides decries at 2.65.11 among Sparta's leaders, however, demonstrates that he is pulling Sparta too far to the other end of the spectrum of national character, and in so doing introducing new flaws. In addition, his forced flight from Sparta makes it clear that his own unrestrained Athenian ambition continues to prevent him from maintaining his position as a leader. Much like Nicias was too Spartan for the Athenians, Alcibiades proves to be simply too Athenian for the Spartans.

³⁹⁵ On this point, see Cartledge and Debnar 2006: 568.

³⁹⁶ "The success of Alcibiades and Chalcideus in instigating revolt at Chios, and soon afterwards at Erythrae and Clazomenae, must be counted a remarkable achievement ..." (Westlake 1968: 235). Luginbill (1999: 124) also notes that, as long as the Spartans had an Athenian leader, they were successful in their naval operations.

Alcibiades with Tissaphernes and Reunited with the Athenians

I turn next to Alcibiades' appearances in the remainder of the *History*. He plays a prominent, yet surprisingly indecisive role in Book 8 (in that he fails to accomplish much in his many meetings and negotiations with Tissaphernes). The vast majority of his actions reinforce, in one way or another, his previously established characterization, as he spends much of the remainder of the work looking after himself and his own position in the Greek world, and locked in competitions with other leaders for influence among the Athenians.

A few examples should suffice to demonstrate this point. As evidence of his continued self-interest over any communal concern, one may cite Alcibiades' immediate shift to actively harming the Peloponnesian cause as soon as he perceives himself to have been wronged by them (8.45.1),³⁹⁷ and in his advice to Tissaphernes not to allow either Athens or Sparta to obtain the upper hand, but instead to continually pit them against one another (8.46.1). Here he continues to show no semblance of civic concern, thinking instead only of his own position, and of what is expedient for himself in the current circumstances. In fact, even when Alcibiades begins to try to bring Tissaphernes over to the Athenian side in the war, Thucydides is explicit that he does so only because he wishes to return to Athens, and believes that they will receive him back if he appears to have influence with Tissaphernes (8.47.1).

Additionally, after he rejoins the Athenians at Samos, Alcibiades continues to claim more sway with the satrap than he actually appears to have, going so far as to claim that he stopped Tissaphernes from providing a Phoenician fleet to the Peloponnesians which Thucydides states he had no intention of actually sending (8.88).³⁹⁸ Alcibiades thus maintains his willingness to

³⁹⁷ As Johnson Bagby argues, Alcibiades appears to be free of any firm ideology (2011: 124).

³⁹⁸ This is the position taken by Westlake (1968: 255–6).

deceive even a friendly audience for his own benefit, and status, it seems, is more important to him than truth.

The consistency in Alcibiades' behavior does not end there, however. Indeed, now lacking Agis as a personal enemy, Alcibiades replaces him with Phrynichus, who attempts to prevent his return to the fleet at Samos by sending a series of letters to Astyochus warning him that Alcibiades is actively working against Peloponnesian interests (8.50–1). Astyochus turns over the letters to Alcibiades, however, who in turn notifies the Athenians that Phrynichus is communicating with the enemy.³⁹⁹ Each of these two commanders, however, participates not on behalf of his community at large, but rather for his own sake. Indeed, Phrynichus opposes the return of Alcibiades because he fears he will do him harm (8.50.1), and his claim that Alcibiades cares only about securing his return—and not about whether the Athenians live under an oligarchy or democracy (8.48.4)—rings true given that Thucydides' narrative shows him expressing support for both supporters of the oligarchic coup (8.47.2) and democrats at Samos (8.76.7, 81–82.1).⁴⁰⁰ Alcibiades thus focuses again on his own position relative to other Athenian leaders, rather than on the communal good of the *polis*.

These episodes demonstrate that Alcibiades maintains his overwhelming ambition and desire to play a prominent role in events in the Greek world. He does not seek this power, however, because of what he thinks he can accomplish for Athens or Sparta, but rather because he thinks he personally deserves it. As such, he uses any means necessary, including deception,

³⁹⁹ As Westlake describes, “The episode is presented as a battle of wits between two practised intriguers playing for high stakes and pursuing their private interests with relentless determination and infinite subtlety” (1968: 244). He goes on, however, to argue that Thucydides is most likely stressing the contrast between these leaders to the point that he is creating a slightly misleading impression of them (1968: 247).

⁴⁰⁰ Westlake (1968: 244) and Delebecque (1965: 86–8, 96–8) take the position that Phrynichus is driven by personal motivations to a lesser extent than Alcibiades.

to demonstrate his value and claim influence, and ends up at loggerheads with anyone who stands in his way.

With all that said, however, one passage stands as an outlier. This is when, after the Athenians at Samos grow angry at envoys from the government of the Four Hundred currently in power in Athens and declare their intention to sail into the Piraeus and retake the city, Thucydides reports that Alcibiades holds them back (8.86.4–5). He is not described as doing this for selfish reasons, however, as readers might expect at this point, but instead Thucydides goes out of his way to state that, for the first time, Alcibiades benefits his city, and that no one else could have accomplished this feat. What are readers to make of this sudden change in Alcibiades' behavior? I take up the possible implications of this passage, as well as several others that have caused scholars consternation in interpreting Thucydides' presentation of Alcibiades, in the next section.

Inconsistency in the Portrayal of Alcibiades?

As noted above, certain episodes in Thucydides' *History* have led scholars to question just how the historian views Alcibiades. Their concerns and arguments have centered largely on two passages: Thucydides' description of Alcibiades as a capable military commander (6.15.4) and the Sicilian Expedition as capable of ending in success (2.65.11), and Alcibiades' sudden display of what appears to be civic-mindedness at 8.86.4–5 (mentioned just above). I will address these difficulties one at a time, beginning with the former.

As scholars have noted, many readers of Thucydides have found Nicias' arguments against the Sicilian Expedition extremely persuasive (Brunt 1952: 59), and have seen the narrative of Books 6 and 7 as confirming that the entire undertaking was a grave mistake

(Bloedow 1992: 144). At the same time, however, Thucydides' statements at 2.65.11 and 6.15.4 (discussed previously) seem to insinuate quite strongly that the historian believed that the expedition was not doomed to failure, but rather could have succeeded (Orwin 1994: 118–19). Rhodes refers to this problem as, “the most serious inconsistency in Thucydides' history” (1988: 245). What is one to do with this seemingly unresolvable incongruity? Various readings have been proposed.

Orwin, for example, takes the position that Thucydides truly believes that the expedition only fails because of the recall of Alcibiades (1994: 119), and Burns largely agrees, positing that the insufficient support for the expedition mentioned at 2.65.11 refers to the poor leadership it experienced in Alcibiades' absence (2012: 230). Gomme, on the other hand, argues that the narrative of Books 6 and 7 does not bear out Thucydides' claims (1956: 195–6), and Brunt feels that Thucydides' position that the removal of Alcibiades was a greater blunder than the expedition itself is an exaggeration, and calls the decision to invade Sicily “an irremediable error” (1952: 95–6). Rhodes, meanwhile, attempts to resolve the issue by reminding us that Thucydides' history was not written as “the result of a single spell of thinking,” and goes on to say that it is not unreasonable to think that Thucydides had different ideas about why the Sicilian Expedition failed at different moments of composition (1988: 245). Finally, Bloedow maintains that we can only guess at what Thucydides truly thought, but in examining the narrative of Books 6 and 7 determines that the invasion was ultimately a mistake (1992: 145).⁴⁰¹

A few points must be made in response to these difficulties. First, as Westlake (1968: 257–8) and Bloedow (1992: 154–5) posit, Thucydides' comments at 6.15.4, in which he claims that Alcibiades was extremely capable in war, and that his removal “swiftly ruined the city” (ὄ

⁴⁰¹ Bloedow also claims that the judgment at 2.65.11 likely results from Thucydides reflecting later on events after 413 (1992: 145). For more perspectives on this issue, see Westlake (1941: 61) and Raaflaub (2006: 205).

διὰ μακροῦ ἔσφηλαν τὴν πόλιν), most likely refers to later events, such as those between 411 and 407.⁴⁰² This is because, as Bloedow notes, Thucydides does not actually report any of Alcibiades' military victories that act as evidence for his outstanding marshal ability, and so must be looking forward to later events which he had yet to record when he died (1992: 154–5). In addition, this statement is unlikely to refer to the removal of Alcibiades from command of the Sicilian expedition, since his ouster did not, in fact, cause the swift downfall of the city, which held out until its final defeat in 404.

Be that as it may, for the purposes of the argument under consideration in this chapter (does Alcibiades' character permit him to provide leadership that Thucydides would identify as effective for Athens?), whether or not the Sicilian Expedition itself could have succeeded actually makes little difference. This is because, while the reason for the expedition's failure appears largely to be the absence of Alcibiades (perhaps indicating that the Athenians did not need to be restrained from undertaking it), the reason for Alcibiades' absence is the mistrust which his character instills in the Athenians, and their resultant rejection of his leadership. As I argued previously, based on Thucydides' schema of positive leadership, 6.15.4 is an indictment of both the *demos*' reaction to Alcibiades *and* of the politician's inability—or unwillingness—to adjust to the reality of the context in which he found himself, and thus to restrain his personal behavior and ambition. Unless Alcibiades changed his character, therefore (exactly what he argues Athens itself must not do in his speech in support of the Sicilian Expedition; 6.18.3, 7), the expedition would always have failed, because Alcibiades would always have alienated the populace to such an extent that he would not have been in a position to utilize his martial skill to its benefit. To summarize, the conceptual possibility for success of this ambitious enterprise

⁴⁰² See also Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1970: 242–5.

changes neither the character of Alcibiades, nor the requirements of his specific Athenian context. Thus, while the success of the Sicilian Expedition would, of course, have been a great boon for Athens in the war, Thucydides demonstrates that Alcibiades is incapable of maintaining the leadership role required to intervene in Athenian politics or military matters. More remains to be said on these points, but I will revisit this discussion after first turning to the next passage in question.

The one seemingly great exception to this chapter's argument that Alcibiades lacks personal restraint, and therefore the ability to provide restraint to either Athens or Sparta, is Thucydides' description of the Athenian general's behavior at 8.86.4–5. There, after mentioning that Alcibiades prevented his democratic compatriots from sailing against the Piraeus, the historian provides the following commentary: καὶ δοκεῖ Ἀλκιβιάδης πρῶτον τότε καὶ οὐδενὸς ἔλασσον τὴν πόλιν ὠφελῆσαι· ὠρμημένων γὰρ τῶν ἐν Σάμῳ Ἀθηναίων πλεῖν ἐπὶ σφᾶς αὐτοῦς, ἐν ᾧ σαφέστατα Ἴωνίαν καὶ Ἑλλάσποντον εὐθὺς εἶχον οἱ πολέμιοι, κωλυτῆς γενέσθαι (“And Alcibiades seems at that time first (and less than no man) to have benefited the city. For with the Athenians in Samos eager to sail against their own countrymen, in which circumstance their enemies would clearly have immediately seized Ionia and the Hellespont, he was the one preventing them”; 8.86.4). He then continues by claiming that Alcibiades was, at that time, the only one capable of holding down the mob (κατασχεῖν τὸν ὄχλον; 8.86.5).

Thucydides clearly marks this behavior as exceptional, and several scholars have interpreted this passage as demonstrating a new and previously unseen side to Alcibiades: a man who looks to the communal good rather than constantly seeking to advance his own, personal ambitions.⁴⁰³ These actions, as well as the terms in which Thucydides describes them, very

⁴⁰³ See Westlake 1968: 253 and Finley 1967: 158 on the exceptionality of Alcibiades' behavior in this passage.

closely mirror those of Pericles (Saïd 2012: 223), who κατεῖχε τὸ πλῆθος ἐλευθέρως (“held down the mass freely”; 2.65.8).⁴⁰⁴ Thus, an argument could be made that Alcibiades here displays change or growth.

At the same time, however, the fact that Alcibiades’ actions benefitted the *polis* does not necessarily mean he was acting altruistically—it could simply be the case that, acting for personal reasons, he just so happened to benefit his city as well. Thucydides actually gives no direct indication of Alcibiades’ motivation, and this omission leaves readers to form their own suppositions. Previous encounters with Alcibiades in the text will undoubtedly play a large role in shaping these hypotheses, and all other evidence portrays Alcibiades as thinking first and foremost of himself and his status. Thus, I argue that it is not unreasonable to conclude that in this instance as well, Alcibiades likely acted at least partly out of personal motivations. The incompleteness of the work unfortunately makes drawing a firm conclusion impossible, since Thucydides does not have a chance report his version of Alcibiades’ later interventions in the war before the *History* abruptly ends.⁴⁰⁵ Be that as it may, however, while this passage does demonstrate that Alcibiades was *capable* of performing great acts of public service (Westlake 1968: 254), his long-established behavioral patterns, characterized as they were by uncontrolled self-interest, make it unlikely for readers to conclude that he suddenly changed his character.

⁴⁰⁴ Forsdyke argues that the verb κατέχειν had a specifically tyrannical connotation in democratic ideology, “... used by the Athenians to describe the forceful subjection of a people by a tyrant” (2001: 331). For example, Herodotus uses this verb on multiple occasions (such as 1.59.1, 5.78, and 5.91.1) to describe the control of Peisistratids (or tyrants more generally) over the Athenian populace (Forsdyke 2001: 332–5). In fact, at 5.91.1 Herodotus claims that there was a stark difference between the success of the Athenians after they were freed (ἐλευθερωθέντων) and when they were held down (κατεχόμενοι) by tyranny, demonstrating the fine line that Thucydides depicts Pericles as walking when he says that he κατεῖχε τὸ πλῆθος ἐλευθέρως (“held down the mass freely”; 2.65.8). More generally on the conception of the tyrant in Greek antiquity, see Forsdyke 2009 (especially relevant to this dissertation are pp. 236–41).

⁴⁰⁵ On the role of the incompleteness of the work in limiting our understanding of Alcibiades, see Westlake 1968: 256.

Conclusion

Thucydides' Alcibiades is, in many ways, an extremely complicated character, not least because of the seemingly simultaneous presence of both praise- and blameworthy traits within him, and because of the incompleteness of the text itself, which leaves readers unable to fully access Thucydides' final verdict on him (if in fact he ever fully developed one). Indeed, it must be recognized that Thucydides does present Alcibiades as possessing remarkable persuasive ability, and as a highly capable military commander (even if the incomplete narrative does not fully confirm this latter point, and readers are left instead primarily with his defeat at Mantinea). The historian also depicts him as acting with relentless ambition and unchecked desire for gain (*πλεονεξία*), and thus identifies him as possessing an individual character very similar to that of his home *polis*. In determining the policies which he will pursue, however, Alcibiades consistently acts on private motivations and for personal gain, and makes no differentiation between his private and public ambitions. Instead, he pursues each in an equally unrestrained manner, and even goes so far as to claim that by pursuing his personal desires he has benefited the state (6.16). This behavior has two consequences: first, it reveals that the character attributed to Alcibiades makes him ill-suited to moderate the Athenian national character, since he is unable to restrain even his own ambition and greed; second, it alienates the Athenian populace, which Thucydides depicts as expecting its leaders to (at least ostensibly and to a baseline extent) subordinate their public desires to the public good. This alienation proves to be Alcibiades' downfall, and leads to his removal from Athens.

As I have demonstrated, however, when Alcibiades changes his context to Sparta, he brings his character with him, complete with all of the same strengths and weaknesses it exhibited at Athens. Thus, he introduces what appears to be much-needed energy to the

chronically slow Spartans, encouraging them to, among other things, send support to Sicily and fortify Deceleia (6.91), but he also competes for status with prominent Spartans in a such a way that he creates powerful personal enemies for himself (8.12.2, 17.2), and thus alienates them to such an extent that they order his execution and he is forced yet again to flee (8.45.1). Similar to how Nicias was, in many ways, too Spartan for Athens, Alcibiades is too Athenian for Sparta, drawing its behavior too far toward the side usually occupied by Athens. As such, he again fails to act as a force of moderation.

Again, all of this is not to say that Thucydides presents Alcibiades as an incompetent leader—the historian very clearly states that he was extremely persuasive and had a great capacity for military undertakings. What is more, in his comments at 2.65.11 and 6.15.4 Thucydides is open about his belief that Alcibiades, with his ambitious and energetic character, was capable of achieving great heights of success in the war. Readers may note, however, that the same may be said of the Athenian national character, which led the city to establish an empire, and to win great victories such as that at Sphacteria. These highs, however, cannot be viewed in isolation, but must be examined next to the lows that accompany them, which demonstrate the weaknesses inherent in Athenian national character, and in Alcibiades' individual behavioral patterns. In essence, despite Alcibiades' numerous skills and his ability to achieve great feats, his relentless ambition and lack of restraint, and especially his emphasis on personal desires and motivations, demonstrate his inability to serve as a moderating force in either an Athenian or a Spartan context.

CHAPTER V.

Conclusions and Political Thought

In this dissertation, I have covered a great deal of ground. I began with a discussion of Thucydides' use of national character, in which I argued that he applies it consistently to both Athens and Sparta at the collective level. In addition, I examined what Thucydides identifies as the source of this national character, and concluded that, much like Herodotus and Hippocrates, he portrays political organization as a primary factor in determining behavioral patterns. I closed this chapter by then pointing out that the collective characterizations which Thucydides attributes to Athens and Sparta are both flawed, though each in its own, unique way. Additionally, because he presents national character as inextricably connected to political form, one may by extension conclude that Thucydides also implicitly demonstrates that the types of governance which he associates with Athens and Sparta represent—democracy and oligarchy, respectively—are themselves flawed, and, just like the characters of the two *poleis*, exist at opposite ends of a spectrum from one another.

This situation, then, leaves room for the intervention of powerful individuals, who must contend with leadership requirements that are highly context-specific, determined as they are by each city-state's unique combination of strengths and weaknesses. Thucydides' description of these individuals then allows readers to observe how their individual characters interact with and affect the collective characters of their *poleis*. Generally speaking, this interaction has three possible results: the leaders will either correct their *polis*' weaknesses while maintaining its strengths, maintain or even exacerbate its flaws, or temporarily drive their city-state's behavior

so far to the other end of the spectrum that one set of flaws is replaced with another. It is thus the interplay of the individual characters of these leaders with the collective character of their *polis* which allows readers to judge their effectiveness.⁴⁰⁶

Based on these observations, I then moved to a discussion of effective leadership in Thucydides, and more specifically of Pericles and Brasidas. There I demonstrated that, while these two leaders are portrayed as very different from one another, Thucydides shows each as managing to provide the type of leadership which his city needs. Indeed, Thucydides directly portrays Pericles as able, when necessary, to restrain his *polis*, or to encourage it to action (2.65.9), and Brasidas as consistently driving his traditionally hesitant fellow-Spartans to action, but also as, when appropriate, able to restrain his soldiers and himself, rather than rushing headlong into unduly risky battles (4.124.4, e.g.) as many Athenian commanders do. I thus argued that Thucydides builds for readers a portrait of effective leadership based on much more than a fixed set of trained skills (such as rhetorical ability) or moral virtues (such as incorruptibility; though these are certainly helpful), but which is instead composed of context-specific requirements, in which a leader's character makes him particularly fitted (or not) to lead a specific city-state. These extremely specific requirements, however, led to a new problem: can these flawed *poleis* actually rely on the emergence of such leaders, who possess an individual character that is perfectly complementary to that of the collective?⁴⁰⁷

In Chapter 3 I undertook an examination of this question, discussing Thucydides' treatment of several Athenian and Spartan leaders whom I have argued he portrays as ineffective. As I noted there, by calling these leaders "ineffective" I do not mean that Thucydides presents them as incompetent or as universal failures, but rather that he shows each ultimately failing to

⁴⁰⁶ On these points, see Ch. 1.

⁴⁰⁷ For more information on these points, see Ch. 2.

provide the sort of corrective, moderating leadership which his *polis*, due to its behavioral tendencies, required. Indeed, all of these leaders' individual characters are too similar to that of one *polis* or the other, and their intervention produces one of the two undesirable results mentioned above: they either unleash their city's existing weaknesses, or they temporarily replace one set of problematic behavioral tendencies with another. Thus, in contrast to the singular personalities of Pericles and Brasidas, Thucydides presents the vast majority of leaders as failing to live up to their example, and in so doing answers the question introduced in the previous chapter: the emergence of effective leaders is the exception, not the rule.⁴⁰⁸

Finally, before moving on to examine whether Thucydides provides a solution to this problem, in which Athens and Sparta possess problematic characters, but cannot rely on the appearance of leaders capable of moderating their *poleis'* behavior, I addressed the difficult case of Alcibiades, a leader whom Thucydides paradoxically portrays as both extremely capable and extremely problematic. There, I argued that the historian portrays Alcibiades as, in almost all ways, too Athenian for either his Athenian context, or for his adopted Spartan context after he is forced to flee Athens. Indeed, Thucydides presents Alcibiades as possessing greed and ambition to rival that of his home city-state, and as pursuing these in such an unrestrained way that he could not possibly be expected to serve as a moderating. In addition, the historian also repeatedly reports that Alcibiades had personal motivations for his actions, and that he hoped to personally profit from them. In fact, Thucydides shows Alcibiades going so far as to attempt to reformulate the proper relationship between personal and private interests in his speech before the Sicilian Expedition (6.16), and in so doing largely inverting the Periclean perspective on the issue which was presented earlier in the work (2.60.1). This added personal concern served to alienate both

⁴⁰⁸ See Ch. 3.

the Athenians and the Spartans, and Thucydides' emphasis on this point further demonstrates why Alcibiades is ultimately an ineffective leader: his personality—and the distrust it engendered—made it impossible for him to maintain a leadership position.⁴⁰⁹

This discussion brings us to the present point in this dissertation, in which we have been left with a seemingly irresolvable situation: Athens and Sparta, due to the weaknesses in their political institutions, stand in need of strong leadership of a highly specific type, but cannot reasonably expect such leaders to emerge with any regularity. Does Thucydides stop here, content to simply point out the tragic flaws of the governmental systems of his time, or does he attempt to provide a solution to this problem? I argue that he does, briefly and indirectly, hint at a solution: the establishment of a government that is neither democracy nor oligarchy, but something in between, and which combines the interests of the few and the many.

Thucydides' Solution: A Government Outside Traditional Classifications

The key to understanding this Thucydidean solution, I argue, lies in his description of the government of the Five Thousand:

καὶ οὐχ ἥκιστα δὴ τὸν πρῶτον χρόνον ἐπὶ γε ἐμοῦ Ἀθηναῖοι φαίνονται εὖ
πολιτεύσαντες· μετρία γὰρ ἦ τε ἐς τοὺς ὀλίγους καὶ τοὺς πολλοὺς ζύγκρασις
ἐγένετο καὶ ἐκ πονήρων τῶν πραγμάτων γενομένων τοῦτο πρῶτον ἀνήνεγκε τὴν
πόλιν (8.97.2).

And especially, in fact, for the first time in my life the Athenians clearly managed the *polis* well. For the blending for the few and the many was moderate and, although matters had been grievous, this first lifted up the state.

Before discussing the implications of this passage, however, I must justify my reading of it.

Indeed, the correct interpretation of this passage has received a great deal of scholarly debate,

⁴⁰⁹ See Ch. 4.

and the strength of the statement which Thucydides makes here depends largely on how one takes its meaning.

The crux of the disagreement lies primarily in the first few words of this sentence, in how one should translate οὐχ ἥκιστα δὴ τὸν πρῶτον χρόνον ἐπὶ γε ἐμοῦ. In Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover, for example, though it is admitted that in using the verb πολιτεύω Thucydides is most likely discussing constitutional form (1981: 331), a number of arguments are provided for why scholars should accept a weaker reading of this passage.⁴¹⁰ For example, it is argued that οὐχ ἥκιστα does not necessarily mean “best,” and thus that this passage is not necessarily saying that the government of the Five Thousand managed the state the best of any in the work, just well (though it is eventually admitted that the phrase means something like “exceptionally”; 1981: 332, 338).

This is a relatively common phrase in Thucydides, appearing 34 times in his history (present passage included). In almost every one of these appearances, this combination of words is used in three types of ways: in providing the chief reason something was either done or turned out a certain way (such as at 1.60.2, when Thucydides explains why the Corinthians volunteered to serve with Aristeus), in identifying a piece of evidence as extremely important to a point Thucydides is making (such as at 1.3.1, when he presents his chief argument in favor of the weakness of the ancients in previous wars), or in noting an event that was, for better or worse, particularly impactful (such as at 1.23.3, for instance, when, while discussing the evil things that occurred during the war such as earthquakes and famines, Thucydides introduces the plague with οὐχ ἥκιστα). Thus, while these words may not directly translate as “best,” and do seem to mean something like “particularly,” “especially,” or “exceptionally,” they nonetheless represent a very

⁴¹⁰ Gomme (1962: 164) actually identifies this passage as an exaggeration that Thucydides surely would have edited, a point with which Grant (1974: 85) disagrees.

strong turn of phrase. Indeed, in each of the cases noted above, Thucydides is identifying reasons or arguments that he finds of *primary* importance. If the government of the Five Thousand managed the *polis* “exceptionally” well in the same way that the plague was “exceptionally” harmful to Athens, then, its significance is hardly weakened.

Next, the phrase τὸν πρῶτον χρόνον ἐπί γε ἐμοῦ has also presented scholars with a number of difficulties.⁴¹¹ This wording is discussed at length in Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover, who eventually conclude that τὸν πρῶτον χρόνον must mean “during the first phase,” though they admit that this interpretation largely leaves ἐπί γε ἐμοῦ “out on a branch” (1981: 334–9).⁴¹² In coming to this conclusion they examine a number of the linguistic arguments that have been made in favor of this reading (and, to their credit, note the problems with each), but they ultimately argue for this interpretation by turning to their perception of Thucydides’ opinion on Athens’ governmental history. The argument, in short, is as follows: Thucydides *cannot* have concluded that the government of the Five Thousand was the best governmental system which he witnessed, because his admiration for Periclean Athens is so clear; these two stances would be in conflict with one another, and he must therefore prefer the latter governmental arrangement. (1981: 334–8).

I find this argument to possess a key weakness, however.⁴¹³ This is because, as I have argued, Thucydides makes clear that Athenian democracy was flawed precisely because it relied on the intervention of Pericles or someone like him. Athens may have been managed well at the time of his leadership, but this situation was, as Thucydides demonstrates, fleeting. It is significant, I believe, that the historian states that, under the government of the Five Thousand, it

⁴¹¹ For an extended discussion of the arguments scholars have made on the proper interpretation of this phrase, see Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover (1981: 332–9) and Hornblower (2008: 1033).

⁴¹² Hornblower (2008: 1033) calls this complication “fatal” to the argument of Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover.

⁴¹³ As do Connor (1984a: 234) and Hornblower (2008: 1033).

was the Athenians (Ἀθηναῖοι) who managed the *polis* well. They did not rely on a leader to check their impulses, but instead were able to govern themselves. There is no conflict, therefore, if Thucydides recognizes that Pericles provided Athens with effective leadership, and that, in Athens under the Five Thousand, the Athenians governed themselves well.⁴¹⁴

I return now to the linguistic arguments that scholars have made concerning τὸν πρῶτον χρόνον. The two primary interpretations of this phrase are that it means either “during the first period,” or “for the first time” (Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1981: 332).⁴¹⁵ Arguments in favor of the former interpretation center on the notion that this combination of words does not appear elsewhere in Greek literature meaning “for the first time,” with πρῶτον without the article generally used for this meaning instead (Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1981: 332–3).

Additionally, a similarity has been posited between this line and τῷ μὲν οὖν πρώτῳ χρόνῳ from Xenophon (*Hell.* 2.3.15) (Hornblower 2008: 1033). Such interpretations, however, left scholars such as Donini (1969: 99f) doing rhetorical backflips to attempt to account for the significance of the phrase ἐπί γε ἐμοῦ, positing, for example, that it meant something along the lines of “in my working life,” and thus referred to the years 431 on.⁴¹⁶

The phrase τὸν πρῶτον χρόνον does show up a number of times in the extant body of Greek literature, and it often does appear to refer to a “first period” or “first phase.” The problem, however, is that it almost always occurs in this context in ancient medical,

⁴¹⁴ Connor proposes this perspective as an alternative way to read this passage, though he does not specifically endorse it: “Could it be, for example, that Thucydides is now leading his reader beyond the role of personalities in politics toward an analysis of political structure (not mere constitutional form), and that he is alluding in this passage to the contrast between Pericles’ personal leadership and the structure of civic affairs under the Five Thousand which reconciled tensions between rich and poor, oligarch and democrat? From this point of view the Athenians might appear to have arranged their civic life well for the first time in Thucydides’ life” (1984a: 234).

⁴¹⁵ These competing readings have persisted, with scholars such as Raaflaub (2006: 189), Johnson Bagby (2011: 132), and Hahn (2009: 179) maintaining the phrase “during the first period,” while Connor (1984b: 227–8), Hornblower (2008: 1033), and Jaffe (2017: 393, 404) choose “for the first time in my life.”

⁴¹⁶ Hornblower points out that it is unclear how this would exclude Pericles from the comparison (2008: 1033).

philosophical, or scientific works (such as Hippocrates, Aristotle, or Galen), in which one would expect an author to be discussing such phases. These words also appear, however, in Polybius, where he describes a group of mercenaries at Carthage: προθύμως δὲ συνυπακουσάντων πρὸς τὴν ἔξοδον καὶ βουλομένων αὐτοῦ καταλιπεῖν τὰς ἀποσκευάς, καθάπερ καὶ τὸν **πρῶτον χρόνον** ὑπήρχον (“And they were eagerly obeying with regards to departing, and they wished to leave their baggage there, just as **the first time**”; 1.66.7). It thus appears that Polybius uses the phrase here to mean something along the lines of “the first time” or “in the first instance.” While this usage is admittedly not precisely the same as “for the first time,” it does provide evidence for treating χρόνος more like the French *fois*,⁴¹⁷ and, when combined with ἐπί γε ἐμοῦ, which is otherwise extremely difficult to account for, invites readers to translate this phrase in the most straightforward and natural way, “for the first time in my life.”

We may, therefore, conclude that we have reached a safe conclusion as to what this sentence means in translation, but what type of government is this? This point is also contested. Depending on which scholar one reads, it is either a slightly altered democracy, an oligarchy, or a mixed constitution. For example, de Ste. Croix (1959) argues (largely negatively, as he admits) that there is no evidence to indicate that the government of the Five Thousand was not basically a slightly altered democracy. McGregor (1956: 102), however, claims that Thucydides’ discussion of the regime of the Five Thousand makes clear that he was an oligarch.⁴¹⁸ Rhodes, meanwhile, directly disputes de Ste. Croix, but comes to the conclusion that this new systems of

⁴¹⁷ On this point see Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1981: 333, where it is argued that χρόνος cannot mean *fois*, but only *temps*.

⁴¹⁸ This sentiment is echoed in Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover: “This constitution must formally be classes as an oligarchy, though of an unusual kind,” and Thucydides “must be counted as that much of an oligarch” (1981: 338). Connor faults this commentary, however, for forcing this constitution to be identified as either democracy or oligarchy (1984a: 234), while Kirkwood notes the complexity of the government of the Five Thousand by saying, “It can be reasonably maintained that the government can as well be called a limited democracy as a moderate oligarchy” (1972: 95).

government was defined by the dominance of the hoplite class: “it is surely credible that the constitution . . . should have been one in which membership of the assembly was restricted to hoplites, and that the thetes acquiesced in this because they were not consulted and still lacked the confidence to demand that they should be consulted” (1972: 124). Hornblower echoes this sentiment, and argues that the Five Thousand surely excluded the *thetes*, and thus was a “hoplite constitution” (2008: 1034). Other scholars, meanwhile, have identified this government as either a “middle of the road” approach to governmental structure (von Fritz 1975: 77, 417), or, more recently, as a type of mixed constitution.⁴¹⁹ I agree with this latter description, but only inasmuch as it reflects a moderate enfranchisement, rather than a system of checks and balances.⁴²⁰

One may note, however, that many of these discussions are primarily concerned with identifying historical reality: who actually was enfranchised under the government of the Five Thousand, and how would *we* identify it. While this is certainly a valid line of inquiry, it is not the primary focus of this dissertation. Instead, I would like to focus on how Thucydides *presents* this government for his readers. The historian makes two crucial points at 8.97.1 that will help with better understanding this presentation: the Five Thousand consisted of all Athenians able to supply hoplite armor, and pay for serving in a public office was ended. Both of these decisions appear to be oligarchic in nature,⁴²¹ but we must also remember that the Five Thousand was an expansion from the more restrictive oligarchy of the Four Hundred, and the inclusion of more citizens in the process of governing is, of course, identifiably democratic.⁴²² Thucydides also

⁴¹⁹ Hahn (2009: 179), Johnson Bagby (2011: 132), Roy (2012: 298), and Jaffe (2017: 393) all identify this regime as mixed. Raaflaub (2006: 189) agrees that Thucydides is describing a mixed constitution at 8.97.2, but argues that he does not directly endorse it. For the reasons I have made clear in this chapter and in this dissertation as a whole (primarily due to the fact that it provides an answer—albeit a brief one—to a problem that Thucydides has spent such a great deal of time constructing in his work), I disagree.

⁴²⁰ On this, see von Fritz 1975: 417.

⁴²¹ On this point see my discussion of Aristotle below.

⁴²² Indeed, Johnson Bagby argues the Five Thousand cannot be identified as a true oligarchy, since it is putting an end to one (2011: 132).

makes clear, however, that this does not represent a return to full democracy; instead, he describes this system of governance as a “moderate blending” (μετρία ... ξύγκρασις), occupying the middle ground between the interests of the few (τοὺς ὀλίγους; representative of oligarchy) and of the many (τοὺς πολλοὺς; representative of democracy). This blending was based, it seems, on restricting enfranchisement by means of property requirements, and on a change in institutional practice (namely the suspension of pay for public office).

Thus, Thucydides presents readers with a political structure that is not easily identifiable as either of the pure forms of government he spends much of his work discussing, and the faults of which he consistently makes clear. Indeed, while in the rest of the text Thucydides focused on a massive conflict between states representative of oligarchy and democracy, as well as the development of violence within city-states (such as at Corcyra) between factions supporting these two types of government, and thus appeared to present his audience with a bipolar choice between two flawed systems in competition with one another, he here offers a new possibility: the establishment of independently effective governance, without the need for interventions by prominent leaders, by combining elements of oligarchy and democracy.

The concept of finding a middle road between conflicting interests in a *polis*, however, was not new to Thucydides, nor did it end with him. Indeed, as Balot argues, there was a “longstanding ‘middling’ ideology promoted by Hesiod, Solon, Phocylides, and other archaic poets” (2006: 258).⁴²³ For example, when discussing the role of the middle class in the form of government which he calls “polity” in his *Politics*, Aristotle quotes the poet Phocylides: πολλὰ μέσοισιν ἄριστα· μέσος θέλω ἐν πόλει εἶναι (“Many things are the best for those in the middle. I want to be the middle in the *polis*”).⁴²⁴

⁴²³ See also Roy 2012: 298.

⁴²⁴ See Balot 2006: 258.

The poetry of Solon is particularly relevant to the present discussion, as he directly discusses managing the conflicting interests of the few and the many. Indeed, in fragment 4, lines 30–3 he laments the dangers of *dysnomia* for a city-state, and praises the benefits of *eunomia* (a point which Szegedy-Mazsak compares to Th. 1.18.1, where the historian states that *eunomia* put an end to *stasis* in Sparta). Moreover, in fragment 5 discusses his efforts to effect change in Athens:

δήμῳ μὲν γὰρ ἔδωκα τόσον γέρας ὅσον ἐπαρκεῖν,
 τιμῆς οὔτ' ἀφελῶν οὔτ' ἐπορεξάμενος·
 οἳ δ' εἶχον δύναμιν καὶ χρήμασιν ἦσαν ἀγητοί,
 καὶ τοῖς ἐφρασάμην μηδὲν ἀεικέες ἔχειν·
 ἔστην δ' ἀμφιβαλὼν κρατερὸν σάκος ἀμφοτέροισι,
 νικᾶν δ' οὐκ εἶας' οὐδετέρους ἀδίκως. (fr. 5.1–6)

For on the one hand I gave to the *demos* as much honor as was sufficient,
 Neither depriving it of honor nor giving it more.
 And those who had power and were outstanding in wealth,
 I also saw to it that these men have nothing shameful.
 I stood covering both with a strong shield,
 And I allowed neither side to be victorious unjustly.

In this poem, Solon presents himself as moderating between the interests of the masses and of the wealthy, and thus as refusing to take a side in their conflict (Szegedy-Maszak 1993: 207).⁴²⁵ As such, he portrays himself as establishing a new government that favors neither faction. Von Fritz (1975: 77) and Balot (2006: 43) see this poem as specifically describing a constitution that combines oligarchic and democratic interests, with Von Fritz calling it a “middle road.” Thus, Solon’s description of his own reformulation of Athenian politics is very similar to Thucydides’ of the government of the Five Thousand. While we cannot know how familiar Thucydides was with Solon’s poetry, we may justly conclude that he appears at least to have been aware of and addressing a set of ideas that already existed at the time of his writing.

⁴²⁵ At fr. 36.20–2 he also claims that no one else could have held down (κατέσχε) the *demos* as he did, language that is reminiscent of both Pericles (2.65.8) and Alcibiades (8.86.5).

Let us now move to the Greeks most often cited when one discusses ancient Greek political theory: Plato and Aristotle. Indeed, while Greek political thought exists well before these fourth century philosophers, as I and many others have demonstrated,⁴²⁶ these two are the first to systematically theorize about politics (at least in extant form). Despite this seeming exceptionality, they each discuss many points that, while not necessarily made in direct response to Thucydides, certainly appear to be part of the same conversation.⁴²⁷ I begin with a discussion of Plato.

As both Balot (2006: 177–8) and Hahm (2009: 180) observe, early fourth century thinkers were heavily influenced by the political upheaval that dominated the end of the fifth century BCE, and of the Peloponnesian War. Plato was no exception to this, having seen the rise of the Thirty Tyrants, as well as the trial and execution of his teacher Socrates at the hands of the reestablished democracy in 399 BCE. As such, a number of his works discuss proper governance at length, and his Socrates is commonly shown criticizing the faults of democracy.⁴²⁸ For the purpose of comparing his political thought with that of Thucydides, I will focus primarily on the *Statesman* and the *Laws*.

One may wonder why I do not intend to address what is arguably Plato’s most famous political work, the *Republic*. This is because, while he does there discuss the political health of the community (as well of the soul) on an in-depth basis, the work’s conclusions bear little in common with those which I have argued Thucydides reaches in his text. There is, admittedly, extensive discussion of who should be allowed to govern in the *Republic*, but Plato’s Socrates

⁴²⁶ See, for example, Lewis (2006: 8), who argues concerning Solon that although he is not carrying out systematic analysis of politics, this does not mean he is not engaging in political thought. On Thucydides as engaging in political philosophy, see Balot (2017: 320). More generally, see also Balot (2006).

⁴²⁷ Stauss directly argues that the ideas of Thucydides and Plato may complement one another (1964: 140).

⁴²⁸ Kamtekar references “the leitmotif of Socrates’ political thought – the criticism of democracy as rule by the ignorant (Pl. *Cri.* 44d; *Prt.* 319b–d; *Grg.* 454e–455a, 459a–461c) in the pursuit of desire gratification (*Grg.* 502e–503d, 521e–522a) resulting in the corruption of the citizens (*Grg.* 515d–517c)” (2009: 339)

places his emphasis on knowledge as the grounds for governance, leaving little room for a role for the many as anything other than workers. Instead, Socrates comes to the famous conclusion that, in his rigidly class-divided city (each group being representative of a part of the human soul), a philosopher-king (representing the rational faculties) must rule (*R.* 473c11–d3).

Although he does mention two concerns that Thucydides would certainly have shared—the possibility for internal conflict, and for rulers to abuse their power for their own profit, his solutions to these possible problems, however, are quite different from those of Thucydides.

With respect to the former concern, Socrates proposes the adoption of the “noble lie,” in which citizens are identified as imbued with gold, silver, or bronze at birth, thus giving a reason for their station in society, rather than proposing a system of government which purports to represent their interests equally. In response to the latter worry, he proposes a strict system of education and property control to remove the temptation for the auxiliaries to prey on those they are meant to protect (*R.* 416a–417b). This issue of corruption, however, persists in Plato’s works, and his interlocutors’ proposed solutions to this problem are not entirely consistent.

I turn now to the *Statesman*, in which, as the title suggests, a young Socrates and an Eliatic stranger attempt to identify what defines the true statesman (Balot 2006: 211). This treatise on politicians inevitably also includes an examination of political systems, and at *Plt.* 291c–292a there is a discussion of regime types, where monarchy (μοναρχία; 291d1), oligarchy (τὴν ὑπὸ τῶν ὀλίγων δυναστείαν; 291d3–4), and democracy (ἡ τοῦ πλήθους ἀρχή, δημοκρατία τοῦνομα κληθεῖσα; 291d6–7) are identified as the primary three. The first two are then further subdivided, monarchy into kingship and tyranny (τυραννίδι, τὸ δὲ βασιλικῆ; 291e5), and oligarchy into itself and aristocracy (ἀριστοκρατία καὶ ὀλιγαρχία; 291e8), while democracy is argued to have only one name.

After discussing these subdivisions, however, the Eleatic stranger maintains that the only true constitution is the one in which the leaders possess expert knowledge (292c). In response to a question from young Socrates about what this means, he explains as follows:

ὥς οὐκ ἄν ποτε πλῆθος οὐδ' ὄντινωνοῦν τὴν τοιαύτην λαβὸν ἐπιστήμην οἷόν τ' ἂν γένοιτο μετὰ νοῦ διοικεῖν πόλιν, ἀλλὰ περὶ σμικρόν τι καὶ ὀλίγον καὶ τὸ ἓν ἐστὶ ζητητέον τὴν μίαν ἐκείνην πολιτείαν τὴν ὀρθήν, τὰς δ' ἄλλας μιμήματα θετέον, ὥσπερ καὶ ὀλίγον πρότερον ἐρρήθη, τὰς μὲν μιμήματα θετέον, ὥσπερ καὶ ὀλίγον πρότερον ἐρρήθη, τὰς μὲν ἐπὶ τὰ καλλίονα, τὰς δ' ἐπὶ τὰ αἰσχίω μιμουμένας ταύτην (*Plt.* 297b7–c4).

That any mass, after receiving such knowledge, would never become able to administer a city intelligently, but we must seek that one constitution which is correct in a somewhat small [number], or few, or even one, and the other [constitutions] must be considered imitations, just as was also said a little earlier, some mimicking this [correct constitution] better, others more shamefully.

Just as in the *Republic*, the primary interlocutor turns to a small group, or even an individual, with expert knowledge to benevolently guide the *polis* and resolve its internal factional disputes. Indeed, as Balot (2004: 97) points out, this point appears explicitly at *Plt.* 311b7–c2, where the Eliatic stranger concludes that the true statesman will weave together the character of brave and prudent men (τὸ τῶν ἀνδρείων καὶ σωφρόνων ἀνθρώπων ἦθος).

It appears, then, that a middle ground is here proposed (similar to both Solon and Thucydides), but the means of arriving there are markedly different: the rule of a dominant, enlightened small group or individual. At the same time, however, the Eliatic stranger, just like Socrates in the *Republic*, acknowledges that it is difficult to find incorruptible people, and that leaders are often corrupted by power (von Fritz 1975: 79). Thus, while Plato's primary interlocutor yet again places power in the hands of a small group, the possibility for abuse of this power yet again arises.

It is in Plato's final work—the *Laws*—that a Platonic speaker finally turns from the ideal to the practical. Indeed, in this work the Athenian stranger proposes that the legislator should

ponder the ideal, but then to consider what is practically possible (*Leg.* 745e7–746d2, esp. 746a9–c2). Moreover, he goes so far as to argue that the perfect city could only be inhabited by gods and children of gods (*Leg.* 739d6–7). Thus, as Balot puts it, the Athenian stranger sees perfection as outside the reach of humans, and instead focuses on what is second best (2006: 224). Part of the reason for the Athenian stranger’s view that the perfect state is unattainable is the greed and corruptibility of individuals (870a1–6), and thus Plato yet again broaches the possible negative effects of corruption on a constitution. In the *Laws*, however, his speaker does not attempt to explain it away by appealing to a knowledgeable, benevolent leader, but instead adjusts the type of constitution he recommends in an attempt to compensate for this reality.⁴²⁹

The solution he proposes to this problem is mixture. Indeed, the concept receives a great deal of emphasis in the *Laws*, with Sparta receiving a lengthy description as the first example of a mixed constitution (691c–701d).⁴³⁰ The type of mixture which the Athenian stranger proposes for the city he is founding, however, is different. He begins with a discussion of the two “mother constitutions” which produce all others: εἰσὶν πολιτειῶν οἷον μητέρες δύο τινές, ἐξ ὧν τὰς ἄλλας γεγονέναι λέγων ἄν τις ὀρθῶς λέγοι, καὶ τὴν μὲν προσαγορεύειν μοναρχίαν ὀρθόν, τὴν δ’ αὖ δημοκρατίαν (“Of the constitutions, a certain two are like the mothers from which someone could rightly say the others were born, and the correct name for the one is monarchy, and the other democracy”; 693d2–5). He then identifies Persia as the exemplar of pure monarchy, and Athens as representative of pure democracy (693e), and proposes that the best practicable solution for humans is to combine their governmental forms: δεῖ δὴ οὖν καὶ ἀναγκαῖον

⁴²⁹ It is also worth noting that in the *Statesman* the Eleatic stranger argues that laws are too specific to cover all circumstances (294a–295a, 295e–296a; though he does admit that lawful societies are superior to unlawful ones), and uses this as an argument in support for the establishment of a statesman who can provide judgment to difficult situations. In the *Laws*, however, the emphasis obviously shifts.

⁴³⁰ Von Fritz identifies this as the first true appearance of the concept of the mixed constitution (1975: v).

μεταλαβεῖν ἀμφοῖν τούτων, εἴπερ ἐλευθερία τ' ἔσται καὶ φιλία μετὰ φρονήσεως (“And so it is also absolutely necessary to have a share of both of these, if in fact there is to be both freedom and friendship together with wisdom”; 693d7–e1).

What, exactly, does this mean? Hahm answers this question as follows: “What Plato is talking about in this mixture of monarchy and democracy in both Persia and Athens is a compromise in which the ruler ... voluntarily surrenders a degree of autonomy to the other part of the state to gain the benefit of the intelligence in the other ...” (2009: 184). This system, then, in which office-holders exercise restricted rule, and refer matters to the other inhabitants of the state for deliberation, certainly represents a mixture of different interests. It is, however, quite different from the mixture which Thucydides describes at 8.97.2 (at least in the terms Plato’s Athenian stranger uses to describe it).⁴³¹ Indeed, it appears much closer to Thucydides’ analysis of Athens under Pericles at 2.65.8, in which he “held down the *demos* freely” (κατεῖχε τὸ πλῆθος ἐλευθέρως), and in which he led rather than being led (οὐκ ἤγετο μᾶλλον ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ ἢ αὐτὸς ἤγε; 2.65.8). Thus, while Plato’s *Laws* does finally broach the topic of mixture as a solution to the problem of poor leadership, it proposes a very different type of mixture, one that Thucydides presented as temporarily beneficial, but as unable to resolve the weaknesses inherent in democracy in any lasting way.

Finally, I conclude my discussion of fourth century philosophers with an examination of the relationship between Thucydides’ concept of a moderate government and Aristotle’s discussion of a mixed constitution in the *Politics*.

⁴³¹ Aristotle both attacks this type of mixture as inferior, since it is composed of the two constitutions which he identifies as the worst (tyranny and democracy; 1265b29–1266a5), and disputes Plato’s very description, arguing instead that what he is describing is actually a combination of oligarchy and democracy (1266a5–22). For more on these points, see Hahm 2009: 186–7.

As discussed above, Thucydides describes the “blending” of the Five Thousand as accomplished through two changes: the adoption of a property requirement (those capable of providing their own arms), and the abolition of pay for serving in office (8.97.1). These changes naturally lend themselves to a comparison with Aristotle, who proposes “polity” (πολιτεία), often translated as “constitutional government,”⁴³² as the most practical positive form of government in the most places (1265b26–30, 1295a25–31).⁴³³ This political structure, as Aristotle tells his readers, is a “mixture” (μίξις; 1293b34) of oligarchy and democracy. In explaining what he means by this, Aristotle focuses on the adoption or abandonment of elements from each type of regime, including property requirements (which he identifies as inherently oligarchic), and pay for official service (a markedly democratic practice) (1294a35–1294b1).⁴³⁴ These considerations are remarkably similar to the devices by which Athens temporarily alters its regime under the government of the Five Thousand, and thus Aristotle seems to be thinking about mixture in much the same way as Thucydides was.

An additional similarity may be noted when Aristotle describes the true blending of constitutions as occurring when one cannot fully determine how to categorize it: τοῦ δ' εὖ μемеῖχθαι δημοκρατίαν καὶ ὀλιγαρχίαν ὅρος, ὅταν ἐνδέχῃται λέγειν τὴν αὐτὴν πολιτείαν δημοκρατίαν καὶ ὀλιγαρχίαν (“And the definition of democracy and oligarchy being mixed well, is when it is possible to call the same constitution democracy and oligarchy”; 1294b14–16). With this notion in mind, one may recall the very different interpretations which scholar have proposed for the government of the Five Thousand (mentioned above), in which they attempted

⁴³² See Balot 2006: 258.

⁴³³ Johnson Bagby (2011: 132) argues that Thucydides’ description of the government of the Five Thousand prefigures Aristotle’s endorsement of the mixed regime.

⁴³⁴ Aristotle goes on to differentiate between the various types of mixture, stating that when such a blending leans toward democracy it is called a polity, and when it leans toward oligarchy it is called an aristocracy (1293b31–8). On this point, see Hahn 2009: 188.

to identify it as either a slightly modified democracy, an oligarchy, a “hoplite constitution,” or a mixed constitution.⁴³⁵ Moreover, Kirkwood’s judgment on this constitution again comes to mind: “It can be reasonably maintained that the government can as well be called a limited democracy as a moderate oligarchy” (1972: 95). Based on these observations, we may argue that the difficulty which readers have had in definitively identifying the form of the Five Thousand directly contributes to its similarity to Aristotle’s model of the mixed constitution.

There are, however, also some differences between Aristotle’s discussion of the “polity” (or “constitutional government”) and Thucydides’ brief discussion of the government of the Five Thousand. Chief among these is the former’s emphasis on the importance of the middle class. Aristotle is emphatic that a strong middling group of citizens is key to the stability and maintenance of a *polis*, basing this largely on his theory of the mean from his *Ethics* (*Pol.* 1295a35–1295b5). While the property requirement Thucydides mentions possibly included those possessing moderate wealth, the historian still frames the government of the Five Thousand as resolving the conflict between the interests of the few and the many, and makes no direct mention of a group occupying the middle. Despite this difference, however, the fact remains that both authors find their solution to the problems of oligarchy and democracy in a regime occupying the middle ground between them.

Conclusion

As has been noted, Thucydides’ description of a blended state, occupying a place between democracy and oligarchy, but identifiable as neither, bears its strongest similarities to Aristotle’s description of blended government (“polity”) from the *Politics*. This is, of course, not

⁴³⁵ See above.

to argue that Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War is a work of systematic political theory—he certainly does not provide readers with an extended political treatise dedicated to the direct discussion of governmental systems. At the same time, however, as I have shown, politics, leadership, and international relations play such an important role in his history (especially in his portrayal of democratic Athens) that he may reasonably be identified as engaging in political thought.⁴³⁶ Indeed, Thucydides is certainly interested in regime, insofar as it relates to the ability of the *polis* to deliberate and act in a moderate way. For example, he spends a great deal of time demonstrating to readers the inner workings of the Athenian democracy, and in so doing makes its faults clear.

At the same time, however, he never undertakes an in-depth excursus like Plato or Aristotle do on issues such as the source of different factions' claims to participation in government, and the relative justice of these claims. Moreover, there are several key differences between Thucydides' discussion of politics and those of fourth-century philosophers. For example, Thucydides shows no interest in establishing a *polis* that would help its inhabitants develop intellectual and moral virtue, as Plato and Aristotle did, but instead searches for a political system which will allow a city to enjoy lasting stability and moderate governance. Furthermore, when Thucydides discusses democracy and oligarchy, he does so in terms of how great a portion of the populace exercises rule: the many or the few (3.82.1, 8.97.2). Both Plato and Aristotle, on the other hand, and to some extent Solon before them, portray the distinction as existing between the rich and the poor, with Aristotle going so far as to say that, if there were a state in which the rich were the many and the poor were the few, rule by the rich would still be oligarchy (1279b17–19).

⁴³⁶ See Ober 2006 and Balot 2017.

Other important differences exist as well, such as Thucydides' seemingly strict division of tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy, while Aristotle discusses many versions of each in his *Politics* (1289a8–12, 1291b31–1292b10). All the same, an analysis of Thucydides' approach to typifying regimes, his implicitly supplied judgments of them, and his proposed ideal political structure demonstrates that Thucydides was addressing and considering solutions to many of the same problems as both earlier poets and later philosophers. While I do not argue that he is either directly responding to his predecessors, or being responded to by his philosophical successors, I do maintain that, in Thucydides' text, we may observe that these issues were “in the air,” so to speak, at the time of his writing, and that Thucydides was, among his many other tasks, engaging with them. Indeed, his *History* is a work that does many things, and I hope to have given readers a window into his ponderings on the politics of his time.

Works Cited

- Ahrens Dorf, P. J. 1997. "Thucydides' Realistic Critique of Realism." *Polity* 30: 231–65.
- Andrewes, A. 1962. "The Mytilene Debate: Thucydides 3.36–49." *Phoenix* 16.2: 64–85.
- Azoulay, V. 2010. *Périclès: La Démocratie Athénienne à l'Épreuve du Grand Homme*. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Badian, E. 1993. *From Plataea to Potidaea: Studies in the History and Historiography of the Pentecontaetia*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Balot, R. K. 2001. *Greed and Injustice in Classical Athens*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- . 2004. "The Dark Side of Democratic Courage." *Social Research: an International Quarterly* 71.1: 73–106.
- . 2006. *Greek Political Thought*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- . 2017. "Was Thucydides a Political Philosopher?," in R. K. Balot, S. Forsdyke, and E. Foster, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Thucydides*. New York: Oxford University Press. 319–38.
- , S. Forsdyke, and E. Foster, eds. 2017. *The Oxford Handbook of Thucydides*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bender, G. F. 1938. *Der Begriff des Staatsmannes bei Thukydides*. Würzburg: Konrad Triltsch.
- Bengtson, H. 1979. *Zu den strategischen Konzeptionen des Alkibiades*. Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- Bleckman, B. 2006. "Alkibiades und die Athener im Urteil des Thukydides." *Historische Zeitschrift* 232.3: 561–83.
- Bloedow, E. F. 1992. "Alcibiades 'Brilliant' or 'Intelligent'?" *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 41.2: 139–57.
- Brunt, P. A. 1952. "Thucydides and Alcibiades." *Revue des études grecques* 65: 59–96.
- Burns, T. W. 2012. "Nicias in Thucydides and Aristophanes Part I: Nicias and Divine Justice in Thucydides." *Polis* 29.2: 217–33.
- Bury, J. B. 1959 (1900). *A History of Greece*. New York: Macmillan.
- Cairns, F. 1982. "Cleon and Pericles: A Suggestion." *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 102: 203–4.
- Carter, L. B. 1986. *The Quiet Athenian*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Cartledge, P., and P. Debnar. 2006. "Sparta and the Spartans in Thucydides." In Rengakos and Tskamakakis 2006: 559–87.
- Cawkwell, G. 1997. *Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War*. London: Routledge.
- Christensen, J., and M. H. Hansen. 1983. "What is *syllogos* at Thuc. 2.22.1?" *Classica et Medievalia* 34: 15–29.
- Christodoulou, P. 2012. "Thucydides' Pericles. Between Historical Reality and Literary Representation," in A. Tsakmakis and M. Tamiolaki, eds., *Thucydides Between History and Literature*. Berlin: De Gruyter. 225–54.
- Classen, J., and J. Steup. 1892. *Thukydides: III*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung.
- . 1900. *Thukydides IV*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung.
- . 1905. *Thukydides VI–VII*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung.
- . 1911. *Thukydides V*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung.
- . 1914. *Thukydides II*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung.
- Connor, W. R. 1971. *The New Politicians of Fifth-Century Athens*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- . 1977. "A Post Modernist Thucydides?" *The Classical Journal* 72.4: 289–98.
- . 1984a. "A Historical Commentary on Thucydides, Vol. 5." Review of *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides, Vol. 5: Book VIII*, by A. W. Gomme, A. Andrewes, and K. J. Dover. *Classical Philology* 79.3: 230–5.
- . 1984b. *Thucydides*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Cornford, F. M. 1907. *Thucydides Mythistoricus*. London: E. Arnold.
- De Bakker, M. 2013. "Character Judgements in the Histories: their Function and Distribution." In Tsakmakis and Tamiolaki 2013: 23–40.
- Debnar, P. 2001. *Speaking the Same Language: Speech and Audience in Thucydides' Spartan Debates*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- . 2013. "Blurring the Boundaries of Speech: Thucydides and Indirect Discourse," in A. Tsakmakis and M. Tamiolaki, eds., *Thucydides Between History and Literature*. Boston: De Gruyter. 271–86.
- Delebecque, E. 1965. *Thucydide et Alcibiade*. Aix-en-Provence: Éditions Ophrys.
- De Romilly, J. 1963 (1942). *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism*. Translated by P. Thody. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- . 1965. "L'optimisme de Thucydide et le jugement de l'historien sur Périclès." *Revue des Études Grecques* 78: 557–75.
- . 1976. "Alcibiade et le mélange entre jeunes et vieux: politique et médecine." *Wiener Studien* 10: 93–105.

- De Ste. Croix, G. E. M. 1956. "The Constitution of the Five Thousand." *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 5.1: 1–23.
- . 1972. *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Donini, G. 1969. *La posizione di Tucidide verso il governo dei Cinquemila*. Torino: G. B. Paravia.
- Dover, K. J. 1965. *Thucydides Book VII*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2009. "Thucydides 'as History' and 'as Literature'," in J. S. Rusten, ed., *Thucydides: Oxford Readings in Classical Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 44–59.
- Edmunds, L. 1975. *Chance and Intelligence in Thucydides*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ellis, W. M. 1989. *Alcibiades*. London: Routledge.
- Ferrario, S. B. 2013. "'Reading' Athens: Foreign Perceptions of the Political Roles of Athenian Leaders in Thucydides." In Tsakmakis and Tamiolaki 2013: 181–98.
- Finley, J. 1942. *Thucydides*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Reprinted 1963, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- . 1967. *Three Essays on Thucydides*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Finley, M. I. 1962. "Athenian Demagogues." *Past & Present* 21: 3–24.
- Flory, S. 1988. "ΠΑΣΑ ΙΔΕΑ in Thucydides." *The American Journal of Philology* 109.1: 12–19.
- Forde, S. 1989. *The Ambition to Rule: Alcibiades and the Politics of Imperialism in Thucydides*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Forsdyke, S. 2001. "Athenian Democratic Ideology and Herodotus' *Histories*." *American Journal of Philology*.
- . 2009. "The Uses and Abuses of Tyranny," in R. K. Balot, ed., *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- . 2017. "Thucydides' Historical Method," in R. K. Balot, S. Forsdyke, and E. Foster, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Thucydides*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 19–38.
- Foster, E. 2010. *Thucydides, Pericles, and Periclean Imperialism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gomme, A. W. 1956a. *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides, Volume II*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- . 1956b. *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides, Vol. III: Books IV–V 24*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- . 1959. *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides, Vol. I: Introduction and Commentary on Book I*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- . 1962. *More Essays in Greek History and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- , A. Andrewes, and K. J. Dover. 1970. *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides, Vol. IV: Books V 25—VII*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- . 1981. *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides, Vol. V: Book VIII*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Grant, J. R. 1974. "Toward Knowing Thucydides." *Phoenix* 28.1: 81–94.
- Graves, C. E., ed. *Thucydides Book IV*. 1982. Bristol: Bristol Classical Press.
- Green, P. 1970. *Armada from Athens*. New York: Doubleday.
- Greenwood, E. 2006. *Thucydides and the Shaping of History*. London: Duckworth.
- Grethlein, J. 2010. *The Greeks and their Past: Poetry, Oratory, and History in the Fifth Century BCE*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2013. "The Presence of the Past in Thucydides," in A. Tsakmakis and M. Tamiolaki, eds., *Thucydides: Between History and Literature*. Berlin: De Gruyter. 91–118.
- Gribble, D. 1998. "Narrator Interventions in Thucydides." *The Journal of Hellenistic Studies* 118: 41–67.
- . 2006. "Individuals in Thucydides." In Rengakos and Tsakmakis 2006: 439–68.
- Hahn, D. E. 2009. "The Mixed Constitution in Greek Thought," in R. K. Balot, ed., *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. 178–98.
- Hanson, V. D. 1998. *Warfare and Agriculture in Classical Greece*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Harley, T. R. 1942. "A Greater than Leonidas." *Greece & Rome* 11 (32): 68–83.
- Heath, M. 1990. "Thucydides' Political Judgement." *LCM* 15.10: 158–60.
- Heilke, T. 2004. "Realism, Narrative, and Happenstance: Thucydides' Tale of Brasidas." *The American Political Science Review* 98 (1): 121–38.
- Henderson, B. W. 1927. *The Great War Between Athens and Sparta*. London: Macmillan and Co., Limited.
- Hobbes, T. 1843. *English Works, Vol. 8*. Edited by Sir W. Molesworth. London: Bohn.
- . 1975. *Hobbes' Thucydides*. Edited by Richard Schlatter. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Holm, A. 1895. *The History of Greece II*. London: Macmillan & Co.
- Hornblower, S. 1987. *Thucydides*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- . 1991. *A Commentary on Thucydides, Volume I*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 1996. *A Commentary on Thucydides, Volume II*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2008. *A Commentary on Thucydides, Volume III*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Hunter, V. 1973. *Thucydides: The Artful Reporter*. Toronto: Hakkert.
- . 1977. “The Composition of Thucydides’ *History*: A New Answer to the Problem.” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 26.3: 269–94.
- Immerwahr, H. R. 1973. “Pathology of Power and the Speeches in Thucydides,” in P. A. Stadter, ed., *The Speeches in Thucydides*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. 16–31.
- Jaffe, S. N. 2017a. “The Regime (*Politeia*) in Thucydides,” in R. K. Balot, E. Foster, and S. Forsdyke, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Thucydides*. New York: Oxford University Press. 391–408.
- . 2017b. *Thucydides on the Outbreak of War: Character and Contrast*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jameson, M. H. 2014. *Cults and Rites in Ancient Greece: Essays on Religion and Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson Bagby, L. M. 2011. “Thucydides and the Importance of Ideology in Conflict,” in D. E. Tabachnick and T. Koivukoski, eds., *On Oligarchy: Ancient Lessons for Global Politics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 110–39.
- Jones, W. H. S, trans. 1923. *Hippocrates Volume I*. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kagan, D. 1991. *The Peace of Nicias and the Sicilian Expedition*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Kallet-Marx, L. 1993. *Money, Expense, and Naval Power in Thucydides’ History 1–5.24*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kamtekar, R. 2009. “The Politics of Plato’s Socrates,” in R. K. Balot, ed., *A Companion to Ancient Greek Political Thought*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. 339–52.
- Kern, P. B. 1989. “The Turning Point in the Sicilian Expedition.” *The Classical Bulletin* 65: 77–82.
- Kirkwood, G. M. 1972. “Thucydides’ Judgment of the Constitution of the Five Thousand (VIII, 97, 2).” *The American Journal of Philology* 93.1: 92–103.
- Lateiner, D. 1985. “Nicias’ Inadequate Encouragement (Thucydides 7.69.2).” *Classical Philology* 80.3: 201–13.
- . 1989. *The Historical Method of Herodotus*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Lazenby, J. F. 2004. *The Peloponnesian War: A Military Study*. London: Routledge.
- Lebow, R. N. 2001. “Thucydides the Constructivist.” *American Political Science Review* 95: 547–60.
- Lewis, J. 2006. *Solon the Thinker: Political Thought in Archaic Athens*. London: Duckworth.

- Lichtenthaeler, C. 1965. *Thucydide et Hippocrate: vus par un Historien-Médecin*. Geneva: Librairie Droz.
- Luginbill, R. D. 1999. *Thucydides on War and National Character*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Macleod, C. 1983. *Collected Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mara, G. 2009. "Thucydides and Political Thought," in S. Salkever, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Greek Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 96–125.
- Marincola, J. 2001. *Greek Historians*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2007. "Speeches in Classical Historiography," in J. Marincola, ed., *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*. Malden, MA: Blackwell. 118–32.
- McGregor, M. F. 1956. "The Politics of the Historian Thucydides." *Phoenix* 10.3: 93–102.
- Meyer, E. 1899. *Forschungen zur alten Geschichte, zweiter Band: zur Geschichte des fünften Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* Halle: Max Niemeyer.
- Müller-Strübing, H. 1873. *Aristophanes und die historische Kritik*. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner.
- Murray, H. A. 1961. "Two Notes on the Evaluation of Nicias in Thucydides." *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 8: 33–46.
- Mynott, J., ed. 2013. *Thucydides: The War of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nichols, M. P. 2017. "Leaders and Leadership in Thucydides' *History*," in R. K. Balot, E. Foster, and S. Forsdyke, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Thucydides*. New York: Oxford University Press. 459–73.
- Ober, J. 1989. *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology, and the Power of the People*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- . 1998. *Political Dissent in Classical Athens: Intellectual Critics of Popular Rule*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- . 2006. "Thucydides and the Invention of Political Science." In Rengakos and Tsakmakis 2006: 131–59.
- Orwin, C. 1994. *The Humanity of Thucydides*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Palmer, M. 2015. "The Spartan Alcibiades: Brasidas and the Prospect of Regime Change in Sparta in Thucydides' War." In Andrea Radasanu, ed., *In Search of Humanity: Essays in Honor of Clifford Orwin*. Lanham: Lexington Books. 65–85.
- Parker, R. 2002. "Religion in Public Life," in M. Whitby, ed., *Sparta*. New York: Routledge. 161–73.
- Parry, A. 1969. "The Language of Thucydides' Description of the Plague." *BICS* 16: 106–118.

- . 1972. “Thucydides’ Historical Perspective,” in A. Parry, ed., *Yale Classical Studies, Vol. XXII: Studies in Fifth-Century Thought and Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 47–61.
- Pearson, L. 1947. “Thucydides as Reporter and Critic.” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 78: 37–60.
- Pelling, C., ed. 1990. *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 1997. “East is East and West is West—or are they? National Stereotypes in Herodotus.” *Histos* 1: 51–66.
- . 2000. *Literary Texts and the Greek Historian*. London: Routledge.
- Raaflaub, K. A. 1989. “Contemporary Perceptions of Democracy in Fifth-Century Athens.” *Classica et Mediaevalia* 40: 33–70.
- Raaflaub, K. A. 2006. “Thucydides on Democracy and Oligarchy.” In Rengakos and Tsakmakis 2006: 189–222.
- Rengakos, A., and A. Tsakmakis., eds. 2006. *Brill’s Companion to Thucydides*. Leiden: Brill.
- Rhodes, P. J. 1972. “The Five Thousand in the Athenian Revolutions of 411 B.C.” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 92: 115–27.
- . 1988. *Thucydides II. Edited with Translation and Commentary*. London: Aris and Phillips.
- Robinson, E. W. 2017. “Thucydides on the Causes and Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War.” In Balot Forsdyke and Foster 2017: 115–24.
- Rood, T. 1998. *Thucydides: Narrative and Explanation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Roy, C. S. 2012. “The Constitutional Debate: Herodotus’ Exploration of Good Government.” *Histos* 6: 298–320.
- Rusten, J. S. 1989. *Thucydides: The Peloponnesian War, Book II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schwartz, E. 1919. *Das Geschichtswerk des Thukydides*. Bonn: F. Cohen.
- Säid, S. 2013. “Thucydides and the Masses”. In Tsakmakis and Tamiolaki 2013: 199–224.
- Shorey, P. 1893. “On the Implicit Ethics and Psychology of Thucydides.” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 24: 66–88.
- Smith, R. E. 1941. “ΑΛΗΘΕΣΤΑΤΗ ΠΡΟΦΑΣΙΣ.” *Greece & Rome* 11: 23–33.
- Stahl, H.-P. 2003. *Thucydides: Man’s Place in History*. Swansea: Classical Press of Wales.
- Storey, I. C. 2003. *Eupolis: Poet of Old Comedy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Strauss, L. 1964. *The City and Man*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Szegedy-Maszak, A. 1993. "Thucydides' Solonian Reflections," in C. Dougherty and L. Kurke, eds., *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece: Cult, Performance, Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 201–14.
- Taylor, M. C. 2002. "Implicating the Demos: A Reading of Thucydides on the Rise of the Four Hundred." *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 122: 91–108.
- . 2010. *Thucydides, Pericles, and the Idea of Athens in the Peloponnesian War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thomas, R. 2000. *Herodotus in Context: Ethnography, Science and the Art of Persuasion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . "Thucydides' Intellectual Milieu and the Plague," in A. Rengakos and A. Tsakmakis, eds., *Brill's Companion to Thucydides*. Leiden: Brill. 87–108.
- Tompkins, D. P. 1972. "Stylistic Characterization in Thucydides: Nicias and Alcibiades." *Studies in Fifth-Century Thought and Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tsakmakis, A. 2006. "Leaders, Crowds, and the Power of the Image: Political Communication in Thucydides." In Rengakos and Tsakmakis 2006: 161–87.
- , and M. Tamiolaki, eds. 2013. *Thucydides Between History and Literature*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Ullrich, F. W. 1846. *Beiträge zur Erklärung des Thukydidēs*. Hamburg: Perthes-Besser and Mauke.
- Vogt, J. 2009. "The Portrait of Pericles in Thucydides," in J. S. Rusten, ed., *Thucydides: Oxford Readings in Classical Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 220–37.
- Von Fritz, K. 1975. *The Theory of the Mixed Constitution in Antiquity: A Critical Analysis of Polybius' Political Ideas*. New York: Arno Press.
- West, A. B. 1924. "Pericles' Political Heirs. I." *Classical Philology* 19.2: 124–46.
- Westlake, H. D. 1941. "Nicias in Thucydides." *The Classical Quarterly* 35.1/2: 58–65.
- . 1968. *Individuals in Thucydides*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wick, T. E. 1975. "A Note on Thucydides, I.23.6 and Ἡ ἈΛΗΘΕΣΤΑΤΗ ΠΡΟΦΑΣΙΣ." *L'Antiquité Classique* 44.1: 176–83.
- Wohl, V. 2002. *Love among the Ruins: The Erotics of Democracy in Classical Athens*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Woodcock, E. C. 1928. "Demosthenes, Son of Alcisthenes." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 39: 93–108.
- Woodhead, A. G. 1960. "Thucydides' Portrait of Cleon." *Mnemosyne* 13.4: 289–317.
- Wylie, G. 1992. "Brasidas: Great Commander or Whiz-Kid?" *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica*, n. s. 41 (2): 75–95.

- . 1993. “Demosthenes the General – Protagonist in a Greek Tragedy?” *Greece & Rome* 40.1: 20–30.
- Zadorojnyi, A. V. 1998. “Thucydides’ Nicias and Homer’s Agamemnon.” *The Classical Quarterly* 48.1: 298–303.
- Zahn, R. 1934. *Die erste Periklesrede (Thuk. I. 140–144). Interpretation und Versuch einer Einordnung in den Zusammenhang des Werkes*. Borna-Leipzig: R. Noske.