THE CAUSES OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR[1]

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Jeder hat nur ein Wort gerufen. Den Satz, der da entstand, hat keiner gehört. Gott vielleicht. Oder das Ausland. Was ja fast aufs selbe rauskommt [Martin Walser, *Der schwarze Schwan*, p. 7].

UNTIL recently it was widely believed that the two financial decrees proposed by Callias were passed in the Attic year 434/33, and indeed on the same day of that year. Accordingly they could be studied to discover the outlook of the Athenians immediately before the disputes which led to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. They could be interpreted as bringing sacred treasures into safety on the Acropolis, where they would be preserved in the event of a hostile invasion of Attica. Such an attitude among the Athenians could be considered together with a statement of Thucydides (1. 44. 2); explaining why the Athenians accepted the Corcyrean offer of alliance in 433, he says: "They thought that the war against the Peloponnesians would come about anyway." Thus literary and epigraphic evidence appeared to converge; it could be supposed that as early as 434/33 the Athenians were looking ahead to war, and this was an important datum in reconstructing the attitudes of the prospective belligerents.[2]

The Problem Reopened

Now, however, C. W. Fornara has presented strong arguments for supposing that the decrees of Callias belong to 418/17.[3] I am convinced by Fornara's reasoning and have only an inconclusive observation to add. The second of the decrees of Callias appears to mention a special vote required from the assembly before a levy of *eisphora* could be proposed, although the word [*esph*]*ora* is in part restored. Thucydides (3. 19. 1) says that the Athenians first held an *eisphora* in 428. So the decree would appear to belong to a date later than 428. Some readers have sought to escape this inference by supposing that by the first *eisphora* Thucydides meant the first of the Peloponnesian War, but that is not the prima facie meaning of his words; he does not add any such qualification as *kata ge ton polemon touton*. Thus his statement provides some ground for seeking a late date for the second decree of Callias, if it is correct to restore [*esph*]*ora* in the inscribed text.

1. Among modern discussions of the subject I have learned most from the following three and shall refer to them by author's name alone: A. Andrewes, "Thucydides on the Causes of the War," *CQ*, N.S. IX (1959), 223–39; D. W. Kagan, *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War* (Ithaca, 1969), pp. 345–74; G. E. M. de Ste Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (Ithaca, 1972). Ste Croix's book appeared after a first draft of this paper had been written, and it has compelled me to modify my views at some points. My thinking has also been stimulated by J. de Romilly, *Thucydide et l'impérialisme athénien* (Paris, 1947), pp. 22–37, but I disagree with Mme de Romilly's view that Thucydides gave Athenian imperialism as the cause of the war and that, as this was indeed the cause, it could be so recognized at the beginning of the war ("L'idée de l'*alethestate prophasis* est donc conforme aux faits; et par suite elle pouvait apparaître dès le début de la guerre," p. 25). On the contrary, it seems to me that Thucydides' statement of "the most genuine cause" had a more precise meaning and that the true cause of a war can usually not be discerned as early as the outbreak of hostilities.

I shall refer to R. Meiggs and D. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions* (Oxford, 1969) as Meiggs–Lewis; to R. Meiggs, *The Athenian Empire* (Oxford, 1972) as Meiggs, *AE*; and to B. D. Meritt, H. T. Wade-Gery, and M. F. McGregor, *The Athenian Tribute Lists* (Princeton, 1939–53) as *ATL*.

2. The two decrees are *IG* I². 91 and 92 = Meiggs–Lewis No. 58. For inferences of the type outlined in this paragraph, see Meiggs, *AE*, pp. 200–201.

3. C. W. Fornara, "The Date of the Callias Decrees," *GRBS*, XI (1970), 185–96. See also H. B. Mattingly, "The financial decrees of Kallias," *PACA*, VII (1964), 35–53. The epigraphic reasons for assigning both decrees to the same day are not decisive; see W. K. Pritchett, "Kallias: Fact or Fancy?" *CSCA*, IV (1971), 219–25. The date 434/33 has been defended by D. W. Bradeen, "The Kallias Decrees Again," *GRBS*, XII (1971), 469–83.

At least it is no longer possible to insist on 434/33 as the date of the decrees of Callias. They must accordingly be left out of account in any attempt to trace the attitudes of the Athenians in the years shortly preceding the outbreak of war. Hence the question of the causes of the war should be reopened. It will be necessary to consider Thucydides' ideas on the subject at some length; not only does he provide the most important evidence, but the precise content of his thought is sometimes difficult to recapture. Something will also be said about economic factors.

A preliminary question, though crucial in importance, may perhaps admit of brief treatment. It concerns the mood of the Athenians when they made the Thirty Years' Peace in 446/45. Some historians have thought that they made the Peace reluctantly, because of the crisis confronting them with the successive revolts of Boeotia, Euboea, and Megara, and that they looked ahead for a favorable opportunity to renew the struggle against Sparta with better prospects of success. In favor of this view it can be observed that *circa* 444–42 the Athenians improved their system of fortifications by building the third of the Long Walls (*to notion teichos*), parallel to the earlier wall linking the city to the Piraeus; this might be the behavior of a city looking ahead to war.[4] On the other hand, the building of this wall is not inconsistent with a purely defensive attitude among the Athenians, and such an attitude is consistent with the steps taken to build temples on the Acropolis. The Parthenon was built from 447/46 to 433/32 and the chryselephantine statue of Athena was put in it; the building of the Propylaea was begun in 437/36 and interrupted by the outbreak of the war. Admittedly, in spite of these expenditures, the Athenians were able to build up a financial reserve, which amounted to some six thousand talents in 431 (Thuc. 2. 13. 3); but, if during the interval of peace they had been firmly intent on renewing the struggle, surely they would have assigned less to the building program and more to the military reserve.[5] Indeed since the outbreak of war interrupted the work of building the Propylaea, it must have marked some change of policy. The same conclusion can be drawn if the Thirty Years' Peace is approached from the chronologically opposite direction. Its conclusion did not mark a major new departure in Athenian policy. The Athenians abstained from warfare in Greece from 454 and made the Five Years' Peace in 451. Their expedition to Delphi, carried out some time later, was merely a response to a Spartan expedition. The crisis confronting them in 447/46 was not provoked by the Athenians but by their enemies. From the Athenian point of view the conclusion of the Thirty Years' Peace confirmed a policy which they had been pursuing ever since 454.[6]

Thucydides: "The Most Genuine Cause"

The crucial passage (1. 23. 5–6), where Thucydides distinguishes between causes of two kinds, needs to be quoted:

διότι δ' ἔλυσαν, τὰς αἰτίας προύγραψα πρῶτον καὶ τὰς διαφοράς, τοῦ μή τινα ζητῆσαί ποτε ἐξ ὅτου τοσοῦτος πόλεμος τοῖς Ἕλλησι κατέστη· τὴν μὲν γὰρ ἀληθεστάτην πρόφασιν, ἀφανεστάτην δὲ λόγῳ, τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἡγοῦμαι μεγάλους γιγνομένους καὶ φόβον παρέχοντας τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις ἀναγκάσαι ἐς τὸ πολεμεῖν· αἱ δ' ἐς τὸ φανερὸν λεγόμεναι αἰτίαι αἷδ' ἦσαν ἑκατέρων, ἀφ' ὧν λύσαντες τὰς σπονδὰς ἐς τὸν πόλεμον κατέστησαν.

Before inquiring into the content of Thucydides' *alethestate prophasis*, it is

4. This argument is offered by Meiggs, *AE*, p. 188.
5. I thank A. Whiley for pointing this out to me.
6. Thuc. 1. 112–14. I should like to associate the change of policy in 454 with the recall of Cimon and the rise of Pericles, but that raises other questions.

proper to note the character of the distinction he draws between causes of two kinds. First, he says that one cause was "least spoken of" but the others were "spoken of openly."[7] Second, he calls one cause "most genuine"; it follows that the others were in his opinion less genuine. That is, in his view, one cause, though least spoken of, was the factor most effective in producing action, but the other causes, though spoken of openly, had less effect on action. Accordingly the reader should strive to understand the content of "the most genuine cause" in a way which does justice to this distinction. It should be noted in passing that the distinction is not that sometimes drawn by modern historians, when they separate the "remote" or "underlying" causes of a war from its "immediate" causes.[8]

It should further be observed that in speaking of *aitiai* Thucydides has in mind things which people said when they imputed responsibility. This is clear from the last sentence in the passage quoted above, where he speaks of "the *aitiai* of each side"; so the word means something like "complaints." Such a meaning is also clear from the ensuing exposition of the *aitiai kai diaphorai*. After narrating the dispute about Corcyra and the battle of Sybota, Thucydides (1. 55. 2) says: "This was the first *aitia* of war arising for the Corinthians against the Athenians, that they had fought against them at sea on the side of the Corcyreans during a state of peace"; here *aitia* again means "grievance" or "ground of complaint." Again, after narrating the dispute about Potidaea, Thucydides (1. 66) says: "These *aitiai* had arisen for the Athenians and the Peloponnesians against one another. The *aitia* arising for the Corinthians was that the Athenians were besieging Potidaea, which was a colony of Corinth, and there were men from Corinth and the Peloponnese within. The *aitia* arising for the Athenians against the Peloponnesians was that they had brought about the revolt of a city which was a tributary ally of Athens, and they had come and fought openly on the side of the Potidaeans against them." The word *aitia* has a patently recriminatory sense in all these passages.

After these preliminaries one may turn to the sentence in which Thucydides states "the most genuine cause." The content of that cause is stated in a subordinate clause, in which the subject is expressed in an accusative, *tous Athenaious*, and the verb, *anankasai*, is accordingly in the infinitive. It is noticeable that Thucydides has chosen to speak of concrete persons, the Athenians, and to refer to the growth of their power, instead of speaking of abstractions, such as the power (*dunamis*) or empire (*arche*) of the Athenians; he is not trying to divert attention from the Athenians to

7. Ste Croix (p. 52–58), taking the content of Thucydides' "most genuine cause" to be the growth of Athenian power and the consequent fear among the Spartans, notes that much is said on these subjects in Book 1; accordingly, he holds that Thucydides means that that cause was little spoken of by the Peloponnesians, although others spoke of it readily. He supposes that Thucydides' account of the causes deals only with the Peloponnesian reasons for going to war, since in fact and in Thucydides' opinion the Peloponnesians were the sole aggressors. It will be argued later in this paper that the Peloponnesians were not the sole aggressors. In stating "the most genuine cause" Thucydides gives the reader no warning that he is explaining the behavior of one side only, and so it is better to suppose that his statement is not thus limited. Indeed at 1. 23. 5–6 he has the attitudes of both sides in mind, since he describes the complaints as "the complaints of each side" (*aitiai hekaterōn*). Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Pomp.* 9. 770), so far from seeing the supposed reference of the passage to the Peloponnesians alone, criticizes Thucydides for attributing "the patent responsibility" (*tas phaneras aitias*) for the war to his own city.

8. Contrast, e.g., Kagan, p. 345: "It was Thucydides who invented the distinction between the underlying, remote causes of war and the immediate causes." But Thucydides does not call the one type of cause "immediate" or the other "underlying" or "remote." For criticism see also Ste Croix, p. 53. Some translators have written "the truest cause" for Thucydides' *alethestate prophasis*. It seems to me that in modern English usage "genuine" admits of a superlative more readily than "true" does, but I do not detect any significant difference of meaning between the two words in this context.

impersonal factors.[9] Indeed he draws attention to the Athenians by naming them at the beginning of the subordinate clause; that is, he puts them in the rhetorically most memorable position. (The same effect can be achieved in English by the circumlocution, "It was the Athenians who . . .") By contrast the Lacedaemonians are named in the least striking part of the sentence just before the verb. Furthermore Thucydides inserts the almost parenthetic verb, "I think" (*hegoumai*), straight after naming the Athenians; this verb invites a relaxation in the tension of the reader's attention, so that he will remember all the more clearly the Athenians as the focus of his awareness.

Thus in the sentence about "the most genuine cause" Thucydides tries first and foremost to say something about the Athenians. A translation must do justice to this. The whole passage should be translated thus:

> As for why they broke the treaty, I have written down first the complaints and the disputes, so that no one may ever inquire whence so great a war arose among the Greeks. Now the most genuine cause, though least spoken of, was this: it was the Athenians, in my opinion, as they were growing great and furnishing an occasion of fear to the Lacedaemonians, who compelled the latter to go to war. But the complaints of each side, spoken of openly, were the following, complaints which led the parties to break the treaty and enter a state of war.

This translation has no pretensions to literary elegance. It tries to do justice to two considerations which arise from the preceding interpretation. First in speaking of *aitiai* Thucydides has in mind attempts to impute responsibility. But "the most genuine cause" and "the complaints and the disputes" were things of a somewhat similar kind, in the sense that Thucydides could contrast them with one another. Therefore it should be presumed that considerations of responsibility are not wholly absent from his mind when he states "the most genuine cause."[10] Second, the statement of "the most genuine cause" singles out the Athenians as the center of attention; therefore, insofar as Thucydides attributes responsibility in stating that cause, he attributes responsibility to the Athenians.

The sentence giving "the most genuine cause" is not a bare statement that the Athenians compelled the Lacedaemonians to go to war. It says more than that. It mentions the growing power of the Athenians and the fear this inspired among the Lacedaemonians; by mentioning these factors in participial phrases, the sentence explains how the Athenians were in a position to put pressure on the Lacedaemonians. But the sentence does not consist solely of its participial phrases; besides mentioning the growth of Athenian power and the consequent alarm among the Lacedaemonians, the sentence says that the Athenians compelled the Lacedaemonians to go to war.[11] One should therefore diverge from the many readers who have

9. Hence I disagree with the second sentence of Andrewes, p. 225, n. 1: "If we trace the development back to 478, as Thucydides invites us to do, then Kimon contributed as much as anyone. Thucydides' liking for abstractions like *tous Athenaious* covers this up, and much besides." On the contrary, it seems to me that Thucydides has significantly chosen a concrete mode of expression, even though abstractions were available.

10. Andrewes (pp. 224–25) holds that, in giving the *alethestate prophasis*, Thucydides seeks not so much to assign responsibility as to account for action. Ste Croix (pp. 61–63) holds that Thucydides is not making a moral judgment in stating the cause of the war. He argues (pp. 5–34) that in Thucydides' opinion moral considerations apply to relations between individuals within the same state, but not to relations between states; but he adds that Thucydides condemns the breaking of treaties. He does not explain why Thucydides makes this latter exception. Admittedly, explicit moral judgments on the actions of cities are notably rare in Thucydides' text, but this need not be on grounds of principle; perhaps the historian merely recognizes that passing moral judgment on the behavior of sovereign states is a waste of words. A statement of the cause of a war cannot (I submit) avoid attributing responsibility, although it may refrain from attributing blame or passing a moral judgment.

11. Ste Croix (pp. 60–61) distinguishes between two senses of *anankasai* and words from the same root. Sometimes they mean strict compulsion, where the party compelled has no

claimed to find the chief content of the clause in its participial phrases; A. W. Gomme, for example, wrote, "... the main cause of the war was Athenian imperialism and Spartan fear of her rival."[12]

Yet for a full understanding of Thucydides' "most genuine cause" something further is necessary. In the course of his work Thucydides attributes many opinions to many historical figures; he expresses explicit judgments in his own person less often, and when he does, he usually takes issue with some current view. Accordingly, when Thucydides, in stating "the most genuine cause" of the war, focuses attention on the Athenians, the reader should ask, what contemporary view was he correcting or perhaps contradicting? The answer is to be found in a passage (7. 18. 2) where Thucydides reports how the outlook of the Spartans changed in the winter of 414/13. He says that then the Spartans became enthusiastic for war; one of the reasons was that this time, they felt, the Athenians had been the first to break the peace. Thucydides proceeds to contrast this Spartan belief with their view of the Archidamian War:

> For in the previous war, they thought, the injustice had been more their own, because the Thebans attacked Plataea during a state of peace, and although a clause of the earlier treaty had forbidden recourse to arms if the other side proposed arbitration, they themselves did not respond when the Athenians invited them to submit the disputes to arbitration. On this account they thought it was only reasonable that they had undergone setbacks, and they called to mind the disaster at Pylos and any other that had occurred.

The view attributed to the Spartans in this passage should not be overstated. They did not believe that they alone committed injustice at the outbreak of the war; they held that the injustice had been *more* their own. Evidently they considered that the Athenians too had committed injustice, but they believed that they themselves had been more at fault, because they had refused the Athenian offer to submit the disputes to arbitration and they had not disowned their Theban allies when these attacked Plataea. Thucydides (1. 78. 4, 1. 145; cf. 1. 85. 2, 1. 140. 2) mentions the Athenian proposal of arbitration without dilating on it; he gives more attention to the disputes themselves, and he makes the Theban attack on Plataea stand out as the first act of war. Evidently he could take for granted among his readers the belief that the Spartans were the greater aggressors. His statement of "the most genuine cause" answers this belief; it admits that the Spartans went to war, but it says that they were compelled to do so by the Athenians.

Thucydides: "The Complaints and the Disputes"

The sentence stating "the most genuine cause" has often and rightly been regarded as an addition made by Thucydides at a late stage to a passage which he had written before. The main reason for thinking so is that he does not proceed forthwith to justify his view of "the most genuine cause"; instead, he offers a full account of "the complaints and the disputes," although he has just implied that these were

choice. "Often, on the other hand, as in other writers, they imply no more than strong pressure and do not by any means exclude a large measure of choice by the person under constraint—and so it is here." He claims that, as *anankasai* has the weaker sense in 1. 23. 6, my interpretation of the sentence is incorrect. His distinction of two senses is valid; I rather think that the English word "compel" has a similar range of meaning; and my interpretation should rest, not on the precise force of *anankasai*, but on *tous Athenaious* as the agents of the compulsion.

12. *Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, I (Oxford, 1945), 152. It is unnecessary to list those who have taken similar views, as reference may be made to Kagan's critical discussion of previous scholarship. Andrewes (p. 224) writes: "The formula may be roughly translated: Athenian expansion alarmed the Spartans and compelled them to war"; then he finds that references to the *alethestate prophasis* pervade Book 1, and so he has to seek an explanation for Thucydides' statement that it was least spoken of. It is easier to suppose that the *alethestate prophasis* does not pervade Book 1.

less genuine. Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Thuc.* 10. 831–36) criticized Thucydides for the relative amounts of attention given to causes of the two kinds and concluded: "But on beginning to inquire into the causes of the war he ought to have given first the true cause, the cause which he considered the real one. For nature required that prior things should come before posterior things and that true assertions should be stated before false ones, and the opening of his narrative would have been much more forceful if it had had this arrangement." The anomalous arrangement, which troubled Dionysius, can best be explained by a hypothesis about composition. If the statement of "the most genuine cause" were an original part of its present context, surely the author would proceed to defend his own view systematically, relegating "the complaints and the disputes" to a subordinate place.[13] Accordingly, to grasp more clearly the concept of "the most genuine cause," the reader should ask what view Thucydides modified in the course of formulating that concept, that is, how he understood "the complaints and the disputes."

After his introductory statement of the causes (1. 23. 5–6), Thucydides narrates the developments concerning Corcyra (1. 24–55). He concludes that narration with a sentence (1. 55. 2, translated above, p. 91), to the effect that this, the Corcyrean dispute, was the first *aitia* of war arising for the Corinthians against the Athenians; that sentence will here be called "the summary statement on the Corcyrean dispute." Next Thucydides narrates the developments concerning Potidaea (1. 55–66). He introduces them by noting that the Corinthians were seeking ways to avenge themselves on the Athenians for their intervention in the Corcyrean affair, and that the Athenians suspected their enmity (1. 56. 2). He concludes his narration of the dispute about Potidaea with a sentence (1. 66, translated above, p. 91), to the effect that these *aitiai* had arisen for the Athenians and the Peloponnesians against one another, and the *aitiai* he specifies arise from the Potidaea affair; this sentence will here be called "the summary statement on the Potidaean dispute."

The "summary statement on the Potidaean dispute" is part of a passage (1. 66–67) which introduces a meeting called at Sparta. After making that statement, Thucydides says that the Corinthians urged the allies to come to Lacedaemon; they themselves came and made complaints against the Athenians. The Aeginetans too presented complaints. So the Lacedaemonians called their allies to a meeting, bidding them state any grievances they had against the Athenians. Thucydides gives four speeches made at the meeting (1. 68–86) and reports the outcome, namely a vote of the Spartan assembly declaring that the peace had been broken and that the Athenians were committing injustice.

The point to note here is that, in introducing the meeting at Sparta, Thucydides gives only the "summary statement on the Potidaean dispute," not "the summary statement on the Corcyrean dispute." In his presentation, the Potidaean dispute stands in a direct causal relation to the meeting at Sparta, and the Corcyrean

13. On the question of composition, it may be possible to trace, not a radical change in Thucydides' views, but some modification and deepening of his ideas (cf. Andrewes). In particular, this approach to the question can be based on two indications. First, Thucydides (1. 1. 1) says that he began work *straight* after war broke out; but he mentions the end of the war (notably at 2. 65). It follows that he was at work for at least twenty-seven years; so some development in his ideas should be expected. Second, the position of the "second preface" (5. 26), coming not at the beginning of the work but near the middle, suggests that Thucydides had already written a good deal of the first half of his work before he learned to regard the whole twenty-seven years as a single war.

dispute stands in a direct causal relation to the Potidaean dispute; but the Corcyrean dispute does not stand in a direct causal relation to the meeting at Sparta. This conclusion can be confirmed from a study of the speeches made at the meeting in Sparta, or rather of the speeches attributed to the Corinthians and Archidamus; the other two speeches are general in their terms and do not deal with specific issues. Admittedly, the Corinthians early in their speech (1. 68. 4) mention Athenian intervention at Corcyra in addition to the siege of Potidaea as illustrations of general Athenian aggressiveness; but the punchline of their speech is near the end, and the demand they make of the Spartans is there (1. 71. 4): "But now come to the aid of the others and of the Potidaeans, as you promised, by invading Attica with all speed." Thus their demand is for remedial action in the Potidaean dispute alone, not for remedial action in the Corcyrean dispute as well. Correspondingly, when Archidamus recommends diplomacy instead of military action, he mentions the Potidaean dispute but not the Corcyrean dispute; he says to the Spartan assembly (1. 85. 2): "Send to the Athenians about Potidaea, send to them about the injuries which the allies profess to be undergoing, especially as the Athenians are willing to submit to arbitration."

In short, in presenting "the complaints and the disputes," Thucydides uses a model which proceeds in a single line. In his opinion the Corcyrean dispute led causally to the Potidaean dispute and the Potidaean dispute led causally to the meeting at Sparta, which took a major step towards war. He might have presented the two disputes in a different way: he might have treated each as exacerbating the attitude of the Peloponnesians, and especially the Corinthians, toward Athens, so that the two developments could have been presented as converging causally on the meeting at Sparta. But he preferred to follow a linear model. This does not necessarily mean that he chose such a pattern consciously or deliberately. More probably he followed a habit of thought. A comparison with Herodotus may throw some light on Thucydides' practice.

Herodotus commonly represents each deed of violence—and history is largely a record of deeds of violence—as an act of retribution for a prior injury. Thus Cambyses prepared an expedition against Egypt because Amasis had deceived him (3. 1); Darius attacked the Scythians in order to punish them, because they had previously invaded Media (4. 1. 1); the Aeginetans, responding to a Theban appeal, began an unheralded war against Athens, and they called to mind an ancient feud which they had with the Athenians (5. 81. 2). Herodotus does not always restrict himself to a linear pattern of explanation. In describing why Croesus went to war against Cyrus, he offers three reasons: Croesus wanted to gain more land; he was encouraged by a response of the Delphic oracle; and he wanted to exact vengeance for the overthrow of his brother-in-law Astyages (1. 73. 1). But some passages explaining acts of violence as retribution suggest that Herodotus derived intellectual satisfaction from linear explanations of this type. For example, after reviewing the different causes alleged by different people for the unpleasant end of Cleomenes, Herodotus states his own preference: he holds that Cleomenes by his death paid compensation to Demaratus (6. 84. 3). Similarly he begins his account of the overthrow of Oroetes by portraying the event as retribution for the killing of Polycrates (3. 126. 1).

When Herodotus reports a complex series of events, he presents them as a chain of grievances and countergrievances,

a causally related series of actions, reactions, and interactions; in short, they conform to a linear model of the type just noted. One example is the mythical account of the origins of the Persian Wars, given at the beginning of Herodotus' work (1. 1–5); since legend gave the items only in outline, they could be adjusted to suit a pattern. Another example is provided by Herodotus' attempts to trace the real origins of the Persian Wars. He starts by singling out Croesus as the man who first began injustices against the Greeks (1. 5. 3); by relating the origins, life, and overthrow of Croesus, Herodotus embarks on a complex series of causally related events. Somehow this chain of causes breaks down, and Herodotus makes a new start (5. 28), explaining how the appeal of some Naxian exiles tempted Aristagoras to seek control of Naxos. But Aristagoras' plan went wrong and this failure precipitated the Ionian Revolt, in which the Athenians and Eretrians joined in the sack of Sardis. So Darius had a grievance against Athens and Eretria, and he tried to punish them with the expedition which was defeated at Marathon. Because of that defeat, operations against European Greece stood on the agenda of Persian policy.[14]

Grievances and retribution play a large part in classical Greek thought about the violent acts of states and of individual persons. In part this habit of thought is derived from the conventions of diplomacy. When a Greek state prepared to attack another, it commonly presented a list of grievances; sometimes the list served less as an ultimatum to be complied with than as a justification for an attack which could no longer be forestalled. A clear example is the list of grievances that the Spartans called to mind before attacking Elis *circa* 399; in this case the ultimatum bears no relation to the grievances named by Xenophon (*Hell.* 3. 2. 21–23). Accordingly it is not surprising that Herodotus, seeking to explain an act of violence, customarily looks for a prior act of violence committed in the opposite direction. But it should be noted that a linear series of actions and reactions was not the only type of explanation available to him. In the thought of Aeschylus, an event is often "over-determined," that is, due to several causes, each of which alone would have sufficed to bring it about. Thus the death of Agamemnon in the play of that name is retribution for the sacrifice of Iphigenia, but it is also retribution for the feast of Thyestes, and it appeases the anger of Artemis, who was a partisan of the Trojans.[15] An Aeschylean play can present a complex pattern of interacting causes.

Herodotus commonly follows a simpler model of a type here called "linear." The question for the student of his thought would be: does Herodotus take for granted that explanation by a linear chain of grievances is satisfactory to his audience, or does he regard this mode of explanation as a discovery about human affairs and try to expound it to his hearers and readers? But the present concern is with Thucydides, and the conclusion to be drawn is that, in relating "the complaints and the disputes" leading to the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides was thinking in a "Herodotean" way. This does not necessarily mean that Thucydides learned this way of thinking from Herodotus alone. It may have been current among other writers and speakers

14. I adhere to what I said about Herodotean thought in "Thucydides, Herodotos, and the Causes of War," *CQ*, N.S. VII (1957), 1–12. I also adhere substantially to the interpretation I gave there of Thucydides' *alethestate prophasis*, although I must abandon the argument I attempted from the tense of *anankasai*. I have had to change my view on the causes of the Peloponnesian War because of the re-dating of the decrees of Callias. For recent discussion of Herodotus' views on causality see J. de Romilly, "La vengeance comme explication historique dans l'oeuvre d'Hérodote," *REG*, LXXXIV (1971), 314–37.

15. Cf. H. Lloyd-Jones, "The Guilt of Agamemnon," *CQ*, N.S. XII (1962), 187–99.

known to Thucydides, but at least he knew and respected the work of Herodotus.[16] At the stage in his development when he related "the complaints and the disputes," he assumed that, when a state went to war, the proper explanation was to be sought in the grievances it could allege as justification, and he assumed that the events producing the grievances should be seen by the historian in a linear pattern.

If this analysis of Thucydides' treatment of "the complaints and the disputes" is correct, the advance he made in formulating "the most genuine cause" was enormous. That formulation says nothing about justificatory grievances. Instead it speaks of growing power, the alarm which growth of power causes, and the compulsion which one state can in consequence bring to bear on another. Thucydides advanced from explaining the outbreak of the war by grievances to explaining it by considerations of power. One should accordingly reject those modern interpretations which fail to put his ideas and assumptions about the causes of war into the context of classical and especially "Herodotean" thought and which therefore overlook the advance he made.[17] The early Thucydides, who expounded "the complaints and the disputes," took for granted habits of thought which are alien to modern readers. It requires an effort of imagination to understand those habits, but it also requires an effort to understand the later Thucydides, who formulated "the most genuine cause." That formulation, dealing as it does in considerations of power, has contributed something to modern ways of thinking about the outbreak of war; but to appreciate it one must recognize the "Herodotean" habit of thought, from which Thucydides freed himself, and one must recognize the contemporary assumption that the Spartans were the greater aggressors in the Archidamian War.

Thucydides on the Incidents Leading to War

In expounding "the complaints and the disputes," Thucydides narrates the incidents concerning Corcyra and Potidaea. He devotes appreciably more space to the Corcyrean incident than to the other. He includes a full narrative of the dispute between Corcyra and Corinth over Epidamnus, even though that dispute did not become a cause of tension between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians until the latter made an alliance with Corcyra. Perhaps this distribution of attention in Thucydides' account of "the complaints and the disputes" reflects a feature of "Herodotean" thought, which attributed great significance to "the beginning of troubles" (*arche kakōn*, Hdt. 5. 28). Thucydides' account of the two incidents is rich enough to enable the reader to discern the Athenian outlook and its changes with some precision. He also mentions the Athenian decree about Megara briefly (1. 67. 4, 1. 139. 1, 1. 140. 3–4, 1. 144. 2) and, although he devotes few words to it, he notes that the demand for its repeal was the point most stressed in a Spartan ultimatum to Athens. A reader may infer that popular opinion could easily have regarded the decree about Megara as the cause of the war. Elsewhere (2. 68) Thucydides records Phormio's storming of Amphilochian Argos, an action which some people have thought exacerbated tension between Athens and Corinth.

Every historian selects from the material available to him and arranges the selected items in a way which he finds intelligible.

16. Gomme, I, 148.

17. This is my main reason for being dissatisfied with many modern interpretations, including those mentioned in n. 1; I may perhaps be excused from more detailed polemics.

In this process of selection and arrangement he is guided partly by his own beliefs and partly by the habits of thought which he derives from his predecessors and contemporaries. Clearly it would be rash to assume that habits of thought current in the time of Thucydides coincide with habits current among historians today; the Spartan outlook described by Thucydides at 7. 18. 2 (above, p. 93) could scarcely be paralleled in a twentieth-century belligerent, since it rests on different assumptions. The preceding section of this paper has tried to specify the habits of thought which guided Thucydides in his choice and arrangement of "the complaints and the disputes." A modern historian, examining the incidents which led to war, starts from different assumptions; he does not take it for granted that events should conform to a linear pattern of grievances and countergrievances. Instead he seeks to discern precisely how each incident exacerbated tension.

The incidents leading to war have often been scrutinized, and treatment of them here can be so much the shorter. In the dispute about Corcyra Athenian behavior was ambivalent. When the Corcyreans appealed to Athens for help against the Corinthians, the Athenians hesitated at first. The assembly met twice, and even at the second meeting the Athenians made nothing more than a defensive alliance (1. 44. 1); the first force they sent consisted of only ten ships (1. 45. 1). On the other hand, they did send a force and soon they dispatched twenty more ships (1. 50. 5). The behavior of the Athenians suggests that they wished both to gain the alliance with Corcyra, whatever the risks, and to avoid the risks of allying with Corcyra.[18] Accordingly the instructions given to the first squadron were singularly difficult to observe: "They were not to fight at sea against the Corinthians, unless the Corinthians sailed against Corcyra and made ready to land on the island or on any possession of the Corcyreans; but in that case they were to prevent the Corinthians with all their strength" (1. 45. 3). In the situation of 433 these instructions meant that virtually any offensive maneuver by the Corinthians would bring the ten Athenian ships into action.

On the conclusion of the alliance Thucydides makes the striking comment (1. 44. 2) that the Athenians thought that war would come about between them and the Peloponnesians anyway and they did not want to abandon Corcyra with its fleet to the Corinthians. Unlike the statement of "the most genuine cause," this comment does not look like a later addition to a previously finished text. To some extent Thucydides has prepared the reader for the comment by making the Corinthians say (1. 33. 3) that the Lacedaemonians are anxious to go to war, but that is an ex parte assertion. The remarkable feature of the comment is that the preceding narrative of events scarcely justifies it. One may speculate about why Thucydides thought that the Athenians at the time of the Corcyrean alliance expected war with the Peloponnesians, whatever they did.[19] This belief of his was surely one of the seeds from which his later conception of "the most genuine cause" sprang. There is some tension between this belief and the relatively hesitant response of the Athenians to the Corcyrean appeal; that is, there was already some tension in Thucydides' thought when he composed his account of the dispute about Corcyra.

In the dispute about Potidaea the

18. I thank A. M. Eckstein for pointing out to me that the Athenians behaved as if they were trying to have their cake and eat it too.

19. Andrewes (pp. 233–37), comparing 1. 140. 2 and Plut. *Per.* 8. 7, makes the interesting suggestion that Thucydides derived this belief from Pericles.

Athenian attitude was unambiguous. The Athenians provoked a crisis by sending an ultimatum to Potidaea (1. 56. 2). Ste Croix (pp. 79–85, esp. pp. 81–82) has offered a different view. He argues that the Thirty Years' Peace applied to Potidaea as an ally of Athens and thus Potidaea was recognized as belonging to the Athenian sphere of influence, so that the Peloponnesians could put forward no further claim on the city; that we do not know whether the Athenian ultimatum was justified, but even if it was not, in consequence of the conclusion of the Thirty Years' Peace Corinth and Sparta had no right to intervene. But in fact Corinth continued sending "supervisory magistrates" (*epidemiourgoi*, 1. 56. 2) to Potidaea annually until the time of the Athenian ultimatum; this shows that Corinth retained some links with Potidaea even after the Thirty Years' Peace. The Athenian ultimatum included a demand that the Potidaeans should expel the "supervisory magistrates" sent from Corinth; thus it was a provocation to Corinth as well as to Potidaea.

The Athenian attitude to Potidaea may have begun to grow severe at an earlier time than Thucydides indicates; from the tribute quota lists it appears that the tribute of Potidaea was increased in time for the payment of 433/32 and perhaps some years earlier.[20] But the uncompromising attitude adopted by the Athenians toward Potidaea in the winter of 433/32 may mark some change of policy. At least the development of Athenian relations with Macedon suggests this. Once Perdiccas had been their ally, but by 433/32 the Athenians were at war with him and had allied with his rivals, his brother, Philippus, and Derdas; an Athenian force of thirty ships under Archestratus was proceeding against Perdiccas. The Athenian provocation to Potidaea gave Perdiccas an opportunity which he exploited promptly; he encouraged the Thracian Chalcidians and the Bottiaeans to secede from the Athenian alliance, and he opened negotiations with Sparta and Corinth.[21] Thus, so far as their relations with Macedon were concerned, it was not in the interests of the Athenians to issue a provocation to Potidaea as they did.

Consideration of the Athenian decree about Megara may be postponed. The bearing of Phormio's action at Amphilochian Argos (Thuc. 2. 68) on the outbreak of the war is difficult to estimate. Phormio, sent to help the Acarnanians and Amphilochians, did not content himself with recovering Argos from the Ambraciots who had occupied it; he also enslaved the Ambraciot inhabitants of the town. This was a severe measure, and Thucydides remarks that it caused Ambracia to regard Argos with bitter hostility. Some readers have thought that Corinth too was probably offended by Phormio's action, since she was often concerned about her colonies and Ambracia was one of them. Ste Croix (p. 85–88) has objected that Ambracia was fully independent and was not itself attacked by Phormio, and that Corinthian interest in this rather remote area should not be exaggerated. But in 429 the Corinthians were most eager in prompting a Peloponnesian expedition to support the Ambraciots (Thuc. 2. 80. 3); in the winter of 426/25, even though the Acarnanians and Amphilochians had made peace with the Ambraciots and thus brought land warfare in the northwestern theater to an end, the Corinthians sent a garrison of three hundred hoplites to Ambracia (Thuc. 3. 114. 4). In 421 the

20. *ATL*, III, 64–65; Meiggs, *AE*, pp. 528–29.

21. Thuc. 1. 57. I thank R. J. Hoffman for making this point to me some years ago about the Athenian ultimatum to Potidaea in the context of relations with Macedon; he is not responsible for any shortcomings in the way I state it.

Corinthians were so perturbed at the loss of Sollium and Anactorium that they refused to join the peace of Nicias (Thuc. 5. 30. 2); their concern for the Ambraciots seems to have been just as great.

The date of Phormio's action at Argos is uncertain. A date after 433 has been defended on the basis of the speech which Thucydides attributes to the Corinthians at Athens in that year. The Corinthians indicate that they will be content if the Athenians refrain from allying with Corcyra; this would be a surprising attitude for them to take if Phormio had already inflicted a major injury on Ambracia. On the other hand, an earlier date has been advocated, on the grounds that Thucydides' relatively full narrative of the years 433 and 432 would mention Phormio's operation, if it belonged there.[22] Both arguments rest on silence and neither is conclusive.

Some provisional conclusions about the incidents leading to war need to be formulated. On receiving the Corcyrean appeal the Athenians showed some hesitation, but there was a provocative element in their response, since they sent ships to Corcyra and the instructions issued to these ships made an armed clash with Corinth very likely. In issuing the ultimatum to Potidaea and following it up, Athenian policy was clearly provocative and recalcitrant. Phormio's action at Amphilochian Argos, whatever its date, was likely to offend Corinth; and although Phormio may have acted on his own authority, Athens did not disavow him. In recent years Kagan, examining Thucydides' "most genuine cause," has emphasized that Athenian power did not grow between 445 and 435. Against this thesis it could perhaps be argued that the foundation of Thurii and Amphipolis constituted some growth in Athenian power, though these may have affected Peloponnesian interests only remotely. It is more to the point to observe that the actions taken by the Athenians in 433 and 432 go some way to justify Thucydides' statement of "the most genuine cause." Athenian power grew through winning the alliance of Corcyra. The short-term effect of this alliance was Athenian intervention against Corinth in the battle of Sybota; in the long term the alliance was expected to affect the interests of the Corinthians and more generally of the Peloponnesians, since it brought a major naval power to the Athenian side (cf. Thuc. 1. 36. 3). The power of the Athenians was likely to grow further if they achieved their designs on Potidaea, and these designs affected the traditional claims of Corinth; the Athenian ultimatum included a demand that the Potidaeans should expel the "supervisory magistrates" sent from Corinth. Sparta could well be alarmed at such growth in Athenian power, since Sparta was concerned for the interests and security of her allies. Moreover the prevalence of a challenging and stubborn attitude among the Athenians could be discerned in their response to the Corcyreans, in spite of their hesitation; it was revealed blatantly in their policy toward Potidaea and also in Phormio's treatment of the Ambraciots at Argos, whatever the date of his intervention. The prevalence of this attitude among the Athenians might enable Thucydides to say that they compelled the Spartans to go to war. Thus the incidents narrated by Thucydides can be invoked to justify his statement of "the most genuine cause," although he does not narrate them for that purpose. Yet there are additional factors to consider.

22. For divergent views on the date see *ATL*, III, 320, n. 84; cf. H. T. Wade-Gery, *Essays in Greek History* (Oxford, 1958), p. 253, n. 5; Meiggs, *AE*, p. 204, n. 1.

Economic Factors

Athenian policy toward Megara must be seen in the context of the incidents discussed in the previous section. Possibly it should also be placed in a context of clashes of economic interests. Rightly or wrongly, people have often supposed that the Athenian decree about Megara had economic purposes and effects. So it will not be amiss to note here some economic factors which may have a bearing on the outbreak of the war.

In 1907 F. M. Cornford in *Thucydides Mythistoricus* offered a thesis which traced the cause of the war to commercial circles in Attica. He supposed that their commercial interests were in bitter competition with those of Corinth, and that they acted secretly to bring about war, so that Thucydides did not know about them. This thesis has often been rejected (most recently by Ste Croix, pp. 214–20), and it will not be revived here. Secret machinations were not possible on any effective scale, when all decisions required a vote of the public assembly; and the previous history of relations between Corinth and Athens showed several friendly acts. But the possibility remains that commercial factors contributed to tension in the 430's. Such factors cannot be ruled out by the silence of Thucydides, for, as has been seen, at first he thought about causes of war in terms of grievances, and later he learned to regard considerations of power as decisive; in this development he might overlook other factors.

Some epigraphic and literary evidence suggests that economic factors played a part in the tensions of the 430's. There are first some puzzling rubrics in the tribute quota lists;[23] they begin in 435/34 and continue until early in the Archidamian War. The cities listed under these rubrics are small, and on the most likely interpretation they joined the Empire as tribute-paying members on their own initiative. Evidently they wished to gain the advantages of membership in the Empire or escape the disadvantages of nonmembership. Perhaps Athens somehow gave preference to the trade of her allies. It is difficult to imagine that the advantages were merely an unforeseen consequence of the structure of the Empire; there must have been specific acts of the Athenians which differentiated the trade of members and nonmembers.

A suggestion that such acts were carried out is to be found in the treatise of pseudo-Xenophon.[24] It is his most animated passage (2. 11–12):

> They [the Athenians] alone among the Greeks and barbarians are in a position to possess wealth. For if any city is rich in ship timber, where will it export it, unless it persuades the rulers of the sea? What if a city is rich in iron or bronze or flax, where will it export it, unless it persuades the rulers of the sea? But from these sources I have ships. From one I get timber, from another iron, from another bronze, from another flax, from another wax. In addition to that they will not allow people to take products elsewhere if they are opposed to us, or else they will not enjoy use of the sea. So I without bestirring myself acquire these products of the land through the sea, and no other city has two of the products. The same city does not produce both timber and

23. The material and ideas in this paragraph are drawn from F. A. Lepper, "Some Rubrics of the Athenian Quota-Lists," *JHS*, LXXXII (1962), 25–55. Cf. Meiggs, *AE*, pp. 250–52. Payments headed *epiphora* occur in the quota lists from 440/39–430/29, and they can well be understood as voluntary payments. But perhaps the advantages sought by these payers concerned defense, not trade; see S. K. Eddy, "*Epiphora* in the Tribute Quota Lists," *AJP*, LXXXIX (1968), 129–43. For a different view of *epiphora*, see now Meiggs, *AE*, pp. 432–33.

24. Arguments for a date of composition for the treatise before 431 are finding increasing favor; see especially H. Frisch (ed. and trans.), *The Constitution of the Athenians* (Copenhagen, 1942) and G. W. Bowersock, "Pseudo-Xenophon," *HSCP*, LXXI (1967), 33–55. But a date within the Archidamian War can still be defended; see D. M. Lewis, *CR*, N.S. XIX (1969), 45–47.

flax, but where flax is plentiful, the soil is level and does not bear timber. Bronze and iron do not come from the same city, nor does any one city have two or three of these commodities, but one has one of them and another has another.

The author speaks only of commodities useful in building ships. From his impassioned language it is not clear whether he refers to a standard Athenian policy or to occasional interference by Athenian commanders in the trade of the Aegean.

Evidence that may bear on these questions is to be found in the second of the Athenian decrees concerning Methone.[25] It was proposed by Cleonymus in 426/25. It provides that the Methonaeans may bring grain up to a certain amount from Byzantium; the *hellespontophylakes* shall not impede the transport or let anyone else impede it; the Methonaeans shall record with the *hellespontophylakes* the amount of grain they plan to bring, and the ship carrying it shall not suffer any penalty. This is the sole certain evidence for the existence of *hellespontophylakes*, although a reference to "magistracies" (*archai*) in a quota list may refer to the same officers. Possibly the office was only instituted after the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. But it is surprising to learn of its existence at all. Epigraphic evidence is necessarily incomplete, and, when it reveals the existence of one board of Athenian officials regulating trade, one should entertain the hypothesis that there were other such boards too. One may likewise call to mind the mysterious *dekate* mentioned in the first of the financial decrees of Callias (line 7); since it is associated with funds controlled by the *hellenotamiai*, it is probably something drawn from the Empire, not from Attica.

These scattered pieces of evidence should be borne in mind in interpreting a remark which the Corinthians make when Thucydides reports the second meeting at Sparta. They say (1. 120. 2):

Those of us who have already had dealings with the Athenians do not need to be taught to be on our guard against them. Those, however, who live in the interior and not in an exposed position need to recognize that, if they do not come to the aid of those on the coast, they will have more difficulty in exporting their produce and importing the goods which the sea brings to the land. They should not behave as poor judges of the things now reported on the grounds that these do not concern them, but they should expect that, if they abandon the coastal states, the trouble will reach them too, and their own interests are no less under discussion now.

Surely this passage proves that Athens interfered in the trade of the Aegean even before the war began. The other evidence adds some clarification, indicating that the policy of interference went back several years at least, that it concerned the raw materials for building ships and perhaps also grain, and that it may have been executed through Athenian officials stationed in the Empire. Perhaps the Athenian policy was carried out through some form of customs dues or harbor dues. The imposition in 413 of a duty of one-twentieth on goods carried by sea shows that interference in this form was feasible. The policy may not have been directed specifically against Corinth, although Corinth was one of the states sensitive to its effects. It is not possible to say whether the Athenians adopted the policy solely for economic reasons or foresaw that it might increase political tensions. Thucydides attaches some significance to Athenian interference in the trade of the Aegean. He thinks that the Corinthians could mention it in urging even inland states of the Peloponnesian League to vote for war. Otherwise, he says little about it. Whether it had more significance than he recognizes is not clear.

25. Meiggs–Lewis No. 65, lines 34–41, with commentary.

The Decree about Megara

The inquiry by Ste Croix has brought a good deal of novel clarity into study of Athenian dealings with Megara. As Thucydides indicates, the main decree excluded Megarians from the Athenian agora and from the harbors of the Athenian Empire.[26] Thucydides (1. 139. 2) also says that the Athenians refused to repeal the decree, alleging that the Megarians had cultivated part of the sacred land of Eleusis and had provided a refuge for fugitive slaves. Ste Croix holds that Athenian policy towards Megara sprang, not from any ulterior purpose, but from genuine concern about cultivation of the sacred land. He thinks that the Athenians responded to the sacrilege by sending a herald to Megara and Sparta, but this step proved ineffectual, and so the Athenians passed the main decree. It was designed to inflict indignity and inconvenience on Megarian citizens. Consequently Megara complained to Sparta, and the Spartans, lacking a valid justification for war, seized on the decree and magnified it as a pretext.

This is a complex theory, and in the course of his exposition Ste Croix has argued the following theses convincingly:

(1) The decree excluded only Megarian citizens from the places it mentioned. Therefore it was not well designed to bring Megarian trade to a standstill. Trade with Megara may have been conducted in part by non-Megarians; some of it may have been conducted by aliens resident in Megara, and trade between Megara and, for example, Athens may have been partly in the hands of Athenians.

(2) A distinction should be drawn between the civic agora of Athens and the larger commercial district, which was also called "agora" and included the civic agora but extended beyond it. The civic agora had precise boundaries; indeed four of the boundary stones have been found. The buildings in the civic agora in the second half of the fifth century were political and religious; it was a place for lawsuits and other public meetings. Trade was conducted in the civic agora but also in the area around it, and this commercial area had no precise boundaries. Athenian law excluded persons accused of homicide and persons convicted of some serious crimes from the agora, and this meant the civic agora.

(3) Aristophanes (*Ach.* 729–64; *Pax* 246–49, 481–83) says that the Megarians were reduced to starvation. However, these economic privations were a consequence, not of the decree, but of the war, in which the Athenians made repeated raids on the Megarid and imposed a blockade.

Ste Croix has had less success in discussing the following points:

(1) He holds that the decree did little harm to Megarian trade; insofar as trade between Megara and the harbors of the Athenian Empire was in the hands of Megarian merchants, these latter would have to be replaced by merchants holding the citizenship of other cities, but that process could be completed in a short period. Ste Croix inclines to suppose that few Megarian citizens were *emporoi* and that these few had little influence on state policy, but the evidence is too scanty to establish any conclusion on these questions. In this connection crucial importance belongs to Aristophanes *Acharnians* 535. Giving a caricaturist's account of the origins of the Peloponnesian War, the poet alludes to the Megara decree and says that in consequence the Megarians appealed to Sparta "when they were beginning to starve step by step" (ὅτε δὴ 'πείνων βάδην). Ste Croix (pp. 241–44) tries to dismiss this half-line as comic misrepresentation. But the jokes in the passage were funnier if the audience could recognize their framework as factual. Prima facie, the line is evidence for believing that the decree harmed the Megarian economy so much that Megara appealed to Sparta.

(2) Ste Croix is not able to show that by "the Athenian agora" the decree meant the civic agora, not the wider commercial area. As he points out, the word could have either meaning in common Greek usage. Moreover, although the agora in the wider sense of the commercial area

26. For the content of the decree see Thuc. 1. 67. 4, 1. 139. 1. The date depends on Thuc. 1. 42. 2, where *proteron* can best be understood as an allusion to the condition obtaining during the First Peloponnesian War; cf. Meiggs, *AE*, pp. 430–31. An earlier date was urged by P. A. Brunt, "The Megarian Decree," *AJP*, LXXII (1951), 269–82. Other evidence on this decree and on other Athenian decrees about Megara is collected by Ste Croix, pp. 225–89.

did not have precise boundaries, Greeks thought of it as a recognizable area. Thus Herodotus (1. 153) makes Cyrus reply to a Spartan protest by saying that he has little esteem for men who have in the middle of their city "a place pointed out" (χῶρος ἐν μέσῃ τῇ πόλι ἀποδεδεγμένος) where they go and deceive one another; and Herodotus explains that Cyrus was alluding to the Greek habit of having an agora for trade in each city. Certainly a decree excluding Megarians from the civic agora of Athens would have been precisely enforceable, since the civic agora had precise boundaries, whereas a decree excluding them from the commercial area would suffer from inherent vagueness. But Aristophanes (*Ach.* 515–22) indicates that, even before the decree was passed, Megarian goods found in Attica were confiscated; one may conjecture that such confiscations did not decrease in consequence of the decree.

(3) The decree excluded Megarians from the harbors of the Athenian Empire as well as from the Athenian agora. The conjunction of places of these two kinds is a little surprising on the view offered by Ste Croix. He holds that the decree tried to assimilate the Megarians, on account of their alleged sacrilege, to the criminals excluded from the civic agora of Athens. Clearly this theory would be much stronger if it could be shown that the same classes of criminals were customarily excluded from harbors. But no such customary exclusion is known, and Ste Croix can only suppose that the decree sought to inflict indignity and inconvenience on Megarians by excluding them from the harbors of the Empire.

(4) Whether or not the decree in fact harmed Megarian trade, was that its purpose? Ste Croix can point out that the decree did not restrict trade conducted by non-Megarians in Megarian goods, that it excluded Megarians from the Athenian agora but not from other parts of Attica, and that it excluded Megarians from the harbors of the Empire but not, so far as is known, from beaches or anchorages where they might land for commercial purposes. As he also points out, more efficient ways of harming the Megarian economy can be imagined: the Athenians might have excluded Megarian goods from the whole Empire, they might have prohibited exports from the Empire to Megara, or they might have forbidden anyone trading with the Empire to trade with Megara. Against these arguments it can still be supposed that the decree was intended to harm the Megarian economy, even if it was not perfectly designed for its purpose. Most states pass laws which are less than perfect in their efficiency; the Athenian decree about coinage does not appear to have been fully enforceable either.[27] Besides, it is not clear what machinery the Athenians had for enforcing possible restrictions on the economy of another state; this question might be answered, if more evidence were available on the matters discussed under *Economic Factors* above, but in the meantime it may not be wholly safe to conjecture more efficient methods whereby the Athenians might have harmed the Megarian economy. Moreover, if, as argued above, the decree in fact harmed the economy of Megara, it may not have been so poorly designed to that end after all.

(5) In the winter of 432/31 the Spartans sent demands to Athens and emphasized the decree about Megara; they argued that, if the Athenians repealed it, there would be no war. Thucydides (1. 140–44) gives a speech of Pericles in response to the demands and adds (1. 145) that the Athenians formulated their reply to the Spartans precisely in the terms proposed by Pericles. One of Pericles' suggestions is (1. 144. 2):

> Let us send these men away with the answer that we will allow the Megarians to use the agora and the harbors, if the Lacedaemonians refrain from carrying out expulsions of aliens against us or our allies (for neither the one nor the other is forbidden in the treaty).

Ste Croix finds here a serious Athenian offer to repeal the Megara decree. But Pericles' remark must be considered in the context of his speech, which is recalcitrant in its general tone. In particular the following remark, which occurs early in the speech (1. 140. 4–5), indicates that Thucydides does not wish to portray Pericles as willing to repeal the decree:

> Let none of you suppose that we are fighting for a slight cause, if we would not repeal the decree about Megara. They stress this most, saying that if it were repealed, there would be no war. Do not allow any ground of recrimination among you as if we went to war for a small reason. This slight cause contains the whole confirmation and test of your policy. If you give way to them, you will at

27. Meiggs–Lewis No. 45. Whatever the date of this decree, it is unlikely that the minting of coins outside Athens ever wholly ceased in the Empire: see E. S. G. Robinson, "The Athenian Currency Decree," *Commemorative Studies in Honor of T. L. Shear* (Princeton, 1949), pp. 323–40 (= *Hesperia*, Suppl. VIII); and the comments of Meiggs–Lewis.

once receive some greater order on the assumption that you will obey that too from fear.

Thucydides does not regard the Megara decree as the major cause of the war. It follows that, in his portrayal, Spartan emphasis on it in the winter of 432/31 is disingenuous; accordingly he does not intend the reader to see in Pericles' apparent offer of repeal a serious attempt to avoid hostilities.

In view of the five points just discussed, it should be supposed that Megarian encroachment on the sacred land of Eleusis was a mere pretext or at most an occasion for the decree, and that the decree was intended to harm the Megarian economy. If nothing more had been at stake than the religious issue, it is surprising that the Megarians chose to face the risks and hardships of war rather than give up their claims to the disputed land. Furthermore, attention should be paid to the timing of the decree. Quite apart from the decree, Athenian relations with the Peloponnesians became acutely strained during 433 and 432 because of Athenian actions at Corcyra and Potidaea. In view of this context, it is easy to see in the decree and the refusal to repeal it another case of Athenian provocation and recalcitrance rather than merely a pious concern for the rights of the Eleusinian deities.

Much remains obscure about the decree, since not enough is known about the conditions of economic activity in the fifth century and the restrictions which the Athenian Empire imposed. As to the aims of the Athenians in passing the decree, there is much to be said for the view that the Athenians hoped thereby to force the Megarians into allying with them, as they had done at the beginning of the First Peloponnesian War.[28] Athenian strategists paid significant attention to Megara during the Archidamian War. Pericles led a major invasion of the Megarid in 431; the Athenians raided the territory twice each year; Nicias installed a garrison in the island of Minoa in 427; and in 424 Hippocrates and Demosthenes launched a plan to capture Megara and succeeded in capturing its harbor town of Nisaea. But, strictly speaking, the question bearing on the causes of the Peloponnesian War is not whether the Athenians hoped to bring Megara into alliance with them, but whether the Peloponnesians attributed this purpose to the Athenians. The only clue is provided by the Peloponnesian garrison which was in Nisaea by 424; Thucydides' remark that it was there "for the sake of the security of Megara" (4. 66. 3) may be significant. Was it installed before or after the Archidamian War began? An assumption prevalent in Sparta in 432 may provide an answer. When the Potidaeans appealed to Sparta before launching their revolt, they received a promise that the Spartans would invade Attica if the Athenians attacked Potidaea; later, when the Spartan assembly met, the Corinthians urged the hearers to invade Attica, and Archidamus warned his fellow citizens not to suppose that they could bring the war to a swift end by ravaging the territory of the Athenians.[29] All these people assumed that the Spartans could invade Attica, that is, that the route through the Megarid was secure. This suggests, though not conclusively, that a Peloponnesian garrison was installed by 432 "for the sake of the security of Megara."

Sparta

Thucydidean habits of thought have pervaded subsequent study, and in at least one respect some correction is needed. The war is commonly called "the Peloponn-

28. This view was hinted at by H. T. Wade-Gery, *OCD*, 904 (= *OCD*², 1069), and developed by him in lectures but not, unfortunately, in print. The events mentioned in this paragraph are known from Thuc. 2. 31, 3. 51, 4. 66–74.

29. Thuc. 1. 58. 1, 1. 71. 4, 1. 81. 6.

nesian War," not "the Atheno-Peloponnesian War"; had its history been written by a Spartan instead of by Thucydides, it might be called "the Great Athenian War." Thucydides recounts the war from an Athenian point of view. This is not a matter of bias but of perspective. Correspondingly, inquirers into the causes of the war have sometimes asked why the Athenians went to war. One should also ask why the other parties went to war. It is accordingly fortunate that two recent studies have stressed the roles of powers other than Athens: the role of the Corinthians has been emphasized by Kagan, that of the Spartans by Ste Croix. Their expositions need not be repeated here, but some items bearing on Spartan policy call for note.

One of these concerns the Samian revolt of 440. An allusion in the speech which Thucydides (1. 40. 5) attributes to the Corinthians at Athens in 433 shows that the Peloponnesians met and deliberated about helping the Samians; the Corinthians say that the other Peloponnesians were divided in their voting, and they claim that they themselves spoke out strongly against intervention. It is unfortunate that this meeting of the Peloponnesian League is only attested in such an indirect way. Little is known about the procedure of the League. From the deliberations which led to the Peloponnesian War and which are recorded by Thucydides in Book 1, it appears that a meeting of the Spartan public assembly preceded a meeting of a congress of the League; thus the Spartan assembly stood in a probouleutic relation to the federal congress, and business was likely to be discussed and resolved on by the Spartans before it was brought before the allies. Accordingly Ste Croix (pp. 200–203; cf. pp. 108–12), reviving a suggestion of A. H. M. Jones, has argued that the discussion by the federal congress in 440 of the question of aid for the Samians implies a prior vote of the Spartan assembly in favor of sending such help. Ste Croix is able to offer persuasive arguments of probability in support of this thesis. It is reasonable to suppose that the Spartans would not let themselves be drawn into armed action by a vote of the allies, unless they themselves had a chance to decide independently; such a safeguard was provided, if a vote of the Spartan assembly for positive action was needed before an issue could be brought before a federal congress. One cannot escape the inference by supposing that opinion in Sparta was divided or that the Spartans wanted to assess the views of their allies; if opinion was divided, the dominant group would not wish to leave the decision to the chances of a majority vote among the allies, and Sparta could ascertain the feelings of her allies with less risk by sending envoys to them.

If the thesis of Ste Croix is correct, a majority of Spartan voters were willing to go to war with Athens as early as 440. The student would then have several things to explain: if most Spartans were willing to go to war so early, why did they not go to war until 431? How did Athenian policy in the 430's respond to the threat of Spartan belligerence? And why did Thucydides attach no importance to the presumed Spartan vote of 440? Arguments from probability can be misleading; it is sometimes unsafe to assume that Greek states conducted their affairs in a way which seems reasonable to the modern mind. Three uncertainties weaken the thesis of Jones and Ste Croix. First, it is not clear that the Peloponnesian League was bound by a strict rule requiring every item of business to be approved by the Spartan assembly before it came before a federal congress; it is conceivable, as an alternative, that the agenda had to be

approved beforehand by the Spartan assembly but, once the congress met, additional items could be brought up by the other members. Second, it is not clear that the Samian question was the only item discussed by the congress of 440. Third, it is not clear that the Corinthian pleaders at Athens in 433 told the whole truth in portraying the Corinthian stand of 440 as the reason the Peloponnesians did not help the Samians. In view of these uncertainties, the following hypothesis is possible as an alternative to the one advocated by Ste Croix: it may be that the federal congress of 440 was summoned to deal with other business and, after it had met, some allies brought up the question of sending help to Samos; possibly the Spartans themselves opposed helping the Samians; they may even have argued that the congress ought not to discuss the question until the Spartan assembly had had a chance to consider it first. Obviously these are mere possibilities, but the burden of proof rests with those who claim a Spartan vote for hostilities against Athens in 440.

Thus the reasons why the Spartans went to war in 431 should be sought, not in an outlook prevalent as early as 440, but in the actions taken by the Spartans in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the war. The question is difficult because information about Spartan affairs in 433–32 is scanty. Opinion was divided; Thucydides represents Archidamus and Sthenelaidas as offering divergent advice to the assembly in the summer of 432. Several months earlier, when the Potidaeans appealed to the Spartans before their revolt, "the authorities of the Lacedaemonians" promised to invade Attica if the Athenians attacked Potidaea (Thuc. 1. 58. 1). Conjectures have sometimes been made about the identity of these mysterious authorities, but they do not lead far. Apparently those authorities could not commit the Spartan state effectively; for, although the Athenians attacked the Potidaeans promptly after the revolt, something like a year elapsed and many deliberations were held before the Spartans invaded Attica.

Little can be done to elucidate Spartan views at the outbreak of war, but two things at least can be said about strategy. The first is somewhat obvious. The Spartans expected Peloponnesian invasions of Attica to have a large effect on Athenian policy. It was a reasonable expectation; in 446 the Athenians had yielded when a Peloponnesian force reached Eleusis. But the expectation was not fulfilled; although the Peloponnesian invasions of Attica inflicted severe damage, they had very little effect on the outcome of the Archidamian War. This Spartan miscalculation must be counted among the causes of the Peloponnesian War.

The other strategic consideration involves Decelea. Herodotus (9. 73) preserves an interesting piece of information: when the Lacedaemonians ravaged Attica, they spared Decelea. But the Peloponnesian invasions did not all ravage the whole of Attica; some were more extensive than others, and in some years many other places as well as Decelea were in fact spared. Herodotus' statement implies that the Spartans did not merely spare Decelea but also *said* that they were sparing Decelea. Herodotus gives a reason drawn from myth for the favor shown to Decelea; that may well be the reason alleged by the Spartans at the time. A later event indicates the real reason: in 413 the Spartans seized and fortified Decelea (Thuc. 7. 19. 1–2). Alcibiades had told them to do so; it is unfortunate that, through the record of Thucydides (6. 91. 6), Alcibiades has stolen credit for an idea which some Spartans apparently entertained as early as

the time of the ravages known to Herodotus. It is accordingly remarkable that the garrisoning of Decelea was not attempted until 413. The delay indicates that, at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, Spartan opinion was divided, not only on the decision to go to war, but also on the best methods for prosecuting the war.

Conclusions

Discussion of the causes of a major war sometimes raises philosophical questions of meaning: what constitutes a satisfactory explanation? A historian's explanation takes for granted assumptions that the author shares with his readers. For example, given Herodotean assumptions about human behavior and interaction, a satisfactory explanation must deal with grievances and retribution. It has been argued above that the type of explanation Thucydides could accept changed in the course of his intellectual development; he came to reject Herodotean assumptions. Obviously, present-day assumptions and the types of acceptable explanation are likely to differ from those of Thucydides. But, for lack of perspective, it is difficult to say what the modern assumptions are.

What were the causes of the Peloponnesian War? Attempts to answer this question ought to recognize significance in the actions of each of the major powers. Theories which assign the whole responsibility to one side are intrinsically implausible and are not borne out by the record. On the Spartan side, the attitude expressed by Sthenelaidas in Thucydides' portrayal (1. 86) was intransigent, as was his formulation of the issue for the assembly to vote on. A good many Spartans overestimated what they could achieve by ravaging the territory of Attica. When they sent a series of demands to Athens in the winter of 432/31, their aim was not to achieve a peaceful settlement of the disputes, but "that they should have the greatest possible grounds for war," as Thucydides (1. 126. 1) observes. On the Athenian side, the dispatch of help to Corcyra was sure to offend the Corinthians. The ultimatum sent to Potidaea was severe in its terms, and, since it followed closely on the Corcyrean crisis, it was likely to exacerbate suspicions and alarm that had already been aroused. Similar considerations apply to the decree about Megara, especially if it was issued about the same time as the ultimatum to Potidaea. The speech which Thucydides (1. 140–44) attributes to Pericles in the winter of 432/31 is more elaborate but just as intransigent as that of Sthenelaidas.

The problem of the causes of the war can be better understood if a distinction is drawn between wars of different kinds. The concept of war is highly ambiguous; warfare in one age may mean procedures quite different from those called by the same name in another age. But war is a manifestation of power, and power is one of the constants in human interaction. So a rough-and-ready distinction may be drawn, across the centuries, between "unlimited wars" and "wars for limited objectives." In an "unlimited war" the purpose is to destroy the enemy as a political entity. Accordingly, fighting may extend to theaters other than those where hostilities began, as happened in the Peloponnesian War. Statements of war aims are correspondingly vague and propagandistic and are not intended to restrict their authors' actions; in 431 the Lacedaemonians declared that they were freeing Greece (Thuc. 2. 8. 4). Aspirations for peace may be expressed within a state, as they were by Aristophanes, but no effective opposition to the conduct of the war is tolerated; during World War II there were prayers for peace in British churches but

no peace marches. In an "unlimited war" questions of war guilt may arise, but all the guilt is on one side: the end determines which side. The Athenians committed war crimes at Melos, Scione, and Torone.[30] In a "war for limited objectives" these features do not appear. When the Athenians fought the Samians in 440–39, they did not try to destroy Samos as a political entity; the indemnity exacted was compensation for the cost of fighting, not a punishment for guilt. The evidence does not suffice to show whether internal opposition was allowed during that war, although Elpinice was outspoken in criticism of Pericles at the end (Plut. *Per.* 28. 6); in the Social War of 357–55 Isocrates came close to advocating an alternative policy.

In a "war for limited objectives" the historian can hope to discover the causes with some precision; the stated objectives provide a starting point. In the case of an "unlimited war" the inquiry into causes is more difficult. The incidents precipitating war gain significance because of pre-existing suspicions, and these in turn may be the result of various circumstances; for example, as noted in *Economic Factors*, the Corinthians could allude to economic restrictions arising from Athenian imperial policy and could therefore warn inland cities to be on their guard. Faced with the complexity of his problem, the historian may fall back on the safe assertion that the war was caused by the whole situation preceding it; this is true but unedifying and it opens up a limitless inquiry (where did the whole situation preceding the Peloponnesian War begin? with the foundation of the Delian League? or with the Hellenic resistance to the Persians? or with the creation of the Peloponnesian League?). Alternatively, the historian may stress one factor, such as Spartan responsibility for the Peloponnesian War, to the exclusion of others; theses of this kind are usually false but illuminating.

Yet a different approach to the problem is possible. In place of simply asking what the causes of the Peloponnesian War were, one may ask, "Why did the Peloponnesian War break out precisely when it did, instead of at an earlier or later date?" An answer to this question must admit that information about it, as about any historical event, is limited and that this limited information has been transmitted by writers whose point of view guided them in selecting from their material. But, with these qualifications, the question can be answered: the war came about when it did because of Athenian initiatives, in particular the dispatch of help to Corcyra, the ultimatum sent to Potidaea, and the passing of the decree about Megara. The Spartan actions were not new departures but responses to the Athenian initiatives. Such a view of the outbreak of the war comes close to Thucydides' mature formulation: the Athenians, since their power was growing, were able to furnish their rivals with an occasion for fear, and thus compelled the Lacedaemonians to go to war.

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30. Xen. *Hell.* 2. 2. 3; Isoc. *Panath.* 12. 62–63.