

PERIKLES AND THE DEFENCE OF ATTIKA DURING THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR¹

GIVEN the increasing interest in ancient military history it seems timely to set Perikles' Peloponnesian War policy of avoiding major land battles in the context of the military options available and how these worked in practice. I should, however, sound one note of caution from the start. My discussion (especially sections I and II) represents a modern assessment of the defence strategies and options available to Athens in 431. While Perikles and his successors undoubtedly considered how best to fight the war, it would be misleading to even imply that their thought processes involved conducting an analysis anywhere near as sophisticated as the one which follows. Quite simply they lacked the theoretical concepts and even the technical vocabulary to do so. There was no history or tradition of staff college appreciations in fifth century Athens and no body of technical or theoretical military literature, and it seems clear that even experienced and successful commanders did not look at war with the same sort of theoretical constructs which we take for granted today.

To them, war was a series of practical problems which were solved (or not) without the benefit of formal training or a theoretical body of knowledge. They had no lists of 'principles of war' or principles of the different phases of war as we do today and presumably thought more in terms of 'if I do this I'll win, with the gods' help' rather than 'this plan is sound because it incorporates the principles of mobility, concentration, and speed'. Many decisions were probably based on precedent, what was normally done or what the commander had seen done in similar circumstances, rather than on a detailed and comprehensive analysis of all the factors involved. This is not to say that ancient generals were unintelligent or inferior, merely that they operated without the benefit of the theoretical framework of military tactics and strategy which we have developed after several thousand years of warfare. This should be kept in mind when reading the following assessment of Athenian war strategy.

According to Thukydides, Perikles' plan to deal with the Peloponnesian threat in 431 was to retire behind the walls of Athens and to replace the consequent loss of agricultural products by imports.² In this way Athens could take full advantage of her empire and her naval supremacy to feed herself while avoiding a major hoplite engagement. As outlined by Thukydides, it is a delightfully simple policy, which took into account Athens' particular strengths and weaknesses—although it has been

¹ I would like to thank the following for the financial assistance which enabled me to conduct the research for this article: the Keith and Dorothy Mackay Travelling Scholarship (University of New England), the Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens, and Mr G. L. Frazer. Associate Professor G. R. Stanton kindly read and commented on an early draft of this paper which also benefited from the referees' comments. The final version was prepared at the University of Queensland in 1989. Unless otherwise specified all dates are BC, all Greek quotations are from the Oxford text, and all translations are my own. The following abbreviations apply:

Anderson *MT* = J. K. Anderson, *Military theory and practice in the age of Xenophon* (Berkeley & Los Angeles 1970).

Hanson = V. D. Hanson, *Warfare and agriculture in classical Greece* (Pisa 1983).

Holladay = A. J. Holladay, 'Hoplites and heresies', *JHS* cii (1982) 94–103.

Ober *FA* = J. Ober, *Fortress Attica* (Leiden 1985).

Ober 'Thucydides' = J. Ober, 'Thucydides, Pericles, and the strategy of defense', *The craft of the ancient historian: essays in honour of Chester G. Starr* ed. J. W. Eadie and J. Ober (New York 1985) 171–89.

OPW = G. E. M. de Ste Croix, *Origins of the Peloponnesian war* (London 1972).

Westlake Essays = H. D. Westlake, *Essays on the Greek historians and Greek history* (Manchester 1969).

Westlake 'Seaborne raids' = H. D. Westlake, 'Seaborne raids in Periclean strategy', *CQ* xxxix (1945) 75–84.

² Thukydides i 143.4–5.

criticised by some modern scholars as an overly defensive strategy which could avoid defeat but which was also incapable of ensuring real victory.³

In an important development to the discussion of Perikles' strategy, H. D. Westlake cast the first real doubts upon the completeness of the account given by Thukydides at i 143.⁴ He argued, convincingly in my opinion, that Perikles' programme of seaborne raids on the Peloponnese and invasions of the Megarid was a large-scale and aggressive counter-measure to the annual invasions of Attika designed '... to cause so much economic distress that ... the Peloponnesian League would have no heart to continue the war'.⁵ Although this view has largely been accepted by scholars,⁶ there is another aspect of Perikles' strategy which has often been neglected in discussions of the war and its conduct: the defence of Attika.⁷

Thukydides i 143.5 records Perikles' argument that:

... if we were islanders, who would be harder to come to grips with? So then considering ourselves, as far as possible, to be so, we must abandon our land and houses, guard the sea and city, and not, because of anger at their loss, fight the much larger numbers of Peloponnesians ...⁸

and most historians, including Westlake, have accepted this to mean that the Attic *chora* was simply to be abandoned to the Peloponnesians.⁹ However, an examination of how the war was conducted reveals that this remark is an over-simplification. It is quite clear from Thukydides' remarks at ii 1.2 and vii 2.75 that both Perikles and his successors did defend Attika, as far as it was possible to do so. This was done on two levels; some protection was gained from raids by means of the border forts like Oinoe and Panakton and, much more importantly, the damage caused by the annual invasions was considerably reduced by using the cavalry in a mobile defence rôle.

While the defence of Attika in such a fashion may have been only a relatively minor aspect of Athenian strategy it did aid the war effort in two important areas: minimising the damage to Attika and boosting Athenian morale. Both of these would undoubtedly have served to increase the ability and the will of the Athenians to resist and therefore render victory more certain. In terms of Westlake's theory, the longer the city could hold out the more likely it was that the attacks on Peloponnesian League territory would achieve their purpose and cause the enemy to sue for peace. This paper concentrates on the place of mobile defence in Athenian strategy and is basically divided

³ See for example K. J. Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte*² ii 1 (Berlin 1914) 300 and n. 1. *OPW* 208–9 also stresses the inability of Perikles' plan to win the war. However, D. W. Knight, 'Thukydides and the war strategy of Perikles', *Mnemosyne* ser. 4, xxiii (1970) 150–61 goes further and argues that in a prolonged war fought according to Perikles' strategy the cost of maintaining her navy and empire would eventually have proved too heavy for Athens.

⁴ Westlake 'Seaborne raids' 75–84.

⁵ *Ibid.* 84; for the view that Perikles had in fact planned an *offensive* war see H. T. Wade-Gery, *OCD*² 1069.

⁶ Cf. *OPW* 209 and D. Kagan, *The outbreak of the Peloponnesian war* (New York 1969) 334–5.

⁷ It was quite some time after this article had been accepted for publication that I discovered the discussion in Ober 'Thukydides', luckily in sufficient time to make some acknowledgement of his important contribution to the debate in the footnotes and to add a short appendix covering

some points of difference. Although there is inevitably some overlap in content (for example we are in complete agreement that the cavalry *was* used to defend Attika) Dr Ober and I approached the subject with different aims and from a different direction—we also differ somewhat about the degree of Perikles' forward planning and the extent of the protection intended for Attika. Hanson (104–6) also notes the defensive rôle of the cavalry, although without relating it to the war strategies of Perikles and his successors. He also underestimates (103 n. 1) the value of cavalry against formed bodies of infantry, see below pp. 97–9.

⁸ εἰ γὰρ ἤμεν νησιῶται, τίνες ἂν ἀληπτότεροι ἦσαν; καὶ νῦν χρῆ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τούτου διανοηθέντας τὴν μὲν γῆν καὶ οἰκίας ἀφεῖναι, τῆς δὲ θαλάσσης καὶ πόλεως φυλακὴν ἔχειν, καὶ Πελοποννησίους ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ὀργισθέντας πολλῶν πλέοσι μὴ διαμάχεσθαι.

⁹ Westlake 'Seaborne raids' 75; it is also unequivocally accepted by Kagan (n. 6) 334.

into three parts. The first discusses the threat to Athens in 431 and the possible responses, the second argues that cavalry could be used successfully in a mobile defence rôle, the third that it was in fact used in this way throughout the Peloponnesian War. I also believe that given the military threat facing Athens in 431 it was in fact the best option available to Perikles, although it did have unforeseen consequences for Athenian political stability.

I. THE THREAT AND POSSIBLE RESPONSES

I shall deal with the nature of the threat first. Although cross-border raids were a possibility, and did occur,¹⁰ the most likely enemy action in 431, and the one which did in fact eventuate, was a large-scale hoplite incursion. However, because fifth century assault and siege techniques were fairly limited and the Peloponnesian League was primarily a land-based power, Athens' navy and long walls precluded an effective siege of the city. Any invasions therefore were likely to follow the traditional pattern of hoplite warfare rather than involve direct action against the city of Athens itself.

This traditional pattern essentially involved marching against the agricultural land of the enemy who would either accept the challenge and defend his land or would decline and stay within his city walls. If the challenge were accepted and the defender won, his crops would be saved; if he lost, they would be ravaged. If the defender refused to fight, his crops would be ravaged anyway and the invader would return home having gained a moral victory besides inflicting economic damage on his foe.¹¹ In fact it was not only Athens which was safe behind its walls; the relatively primitive assault techniques and the expense of protracted sieges meant that, in most cases, a walled city's only vulnerable point, barring treachery, was its crops, orchards, and other fixed assets in the countryside.¹²

Most Greek cities could not afford to lose more than one harvest without being forced to import food to avoid starvation,¹³ and this should not be underestimated as a factor in classical warfare. The importance of crops is graphically illustrated by Agesilaos' actions in 390/89 when he allowed the Akarnanians to plant their crops unmolested so that he could threaten them more effectively once the grain was ready to harvest.¹⁴ In a basically subsistence economy the mere threat of having its crops ravaged was sometimes sufficient to make a city capitulate.¹⁵ Crops were therefore almost always defended, usually by hoplites, resulting in pitched battle between two hoplite armies, often supported by cavalry or *psiloi*. This was the normal, and traditional, means of defending the agricultural hinterland but there were three other active methods: a pre-emptive strike, border defence, and mobile defence.¹⁶

Both a hoplite defence of the *chora* and a pre-emptive attack held the major attraction that if the enemy were decisively defeated it might be several years before he

¹⁰ Cf. Ar. *Ach.* 1018–36 and 1071–7. The statement at Thukydides ii 18.2 that Oinoe was there to guard the frontier should be interpreted to mean guard against raids or small incursions. The fort was patently unable to deal with anything larger, as the siege of 431 shows: Thuky. ii 18.

¹¹ For the general pattern of hoplite warfare see Gomme *HCT* i 10–15 and Anderson *MT* 2–3. For the moral victory see Xen. *Hell.* vi 5.21 and below, pp. 104–6.

¹² Gomme *HCT* i 16–19; A. W. Lawrence, *Greek aims in fortification* (Oxford 1979) 39–42. The siege of Potidaia for example cost two thousand talents, Thuky. ii 70.2.

¹³ For example, Xen. *Hell.* v 4.56 and vii 2.10, 17 ff.

¹⁴ Plut. *Ages.* xxii 5; the tactic worked.

¹⁵ Thuky. iv 84.2–88.1, cf. Epameinondas' decision to despatch his cavalry against Mantinea, Xen. *Hell.* vii 5.14.

¹⁶ I exclude here the passive measure of completely abandoning the *chora* without any defence at all. The three main types of defence: hoplite, border, and mobile, are readily identifiable to anyone working in the field but the pre-emptive strike is less obvious and was first drawn to my attention by the discussion in Ober *FA* 70 ff.; he also examines the other types there.

attempted to attack again. According to Thukydides, for example, Pagondas claimed before Delion in 424 that the Theban victory at Koroneia had secured Thebes right up until that time.¹⁷ However, both these options meant hazarding one's own hoplite forces in a single engagement. Because casualties could be as high as 8.3% and 20–25% of the total force of the victor and vanquished respectively¹⁸ this could be rather a gamble. This factor almost certainly explains why ten of the eleven Boiotarchs were against giving battle at Delion when it was realised that the Athenians were already on their way home. They were overruled by Pagondas, the supreme commander, who alone thought a battle worth the risk (ἄμεινον εἶναι κινδυνεῦσαι).¹⁹ The risk was compounded for Athens in 431 as she was faced by vastly superior numbers, including the best hoplites in Greece, so it is hardly surprising that Perikles did not view a pitched battle as an attractive option.

Although a pre-emptive strike would have involved fighting only part of the enemy's combined forces at any one time the remainder would still have to be faced shortly afterwards.²⁰ Only the Megarid and Boiotia were within easy striking distance of Athens, and a defeat of the cities in one or other of these areas would not have prevented the rest of the Peloponnesian League from marching on Attika.²¹ A pre-emptive strike was best employed not against a large coalition but against a single enemy and the Athenian failure at Delion in 424 illustrates the risk attached even to this strategy. It too was therefore not an appropriate choice in 431.

The theory of border defence has been strongly advocated in more recent times by G. E. M. de Ste Croix and by P. A. Cartledge who argued that an effective defence could be provided by using light troops (or lightly equipped hoplites according to de Ste Croix) to control the mountain passes.²² Such an approach to defence certainly was attempted from time to time, particularly in the fourth century; however, it also had several disadvantages which curtailed its usefulness in 431.²³

The first of these was the number of possible invasion routes into Attika. AS MAP 1 shows, there were three main directions from which an invasion of Attika could be launched and each of these included several alternative routes. These are: the South West, either along the coast past Eleusis or further inland; the North West, across Kithairon and Parnes, either south of Oinoe, through Oinoe itself, or via Panakton/Phyle; and the North East, either through the Dekeleia or Aphidna passes or the longer routes via Marathon, Mount Pentelikon or even around Hymettos.²⁴

To defend all of these routes with light troops or hoplites would have been both difficult and expensive, particularly as the possibility of unheralded invasion or seizure of passes in advance required that they be guarded for longer than the weeks immediately preceding the harvest.²⁵ To do so would rule out the use of citizen hoplites, and as Athens apparently had no organised light troops of her own as late as 424²⁶ the creation of a new force or the hiring of mercenaries would have been required. However, to feed

¹⁷ Thukydides iv 92.6. The battle of Sepeia in 494 kept the Argives quiet for a generation, Herodotos vi 83.

¹⁸ P. Krentz 'Casualties in hoplite battles' *GRBS* xxvi (1985) 14–20, especially the table on 19.

¹⁹ Thuky. iv 91.

²⁰ Cf. Thuky. i 143.5 on this as a problem even if the Athenians were to win a pitched battle against the Peloponnesian League.

²¹ Although, as I argue below (p. 104), the loss of the Boiotian cavalry would have severely hampered League operations in Attika.

²² *OPW* 190–5. P. A. Cartledge, 'Hoplites and heroes: Sparta's contribution to the techniques of

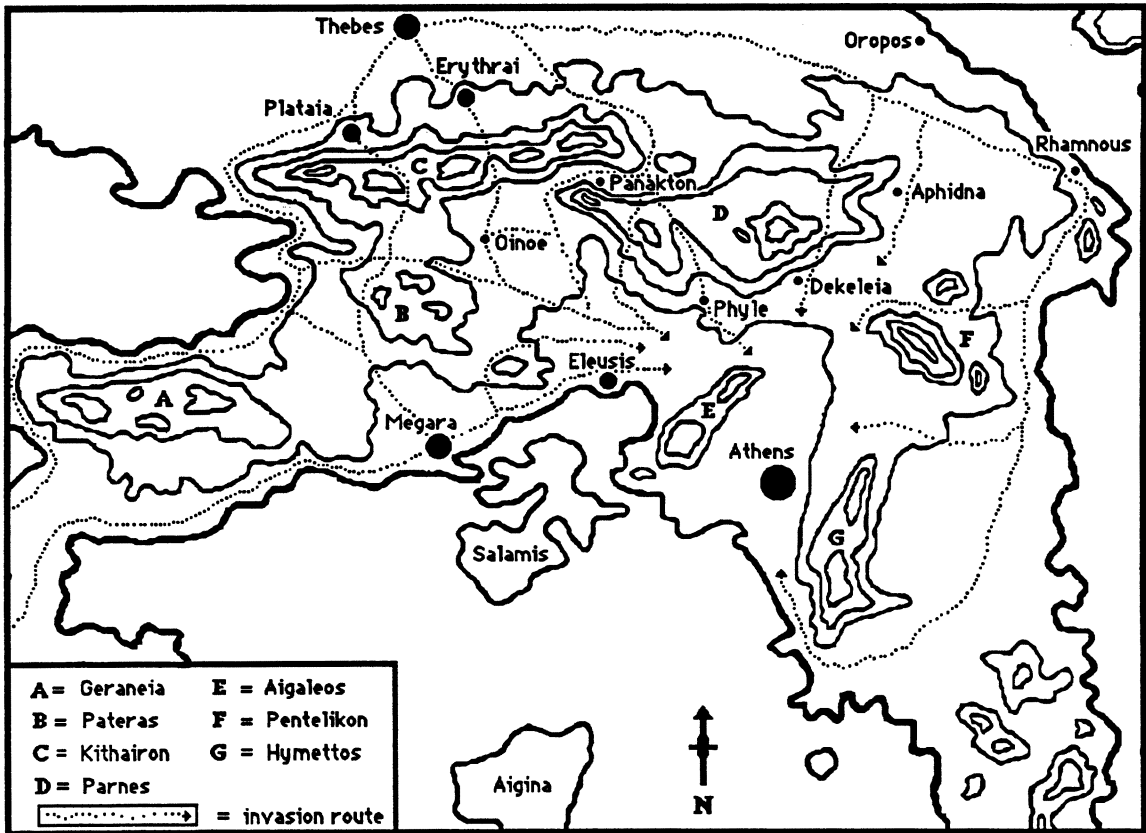
ancient warfare', *JHS* xcvi (1977) 22 ff.

²³ For a list of examples of its use see *OPW* 192–4. For objections to this strategy in a general Greek context see Holladay 97–9.

²⁴ For a more detailed description of the routes into Attika see W. W. Cruickshank, *Topography, movement and supply in the warfare of ancient Greece south of Thessaly and Epirus* (Diss. London 1955) 174–278. Ober *FA* 111–29 also has a useful discussion.

²⁵ Holladay 98. Agesilaos' seizure of the passes into Boiotia in 378 and 377 is a good example of this, *Xen. Hell.* v 4.36–7, 47–8.

²⁶ Thukydides iv 94.1.



MAP I Invasion Routes into Attika

and pay light infantry garrisons, and also to train them in the case of citizens, would have been prohibitively expensive.²⁷ In addition, several of the possible invasion routes would require a hoplite defence because of the width of the countryside: Oinoe and Panakton for example are either on or next to plains not passes. Finally, in the North West at least, many of the sites suitable for defence by light troops could be bypassed or turned relatively easily.

Therefore, in all probability, border garrisons of light troops would have been unable to prevent an army as large as that fielded by the Peloponnesian League from breaking into Attika. This is confirmed by the activities of the garrison at Oinoe which was clearly unable to do anything except stay inside the walls when the League army invaded in 431.²⁸ There are other cases of hoplites forcing their way through defended areas or passes²⁹ and if such a breakthrough did occur the only function the garrisons could then fulfil would be to harass the enemy's rear. As fifth century armies, including that of the Peloponnesian League, usually lived off the land or on what they had brought with them they rarely had vulnerable supply lines which these garrison troops could cut.³⁰ Because of this, their only real value once bypassed would be if the enemy were then defeated on the plain in which case border garrisons could inflict further casualties upon them during their withdrawal.³¹

²⁷ Gomme *HCT* i 14; Anderson *MT* 5. For the daily ration per man and the number of transport animals required to move supplies see D. W. Engels, *Alexander the Great and the logistics of the Macedonian army* (Berkeley 1978) 18–19 and 123–6.

²⁸ Thuky. ii 18.1–2.

²⁹ Holladay 99.

³⁰ An exception to this is the Plataian campaign of 479 where the Persian cavalry succeeded in destroying a Greek supply train en route for the army, Herodotos ix 39.

³¹ Cf. Thuky. viii 98.2 for the rôle of the Oinoe garrison in ambushing a Corinthian force returning from duty in Dekeleia.

In fact, the only way in which any sort of secure, long-term, border defence of Attika could be effected was probably by establishing a system like the one which Ober has suggested was used in the fourth century.³² This, he argues, involved an integrated network of fortified positions and signal towers: the forts designed to impose considerable delay on the enemy or to provide advance warning of their approach and the towers designed to summon aid from Athens. However, the fourth century threat was not from the combined forces of the Peloponnesian League but from the armies of individual states or smaller coalitions and this aid was therefore in the form of a general mobilisation against the enemy incursion. Even this highly developed system then would not, in itself, provide a total defence but relied on the support of a hoplite mobilisation to back up the frontier garrisons. The fifth century threat was different, being from a larger force, and in 431 a response πανδημεί was the very thing which Perikles was trying to avoid.

There was one other variant of the border defence strategy possible for Athens in the fifth century, a forward defence based on the Megarid and Mount Geraneia. De Ste Croix has plausibly argued that the Athenian alliance with Megara effectively prevented a Peloponnesian invasion of Attika from about 460 to 446.³³ A similar policy may have been behind the unsuccessful attempt to seize Megara in 424 but, like the frontier border defence just discussed, it was also less than perfect. Firstly, and most importantly, such a policy was basically untenable without an alliance with Megara, an unlikely occurrence in 431.³⁴ Without support in the form of Megarian troops occupying, or helping to occupy, Mount Geraneia this strategy would almost certainly have failed as the cost of maintaining an Athenian or mercenary garrison there would be as expensive as garrisoning the borders of Attika. In addition, without Megarian help, manning the Megarid in sufficient strength to prevent an invasion by the bulk of the Peloponnesian forces in the south would effectively denude Attika of defence against invasion from Boiotia. Finally, with anything short of an enthusiastic Megara to its rear, any Athenian garrison on Geraneia would be very isolated and a long way from Athenian help in the event of a major attack.

Therefore, border defence, whether frontier or forward, was not feasible unless Athens either was prepared to hire light troops (or develop her own *psiloi*), construct a network of fortified garrisons, *and* cover the threatened route with a general mobilisation or, alternatively, was able to ally with Megara. The latter was, to say the least, highly unlikely given the circumstances surrounding the outbreak of war. The former, on the other hand, would have involved major expense and in addition, if Attika were truly to be defended, suffered from the same basic defect as the traditional form of defence: the possibility of a hoplite battle against superior numbers.

Because of these problems with a hoplite or border defence strategy, there was no real likelihood of providing complete security to the Attic *chora*. The best that could be done here was to use border forts to minimise raiding and, not surprisingly, this tactic was used to reduce the damage in frontier areas during the war.³⁵ However, Athens could not prevent the Peloponnesian League army from crossing her borders and could not defeat it once it had arrived. Only one other active defensive option remained: mobile defence, and this was in fact the one which Perikles and his successors used. This strategy accepted that the enemy could not be stopped at the borders nor defeated in a decisive hoplite engagement and sought instead to limit the damage done to the countryside. This was achieved by the continual harassment of the invasion force, using

³² Ober *FA passim*, especially 191–222.

³³ *OPW* 190 ff.

³⁴ Although the Megarian decrees of the 430's may well have been designed to force Megara into

such an arrangement (S. Hornblower, *The Greek world 479–323* [London 1983] 92) this had clearly not been achieved by the time war broke out.

³⁵ Ober *FA* 192–5.

cavalry (or *psiloi*) to restrict its movement and, as far as possible, to prevent its ravaging the city's agricultural hinterland.

II. THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF MOBILE DEFENCE

Section III of this paper examines the evidence for Athens' use of mobile defence during the Peloponnesian War, but it is necessary first to discuss how mounted troops were used in this way. The use of cavalry to bear the brunt of a hoplite invasion runs counter to the general assumption that Greek cavalry was really only of peripheral value prior to Philip and Alexander because of its inability to charge into formed bodies of heavy infantry.³⁶ Nonetheless, mobile defence was a feasible tactic and was used in several campaigns other than the defence of Attika from 431 to 404. For example, the Thessalians used it to good effect during the Athenian invasion of 457 when, according to that delightful statement in Thukydides i 111.1, the Athenians '... dominated the country, though without being able to go far from their camp because the Thessalian cavalry prevented them ...'.³⁷ Other examples of mobile defence occur elsewhere in Greece and it seems to have been a particularly common strategy in both Sicily and Persia.³⁸

Mobile defence could be achieved on a variety of levels. At its best it involved harassing, or (much more rarely) the destruction³⁹ of, the enemy's main force, thereby preventing it from damaging the countryside. However, even to attempt to do this required a very large cavalry force such as that possessed by states like Thessaly or Syracuse, and even then it could only succeed if the enemy had no effective cavalry protection of its own. At a lower level, if the enemy army could not directly be contained or destroyed then damage could be considerably reduced by preventing individuals or groups leaving the safety of the main force to forage and/or ravage.

The use of mobile defence was made possible by the vulnerability of infantry to good cavalry. By this I do *not* mean to imply that Greek cavalry was always, or even often, successful against Greek footsoldiers, merely that when well and aggressively led good quality horse could, in the right circumstances, be very dangerous to infantry. Although it is not widely recognised, mounted troops were capable of containing a large army of hoplites or a smaller combined force of hoplites supported by horse or light troops.⁴⁰ There are also recorded cases of cavalry destroying small or disorganised bodies of foot.⁴¹ The tactics involved in this were relatively simple and effectively took advantage of the weaknesses of infantry. In the case of hoplites this was their lack of tactical mobility while for *psiloi* it was their lack of protection.

To take the hoplites first, their equipment and formation were primarily suited to fighting other hoplites and one of their main characteristics was the close ordering of the

³⁶ For example, Anderson *MT* 58, Gomme *HCT* i 15.

³⁷ '... τῆς μὲν γῆς ἐκράτουν ὅσα μὴ προϊόντες πολὺ ἐκ τῶν ὀπλῶν (οἱ γὰρ ἱππῆς τῶν Θεσσαλῶν εἶργον) ...'. Cf. Diod. Sic. xv 71.4–5.

³⁸ Greece: Thuky. i 111.1, ii 100.5; Herodotos v 63.3–4; Diod. Sic. xv 71.4–5; Xen. *Hell.* v 3.3–5. Other examples of cavalry used against ravagers and foragers (although not necessarily as the *sole* means of defence) include Xen. *Hell.* v 3.1–2, vii 1.20–2 and 2.4, 10 (helped by *epilektoi*). Sicily: Thuky. vii 4.6; Plut. *Nic.* xix 6; Diod. Sic. xi 21.2, xiii 44.3–4 and 88.1. Although the Syracusans also

used their infantry on occasion it was their cavalry which often played the most effective part. For Persia see Xen. *Hell.* iv 8.18–19 and p. 102 below.

³⁹ The defeat of Anchimolios' army in Attika in 511 is one of the best examples of this, Herodotos v 63.

⁴⁰ See Xen. *Hell.* vii 1.21 (quoted below p. 99) and 2.10.

⁴¹ See below pp. 98–100 and also Xen. *Hell.* iv 8.18–19 (Persian cavalry), vii 2.4 and 21–2 (backed up by hoplites in the second example) and Thuky. ii 79.6, v 10.9 (supported by *psiloi* in both cases).

ranks for mutual protection.⁴² The cooperative nature of the hoplite phalanx is well illustrated by the rôle of the *aspis*. Despite Archilochos' studied indifference it was considered a disgrace to abandon one's shield in battle and at Athens to be a $\rho\acute{\iota}\psi\alpha\sigma\pi\iota\varsigma$ was an indictable offence.⁴³ This is explained by Kleomenes' statement that it was disgraceful to lose one's shield but not one's helmet or breastplate because the shield was for the safety of the whole line while the other items benefited only the individual.⁴⁴ The fundamental importance of the *aspis* is further emphasised by the fact that as the other items in the original hoplite panoply were discarded or modified it remained unchanged.⁴⁵

The panoply was designed to protect the hoplite while he was in formation and, because of deficiencies in cavalry harness, and the use of short spears and the tetragonal formation common in Greece, it was also effective against a frontal cavalry charge.⁴⁶ However, it was probably less useful outside the phalanx as the large shield with its off-centre grip would have been rather unwieldy and its weight (along with that of the other accoutrements) would have handicapped a fleeing or pursuing hoplite.⁴⁷ Xenophon points out how difficult it is for troops to stand and fight when they see others running away, so once a phalanx started to break the concern of most of its members would presumably have been to place as much distance as possible between themselves and the enemy.⁴⁸ This explains why the *aspis* was the first thing discarded in a rout. The individual hoplite was therefore vulnerable and needed to stay in formation to derive the maximum protection from his equipment.⁴⁹

To exploit this vulnerability to the full cavalry had to attack the hoplite outside the phalanx. This could be done when the phalanx had collapsed or was disrupted either by hostile action or an obstacle. Alternatively, as will be seen, effective assaults could be launched against hoplites scattered for foraging or ravaging or who had not yet formed their phalanx. However, the *hippeis* did not have to wait around for opportunities to catch infantry out of formation—they themselves possessed sufficient hitting power to break a hoplite phalanx either by charging its flanks or by harassing it with missile fire. Flank attacks allowed the cavalry to make use of shock action: hoplites were very vulnerable to an assault on their right or unshielded side or on their rear and would

⁴² Although this has been challenged by G. L. Cawkwell, *Philip of Macedon* (London 1978) 150–3, Holladay 94–7 adequately disposes of his arguments. The close-ordering of the ranks was emphasised as late as Onasander xxvii.

⁴³ A. R. W. Harrison *The law of Athens: procedure* (Oxford 1971) 32. See also Aristophanes' jibes at Kleonymos and others: *Pax* 446, 674–8, 1185–6, 1302–4; *Av.* 290, 1473–81; *Nub.* 353–4; *Vesp.* 15–23, 592, 822–3. In Lysias x (*c. Theomn.*) 6 ff. it is associated in discussion with charges of murder, parent-beating, assault, and abduction.

⁴⁴ Plut. *Moralia* 220A.

⁴⁵ A. M. Snodgrass, *Arms and armour of the Greeks* (London 1967) 109 f.; Anderson *MT* 13 ff. and 40–2; J. K. Anderson, *Ancient Greek horsemanship* (Berkeley 1961) 141–2.

⁴⁶ I do not wish to develop my theory of cavalry warfare further here, as I believe that it deserves fuller treatment than can be provided in this article. It is enough for the moment to state that I consider that the Greek mounted arm prior to the developments under Philip and Alexander has been undervalued by most historians. Although incapable of charging into the front of an intact phalanx (but see

n. 50 below), such cavalry could be effective against its rear or flanks, could use missile fire to destroy its cohesion, or could take advantage of any disruption caused by obstacles or by enemy action. While some examples of the efficacy of cavalry against even large hoplite forces and the theory of their use are given below, I shall be elaborating my views more fully in a book to be published by Oxford University Press.

⁴⁷ H. L. Lorimer, 'The hoplite phalanx', *BSA* xlii (1947) 76–7; cf. Holladay 95.

⁴⁸ Xen. *Hell.* vii 5.24. Sokrates' actions during the retreat at Delion are an exception and described as such, Plato *Symp.* 220E–221B, cf. Plut. *Alc.* vii 4.

⁴⁹ This receives further confirmation from Euripides *HF* 190–4 where Amphitryon, arguing that the bow is superior to the spear states that:

A hoplite is a slave to his weapons,
And from the lack of bravery of his formation-fellows
Himself perishes, through the cowardice of his neighbours;
Having broken his spear, he, who has only one defence,
Is unable to ward off death from his body,

almost certainly break, before or on impact, if such an assault occurred.⁵⁰ Such attacks could be avoided by siting the flanks on obstacles or, alternatively (but only if the opposing cavalry had no hoplite force with it), by forming a square. But, whether a square was formed or not, the close ordered hoplite ranks provided a relatively easy target for projectile weapons like the javelins carried by many cavalrymen.⁵¹ Apart from retiring to high ground the only defence a purely hoplite force had against this was to use detachments to charge out to keep the enemy out of range. While this tactic was practised (and even preferred on occasion to the use of *psiloi* to help), the charging troops, or *ekdromoi*, were vulnerable to individual attack and often too slow to catch their assailants anyway.⁵²

Except in rugged country, cavalry could be much more dangerous in this rôle than *psiloi* because of its superior mobility. This allowed it the facility to harass hoplites with relative impunity until either their movement was curtailed or their formation collapsed allowing them to be mopped up individually. Even large bodies of hoplites could be contained by aggressive cavalry action, particularly where their own supporting arms were ineffectual or non-existent. This is graphically illustrated by Xenophon *Hell.* vii 1.21 which describes an action near Korinth in 369. The cavalry sent by Dionysios of Syracuse numbered only fifty and was part of an allied Athenian/Korinthian army while the enemy referred to was a Theban invasion force of some seven thousand foot and six hundred horse.⁵³ The passage is worth quoting in full for the picture it gives of the tactics involved:

But the cavalry sent by Dionysius, in spite of their small numbers, rode along the enemy's line either as individuals or in small detachments and charged down on them, hurling their javelins. When the enemy moved out against them, they would fall back, and then face about and hurl their javelins again. And in the course of all this they would dismount and have a rest; and if they were attacked while they were dismounted, they would easily leap on their horses and ride away. But if the enemy pressed his pursuit far from the main army, they would turn on them while they were going back again, and with volleys of javelins give them a very rough time. Thus they made the whole enemy army either advance or retreat just as they pleased.⁵⁴ (Warner)

⁵⁰ On the type of shock employed by cavalry see J. Keegan, *The face of battle* (Harmondsworth 1986) 95–6 and 154 ff.; but I have recently been convinced by Dr M. M. Markle that there is nothing in the nature of the horse *per se* which precludes its riding into a body of troops. He is intending to publish a paper on this area in the near future. However, like Keegan, I believe that cavalry normally achieved its effect by moral rather than physical shock and this is particularly true of the classical Greek arm. The front of a phalanx *could* be breached, using the tactics described by Arrian *Tact.* xvi 6–9, but in my opinion only by a force equipped with spears longer than those carried by the infantry (*cf.* M. M. Markle, 'The Macedonian sarissa, spear, and related armor', *AJA* lxxxi (1977) 339). Any penetration of a hoplite phalanx which stood firm almost certainly occurred at a pace much less than a gallop and was possibly achieved at little more than a walk.

⁵¹ The more lightly equipped hoplites of *c.* 431 onwards (Anderson *MT* 41) were of course even more vulnerable to missiles than their more fully-armoured predecessors. There are problems in determining cavalry weaponry at Athens as the *hippeis* could be armed in a variety of ways: with two javelins, with a thrusting spear, or with javelins *and* a thrusting spear. A sword was sometimes carried in addition to any of these

combinations. Although Attic vase paintings suggest that most cavalrymen were equipped with two javelins it is sometimes difficult to know how far to trust this evidence. I intend to include a detailed study of this question in my forthcoming book.

⁵² Thuky. iv 125–7; Xen *Hell.* iv 5.14–17 (used against peltasts but demonstrating the same principles), *Anab.* iii 3.15. In the first example Brasidas placed his *psiloi* inside the hoplite square.

⁵³ Diod. Sic. xv 68.1. These figures applied at the start of the expedition and as Xenophon's account of the engagement contains no mention of the Theban cavalry it might quite possibly have been occupied elsewhere at the time.

⁵⁴ οἱ δὲ παρὰ τοῦ Διονυσίου ἵππεῖς, ὅσοι περ ἦσαν, οὗτοι διεσκεδασμένοι ἄλλος ἄλλη παραθέοντες ἠκόντιζόν τε προσελαύνοντες, καὶ ἐπεὶ ὤρμων ἐπ' αὐτούς, ἀνεχώρουν, καὶ πάλιν ἀναστρέφοντες ἠκόντιζον. καὶ ταῦτα ἅμα ποιοῦντες κατέβαινον ἀπὸ τῶν ἵππων καὶ ἀνεπαύοντο. εἰ δὲ καταβεβηκόσιν ἐπελαύνοιέν τινες, εὐπετώσ ἀναπηδῶντες ἀνεχώρουν. εἰ δ' αὖ τινες διώξειαν αὐτούς πολὺ ἀπὸ τοῦ στρατεύματος, τούτους, ὅποτε ἀποχωροῖεν, ἐπικείμενοι καὶ ἀκοντίζοντες δεινὰ εἰργάζοντο, καὶ πᾶν τὸ στρατεύμα ἠνάγκαζον ἑαυτῶν ἕνεκα καὶ προΐεναι καὶ ἀναχωρεῖν.

Because of their inability to fight in formation most types of *psiloi* were as vulnerable to cavalry as individual hoplites. Although their limited armour did aid their mobility this was often insufficient to save them from a mounted enemy. Two Theban successes against Spartan peltasts in 378 illustrate the particular vulnerability of disorganised light troops but cavalry was also effective against organised *psiloi*. At least once Thracian peltasts fled before a cavalry charge even reached them.⁵⁵ However, those peltasts equipped with a shield and longer spear and who were able to fight in formation had to be attacked like hoplites.⁵⁶ They were therefore not always easy prey for cavalry as the Dioi proved at Mykalessos. Although some were cut down by the Theban troopers, the main body prevented the cavalymen from getting too close by using detachments to charge out against them.⁵⁷ Although these *ekdromoi* were probably less likely to suffer casualties than slower hoplite *ekdromoi* it seems likely to me that in this particular case it was the relatively short distance to their boats which saved the Thracians by denying the Theban horse sufficient time to pressure their formation into collapse.⁵⁸

Mobile defence utilising cavalry directly against the main enemy force could therefore work in theory and did work in practice. In 431, however, their own sizeable cavalry force probably protected the Peloponnesians from the spectacular and effective harassment of a hoplite army portrayed in the Xenophon extract quoted above.⁵⁹ Despite this, though, they were still vulnerable in one important area: highly effective cavalry charges could be launched against troops who had scattered to forage or to ravage agricultural land. In Greek warfare generally it seems that these were often left unprotected by their own cavalry, either because foraging was regarded as something which the individual undertook in his own time and at his own risk or because the foragers and/or ravagers were too widely scattered for effective protection.⁶⁰

Because of the methods used in devastating agricultural areas, the cavalry tactics described earlier in this section were particularly useful in their defence. Invaders deprived the enemy of agricultural produce by destroying the crops, harvesting them for their own use, or a combination of the two. Long term damage could be caused by the destruction of vines, trees, and farm buildings.⁶¹ The precise method of ravaging obviously differed according to local conditions but, although sometimes used, burning was probably not the most common medium of destruction during the Peloponnesian invasions of Attika. This is because, in some ways, it was not a particularly good method of destroying farmland and obviously could not be used indiscriminately where an army was harvesting crops for its own use. This was the case with the Peloponnesians who used the combination method against the Athenians from 431 onwards: although they brought some supplies with them they also used local crops (their 425 invasion for

⁵⁵ Disorganised troops: Xen. *Hell.* v 4.39 and 44–5; organised troops: Arrian *Anab.* i 2.5–6 (in conjunction with infantry), cf. the similar (but less successful tactics) in Thuky. ii 100.4–5. The Getai fled before contact, although Alexander's unexpectedly easy crossing of the Ister apparently contributed to the shock of the attack, Arrian *Anab.* i 4.3.

⁵⁶ For this equipment see J. G. P. Best, *Thracian peltasts and their influence on Greek warfare* (Groningen 1969) 139–42.

⁵⁷ Thuky. vii 30.2. He only mentions one item of their equipment, the *machaira* (vii 27.1), but because of their ability to fight in formation they must also have been armed with a shield and a spear as well. They lost 250 men out of 1300, mainly stragglers or those who drowned trying to swim

out to the boats.

⁵⁸ The distance from Mykalessos to the nearest bay is only some 5–7 kilometres so, allowing for the time it took the Theban cavalry to arrive, the pursuit was probably fairly short.

⁵⁹ Thukydes ii 9.3 states that the cavalry was supplied by Boiotia, Phokis and Lokris. *Hell. Oxy.* xi 3–4 tells us that the cavalry of the Boiotian League in the early fourth century was 1100 strong.

⁶⁰ Although this seems strange today, presumably one of the main problems involved in detailing troops to protect foragers or ravagers was that they were probably unwilling to stand by and watch others have the pick of the available food and/or booty. See also nn. 73 and 75 below.

⁶¹ W. G. Hardy, 'Hellenica Oxyrhynchia and the devastation of Athens', *CPh* xxi (1926) 348 ff.

example had to be cut short because the Attic grain was still too green to harvest).⁶² However, the devastation of some areas in passing suggests pure destruction rather than harvesting.⁶³

The verb *τέμνω*, which is frequently used in the context of ravaging, strongly suggests that the cutting down of trees and crops was the standard practice⁶⁴ and in addition the three main objects of destruction: crops, trees, and farm buildings, are not as vulnerable to fire as is often assumed. W. G. Hardy, for example, claimed that Greek country houses were difficult to set alight and this is supported both by the archaeological evidence of their construction⁶⁵ and by Thukydides ii 14.1 which states that the woodwork was removed before the invasion force arrived. Trees could be burned, but the olive in particular would probably have taken some trouble to ignite because of its thick bark, and as they were always planted a good distance apart it would presumably have been difficult for the fire to spread easily from tree to tree.⁶⁶

Thukydides vi 94.2 shows that on occasion crops were burned, but experimental tests conducted in the U.K. after the Second World War show that it is often surprisingly difficult to fire grain (especially wheat) and that the damage is limited to very small areas if the crop is not fully ripe or there has been recent rain.⁶⁷ In fact, the scientist who conducted these tests, D. J. Watson, claimed that 'the danger of loss by fire occurs mainly when harvest is delayed beyond the stage when the crop first becomes fit for cutting'.⁶⁸ The problem for an invader wishing to use fire would be to arrive when the crop was ripe but not yet harvested—not an easy feat as different crops ripen at different times.⁶⁹ It is clear then that not only troops harvesting crops but also, in many cases, those destroying crops, vines, trees, and buildings used tools to do so and did not therefore usually operate in close formation.⁷⁰ Marching a formation through standing crops,⁷¹ although giving security to the destruction party, would presumably cause much less damage than burning or cutting as the area affected in a given time would be smaller and some at least of the trampled crop could probably be salvaged (even if only as animal fodder) after the invaders had left the area. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that most of the damage was in fact caused not by the core force of hoplites but by light troops operating away from the main body.⁷² Therefore, because of the methods of agricultural destruction most soldiers engaged in ravaging, whether *psiloi* or hoplites,

⁶² Supplies: Thuky. iii 1.3; 425 invasion: Thuky. iv 6.1.

⁶³ For example, Thuky. ii 23.1 and 3.

⁶⁴ A. H. Jackson, 'The original purpose of the Delian league', *Historia* xviii (1969) 12–13; cf. the discussion in Hanson 14–20 (which makes rather more of the use of fire).

⁶⁵ W. G. Hardy (n. 61) 348 n. 4; for house construction see Jones, Graham, and Sackett, 'An Attic country house below the cave of Pan at Vari', *BSA* lxviii (1973) 355–452.

⁶⁶ For the burning of trees and the distance between olive trees see Theophrastos *CP* ii 3.3 and 5.6. On the difficulty of igniting trees with thick bark see A. J. Kayll, *A technique for studying the fire tolerance of living tree trunks*, Dept. of Forestry, Canada (Ottawa 1963) 19. The problems involved in burning olive groves have now been remedied by modern ordnance, cf. Robert Fisk, *The Times* (11th August 1983) 4.

⁶⁷ D. J. Watson, 'Inflammability of cereal crops in relation to water content' *Empire Journal of*

Experimental Agriculture, vol. xviii no. 71 (1950) 150–7. The experiments relate to U.K. conditions, and crops in Greece, because of the drier conditions there, would have been vulnerable for a longer period than Watson's results show. However, his overall conclusions, that it is not as easy to fire grain as most think, is still valid. Cf. the discussion at Hanson 42–6 which basically agrees with my views; although he tends to concentrate more on the success of fire most of his examples refer to *dry* crops (particularly stored grain or harvested sheafs in the field) and he too emphasises the relatively short period of vulnerability.

⁶⁸ D. J. Watson (n. 67) 157. However, he also points out that with large crops such delays are not infrequent because of the difficulty of harvesting the entire crop as soon as it ripens.

⁶⁹ See also Westlake *Essays* 93 n. 27.

⁷⁰ Anderson *MT* 3.

⁷¹ For example, Arrian *Anab.* i 4.1

⁷² Hanson 21–5.

operated out of formation and so were vulnerable to sudden attack of the type most effectively delivered by cavalry.⁷³

In addition, most Greek armies had no organised commissariat and therefore relied on individual foraging or the establishment of markets to feed their soldiers.⁷⁴ Markets, however, could not readily be established in Attika as it was hostile territory, and foragers were even more at risk from cavalry attacks than organised destruction parties because they operated, unprotected, as individuals or in small groups and were often encumbered by tools or booty.⁷⁵ Two incidents involving Greek troops in Asia show that even large bodies of foragers were at risk from horsemen. In the first, according to Xen. *Anab.* vi 4.24, two thousand foragers from the Ten Thousand were attacked by cavalry under Pharnabazos. About five hundred were killed and the rest forced to retire to the upland areas. Xen. *Hell.* iv 1.17–19 records that Pharnabazos was again successful under similar circumstances in 395 when he killed one hundred of a seven-hundred-man group from Agesilaos' army. On this occasion the Greeks managed to form a hasty phalanx when they realised the impending danger but were nevertheless disrupted by two scythed chariots and then attacked by the cavalry. Another large-scale loss of life among foragers is mentioned by Diodorus Siculus at xiii 44.1–4.

Given the success of these and other actions against foragers, ravagers, and even large hoplite forces, it is not surprising that the Persians and those Greeks from traditional cavalry areas like Thessaly and Sicily regularly used their mounted arm against hoplite incursions.⁷⁶ However, the defence of Attika during the Peloponnesian War represents the most sustained use of cavalry in the mobile defence rôle in antiquity.

III. THE DEFENCE OF ATTIKA 431–404

The Spartan strategy here was initially limited to the traditional one of forcing an enemy to submit by ravaging his crops. To this end Attika was invaded annually by two-thirds of the total forces of the Peloponnesian League.⁷⁷ In the first invasion (see MAP 2), even before the main Peloponnesian army reached the outskirts of Athens, and while the Athenians were still hoping that it would withdraw as it had under Pleistoanax in 446, the Athenian cavalry was engaging the enemy at a place called Rheittoi on the Thriasian Plain.⁷⁸ Then, when the Peloponnesians moved northwards and began ravaging Acharnai in view of Athens, Perikles continually (αἰεὶ) used the cavalry to protect the countryside close to the city.⁷⁹ However, it was unrealistic to expect that the cavalry could protect the whole of Attika or could attack the main body of enemy hoplites as this was defended by its own cavalry, drawn from Boiotia, Phokis, and Lokris. But, as we have already seen, the Athenian *hippeis* were prepared to operate as

⁷³ Foragers were certainly unprotected (see n. 75) and it seems that unless moving under orders as organised bodies (which reduced the amount of damage possible), ravagers also normally conducted their activities without much protection. Although we might expect *psiloi* and cavalry to have performed this task it seems that they normally either concentrated on supporting the main body of hoplites or were off ravaging/foraging on their own behalf (see for example Thuky. iii 1.2 for the apparent lack of protection afforded to those operating away from the main force).

⁷⁴ Pritchett, *The Greek state at war* i (Los Angeles 1971) 30–52.

⁷⁵ Thuky. vii 4.6 and 13.2 (the Athenians at Syracuse). See Onasander x 7–8 for the defencelessness of those out looking for supplies—he advo-

cated both banning unauthorised foraging and the protection of authorised foragers. Despite this, it was not usual Greek practice to protect foragers and the first examples of this concern Alexander, Arrian *Anab.* i 5.9 and iii 20.4(?). In later periods such protection may have been provided as a matter of course, Onasander x 8 (cf. Livy xxxi 2 for Roman practice). For the equipment carried by foragers see Xen. *Anab.* vi 4.23.

⁷⁶ See above p. 97.

⁷⁷ Thuky. ii 10.2, 47.2, and iii 15.1. He does not specify the numbers but Plut. *Per.* xxxiii 5 states it was sixty thousand; cf. Gomme, *HCT* ii 13, who estimates it at not more than about thirty thousand at most.

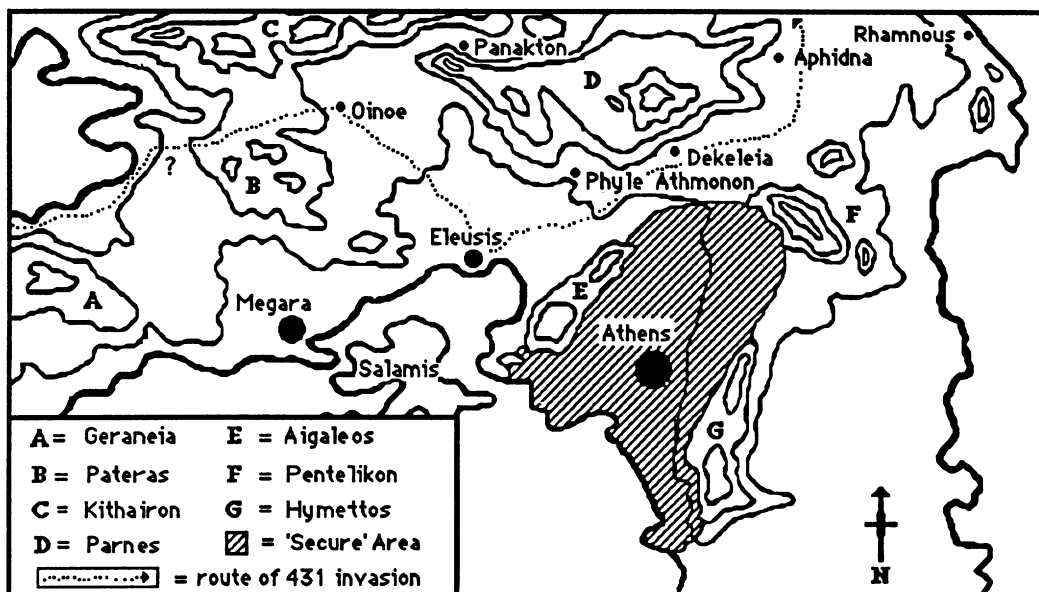
⁷⁸ Thuky. ii 19.2.

⁷⁹ Thuky. ii 22.2.

far afield as the Thriasian Plain and in 430 they, and some Thessalian cavalry, are attested in Thukydides ii 22.2 at a place called Phrygia, in the deme Athmonon, north of Athens.⁸⁰

After their initial reverse at Rheitoi, which took place in unspecified circumstances, the *hippeis* seem to have perfected their tactics. They were apparently successful against the Boiotian horse at Phrygia and by 428, according to Thukydides iii 1.2, they were, as in 431, able to prevent '... the majority of the light troops from leaving their camp to harm the areas near to the city'.⁸¹ Thukydides also states here that this had been the practice on previous occasions which shows that this was the regular response to the annual invasion and not an isolated incident.

The meaning of 'the areas near the city' (τὰ ἐγγύς τῆς πόλεως) is vague, but Thukydides' account of the operations of 431 at ii 19–23 states that the Peloponnesians kept to the west of Mount Aigaleos during their march to Acharnai and suggests that they did not come much, if at all, further south than Athmonon before leaving via Oropos. This may mean that the plains from the city walls out as far as Mount Aigaleos and Hymettos in the west and east and perhaps Athmonon in the north were relatively secure, although obviously the further from the walls the less safe property and crops would have been (see MAP 2). Because of the economies of transport the bulk of the city's local food supply was probably grown in precisely this area, that is, fairly close to the walls.⁸² However, the exact extent of the relatively secure area almost certainly varied from invasion to invasion and may not have been as large as this in other years.⁸³



MAP 2 Attika during the Peloponnesian Invasions

⁸⁰ J. S. Traill, *The political organization of Attika*, *Hesperia* Supplement xiv (Princeton 1975) map 1.

⁸¹ τὸν πλείστον ὄμιλον τῶν ψιλῶν... τὸ μὴ προεξιόντας τῶν ὀπλων τὰ ἐγγύς τῆς πόλεως κακουργεῖν.

⁸² I am grateful to Mr A. French for pointing this out to me.

⁸³ For example, Thukydides' statement (ii 55.1) that in 430 the Peloponnesians ravaged the plain (ἔτεμον τὸ πεδῖον) before moving on to the coast

near Laureion and his remarks at ii 57.2 suggest that a larger area was devastated that year. However, I do not believe that 'the property protection scheme had apparently broken down completely', Ober 'Thukydides' 179. In my opinion it was never intended to provide total protection, merely to reduce the damage as far as possible; in 430, for the reasons stated in Ober 'Thukydides' 179–80, this happened to be more difficult than at other times.

So, it is quite clear from Thukydides that the cavalry was used to protect as much of Attika as possible during the first four years of the Archidamian war and this was also the case for the whole of the Dekeleian War. With the Peloponnesian occupation of Dekeleia in 413 the ravaging became much more extended and Thukydides records at vii 27.5 that from this point onwards the cavalry rode out *every* day to harass the enemy and protect the countryside. This phase of the war lasted from 413 to 404 but the evidence for the remaining period of hostilities, that is from 427 to 421, is rather sketchy. This is not least because only two other invasions (427 and 425) are recorded for this period as the Spartans apparently abandoned their attacks on Attika after the capture of the garrison on Sphakteria in 425.⁸⁴ However, it does seem highly likely that if the cavalry was used in mobile defence for two-thirds of the war, including the periods at both the start and end of the conflict, that this was also true of the few invasions during the other third.

Additional support for this view is lent by Hippokrates' speech before Delion in 424. At iv 95.2, Thukydides portrays him encouraging the troops to fight by pointing out that if the Athenians were victorious the Peloponnesians, thereby deprived of the Boiotian horse, would never again attack Attika. This statement has been dismissed, unfairly in my view, by de Ste Croix,⁸⁵ but it makes eminent sense if Attika were being protected by cavalry. I have already argued that hoplites alone or even hoplites and light troops could be vulnerable to good cavalry and as Thuky. ii 9.3 suggests that the Boiotians provided the bulk of the Peloponnesian League's mounted arm their loss would severely hamper League operations in Attika. Hippokrates' remark then seems to show that the cavalry had been recently active in its normal rôle and in addition Aristophanes' *Knights*, produced in the same year as the battle of Delion, contains the claim at lines 596–7 that the horses and men had shared in *many* raids and battles.

As a further piece of minor circumstantial evidence, the whole of Xenophon's *Eq. Mag.* is heavily influenced by the hit-and-run tactics employed against a superior enemy,⁸⁶ and I consider that this represents the lasting effect which over twenty years of such activities in defence of Attika had left upon Athenian cavalry tactics. More direct evidence though, if (as seems likely) he is referring to the Peloponnesian War, is his remark at vii 4 that:

if the city turns to her navy, and is content to preserve her walls, just as she did when the Lakedaimonians invaded with all the Greeks and expects her cavalry to preserve the things which lie outside the walls, and to run its risks alone against her foes; then indeed I consider we need first the strong friendship of the gods and second it is necessary that the hipparch be highly skilled.⁸⁷

The cavalry was therefore used throughout the war to provide what defence it could to Attika, and, according to Thukydides ii 22.1 and iii 1.2, was able to do so with some success. But one question remains which should be answered at this point: why did the Athenians bother to defend Attika at all? If goods and food could be imported as readily as Thukydides i 143.4–5 suggests then why bother to risk *any* Athenian lives in the defence of the *chora*?

The answer is twofold. Thukydides' remarks on the effect of the occupation of

⁸⁴ Presumably because of the Athenian threats to kill the captives, Thuky. iv 41.1.

⁸⁵ *OPW* 194.

⁸⁶ See especially iv 13–20 and vii 5–14.

⁸⁷ ἦν δὲ ἡ μὲν πόλις τρέπεται ἐπὶ τὰ ναυτικά καὶ ἄρκῃ αὐτῇ τὰ τεῖχη διασώζειν, ὥσπερ καὶ ὅποτε Λακεδαιμόνιοι σὺν ἅπασι τοῖς Ἑλλησιν

ἐνέβαλον, τοὺς δὲ ἵππεας ἀξιῶσιν τὰ τε ἔκτος τοῦ τεύχους διασώζειν καὶ αὐτοὺς μόνους διακινδυνεύειν πρὸς πάντας τοὺς ἐναντίους, ἐνταῦθα δὲ θεῶν μὲν οἶμαι πρῶτον συμμαχῶν ἰσχυρῶν δεῖ, ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ τὸν ἵππαρχον προσήκει ἀποτετελεσμένον ἄνδρα εἶναι.

Dekeleia show that when Athens really was denied the use of much of Attika on a long-term basis it was a serious matter. He states:

and the food supplies from Euboia, which before had been brought in by the faster route overland from Dekeleia through Oropos had to go, at much cost, by sea round Sounion. Everything the city needed had to be imported and instead of a city it became a fortress.⁸⁸

Obviously things were not quite so grim during the Archidamian War when Attika could still be used for a large part of the year, and *Hell. Oxy.* xii 3–5 confirms that most of the serious damage to Attika occurred after 413.⁸⁹ However, even during the Archidamian war the loss of agricultural produce and rural property must have placed a significant financial burden on the population. Therefore, any measure of protection to Attika would have helped to reduce the economic drain on Athens and thereby prolong resistance.

However, while this may well have been part of the reason for Perikles' decision to provide as much security for Attika as possible, there was another important factor. Although he had good reason to avoid the possibility of a major hoplite defeat, the reaction to the first invasion showed that Perikles could not afford to abandon Attika entirely to the enemy because of the risk of damage to his own political position and to the Athenian will to resist. Instead he chose to provide some protection to the Athenian *chora* with the *hippeis* and the frontier forts and to retaliate in kind with attacks on the Megarid and seaborne raids on the Peloponnese.⁹⁰ The factor of morale was initially very important given the prominence of the hoplite ethos in Greek thinking.⁹¹ Perikles' problem was that in traditional warfare a state which did not mobilise its hoplites to defend its farmland was considered to have suffered a moral defeat.⁹² There is much evidence from both the fifth and fourth centuries to show that such a refusal to fight was considered dishonourable.⁹³

A prime example of this is Thukydides ii 21.2 which describes the Athenian reaction to the first invasion of the Peloponnesian War as follows:

when they saw the army at Acharnai, only sixty stades away from the city, they could no longer tolerate the situation. Their land was being ravaged right in front of them, something which the young men had never seen nor the old men except at the time of the Persian invasion. It was terrible and they, especially the young, wanted to march out and no longer put up with it.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Thukydides vii 28.1. ἡ τε τῶν ἐπιτηδείων παρακομιδὴ ἐκ τῆς Εὐβοίας, πρότερον ἐκ τοῦ Ὀρωποῦ κατὰ γῆν διὰ τῆς Δεκελείας θάσσωσιν οὔσα, περὶ Σούνιον κατὰ θάλασσαν πολυτελὴς ἐγίγνετο· τῶν τε πάντων ὁμοίως ἐπακτῶν ἐδέϊτο ἡ πόλις, καὶ ἀντὶ τοῦ πόλις εἶναι φρούριον κατέστη. Cf. Plato *Crito* 43B 2–5 for the practice of passengers disembarking at Sounion and continuing overland, apparently because of the common problem of adverse winds around the cape itself.

⁸⁹ Although, as Hanson points out, 142–3, while damage to agriculture was increased, the main losses were of property.

⁹⁰ Thuky. ii 23.2–31, 56. If de Ste Croix's interpretation of the Megarian decrees (*OPW* 225–289) is correct then the invasions of the Megarid may also have been influenced by religious considerations.

⁹¹ There are strong links between the hoplite and the concept of the *agathos*. It was the hoplite who defended the city and his family, the key function of the *agathos* (A. W. H. Adkins, *Merit and responsibility* [Oxford 1960] 236–7). Other hoplite virtues such as steadfastness and cooperation also

figured in contemporary or near-contemporary ideas about the ideal citizen; see for example Plato *Laches* 182A, Sophokles *Antigone* 666 ff., Ar. *Ran.* 1009–17, cf. Adkins 165.

⁹² Y. Garlan, *War in the ancient world* (trans. J. Lloyd) (London 1975) 60. Cf. Thuky. i 140.5, ii 21.2–3 and Diod. Sic. xii 61.2.

⁹³ This was expressed as late as 355 in Isokrates viii 77. See also Xen. *Hell.* vi 5.20–1, Plut. *Nic.* xx 4–8, and Thuky. viii 27. Although the last two of these examples involve naval engagements, the *strategoí* involved were of hoplite class. Cf. Plut. *Per.* xxxiii–xxxiv.

⁹⁴ ἐπειδὴ δὲ περὶ Ἀχαρνὰς εἶδον τὸν στρατὸν ἐξήκοντα σταδίους τῆς πόλεως ἀπέχοντα, οὐκέτι ἀνασχετὸν ἐποιοῦντο, ἀλλ' αὐτοῖς, ὡς εἰκός, γῆς τεμνομένης ἐν τῷ ἔμφανει, ὃ οὐπω ἐοράκεσαν οἱ γε νεώτεροι, οὐδ' οἱ πρεσβύτεροι πλὴν τὰ Μηδικὰ, δεινὸν ἐφαίνετο καὶ ἐδόκει τοῖς τε ἄλλοις καὶ μάλιστα τῇ νεότητι ἐπεξιέναι καὶ μὴ περιορᾶν. For similar sentiments see also Hermippos fr. 47 Kassel–Austin = Plut. *Per.* xxxiii 7. Gomme *HCT* ii 75–76 cites two fragments of comedy which may also refer to this incident.

Perikles was in fact accused of cowardice (ἐκόκιζον) for not leading them out to defend their land and, significantly, Diodorus Siculus xii 42.8 notes that when he did lead the first retaliatory raid Perikles was praised by the Athenians ‘... on the grounds that he was acting as a general and waging war on the Peloponnesians’.⁹⁵

Perikles remained apparently unmoved by the accusations of cowardice and the demands to march against the enemy but he nevertheless refrained from calling an assembly, checked the city’s defences, and tried to keep things calm. Importantly, as noted above, Thukydides adds that he also continually sent the cavalry out to prevent the enemy from ravaging the area close to the city.⁹⁶ In addition, his invasions of the Megarid and the large-scale seaborne raids on the Peloponnese would also have helped to quieten those who were demanding an aggressive response to the invasions.⁹⁷

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The Athenians then did try to protect Attika by the most effective method available to them short of risking a major, and potentially disastrous, hoplite engagement. The protection provided by cavalry in the mobile defence rôle throughout the war was by no means total and was never intended to be so, but it was the best which could be achieved under the circumstances. It was not only a necessary factor in raising and maintaining morale but also provided some measure of physical protection to Athens’ agricultural hinterland and was therefore well suited to the threat not only in 431 but also to its extension in 413 when Dekeleia was occupied. As we have seen from Thukydides, this protection was greatest closest to Athens, although perhaps even extending as far out as Mounts Aigaleos and Hymettos, the area shown in MAP 2, and where most of the city’s local food supply was presumably grown. This in turn must have helped to ease, even if only in a relatively small way, some of the financial burdens of the war. The efficacy, or at the very least the desirability, of using the *hippeis* against the invaders in this manner is illustrated by the fact that, whatever their war aims, Perikles’ successors continued to follow his lead.

Thukydides i 143.4–5 therefore represents an oversimplification of Perikles’ ultimate strategy. While, quite sensibly, he did, as Thukydides states, avoid a major hoplite clash with the main Peloponnesian army, Perikles did not just sit back and leave Attika to its fate. Instead he protected it to the best of Athens’ ability, partially by use of the border forts against cross-border raids,⁹⁸ but primarily by using the cavalry to reduce the damage caused by the annual invasions. This, I would argue, was an important supplement to his programme of offensive action against individual enemy states already identified by Westlake. Whether Perikles intended to use the cavalry in this way right from the start or was first prompted to do so by the angry reaction of the Athenians to the first invasion is open to debate.⁹⁹ Nonetheless, it was not only a logical and sensible response to the enemy actions in 431 and the reactions these caused in Athens, but was, in my view, the best of the available defensive options.

⁹⁵ ὡς δυνάμενος στρατηγεῖν καὶ τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις διαπολεμεῖν (Budé).

⁹⁶ Thukydides ii 22.2.

⁹⁷ Westlake is correct to state that the morale factor was not the *sole* reason for Perikles’ programme of raids and invasions, *Essays* 91 ff., ‘Seaborne raids’ 79–80 and 84, but I believe it *was* an additional, and not unimportant, reason for staging them.

⁹⁸ Although the activities of the garrisons here were almost certainly not directed in detail from

Athens but presumably relied upon the initiative of the local commander. It may well be that the function of these forts was to guard against raiders and that their use here was accepted simply as part of the natural scheme of things rather than representing any innovative, or even consciously formulated, part of Perikles’ strategy. This is perhaps supported by Thukydides’ remarks at ii 18.2 on the rôle of Oinoe in wartime.

⁹⁹ See the discussion in the appendix.

However, the adoption of mobile defence did have one unforeseen result. The cavalry served continually in defence of Attika, the most important campaign area according to traditional values, and at some cost to themselves. Thukydides vii 27.5, for example, paints a moving picture of the hardships endured by both cavalryman and mount while riding out every day of the year against those in Dekeleia and Xenophon's *Eq. Mag.* vii 4 also stresses the difficulty of sustaining the mobile defence rôle.¹⁰⁰ The *hippeis* also served overseas while in contrast the other sections of the armed forces served *only* overseas and not in active defence of Attika. In terms of the *kaloi kagathoi* at any rate, the cavalry were the only ones actually doing something to protect the *chora*—the traditional focus of military activity. *Ar. Eq.* 573–80 contain a hint that as early as 424, long before the heavy commitment required by the Dekeleian campaign, the cavalry already believed that it was putting the most effort into fighting the war. It should also be remembered that while the cavalry, hoplites, and rowers all served Athens with their persons, the cavalry class in addition shouldered an important part of the financial burden of the war through trierarchies and the *eisphora*.

Therefore, although Aristophanes' comment is obviously exaggerated in the context of the total war effort, it seems likely that the *hippeis* themselves considered that they were bearing an unfair share of the burden and that this feeling intensified as hostilities dragged on. If this is so, then it may provide an additional explanation for their participation as a group in the oligarchic movements in the latter part of the Peloponnesian War.

APPENDIX. THUKYDIDES ON PERIKLES' INTENTIONS IN 431

Although beyond the original scope of my article, it is necessary to discuss Dr Ober's explanation of why Thukydides' accounts of Perikles' war policy at i 141 ff. and ii 65 fail to mention mobile defence when his record of the events clearly shows that cavalry was used in this rôle. Dr Ober basically argues that, in order to ensure the acceptance of his 'no-battle strategy' before the war began, Perikles had to, and did, promise that the *chora* would be protected by the cavalry. Thukydides, however, suppressed this information because 'Pericles could not be depicted as making a deal with the rural citizens over a concern so negligible in the greater scheme of things as rural property'.¹⁰¹

The onus is clearly upon Dr Ober to show why the evidence of Thukydides' testimony here should be discarded but his theory seems unnecessarily complicated and relies on three basic assumptions which cannot be substantiated. The first is that the *ekklesia* would not have accepted the 'no-battle strategy' without the promise of safety for the *chora*, the second that Perikles made such a promise. Following on from these is the third: that before the outbreak of war Perikles had therefore planned to use the cavalry to protect the *chora* from harm.

However, there is another explanation of the contradiction identified by Dr Ober which has the major advantage of fitting in with the existing evidence, provided by Thukydides. This is simply that Perikles did not refer to a cavalry-based defence of the *chora* in his pre-war speeches and, in all probability, had not envisaged such a comprehensive defence until events persuaded him that it was a necessary and effective option.

To take Dr Ober's assumptions in order, I do not consider that a public promise to defend the *chora* was a necessary prerequisite for securing initial acceptance of the policy outlined in Thuky. i 141 ff. Nor, perhaps, would such a promise have been compelling enough to have done so. Prior to the invasion of 431 Perikles had enjoyed well over a

¹⁰⁰ This passage is quoted above p. 104.

¹⁰¹ Ober 'Thucydides' 181 and 182.

decade of dominance in Athenian politics and was at the height of his influence. In addition, as outlined in Section I, the avoidance of pitched battle was eminently logical under the circumstances and this must have been apparent to many Athenians. The *demos* did not always decide policy according to selfish motives (the use of the Laureion silver to build ships recorded in Plut. *Them.* 4 springs to mind here) and damage to the rural areas would not in any case have involved direct loss to many of the urban populace. Perikles' plan was logical, and if his arguments in its favour were as convincing as the ones presented in Thukydides then it is not hard to believe that a majority could have accepted it on its merits.

Furthermore, it is by no means certain that an undertaking to protect Attika would have carried much weight prior to the outbreak of war. Cavalry certainly could be effective in defence of territory (see Section II) but Athens was not traditionally a cavalry power and the influence of the hoplite ethos in 431 was probably quite strong.¹⁰² As a result, some Athenians undoubtedly believed that horsemen were incapable of providing a defence of the *chora*.

In fact, I seriously doubt whether any Athenians believed that the *hippeis* could protect *all* of Attika: the Peloponnesian army was too large and had too many mounted troops of its own. Moreover, the Athenian cavalry, only fairly recently increased from 300 to 1000 men,¹⁰³ was as yet largely untried in battle. This is why it seems likely that, whenever the decision was made, the cavalry was never intended to provide more than partial protection of the countryside. Any promise by Perikles that such protection was to be total would, I think, have been regarded as audacious, if not actually foolhardy.¹⁰⁴

It seems quite feasible then that a combination of Perikles' influence and the logic of his case could have persuaded sufficient pre-war voters to adopt his plan to avoid a hoplite battle. A promise to protect the *chora* was not therefore a logical necessity and need never have been made. The difficult task was, it appears, not so much to persuade the Athenians to accept the plan in the first place as to abide by the decision once the threat to Attika was realised.

Thukydides ii 21 clearly illustrates the problems of maintaining their resolve once the invasion force had materialised. However, even then the logic of Perikles' arguments still held and was presumably reinforced when the population was able to see the size and power of the enemy for themselves. Some Athenians therefore, and possibly still a majority, presumably remained convinced of the correctness of their original decision. Perikles certainly did,¹⁰⁵ but he also took active steps to minimise the force of the dissenting view by checking the defences, muzzling debate, and by mobilising the *hippeis* to provide some obvious resistance to the enemy.

Perikles' use of the cavalry was certainly an important factor in ensuring that his strategy was not abandoned. But it was not the only factor, and the cavalry was not necessarily deployed in order to fulfill a promise made to the rural population nor because Perikles had always planned to employ them in this way. Given the size of the enemy and the relatively untried nature of the *hippeis*, he may not have realised their potential either for boosting morale or for protecting the city environs until they were actually put to the test and proved successful.

Thukydides ii 21–22 does in fact convey the impression that the Athenian reaction in 431 was worse than anticipated, and Perikles' actions here could well have been implemented more in response to the immediate crisis in Athenian resolve than in

¹⁰² For its survival as late as 341 cf. Dem. ix 49.

¹⁰³ On the date see G. R. Bugh, *The horsemen of Athens* (Princeton 1988) 76.

¹⁰⁴ The evacuation of all their property, including the woodwork from their houses (Thuky.

ii 14.1), suggests that the Athenians placed little faith in the possibility that their homes could be protected.

¹⁰⁵ Thuky. ii 22.1.

accordance with a long standing masterplan. I think we sometimes overestimate the extent to which political leaders operate to detailed blueprints for action¹⁰⁶ and in this case Perikles may simply have misjudged the effect of the first invasion and the extent of his personal influence. 'No plan survives the first contact with the enemy' is a common saying in military circles, and it seems quite feasible to me that Perikles had originally simply planned to fight the forthcoming war by avoiding a hoplite clash and feeding the city from the empire. However, when the war began and the harsh realities of this policy became apparent he extended the basic strategy to include seaborne raids and a much more comprehensive use of the cavalry.

If this analysis is correct, then why didn't Thukydides' description and assessment of Perikles' war plan at ii 65 include reference to these extensions? Again, the answer is more straightforward than a desire to suppress information detrimental to an idealised Perikles: Thukydides simply had more important things to discuss in his short section on this subject. The employment of the cavalry, like the use of naval raids identified by H. D. Westlake, was an adjunct to the main strategy of avoiding a battle. Both were in fact only relatively small parts of Perikles' overall strategy which was in itself a fairly major departure from normal practice. Thukydides apparently chose to concentrate on the main thrust of Perikles' plan.

If the tactic of mobile defence evolved fully only after it had proved its effectiveness in maintaining morale and reducing damage, then his silence at i 141 ff. and ii 65 is even more understandable: it was not part of a detailed battle plan worked out by Perikles in advance but was part of the measures he adopted to ensure his basic strategy actually worked. Thukydides did, however, record its use (as he did with the amphibious raids) and its success in protecting the areas around the city. Given the relative lack of sophisticated military theory and strategic analysis in fifth century Greece¹⁰⁷ this is perhaps as much as we could have expected of him.

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¹⁰⁶ On this see A. J. P. Taylor's analysis in *The origins of the second world war* (Harmondsworth 1973) *passim*, but especially 98.

¹⁰⁷ See my opening remarks.