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SEA POWER IN THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR

John Nash

The Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE) was one of the defining conflicts of the ancient Greek world. It involved almost all the Greek city-states, aligned with one of the two main protagonists, Athens and Sparta. Conventionally it is seen as a war between a great land power, Sparta, and a great sea power, Athens. The effect of viewing the war in this way is to give less prominence to the place of sea power in the conduct of the war, with that element viewed as relevant to only one side. Many scholars acknowledge that Athenian war strategy was primarily a maritime strategy and that Sparta only defeated Athens once the former had embraced the use of sea power against the latter. This is the basic narrative, and it is essentially correct. However, there is little appraisal of how sea power was used in the conduct of the war. This is unfortunate, since the Peloponnesian War is an excellent example of the uses and effectiveness of sea power. A more

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thorough examination of the thirty-year war between Sparta and Athens and their respective allies reveals a conflict in which sea power was of critical importance.

Sea power in the Peloponnesian War is visible along the full spectrum of maritime operations. Following Ken Booth and Eric Grove, modern naval operations commonly are divided into three main categories—the “span of maritime tasks,” in current Australian maritime doctrine: military, diplomatic, and constabulary (policing).¹ An examination of naval operations during the Peloponnesian War makes clear that, even at that time,

naval forces conducted operations that spanned these three basic categories in ways that are recognizable to the modern observer.

These categories are not intended to be prescriptive, and naval operations often span several different tasks; current Chinese antipiracy operations in the Gulf of Aden can be seen as both constabulary and diplomatic in nature, for instance. What these categories aid in illustrating is the many and varied operations that navies conduct and how sea power is used, and used differently, by various powers and with different strategies in place.

The strategy of Athens under the leadership of the statesman Pericles was conspicuously and unambiguously maritime in nature. Under his leadership, Athens would import all its required foodstuffs, avoid land battle with the dreaded Spartan phalanx, and conduct amphibious operations against Spartan territory. Athenian war strategy changed significantly in the second half of the Peloponnesian War (413–404 BCE), but it nevertheless remained a maritime strategy.² This portion of the struggle commonly and misleadingly is referred to as the *Decelean War*, but the *Ionian War* is a more appropriate term. The fortification of Decelea in Attica did separate Athens from a large part of its countryside and cut off the land route to the critically important island of Euboea, and this fortification did define to a strong degree Athenian and Spartan strategy for the final years of the war. However, the actual conduct of the war was carried out almost entirely in the eastern Aegean and up to the Hellespont (Dardanelles) region. It was a war defined by maritime operations: the interdiction of trade; diplomatic coercion; amphibious operations; and pitched naval battles, on both a small and a large scale. Examining these operations provides a better picture of how the war was conducted and brings its truly maritime nature to the fore, allowing the value of studying this period to be appreciated fully.

SEA POWER AND TECHNOLOGY

Before examining maritime and naval operations in the Peloponnesian War, it is important to address the issue of technology and the limitations imposed on naval forces of the period. Too many scholars, of both classical history and modern strategic thought, consider technology to have been so primitive as to render the study of maritime strategy in ancient history pointless. Chapter titles found in some works clearly demonstrate the poor regard in which some hold the naval operations of this era (e.g., “The Pre-naval Era” [James Cable]; “Land Warfare Afloat: Before 1650” [Michael A. Palmer]).³

Palmer especially makes sweeping statements about the technological effectiveness of ancient fleets, most notably that it was only with the advent of European sailing navies that states sought to command the seas by destroying enemy fleets.⁴ Yet the fifth-century BCE naval battles of Salamis, Mycale, Arginusae, and

Aegospotami involved fleet actions aimed at removing the opposing fleet from the sea—with some or a complete measure of success. Also worthy of mention are the numerous battles fought during the third-century BCE First Punic War between Carthage and Rome, most notably the battle of the Aegates Islands, a naval battle that effectively decided the outcome of the war in Rome's favor, with widespread and long-lasting consequences, especially with regard to the Second Punic War. Roman sea power ensured that the general Hannibal had to walk to Italy rather than go by sea.⁵ Palmer's assertion is limited severely in both time and space, seeming to posit sea command theory as a European, Enlightenment-era phenomenon. An assertion as sweeping as Palmer's is not backed by historical evidence, and the Peloponnesian War example is an effective corrective.

As the debate raged over whether Sparta and its allies should go to war with Athens, the historian Thucydides has the Corinthians pushing for war, writing, "A single defeat at sea is in all likelihood their [Athens's] ruin."⁶ Whether this was a genuine Corinthian view or an Athenian fear that Thucydides projected through a speech is immaterial to this particular argument. Irrespective of viewpoint, the idea that the war in general, not just the war at sea, could be resolved in one great fleet action was clearly in evidence 2,500 years ago. The historian Diodorus Siculus states that late in the war, in approximately 410, the Spartans thought that for them to lose at sea constituted no more than a setback, since they were still supreme on land, but that defeat at sea for Athens would result in that city fighting for its very survival.⁷ Indeed, by that stage of the war the Athenians were clinging on to a fragile empire, with their resources severely depleted, while Sparta's "center of gravity," the Peloponnese, was safe from the depredations of the Athenians.⁸

This line of thinking on decisive battle has a striking parallel in the early twentieth century and the First World War. It is reminiscent of the German naval strategy under Admiral Tirpitz of a "risk fleet": the idea that the inferior German High Seas Fleet could catch a portion of the Royal Navy's Grand Fleet and defeat it, thus—with one grand battle—altering the balance of naval power in favor of Germany.⁹ The Athenians in 480 were able to erode the Persian fleet's fighting ability at Artemisium, admittedly with the help of a storm, and soon after at Salamis were able to defeat the Persians at sea, making the decisive land battle at Plataea possible and thus saving Greece.¹⁰ The aforementioned Corinthian speech is an explicit expression of decisive naval battle as a conscious strategy. Taken with the Persian Wars example, the Corinthian and Spartan examples show that over a 2,500-year period, the concept of a "Mahanian" battle at sea to determine the outcome of a war remained an appealing and viable strategy with roots in the classical Greek era.¹¹

The purpose here is not to disregard technological limitations or minimize the importance of technology, but to illustrate the enduring nature of some basic tenets of naval warfare and maritime strategy. Technological limitations often are used to justify a view that navies of the time could not participate in any contest for control of the sea. Cable criticizes Mahan's exploration of sea control during the Second Punic War, writing that Mahan does not mention the very limited sea-keeping capacities of Roman galleys or their dependence on coast hugging as almost their sole mode of navigation—as if these aspects had any bearing on the concept of sea control.¹² The basic fact of the matter was that the Romans could do what they wanted at sea and the Carthaginians were restricted severely in their ability to use the sea for their own purposes—as clear an example of control of the sea as any other throughout history.¹³ Sea control should be thought of as a relative concept, not an absolute one.

SEA CONTROL

The concept of sea control is certainly in evidence during the Peloponnesian War, despite the restrictions of technology. In the second year of the war, Thucydides has Pericles console the people of Athens, telling them that there are two domains, land and sea, and that the Athenians hold sway over the sea—not only as they are doing so at present, but to whatever extent they think fit. Moreover, “your naval resources are such that your vessels may go where they please, without the [Persian] king or any other nation on earth being able to stop them.”¹⁴ This was a bold assertion, and one made in the context of a political speech to the Athenian population; yet the basic premise was correct. Events of the year had demonstrated that the Athenians could sail where and when they wanted. There were some exceptions, such as the virtually unopposed Spartan raid on Salamis, which caused a panic in Piraeus, but this helps demonstrate a basic tenet of sea control: it is limited in time and space.¹⁵ While technological considerations precluded what might be called “sea command” from being exercised, this is true of most times in the history of naval warfare.¹⁶ The state of sea control throughout the war passed from Athenian control of the sea, to a contested sea, and finally to Spartan control of the sea. Moreover, as Pericles's speech illustrates, the idea of navies being able to establish sea control at this time was a conscious strategic concept. Again, that these changes in sea control are readily apparent invalidates arguments that such concepts were not present in the classical world.

The ultimate role of navies, both past and present, is to fight and win at sea. Although naval battles may occur infrequently, all other roles that navies undertake are dependent on the ability to fight and win against an enemy. There is little possibility of conducting amphibious operations, diplomatic coercion, or trade protection if a naval force cannot prevail over an enemy in battle. This principle

is demonstrated amply throughout the Peloponnesian War. Athens's ability to prevail in battles at sea allowed it to gain and maintain sea control.

THE STRATEGY OF PERICLES AND HIS SUCCESSORS

Athenian strategy under Pericles has been the source of much debate and misconception. It was a maritime strategy and it was a defensive strategy. Athens was fortified with walls, both those around the city itself and the long constructions that ran down to the port of Piraeus. This effectively sealed off Athens from enemies; siege warfare of the time relied primarily on a besieging force starving the city out or being let in by forces within the city. It was not until the era of Philip of Macedon in the fourth century that siege weapons developed to a point at which besieging forces could threaten the walls of a city directly. Able to import all the food it required, Athens was a metaphorical island—a concept pushed by Pericles and the unidentified author referred to as “the Old Oligarch.”¹⁷ With the safety of the city almost guaranteed and its supply lines assured, Athens could strike out at Sparta and Spartan allies using superior sea power.

The strategy of Pericles was an evolution of the strategy developed by those who had come before him, back to Themistocles and the Persian Wars. Thucydides sees Themistocles as the one who spurred Athens into becoming a sea power, thereby laying the foundations of the Athenian empire. This was because Themistocles in 478 had the Athenians rebuild their city walls, as well as the long walls connecting the city to the town and port of Piraeus. He allegedly advised the Athenians that if they were ever to find themselves hard pressed by land, they should go down to Piraeus and defy the world with their fleet. Before the battle of Salamis in 480, a Corinthian delegate attacked Themistocles's counsel, dismissing him because Athens had been evacuated and thus he did not even have a city to his name. Themistocles replied that not only did he have a city, but he had one even greater than the Corinthians—so long as the Athenians had 250 ships fully manned.¹⁸ Athens's decision to rebuild the city's walls caused anxiety in Sparta, although it was Sparta's allies that allegedly instigated the Spartans to confront Athens, because they feared the Athenian navy and the valor the Athenians had displayed against Persia.¹⁹ It is noteworthy that Thucydides maintains that it was Sparta's allies who were most concerned, for these allies were nearer to the coast than Sparta itself, and therefore more vulnerable to Athenian sea power. Plutarch put it bluntly in his biography of Themistocles, writing that he “fastened the city to the Piraeus and the land to the sea.”²⁰

The walls of Athens were important to defense against Spartan and other hoplites, but, as Themistocles supposedly made clear to the other Greeks, it was the fleet that formed the basis of Athenian power from the Persian Wars onward. At this early stage, it was a defensive strategy, although the Athenians engaged

in various overseas campaigns before the Peloponnesian War. However, with the Delian League slowly morphing into the Athenian empire, the Athenians found themselves able to draw on vast resources. This solidified Athenian strategy, which is illustrated clearly in the fifth-century work of the Old Oligarch. The first point he makes is about Athenian hoplites: although they may be no match for their enemies, they are still stronger than their tribute-paying allies—and that was sufficient.²¹ It is a strong indication that the Athenians did not intend to use their land forces to confront their enemies directly in pitched battle—making it all the more clear that Athens's grand strategy was a maritime one.²² The city-state's land army need only be stronger than that of any of the allied states. Even so, if the need arose the Athenians could use this inferior force in a superior way: their navy could land a superior force of troops wherever they wished. The author notes that “it is possible for the rulers of the sea to sometimes do as land powers do, to ravage the land of the stronger; for it is possible to sail about wherever there is no enemy or wherever they are few, and to embark to sail away as the enemy approaches.”²³ During the Peloponnesian War, Athenian raids on the Peloponnesians demonstrated this many times. The author is highlighting the mobility of Athenian land forces. There was no need for them to engage in a futile and destructive hoplite battle to defend Attica.

As the Old Oligarch explains further, Athens exploited geography to its strategic advantage. Land powers could band together easily, whereas the sea separated islands geographically. Athens controlled this sea, and even if it failed initially to prevent the islanders from coming together, it still could cut them off from outside supplies and starve them out.²⁴ The infamous threat leveled against Melos during the Peloponnesian War was made with the understanding that Athens's navy could cut off and invade the small island without outside interference. As for the mainland cities, Athens ruled over them by fear. This was not because of a superior land army, but through a combination of Athens being able to control the flow of imports and exports and the superior mobility granted by its strong navy.²⁵ Athens's sea power, in theory and practice, became primarily an offensive force in the lead-up to the Peloponnesian War.

The separation of the operational from the strategic level of war aids in clarifying Athenian strategy during the first part of the Peloponnesian War, known as the Archidamian War. This requires caution, as there are no definite lines between these two levels, and the Peloponnesian War has received no such examination from scholars of either the classical world or modern military theory.²⁶ Nevertheless, it is a useful way to examine the war without conflating policy, strategy, and operations. At its core, strategy is about “maintaining a balance between ends, ways, and means; about identifying objectives; and about the resources and methods available for meeting such objectives.”²⁷ Under Pericles's

strategy, Athens was a city protected from land attack, with a powerful navy capable of power projection and an empire that provided a huge amount of capital with which to fund a maritime war, which would end with the continuation of the *status quo ante bellum*. The campaigns that Athens launched against the Peloponnese can be seen as the operational level of war: the precise *ways* in which Athens used *means*—sea power—to achieve its desired *ends*; in short, strategy in action. The strategy of Pericles did not, as Donald Kagan claims, fail; the successors of Pericles maintained essentially the same strategy, but pursued it more vigorously and more aggressively on an operational level.²⁸ Pericles's strategy was one of projecting maritime power as a means of coercing Sparta into peace, a strategy that ultimately succeeded in 421 with the Peace of Nicias, however imperfect Thucydides considered that peace to be.²⁹

The opening of the war saw both Sparta and Athens initiate their war plans. Sparta invaded Attica in the hope of drawing out and defeating the incensed Athenian hoplites, while Athens gathered its allies and prepared a hundred ships for a raid on the Peloponnese.³⁰ Kagan's summary of the first year of the war has the Spartans doing widespread damage and the Athenians expending considerable time and money for little gain.³¹ Henry D. Westlake and John F. Lazenby also conclude that the Spartans inflicted more damage on Attica than the Athenians did in return.³² These are poor assessments of the events of that first year, both overestimating the damage the Spartans inflicted and grossly simplifying and underestimating the damage Athens inflicted. There is little doubt that the Spartans' invasion of Attica and their despoliation of the land upset Athenians greatly; Thucydides says so.³³ However, the invasion and ravaging of Attica made the Athenians more angry and resolute than despairing, and it certainly demonstrated to the Spartans that their ravaging strategy would not induce the Athenians into any rash actions.³⁴ It also assumes a negligible effort by Athens to defend Attica, which was not the case. As small as it might have been, Athens's effort to defend Attica with cavalry both boosted morale and limited the damage that the cavalry-deficient Spartan army could inflict.³⁵ Many scholars have exaggerated the effects of Spartan efforts during the first year of the war, perhaps because the traditional nature of Spartan land invasion makes it appear more effective compared with the more unorthodox Athenian maritime strategy.

On the first point, instances of ravaging during this period appear to have been greatly exaggerated regarding their material effects. In his groundbreaking work *Warfare and Agriculture in Classical Greece*, Victor Davis Hanson quite convincingly argues that the systematic destruction of crops and the ravaging of land are extremely difficult. Grapevines and olive trees are extremely hardy and therefore difficult to destroy; doing so requires many hours. Further, grain is vulnerable to fire and other destruction only during a narrow time window. These conclusions

stem from practical experience in farming, as well as from close reading of the relevant literature. Of particular importance is a passage in the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*, in which the unknown author describes Attica before the Spartan fortification of Decelea as the most lavishly equipped part of Greece, having suffered only slight damage from the Spartans in previous attacks.³⁶ Thucydides too describes the fortification of Decelea as one of the prime causes of Athenian ruin, in stark contrast to the invasions of the Archidamian War.³⁷ This should not be a surprise, since Hanson calculates that the Spartans spent a total of only 150 days in Attica during the entire Archidamian War.³⁸ The idea that Sparta laid waste to Attica is hard to defend and the effectiveness of this Spartan strategy is overstated. Sparta's original strategy was ultimately a failure, and it was only when Sparta embraced sea power that it defeated Athens—not in the fields of Attica, but on the seas from which Athens derived its power.³⁹

In contrast, Athens's accomplishments during the first year of the war were strategically significant, as it used sea power to strengthen its position greatly. The Athenians, along with a contingent of fifty ships from Corcyra and other allies, conducted their own ravaging of enemy territory. This raiding included an attack on the city of Methone in the helot homeland of Messenia, a strike into an area where the Spartans felt particularly vulnerable. Although the Athenians did not take the city, the attack clearly worried the Spartans. Concurrently with this operation, thirty Athenian ships raided farther north into Locris, taking hostages and defeating the Locrians who assembled there to resist them. Finally, the Athenians secured the islands of Aegina and Cephalonia, the latter taken without a fight.⁴⁰ Occupation of the former island ensured the security of the Saronic Gulf, and control of the latter helped secure a base off the west coast of the Peloponnese and Acarnania.

It is arguable that by the end of the first year of the war the Athenians had done as much material damage to the Spartans as the Spartans had to the Athenians.⁴¹ Plutarch goes so far as to write that not only did Athenian raids on the Peloponnese cause more damage than the Spartan ones on Attica, but if the plague had not occurred the Spartans would have given up entirely.⁴² Far more important, and often overlooked by scholars, is the fact that Athens had accomplished far more than the Spartans in solidifying and improving its strategic position in Greece, as well as proving the capability and reach of Athenian sea power.

The offshore Greek islands were important strategic locations, and both sides targeted them. The Ambrakiots convinced the Spartans that conquering Acarnania would lead to the taking of the islands of Zakynthos and Cephalonia, possession of which would make Athenian cruises around the Peloponnese much more difficult.⁴³ Corcyra not only possessed a strong navy, but was situated on the best sailing route from Greece to Italy. Athens's and Sparta's respective interference in

Corcyrean affairs was aimed not at conquest but at establishing a friendly government that would secure the island for their interests, especially control of the sea lines of communication (SLOCs). An Athenian attack on the island of Kythera in 424 had a twofold purpose. First, the island was a landing place for merchant ships sailing from Libya and Egypt. Second, the island was in a position from which Laconia could be secured from attacks by “privateers,” which made it an excellent place for the Athenians to set up a base from which to raid the Peloponnese.⁴⁴ There is also the matter of money, as the Athenians were able to exact a tribute of four talents from Kythera, an important Spartan-allied city. This was not a departure from Athens’s original strategy, as Kagan claims, but a change in the operational conduct of the war.⁴⁵ Athens still was using sea power offensively, attacking the Peloponnese and wearing down Sparta.

The culmination of the Periclean strategy was the Athenian success at Pylos and the capture of Spartan forces on the island of Sphacteria in 425. Thucydides labels the end result a stroke of enormous luck. Although luck certainly contributed to Athenian success, the matter should be seen not so simply, but as the fruition of Athenian maritime strategy.⁴⁶ Once again Kagan is incorrect in calling Demosthenes’s strategy a clear departure from previous Athenian strategy.⁴⁷ Although it is true, as he points out, that Pericles had mentioned establishing fortifications in the Peloponnese but never did so, Pericles’s death not long into the war means we cannot know whether the idea was only a vague and empty threat.⁴⁸ Demosthenes’s decision to fortify Pylos demonstrates a continued, albeit belated, plan to increase pressure on Sparta through raids and attacks on its territory from the sea. Two modern scholars quite correctly interpret the Pylos campaign as the logical corollary of the Periclean strategy.⁴⁹ Although Thucydides writes that it was owing to a storm that the Athenians ended up at Pylos, he also states that it was the location where Demosthenes landed to “do what was wanted there” and to fortify the position, as that was the object of the voyage. This was not a random, deserted headland, as Thucydides has the two Athenian generals sneeringly say; it was territory in the heart of Messenia, among the helot population that was such a constant worry to Sparta.⁵⁰ The original Athenian plan, as Pericles had described it, was unchanged, merely pursued more aggressively at the operational level.

The Athenian decision to fortify Pylos quickly got the attention of the Spartans. Once King Agis II and the Peloponnesians ravaging Attica heard the news, they marched back immediately, and once in Sparta they called together allies from around the Peloponnese.⁵¹ Once the Spartans attacked the Athenian garrison on Pylos, they made the fateful decision to land a force of hoplites on the island of Sphacteria to prevent any Athenian relieving force from establishing a base nearby.⁵² The subsequent naval battle, in which Athens was victorious, also

had the effect of trapping the Spartan hoplites occupying Sphacteria. This situation was deemed so dire that the Spartan commanders resolved to conclude a truce on the spot. In fact, the Spartans felt the situation so serious that as part of the truce they temporarily surrendered to the Athenians all their warships in Laconia, sixty in total.⁵³ The Spartans were willing to gut their naval power, weak as it already was, to retain their small contingent of men. This shows a lack of Spartan confidence with respect to naval matters, and it demonstrates clearly the Athenian amphibious capability. Athenian land and naval forces could be used in close concert not just to raid territory, but to deal a serious military blow to Sparta, one with severe political consequences.

The full magnitude of Athenian accomplishments during the Pylos campaign is evident in Spartan actions after the capture of their hoplites on Sphacteria. Thucydides calls the surrender of the (approximately) 120 Spartiates the most surprising thing to happen in the war.⁵⁴ The most immediate result of the Spartans being taken prisoner was the Athenian threat to execute them if the Spartans invaded Attica, thus ending the direct threat to Attica and freeing it up for full use.⁵⁵ The Spartans sent envoys to Athens to recover both the prisoners and Pylos, for they were seriously alarmed by the Messenian raids being conducted from Pylos into Laconia, as they stoked the age-old fear of widespread helot rebellion.⁵⁶

The Athenians did not stop their naval operations of 425 with Pylos. They raided Crommyon in Corinthian territory and established a fortified base at Methana from which they could raid into the territory of Troezen.⁵⁷ In the northwest the Athenians based in Naupactus made an expedition against Anactorion, a Corinthian-controlled city, taking it and settling people from Acarnania there.⁵⁸ This meant that the entire north coast of the Corinthian Gulf from Naupactus to Ambracia, with the minor exception of Molycreion, was hostile to Corinth. These widespread amphibious operations demonstrate a powerful Athenian maritime, and especially naval, capability and a strategy that was aggressively expeditionary in nature.

Thucydides gives a very blunt assessment of the events described above, and of their effects on Sparta as well. The Spartans split their forces and stationed them throughout the most threatened areas of the Peloponnese, and took the unusual step of raising a force of cavalry and archers to act as a mobile reserve. Thucydides describes the Spartans as on the defensive, fearing internal revolution, afraid of another disaster like the one that had befallen them at Pylos, and lacking all confidence in themselves.⁵⁹ The cause of this anxiety and outright fear was constant, unimpeded Athenian raiding along the Peloponnesian seaboard.⁶⁰ This scourge was made possible by a strong Athenian navy that could land a force

of troops in hostile territory, protect them from enemy naval intervention, and bring them off again safely or keep them supplied and protected so they could cause even greater damage.

Although Pericles's strategy essentially remained in play throughout the first decade of the war, there were departures from it as the war expanded into new areas such as Sicily and the Chalcidice region. Nevertheless, these campaigns were also expeditionary in nature, relying heavily on naval force to project power into coastal and island regions. The first expedition to Sicily constituted a departure from Pericles's strategy, although the ostensible aim was not conquest but the provision of aid to Athens's Sicilian allies. Thucydides does give the Athenians a more sinister motive, calling the expedition a test of how vulnerable Sicily might be to Athenian conquest, but this interpretation should be viewed with caution.⁶¹ The first Sicilian expedition was primarily diplomatic in nature, and Thucydides perhaps downplays the importance of the Athenians' attempts at aiding their western allies. After all, the Peloponnesians had strong friends in the west too, and for Athens to ignore its allies' call for help would have weakened its position in the west, if not in the other territories where it had allies. Because failure to aid its allies would have made Athens look weak, the dispatch of a naval expedition to Sicily in 427 can be seen as a response to external events rather than as a radical change in the conduct of the war and Athens's strategy, if not policy. As the war dragged on, it became more complex, and these instances highlight the ever-important point that strategy is not practiced in a vacuum.

Spartan operations in the Chalcidice region in the later years of the Archidamian War mark a change in Sparta's strategy that reveals the effectiveness of Athenian strategy up to that point. Thucydides explicitly states that Spartan operations in the northwest Aegean were aimed at distracting Athens and relieving the pressure it was putting on the Peloponnesians, Laconia in particular. Further and even more importantly, Thucydides writes that the Spartans were happy to have an excuse to send out helots from the Peloponnesians, since the occupation of Pylos was thought to have increased the chances of a helot revolt.⁶² It also marks the point at which Sparta abandoned all hope of confronting Athens at sea until well after the Peace of Nicias, for it decided to avoid naval operations in favor of a purely land campaign. However, Spartan success in the northwest Aegean presaged a bolder and more successful strategy to be undertaken during the Decelean/Ionian War, when Sparta would use Persian money to build a fleet and conduct its own amphibious operations against the Athenians in the Ionian island and Anatolian regions. Sparta recognized that the most effective strategy for victory was to separate Athens from its allies, by force or otherwise. This strategy

was tested and found to be successful during the campaigns in the Chalcidice region, but it could not be executed after the failure of the Mytilinean revolt and Pylos campaigns eroded and ultimately destroyed Spartan naval capabilities.

OPERATIONS OUTSIDE OF BATTLE

Diplomacy

He [Pericles] displayed their power to the barbarian tribes living around and to the kings and lords the power and the confidence and impunity with which they sailed where they wished, having made all of the sea subject to their control.

PLUTARCH, *LIFE OF PERICLES*

Naval forces have many roles outside of war and combat operations, foremost among them in diplomacy. Diplomatic tasks range from furnishing allies with moral and physical support to coercion, and all these roles fell within the scope of action of Greek maritime forces during the Peloponnesian War. Navies were—and still are—uniquely placed to act as diplomatic tools; armies are inherently intrusive, whereas navies can remain at a distance, threatening or reassuring as desired without instigating hostilities.

The Plutarch passage quoted above details an Athenian expedition that Pericles conducted in approximately 436 and that is an excellent example of the use of naval force for diplomatic purposes. The fleet's presence off the coast of the Aegean Islands and Black Sea region demonstrated the Athenians' potential power to friend and foe alike, without actually encroaching on any territory or engaging in a hostile act. The Peloponnesian War involved many different protagonists spread throughout the Mediterranean, and most of them were within reach of the sea, providing a city with the opportunity to aid or menace with its navy as it saw fit, exercising both soft and hard diplomacy.

Pericles's show of force in 436 was aimed at Greeks and foreigners alike, powers with which they were at peace at the time. As Plutarch understands, it was more than a matter of simply sailing a large body of warships around; the real point of the exercise was to demonstrate Athenian sea control. The ships displayed naval and military power in a region distant from Athens, with the implication that the Athenians could project this power anywhere and at any time, thus enjoying the power, confidence, and impunity to sail where they wished, "having made all of the sea subject to their control."⁶³ This was no idle threat, for the opening years of the Peloponnesian War demonstrated that the Athenian fleet indeed could sail where it wished and land troops in strategically significant areas. Further, Plutarch writes that Pericles did many things to please the people,

including “sending out sixty triremes each and every year, in which many of the citizens were sailing for eight months being paid.”⁶⁴ This acted as an annual demonstration of Athenian sea power to the Aegean world. Some scholars believe that sixty ships is too large a number, pointing out that it would have incurred too great an annual cost; but, regardless of numbers, it remains an example of the frequent use of Athens’s navy for diplomatic purposes.⁶⁵ Russell Meiggs suggests that the main function of the fleet in peacetime was as a police force, with the threefold duty of showing the flag, instilling confidence in the hearts of friends, and suppressing piracy.⁶⁶ Although correctly identifying the roles, he mistakenly identifies the first two as constabulary operations, when they are in fact diplomatic ones—the two most prominent and important diplomatic roles that navies undertake. The ultimate goal of such posturing was to establish in the minds of friend and foe alike the Athenian capacity and will to control the seas. Athenian power and influence were extended across the regions through the use of naval forces in a diplomatic role.⁶⁷

An episode that occurred at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War neatly demonstrates the diplomatic use of sea power. Athens decided to conclude a defensive treaty with the island state of Corcyra in 433; both Thucydides and Plutarch write that Athens needed to aid Corcyra, lest its naval power go over to Athens’s rival, Corinth.⁶⁸ Athens sent ten ships to aid Corcyra. Especially noteworthy was the inclusion of three *strategoï* to command the contingent.⁶⁹ Considering that Athens elected ten *strategoï* for each year, three is a high level of command for such a small number of ships; a later raid on the Peloponnese during the first year of the war involving a hundred ships had the same number of *strategoï*.⁷⁰ Indeed, the three commanders sent to Corcyra were under very strict instructions to do nothing that might provoke Corinth or lead to a violation of the treaty Athens had with it, but to prevent an incursion into Corcyraean territory. Athens sent out a tightly controlled force of ships to aid an ally, Corcyra, while simultaneously making a show of force and a demonstration of Athenian resolve in the face of Corinthian aggression. Kagan puts it best when he describes this maneuver as less a military than a diplomatic one.⁷¹

The contention that the Athenian orders were unrealistic misses the point that it was a diplomatic rather than a military use of sea power.⁷² It was the presence of Athenian ships to begin with, as opposed to their number, that was the entire point, and the fact that three *strategoï* commanded them shows the delicate nature of the task. From the outset of political tensions, Athens employed naval force as a diplomatic tool. That Pericles did not go with the force is perhaps a good indication that the other Athenian leaders clearly understood his aims.

Trade Protection and Interdiction

The protection and interdiction of trade have been among the prime duties of navies throughout history, and the conduct of such operations during the Peloponnesian War was critical to its outcome. Both sides engaged in the protection of their own and the interdiction of enemy seaborne trade, although it was Athens that had the most to lose from an interruption of trade. Operations ranged from the employment of “privateers” and direct attacks on shipping to the control of vital SLOCs. These operations are not as well documented as the other maritime operations undertaken during the war, either in the ancient sources or by modern scholars, but they remained vital, and it was Athens’s inability to protect trade, particularly in foodstuffs, that led to its surrender following blockade and starvation by Sparta.

In the second year of the war the Athenians sent six ships under a certain Melesandros to the region of Caria and Lycia, located on the Anatolian coast. Melesandros’s tasks were twofold: to collect tribute and to prevent “the Peloponnesian privateers” from attacking merchantmen.⁷³ Both Richard Crawley and Rex Warner, translators of two of the most popular editions of Thucydides, translate *leistikos* in the above passage as *privateer*.⁷⁴ However, *leistikos* usually is translated as *pirate* or *bandit*, as the term was equally applicable to such activities on land and sea. Labeling them privateers implies that the Spartans employed them to attack only the shipping of Athens and Athenian allies.

In the first year of the war Athens had fortified the island of Atalante off the Opuntian coast to prevent *leistikoi* from sailing out of Opus and the rest of Locris and attacking Euboea.⁷⁵ It was only with the outbreak of war that Athens suddenly had found the need to fortify this particular position, suggesting that piracy was not an enduring regional issue of concern to Athens. In this case, it appears that Sparta engaged locals to privateer against the Athenians. Locris’s position near Euboea—an island important for the support of Athens—made it a good base of operations, yet the Spartans’ navy was so weak it was unlikely they could establish their own base there: thus the need to gain the support of *leistikoi*.

As for direct attacks on trade, there is a vague reference to the Spartans attacking Athenian and allied traders at sea at the very beginning of the war, but the narrative is quite unspecific and stands out most for highlighting the brutality of the Spartans.⁷⁶ A more detailed instance appears in 412/1, when the Spartan Hippocrates was sent out with one Laconian and eleven Sicilian ships to Cnidus on the Ionian coast. Half the ships were ordered to seize all merchant vessels sailing from Egypt.⁷⁷ However, the Athenians became aware of this and sent out their own ships, which intercepted and captured the Peloponnesian ships. This negated the threat to the merchant vessels, which presumably were carrying grain to the Athenians in the region.⁷⁸ In 410, the Spartan king Agis sent fifteen ships,

manned by allies, to Chalcedon and Byzantium, and en route three of them were destroyed in the Hellespont by the nine Athenian ships that were always present to watch over merchantmen.⁷⁹ These examples show that the Athenians were on constant watch for threats to their merchant vessels and had mechanisms in place for the wartime control of grain throughout the Aegean.⁸⁰

The final way in which trade was attacked or protected was through the control of shipping routes—the vital SLOCs. Having established supremacy over the waters of the Propontis (Sea of Marmara) after the victory at Cyzicus, Athens was able to control the flow of shipping via this route and collect a tax on all vessels sailing into the region from the Black Sea. King Agis summed up Spartan despair at the Athenian control of grain routes. “But Agis, seeing [from Attica] the many grain ships sailing into the Piraeus, was saying that it was of no advantage for them [Sparta] to shut out the Athenians from the land for much time already, if they could not hold back the grain imported by sea.”⁸¹

It was evident to the Spartans that, despite occupying Athenian territory in Attica year-round, they could win only by cutting Athens off from its overseas food supply. This was achieved best through control of Athens’s main SLOC, which by the end of the war ran through the Bosphorus and Hellespont. Black Sea grain was critical to Athens, and had been possibly as far back as the late 430s. The loss of Euboea in 411 was a disaster for Athens, not just because of the loss of ships in the battle off Eretria, but for the loss of an important source of grain and other supplies; Thucydides held that the island was of more value than Attica.⁸² Athens previously had imported grain from a range of different areas, but gradual Spartan pressure eventually forced the Athenians into relying on importations solely from the Black Sea region. By closing down the last available grain SLOC to Athens, Sparta finally was able to starve Athens into submission.

LESSONS

The Peloponnesian War of 431–404 BCE was a maritime war, one characterized by the constant use of sea power by Athens, Sparta, and their respective allies. The lands surrounding the cities of both protagonists were not the scenes of great, or even many, battles. From Sicily in the west to the Bosphorus in the east, it was the littoral areas, and especially the islands, that saw endemic warfare throughout three decades of conflict. There were only two large-scale land battles during this period, and none in which the full forces of the Athenians and Spartans were involved. Soldiers certainly had their part to play in the Peloponnesian War, but it was the ability to project power at and from the sea that was the determining factor in the war.

At the core of Athenian strategy, from the very beginning of the war, was the capability to project power ashore from the sea. Athenian ships cruising by the

island or coastal city of a recalcitrant ally were effective diplomatically because it was understood that they could cause serious damage. When it came to fighting Sparta, the Athenians' ability to raid the coast of the Peloponnese was central to their war strategy, and one to which the Spartans had no effective response. Athenian attacks demonstrated that without a navy and in spite of Spartan attacks on Attica, Sparta could not protect its allies from Athenian naval forces. The walls of Athens protected the city from the vaunted Spartan hoplites, just as the seas and Athenian triremes protected Athens's allies. Maritime power projection by the Athenians demonstrated the impotence of the Spartan land army, and raised the specter of helot rebellion as well. The Athenian victory at Pylos and Sphacteria in 425 is the starkest example of these facts and was the vindication of the Periclean strategy, regardless of how later politicians chose to exploit or throw away this important victory. The Sicilian expedition was the largest amphibious operation conducted to that time, and the operations conducted at sea had a critical impact on the fate of the expedition—in the Corinthian Gulf, off the coast of Italy, and in the Great Harbor of Syracuse. This outcome was of great consequence to the rest of the war because it enabled a Spartan strategy of confronting Athens at sea. The final years of the war were fought primarily in the eastern Aegean and saw both sides conducting maritime power-projection operations around the islands and the Hellespont region.

The use of maritime power for diplomatic and political purposes was crucial, especially for the Athenians, who relied so heavily on a maritime empire for support. Sea power granted Athens the power to keep allies in line and dissuade them from rebellion. The Old Oligarch baldly states this as the case, and Thucydides's narrative of the war supports this analysis. When Athenian naval power weakened, Sparta was able to draw away from Athens this base of support and compromise the Athenians' ability to fight. Aside from tribute collection from allies, both sides used the threat of naval force to extort money out of third powers. Athens began the war with a firmly entrenched maritime consciousness that had seen naval force used for diplomatic means on a daily basis. Both sides used navies as tools of diplomacy, especially as coercive forces with great reach.

Maritime trade was a critical Athenian vulnerability that required protection, especially as Spartan actions in Attica deepened Athenian dependence on imports of food by sea. Athenian hegemony in the Aegean had helped suppress piracy, but clearly there were plenty of would-be pirates and opportunists who were willing and able to enlist with Sparta to attack Athenian shipping. This state-sponsored piracy, akin to privateering in modern legal terms, demonstrated Sparta's recognition of the need to hit Athens at sea to damage its maritime trade. As the war dragged on and Athens became reliant on grain imports from the

Hellespont region and beyond, this theater became a crucial one in the conduct of the war as Sparta tried to close the strait to Athens. It was Athens's inability to keep its SLOCs open and thereby feed itself that led to defeat.

The maritime operations that Greek forces conducted during the Peloponnesian War would have been impossible without navies' ability to fight at sea. Battle, on whatever scale, was of critical importance throughout the war. Possession of a strong fleet that was proven in battle allowed Athens to bully other states by merely sailing its fleet around the Aegean and beyond. Without establishing sea control with its fleet, Athens would not have been able to conduct a concerted campaign of maritime power projection against Sparta and its allies. The Athenians certainly would not have gained a victory as stunning as the one at Pylos/Sphacteria without the ability to defeat the Spartan fleet in battle. It was only when Sparta took to the seas with a fleet that it was able to cause serious harm to Athens, which caused the latter's allies to rebel and threatened its maritime trade. Sparta's eventual transformation into a naval power, no matter how short-lived, combined with Athens's inability to counter this transformation effectively, was the defining factor in the war.⁸³ Once Sparta confronted Athens in battle at sea, it directly threatened the Athenians with loss of the foundation of their power.

Far from being a sideshow of only secondary importance, the naval and maritime dimension of the Peloponnesian War was of critical importance to the conduct, and indeed the outcome, of the war. Too much has been made of technological limitations, prejudicing the proper study of maritime operations and their impact on the history of the period. The Peloponnesian War was fought primarily at and from the sea, and the outcome of the war was decided by the ability of Athens and Sparta to use sea power effectively.

NOTES

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1. Ken Booth, *Navies and Foreign Policy* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), p. 16; Eric Grove, *The Future of Sea Power* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 234; Royal Australian Navy, *Australian Maritime Doctrine* (Canberra: Sea Power Centre—Australia, 2010), p. 100.
2. Donald Kagan, *The Fall of the Athenian Empire* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1987), p. 41. Ionia refers to the area encompassing the eastern Aegean Islands and the coastal cities of Anatolia and western Turkey, home of the Ionian Greeks.
3. James Cable, *The Political Influence of Naval Force in History* (Hampshire, U.K.: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 15–16; Michael A. Palmer, *Command at Sea: Naval Command and Control since the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2005), pp. 19–38.

4. Palmer, *Command at Sea*, p. 17.
5. For more on this subject, see J. F. Lazenby, *The First Punic War: A Military History* (London: Routledge, 1996).
6. Thucydides, *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*, ed. Robert B. Strassler (New York: Free Press, 1996), 1.121.4. This edition is based on the 1874 translation of Richard Crawley.
7. Diodorus Siculus, *Diodorus of Sicily in Twelve Volumes*, trans. C. H. Oldfather (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1935; repr. Loeb Classical Library, 1976), 13.52.6.
8. It is hard at this point to escape a comparison with the First World War, where it was said of the British admiral Sir John Jellicoe that he was the only man who could lose the war in an afternoon. Robert K. Massie, *Castles of Steel: Britain, Germany, and the Winning of the Great War at Sea* (New York: Ballantine, 2003), p. 56.
9. This was the essence of the strategy after war had broken out; Tirpitz's *Risikogedanke* (doctrine of risk) originally envisaged a German navy that eventually would be strong enough to deter the Royal Navy from war altogether. The outbreak of war in 1914 came earlier than Tirpitz expected the German fleet to achieve this (1915 was his earliest estimate; the intervening period was called the "danger period"), and thus the goal for German naval strategy during the war became the whittling down of the Royal Navy until parity was achieved. Corinthian thinking (as projected by Thucydides, at least), held that defeating a large Athenian naval contingent would bring the Peloponnesian side closer to parity with the Athenian fleet, thus negating the Athenians' greatest advantage. For Tirpitz's doctrine of risk, see Paul G. Halpern, *A Naval History of World War I* (London: UCL, 1995), pp. 2–5, and Robert K. Massie, *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, and the Coming of the Great War* (London: Vintage, 2007), pp. 180–81.
10. For a more detailed examination of the war at sea during the Persian Wars, see Barry A. Strauss, *Salamis: The Greatest Naval Battle of the Ancient World, 480 BC* (London: Arrow, 2004), pp. 13–37, 91–253, and John R. Hale, *Lords of the Sea: The Epic Story of the Athenian Navy and the Birth of Democracy* (London: Penguin, 2009), pp. 43–74.
11. Other decisive naval battles that came later, such as Actium, Lepanto, Trafalgar, and Tsushima, among others, had a clear influence on German naval strategy. The Peloponnesian War seems to be the first explicit expression of decisive battle as a legitimate naval strategy, no doubt taking as an example the Persian Wars before it.
12. Cable, *The Political Influence of Naval Force in History*, p. 15.
13. The very point Mahan was making in the introduction to his groundbreaking *Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783* (New York: Dover, 1890; repr. 1987), pp. 13–21.
14. Thuc. 2.62.2.
15. Thuc. 2.93–94; Diod. Sic. 12.49; Royal Australian Navy, *Australian Maritime Doctrine*, p. 72; Geoffrey Till, *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 145–50.
16. The difference between *sea control* and *sea command* is essentially a question of totality. *Sea command* refers to the complete and unfettered ability of one side to do on or by the sea what it wishes, unopposed. This has been seen only rarely throughout history, although it could be argued that Athens gained sea command at a certain point during the Peloponnesian War, or even earlier, after the Peace of Kallias—see below. For a more in-depth discussion, see Till, *Seapower*, pp. 145–50.
17. Thuc. 1.143.5; "The Old Oligarch," *Pseudo-Xenophon's Constitution of the Athenians*, trans. R. Osborne, 2nd ed. (London: London Association of Classical Teachers, 2004), 2.14–16. Referring to the author as "the Old Oligarch" rather than "Pseudo-Xenophon" creates less confusion, as Xenophon had nothing to do with the *Constitution*.
18. Herodotus, *The Persian Wars*, trans. A. D. Godley, Loeb Classical Library 119 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1925), 8.61.
19. Thuc. 1.91–93.
20. Plutarch, *Lives*, vol. 2, *Themistocles and Camillus. Aristides and Cato Major. Cimon and Lucullus*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb Classical Library 47 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1914), 19.2–3.
21. "Old Oligarch," *Pseudo-Xenophon's Constitution of the Athenians*, 2.1.

22. *The "Old Oligarch": The "Constitution of the Athenians" Attributed to Xenophon*, trans. J. L. Marr and P. J. Rhodes, Aris & Phillips Classical Texts (Oxford, U.K.: Oxbow, 2008), p. 100.
23. "Old Oligarch," *Pseudo-Xenophon's Constitution of the Athenians*, 2.4.
24. *Ibid.*, 2.2.
25. *Ibid.*, 2.3–5.
26. Many scholars and military practitioners see the idea of "operational art" as having consumed or confused the relationship between strategy and tactics. The concept of operational art as it is known today is a recent one and has provoked much debate, especially after the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq during the early part of the twenty-first century. For more discussion, see Hew Strachan, *The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013), pp. 210–34, and Justin Kelly and Michael J. Brennan, *Alien: How Operational Art Devoured Strategy* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2009), available at www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/. My current PhD work is concerned with sea power and maritime strategy for the Greek classical period (roughly 550–321 BCE), with the aim of critically analyzing the role of sea power during this period.
27. Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013), p. xi.
28. Donald Kagan, "Athenian Strategy in the Peloponnesian War," in *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War*, ed. Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox, and Alvin Bernstein (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), p. 41; Donald Kagan, *Thucydides: The Reinvention of History* (New York: Penguin, 2009), p. 85. Kagan's views on Pericles and his strategy have not changed since he wrote his four-volume series on the Peloponnesian War (1969–87).
29. John Hale calls the Peace of Nicias a triumph for Athens that would have gratified Pericles. Hale, *Lords of the Sea*, p. 184. Platias and Koliopoulos call the peace favorable to Athens, ruined only by the Sicilian expedition. Athanassios Platias and Constantinos Koliopoulos, *Thucydides on Strategy: Athenian and Spartan Grand Strategies in the Peloponnesian War and Their Relevance Today* (London: Hurst, 2010), p. 56.
30. Thuc. 2.17.4, 2.18–21.
31. Kagan, *Thucydides*, p. 80.
32. Henry D. Westlake, "Seaborne Raids in Periclean Strategy," *Classical Quarterly* 39, nos. 3/4 (July/October 1945), p. 81; J. F. Lazenby, *The Peloponnesian War: A Military Study* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 253.
33. Thuc. 2.21–22.
34. The idea that the Athenian population would be so despondent at the destruction and ravaging of their land that effectively it would cause them to capitulate by engaging in a hopeless land battle is reminiscent of the underlying assumption in the early twentieth century that the use of strategic bombing in war would bring a nation to its knees. As the wholesale destruction of German and Japanese cities at the hands of Allied conventional bombers showed, this was flawed logic. J. E. Lendon proposes that the actions of the first six years of the war were aimed at damaging the honor of the other side, striking blows more moral than physical. It is an interesting proposal—but not terribly convincing. The fears that Spartan allies expressed during the rebuilding of the Athenian walls seem to be concerned with damage not to honor but to their property and livelihoods. Lendon does, however, seem to concede that Athenian actions included offensive operations rather than pure defense. See J. E. Lendon, *Song of Wrath: The Peloponnesian War Begins* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), pp. 107–283.
35. Thuc. 2.22.2. See also I. G. Spence, "Perikles and the Defence of Attika during the Peloponnesian War," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 110 (November 1990), pp. 91–109.
36. "London Fragments," in *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*, trans. P. R. McKechnie and S. J. Kern (Warminster, PA: Aris & Phillips, 1988), 17.4–5; Victor Davis Hanson, *Warfare and Agriculture in Classical Greece*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1998), p. 237.
37. Thuc. 7.27.3–5.
38. Hanson, *Warfare and Agriculture in Classical Greece*, p. 147. Hanson's argument does not convince everyone. James Thorne argues that the example of the ravaging of Attica is

- not representative of the economic impact of ravaging in classical Greece, because Athens alone could bear such hardship. If anything, this argument reinforces the effectiveness of sea power during the war. See James A. Thorne, "Warfare and Agriculture: The Economic Impact of Devastation in Classical Greece," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 42, no. 3 (2001), pp. 225–53.
39. As Kagan finally admits at the end of his survey of the Archidamian War. Donald Kagan, *The Archidamian War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1974), p. 333. However, Lazenby comes to the strange conclusion that Sparta still did more damage to Athens than Athens did to Sparta with this strategy—a conclusion with no solid foundation. Lazenby, *The Peloponnesian War*, p. 253.
40. Thuc. 2.25.1; 2.26–27; 2.30.2.
41. Diodorus's account gives the impression that it was the Peloponnesians who suffered most from the raiding of the first year; they were "terrified" by the Athenians "ravaging many places of the coastline." Diod. Sic. 12.42.7–8. B. X. de Wet is one of the few authors who also come to the conclusion that Athens did more material damage. His work is also an early, yet overlooked, example of a scholar arguing for a strong offensive element to Athenian war strategy. B. X. de Wet, "The So-Called Defensive Policy of Pericles," *Acta Classica* 12 (1969), pp. 103–19.
42. Plutarch, *Lives*, vol. 3, *Pericles and Fabius Maximus. Nicias and Crassus*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb Classical Library 65 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1916), 34.2.
43. Thuc. 2.80.1.
44. Thuc. 4.53.3; Plutarch, *Per.* 6.4.
45. Thuc. 4.57.4; Kagan, *The Archidamian War*, p. 261.
46. This refers to the outcome of the campaign rather than the Athenians' landing at Pylos. Luck is a convenient explanation for Thucydides, whose distaste for Cleon is well known. Rather than credit Cleon with a well-earned victory resulting from good leadership, it seems that Thucydides opted to ascribe the victory to luck.
47. A very capable politician and general, not the famed orator of the fourth century. Kagan, *The Archidamian War*, p. 222.
48. Thuc. 1.142.4.
49. Platias and Koliopoulos, *Thucydides on Strategy*, p. 49.
50. Thuc. 4.3.1–3. Helots made up the population of Messenia, the region Sparta conquered and enslaved into working the land on Sparta's behalf. Many consider the Spartan military regime as conceived primarily to ensure a strong military that could keep the helots suppressed in perpetual serfdom.
51. Thuc. 4.6, 4.8.1–2.
52. Thuc. 4.8.3–8. For more details on the Pylos campaign, see Lazenby, *The Peloponnesian War*, pp. 67–79.
53. Thuc. 4.15–16.
54. Thuc. 4.40.1. Hornblower calls this a typical rhetorical superlative. Simon Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, vol. 2, *Books IV–V.24* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), p. 194. Nevertheless, the surrender of Spartan hoplites in such number was unheard of to that point, and certainly flies in the face of the vaunted reputation of Spartan hoplites, epitomized by their performance in the battle of Thermopylae in 480.
55. Thuc. 4.41.1.
56. Thuc. 4.41.1–3; Diod. Sic. 12.63.5.
57. Thuc. 4.45.
58. Thuc. 4.49. J. B. Salmon, *Wealthy Corinth: A History of the City to 338 BC* (Oxford, U.K.: Clarendon, 1984), p. 318.
59. Thuc. 4.55.1–4.
60. Thuc. 4.56. To paraphrase Jackie Fisher, the Athenian army was a projectile fired by the Athenian navy.
61. Thuc. 3.86.3–4.
62. Thuc. 4.80.1–2.
63. Plutarch, *Per.* 20.
64. *Ibid.*, 11.4.
65. Russell Meiggs, *The Athenian Empire* (Oxford, U.K.: Clarendon, 1979), p. 206; Samuel K. Eddy, "Athens' Peacetime Navy in the Age of Pericles," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine*

- Studies* 9, no. 2 (1968), pp. 142–55. Although Plutarch's language makes it clear that it was sixty ships under pay for the entire eight-month period, it seems more reasonable to think that a portion of the sixty ships were sent out in rotation throughout an eight-month period. This would ensure a healthy training rotation of ships and crews while maintaining a presence throughout the Aegean at a lower cost than having all sixty out at once, although this perhaps occurred for some periods.
66. Meiggs, *The Athenian Empire*, p. 206.
67. The scope of this article leaves no room for proper explanation of or speculation about why such overt and frequent demonstrations of sea power did not lead to any sort of naval arms race. A cursory examination suggests that money was the key factor, navies being capital and manpower intensive. Athens's tribute-paying allies contributed money rather than ships, so there were few large standing naval forces in the Aegean. Thus, one can glimpse tensions concerning naval armaments in the initial conflict over Corcyra, each wanted the city's very large fleet between Athens and Sparta on its side.
68. Thuc. 1.44.
69. Thuc. 1.45.
70. Thuc. 2.23.
71. Donald Kagan, *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 244–45.
72. Hornblower, *Books IV–V.24*, p. 90.
73. Thuc. 2.69.1.
74. Thucydides, *The Landmark Thucydides; Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner (London: Penguin, 1954; repr. 1972).
75. Thuc. 2.32.
76. In 430. Thuc. 2.67.4; Thomas Kelly, "Thucydides and Spartan Strategy in the Archidamian War," *American Historical Review* 87, no. 1 (February 1982), p. 32 note 20.
77. Thuc. 8.35.1–2. The location of classical Cnidus is somewhat disputed. Simon Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, vol. 3, *Books 5.25–8.109* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), pp. 849–51.
78. Thuc. 8.35.3.
79. Xenophon, *Hellenica: Books 1–4*, trans. Carleton L. Brownson, Loeb Classical Library 88 (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1918), 1.1.36.
80. Peter Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World: Responses to Risk and Crisis* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988), pp. 121–22.
81. Xen., *Hell.* 1.1.35.
82. Thuc. 8.96.1–2.
83. The topic of Sparta's transformation into a sea power as a phenomenon is examined more thoroughly by Barry Strauss in an interesting volume on maritime transformations throughout history (with a focus on China's modern transformation into a sea power). Barry Strauss, "Sparta's Maritime Moment," in *China Goes to Sea: Maritime Transformation in Comparative Historical Perspective*, ed. Andrew S. Erickson, Lyle J. Goldstein, and Carnes Lord (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009), pp. 33–61.