DESTRUCTIVE STATE INTEREST

AND PANHELLENISM

IN THUCYDIDES

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By

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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

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A candidate for the degree of Master of Arts,

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

Names of journals are abbreviated as in *L'Année Philologique*. Frequently cited ancient authors and works listed below.

Ach.	*Acharnians*
Alc.	Alcibiades, life of, in Plutarch's lives
Ana.	*Anabasis*
AP.	*Athēnaiōn Politeia* (attritubuted to Aristotle)
Diod.	Diodorus Siculus
Her.	Herodotus
Hell.	*Hellenica*
Kn.	*Knights*
Lys.	*Lysistrata*
Peace	*Peace*
Plut.	Plutarch
Rep.	*Republic*
Thuc.	Thucydides

Chapter One:
Introduction

Thucydides through his critique of destructive self-interest on the international level provides a message of Panhellenism in his work. Thucydides' narrative, first and foremost, is a history of the Peloponnesian War. The history, however, includes an analysis of human nature (1.76.2) and demonstrates that human nature drove the events of the war, especially evident in the Corcyraean *stasis* (1.22.4, 3.84.2). Thucydides at 1.76.2 defines human nature as being driven by three factors: fear, honor and interest. This thesis investigates the third factor, interest, to see how the author portrays it throughout the history. I differentiate between two forms of interest: destructive self-interest and enlightened self-interest. While Thucydides makes no explicit distinction between the two, the difference is drawn from certain speeches and discussion of them by modern authors. Destructive self-interest occurs when an entity (an individual within a community, or a state on the international level) acts to enrich itself at the expense of the community, an act sometimes characterized by *pleonexia*, or a want for more. Enlightened self-interest occurs when the same entity chooses instead to support the community as a whole, putting aside immediate private gain so that the majority might profit.

The criticism of destructive self-interest and the preference for enlightened self-interest was a common theme in late fifth/early fourth century thought as writers like Herodotus, Aristophanes, the tragedians, Lysias, Xenophon and Plato included it in their works. Thucydides in his work demonstrates the danger of acting according to destructive self-interest on both the community and international level. On the community level, Thucydides in Pericles' *Funeral Oration* portrays the ideal society as

one where individuals moderate their own desires for the group, and in the Corcyraean *stasis* shows the ruined society as one where people pervert societal norms by pursuing their own interests to the detriment of the community as a whole. He furthers this critique by describing how the politicians that followed Pericles ruined Athens by pursuing their own desires (though he remains quiet on how Pericles pursued his own interests). On the international stage he shows how the war began, was prolonged and how its effects were magnified by states following policies of destructive self-interest. Though the majority of the history shows the danger of destructive self-interest, there are moments when Thucydides points to a way of enlightened self-interest: Diodotus' speech in the Mytilene debate (3.42-8) and Hermocrates' speech at Gela (4.59-64). Like other Panhellenic calls, Hermocrates calls for the subordination of individual cities' interest for the good of the whole Greek world in order to ensure the stability of the international community, thus making Thucydides a Panhellenist (as will be argued in chapter five).

In order to avoid my own intellectual overreach, I do not attempt to argue that Thucydides had this purpose in mind when he wrote. Again, his focus was on the Peloponnesian War, which included an analysis of the dangers of human nature. Part of these dangers involved acting according to irrational destructive self-interest (3.82.8). If the war happened due to human nature and part of human nature is to act on destructive self-interest, then the best way for states to avoid war is to avoid policies of destructive self-interest and to enact policies of enlightened self-interest. For states this means abandoning policies based only on the interest of the state and embracing policies of working together with other states - in other words, Panhellenism. This is the logical

conclusion, if one wants to learn from Thucydides' writing, not merely take it as an accurate measure of humanity without believing that anything can change.

This reading emerged from several strains of classical scholarship.[1] The first vein deals primarily with Thucydides and the construction of his work. Jacqueline De Romilly in *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism* recognizes that the history shows a dangerous shift in Athenian imperial policy, from the moderate policies of Pericles to the expansionist, dangerous and eventually destructive plans of Alcibiades.[2] She also notes the similarities between Thucydides and other authors of his time, but did not go so far as to see that these parallels meant that Thucydides could be conceived of as being Panhellenic.[3] Virginia Hunter in *Thucydides the Artful Reporter* presents the historian as a writer who constructed the events of the history in order to demonstrate how history unfolds and how people can affect it.[4] Peter Pouncey in *The Necessities of War* examines how Thucydides used the definition of human nature in 1.76.2 to explain the motivations of both states and individuals throughout the course of the history.[5] Robert Connor in his *Thucydides* pushes the idea that Thucydides wanted to engage his readers in issues of the war, but that no overarching message could be taken from it.[6] James Morrison continues these thoughts in *Reading Thucydides* in which he examines Thucydides' presentation and how the author creates certain parallels, like the comparison of cities to individuals, to get the reader to think along new lines of thought.

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[1] The following is by no means a comprehensive review of all Thucydidean scholarship.
[2] Jacqueline de Romilly, *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism*, trans. Philip Tody (Alden 1963), 350-1.
[3] de Romilly, *Athenian Imperialism*, 358-9.
[4] Virginia Hunter, *Thucydides the Artful reporter* (Hakkert 1973), 183.
[5] Peter Pouncey, *The Necessities of War* (Columbia 1980), 143-50.
[6] Robert Connor, *Thucydides* (Princeton 1984), 248-50.

Another strain of scholarship deals with classical Greek thought on International Relations. While focusing on the work as a history, these authors deal with Thucydides' presentation of states in an international system. G.E.M. de St. Croix in *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* outlined the realist view of Thucydides, portraying the writer as one who viewed the international world as anarchic, where states could and would only operate according to self-interest and that questions of justice were irrelevant.[7] This view has been challenged, and modified since, with articles like David Cohen's "Justice, interest, and Political deliberation," showing that the author promoted courses of action arrived at by rational deliberation, rather than brash action.[8] Laurie Johnson's *Thucydides, Hobbes, and the Interpretation of Realism* or Gregory Crane's *Thucydides and the Ancient Simplicity* attempt to modify or explain the ways in which Thucydides was a realist.[9] John Dillery in *Xenophon and the history of his times* outlines how Xenophon in the *Hellenica* warned against states acting on *pleonexia*,[10] an idea that this thesis applies to Thucydides.

Another implicit argument in this thesis is that Thucydides saw the Hellenic world as a community of states held together by some form of international law/accepted modes of state behavior, which is a controversial claim in scholarship. Some scholarship minimizes Greek interstate relations, seeing them as limited to only a few shared customs and practices, like common religious festivals, battlefield monuments and treaties.[11] George Sheetz and Polly Lowe demonstrate in their works "Conceptualizing International

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[7] G.E.M de St. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (Cornell 1972), 16.
[8] David Cohen, "Justice, Interest, and Political Deliberation," *QUCC* (1984), 59.
[9] Laurie Johnson, *Thucydides, Hobbes, and the Interpretation of Realism* (Northern Illinois 1993), 201-229; Gregory Crane, *Thucydides and the Ancient Simplicity* (Berkeley 1998), 1-19.
[10] John Dillery, *Xenophon and the history of his time* (Routledge 1996), 251.
[11] George Sheetz, "Conceptualizing International Law in Thucydides," *AJP* (1994), 51; Josiah Ober, "Law and Political Theory" in Michael Gegarin and David Cohen (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Law* (Cambridge 2005), *403*.

Law in Thucydides" and *Interstate Relations in Classical Greece* that various relationships existed in the Classical Greek world, including ties of metropolies to colonies, ideas of reciprocity, shared religious sanctions, arbitration as an alternative for conflict resolution and that the existence of these practices present a more complex picture of Greek interstate relations than earlier conceived.[12] The existence of such laws would mean that Greek states existed as a community and that the war was in effect a *stasis* on an international scale, the thesis of Jonathon Price's *Thucydides and Internal War*.[13] These strands combine to form this thesis: Thucydides engages his reader in an attempt to teach, his history presents the dangers of human nature, especially the danger of acting on destructive self-interest, that despite showing a realist system, the historian actually critiques such a system and that the Greek cities existed in an interconnected community bound by unwritten laws, much like a polis.

Why does my view differ? I live in a time when the United States succeeded to lone hegemony where Athens failed, only to see the disastrous outcome of that victory. The root of Thucydidean scholarship to which I am responding was written in the Cold War when two powers stood against each other with the rest of the world divided between them.[14] Thucydides' work is applicable to the situation as it demonstrated what would happen if the two powers did engage each other (sans nuclear weapons). Therefore it made sense given the climate at the time to think that states only acted in self-interest to protect themselves. I write this analysis with little recollection of a time when the United States and the Soviet Union stood toe to toe with the world divided

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[12] Sheetz, "Conceptualizing International Law in Thucydides," 70-1; Polly Low, *Interstate Relations in classical Greece* (Cambridge 2007), 252-3.
[13] Jonathan Price, *Thucydides and Internal War* (Cambridge 2001), 77.
[14] Connor, *Thucydides*, 3.

between them. I saw the US enjoy, briefly, an unparalleled point of influence in world affairs, witnessed the result of that power misused and watched the US enter into a war and an occupation not for the interest of the state, but the interest of a few individuals and corporations, an action which was then sold to the people as being in the interest of the state (Thuc. 2.65.8). Just as Sparta's hegemony ended when it tried to stabilize Greek affairs in its favor (as demonstrated by Xenophon) so too the United States ruined its dominance by nation building in a very unstable region of the world. Looking at Thucydides, I saw this process occurring with Athens during the Peloponnesian war.[15] Does this negate either view? No. Thucydides portrays a world of competing hegemonies, while at the same time showing what happens when states act in their own interest. Instead of focusing on the nature of the conflict, I looked at its impact on individual cities and took as the more important lesson that when states act according to destructive self-interest they harm the international community and eventually destroy themselves. To avoid this fate, states should subordinate national interest in favor of working through the international community.

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[15] The long history of world powers, like the US, the former Soviet Union, China, France and the United Kingdom, meddling in the affairs of lesser states to their detriment, as Athens and Sparta did before and after the war, reinforces this message for me.

Chapter Two:
Destructive self-interest in other Greek authors of the late fifth/early fourth century

Thucydides is not alone in demonstrating the dangers of self-interest and *pleonexia*; other authors of the late fifth and early fourth century, like Herodotus, Aristophanes, Lysias, Xenophon and Plato, included similar themes in their works. Herodotus presents individuals acting in self-interest as the immediate cause of the Persian wars (5.35-6.32), and notes the role of overreach in Xerxes' campaign (7.8-18). The tragedians and Aristophanes incorporate such ideas into their plays: the tragedians through the tragic fall of a character, like Oedipus, Creon or Xerxes and Aristophanes in his war plays, *Acharnians, Knights, Peace* and *Lysistrata*. Lysias relies on the *topos* of the danger of individuals putting their desires above the city in several of his speeches, including *On the murder of Eratosthenes*, and *Against Alcibiades*. Plato in the *Republic* debates in whose interest the state is run and the disastrous impact uncontrolled self-interest can have on an individual and his community. Finally, Xenophon in the *Hellenica* illustrates how *pleonexia* led to the fall of both the Thirty in Athens (2.3.11-4.21) and to the end of Spartan hegemony over Greece.

Herodotus uses the theme of acting on destructive self-interest leading to greater trouble in his explanation of the Ionian revolt (5.35-6.32) and the idea of *pleonexia* leading to disaster in the Persian debate on Xerxes' invasion of Greece (7.8-18). The Ionian revolt, which Herodotus labels as the beginning of trouble between the Greeks and the Persians (5.97.3), was caused by two men following their own interests.[1] Histaeus and Aristagoras, the instigators of the Ionian revolt according to Herodotus, started the revolt not out of desire to free Ionia, but rather in order to advance their personal

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[1] K.H. Waters, *Herodotus the Historian* (Croom Helm 1985), 126.

ambitions. Before the revolt, Aristagoras feared he would lose his status as tyrant of Miletus because he had failed to capture Naxos for the Persians, could not pay the troops from that campaign and had earned the ire of the Persian commander Megabates due to his failure in the campaign (5.35.1). Histaeus, Aristagoras' cousin, at the time was a counselor to Darius in Susa, wanted to return to Miletus and conspired with Aristagoras to coerce the Ionian cities to revolt so that Darius would send him back to help subdue them (5.35.4). Aristagoras, desiring to protect himself and at the prompting of his cousin, persuaded the Ionians to revolt (5.36.1-2). Through this story, - with the amusing anecdote of the message being tattooed on the head of a slave (5.35.2-3) - Herodotus blames revolt on the machinations of two Persian puppets, and afterword notes that the war between the Greeks and the Persians arose from the Ionian revolt (5.97.3). Thus, Herodotus shows how destructive individuals acting for their own profit could be.

Herodotus also discusses *pleonexia* and the problems of overreach. Croesus of Lydia attacked the Persians in the hopes of creating a great empire, and in the process lost his kingdom (1.71-83). Various Persian campaigns also demonstrate the dangers of *pleonexia*: Cyrus desired to subjugate the Massagatae and died in the attempt (1.201-14.3), Darius led a failed invasion of Scythia (4.1-142), ordered the unsuccessful invasions of Greece in 492 (6.43-5) and 490 (6.94-116) and Xerxes invaded Greece to his misfortune (7.4-9.122). In depicting the debate over the invasion, Herodotus highlights Persian concern regarding *pleonexia* and overreach. When Xerxes announced his plan to invade Greece, only his uncle, Artabanus, cautioned the king about the risks involved in the venture (7.10.c). He noted that the gods strike down the greatest of living creatures, while leaving the small ones alone, and in this manner brought the great low (7.10.e).

Xerxes listened to these strong warnings against the invasion (7.12.1). Though Xerxes initially decided not to invade Greece, a divine force commanded him in a dream to attack (7.14). He made Artabanus experience the same dream and while Artabanus bowed to the will of the vision, he reaffirmed his advice that the desire for more leads to ruin (ὡς κακὸν εἴη τὸ πολλῶν ἐπιθυμέειν), recalling Cyrus' fate against the Massagetae, Cambyses' invasion of Ethiopia, and Darius in Scythia (7.18.2). Thus Herodotus not only included the themes of destructive self-interest and *pleonexia*, but also demonstrated their negative consequences.

Characters acting out of self-interest are well known in Greek tragedies, as are the connections between Thucydides and the tragedians.[2] Sophocles' Oedipus in his blind search for the truth destroyed his house; his Creon, determined to ensure that Polyneices remained unburied, lost his wife and son. The plight of these men mirrors Athens' fall in Thucydides' text, as a determination to follow single courses of action, either finding the source of a plague, punishing rebels, or the domination of the Greek world, end in disaster.[3] The tragedians also include a warning against *pleonexia*, as seen in Aeschylus' *Persae*.[4] Xerxes' queen relates how his advisors pushed him to attack Greece in order to increase the wealth left him by Darius (755). Later in the play, the ghost of Darius laments that the desire for the wealth could result in losing prosperity (824-6). The

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[2] J.R. Finley, "Thucydides and Euripides," *Three essays on Thucydides* (Harvard 1967); Colin Macleod, "Thucydides and Tragedy," *Collected Essays* (Oxford 1983). Simon Hornblower in his *Thucydides* devotes an entire chapter to the parallels between Thucydides and other writers (Simon Hornblower, *Thucydides* (Johns Hopkins 1987), chapter 5 intellectual affinities) and in *Thucydides and Pindar* examines the parallels in political thought and style between the two authors but hesitates to claim any direct link between them (Simon Hornblower, *Thucydides and Pindar* (Oxford 2004), 371-375).
[3] Macleod, *Collected Essays*, 142; Peter Burian, "Myth into *muthos*: shaping of tragic plot," in P.E. Easterling (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge 1997), 182.
[4] Michael Gegarin, *Aeschylean Drama* (Berkeley 1976), 45.

tragedies, then, share similar themes with Herodotus and other writers including the destructive nature of both self-interest and *pleonexia*.[5]

Aristophanes, in his early war plays, *Acharnians, Knights,* and *Peace,* includes the themes of both pleonexia and of destructive self-interest. *Acharnians*, performed in 425, involves a farmer, Dicaeopolis (possibly meaning the just city),[6] signing a separate treaty with the Spartans in order to enjoy the benefits of peace. Failing to obtain peace at the Assembly (56-8) and being disgusted at the various proposals of how to continue the war (61-108, 155-73), Dicaeopolis commissions a private peace for himself (130-3). After the Assembly Dicaeopolis runs into Lamachus, a politician who has prospered as a result of the war (572-625), in a scene that contrasts the fate of the poor farmer, Dicaeopolis, to that of the war profiteer, Lamachus. In comparison to Dicaeopolis' rags, which he took from Euripides to appear pitiable (*Ach.* 410-34), Lamachus enters in pristine armor (demonstrating his wealth and that he has not been fighting) and promotes the war (570-622). After mocking Lamachus' armor (575-89), Dicaeopolis denounces him and other young men of avoiding their duties in the war while old men like himself are on the front line (600-1).[7] Thus the scene shows that the common people of the city suffer the burden of the war, while a few profit.

Later in the play, Dicaeopolis receives the rewards of peace as he freely trades with merchants from Megara and Thebes (750-835, 860-955), while at the same time refusing to share his luxuries with certain Athenians who visit him. Dover argues that Dicaeopolis here acts selfishly, desiring to retain all the benefits of peace for himself

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[5] Jasper Griffin, "Herodotus and tragedy," in Carolyn Dewald and John Marincola (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus* (Cambridge 2006), 50-3.
[6] The point of the name is to associate the actions of the farmer to those of a just city; Douglas MacDowell, *Aristophanes and Athens* (Oxford 1995), 79.
[7] MacDowell, *Aristophanes and Athens*, 70.

without sharing them with his countrymen.[8] MacDowell shows that Dicaeopolis is not selfish; he tried to get a peace passed in the Assembly, but failed (56-9), and he shares the joys of peace with other Athenians, like the members of the chorus, and other Greeks, a Megarian and a Theban.[9] The farmer, however, does not give handouts.[10] In a final confirmation of the dangers of war and the blessings of peace, the last scene of *Acharnians* revisits the difference in fortunes between Dicaeopolis and Lamachus.[11] While Dicaeopolis enjoys all the wealth he has obtained through trade, Lamachus comes back bedraggled and wounded after a minor skirmish (1174-89); thus, the final observation of the audience is that Dicaeopolis, who acted for the greater interest, peace, is enjoying the good life, whereas Lamachus, who worked for himself, has been beaten up. In this way, the *Acharnians* demonstrates that achieving the greater good, peace, is more profitable (and pleasurable) for individuals and the city, than pursuing individual interests.

Aristophanes' *Knights* ends with a similar thought. *Knights* is a critique of Cleon, a prominent politician in the early years of the war whom other authors like Thucydides and pseudo Aristotle vilified (Thuc. 3.36.6, *AP*. 28.3). In the play two slaves, Nicias and Demosthenes, plot to expel another slave, Paphlagon (who represents Cleon), from the house of their master, Demos, whom he has bewitched. They complain that Paphlagon is loud, flatters and pampers the master and steals other's accomplishments to claim them as his own. This is in mockery of Cleon's success in the Pylos/Sphacteria campaign, which

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[8] K.J. Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy* (Berkeley 1972)*,* 87.
[9] MacDowell, *Aristophanes and Athens*, 76.
[10] MacDowell, *Aristophanes and Athens*, 76.
[11] MacDowell, *Aristophanes and Athens*, 75.

he took the credit for from the general Demosthenes (Thuc. 4.29.2, *Kn*. 45-57).[12] To rid the house of the meddlesome slave, Nicias and Demosthenes bring to the house an even more outrageous character, a sausage seller from the Agora (141-51). In a series of contests the sausage seller outwits Paphlagon, and in the end the two try to win the favor of the master by bribing him with food (1150-210). The contest is decided when Demos looks into their hampers to see who has given more. The sausage seller's is empty (1215), whereas Paphlagon has tucked away the best food for himself (1218-20). As a result, Demos expels Paphlagon from the house and the sausage seller becomes Demos' new associate; more than this, Demos is restored through his association with the sausage seller. He stops being a dotty old man who lives off the flattery of others and regains a healthy vigor (1331-70). The grasping slave, Paphlagon, acting to enrich himself and further his interests, enfeebled his master; the sausage seller, giving all to Demos, restored him. Therefore, the message of *Knights* is that the removal of politicians like Cleon, who operate on destructive self-interest but deceive the city in the process, and their replacement with men like the sausage-seller, who gave all to the community, will restore the health of the Athenian state.[13] While the play is an attack on Cleon by Aristophanes it follows other Aristophanic comedies in condemning flatters and sycophants (*Peace* 635, *Lys.* 577-8).

Peace reiterates the message of the danger of working for self-interest in its treatment of Pericles and the cause of the war. Aristophanes attacks the statesman when he has Hermes blame Pericles for the starting war through the Megarian Decree (*Ach.*

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[12] MacDowell, *Aristophanes and Athens*, 108.
[13] MacDowell, *Aristophanes and Athens*, 104.

530-540), which he enacted in order to avoid prosecution for the Pheidias affair.[14] Therefore, Pericles, in order to protect himself, endangered the city. Others, like Athenian allies trying to remove the yoke of Athenian rule (619-22) and demagogues (635), prolonged the war for their own profit. Therefore, in his early plays involving the war,[15] Aristophanes blames the continuation of the war on those who have profited from it, while the community as a whole suffered; he promotes any action, especially peace, that brings benefits to all Greece, not just individuals and in this manner derides destructive self-interest.

The logographers and *rhētores* of fourth century Athens, like Lysias, attacked destructive self-interest through the rhetorical *topos* of maintaining the laws of the city and protecting the community. In *On the murder of Eratosthenes* and *Against Alcibiades*, Lysias portrays his opponents as pursuing their own desires in spite of the laws, and therefore endangering the community.[16] In *On the murder of Eratosthenes* Lysias portrays adulterers as men who put themselves above the laws of the city and threaten its stability (33). He ends the speech with a plea to respect the laws of the city, which the defendant was obeying (49); if found guilty, then the jury was giving license to adulterers to do as they please (48). In this case, Lysias represents the laws as the bulwark of social order, those who ignore them for their own desires as dangers the city and those who uphold them as defenders of the well being of the entire community.   In *Against Alcibiades* Lysias constructs a similar argument as he claims that Alcibiades (the younger) put himself above the city's laws (just like his father) when he signed up with

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[14] *Peace 603-14*, Diod. 12.39-40, Plut. Per. 31.
[15] Other war plays, like Lysistrata, promote the idea of greater-interest through their messages of peace, but do not develop the idea more than this.
[16] James Sickinger, "Law and Rhetoric," in Ian Worthington (ed.), *A Companion to Greek Rhetoric* (Oxford 2007), 297-8.

the cavalry forces despite failing the *dokimasia* (10). Finding the young man guilty would send a clear message to the allies and enemies of Athens that the city will not tolerate such a blatant flouting of the laws (13). Lysias again explains the need to rein in individual desire for the good of the city, otherwise the city will not be respected; therefore destructive self-interest cannot be tolerated. Using the laws to cast an opponent as being against the community was a common *topos* for Greek *rhētores* as it demonstrated the *hybris* of an individual as seen in Demosthenes 21, *Against Medias*.[17] While a trick to win the case, these speeches show that the court goers of Athens were aware of and reacted to such ideas as the danger of destructive self-interest on the community level.

Plato in the *Republic* outlines in whose interest the state is run and why pursuing one's interest is a danger to the state. This debate begins when Thraysmachus posits that it is just to follow the laws and that the laws exist for the advantage of the ruler (338d-9a). After quibbling on whether the ruler always works to his own advantage (339c-41c), Socrates starts a new line of inquiry, questioning if it is in the interest of the doctor or the patient to practice medicine, or if it is in the interest of the crew or the helmsmen to steer (341c). When Thraysmachus agrees, Socrates turns it around, stating that if it is in the interest of the crew and the patient, then rulers rule in the interest of the people, rather than the ruler ruling for his own interest (343c). Plato demonstrates that the true interest of government is the governed, not the power of the authority. This parallels Diodotus' argument in the Mytilenean debate as to how Athens should rule; as opposed to pushing

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[17] Sickinger, "Law and Rhetoric," 298.

its own interest and destroying powers that resist, Athens instead should act to support its subject allies in order to secure their loyalty (Thuc. 3.46.4-5).[18]

Plato reiterates this message in book six when Socrates discusses who should be chosen as the navigator of a ship, a metaphor for who should lead the state. Socrates describes how the owner of a ship is swarmed with men, clamoring to claim that they would do the best job and how this mob works to tear each other down in an attempt to be chosen (488 a-b). Socrates derides these attempts, noting that neither favor of the master nor posturing makes a good navigator; a good navigator must know the waves, skies and clouds (488d). This emphasizes that the best leaders are not those who desire leadership, rather those who have the knowledge of it. This parallels Thucydides' description of Pericles' relationship with the people of Athens at 2.65.8-9, and reiterates the message of the previous passage that the ruler should rule for the benefit of the whole, not the individual.

Not only does Plato demonstrate that the ideal ruler serves his people, subordinating his own interest for others, but also he demonstrates the negative impact that uncontrolled self-interest has on a person. This debate begins in book two of the *Republic* with a discussion regarding *pleonexia*, when Glaucon questions Socrates about the nature of justice and injustice. Glaucon states that justice is simply the balance between suffering and performing injustice (359a). He believes that if man could, he would act as he pleased and to illustrates this point he tells the story of the shepherd who found a ring that made him invisible and used it to take over a kingdom (359 b-d). Glaucon's conjecture is that laws make men appear just or unjust, yet when there is no

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[18] David Cohen, "Justice, Interest, and Political deliberation in Thucydides," *QU (1984)* 39; Patrick Coby, "Enlightened Self-Interest in the Peloponnesian War: Thucydidean Speakers on the Right of the Stronger and Inter-state Peace," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* (1991), 85.

law, or no consequence, there is no virtue in being just, in fact it is foolish to pass up opportunities presented if there is no risk of reprisal. A man who is unjust and gets away with it will enjoy all the benefits of being a just person, as well as the advantages of being unjust (360 c-d). This view points to a conflict between nature and law, that men are similar in inclination and given the opportunity they will act to take more (359 c). It is only the fear of punishment that makes men obey the law, a view reflected in the Melian dialogue when the Athenians noted that as they have the power they will proceed as they desire (5.105).

While there is no immediate reply to Glaucon's claim, Plato returns to this idea when he describes the degenerative impact that unregulated desire has a person.[19] In the *Republic* book eight, Socrates relates how a person who follows his passions is eventually controlled by them. In following his passions, so Socrates states, a man will soon find himself going to greater lengths to satiate them (573 d). If he does not, then his passions attack him and he is stung as if by insects (573 e). To this end, the individual burns through his own money, his parent's money, then resorts to petty thievery and other vile acts in order to continue his habits (574a-5a). Under the control of these malicious forces, the individual loses all his old values and becomes a slave to his passions (575 d). This endangers the state, for if enough of these individuals exist within a polis, they will work to subvert it, create a tyranny and select the most wicked person among them to be in charge (575 c-d). In this way, a person who follows his own passions and selfish desires becomes trapped by them and pursues them to the detriment of others and himself. In contrast a virtuous and just man knows to limit and control his passions and

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[19] Richard Kraut, "The defense of Justice in the *Republic*," in Richard Kraut (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (Cambridge 1992), 326.

finds pleasure in moderate ways that do not control him but that are still pleasing (571 d-2 a). Therefore, the unjust man who pursues his own interests will never profit as much as the just man who does not follow his own interests to excess.[20] Plato in the *Republic* notes how true interest resides not in the individual, but the group as a whole, that individuals who rule need to be mindful of this desire as opposed to their own needs and that the pursuit of own desires/interest are destructive, whereas moderate action allows for greater fulfillment.

Xenophon focuses on the problems of *pleonexia* in the *Hellenica* both in internal politics in his portrayal of the Thirty in Athens and in international affairs in his explanation of why Greece remained unsettled after the Peloponnesian war.[21] He continues the pattern set by Thucydides in the description of the Corcyraean *stasis* that *pleonexia* and *philotimia*, increased the effects of *stasis* (3.82.8).[22] *Pleonexia* was the root of trouble for Greece as states, unable to peacefully coexist, struggled to dominate each other which resolved nothing and caused more devastation.[23] Xenophon's portrayal of the Thirty, while similar to other accounts of the regime, also includes the idea of destructive overreach to explain their demise.[24] The Thirty, once established, ruled according to their desire (*Hell.* 2.3.13, *AP.* 35.4), as if they were tyrants (2.3.16), killing for hatred, money (*Hell.* 2.3.21, Lys. 12.7) and to remove any possible opposition (*Hell.* 2.3.14, Diod. 14.4.3). Such disregard for public well being alienated the Thirty from the rest of Athens, leaving them to rely more and more on the Spartan garrison (*AP.* 37.2) and causing them to kill more individuals in order to pay the soldiers (2.3.22).

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[20] Kraut, "Defense of Justice in the *Republic*," 326.
[21] John Dillery, *Xenophon and the history of his times* (Routledge 1995), 163.
[22] W.E. Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian* (Albany 1977), 126.
[23] Dillery, *Xenophon and the history*, 242.
[24] Dillery, *Xenophon and the history*, 148.

The crisis culminated in the trial of Theramenes, a member of the Thirty who attempted to moderate their excesses; an event which the *Hellenica* covers more extensively than any other classical author.[25] The trial is a judgment of Thirty, in which Critias defended their actions as being necessary in order to maintain peace, attacked Theramenes as being a traitor (2.3.29) and denounced him as a person who looked out only for himself (2.3.32). Lysias supports this accusation in *Against Eratosthenes*, but his account differs greatly from Xenophon's (62-78).[26] Theramenes replied that the true dangers to the state were men who killed to satisfy their greed (2.3.43). After the sacrilegious murder of Theramenes (*Hell*. 2.3.55-6, Diod. 14.5.3), the Thirty continued their tyranny (2.4.1) until popular opposition grew to such a point that they were overthrown and condemned by Cleocritius as men who for their own profit killed more Athenians than the Spartans did in the Peloponnesian war (2.4.21). The Thirty's greed led it then, as explained by Xenophon, to eventual ruin.

Xenophon also uses *pleonexia* to explain how Spartan hegemony over Greece ended. At the end of the Peloponnesian war Sparta ignored the original war aim to preserve Greek freedom and instead strove to maintain its hegemony over the Greek world (3.5.12-3). After the King's Peace of 386 reaffirmed Sparta's rule, it became even more domineering in Greek affairs, leading to its ruin (*Hell*. 5.3.27, Diod. 15.23.3-4).[27] The city forced the dissolution of various confederacies, including the one between Corinth and Argos (5.1.34) and the Boeotian confederacy (5.1.33). It also invaded Mantinea (*Hell*. 5.2.4-7, Diod. 15.12.1-2) and Phlius (5.2.9, 5.3.11-25) to install pro-Spartan oligarchies. This arrogance and overbearing foreign policy culminated in

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[25] Dillery, *Xenophon and the history,* 153.
[26] S.C. Todd, *Lysias* (Austin 2000), 132 n.43.
[27] Charles Hamilton, *Agesilaus and the Failure of Spartan Hegemony* (Cornell 1991), 256.

Sparta's seizure of the Theban Cadmeia in 381 (5.1.4).[28]   This act renewed the struggle

for supremacy among the leading Greek cities and lasted until the battle of Mantinea in

362.

In response to the seizure of the Cadmea, Thebes made an alliance with Athens,

and in 378 Athens reconstituted its naval alliance for the purpose of maintaining Greek

freedom against Sparta.[29]   The Thebans retook the Cadmea in 378 with Athenian help

(5.5.11-2), rebuilt the Boeotian league and in 371 defeated the Spartans at the battle of

Leuctra. This victory made the Boeotian city the preeminent power in Greece, though its

ascendency was no better than Sparta's. The fighting among continued into the 360s as

Thebes used its new position to free Messenia from Spartan rule and meddle in the affairs

of Thessaly.[30]   In response to Theban aggression, Athens allied with Sparta and at the

battle of Mantinea the three powers fought to an inconclusive finish, leaving Greece

divided and unsettled (7.5.27). Thus, the *Hellenica* characterizes the years of the late

fifth and early fourth century as turbulent times for Greece, as powers, either

governments in a city or states on the international stage, that grasped for more found

increasing resistance and eventual ruin.

There is a clear theme in the writings of these authors of the late fifth and early

fourth century that pursuit of destructive self-interest and *pleonexia* are dangerous.

Herodotus includes both ideas in his histories, demonstrating human culpability in larger

events and that overreach is a danger that should be guarded against; however, there are

larger forces at work in Herodotus which push the characters into actions they do no

agree with. The playwrights also incorporate these ideas: the tragedians present the tragic

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[28] Dillery, *Xenophon and the history,* 214.
[29] Hamilton, *Agesilaus,* 4.
[30] Hamilton, *Agesilaus,* 4.

fall of characters that follow self-interest. Aristophanes mocks people who benefited from the war and rewards those who push for peace, which he shows to be beneficial to many. Lysias uses the laws as a way to show the danger of individual desire.

Plato emphasizes and expands on why pursuing selfish aims is harmful to individuals and to states. Xenophon illustrates how Athens suffered when the Thirty reveled in its greedy rule, and how Greece had been torn apart by states trying to expand their power. Chronologically writing in the middle of these authors is Thucydides. As the following chapters will demonstrate, he also explores the impact of self-destructive self-interest, and *pleonexia* on the national and international level. Like his contemporaries Aristophanes and Lysias, and the later authors Plato and Xenophon, Thucydides couples his message of dangerous self-interest with the idea that group action can benefit a society. The last chapter will examine this premis: if authors such as Xenophon and Aristophanes see similar problems in society as Thucydides, and offer similar solutions to these problems as does Thucydides, why does modern scholarship acknowledge and debate the Panhellenism of them, yet deny similar sympathies in Thucydides?

Chapter Three:
Destructive self-interest and its impact on the community

The theme of individuals hurting the community through destructive self-interest was known to Thucydides, for he wrote that after the death of Pericles Athens declined because Pericles' successors manipulated people for their own interest, rather than the good of the city (2.65.7). Another well analyzed episode, the Corcyraean *stasis*, shows how individuals acting on *philotimia* and *pleonexia* dangerously radicalized society, demonstrated by words changing their very meanings, and how the community lost cohesion because of those two motivations (3.82.4-8). *Philotimia* and *pleonexia* recall the Athenian ambassador's statement at the Congress at Sparta, where he states that individuals work on fear, self-interest and honor (1.76.2), only in the case of Corcyra these feelings are heightened due to the war (3.82.2), adding more stress to the city and causing more chaos (3.82.1). Within the text the episode serves as a microcosm of the war as individuals acting on destructive self-interest started and continued the civil turmoil, just like how states acting in self-interest initiated the war and caused even greater destruction and devastation.[1] In real life the Corcyraean *stasis* was the first of many revolutions spawned by the war and demonstrated a radicalization of the war.

Thucydides illustrates the danger of individuals acting according to destructive self-interest in a community through various methods. On a theoretical level, he creates two model communities: the well ordered city where individuals support the state, Athens before the plague, and the city in disorder where individuals put their own desires above the state, Corcyra in the midst of *stasis*. He reinforces the message of the necessity to work for the state and the dangers of *stasis* in his description of Spartan society and the

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[1] Jonathan Price, *Thucydides and Internal War* (Cambridge 2001), 12.

Epidamnian *stasis*. He expands on the theme of destructive self-interest in his attacks on the Athenian democracy, his portrayal of Pericles and Alcibiades, and his explanation for the Peace of Nicias and the events of book eight.

In book two Thucydides constructs his ideal city in the funeral oration,[2] which lauds Athens at the pinnacle of its power, the city's accomplishments, its government and the characteristics of its people. The speech emphasizes certain aspects of a democratic society, specifically that people willingly sacrificed themselves for the city.[3] The battlefield proves the power of this community spirit, as in contrast to the Spartans, who trained to fight from birth, Athenians lived a leisurely existence and still entered into combat willingly (2.39.1). Another quality of Athens was the interest that its citizens took in public affairs: they paid attention not only to their own cares, but the needs of the city as well, and ostracized those who did not participate in government (2.40.2). The ultimate sign of this dedication was the willingness of men to die for the city (2.42.1-2).[4] This final sacrifice defined the city's greatness. As Pericles noted, not many citizens in Greece would do the same for their city and this self-sacrifice made Athens unique (2.42.2). Athens then was the ideal city, the education for all of Greece (2.41.1), one where the citizens were so dedicated to the city that they gave their lives for it. The speech may follow in the genre of funeral orations and may be a distillation of Pericles' actual speech given in response to the events of the first year of the war,[5] but it is the only

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[2] Robert Connor, *Thucydides* (Princeton 1984), 66.
[3] Peter Pouncey, *The Necessities of War* (Columbia 1980), 77; Though Thucydides' funeral oration follows many patterns of the *epitaphios* genre, it is unique in its praise of the Athenian constitution: Cristopher Crey, "Epideictic Oratory," in Ian Worthington (ed.), *A Companion to Greek Rhetoric* (Oxford 2007), 245.
[4] Connor, *Thucydides*, 69.
[5] A.B. Bosworth, "The historical context of Thucydides' Funeral Oration," *JHS* (2000), 16.

funeral oration in the text of Thucydides and clearly presents Thucydides' ideals of what a city should be.

After the plague narrative in which the *mores* and customs Pericles praised in his funeral oration perished temporarily, the great statesman in his last speech before he succumbed to the plague re-asserted that people needed to work for the good of the city over personal ambition. He claimed that as long as the state prospered, an individual would do well; however, if an individual prospered at the expense of the state, or prospered while the state suffered, then that individual risked destruction as well (2.60.2-4).[6] Connor notes that if the funeral oration praises Athens, then Pericles' final speech is the city's epitaph as it marked the apex of Athenian power and explained why the city began to crumble putting emphasis on individual greed over common good.[7] Thucydides reinforces this message at the end of the section, when he notes that Athens declined on account of politicians who acted to support their own goals in contrast to Pericles' appeal for selfless behavior (2.65.7).

The description of Spartan society in the Archeology supports the idea that the ideal community is one in which individuals subordinate themselves to the community. As Ober observes, Thucydides points out that Sparta through its laws had not suffered *stasis* in four hundred years (1.18.1) and that Sparta avoided civil strife by creating the appearance of equality: no one in Sparta was allowed to look wealthier than anyone else (1.6.4).[8] In this way Sparta enforced an egalitarian appearance upon the population and

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[6] Pouncey, *Necessities of War*, 77; Simon Hornblower, A *Commentary on Thucydides*, vol. 1 (Oxford 1991), 333.
[7] Connor, *Thucydides*, 71.
[8] Josiah Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens* (Princeton 1998), 65.

maintained stability.[9]   While the image presented is a Thucydidaean construction, representing the author's exploitation of the Sparta Mirage, the description reinforces the concept of what constitutes an ideal society.[10]   The ideal city then was one where individuals practice enlightened self-interest, the subjugation of individual desire for the needs of the city, as represented in the funeral oration, Pericles' post plague speech and the description of Spartan society.

If the well ordered city was one where individuals supported the community, the disorderly city was one where individuals worked for their own profit to the detriment of the whole, exemplified by the Corcyraean *stasis* narrative.[11]   The troubles in Corcyra started with factional strife as Corcyra was divided between democrats and oligarchs. The oligarchs attempted to wrest power for themselves through political intrigue and failing in this, they moved to outright violence (Thuc. 3.70, Diod. 12.57.3). The fighting continued in the city until the democrats defeated the oligarchs and the Athenian general Nicostratus negotiated a peace (Thuc. 3.75.1, Diod. 12.57.3). The peace was fragile and the oligarchs, fearing reprisal, shut themselves away in the temple of Hera (Thuc 3.75.5, Diod. 12.57.3). The arrival of a Peloponnesian fleet exacerbated the situation for when the Corcyraeans sailed out to fight the Spartans some of their ships defected and Corcyraean resistance collapsed (3.78).   The real atrocities began when the Peloponnesians left and an Athenian fleet approached, which caused the democrats to start slaughtering their opponents as all laws of society collapsed (3.81). Indiscriminant butchery began: fathers killed sons, people killed on account of old hatreds or debts,

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[9] Ober, *Political Dissent,* 68.
[10] Eugene Tigerstedt, *The Legend of Sparta in Classical Antiquity*, vol. 1 (Almqvist & Wisell 1965), 148.
[11] Connor, *Thucydides*, 102.

supplicants were dragged from the temples and killed and people were killed in the temples (3.81.4-5).

In the course of the Corcyraean *stasis*, and those that followed around the Hellenic world (3.82.1), the foundations of society were overturned (3.84.1). Words and deeds became radicalized: aggression was courage, deliberation was cowardly and moderation was unmanly (3.82.4). Families were torn apart by party strife (3.82.6); intrigue was rife in the city (3.82.7). What drove the deterioration of civil society was love of power fueled by greed and ambition (3.82.8). Leaders claimed they were working for the good of the city, but in reality they strove to promote their own authority (3.82.8). Through Corcyra Thucydides shows the complete destruction of civil society as human nature, spurred on by desire, overcame laws placed upon it to ensure the well running of society (3.84.2).

Though Corcyra is the paradigm for *stasis*, the *stasis* of Epidamnus in book one foreshadows the Corcyraean *stasis* and reflects the idea that individuals working for interest destroy the state.[12] Epidamnus was a powerful city on the Adriatic that was weakened by a foreign war and fell into civil strife (1.24.3-5). The democratic party eventually ejected the oligarchic party, which returned at the head of a barbarian army and harassed the city (Thuc. 1.24.5, Diod. 12.31.2). Though not as extreme an example Epidamnus mirrors the fate of Corcyra, a state that lost its glory through internal struggle,[13] reaffirming the idea that individuals, when acting on destructive self-interest, harm the state.

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[12] Ober, *Political Dissent*, 70.
[13] Ober, *Political Dissent*, 70.

Thucydides reuses the theme of individual desire harming the city in his criticism of the politicians who followed Pericles. Part of the problem was the gullibility of the Athenian people, whom the writer, in Pericles' denouncement of Athenians in the wake of the plague, Cleon's critique of democracy in the Mytilene debate and book eight, characterizes as fickle. After the plague hit Athens, the people, angry due to their suffering in the war, blamed Pericles for their troubles and sent peace overtures to the Spartans (2.59.2). The statesman reprimanded the mob for their *volte face*, claiming that when things went well all were happy; once problems occurred the mass lost its resolve and looked for scapegoats, even though it had voted to go to war (2.60.4). He admonished the mob for its lack of resolve, as at the first hint of trouble it was willing to capitulate (2.61.2). He urged the crowd to endure the hardships of war and live up to the greatness of its city (2.614). The speech did not ease the people's anger and they fined Pericles, but as a final irony they elected him as general for the next year (2.65.3), affirming the mercurial nature of the *demos*.

Cleon's speech in the Mytilene debate continues the theme of the irresoluteness of people in a democracy as he accused the mob of being too easily swayed in debate by good speakers and that they acted more like an audience rather than a democratic assembly. He noted how they were regular speech goers, easily deceived, prone to ignore solid advice and swayed by complex arguments (3.38). He stated that he preferred people who thought they were stupid so that they would obey the laws, rather than people who thought they were smart since they acted above them (3.37.). In book eight the fickleness of democracy comes through again as the mass turned against speakers who proposed the Sicilian expedition, though it had supported them earlier (8.1.2). The

people even voted to remove themselves from power and to establish an oligarchy (8.54.1).[14]   Repeatedly Thucydides denigrates democracy by demonstrating that the people were capriciousness, and were willingly manipulated by the leaders who came after Pericles.

To further his critique of destructive self-interest Thucydides constructs Pericles as the selfless leader to contrast him with his selfish successors. He establishes Pericles as the ideal leader, who possessed all the qualities of leader, had control over the mob and no political rivals. In order to create this image the historian masked the fact that like his successors Pericles worked according to self-interest. Thucydides' antithesis to Pericles is Alcibiades, a man who controlled the people in a manner similar to Pericles, guided the state for its and his own benefit and engendered so much hatred and resistance from other politicians that their animosity hindered the war effort. Other warnings against individual self-interest include Thucydides' discussion of the motivations behind the Peace of Nicias at 5.16.1 and the various intrigues and plots recounted in book eight.

Pericles embodied all that Thucydides' desired of a statesman: foresight, integrity and the ability to lead the people without flattery (2.65.5-9);[15] the author even states that Pericles led Athens when it was at its greatest (2.65.5). He does not, however, call Pericles selfless. Pericles' speeches promoted the subordination of individual interest to that of the state and Thucydides objected to Pericles' successors because they ignored his strategy and pursued their own ambition for glory to the detriment of the Athens (Thuc. 2.65.7); so it would follow that what made Pericles great was his ability to rule without acting on personal self-interest. Yet the historian does not comment.

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[14] Connor, *Thucydides*, 227.
[15] H.D Westlake, *Individuals in Thucydides* (Cambridge 1968), 41; Pouncey, *Necessities of War*, 115.

It is possible that Thucydides did not feel a need to comment. He merges Pericles with the state to such a degree that the politician is the state for the early period of the war (2.65.8), combining his interests with those of the state and making him the epitome of a leader.[16] In this way, the politicians that followed failed because they did not follow Pericles' lead, either in terms of strategy or in how they controlled Athens. It is also possible that Thucydides could say nothing because other classical authors blamed Pericles for starting the war for his own motives. As shown in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* and *Peace,* the playwright accused Pericles of passing the Megarian decree for personal reasons (*Ach*. 524-534, *Peace 605-61).* If Thucydides wanted to blame the loss of the war on politicians who acted out of interest (2.65.7), he could not show that Pericles acted out of interest when he ran the state. Therefore, Thucydides developed the character of Pericles in a cursory fashion in order to portray Pericles as the ideal statesman. Both of these explanations are credible, the focus is the ideal the Thucydides constructs through Pericles: a leader wholly dedicated to the state and a model against which the successors were found wanting.[17]

Pericles' closest successor was Alcibiades. As a statesman, Pericles promoted the state over the individual; Alcibiades combined state and personal interests.[18] While Thucydides claims that Pericles led the city during its greatest period (2.65.5), he admits that Alcibiades was its best war leader (6.15.4). The language describing Alcibiades' actions in convincing Athens to ally with Argos in 419 demonstrates the historian's belief of Alcibiades' patriotism. When explaining Alcibiades' motivation for pushing the

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[16] Pouncey, *Necessities of War,* 81; Price, *Internal War,* 239.
[17] Price, *Internal War,* 239.
[18] Colin Macleod, *Collected Essays* (Oxford 1983), 86; Steven Forde, *Ambition to Rule* (Cornell 1989), 177; Ober, *Political Dissent*, 93.

alliance with Argos, the author notes that Alcibiades perceived the alliance as better for Athens (ᾧ ἐδόκει μὲν καὶ ἄμεινον εἶναι πρὸς τοὺς Ἀργείους μᾶλλον χωρεῖν 5.43.2). Plutarch, writing about the same incident, notes that Alcibiades envied (φθονῶν) Nicias' fame and set out to sabotage the peace (*Alc*. 14.2). Thucydides attributes some envy on the part of Alcibiades in pushing for the Argive alliance as he describes how Alcibiades was annoyed that the Spartans did not use him to help negotiate the alliance (5.43.2); however, the forefront of Thucydides' discussion is that Alcibiades thought the Argive alliance was necessary and better for Athens. Another episode in the history that portrays Alcibiades' care for the city was when he prevented the democrats at Samos from attacking the oligarchs in Athens and initiating a *stasis* similar to Corcyra's (8.86.4-5).[19] These passages indicate Thucydides' belief of Alcibiades' dedication to the city.

While supportive of the city, Alcibiades also promoted his own interests. His speech calling for the Sicilian expedition explains this seeming conflict of interest. In the preceding speech Nicias accused Alcibiades of pushing the expedition to further his own glory (6.12.2). Alcibiades countered by saying that his personal glory enriched the city as a whole (6.16.1-3), rhetorically combining his patriotism with self-interest. The people were caught up by Alcibiades' zeal, as he instilled in them a passion for conquest (6.19.1).[20] In this manner then, Alcibiades led the people of Athens, like Pericles, not through flattery, but through personal charisma (6.17.4).[21]

This excess of Alcibiades led people to fear him and conspire to against him (6.15.4). While Alcibiades might have been a man dedicated to the city the animosity he generated in other politicians caused them to act according to destructive self-interest to

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[19] Pouncey, *Necessities of War,* 115.
[20] Ober, *Political Dissent*, 112.
[21] Forde, *Ambition to Rule*, 179

strengthen their own positions by removing him.[22] His recall to Athens from Sicily for the mutilation of the herms and the profaning of the Mysteries illustrates this as he desired to stand trial before the armada sailed, but his unnamed opponents maneuvered the courts to act while Alcibiades was away (6.28),[23] causing Alcibiades' recall and possibly the failure of the Sicilian expedition (2.65.8).[24]

In book eight the plight of Phrynichus, a popular leader in Athens after the Sicilian expedition, demonstrates both how much other politicians hated Alcibiades, and how this hurt the city.[25] Chosen as one of the commanders of the fleet at Samos, Phrynichus was an ardent democrat and an opponent of Alcibiades. He rejected Alcibiades' appeals to return to Athens (8.48.4) and attempted to collaborate with the Spartan general serving with Alcibiades to incriminate and destroy the Athenian exile (8.50.2). This plan backfired when the Spartan commander revealed Phrynichus' plot (8.50.3), forcing the Athenian general to return to Athens and join the oligarchic revolution to stop Alcibiades' recall (8.68.3). Eventually an unknown disgruntled soldier with tenuous connections to popular resentment against the regime assassinated the former democrat turned oligarch (8.92.2). This convoluted affair illustrates the hatred politicians had for Alcibiades, the lengths to which they went to counter him and how Thucydides paints a situation to show how detrimental acting on self-interest was. Phrynichus in his opposition of Alcibiades and in an attempted to retain/expand his own power, betrayed his command to the Spartan opposition, turned against his democratic leanings and as a result died at the hands of a democrat. Alcibiades, a maverick in the

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[22] Pouncey, *Necessities of War*, 113; Macleod, *Collected Essays*, 71.
[23] Walter Ellis, *Alcibiades* (Routledge 1989), 59.
[24] Pouncey, *Necessities of War*, 113; Macleod, *Collected Essays*, 71.
[25] Pouncey, *Necessities of War, 109.*

later chapters of the narrative, embodies the power of destructive self-interest. While devoted to the state and himself, the opposition which he inspired in others and the radical democracy which allowed them to operate as they wished led to a series of follies throughout the later part of the war, including the rule of the 400 in 411.[26]

Two other episodes illustrate the danger of individuals, not just Athenian politicians, acting according to their own interests: the explanation of Athenian and Spartan leaders' motivation for the Peace of Nicias at 5.16.1 and the various conspiracies of book eight. Thucydides at 5.16.1 states:

> Now Athens had suffered another defeat at Amphipolis, and Cleon and Brasidas were dead – the two people who on each side had been most opposed to peace, Brasidas because of the success and honor which had come to him through war, Cleon because he thought that in a time of peace and quiet people would be more likely to notice his evil doings and less likely to believe his slander of others. This was the moment, then, when even greater efforts to secure peace were made by the two statesmen who had the best claims to influence in each city, the Spartan King Pleistoanax, the son of Pausanias, and Nicias, the son of Niceratus, who had done better in his military commands than anyone else of his time. So now, while still untouched by misfortune and still held in honor, Nicias wished to rest upon his laurels, to find an immediate release from toil and trouble both for himself and for his fellow citizens, and to leave behind him the name of one whose service to the states had been successful from start to finish. He thought that these ends were to be achieved by avoiding all risks and by trusting oneself as little as possible to fortune, and that risks could be avoided only in peace. As for Pleistoanax, he was being attacked by his enemies in connection with his restoration; whenever anything went wrong, they invariably brought his name forward in an attempt to convince the Spartans that what had happened was due to this illegal restoration of his.[27]

Here the historian shows that the war continued after 425 in part due to the desire of two men: Brasidas and Cleon (a point reinforced by Aristophanes in *Peace* (269-84)). Both were working to further their own goals: Brasidas to achieve fame, Cleon to hide his wickedness. Not only did they prolong the war, during which both sides suffered, they both died on account of their self-interest. Even the Spartan king, Pleistoanax, was operating more for his own good than for the good of his people when he agreed to the

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[26] It is unknown how Thucydides would have treated Alcibiades in the last part of the war as his narrative is unfinished.
[27] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner (Penguin 1972)

Peace of Nicias, which explains why the peace was so detrimental to the Spartans on the international stage (see the next chapter). 5.16.1 ties together the destructive self-interest of both individuals and communities, as it states how individuals working for their own profit led states to continue the war, creating more misfortune.

Book eight with its intrigues and conspiracies portrays the chaos that occurs when individuals lose group identity and follow their own desires.[28] Mirroring the machinations and confusion of the Corcyraean *stasis*,[29] the book brings the history to a personal level, abandoning group identities to describe the activities of individual leaders, and revealing the conflict found therein. All sides of the war are shown to suffer from internal strife. The Spartan commanders, Atyochus and Pedaritus, struggled against each other (8.32.2)[30] resulting in the fall of Chios (8.55.3) because Astyochus withheld support from Pedaritus (8.32.1). Tissaphernes and Phernichus, two top Persian officials, competed for Spartan support (8.6.2).[31] Athens on the verge of the oligarchic coup was filled with suspicion and fear and everyone spied on everyone else (8.66). The coup alienated the armed forces at Samos, which set up their own democratic government in opposition to the oligarchy in Athens, and the two sides plotted against each other, dividing the war effort (8.76.1). This inertia only ended with the removal of the oligarchy and a return to limited democracy (Thuc. 8.97.2). This government was the best according to Thucydides as it included the desires of both the most and the least and moderated policy; in this way it culled the destructive self-interest impulses of politicians and limiting the caprices of the people, the two factors that led to the decline of Athens

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[28] Pouncey, *Necessities of War*, 142.
[29] Price, *Internal War*, 309.
[30] Pouncey, *Necessities of War*, 140.
[31] Pouncey, *Necessities of War*, 141.

(8.97.2). The solution to the rampant separatism of book eight is working together, balancing the needs of individuals with the needs of the community as whole. Thucydides repeats this message as a cure for international troubles as well (chapter five).

Thucydides critiques individual self-interest, and demonstrates its destructive impact on the community. In book two, Pericles' funeral oration creates the ideal city, an education for all Greece (2.41.1), where individuals work selflessly for the city. In book three, the Corcyraean *stasis* portrays the ruined city, where individual ambition caused the radicalization (seen through words changing meaning) and eventual destruction of civil society. The characterization of politicians like Pericles and Alcibiades re-emphasizes this idea. Pericles, for Thucydides, was the model statesman, embodying the ideal of merging individual interest with the interest of the state. Alcibiades was a man dedicated to both himself and the state; it was the hatred of other politicians and their desires to gain power that forced Alcibiades out, and hurt the Athenian war. 5.16.1, which shows that the war was continued by individuals working according to self-interest, and book eight, filled with conspiracies and the failed Oligarchic coup in Athens, recalling the Corcyraean *stasis* and showing the deliberating effect that factionalism had on Athens, reinforce the message of the danger of individuals acting on destructive self-interest. Thucydides carries this critique onto the international level, as will be seen in the following chapter.

Chapter Four:
Destructive self-interest and *pleonexia* on the International stage

The Athenian embassy at the first Spartan congress of 431 proclaimed that states are motivated by three things: fear, honor, and self-interest (1.76.2).[1] A question that arises from the work, however, is what is in the best interest of a state? Is it a policy of destructive self-interest in which the state benefits at the expense of other states? Or is it a policy of enlightened self-interest, where the state subordinates immediate gain for long term peace and prosperity. The Corcyraean *stasis* narrative provides a rubric to answer the question. S*tasis* is a time when the niceties of society are removed, and people resort to the most basic means in order to achieve their daily wants (3.82.4). 3.84 describes it as the breakdown of law and order, when human nature overthrows all laws meant to protect humanity. The radicalization of society, demonstrated by the changing of the meaning of words, the thirst for revenge, marks a society in *stasis* (3.82.4) and all of this is driven by heightened sense of honor and self-interest, *philotimia* and *pleonexia*. This demonstrates an inherent conflict of the needs of the whole against the desires of the individual and in *stasis* the needs of the individual supersede those of society. Such a conflict exists in Thucydides' description of state interaction in the time before and during the war between Athens and Sparta. In the Archeology, the historian establishes the model of what happens to states that work according to destructive self-interest: how they rise, gain more power, fall victim to *stasis*, then collapse (1.2.4). Book one demonstrates how the war began through Athens acting according to destructive self-interest in the various crisis that led up to the war; even his truest explanation of the war (1.23.6) shows Athens and Sparta acting in ways to increase their own power over others. The Plataean

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[1] τιμῆς καὶ δέους καὶ ὠφελίας.

34

judgment (3.51-68), the Pylos campaign (4.1-41), the Peace of Nicias (5.13-24), the Melian dialogue (5.84-116) and the Sicilian expedition (6-7), all demonstrated that states following policies of self-interest continued and magnified the destruction caused by the war; whereas in the Mytilenean dialogue (3.36-50), Athens followed a more rational course of action and mitigated the excesses of war. These episodes parallel actions described in the Corcyraean *stasis*, and show how destructive self-interest drove the war.

In the Archeology, Thucydides, while explaining why the war will be the greatest, establishes the idea of the destructive cycle of state power: states grow in order to defend themselves, become more powerful, subjugate lesser states and eventually fall into *stasis* and collapse. For Thucydides the Peloponnesian war is merely the latest and greatest in Greek history (1.1.2).[2] At the outset, Thucydides notes that the accumulation of wealth and power in society caused conflict and resulted in destruction (1.2.4). This pattern began in the prehistory of Greece (1.2.1), first culminated in the Trojan War, which settled nothing since afterwards Greece continued to suffer from *stasis* (1.12.2-4), restarted as cities grew in power and influence and led to the war between Athens and Sparta (1.18.3).

While these wars were taking place, a common identity emerged among the Hellenes. Thucydides uses Homer as his evidence, though he does not want to emulate the style of poets (1.21.1), and notes that the early Greeks did not consider themselves to be one people since in Homer they were not referred to as Greeks, rather the poet identified them with various geographical areas within Greece (1.3.3-4). Only with the dissemination of the sons of Hellas did all of Greece adopt a Hellenic identity (1.3.2) and

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[2] Gregory Crane, *Thucydides and the Ancient Simplicity* (Berkeley 1998), 126.

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by the Persian wars in the text there exists an idea of a Hellenic world,[3] which joined together to repel the Persians, creating a picture of a united Greece that overlooked the Greek cities that went over to the Persians (1.18.2). Thus the archeology creates the illusion that the Hellenic world was unified, just like a city, during the Persian wars.[4] In the wake of the Persian conflict, Athens and Sparta shattered this unity through their antagonism as cities gravitated to one side or the other (1.18.2). The Archeology comes about full circle: Greece was strong as it had ever been, yet this growth led to *kinēsis*, the war between Athens and Sparta (1.1.2), which tore the world apart (1.18.3). *Kinēsis* refers not just to the *stasis* created by the war, though the war was a *stasis* of the Hellenic community,[5] but includes it among the other disturbances that made the war so destructive.[6] Through the Archeology, Thucydides creates a Hellenic world in order that he might destroy it with the war, just as a *stasis* destroys a city.

At the end of the Archeology Thucydides lays out two ideas on the causes of the war between Athens and Sparta: his truest explanation and the causes put forward by most people (1.23.6). The truest explanation is that the growth of Athenian power and the fear which it instilled in the Spartans caused the war (1.23.6); this explanation indicates that for Thucydides both cities followed policies that empowered themselves at the expense of others and started the war: Athens by attempting to increase its own power and Sparta by attempting to protect its power through conflict. Each power acted according to human nature, interest and fear, adopting policies of destructive self-interest

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[3] Jonathan Price, *Thucydides and Internal War* (Cambridge 2001), 333.
[4] Price, *Internal War*, 333-4.
[5] Price, *Internal War, 77.*
[6] Price, *Internal War*, 209.

and these policies brought them into conflict.[7]   Though this is Thucydides' truest

explanation, he goes on to narrate the commonly perceived reasons for the war: the

Corcyraean and Potidaean conflicts; what Thucydides leaves out in this list, though he

references it as also important, is the Megarian decree and complaints from Aegina.

Thucydides portrays the Corcyraean affair as the first popularly accepted cause of

the war. Epidamnus, a city on the Illyrian coast, faced factional trouble within the city,

and appealed to its metropolis, Corcyra, for aid (Thuc. 1.24.6, Diod 12.30.2); Corcyra

refused, neglecting its duties as a metropolis, and caused Epidamnus to appeal to Corinth,

which accepted and sent support (Thuc. 1.25-6, Diod 12.30.3-4). Corcyra, outraged,

attacked Epidamnus, won a significant victory, besieged its colony (Thuc. 1.26.5, Diod

12.30.5, 31.2), offered to settle the issue by arbitration, was denied (Thuc. 1.28.1) and

then appealed to Athens for support against Corinth and its Peloponnesian allies (Thuc.

1.31.2, Diod. 12.33.1). Delegations from Corcyra and Corinth came to Athens to present

their cases on whether or not Athens should ally with Corcyra (Thuc. 1.31, Diod. 12.33.1-

2).[8] The Corcyraean speech to the Athenian Assembly centered on why the alliance was

in the best interest of Athens (1.32.1).[9] It pointed out that the Athenians would gain a

grateful ally and a powerful fleet in one move (1.33.1). The Corcyraeans claimed that the

alliance would not violate the Thirty Years Peace between Athens and Sparta, as Corcyra

was an unaligned power and as such was allowed to choose a side (1.35.1). Such an

alliance too denied possible naval support to the enemies of Athens (1.35). In their

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[7] Martin Ostwald, *ANAGNĒ in Thucydides* (Scholars Press 1988), 32; though Ostwald does not think that Thucydides shows the states acting in self-interest, the amount of discussion on state-interest in book one indicates otherwise.

[8] On the speeches of Thucydides, I agree with Harding and Garrit, the speeches he records were given, but Thucydides rewrote them to what he thought appropriate; H.F. Harding, *The Speeches of Thucydides* (Coronda 1973), 1; Thomas Garrity, "Thucydides 1.22.1: Content and Form in the Speeches," *AJPh* (1998), 377.

[9] David Cohen, "Justice, Interest, and Political deliberation in Thucydides," *QUCC* (1984)*,* 37.

summation, the Corcyraeans reinforced the message that such an alliance was in the interest of Athens (1.35.5)[10] and reiterated the importance of their naval strength (1.36.3).

As happened in Diodotus' speech in the Mytilenean dialogue, the Corinthians based their rebutal on maintaining ties of friendship among the cities as opposed to Athens acting in a matter that would only serve itself.[11] The Corinthian ambassadors asked the Athenians to maintain the tenets of the Thirty Years Peace and reminded them that Corinth had not intervened when Samos revolted in 440 (1.40.5), a more dire situation as Samos was a major Athenian ally and had Athens lost it, the city would have lost its empire (1.116.2).[12] The Corcyraean matter, in contrast, was a minor disturbance. The Corinthian envoys told the Athenians that security was found by dealing fairly with one's equals as opposed to pursuing some immediate advantage (1.43.2). They ended their speech by mimicking the Corcyraeans' defense of self-interest by saying that it would be in the Athenians' best interest not to aid the Corcyraeans as this would ease tensions between the powers (1.42.-3).[13]

The question of the Corcyraean alliance concerned the Athenians so much that they held two assemblies about it. The first assembly wanted to uphold the treaty with Corinth and to reject Corcyraean overtures; the second overturned this decision and signed a defensive alliance with Corcyra (1.44.1). The popular belief that the war was inevitable tipped the balance in favor of a defensive alliance (1.44.2),[14] which did not

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[10] The Corcyraean delegation never explicitly states what kind of alliance they desire from Athens, only later debate in the Athenian assembly decides on a defensive alliance in order to avoid breaking the Thirty Years Peace (1.44.1).

[11] Cohen, "Justice, Interest, and Political Deliberation in Thucydides," 39.

[12] George Cawkwell, *Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War* (Routledge 1997), 23.

[13] Cohen, "Justice, Interest, and Political Deliberation in Thucydides," 39.

[14] There is some evidence that this was true, especially if the first Kallais decree, consolidating outlying temple treasuries within the city, was passed before the war began, rather than in the 420's. Simon Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, vol. 1 (Oxford 1991), 87.

technically break the existing Peace between Athens and Sparta unless the Peloponnesians attacked Corcyra (1.44.1-2). The former vote would have upheld the peace and not endangered Athenian relations with its primary rivals, but it held the possibility of strengthening Athens' enemies. The alliance, while providing an immediate and palpable benefit to Athens, antagonized the Corinthians. The Athenians decided to act on a modified course of self-interest:[15] while they did not want to break the treaty with the Peloponnesians, they could not allow Corinth access to Corcyra's navy, so they signed the defensive treaty with Corcyra (1.45.1). This episode parallels some of the actions that happened in the Corcyraean *stasis*: the breakdown of traditional relations (3.82.5) like those between metropolis and colony, the putting aside of informal rules meant to curb intra-state violence (3.84.3),[16] Corinth declining Corcyra's offer of arbitration (1.28), the ignoring of future problems for immediate gain (3.83.3), the Athenians choosing to accept the alliance based on the need for Corcyraean fleet, and the turning away from vows out of fear of being hurt (3.83.3), Athens ignoring the Thirty Years Peace to join in an alliance with Corcyra. This conflict began the Hellenic *stasis* as states operated under destructive self-interest to gain power for themselves, Corcyra and Corinth fought to control Epidamnus and Athens allied with Corcyra to maintain its naval superiority (3.83.8). In the process they ignored the rules of society (3.84.3), and endangered the Hellenic community as whole.

In 433 Athenian ships helped the Corcyraeans defeat the Corinthians in a naval battle, which brought Athens and Corinth closer to war (Thuc. 1.49, Diod 12.33.4). By the end of the first episode after the Archeology, Thucydides presents self-interest as a

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[15] Cohen, "Justice, Interest, and Political Deliberation in Thucydides," 39.
[16] George Sheetz, "Conceptualizing International Law in Thucydides," *AJPh* (1994), 70-1; Stephen Usher, "Symbouleutic Oratory," in Ian Worthington (ed.), *A Companion to Greek Rhetoric* (Blackwell 2007), 222.

large motivating factor for state action: Athens chose the alliance with Corcyra because its citizens felt the alliance was the best for the city because they believed war with the Peloponnesians was inevitable, though Thucydides remains himself distant from this belief. He constructs the narrative to show the reader the questions and arguments put before the Athenians and wants the reader to judge the decision based on the merits of the argument, but offers no opinion himself.[17] To this point there is no discussion of other factors that caused friction between Athens and Sparta, no mention of the hated Megarian decree, merely the truest explanation and the debate over Corcyra; so war at this point was not inevitable, rather the Athenians made the war unavoidable by acting on destructive self-interest.

The Potidaean episode involved similar tensions as the previous Corcyraean one, the breaking of accepted Greek in pursuit of self-interest, which caused conflict between the major powers. Potidaea was a Corinthian colony in the Chalcidice that belonged to the Athenian alliance (Thuc. 1.56.2, Diod 12.34.1) and in the wake of the Corcyraean conflict, Athens decided to strengthen its hold on the city by ordering the Potidaeans to tear down their seaward walls and to expel all Corinthian magistrates. Though Potidaea might have had an unusually close relationship with its metropolis Athens with its decrees tried to assert more influence than allowable for an ally (1.56.2). The Athenians wanted to prevent Potidaea from revolting, which would have threatened other Athenian holdings in the area (1.56) and cut Athens off from the rich resources, especially the timber for Athenian ships, of the territory. The city's authority was already tenuous in the region due to its unstable relationship with Perdiccas II of Macedonia, who disliked Athens because it was supporting his brother for the throne (1.57.3). The Potidaeans

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[17] James Morrison, *Reading Thucydides* (Ohio 2006), 138-9.

responded to the Athenian demands by sending embassies to both Athens and Sparta: to Athens to try and repeal the acts and re-establish the status quo, and to Sparta for aid if the negotiations at Athens failed (1.58.1). The Athenians refused and the Potidaeans, with the Chalcidians and Bottiaeans, revolted, supported by the Spartans and Perdiccas II (Thuc. 1.58.1, Diod 12.34.2). The very rebellion Athens desired to deter through their actions occurred due to the city acting on destructive self-interest (1.56.2). The revolt resulted in a battle between Athens and the forces of Potidaea, the Chalcidice and volunteers and mercenaries from the Peloponnese, which Athens won, allowing it to besiege Potidaea (1.63-4).

Diodotus blames the Potidaean revolt on the machinations of the Corinthians as opposed to the anxiety of Athens (Diod. 12.34.2), reinforcing the idea that Thucydides constructed the events in the history to show the danger of destructive self-interest. The Athenians feared Corinthian influence in the north, an important resource area, and instead of strengthening their ties with Potidaea through good will to ensure their hold on the region, they set down a series of decrees meant to enforce their hold on the city at the expense of their ally. The Potidaeans refused and tried to ensure their freedom by appealing to the Spartans. The resulting battle ended as a victory for Athens, but the city had to expend resources, in terms of troops and fleets, whereas smart diplomacy might have yielded the same results without further antagonizing the Peloponnesians.

In response to the Potidaean affair member states of the Peloponnesian League and unofficial representatives from Aegina met at Sparta in 431 to air their grievances regarding Athens and to push Sparta to declare war (1.67.1-3). Here the Megarians complained about the decree Athens had passed against them (1.67.4), a point of

contention not explained by Thucydides, but labeled by the author as the main cause of the war (1.139.1). The decree banned Megarian trade from the ports of Athens and its subjects and was an attempt through economic pressure to force Megara, which had left the Athenian alliance in 445, to leave the Peloponnesian League and rejoin the Athenian empire.[18] As previously noted, Aristophanes believed that Pericles passed this decree to further his own interests, rather than the interests of the city (*Ach.* 530-42, *Peace 603-14*); if this was the case, Thucydides may not mention the decree in order to avoid soiling the name of Pericles, especially if he desired to portray the politician as a man who pursued policies that were only in the best interest of the city.[19] Another explanation is that the decree occurred too early for the historian to consider it as an immediate cause of the war.[20] Despite the reticence to address the decree, it was an act of Athenian destructive self-interest and was a point of contention between the cities that helped spark the war; again states acting on destructive self-interest increased tensions and caused the war. Another reason for war overlooked by Thucydides was the complaints of the Aeginians, who wanted war in order to gain independence from Athens (1.67.2).

Though mentioning several delegations at the congress, Thucydides presents only two speeches, those of the Corinthians and the Athenians. In their speech, the Corinthians chided the Spartans for failing to act according in their own interest. At the beginning of the speech, the Corinth delegation derided the Spartans for not attempting to come to some accord with Corcyra as it would have been a naval asset for the Peloponnesians (1.68.4). While attacking the Spartan national character, the Corinthians pointed out that the Spartans avoided hurting others before they defended themselves

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[18] Cawkwell, *Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War*, 33.
[19] Cawkwell, *Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War*, 33-4.
[20] Cawkwell, *Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War*, 28.

(1.71.1). In general, the Corinthians belittled the Spartans for their conservatism and explained how the Athenian national character, with its boundless energy and determination, threatened Sparta and its authority (1.71.3). In their final critique, the Corinthians stated that Sparta endangered its position as hegemon by not attacking Athens, since members of the Peloponnesian League were willing break away in order to defend themselves (1.71.5). The essence of the Corinthian charge, then, was that the Spartans, due to their old fashioned values, did not perceive the threat from Athens and had to do so to maintain their hegemony (1.71.5). In this way, the Corinthians advised the Spartans to act rashly to declare war in order to prevent a possible conspiracy, another symptom of individuals in *stasis* (3.82.6).

Some Athenians happened to be at Sparta during the congress, and in an answering speech defended their city by admitting its guilt, but declared that the Spartans would have acted no differently under the same circumstances (1.76.1). They claimed that Athens had acted just as any other state would have and supported their rule of others by natural law, since the weak were always subject to the strong (1.76.2). The Athenians then denied some of the charges, stating that the allies had joined them willingly (1.75.2) and that they were just in the governing of their empire (1.77). The Athenians ended by noting that war was not in the interest of Sparta, for if the Spartans won they would merely create more trouble for themselves (1.77.6). Also, the fortunes of war were fickle, and the Spartans could not anticipate the cost of the war, nor the impact it would have on their society (1.78). While perhaps a bluff, the speech called upon the Spartans

to reconsider brash action, calculate the costs of war, and consider what was in their real interest.[21]

Both speeches appealed Sparta's supposed interests. The Corinthians pushed a policy of irrational destructive self-interest, reasoning that the Spartans had to act promptly to maintain control over their allies by declaring war. The Athenians argued for more enlightened self-interest, warning the Spartans to rationally consider the difficulties that the conflict would create, and offering an alternative solution, arbitration.

The two speeches that followed these addresses both laid out how the Spartans should go to war. Archidamus, the Spartan king, praised the conservative nature of the Spartans, and advised a cautious, deliberative approach to the war (1.80-5). On the contrary, Sthenelaidas, an ephor, in a short speech called for immediate action (1.86). This speech is unique in Thucydides' work on account of its directness and the historian uses it to focus on the irrationality of the speaker and the irrationality of going to war.[22] These speeches expose a conflict between calculated action as voiced by Archidamus and the rash action proposed by Sthenelaidas,[23] a contrast that appears again in the Mytileneaen debate.[24] Just as it would be wiser to prepare carefully for war, so too close deliberation on what was in the best interest of Sparta, war or arbitration, might have led to arbitration and a lasting peace with Athens. After the speeches there was indecision among the Spartans on whether or not to go to war and as had happened in Athens when the people debated the alliance with Corcyra two votes were taken (1.87.2). In the end short-sighted interest won and the Spartans chose war. In both his truest explanation, and

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[21] Clifford Orwin, "Justifying Empire," *The Journal of Politics* (1986), 80.
[22] Edmund Bloedow, "Sthenelaidas the persuasive Spartan," *Hermes* (1987), 65-6.
[23] Edmund Bloedow, "The Speeches of Archidamus and Sthenelides at Sparta," *Historia* (1981), 142; Cohen, "Justice, Interest, and Political Deliberation in Thucydides," 41.
[24] Cohen, "Justice, Interest, and Political Deliberation in Thucydides," 46.

his narrative of the events leading up to the War, Thucydides continually highlights the role that destructive self-interest had in causing the war; just as *philotimia* and *pleonexia* fueled the Corcyraean *stasis,* irrational thoughts on self-interest started the war.

Once the war began, its atrocities were magnified when states followed policies of destructive self-interest. The Spartans killed the remaining defenders of Plataea because they believed they needed to satisfy their Theban allies (3.68.4). The Athenians prolonged the war and created more suffering when they ignored Spartan peace overtures in the hopes of future successes after the capture of Sphacteria. The Spartan king Pleistoanax signed the Peace of Nicias in 421 out of a selfish desire to quell internal dissent (5.16.2-17.1), which alienated Sparta's allies and almost caused Sparta to lose control of the Peloponnesus. Athens attacked Melos and then Sicily due to *pleonexia* and at Sicily suffered a disastrous loss. In contrast, states that acted according to enlightened self-interest promoted good will as seen when Athens strengthened its relationship with its allies through good treatment of the Mytilenean rebels. This concept of states working together will be expanded upon in chapter five, but it demonstrates that a policy of enlightened self-interest mitigated the horrors of war.

After the debates in book one, significant discussion of the motivations behind state action does not occur until book three in the Mytilene debate (3.36-50) and the Plataean judgment (3.51-68). Both episodes center on the question of how to treat conquered cities.[25] The Mytilenean debate deals with how to treat an ally that revolted. Mytilene, the leading city on Lesbos, convinced the majority of the island to revolt, but was crushed by an Athenian fleet sent to take the island back (Thuc. 3.2-3.5, Diod.

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[25] Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, vol. 1, 462-3; Robert Connor, *Thucydides* (Princeton 1984), 91.

12.55.1-7).   The Athenians debated the fate of the island twice and again the historian

relates the speeches of not from the first assembly, but the second. On the first day, the

Athenians sentenced the inhabitants of the island to death or enslavement (Thuc. 3.36.2,

Diod 12.55.9); the next day the Athenian people felt remorse and reviewed their decision

of the previous day (Thuc. 3.36.4, Diod. 12.55.10). Cleon, speaking in favor of harsh

treatment for the wayward allies, stated that the best way to deter future rebellions would

be to utterly destroy the Mytileneans (3.39.7-8) because Athenian rule was a tyranny

upheld by strength not good will (3.37.2). He argued not for justice, as he claimed, rather

a brutal use of power cloaked in an idea of state interest.[26] The need for violent and brash

action characterizes Cleon's speech and mirrors actions taken during the Corcyraean

stasis by promoting vengeance over interest and the masking of atrocities through clever

rhetoric (3.82.7).[27]

Diodotus advised a more lenient course of action based on deliberation, reason

and enlightened state-interest.[28] In a comparison between people committing crimes and

cities revolting he noted that regardless of the harshness of the penalty, people are bound

to break the law (3.45.3). Therefore, the best course of action for Athens was not to

crush its subjects as this ruined their usefulness to Athens, but rather to defeat the rebels

and then incorporate them back into the empire in such a way as to engender the good

will and support of the querulous ally (3.45).[29] In this way, fewer states would want to

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[26] Cohen, "Justice, Interest, and Political deliberation in Thucydides," 48; Nicholas White, *Individual and Conflict in Greek Ethics* (Oxford 2002), 140; Usher, "Symbouleutic Oratory," 224.
[27] Colin Macleod, *Collected Essays* (Oxford, 1983), 94; Josiah Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens*, (Princeton 1998), 97.
[28] Cohen, "Justice, Interest, and Political deliberation in Thucydides," 51; Usher, "Symbouleutic Oratory," 224.
[29] Patrick Coby, "Enlightened Self-Interest in the Peloponnesian War: Thucydidean Speakers on the Right of the Stronger and Inter-state Peace," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* (1991), 85; Jacqueline de Romilly, "Eunoia in Iscorates or the Political Importance of Creating Good Will," *JHS* (1958) 92.

rebel, those that revolted would capitulate sooner rather than holding out to the end, and the empire would not be weakened by having to quell numerous revolts; this advice on the profits of good governance again foreshadow events in the Corcyraean *stasis* when the oppressed take revenge for past brutalities (3.84.1).[30] The entire debate, like previous ones, highlights the conflict between rash versus calculated action.[31] Cleon espoused a violent policy focused on maintain the image of Athenian might, whereas Diodotus proposed a strategy that looks to the long term benefit of Athens by ensuring that the city did not lose tribute from cities, or have to expend valuable resources subjugating wayward allies.[32] After these speeches, the Athenians adopted Diodotus' plan and voted to not destroy the people of Mytilene (3.49.1). Through a policy of enlightened self-interest, the Athenians limited the excess of the war, killing only the ringleaders of the rebellion as opposed to the entire population of the island (3.50.1).

In the following Plataean judgement, in contrast to Athens' decision to spare the Mytilenean rebels, Sparta ignored the pleas of the Plataeans, and a policy of enlightened self-interest, and followed a narrower policy based on its perceived need of the Theban alliance, similar to the policy Cleon promoted in the previous episode and to the short sighted decisions made in *stasis* (3.68.4).[33] The Plataean judgment occurred when the remaining defenders of Plataea yielded to their Peloponnesian besiegers and were tried by the Spartans (Thuc. 3.52.1, Diod. 12.56.4). The Spartans gave the Plataeans a chance for mercy based on their answer to the question: how have the Plataeans aided the Spartans in the present war (Thuc. 3.52.4, Diod. 12.56.5)? The Plataeans offered no strong

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[30] Cohen, *"Justice, Interest and Political deliberation in Thucydides,"* 58.
[31] Cohen, "Justice, Interest and Political deliberation in Thucydides," 49; Ober, *Political Dissent*, 98.
[32] Ober, *Political Dissent*, 101.
[33] Macleod, *Collected Essays,* 130.

answer, and appealed instead to their services to Greece in the Persian war (3.54.3).
They also attacked Thebes for joining the Persian side in the conflict (3.54.3), and called
upon the Spartans to follow the laws of Hellas and protect the Plataeans as suppliants
(3.58.3). The Thebans replied that the Plataeans deserved no special treatment as they
chose to ally themselves with the Athenians (3.63.4), and noted that earlier in the war,
when a group of Thebans had tried to stir up revolution in the Plataea, the Plataeans
broke the same laws of Hellas to which they were appealing (3.68). In the end as
Thucydides notes the Spartans decided the case not on the merits of the arguments of
either the Plataeans or the Thebans, rather on their percieved need of Theban aid
(3.68.4)[34] and in this way made accepted customs and traditions another casualty of war.

In 427, After the Mytilene affair, and the Aetolian campaign, the Athenians
enjoyed a string of military successes, culminating in Pylos/Sphacteria campaign of 425
(4.3-14). An Athenian fleet, while on its way to Sicily, was driven ashore at Pylos, a
town in Messenia 45 miles away from Sparta (Thuc. 4.3, Diod 12.61.1). The Athenians
fortified the position, either on the advice of Demosthenes or on account of boredom
(4.4), and prepared for an attack. The Spartans occupied a nearby island called
Sphacteria to better support their assault against the Athenians (Thuc. 4.8, Diod. 12.61.4).
After several days of unsuccessful attacks, a relieving force of Athenian triremes drove
off the Spartan fleet and isolated the Spartan troops on Sphacteria (Thuc. 4.14, Diod.
12.63.1). Eager to retrieve their men, the Spartans first signed an armistice, and then sent
a peace delegation to Athens (Thuc. 4.17-20, Diod. 12.63.2). At this time Athens had a

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[34] Macleod, *Collected Essays*, 119.

chance to end the war on very favorable terms and chose to continue the war because the people were greedy for more success, according to Thucydides (4.21.2).[35]

Thucydides fills the Spartan peace proposal with ideas of enlightened self-interest. The Spartans warned the Athenians against overreach and pointed out that the best Athens could do was to use its current advantage to make peace (4.17.4). They reminded the Athenians of the vicissitudes of fortune, that the truly wise avoided pressing their luck (4.18.3-4). Therefore, the Athenians should accept the Spartan offer, not risk their powerful position by continuing the war and make a peace favorable to both sides in order to avoid recriminations that would lead to a future war (4.19). If this was done, the two cities would dominate Hellas in a spirit of friendship (4.20). In essence the Spartans asked the Athenians to put aside any remaining desires and end the war in a way beneficial to Athens and Sparta, a course of enlightened self-interest since Athens would not press to get as much as possible. The speech promoted rational thinking and proposed an equal peace that satisfied all parties in order to propagate good relations between the leading powers (4.20). In the speech the Spartans reversed the policy they espoused at Plataea, as in 427 they acted according to destructive self-interest and their need to remain friendly with the Thebans, but in 425 they counseled the Athenians not to use the situation to their own advantage.

The Athenians, however, acting on *pleonexia* rejected the peace overtures (4.21.2). Thucydides notes very little debate in Athens over the Spartan peace offer, instead showing that Cleon with the consent of the people sabotaged the peace

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[35] Virginia Hunter, *Thucydides the Artful reporter* (Hakkert 1973), 80-1; though I disagree that Thucydides did not want the reader to connect Athens' decision in 425 to reject to the losses in 424-2. There may not be a direct link in the text, but the rejection led to the campaigns of the following year, which caused Athens to suffer.

negotiations by giving extensive demands to the Spartan delegation, then reviling it for having to consult about his amendments (4.21.1-22.2). Philochorus does not portray the Athenians as being so unanimous in their rejection of the peace, and records that the Athenians finally refused the peace offer after three votes (FGrHist 328).[36] The rejection of peace in 425 was not beneficial for Athens because the resumed fighting led to military disasters at Megara, Boeotia and in the north.[37] Thucydides' construction of events emphasizes that Athens acted according to overreach in rejecting the peace and in the rest of book four shows how Athens suffered for this decision.

After the Athenians successfully concluded the Pylos/Sphacteria campaign in 425 (4.38) and enjoyed more military successes in 424, the capture of Anactorium (4.49), Cytherea (4.54) and Thyrea (4.57), the war turned against them as they lost their foothold in Sicily (4.65), supported a failed revolution in Megara (4.74.2) and launched a doomed assault against Boeotia, leading to the disaster at Delion (4.100.1). Finally, Brasidas captured Amphipolis in Thrace in the winter of 424/3 (4.106.2-3) and began to draw Athenian allies on the Thracian coast to the Spartan side (4.109.4). Athens' rejection of the treaty with Sparta on the hopes of more conquest thus backfired (as the Spartan delegates warned) and Athens was left in a worse position in 421 than it had been the Spartans first offered peace (5.14.1). Though there is no stated link between Athens' decision to reject the peace overtures in 425 and its suffering,[38] the rejection of 425 caused the Athenians to continue the war with a renewed confidence (5.14.1), leading to the campaigns of 424 and the reversal of Athenian fortunes. The episodes from Mytilene forward even create an odd parallel to reinforce the danger of working on self-interest:

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[36] Hornblower, A *Commentary on Thucydides,* vol. 1, 177.
[37] scholarly debate – Hunter, *Thucydides the Artful reporter*, 80.
[38] Hunter, *Thucydides the Artful reporter*, 81.

Athens acted on enlightened self-interest when dealing with the Mytilenean rebels and enjoyed success in the war up until 424; the Spartans chose to follow destructive self-interest at Plataea and suffered in the war until 424. In 425 the positions of the powers were reversed when the Spartans promoted a policy of peace and enlightened self-interest to the Athenians, who chose instead to follow a path of destructive self-interest due to the urgings of Cleon and *pleonexia*, which ended in the disastrous campaigns in the north. While there is no direct causation, the episodes and debates that center around questions of destructive or enlightened self-interest are given particular emphasis in books three through five, whereas the military narratives are rushed and crammed in between them; this construction focuses the reader's attention on city motives, actions and their consequences, instead of the military events.[39]

When the Spartan king Pleistoanax acted according to his own desires in signing a peace with Athens without the agreement of Sparta's major allies, he risked Sparta's position as hegemon of the Peloponnese. After the death of Brasidas and Cleon, Sparta and Athens signed a peace, as both cities were motivated by private concerns (5.14); Athens had suffered several serious setbacks and feared that the allies, encouraged by the series of Athenian loses, might decide to revolt (5.14.1-2). The Spartans were threatened by foreign and domestic threats like unrest among the Helots and the end of a thirty years peace with Argos, which Sparta thought might cause conflict (5.14.3). Therefore, the two powers agreed to the Peace of Nicias despite the unwillingness of Sparta's more important allies, Corinth, Thebes, Elis and Megara, to sign it (5.17.2), which caused a

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[39] As Rood notes Thucydides uses certain tools like focalization to construct his narrative passages to emphasize certain actions, or to correlate events (Tim Rood, *Thucydides Narrative and Explanation* (Oxford 1998), 20-1). If Thucydides used Pylos to set up Mantinea (Rood, *Narrative and Explanation*, 81), then would it not also be possible he used Mytilene/Plataea to set up Pylos? Again the rushed narrative of the campaigns of 427-425 seem to indicate this

breach among Sparta and its allies (Thuc. 5.22.1, Diod. 12.75.2). Argos used this dissent to try to gain control of the Peloponnese by forming a rival alliance with disenchanted Spartan allies, like the Eleans and the Corinthians (Thuc. 5.31.6, Diod. 12.75.4). These actions, Spartan mismanagement and Argive plotting, created a diplomatic knot with Sparta allying with Athens to offset the loss of old allies (5.22.2) and then with the Boeotians (on separate terms than the peace with Athens, which violated the treaty and alliance with Athens (5.39.3)). The Athenians, persuaded by Alcibiades (who was angry that he had not been asked to negotiate the settlement with Sparta (Thuc. 5.43.2, Plut. Alc. 14.2)), then allied with Argos (Thuc. 5.43, Diod. 12.77.2). In the end, Sparta broke its alliance with Athens, defeated the Argives and their allies at the battle of Mantinea and retained its dominant position in the Peloponnese (5.69-74), but not without considerable trouble. Pleistoanax, working to quell internal unrest (5.16.1), chose a policy of destructive self-interest when he agreed to the Peace of Nicias, an act that satisfied only Sparta, which caused unrest among the allies and led, circuitously, to Argos almost toppling Spartan hegemony at Mantinea. While perhaps not the clearest examples, the signing of the Peace of Nicias due to considerations of destructive self-interest without the consent of its more powerful allies proved dangerous to Sparta.

The final examples of destructive self-interest on the international level are the Athenian campaigns against Melos and Sicily. In the Melian campaign of 416 the Athenians articulated a policy of aggressive imperialism,[40] when they announced that the Melians must join the empire by free will or by force (5.84.3). The Melians failed to dissuade the Athenians with their calls upon justice, gods and the Spartans. The logic was clear to the Athenians: to maintain the empire they must control island states; Melos

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[40] Jacqueline de Romilly, *Athenian Imperialism*, trans. Philip Tody, (Alden 1963), 124.

was a weak island state, therefore Athens must control it in order to prevent revolts from by other subject cities (5.97). To ensure the continuation of the empire Athens had to conquer the Melians (5.97). The Melians resisted, lost and the inhabitants of the island were either killed or enslaved (5.116). This did not quench Athenian lust for conquest, as the citizens set their eyes on Sicily. The entire dialogue represents the new attitude of greed that gripped Athens, a program of unabashed imperialism based on destructive self-interest, which disregarded the possibility of working together with other Greek cities and the laws of Hellas.[41]

The Sicilian campaign, caused by a policy of *pleonexia* espoused by Alcibiades, was the greatest disaster for the Athenians (7.87). Thucydides introduces the campaign in book six by recounting the debate between Nicias and Alcibiades in the second Assembly discussing whether or not Athens should send troops to Sicily (Thuc. 6.8.2, Diod. 12.83.5). Nicias spoke of the dangers of such a venture and the limited reward that would be gained (6.11.1). He noted that while Athens was dominant in the Aegean the situation was not settled and that leaving these problems for a far away imperial conquest was foolish (Thuc. 6.10, Diod. 12.83.6). This advice followed Pericles, who warned the Athenians against expanding their empire during the war (2.65.7). Nicias noted how far Sicily was from Athens and how difficult it would be to hold the island (6.11.1). He also declared that the Sicilian campaign was the machinations of a certain unnamed youth (Alcibiades) who merely wanted to enrich himself (6.12.2). Nicias' speech promotes deliberation and rational calculation of state interest,[42] a calculation that demonstrated the danger of the Sicilian campaign.

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[41] Ober, *Political Dissent*, 104; Price, *Internal War*, 196.
[42] Ober, *Political Dissent*, 109.

Alcibiades' reply to Nicias' complaints focused on the profits of the expedition. He fantasized about the power that could be gained through Sicily and how the Athenians could use it to conquer the rest of Greece (6.18). His speech did not emphasize deliberation or rational calculation, rather it appealed to emotion and patriotism in a manner reminiscent of Cleon in the Mytilene debate.[43] Nicias spoke again and tried to dissuade the Athenians by exaggerating the amount of material it would take to conquer Sicily,[44] much like the Athenian ambassadors attempted to deter the Spartans in 431 by noting the dangers of war. The Athenian population, however, was too inflamed with ideas of glory and power, eagerly enlarged the expedition (Thuc. 6.24, Diod. 12.84.1) and sealed Athens' doom. Athens' loss in Sicily marked the beginning of the end, as its enemies and dissatisfied allies turned on it (Thuc. 8.2.1, Diod. 13.34.1-2). Thus is the fate of a state operating on destructive self-interest and *pleonexia*; in the constant reach for more Athens overextended itself and lost all it had fought for. Both of these expeditions were unnecessary, considering Athens' dominant position in Greece after the Peace of Nicias. Had the Athenians not followed a policy of overreach, had individuals not hijacked the city's agenda for their own purposes, the entire expedition could have been avoided, the war would not have been as costly and Athens might have retained its empire. Thucydides did not finish the history, so his conclusion on the downfall of the Athenian empire is unknown, but the Athenian's lose of power in the Aegean due to their failure at Sicily is well recorded in book eight.

States acting according to destructive self-interest created, prolonged and added to the calamities of the war on the international stage. In the Archeology Thucydides

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[43] Ober, *Political Dissent,* 111-2.
[44] Ober, *Political Dissent,* 113-4.

demonstrates the cycle of history that has played out and that will play out in his work: the accumulation of wealth and power led to *stasis* and downfall. States acting on destructive self-interest then caused their own downfall. For Athens this begins in book one, as with the Megarian decree, the Corcyraean alliance and the struggle with Potidaea, Athens followed policies that benefited it, but which brought it into conflict with Corinth and then Sparta. Sparta followed a similar path at the urging of the allies, when it shunned the Athenian offer of arbitration and voted for war. Throughout the first ten years of the war, decisions for self-interest increased the devastation of the war: Sparta executed 200 men at Plataea for supporting Athens, the Athenians prolonged the war for four years by trying to take advantage of their victory at Pylos and the Spartans almost lost control of the Peloponnese in their rush for peace. Finally, Athens' growing desire shifted from a policy of self-interest to one of grasping *pleonexia* as it assaulted first Melos, then Sicily in bids for more power, resulting in the end of its empire. So, destructive self-interest led to the collapse of Athenian empire as it shifted Athens away from policies of interest to greed, which led as seen in the Archeology to the collapse of power. In the debates around these actions the speakers took positions that reflect the motivations of people in the Corcyraean *stasis*, reinforcing the idea that acting on self-interest only harms society. Scholars stop here, recognizing that self-interest is harmful, but that the international world is inherently anarchic where only the strong survive. They do not acknowledge an opposing message in Thucydides: a message of working together. To an extent this has been discussed in the Mytilenean dialogue, but this discussion of states working together, and the possibility of Thucydides' Panhellenism, will be furthered in the next chapter with an analysis of Hermocrates' speech at Gela.

Chapter Five:
The Panhellenism of Thucydides

What is the impact of the message that states acting according to destructive self-interest ruin the international community? Historians like Eckstein, Crane and de Ste Croix believe that it is simply Thucydides' realism, that he accepted the situation regardless of how much he disliked the death and destruction it caused.[1] This explanation is unsatisfactory. If Thucydides is the genius everyone lauds, was he likely to look at the devastation caused by the war and think that it was unavoidable? At 1.22.4 he notes that the war will happen again as according to human nature, but by writing the history was he not trying to change human nature and avoid such a catastrophe?   The parallel that comes to mind is intellectuals of Europe in 1918 saying, "well that was bad, pity it has to happen again at some future time." The reactions of other ancient authors demonstrate that such ambivalence was not common: Aristophanes in his war plays called for peace and an end to the ruinous conflict. Plato in the *Republic* reprimanded the Greeks for their interpolis fighting (5.469.c). Xenophon in the *Anabasis* promoted unity among the Greeks and at the end of the *Hellenica* lamented the disorder that continuous conflict brought to Greece (7.5.27). Isocrates throughout his career in such speeches as the *Panegyricus, On the Peace* and *To Philip* pushed the leading Greek powers to settle the affairs of Greece through a joint campaign against Asia.

Was Thucydides aberrant in his opinion? Was he the only one who thought that the war was unavoidable and that mankind would continually fight such wars? At times

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[1] Arthur Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy, Interstate War, and the Rise of Rome* (Berkeley 2006), 49; Gregory Crane, *Thucydides and the Ancient Simplicity (*Berkeley 1998), 64 n. 63; G.E.M. de Ste Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (Cornell 1972), 16.

it seems that way. The Archeology shows that warfare was endemic in Greek history. At 1.22.4 Thucydides notes that he recorded the events of the war so that the work would be useful to future generations, when the events occurred again as according to human nature just as the *stasis* at Corcyra happened due to human nature (3.84.2). Does this mean they are unavoidable, or that through education man can make better decisions? A contentious claim in scholarship, but I agree with those who see Thucydides' work as a way to educate people and to prevent such atrocities.[2] The war between Athens and Sparta was unique for Classical Greece as it broke down the societal norms of Hellenic society as revealed in the Corcyraean *stasis* narrative (3.84.2).[3] Thucydides recognized that conflict was inherent in Greek life - so did Aristophanes, but that did not stop him from promoting peace or policies that strengthened the ties between Athens and its allies. The historian, perhaps, while recognizing that wars were constant, desired to mitigate the effects of war and prevent a war on the scale of the Peloponnesian war from occurring again and stop *stasis* from breaking out in communities. This would explain his emphasis on human nature, which includes the danger of acting on destructive self-interest. States acting on destructive self-interest started the war, continued the war and magnified the effects of the war, which caused the *mores* of Greek society to be cast aside resulting in more atrocities. Just as individuals acting on destructive self-interest ruined communities, so states acting in self-interest ruined the international community and the impact of *stasis* within states mirrored the impact of the war on the international

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[2] Analytical rigor: Simon Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, vol.1 (Oxford 1991), 61; Jonathan Price, *Thucydides and Internal War* (Cambridge 2001), 27-8. Those who feel Thucydides wants to change people: Jacqueline de Romilly, *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism*, trans. Philip Tody (Oxford 1963), 25; Virginia Hunter, *Thucydides the Artful Reporter* (Hakkert 1973), 183; Laurie Johnson, *Thucydides, Hobbes, and the Interpretation of Realism* (Northern Illinois 1993), 219-220.
[3] Johnson, *Thucydides, Hobbes, and the Interpretation of Realism*, 220.

level. If it is dangerous to act according to destructive self-interest, how should states act? Thucydides provides an answer in the speech of Hermocrates at Gela (4.59-64).

The speech calls on the cities of Sicily to put aside their petty differences and unite for a common purpose, a Panhellenic call. To evaluate this idea, this chapter will review Panhellenic messages of other fifth/fourth century Greek writers, Herodotus, Aristophanes, Xenophon, Lysias, Isocrates and Demosthenes, and then examine the speech of Hermocrates at Gela to see if/how the message matches the Panhellenic creeds of these authors. Finally, other ideas in Thucydides' text will be discussed to demonstrate how they reinforce this Panhellenism.

Thucydides a Panhellenist? Most scholars would disagree.[4] By Mitchell's definition in *Panhellenism and the Barbarian in Archaic and Classical Greece* the historian is a Panhellenist because he utilizes various images to show a unique community of Greek cities. He develops the common heritage of Hellas in the Archeology, in which he outlines the history of the Greeks, describes their shared customs and differentiates between Greeks and barbarians (1.1-21). In doing so he follows Mitchell's two maxims of Panhellenic thought: he presents a distinct Greek community and excludes others from this community.[5] Though possible to call Thucydides a Panhellenist using Mitchell's definition, it is distasteful. First, it gives the author the label from a modern argument which discredits the distinction. Second, Mitchell's whole concept of Panhellenism is that the Greeks understood themselves through various mutual stories, icons and beliefs to be Greeks and therefore different from those who did not share these customs (accepting the fact that the majority of the

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[4] de Romilly, *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism*, 358; others do not denounce the idea, but it is not included in their analysis: Connor, Hornblower, Ober, Morrison, or Mitchell.
[5] Lynette Mitchell, *Panhellenism and the barbarian in Archaic and Classical Greece* (Swansea 2007), XX.

information is coming from Athenians). For Mitchell, then, Panhellenism equates to Classical Greeks recognizing themselves as a distinct culture. Though recognizing that this label evolved into something more in Isocrates and other writers, Mitchell identifies their works as only part of a greater Panhellenic ideal.

Putting aside modern constructions on ancient authors, another way to approach Thucydides' Panhellenism is to identify why other ancient Athenian authors have been labeled Panhellenists and to see if those reasons apply to Thucydides. While this puts a modern designation on the ancient author, the focus is not on the term Panhellenist, but what makes an author be called a Panhellenist. If the ideas in other classical Greek authors are similar to those in Thucydides, and are deemed Panhellenic, then should not Thucydides also be called a Panhellenist? The nomenclature does not matter, what matters is the message and as noted in chapter one Thucydides already shares similar themes with other authors in terms of warnings against destructive self-interest.

To start, what is Panhellenism? Is it as Mitchell describes merely the recognition of a distinct Greek identity? Was it a vague concept of unity used to cover imperial propaganda as Perlman asserts?[6] Based on Herodotus, Aristophanes, Xenophon and the *rhētores*, Panhellenism seems to be the joining together of Greek states without the loss of autonomy for mutual cooperation.[7] There are three forms of Panhellenic thought from the authors of the late fifth and early fourth century: laudation of Greek unity, calls for Greek unity and calls for Greek unity in order to attack a foreign foe. Herodotus praises the Greeks for their unity in the face of the Persian invasion even though only a limited

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[6] S. Perlman, "Panhellenism, the Polis, and Imperialism," *Historia* (1976), 5.

[7] Though I disagree on Perlman's thought that Panhellenism in general was tool for propaganda (for certain authors this is correct) I do agree that Panhellenism was never meant to supersede the polis. Perlman, "Panhellenism, the Polis, and Imperialism," 5.

number of Greek communities were actually involved in the effort to repel the Persians.[8]
Aristophanes in *Lysistrata* calls for reforms of the Athenian empire that would
incorporate the allied cities closer to Athens (580). Xenophon in the *Anabasis* mused on
the collective power of Greek arms (*Ana.* 3.11-6, 5.15-6). The *rhētores*, Lysias in his
funeral oration, Isocrates in the *Panygericus, On the Peace,* and *Letter to Philip* and
Demosthenes in the *Third Philippic*, present the most militant form of Panhellenism as
their speeches promoted Greek unity through an attack on foreign powers.

Herodotus relates the Panhellenic efforts of the Greek cities at the time of the
Persian war, despite having an Athenian bias, and demonstrates the power of a united
Greece.[9] In the work he describes how the Greeks in the face of foreign invasion put
aside their differences with great difficulty and united against a common threat (7.145).
He does record dissent as some Greek cities joined the Persians either for their own
protection, as was the case for Thessaly (7.172-4), or to advance their own goals, as was
the case for Argos (7.148-9) and Thebes (7.233). There were also problems with holding
the alliance together. After the defeat at Thermopylae and while the fleet was at Salamis
opinions among the Greeks were divided on what to do with the fleet: the Peloponnesians
wanted to withdraw to the Isthmus of Corinth, whereas the Athenians, knowing that the
fleet would disperse otherwise, desired to hold at Salamis (8.40). Themistocles tricked
the rest of the Greeks into staying (8.75-83) and in this manner saved Greece (7.139). In
book nine, Herodotus exhibits the power of united Greek arms at the battle of Plataea
(9.58.85). Overall, the history explains how the Greeks overcame their disunity to repeal
the barbarian threat and while Herodotus favors Athens, he also lauds the city for its

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[8] Mitchell, *Panhellenism and the barbarian*, 77.
[9] Philip Stadter, "Cities of Mainland Greece," in Carolyn Dewald and John Marincola (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus* (Cambridge 2006), 249.

Panhellenic spirit (8.144.2).[10] This favoritism means either the historian, like Isocrates would later, promoted a Panhellenism with Athens in the lead, or that the statements of Athenian Panhellenism are ironic, as the city that had been most fervent in protecting Greek liberty then went on to establish an empire over its Hellenic brethren.[11] Either way, Herodotus' History demonstrates the power of combined Greek action despite how few Greek states actually united to save Greece.[12]

Aristophanes provides a Panhellenic call in *Lysistrata*. Aristophanes' desire for peace is well established in his comedies; in *Acharnians* he displays the profits of peace (988-1068), and in *Peace* he reveals that peace can only be obtained if those who want it actively take a hand to secure it (511-9). *Lysistrata*, performed in 411, puts calls for reform for Athenian imperial reform in Lysistrata's debate with the Proboulos. As outlined in her speech, within the city Lysistrata would remove the self-serving politicians and sycophants from society (576-8) and give citizen rights to metics, debtors and deserving foreigners (580-1). For the empire, Lysistrata would enfranchise all colonies of Athens (582), which might have included all island and Ionian cities.[13] These reforms would weave together the various states and peoples of the Athenian empire into a harmonious union, subordinate the importance of Athens, renew the autonomy of the allies and establish peace in the empire;[14] they are also similar to the ideas proposed by Diodotus in the Mytilene debate. While not the universal Panhellenism of other authors,

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[10] Stadter, "Herodotus and the cities of mainland Greece," 249.
[11] Stadter, "Herodotus and the cities of mainland Greece," 249.
[12] Mitchell, *Panhellenism and the barbarian*, 77.
[13] Douglas MacDowell, *Aristophanes and Athens,* (Oxford 1995), 238.
[14] William Hugill, *Panhellenism in Aristophanes,* (Chicago 1936), 101.

the reforms would provide autonomy and security to a community of Greek cities, all key ideas of Panhellenism.[15]

Xenophon in the *Anabasis* records the power of Greek arms in the face of a foreign threat and mused on the capabilities of such a force.[16] In a speech to the entire army following the assassination of the generals, which employed standard Panhellenic rhetoric of praising the Greek success during the Persian Wars, the power of united Greek arms and the weakness of Persian troops (3.11-6), Xenophon called upon the former mercenaries of Cyrus to work together for the good of all (3.31-2). They did so and returned to Greek territory safely. When the Ten Thousand reached the sea, Xenophon looked out upon the assembled mass and thought about using the power that the men possessed to form a city in Asia, reinforcing the idea of the collective power of Greek arms (5.15-6).[17] The unity of the mercenaries allowed them to return to the Aegean successfully, but that was where it ended as through arguments about campaigns against other Greeks they lost group cohesion and broke apart.[18] Through this narrative, Xenophon presents the idea of the possibility of Greek unity in the face of an enemy, much like Herodotus, but also makes calls for peace without the need for outside campaigns, like Aristophanes.

The *rhētores* presented the most militant form of Panhellenism. The speeches of Lysias, Isocrates and Demosthenes link Panhellenism with joint campaigns against foreign threats. Lysias in his Olympic speech of 388 proposed a joint Hellenic campaign against Persia and Syracuse (33.5-6), led by the Spartans since they were the traditional

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[15] Hugill, *Panhellenism in Aristophanes*, iii-iv.
[16] Bruce Laforse, *Xenophon and the Historiography of Panhellenism*, Phd dissertation (Austin 1997), 117; John Dillery, *Xenophon and the history of his times* (Routledge 1995), 83.
[17] Dillery, *Xenophon and the history*, 86.
[18] Laforse, *Xenophon and the Historiography of Panhellenism*, 148; Dillery, *Xenophon and the history*, 88.

defenders of Greek liberty (33.7). The speech is peculiar in that it calls for a Panhellenic campaign against fellow Greeks, but Lysias was directing it against the tyrant of Syracuse so the campaign was still to free Greeks.[19] While surviving only in fragments, Lysias' Olympis oration clearly outlines his Panhellenic sympathies.

Isocrates' various speeches, *Panegyricus*, *On the Peace* and *To Philip*, contain similar ideas, but expand on them and give particular prominence to Athens.[20] In the *Panegyricus*, he seeks to restore Athenian power in the Greek world through Spartan assistance, settle the disputes of the Greeks and then launch a joint attack against the Persian Empire. The campaign would profit the Greeks as it would provide land for the masses of poor Greeks, which in turn would lessen the civil tension within cities and decrease the occurrence of *stasis* in them (174). Though at the time of the speech Sparta was the dominant power in Greece, Isocrates promotes joint Spartan and Athenian leadership as a way of reinstating Athenian pre-eminence in the Aegaean.[21] The speech attempts to justify the return of Athenian power through Panhellenism by its exaltation of Athenian virtues, reminiscent of Gorgias' Olympic speech, Lysias' Olympic speech and epideictic orations, especially *epitaphiōi*, in general.[22]

On the Peace, written at the end of the Social War, promotes Panhellenism to Athens as a way for the city to regain its position of power in Greece (16).[23] Isocrates' problem was that Athens had degenerated since the time of the Persian wars (105) and that self-serving leaders pushed disastrous policies on the city, which led to its ruin (127-

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[19] Perlman, "*Panhellenism, the Polis and Imperialism,*" 20.
[20] Usher and Papillion both analyze Isocrates for his style and thoughts on education, but focus only a little on his Panhellenic message. Stephen Usher, *Greek Oratory* (Oxford 1999), 298-303, 321-3; Terry Papillion, "Isocrates," in Ian Worthington (ed.) *A Companion to Greek Rhetoric* (Blackwell 2007), 63-71.
[21] Terry Papillion, *Isocrates II,* (Austin 2004), 26-7.
[22] Usher, *Greek Oratory*, 299-300.
[23] Papillion, *Isocrates II*, 134.

31). His solution was to reform the democracy (133) and to treat the allies well (134);

suggestions similar to those found in Thucydides' Mytilene debate and Aristophanes'

Lysistrata.[24] By accomplishing these reforms and by bringing liberty to Greece Athens

would regain its lost hegemonal position (142). *To Philip*, addressed to Philip II of

Macedonia and written in the wake of the Peace of Philocrates of 346, called upon Philip

to settle the disputes of the leading powers of Greece (he includes Argos as a way to win

favor with Philip, and to emphasize the Temenid's Greek heritage) in order to mount a

joint invasion of Persia (30). Unlike the *Panegyricus* and *On the Peace*, Isocrates could

not push for Athenian leadership in the expedition as the city's power waned due to its

war with Philip, but he still lists Athens as one of the prominent powers of Greece and the

one most amicable to the joint campaign (30-1). Such a campaign would enjoy the

support of mercenary Greek troops (96), and of disgruntled Persian satraps who desired

to revolt (103-4). As in the *Panegyricus*, Isocrates shows that Greece is full of factional

strife and that the best relief for this is a campaign against Persia (46-52). Therefore,

Philip should follow the example of his illustrious ancestor Heracles and lead the attack

against Asia (111), as it would heighten his reputation among the Greeks (154). In these

speeches Isocrates hammers on the theme that peace and prosperity can come to Greece if

a leading power settles all disputes and relieves internal pressure through an attack on

Persia.

Demosthenes copies the message of Athens uniting Greece in his attacks against

Philip,and calls upon other Greek cities to destroy Philip II of Macedonia for the purpose

of protecting Athenian interests.[25] In the *Third Philippic* he brings the idea of a

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[24] de Romilly, *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism*, 360.
[25] Perlman, "Panhellenism, the Polis and Imperialism," *24*-5.

Panhellenic war against Philip to the forefront of his appeal, but throughout his speeches he maintains the prominence of Athenian interests.[26] Of the three, Lysias, Isocrates and Demosthenes, Demosthenes is the most nationalistic as he used the Panhellenic calls to further Athenian interest in the Greek world. Isocrates does this as well, as his early calls included the claim of Athenian leadership in the expedition, but he was willing to allow the mantle of leadership to pass to others; Demosthenes put Athens first and tried to use Panhellenic calls to further Athenian power. The Panhellenic messages of the *rhētores* were the most militant, as opposed to merely praising or calling for unity, they called for unity for the purpose of attacking an "enemy of Hellas" and at times were veiled attempts for Athens to reclaim its hegemony over the Greek world.[27]

Thucydides' speech of Hermocrates at Gela, and Thucydides' entire Panhellenic program, mirrors Herodotus', Aristophanes' and Xenophon's form of Panhellenism the most in that he promotes a message of Greeks working together to further their common security. The Panhellenic possibility of the speech has been overlooked by scholars. Harding in *The Speeches of Thucydides* states that it is a character sketch of Hermocrates and Hornblower notes the speech reflects Thucydides' great respect for Hermocrates as a statesman; neither comment much on the content of the speech.[28] Ober, discussing Thucydides' critique of individualism, notes that Thucydides contains no message of the power of collective action, yet does not address Hermocrates's speech at Gela.[29] Connor philosophizes that the message in the speech could be applied to the war as a whole, but

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[26] Perlman, "Panhellenism, the Polis and Imperialism," 25.
[27] Perlman, "Panhellenism, the Polis and Imperialism," 30.
[28] H.F. Harding, *The Speeches of Thucydides*, (Coronado Press 1973), 113; Simon Hornblower, *Commentary on Thucydides*, vol. 2, (Oxford 1995), 221.
[29] Josiah Ober, *Political Dissent in Classical Athens*, (Princeton 1995), 67-72.

does not commit himself.[30] Hammond notes that the speech contains a universal message that rational calculation is better than direct action, but does not link it to any broader peace message Thucydides might have included.[31] Dillery dismisses the Panhellenic possibility of the speech because Thucydides would never condone such an idea on an international scale.[32] Overall these oversights are based on the individual authors' perception of Thucydides and are not supported by the text.

In the speech, Hermocrates calls upon the cities of Sicily to end their squabbles and unify in order to avoid foreign domination (4.60). He noted the disastrous effects that constant warfare has on the cities of Sicily and explains how, if the cities continued in this manner, their petty wars could lead to foreign enslavement; for if the Athens became invovled, it would pick off the Sicilian cities one by one until it controlled the whole island (4.60.2). By putting aside their differences and uniting in peace, the Sicilians could avoid this fate, and enjoy the profits of peace (4.62). Future conflicts could arise among the Sicilians, but these could be resolved through mediation rather than conflict (4.64.3). He ends the speech reiterating the message of the power of unity (4.64.3-5):

> And I call upon the rest of you to follow my example – give way to each other rather than be forced to do so by our enemies. There is nothing to be ashamed of in making concessions to one's own people, a Dorian to a Dorian or a Chalcidian to another of his own race, and, taken all together, we are all of us neighbors, living together in the same country, in the midst of the sea, all called by the same name of Sicilians. There will be occasions, no doubt, when we shall go to war gain and also when we shall meet together among ourselves and make peace again. But when we are faced with a foreign invasion, we shall always, if we are wise, unite to resist it, since here the injury of any one state endangers all the rest of us. And we shall never again in future call in allies from outside or arbitrators. By acting in this way we shall be conferring immediately two benefits on Sicily – release from the Athenians and the cessation of civil war; and for the future we shall have a country that is free in itself and not so much in danger from abroad.[33]

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[30] Robert Connor, *Thucydides*, (Princeton 1984), 126 n.42.
[31] N.G.L. Hammond, "The particular and universal in the speeches of Thucydides," in P.A. Stadter, *The Speeches in Thucydides* (UNC Chapel Hill 1973), 58-9.
[32] Dillery, *Xenophon and the history of his time*, 53.
[33] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner (Penguin 1972).

This speech provides the best demonstration of Thucydides' Panhellenism. Like Aristophanes and Xenophon it calls for unity, not based on a military expedition, but rather in order to enrich and protect the Sicilian cities themselves. Like Xenophon, Hermocrates factored in the imminent danger of a foreign power, Athens, and encouraged unity in order to protect the autonomy of the Sicilian states and provide for a common defense; thus he pushed the Sicilian states to embrace enlightened self-interest through common action rather than destructive self-interest.[34] Hermocrates also avoids the *topos* of justice in this speech, choosing instead to focus on what is in the interest of states.[35] In this way then Hermocrates puts forward a Pansicilian message, yet scholars do not see the message as Panhellenic, despite having the elements of a Panhellenic appeal.

The speech is Pansicilian and not Panhellenic if Thucydides only recorded the events of the war without having a deeper purpose; if Thucydides' work has a greater meaning to it, as I think it does, then the message can be Panhellenic. The speech's own position within the history supports this reading as it contrasts Athens' decision to act on destructive self-interest, the city's refusal of Sparta's peace proposal on the advice of Cleon in 425 (4.21),[36] to the Sicilians' adoption of a policy of enlightened self-interest with the acceptance of the Peace of Hermocrates (4.65.1). The Sicilians enjoyed peace; while Athens went on to lose three successive campaigns in Megara, Boeotia, and

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[34] Robert Connor, "Polarization in Thucydides," in Richard Ned Lebow and Barry S. Strauss (eds.), *Hegemonic Rivalry* (Westview 1991), 64.

[35] Stephen Usher, "Symbouleutic Oratory," in Ian Worthington (ed.) *A Companion to Greek Rhetoric* (Blackwell 2007), 224.

[36] Scholars debate whether or not this was the correct action; de Romilly believes so, thinking that it was the kind of victory Pericles envisioned (de Romilly, *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism*, 182), whereas Worthington thinks that the Spartan peace offer was disingenuous (Ian Worthington, "Aristophanes' Knights and the abortive peace proposal of 425 BC," *AC*, (1987), 62). Whether or not matters little, as the key to the debate is Thucydides' portrayal that the decision came out of a pleonastic desire, a fact which is contradicted by other ancient authors.

Thrace, and ended up in a worse position in 421 than if it had accepted the peace offer of 425. Athens acted in destructive self-interest, and lost; the Sicilians acted according to enlightened self-interest, and enjoyed peace. Thucydides contrasts these two peace conferences to emphasize the desirability of peace and the Panhellenic nature of Hermocrates' speech.

There are several possible explanations as to why Thucydides cannot put a direct Panhellenic speech in the history. First, as stated in 1.22.1, he is bound to record the words and deeds of the Peloponnesian War, so if no one gave a Panhellenic speech (or if no character was in a position to give a Panhellenic speech), then he could not write one.[37] Though Thucydides might construct speeches to fit the situation and certain Greek speeches did contain themes of working together, namely Diodotus in the Mytileneaen debate, he would not create artificial speeches which would go against his claim of remaining as close as possible to things said (1.22.1). Second, perhaps more telling is that Thucydides understood the emptiness of Panhellenic rhetoric. Panhellenic calls had been used earlier to mask imperialist motivations: Pericles in 449 made a call to all Greeks to a conference on the sacrifices owed to the gods for shrines destroyed in the Persian Wars and how to ensure peace among the Greeks (Plut. *Per.* 17.1). This move was seen as a way for Athens to claim leadership of the Greek world through Panhellenism.[38] In the Athenian ambassador's speech at Sparta in Thucydides (1.73-8), the ambassador laid out how Athens used its position as a Panhellenic leader to further its own imperial interest (1.75). Sparta went to war ostensibly to free Greece from the

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[37] Again, the content of the speeches might have been a Thucydidean invention, but not the speech itself; fragmental evidence from the historian Antiochus, a contemporary of Thucydides, that Hermocrates indeed gave a speech at this juncture (FGrHist 555). Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, vol. 2, 220.
[38] Donald Kagan, *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War* (Cornell 1969), 111-3.

Athenian tyranny, a Panhellenic motive, yet later in the war allied with Persia, and ceded to it control of the Ionian cities, betraying any Panhellenic intentions (8.18.1). Cities in Thucydides ignored calls on Panhellenic pretenses, for example Sparta ignored the Plataeans' plea for leniency at the end of the siege of Plataea (3.68.1). Isocrates in the *Panathenaicus* made a similar critique, stating that both Sparta and Athens used the rhetoric of war against the barbarians to enslave the Greeks (97). Therefore, Panhellenic calls for Thucydides were discredited. He recognized that they were, as was the case with the *rhētores*, thinly veiled propaganda to promote the imperialistic program of individual states.[39] If this is the case, then he could not have a mainland Greek make the call without it being questioned. Therefore he used Hermocrates at Gela, whom he admired as a statesman,[40] as a means of transmitting a Panhellenic message. If the Sicilians, who suffered the same divisions between Ionians and Dorians as the mainland Greeks did (4.64.3), could unite and enjoy peace, why not Hellas as a whole?[41] The dismissing of the Panhellenic content of Hermocrates' speech because he is Sicilian is not sufficient to ignore the implications of the speech in the history.

Further, \it would not discredit the speeches' Panhellenic qualities if it was an attempt by Syracuse to gain dominance over Sicily: rather it would reinforce the supposed emptiness of Panhellenism. But I do not think this is the case. What I have tried to show is that authors in the classical age understood that individuals working only for their own good, destructive self-interest, imperiled the community and tried to prevent such decisions by supporting actions that supported the community, i.e. enlightened self-interest. Thucydides recognized this truth not only on community level, but on an

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[39] Perlman, "Panhellenism, the Polis, and Imperialism," 30.
[40] Harding, *Speeches of Thucydides*, 113; Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, vol. 2, 221.
[41] Connor, "Polarization in Thucydides, 64.

international level. Enlightened self-interest, on an international level, is where states work with each other, while retaining their autonomy, to support and defend one another – i.e., Panhellenism. Would such a movement require a leading state? Certainly, just as a polis requires good leadership so too would a body of states. In the case of Sicily in 425 did the peace benefit Syracuse? Yes. Did it do so to the detriment of many other states? No. This is the key. Enlightened self-interest supports all states, not just a few. Was the peace perfect? No. Thucydides and Diodorus relate how the Syracusans intervened with the Leotini (Thuc. 5.5, Diod. 12.54.1-7)[42] and later against the Egestaeans in 415 (Thuc. 6.6, Diod. 12.82.3-7). In the same eight year period, however, on mainland Greece Athens lost three campaigns against Sparta and her allies and Sparta almost lost its hegemony over the Peloponnese at Mantinea. So which is better? A policy that limits war or a policy that perpetuates it?

At the end of book eight, Thucydides says that after the rule of the four hundred, the best government of his time was installed in Athens, one in which the needs of the both the many and the few were balanced (97.2). Applying this to the international community, it would be easy to see a model where strong and weak states moderated their own desires for the good of the international community, much like Diodotus and Hermocrates suggested, which would create peace and stability for all. While perhaps this is reading too much into this comment, this is the message that Hermocrates promotes and when the Sicilian cities listened to him there was peace. When states do not follow this course of action, as happened in book one when Athens and Sparta went to war to protect their own interests, the greatest war of classical Greek history occurred.

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[42] Date for Leotini uncertain, Thucydides has it after the peace of Gela, but Diodorus puts it before the Mytilene revolt.

Considering these things, the Panhellenic message of Thucydides is clear. Though not the militant Panhellenism of the *rhētores*, the writer parallels Herodotus, Xenophon and Aristophanes in putting forth a call for unity of all Greek states and the need for cities to subordinate their interest to those of the whole of Hellas. Thucydides does this through the speech of Hermocrates at Gela, which contains strong Panhellenic themes, but is cloaked in Pansicilianism because of the emptiness of Panhellenic rhetoric.

Conclusion

This thesis evaluates Thucydides' portrayal of state interaction in the Peloponnesian War. It sought to determine whether Thucydides was portraying an anarchic international system in which might made right because he believed this was how states acted, or was he critiquing states acting in this manner. An examination of Thucydides' narration, his depiction of key events and the motivations behind state action, reveals that Thucydides did not believe in an anarchic international system. Throughout the work, there are ideas of international law and accepted practices of state interaction and he portrays what happened when states stopped obeying these customs and practices and put their own interests above the desire to maintain stability on the international stage. To an extent this the norm as states had acted in this cycle of destruction since the settling of Greece and the Peloponnesian War was merely the latest and greatest iteration of a larger cycle. This is not to suggest that this is the only way states can act as in most episodes states chose between pursuing policies of destructive self-interest or enlightened self-interest. When states chose paths of destructive self-interest, they advanced their own interests, but hurt the international community and endangered their own long-term security. When they chose enlightened self-interest, they maintained the international community and created more opportunities for peace and prosperity. Thucydides reinforces this critique by applying it to communities, showing how individuals acting for their own purposes hurt the cities they live in. He then parallels state action to individual action, to re-emphasize the idea that states are merely individuals on the international stage.[1]

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[1] James Morrison, "A Key *topos* in Thucydides: the Comparison of Cities and Individuals," *AJPh* (1994), 537.

Thucydides' critique of destructive self-interest creates a message of Panhellenism. Along with other intellectuals of late fifth/early fourth century Greece, Thucydides understood the dangers of individuals ignoring the needs of the many for their own selfish goals. He criticizes such action on both a national and international level in his explanation/narration of the events of the Peloponnesian War. Thucydides' solution, as with later writers, was the collective action of states, organized in a loose body, which maintained their freedom and autonomy, but provided for common defense against a foreign foe, otherwise known as Panhellenism.

Scholars deny this thought not on textual grounds, but on ideological ones. Thucydides was too logical, too rational, too shrewd an observer of states to conceive, let alone propose such a plan; he understood that the Greeks were too divided, too xenophobic for such a strategy to work. Panhellenic calls made in his lifetime were tools of imperialism, a way for stronger states to impose their will on weaker one. He wrote the history to provide a record of the war, an analysis only with no desire/expectation to change the world.

Or Thucydides was a moralist. A person, who shared similar insights with Aristophanes, distressed by the destruction caused by the war, understood that in part Athenian imperialism had caused it and wished to return to an older form of the Delian league, one in which Athens was not so domineering. He wrote the history then to serve as a guide, much like a doctor meticulously records the symptoms of a patient, so that others later could apply its lessons to their times, and in so doing avoid the mistakes of the past.

The truth is undeterminable. What matters is how we apply the lessons within Thucydides' work. What it shows is a war caused and continued by human nature, driven by a desire for more. The history describes states acting to ensure their own safety at the expense of others, ignoring calls based on a common understanding and the chaos that follows such actions. The war for Thucydides was a *stasis* of the Greek world (though technically not a true *stasis*) to be avoided at all costs through good governance and moderate policy. For centuries, states have broken themselves in the pursuit of *pleonexia*. The United States today is embarked on a similar venture and is destroying itself in the process in order to enrich the pockets of a few at the expense of the many. Thucydides and other classical Greek authors saw the danger of such actions and proposed the same solution: the abandonment of policies that enriched the state alone and the practice of Greek states working together loosely, while retaining their autonomy, to protect against foreign threats.

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