

2022

## Restoring Thucydides: Testing Familiar Lessons and Deriving New Ones

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### Recommended Citation

Hammond, Joshua; Novo, Andrew R.; and Parker, Jay M. (2022) "Restoring Thucydides: Testing Familiar Lessons and Deriving New Ones," *Naval War College Review*. Vol. 75: No. 3, Article 12.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol75/iss3/12>

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as well as SIGINT analysts, artillery gunners, submariners, ordnancemen, snipers, linguists, and logisticians” (p. xxvi). Undeniably, Aristotle does have much to teach both the military practitioner and the philosopher of political theory. But by the same token, if Aristotle—a master of methodological induction and a posteriori analysis—suddenly returned to life today, no doubt he would learn much, just as the present-day military strategist and tactician would, from the candid war experiences and the well-reasoned arguments of the astute thinkers in *Military Virtues*.

EDWARD ERWIN



*Restoring Thucydides: Testing Familiar Lessons and Deriving New Ones*, by Andrew R. Novo and Jay M. Parker. Amherst, NY: Cambria, 2020. 218 pages. \$39.99.

When I was trying to drum up enrollment for an elective on Thucydides at the Naval War College, one interested student told me that he was most inspired by Thucydides’s famous quote that “the nation that makes a distinction between its scholars and its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards and its fighting done by fools.” I did not have the heart to tell him that he had not only the quote wrong but the author too. Sadly, this is only one of many misconceptions that national-security professionals have about Thucydides and his work.

Andrew R. Novo and Jay M. Parker’s *Restoring Thucydides: Testing Familiar Lessons and Deriving New Ones* takes on many of these misconceptions to “push back against the oversimplification and decontextualization of Thucydides” (p. 3). In doing so, Novo and Parker appear

to be part of the response to Graham Allison’s 2017 *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?* and his use of Thucydides as a crystal ball for future Sino-American relations. While the authors acknowledge their issues with Allison’s analysis, they take pains to point out that they are less interested in refuting Allison’s thesis and more interested in providing a corrective to some of the worst misunderstandings of Thucydides that followed Allison’s best seller. To that end, they draw on some of the major scholarship on Thucydides over the past twenty years from diverse perspectives such as literary criticism, translation mechanics, and international relations theory. In addition, they rely on multiple English translations of Thucydides and even throw in a little ancient Greek.

The authors first identify five “common threats” that lead readers to superficial conclusions: that fifth-century Greece was bipolar, that Thucydides blamed the international system for the war, that domestic politics are less important than state-on-state interactions, that Thucydides is the father of realism, and that the Peloponnesian War was a single unitary conflict between Athens and Sparta. In each chapter, they provide something like an annotated bibliography of relevant books and articles that support their reexamination of these misconceptions. In addition, they present accessible summaries of some of the most important episodes of the Peloponnesian War, such as the political maneuvering during the Peace of Nicias, the siege of Melos, the Sicilian expedition, and the fates of Athens and Sparta after the war ended in 404 BCE.

The book ends with seven lessons to take the place of the five threats identified

earlier. The fact that the former are not as easily listed as the latter demonstrates that Novo and Parker are offering more-complex and -nuanced lessons than those they replaced. Aside from these big takeaways, the book has some smaller but no less compelling ideas. Specifically, Novo and Parker point out that, despite what Archidamus, king of Sparta, and Pericles, “first citizen” of Athens, repeatedly say (and what the Naval War College repeatedly teaches), navies were far easier to replace than armies (p. 75). They also quite persuasively dispute the Sicilian expedition’s similarities to the Vietnam War (pp. 37–38, 147), another long-standing Naval War College truism. Unfortunately, the authors sometimes are guilty of the very sins they catalog. First, some of their myth busting seems more like hair splitting. For example, they point out that Athens was not a sea power because “strictly speaking, as a metropolitan area” Athens lacked access to the sea (p. 102)—but surely a distance of six miles from acropolis to port does not dictate disqualification as a sea power. Second, they take several incidents out of context, or they ascribe links between events that just are not present in Thucydides. For example, they imply that Thucydides was shocked that Sparta did not break the Peace of Nicias after Melos was reduced, but the quote they cite describes Spartan reaction (or lack thereof) to Athenian raids in the Peloponnesus (p. 115), not the sack of Melos. Finally, on several occasions they mischaracterize secondary sources as representing Thucydides, or speeches from Thucydides as the author’s own views (p. 83). The end result is that rather than add nuance to an oversimplified claim such as “fifth-century Greece was bipolar,” they merely

replace it with an equally oversimplified claim such as “fifth-century Greece was *not* bipolar,” despite having presented many diverse and compelling points of view that fifth-century Greece was a more complicated state than a simple label would suggest (pp. 50–53).

I recognize that I may not be the target audience for this book. I am fluent in ancient Greek; I have read Thucydides multiple times, as literature, translation material, history, and political science; and I already am familiar with most of the books and articles the authors cite. In contrast, for a reader who knows Thucydides only through Graham Allison or from pithy misquotations and misattributions, this book may provide alternative perspectives. While I agree with Novo and Parker’s exhortation to use Thucydides “as a beginning not as an end” (p. 171), readers who are unfamiliar with Thucydides but wish to understand this important work still should approach *Restoring Thucydides* with caution.

JOSHUA HAMMOND



*On Operations: Operational Art and Military Disciplines*, by B. A. Friedman. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2021. 256 pages. \$31.95.

*On Operations* is B. A. Friedman’s examination of the origins of the operational level of war, operational art, and the military general staff and of their impact on U.S. military thinking, doctrine, and way of war. His ambitious work has two aims. First, he advocates strongly for the removal of the concept of the operational level of war from U.S. doctrine. Second, he seeks to improve the value and use of operational art by military staffs in organizing tactical actions to attain strategic