

MYTILENE, PLATAEA, AND CORCYRA IDEOLOGY AND POLICY IN THUCYDIDES, BOOK THREE

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I

AMONG THE MOST STRIKING PASSAGES of Thucydides' history is his analysis, at 3.82 and 3.83, of the causes and the course of the *stasis* at Corcyra, and subsequently in other cities of Greece. Since Thucydides uses the occasion to make a general statement on the phenomenon, and since this passage contains some of his few overtly analytic statements, it is most often abstracted from its particular occasion, given an entirely general interpretation, and applied as a description or diagnosis of the moral state of Greece as a whole, as the stresses of war took their toll of the reserves of decency and civility on both sides. To some extent Thucydides intended that the passage be so taken. Yet in one respect, at least, returning the passage to its immediate context makes it possible for us to recognize an event of even greater magnitude, in Thucydides' interpretation of the war, than this *stasis* itself, or even this *stasis* as exemplary of other *staseis*.

What Thucydides says about the origin of the Corcyrean *stasis* (3.82.1) seems straightforward. This *stasis* was the first of its kind;¹ the Athenians were called in by the leaders of the *demos*, the Spartans by the oligarchs; this pattern was to be followed, later, "by, as it were, the whole of Greece." What was new to this *stasis* (and was also, no doubt, the cause of its peculiar violence) was the extensive involvement of the great powers in the internal political disputes of an individual Greek city. During peacetime, Thucydides says, neither occasion nor pretext would exist for this involvement, but at war, and with the alliances available, the involvement was easily arranged.

In fact, these simple statements conceal a major political development. That the *stasis* at Corcyra was seen by Thucydides as essentially political

¹Such—by elimination of alternatives and comparison with Thucydides' actual treatment of this *stasis* in his narrative—is the proper sense to be given the *ἐν τοῖς πρώτῃ* of 3.82.1. It is not enough to say that this *stasis* was "among" the first of the war, for were it not the very first of its sort its cruelty would hardly have appeared as shocking as it evidently did to Thucydides. Neither is Thucydides here saying that this was the first *stasis* of all in the war, for it was not. *Stasis* serious enough to involve the loss of the city had already occurred at Colophon in 430 (3.34.1); and reference is made in the history to earlier *staseis* at Larisa (2.22.3) and Megara (3.68.3). What makes this *stasis* "the first" (in a particular sense) and both shocking and significant is that it is the first *stasis* of a new and special character.

in character has been asserted before,² but these assertions do not consider that the origin of this political character is itself problematic. Because the alignment of Athens with the democrats of other cities and Sparta with the oligarchs seems, in the light of subsequent events, the natural alignment, and because war, as Thucydides' "violent teacher" (3.82.2), seems so conveniently to account for it, it is possible to underestimate how difficult it is to explain satisfactorily the origin of the alliances on which this alignment depends, and of the new kind of *stasis* they made possible.

Thucydides describes the necessary conditions for this *stasis* in a double genitive absolute: *πολεμουμένων δὲ καὶ ξυμμαχίας* [sc. *ἐτοίμης οὔσης* or the equivalent], and two considerations should convince us that each of these genitives must be given its proper and independent force. First, the availability of the great-power alliances on which this form of *stasis* depends cannot be said to be a simple consequence of the existence of a state of war, for four and one half years of war have already passed without their appearance. Second, war alone cannot explain the fundamental irregularity of these alliances that involve the great powers not with the governments of other cities, but with political factions inside them. I. A. F. Bruce points out that, convened as the actual government of Corcyra, the *demos* voted essentially for neutrality (3.70.2).³ The intervention of the Athenians and Spartans was at the instigation, not of the government of Corcyra, but, in fact, of its two political "parties." At 3.82.1 Thucydides makes it clear that this was the pattern wherever this kind of *stasis* took place, but it is an unprecedented sort of alliance with which we are now concerned: not of government with government, or of state with state, but of state with party.

If the irregularity of this kind of alliance raises questions about its origin, the past history of Corcyra raises even more fundamental questions about its nature. Knowing what we do about the earlier political history of Corcyra, we are forced to consider that although the alignment of democrats with Athens and oligarchs with Sparta was later to be expected, it was not originally as "natural" as is usually assumed,⁴ and its first appearance here bespeaks a dramatic political innovation. One of the *αἰτίαι* of the Peloponnesian War was, of course, the alliance of Athens

²Most forcefully by A. Fuks, "Thucydides and the Stasis in Corcyra: Thuc., III, 82-3 versus [Thuc.], III, 84," *AJP* 92 (1971) 48-55.

³I. A. F. Bruce, "The Corcyraean Civil War of 427 B.C.," *Phoenix* 25 (1971) 108-117, especially 108-109. On the extremely factional nature of these alliances, see R. P. Legon, "Megara and Mytilene," *Phoenix* 22 (1968) 200-225.

⁴As, for example, by Bruce (113) and Fuks (49). That there were occasions on which Athens established democracies among some of its allies further obscures the novelty of this alignment. Corcyra was not a subject of the empire, and, as its history makes clear, Athens was initially indifferent to its internal politics.

with Corcyra. From Thucydides' statements here at 3.82, and from later Athenian practices, we might assume that the alliance in 433 itself followed this politically consistent pattern (that is, of democratic Athens with the democrats of Corcyra). In fact, it did not. The initial event in the episode of Epidamnus was the expulsion of the Epidamnian oligarchs (1.24.5). When the democratic government of Epidamnus approached Corcyra for aid (1.24.6–7), it was refused. It received help, however, from the oligarchic government of Corinth (1.25.3). When, on the other hand, the now outnumbered Epidamnian oligarchs asked for Corcyrean aid (1.26.3), they received it. It was with, in fact, this oligarchically inclined (or perhaps merely politically indifferent) Corcyrean government that the Athenians made their alliance, against the democracy of Epidamnus.

Put baldly, in one of the events which led to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, oligarchic Corinth supported the democrats of Epidamnus, and democratic Athens supported the oligarchs of Epidamnus and the oligarchic-leaning government of Corcyra. At the least we must say that in their relations with independent nations at this crucial moment in the war the Athenians acted according to motives that had nothing whatever to do with the internal politics of these nations. Indeed, the Corinthians acted this way too. Yet, by the fifth year of the war, at 3.82.1, we find Athens supporting the democrats in Corcyra and the Spartans (or the Peloponnesians, replacing the Corinthians) supporting the oligarchs. Further, Thucydides states directly that this was to occur not in Corcyra alone, but all over the Greek world; and, from the fact that the leaders of the factions in the cities could count on the aid of the appropriate powers, we can conclude that it was thought the natural state of affairs.

If this later alignment seems to be natural by the fifth year of the war, but was not necessarily so prior to that moment (as the opposite alignment in 433 demonstrates), we must conclude that within Thucydides' interpretation of the war we see represented a dramatic and radical shift in the political opinions of the nations of Greece. In their dealings with cities outside their immediate blocs, the major powers appear to switch the sides they support. Or, perhaps more accurately, they decide that there now is an appropriate side for each of them to support, where previously sides in internal political conflicts were irrelevant. In this respect the alliance with Corcyra, to which Thucydides alludes at 3.82.1 as a condition of the *stasis* there as elsewhere, even if legally the same alliance as that of 433, no longer has the same essential basis. It is an alliance informed by a new determination of sides, a determination that was not made in 433. The alliances now available to either side were of a new character: they were politically homogeneous; they might be made, initially, with political factions rather than with the governments of the

states; and their purpose (to the faction calling in the great power) was to cause harm to the opposing political party. The last would certainly have been an *incidental* result of all previous alliances between states, but the alliances described by Thucydides in 3.82.1 were the first which aimed specifically at influencing internal politics.⁵

In effect, we now have two questions. We need to find (1) Thucydides' explanation of the origin of these new alliances, and (2) his explanation of the radical shift in political opinions that has taken place in Greece. In Thucydides' history, these political innovations manifest themselves in the fifth year of the war, and his narrative of the fifth year (3.26–88) is, indeed, constructed precisely to explain them. It is almost entirely occupied with three events: the Athenian treatment of the surrender of Mytilene, the Spartan treatment of the surrender of Plataea, and the *stasis* at Corcyra. None of these events has any effect on the material military conditions of the war. The surrender of Mytilene and the subsequent terms imposed upon it do little except return the island of Lesbos to the Athenian empire. The surrender of Plataea, though the large number of soldiers committed to its capture implies a Peloponnesian belief in its importance, makes no difference to the conduct of the war in Boeotia and Attica. Its loss does not deprive Athens of opportunities for action against Boeotia (in fact, the largest Athenian campaign against Boeotia is undertaken after its loss); the addition of its territory to the Peloponnesian League does not result in any increase of activity against Attica from Boeotia. The stronger ties between Corcyra and Athens that result from the defeat of the oligarchic party in Corcyra do not make any apparent difference in the amount of Corcyrean help to the Athenians. During the original *ἐπιμαχία* Corcyrean help was minimal; following the *stasis*, despite, as it were, a new debt owed Athens, Corcyrean help was, it seems, still minimal.⁶ But, though these three events of the fifth year were of little or no material consequence, Thucydides treats them with a care and an emphasis reserved for only a very few events in the course of the war.⁷ We must therefore conclude that he saw in them some crucial non-material consequence or significance, and it is for this that we must search.

Previous interpretations of Thucydides' reasons for including and emphasizing these events have in the main tended toward two separate, moral demonstrations: either (1) the events of Book Three show the in-

⁵Cf. T. J. Quinn, "The Unpopularity of the Athenian Empire," *Historia* 13 (1964) 257–266, especially 258–259.

⁶Specific Corcyrean help is noted only twice by Thucydides: 2.25.1 and 3.94.1. See A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* (Oxford 1956) 1.168.

⁷The events of the fifth year of war are treated at disproportionate length. In addition, they include four speeches, all in debates. Such treatment is accorded only two other occasions: the beginning of the war (Book One) and the Sicilian Expedition (Book Six).

creasing brutalization of the Greeks, a brutalization which will culminate in the execution of the Melians in Book Five;⁸ or (2) the paired debates at Athens and Plataea compare the treatment accorded conquered foes by Athens and Sparta, and show the temperance of the Athenians and the cruelty of the Spartans.⁹ Such moral explanations will not, unfortunately, bear scrutiny.

The actions of Athens and Sparta in Book Three cannot provide new evidence of brutality since the brutality exhibited in them is not especially new. On the Spartan side we can always find evidence of a kind of gratuitous brutality: at 2.67.4 Thucydides mentions without emphasis that since the beginning of the war the Spartans killed the sailors they captured at sea, whether they were actually Athenian allies or were neutral; at 3.32.1–2 it requires a special argument to keep Alcidas, the Spartan commander, from executing captives of nations he was putatively in process of liberating from Athens. On the Athenian side, too, we can find evidence of a consistent level of violence: at 2.67.4 the actions of the Spartans are used to excuse a set of illegal executions by the Athenians; the so-called low point of Athenian brutality (Melos) is antedated by an identical slaughter at Scione six years before (5.32.1) which receives no comment from Thucydides; execution was not actually considered in the Melian Dialogue, and in any case probably no more men were killed at Melos and Scione than were killed in the “less brutal” executions at Mytilene; almost half of the Athenians who deliberated about Mytilene were in favor of executing the *entire* male population of that city. It is extremely difficult to demonstrate any progressive brutalization; rather, violence appears to remain at a uniform level throughout the war. (Although it may be fair to say that as the war progressed rationalizations of violence became more perfunctory.)

Neither can we find a moral lesson by seeing the debates at Athens and Plataea as exemplary of the differing attitudes of Athens and Sparta toward the enemies they capture. Mytilene and Plataea do not stand in anything like the same relation to their respective conquerors, and so the comparison could hardly be considered adequate. More significantly, in neither case does the decision provide an example: the Spartans never find themselves in a similar position, and so never act this way again; and, while the Athenians do often find themselves dealing with allies that revolt, their responses are always different from their response here.¹⁰

⁸So John H. Finley, Jr., *Thucydides* (Cambridge, Mass. 1942) 177–180; F. M. Wassermann, “Post-Periclean Democracy in Action: The Mytilenean Debate (Thuc. III 37–48),” *TAPA* 87 (1956) 27–41, especially 28–29, 34.

⁹So Gomme, *Commentary* 2.354–355, who also hints at a general slide toward accepting brutality.

¹⁰The Athenians act either better, as at Mende (4.130.7) and Lesbos and Clazomene (8.23.6), or worse, as at Torone (5.3.4) and Scione (5.32.1). Gomme suggests (*Commentary*

Finally, when the comparison is made, it is usually to demonstrate the greater temperance, if not decency, of the Athenians. But while it is true that there is something ugly about the way in which the Plataeans are condemned, it is necessary to remember that the "temperate" or "decent" Athenian solution killed probably as many as five times the number of men killed by the Spartan decision, and that this temperate solution was passed by only a few votes.

Both of these interpretations wrongly assume that, since the two debates do not result in actions of *material* significance, the debates are examples of general attitudes rather than events in their own right. In doing so they separate the events of the fifth year not only from each other, but from any specific temporal location. Yet surely it would be better to return these events to their context in the war, as particular actions grounded in the developing strategies and attitudes of the combatants. Since they stand together almost without interruption, and were felt by Thucydides to be appropriately treated thus, it is reasonable to look for their significance in the light that they throw on each other.

This approach requires us to treat the speeches in Book Three as more or less accurate representations of speeches actually given—or which Thucydides wishes us to believe were actually given—during this year. While the historicity of the speeches has long been controversial, for our purposes straightforwardly operational considerations argue that we deal with the speeches—initially, at least—as if they were genuine.¹¹ Since the speeches appear in Thucydides' history as particular pieces of political rhetoric delivered on specific occasions, it is only by regarding them as such that we can confidently approach *Thucydides'* interpretation of these events. Any attempt to emend these accounts before examining their function as if actual speeches will inevitably contaminate Thucydides' interpretation with our own. Thus, if our goal is to understand Thucydides' principles, intentions, and interpretations, our inquiry must begin

3.362) that the Toronean sentence was mitigated, in which case it was treated much better than Mytilene.

¹¹On the question of the historicity of the speeches, I am compelled to agree with their pointed defense by Donald Kagan, "The Speeches in Thucydides and the Mytilene Debate," *YCS* 24 (1975) 71–94, especially 71–79. Denying the authenticity of the speeches—or Thucydides' accuracy in reporting them—has extensive and destructive consequences. Inasmuch as Thucydides presents the speeches simply as speeches, and gives no indication that he has fabricated them in any material way, he gives to the speeches the same guarantee of historicity that he has given to every other event in his narrative. There is no way for us to question Thucydides' guarantee in the one instance without questioning it in all the others. To question the veracity of the speeches thus has the ultimate consequence of undermining—if not utterly destroying—Thucydides' general credibility as a historian. See also Donald Lateiner, "The Speech of Teutiaplus (Thuc. 3.30)," *GRBS* 16 (1975) 175–184, especially 180–181.

not by asking what Thucydides meant to say by writing a particular speech, but by asking what the purposes of the speaker were in giving it.¹² Only by first having determined this can we be in a position to ask what Thucydides' intention may have been in recording this speech and these purposes.

II

The answers to the questions we have raised concerning the novel alliances of the fifth year of the war are to be found in a change in intention or policy among the combatants. But change can only be recognized by reference to some fixed point. In the examination of policies, of the decisions which create policy, and of the arguments that influence decisions, our points of reference are the policies previously agreed to, and the principles according to which those earlier policies were made.

In this regard it is important to notice that Cleon's response to the revolt of Mytilene is a thoroughly conservative one. If we compare his speech in the debate on the Mytileneans (3.37-40) to previous Athenian statements concerning the empire and international relations (the Athenian speech at the first Spartan Congress and Pericles' three speeches), we see in them a fundamental agreement concerning the principles which are assumed to govern the actions of, and relations between, states. There is, indeed, a marked difference in tone between Cleon's speech and those earlier statements, and in the violence of Cleon's style we can see traces of both the violence of his character (according to Thucydides, 3.36.6) and the stresses and frustrations which five years of war and three of plague have created. But underlying the differences of style and temperament is a basic identity of principle, and in this debate on Mytilene Cleon's positions provide us with our fixed point of reference against which we can see the victory of Diodotus' speech as a distinct change in Athenian policy.¹³

¹²As Kagan (79) has made clear.

¹³Whose speech is the conservative one is a crucial point. If, as many suggest, it is Diodotus', then we have a picture of an older Athenian decency only barely holding its own against a growing brutality. In this case the exemplary interpretations would be correct. If the conservative speech is Cleon's, we may see in Diodotus' a new Athenian direction.

Donald Kagan (*The Archidamian War* [Ithaca 1974], 158 and 160) and B. X. de Wet ("Periclean Imperial Policy and the Mytilenean Debate," *AClass* 6 [1963] 106-124) would have Diodotus the conservative and heir to Pericles. But their identification of Diodotus and Pericles rests solely on their moderation, as compared to Cleon's immoderation. Diodotus is, certainly, the more moderate of the two speakers in the debate, and Cleon's immoderation makes a shocking contrast to previous statements

The Athenian speakers at Sparta cited two principles of international relations: that states act as they do from fear, honor, and profit (1.75.3), and that the weaker is always subject to the stronger (1.76.2). As the Athenians interpret these principles they are wholly materialistic, in that they attribute no efficacy or relevance to the policies or thought of particular states. The Athenians (and later Pericles and Cleon) assume not only that fear, honor, and profit are common to all states, but also that they will have the same influence on all states in the same circumstances (1.76.1–2). Thus, these principles ultimately explain all actions and relations among states by factors that are reducible simply to the material aspects of states: their size, the possibilities size allows, and the automatic reactions of states to the other states they encounter. Since all states were said to act according to these principles, all states could (and should) be treated in the same way. Cleon's argument for the execution of the entire male population of Mytilene is founded firmly on these principles and the relations they describe.

His argument is a simple one. Athens holds control of its allies like a tyrant (and his echo, here, of Pericles—whether genuine or merely an artifice—gives a further link to the past policy), by force or the fear of force alone (3.37). Any of the imperial cities, if it feels it can succeed, or that it would be profitable even to try, will revolt from Athens (3.39). In order, therefore, to preclude any further revolts, a terrible example must be made of Mytilene, so that the fear of failure can outweigh any hopes of profit in the minds of the rest of the allies (3.40). Two assumptions underlie this argument. First, that the only bonds in the empire or between states generally are complementary threats and fear.¹⁴ Second, that the only significant agents with which one deals are states as a *whole*. Both assumptions depend on the two previously mentioned

by Pericles. But we should not confuse moderation of tone with identity of principles. (Nor should we be carried away in thinking Diodotus moderate: his moderate solution kills one thousand prisoners.) Gomme ("Four Passages in Thucydides," *JHS* 71 [1951] 70–80, especially 78) has seen the similarity of Cleon's language to that of Pericles. See also A. Andrewes, "The Mytilene Debate: Thucydides 3.36–49," *Phoenix* 16 (1962) 64–85, especially 76. Even more important than consonance of language, however, is consonance of principles. On the identity of Cleon's principles with those of Pericles, see L. Bodin, "Diodote contre Cléon," *Mélanges offerts à Georges Radet, REA* 42 (1940) 36–52, especially 44 and 47, and H. D. Westlake, *Individuals in Thucydides* (Cambridge 1968) 65. In Cleon's immoderation we can see how the stresses of war impose distortions on policy. Under Pericles the early principles of the Athenians tended toward moderation. After five years of war these same principles can, given the psychological changes war produces, be used to justify harsh and cruel measures. Moderation has disappeared not because Cleon has substituted new principles, but because war has eroded that reserve of confidence and decency upon which moderation depends.

¹⁴That Cleon here virtually echoes the statement made by the Mytilenean ambassadors to the Peloponnesian League (3.11.2) suggests both that these principles were widely held, and that their defeat would mark a departure from earlier policies.

principles, for when states are considered materialistically, the interests they have must be attributed solely to their material circumstances. Since for any state the material circumstances are a constant regardless of its political make-up or divisions, when states are thought of in these terms (as nothing more than their size, or wealth), then one can think of their interests or actions only as those of the state as a whole, as the interests or actions proper to a body of a given size and with a certain wealth (much as in physics the body is identified by its mass alone, and considered as a unit without parts). In these terms it is impossible or irrelevant to distinguish (as, by contrast, Diodotus does) different interests held by different classes within the state. States with the possibility of power will want to exercise that power, and that they will has no relation to their political composition. So, finally, the only relations that can exist between states are those of the exercise of power: control or servitude, dominating or being dominated.

Diodotus, who opposes Cleon in this debate, holds (or at least claims that he holds) many beliefs in common with him. With Cleon, he believes that the debate on Mytilene has more than immediate significance; it will decide imperial policy for other cases as well. He, too, believes that human nature is incorrigible and prone to crime, that cities as well as people are wont to commit violence upon one another if they think they can gain an advantage by it. He, too, believes that pity and mercy should play no part in the deliberations, and that the sole criterion should be the profitability of the decided policy for Athens. But where Cleon sees a simple solution according to well-recognized principles, Diodotus sees that the very beliefs he holds in common with Cleon render the established principles and policies ineffective and even counter-productive.¹⁵

The keystone of Diodotus' argument is the elegant sophistic (3.45-46) about love and hope. Having agreed with Cleon that human nature is unalterably aggressive, Diodotus argues that fear can never prevent the operation of this nature. Fear has been used as a deterrent from crime for ages, but even the fear of death is rendered ineffective, Diodotus claims, by the actions of love, hope, and fortune. This will be as true of states as of men, and the result of the execution of the Mytileneans will be to make other revolted allies more intransigent in their revolt, rather than to keep them from it. Having suggested the futility of Cleon's solution, Diodotus resolves the problem by transforming a simple political distinction into a prescriptive principle for international policy in a way not previously done by the Athenians.¹⁶

¹⁵He disagrees with Cleon about the utility of deliberation. Andrewes ([above, n. 13] 75) rightly points out that in this instance Diodotus holds views similar to those of Pericles. But this similarity pertains to the procedure of politics. As far as principles of action are concerned, it is Cleon who most resembles Pericles.

¹⁶Bodin (above, n. 13) 50 and 52.

When Diodotus insists (3.47.1-2) that the Athenians must distinguish between the interests and sympathies of the oligarchs and those of the *demos* in subject states, he employs a distinction of no great subtlety or novelty. It is hard to think of a single Greek city in which citizens would not recognize that there were, broadly conceived, two classes with differing and opposed interests. Moreover, the Athenians themselves had, on occasion, made use of this distinction as a means of "pacification" of revolted allies. At Erythrae and Samos (and possibly elsewhere) the Athenians dictated the institution of democracies following the surrender of these cities.¹⁷ Underlying this action was the assumption that democracies would be less passionately interested in revolting from the empire.

Nonetheless, Diodotus' use of the distinction to propose a general imperial policy of support for democracies clearly does mark an innovation. First, earlier Athenian establishment of democracies in allied cities was hardly a matter of policy.¹⁸ What firm evidence we have of such establishments shows that they follow the quelling of a revolt. They are measures decided after the fact, and, apparently, only in cases of serious and determined rebellion. Diodotus, however, is offering a principle to direct action toward the allies and other states "before the fact"—that is, a uniform policy to maximize allied sympathy and cooperation, not

¹⁷"Regulations for Erythrai: (?) 453-2 B.C.," in *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century B.C.*, ed. Russell Meiggs and David Lewis (Oxford 1969) no. 40; "Athenian Treaty with Samos: 439-8 B.C.," Meiggs-Lewis no. 56; see also Thuc. 1.115.2-3. Democracies may also have been established at Colophon (Meiggs-Lewis no. 47) and Chalkis (no. 52), but this is by no means certain.

¹⁸[Xenophon], *Constitution of the Athenians*, 1.14, 3.10-11, indeed suggests that it was a policy. Given the partisan exaggeration of the "Old Oligarch," it is hard to base any firm conclusions on his testimony. What may have occurred on an *ad hoc* basis could easily be blown up by him into a general policy. Moreover, some of his other statements contradict his assertion that this was a policy. At 1.18 he seems to suggest either that the allied cities as a whole hated and feared the Athenians (thus contradicting the notion of allied democratic sympathy for the Athenian *demos*) or that the "better" people (who did have grounds for fearing Athens, according to him) were in control of the governmental actions and trade of the cities (contradicting the notion of democracies in power in all the allied states). At 3.11 he draws our attention to occasions when the Athenians supported oligarchies, despite his earlier assertion that they never did. Finally, even if one assumes the strict factual accuracy of what could be called a scurrilous pamphlet, the most likely date of its composition renders its statements about Athenian political policy inconclusive. If the work was written before the Peloponnesian War (as argued by Hartvig Frisch, *The Constitution of the Athenians* [Copenhagen 1942] 62) it may indeed describe an ideological Athenian foreign policy in operation before 427. But if (as now seems to be more widely agreed) the date of composition is placed at or near 424 (cf. G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* [Ithaca 1972] 308-310; Harold B. Mattingly, "The Athenian Coinage Decree," *Historia* 10 [1961] 179; Russell Meiggs, *The Athenian Empire* [Oxford 1972] 390-391, places the composition at some moment during the war), the policy—if it be such—to which the author is referring may in fact be one which began in 427, yet which seemed to have been in effect for a much longer time.

merely a case by case expedient to return revolted allies to Athenian control. No such consistent policy of support for the democratic factions in the cities had existed before, as we can see from other occasions on which the Athenians did not establish democracies in recaptured cities,¹⁹ and also from earlier Athenian indifference to the ideological position of its allies *before* a revolt or the framing of an alliance.²⁰

A second innovation in Diodotus' proposal is its range of application. Although Diodotus addressed himself only to imperial affairs, his principle could easily be abstracted from this particular field, and put to wider use. If support for democrats in the allied cities will bind them closer to Athens, should not support for democrats in independent cities make possible the binding of those cities, also, to Athens? However widespread Athenian support of democracies inside the empire may have been before 427, up to this point we can see no use of this principle to direct Athenian policy toward cities *not* in the empire. In one especially relevant case, we can see that Athenian relations to Corcyra before this moment were decided solely on material, not ideological, grounds. Diodotus' transformation of a "domestic" political distinction into an abstract principle, however, made possible the extension or "externalization" of this principle, and from this time forward we see Athenian relations to other cities (even outside the empire) profoundly shaped by this ideological interpretation. It is precisely this aspect of the novelty of Diodotus' principle that is most important to Thucydides. The occasions on which he draws attention to the ideological basis of actions in the war—*staseis* that encourage Athenian intervention, or instances where the form of government makes a difference to the alignment of states in alliances—are predominantly those involving Athens with cities outside its empire.²¹ In this, of course, Thucydides is consistent with his general interests in the history: de-emphasizing, for the most part, questions of internal imperial administration, and concentrating on policies and actions that affect the independent participants in the war.

The third perspective from which we may see the novelty of Diodotus'

¹⁹Notably Miletus in 449, see Meiggs, *Athenian Empire* 115, 562–563, and possibly Colophon and Chalkis (above, n. 17).

²⁰For example, Mytilene, Chios, Samos, and Miletus before their revolts, and Corcyra. See Meiggs, *Athenian Empire* 208–210; Meiggs-Lewis 143; Benjamin Dean Meritt, H. T. Wade-Gery, Malcolm Francis McGregor, *The Athenian Tribute Lists* (Princeton 1950) 3.149–154, "Democracy in the Allied Cities." There would, of course, be sound political reasons for not pursuing "democratization" as a policy: it would tend toward *unsettling* many cities. As long as an oligarchy was remaining quietly in the empire, it would hardly be worth the upheaval of changing its government.

²¹Corcyra itself, Megara (4.66–74), Boeotia (4.76.2), and, during the Peace of Nicias, Argos, Elis, and Mantinea (5.47, 5.76, 5.82). Thucydides' interest in the ideological basis of actions relating to Athenian allies is limited primarily to the defections of Torone (4.110.1) and Mende (4.123.2) during Brasidas' campaign.

proposal is that of Thucydides' narrative of the war itself. Even were we to conclude (on the basis of evidence outside Thucydides) that Diodotus' proposal was *not* a policy innovation at Athens in 427, we would still have to conclude that it is presented to us as one by Thucydides. In the history no earlier Athenian speaker gives any strategic significance to the political positions of factions inside a state. Moreover, the materialistic principles of international relations that other Athenians enunciate are ones for which the consideration of political factions would be irrelevant.²² When Thucydides reports it to us, Diodotus' use of the distinction of the interests of political parties as a basis for international politics is an innovation, and it is in his perception of the novelty of this position that Thucydides sees the beginning of an important change in the nature of the war.

The first step of this change is Diodotus' proposed solution to the Mytilenean problem, resting on the suggestion of a new kind of bond within the empire to replace the allegedly ineffective ones of fear. By using his political distinction, Diodotus makes relevant a fact which Cleon ignored completely (perhaps from malice, perhaps because it was meaningless in the system described by his principles), and which justifies sparing the lives of the majority of the Mytileneans. When the oligarchs finally had to arm the Mytilenean populace, the people immediately delivered the city to the Athenian commander (3.47.3 in this speech, 3.27.3 in Thucydides' narrative). Diodotus generalizes this into an imperial policy: the allies can be kept close to Athens by cultivating the political sympathies which exist between the democratic factions of the subject cities and Athens. If human nature cannot be reformed, this, at least, would make it possible to channel its energies in directions advantageous to the Athenians.²³ It is this policy that, in revising their earlier decision on Mytilene, the Athenians accept.

²²Cleon, in fact, specifically denies that the distinction has any significance (3.39.6), as he must to remain consistent to his principles.

²³Whether or not these sympathies existed touches on the question of the "popularity" of the empire. Without attempting to treat this problem directly, the following observations may be made: (1) Diodotus may well be expressing an Athenian opinion (or hope) concerning allied democratic support, whether the allies themselves felt at all sympathetic to Athens or not; (2) as long as the Athenians believed this, it could shape their policy, and they would have been unwise not to try to manipulate or generate whatever sympathy they could. Therefore, Diodotus could propose such a policy as a way of *creating* sympathy (and new allies) for Athens. Diodotus himself recognizes this in his statement (3.47.4) that Athens should always speak of the democrats as allies, even when their actions have not warranted it, for fear of losing their only possible supporters.

We need not therefore conclude with Gomme (*Commentary* 2.322) that the apparent contradiction between Diodotus' assertion of allied support and Thucydides' statement at 2.8.5 of universal hostility to Athens indicates that the passages were written at different stages of Thucydides' thought about the war. The contradiction may be

At 3.36.6 Cleon is introduced as the politician with the most influence in Athens at this time, and his defeat, therefore, is itself an event of some note. In making a point of the closeness of the vote after this debate (3.49.1), even on this second deliberation and under the influence of remorse, Thucydides provides a second reason for the noteworthiness of this occasion, by suggesting it is a moment of virtual equilibrium between one policy and the other. The materialistic interpretation of international politics implied by Cleon's response to the revolt of Mytilene (and the principles by which he justified this response) had been the interpretation current in Athens (and probably elsewhere) throughout the first five years of the war. Diodotus' break with this interpretation, and his advancement of a principle that was soon extended to cover the entire Athenian foreign policy introduced the consideration of ideology into the actions of the cities in the war. His success in this debate is the occasion of a significant shift in Athenian policy, and by introducing ideology Diodotus proposes the principle of exactly the new kind of alliance whose origin we are trying to find: of the Athenian state with a political faction, rather than with the government, of another state. This kind of alliance could not have occurred until the introduction of ideology, since its political foundation would not have been comprehended under the earlier materialistic interpretation.

Of course, changes like this do not occur instantaneously. That Cleon specifically denies the application of the distinction between the interests of the oligarchs and the *demos* (3.39.6) indicates that the distinction was in use by other persons besides Diodotus, and that Cleon expected it to be used in the debate. What we see in the debate is not the invention of the distinction, but the first successful assertion of it as a basis for a consistent policy, the acceptance of its applicability, and its authorization for public use. Although the materialist interpretation held public authority throughout the first five years of war, an increasing dependence upon ideological interpretations must actually have been appearing in Athens for this moment to have occurred at all. Diodotus' speech does not mark the first moment at which an ideological interpretation was used; rather, it marks the first moment at which ideology was used as a principle publicly and at the "policy level."

explained by (1) a difference between Diodotus' opinion and the true feelings of the allies; or by (2) rhetorical and political needs at Athens which led Diodotus to propose his policy in order to woo the allied democrats. It is also possible, of course, that opinion had changed within the imperial cities since the start of the war. This would not imply that Thucydides had changed *his* opinion. Quinn ("Political Groups at Chios, 412 B.C.," *Historia* 18 [1969] 22-30) also points out that the possibility of a decisive victory over one's political enemies could create an authentic tie between Athens and the democrats in allied cities that was independent of the question of popularity.

III

The victory of Diodotus' speech made possible, on the Athenian side, the shift of support of the Athenian government from the oligarchs of Corcyra to the democrats and (insofar as this speech occurs as a public event which can therefore be perceived by other states) made possible the recognition by the Corcyrean democrats of the availability of Athenian aid for use in factional conflict. The debate at Plataea performed the same function on the Peloponnesian side.

The significance of this debate is not immediately apparent. Sparta was deeply involved in the affair only for the sake of the Thebans, yet the virulent hatred between Thebes and Plataea antedated even the Persian War. The Spartans killed the Plataeans because the Thebans wanted them to, and the Thebans wanted this because of old hatreds, not because of any new reasons that had grown out of the present conflict. The real concerns of the situation, therefore, had little direct relation to the Peloponnesian War. Given this background, we would expect the execution of the captured Plataeans to be a foregone conclusion, and we would expect the process that led to it to be perfunctory and simple. At first, the Spartan judges at Plataea were clearly favorable to the Theban request for the execution of all the Plataeans, and demonstrated this by the question they asked the Plataeans by way of trial (3.52.4: "Whether they had done any good to the Spartans and their allies in this war"), a question which allowed the Plataeans no opportunity for defense. And yet, the eventual execution did not issue directly from these prejudgments.

Unexpectedly, the Plataeans were almost successful in persuading the Spartans to show mercy, for at 3.60 (following the Plataean speech) Thucydides informs us that the Thebans asked permission to speak because they were afraid that the Spartans might retreat from their earlier agreement.²⁴ It was the Theban speech which caused the judges to change their minds yet again and to decide for the execution of the Plataeans. That the Plataeans were almost successful, however, directs our attention to the arguments of the Thebans (and away from the ancient animosities between Thebes and Plataea) as the cause of the condemnation. That is, had the Spartans executed the Plataeans without wavering, we could only look to the old hatreds for an explanation of the executions. But because the Spartans did waver, we know that there

²⁴"The Thebans feared . . . lest the Spartans give in at all (μή . . . τι ἐνδῶσι)," 3.60. The vehemence of Theban hatred for Plataea (they are unwilling to allow even the slightest mitigation of sentence) gives an indication of the power and effectiveness of their argument. It is strong enough to convince the Spartans too (though they have no old animosity to drive them to it) to be unwilling to make the slightest concession.

was something said at this debate which caused them to overcome their hesitation (the result of the Plataean speech), to reconfirm their judgment against the Plataeans, and to proceed with the executions.

The only effective argument the Plataeans can marshal in this debate is a direct appeal for mercy, supported by reference to their actions in the Persian War (3.54, and 3.56–59).²⁵ The appeal depended on Spartan memory of the Theban betrayal of the Hellenic cause in that war (of Theban “Medism,” as it would be called—a charge that the Plataeans never made in name, but introduced early in their speech, and returned to no fewer than four more times²⁶), and on Spartan willingness to consider Medism or fidelity to the Hellenic side the primary distinction to be made in determining the moral character of nations. That this memory still exercised some hold on the Spartans can be seen in the effect the Plataean speech had on the judges. In the end, however, the Spartans ignored this appeal because the Theban speech replaced this distinction with a new criterion for the evaluation of states, a new model of international behavior that enabled the Spartans to overcome their hesitation.

The Thebans delivered a brutal speech, angry, full of hatred for the Plataeans, and poorly reasoned as well. For all that, it was successful. In general, the argument of the speech is this: however badly we may have acted during the Persian War, the Plataeans have now acted much worse. As the foundation of this attempt to turn the tables on the Plataeans, the Thebans make use of what, for this occasion, was a powerful rhetorical invention. Drawing on the moral indignation encapsulated in the familiar charge of “Medism” (*μηδισμός*), the Thebans propose (for the first time in this history) the concept of “Atticism” (*ἀττικισμός*), parallel in construction, and implying the same senses of betrayal and criminality.

The Thebans said in effect that the Plataeans may not have Medized, but they have Atticized, and that is worse. This is a cruel rhetorical trope, for by a mere verbal similarity the Thebans insisted that actions of vastly different qualities and magnitudes were in fact equivalent. Yet

²⁵At 3.55.4 they also argue that in any case they are not to blame for their actions: “So, whichever of you [Athenians or Spartans] is leading your allies, it is not the followers who are responsible if anything ill be done, but those who commanded the incorrect acts.” That this would most probably not have been an effective argument I believe we can see from the Theban speech, in which it is used three times, but in contradictory senses. At 3.62.4 the Thebans use it to exculpate themselves from having fought with the Persians; at 3.63.2 they deny the application of the argument and insist that the Plataeans should have revolted from Athens; and at 3.65.2 they again invoke it to demonstrate that the Plataeans were wrong in opposing the Theban attack of 431 (this time even paraphrasing the Plataean words). To have the Thebans unself-consciously use the argument in contradictory senses seems to me to throw the gravest doubt on the credibility and effectiveness of any such *remotio criminis* at this point in the war.

²⁶The Plataeans first mention Medism at 3.54.3, and then again at 3.56.4–5, 3.57.2–3.58.1, 3.58.4–5, and 3.59.2.

it was a singularly effective argument. It suggested that the indignation to which the Plataeans had appealed against the Thebans should now be reflected back upon themselves. It had, for this audience, an attractive appropriateness, representing (in its parallel to Medism) both the immensity of the Athenian threat and the limitlessness of Athenian ambitions as perceived by the Peloponnesians. Most importantly, as a slogan it had the political effectiveness necessary for its acceptance.

By his treatment of the slogan here and later, Thucydides seems to imply that this debate was either the occasion of its invention or the first instance of its use to determine policy. The Theban speech marks the earliest appearance in the language of both Atticism (*ἄττικισμός*) and its verb, Atticize (*ἄττικίζειν*), and there are other indications of the novelty of the words. They are used three more times in Thucydides (4.133.1; 8.38.3; 8.87.1), and then later by Xenophon.²⁷ Of the Thucydidean examples, three observations should be made. First, the words are never used by the Athenians or their allies. They were used by the Thebans, by the Spartan faction in Chios, and (in their usage at 8.87.1) presumably by the Peloponnesians generally. (When Thucydides uses one of the words himself at 8.87.1, he is echoing the popular explanation circulating among the Peloponnesians in Asia Minor.) These were not neutral words that Athenians could use; they denoted a crime, and thus were current only among the Peloponnesians and their supporters. Second, in these three later citations, Thucydides gives the words no explanation or special emphasis. In his off-hand and matter-of-fact use of the words we can find evidence of their having achieved acceptability as political slogans. Third, we can even trace the outlines of the political history of the words. They are used for the first time in this speech to maximize the criminality of Plataean resistance, and to provide the Spartan judges with a justification for the execution of the Plataeans. Having found success once with the slogan, the Thebans used it again later (4.133.1) against the Thespians. This time they alleged that Atticism was a crime in fact (not merely *like* a crime): *ἐπικαλέσαντες ἄττικισμόν*, "laying Atticism to their charge" (or, perhaps, "alleging Atticism as their crime"). When used in Chios (8.38.3) the word has indeed received the status of a formal crime. (Testimony to the existence of an actual crime called Atticism can be found in an Athenian inscription [IG 2²33, dated ca 385] honoring Thasians who were prosecuted for the crime of Atticism.²⁸) And when Thucydides speaks of Tissaphernes as Atticizing (8.87.1), the word seems

²⁷Xenophon *Hell.*, 1.6.13; 6.3.14. Xenophon also appears to be the first to use the terms "Laconize" and "Laconism" in the parallel descriptive sense of "siding with" (rather than "imitating") the Spartans.

²⁸H. W. Pleket, "Thasos and the Popularity of the Athenian Empire," *Historia* 12 (1963) 75.

half accusation, half description. Eventually, the terms could be used wholly descriptively, as in Xenophon: "In every city some Laconized and others Atticized" (*Hell.* 6.3.14, 371 B.C.).²⁹

The argument to which the Spartan judges responded—the assertion that Athenian behavior in fact followed a pattern so fearful and so criminal as best to be summarized by a slogan that reminded the hearers of the terrors of Medism—was, in its own way, as ideological an argument as Diodotus' at Athens. It was not specifically political, as was Diodotus', but oligarchs are especially prone to use non-political slogans even in political situations. Yet the slogan "Atticism" as the emblem of a specific perception of the Athenian danger was as abstract and extensive a formulation of international behavior as was Diodotus'. The difference between "Atticism" and "Athens" (as one's enemy) is precisely ideological. Athens is a city which one may fight. In its appearance to Athens' enemies as a systematic pattern of behavior, however, Atticism was an ideology that *other* cities might embrace (or by which they could be "infected"), and to explain the actions of nations by reference to its effect is to shift one's interpretation of events from opposition to a material entity to opposition to an abstract, yet powerful, force inherent in a given set of beliefs. Oligarchs, too, were aware of the distinction of democrats and oligarchs, and to the oligarchs in Thucydides' history, the concept of Atticism came to stand for the international form of Athenian democracy and the dangerous influence they believed it exercised.

IV

Any radical shift in the political interpretations of a nation will entail the reformulation of policy, and will cause discernible changes in its actions. For Thucydides, 427 is the year in which the participants in the war came to attribute a new meaning to it, and the adoption of new, ideologized interpretations of political relations by both sides can be seen in his history to have a profound effect on their conduct of the war.

On the Athenian side, from this time all alliances were with democracies or democratic factions alone, and all captures of cities by the Athenians involved a change in the form of government. (The latter is

²⁹There are also stylistic grounds for thinking the Theban speech marks the first appearance of "Atticism" and "Atticize." The Plataeans in fact never used the term "Medism" in their speech. The omission makes its sudden appearance in the Theban speech all the more striking. It is not a word one would expect a nation to be willing to use of itself, yet the Thebans were not only willing to use it, they were eager to. They pounced on the word precisely because it allowed them to make prominent use of their coinage "Atticism."

also true of cities captured by the Peloponnesians.) At the beginning of the Peloponnesian War the nature of the governments of allied cities appears to have been irrelevant. Although Corcyra had some form of popular government in 433, it supported the exiled oligarchs from Epidamnus (1.24.5–7 and 1.26.3–4), and Athens was quite willing to aid Corcyra aid the oligarchs. Moreover, before Corcyra approached the Athenians, it had approached Sparta, and indeed had received some moral support there (1.28.1), yet this did not affect Athenian attitudes toward an alliance with Corcyra. Mytilene, too, was in the hands of its oligarchs at the time of its rebellion in 428 (and the oligarchs alone negotiated on behalf of the entire city with the Peloponnesians at Olympia, 3.9–14). That it was also an oligarchy in 432 is strongly implied by the statement (3.2.1) that the city was interested in revolution even before the outbreak of the war.³⁰ Yet Lesbian ships (primarily Mytilenean) were allowed to serve with the Athenian navy until the rebellion actually took place (3.3.4). There was not, apparently, up to the fifth year of the war, any notion of an ideological “security risk.”³¹

From the moment of Diodotus’ speech, however, Athenian foreign relations took a decidedly ideological turn. Athenian involvement in the *stasis* at Corcyra was on the democratic side; Megara, which had been attacked ineffectually twice a year from the beginning of the war, was almost taken with the help of the Megarian democrats (4.66–74); the Athenian campaign in Boeotia was the result of the initiative of Boeotian democrats (4.76.2). During Brasidas’ campaign in Thrace, military events depended almost entirely on politics: Thucydides tells us (4.78.2–3) that the Thessalian *demos* would have prevented Brasidas’ march north, but did not have the power to do so under their constitution; Brasidas was called into cities by the oligarchs (Torone, 4.110.1; Mende, 4.123.2); aid was given to Athens by the *demos* at Mende (4.130.4–5).

Further evidence for the importance of ideological concerns at this stage of the war can be found in the complicated events surrounding the shifting alliances of the Peace of Nicias. At 5.31.6 (in 421) it is stated that Boeotia and Megara chose not to join the Argive alliance because of the assumed conflict of interests between their oligarchic governments and the democratic governments of Argos and its allies. In 420 the Argives broke off negotiations with Sparta in order to take advantage of an

³⁰That on this early occasion the Spartans were unwilling to encourage this revolt may either (depending on its date) indicate Spartan indifference to ideological distinctions before 427 or perhaps simply a reluctance to break the terms of the Thirty Years’ Peace.

³¹See also Gomme, Dover, and Andrewes, *Commentary* 4.57–61, which, in addition, gives evidence of the toleration of democratic governments within the Peloponnesian League, and therefore of the lack of ideological discriminations, at first, among the Peloponnesians too.

Athenian offer (5.44.1), and enthusiastically concluded a quadruple alliance, Argos-Athens-Elis-Mantineia (5.47). Among the reasons given for the Argive decision is that Athens, like Argos at the time, was governed by a democracy.³² At 5.76 (418/17), however, the Argive oligarchs are shown concluding a peace with Sparta as the first step to the overthrow of the democracy. The oligarchs then broke off Argos' alliance with Elis, Mantineia, and Athens, and concluded an alliance with Sparta (5.78-79). They supported the Spartans in establishing an oligarchy in Sicyon, and took advantage of the opportunity provided by this campaign to put down the democracy in Argos and establish an oligarchy suitable to the Spartans (5.81.2). In a final ideologically-inspired reversal, however, a counter-revolution in 417 returned the democrats to power (5.82.2), and led to renewed Athenian aid and the reestablishment of the Argive alliance with Athens (5.82.5).³³

On the Peloponnesian side, the new ideological interpretation did not so much influence the character of Peloponnesian alliances (at no point did the Peloponnesians court alliances with democracies) as it did the character of the war the Peloponnesians fought. The change in interpretation of the enemy (from Athens to Atticism) suggested new strategies for bringing the war to a successful conclusion. From the beginning of the war it had been a declared goal of the Peloponnesians to detach Athens' allies from its empire (1.122.1), but the goal had proved elusive, perhaps because the Peloponnesians had no clear idea of the means to reach it. The new ideological interpretation, however, suggested that the detaching could take place through support for oligarchic attempts to subvert democratic governments in the Athenian allied cities, a course of action the Peloponnesians began to pursue. Further, the new interpretation suggested that once the democracy in Athens, and with it Atticism, had been brought to an end, so too could this war be ended and any future Athenian threat averted.³⁴

³²According to 5.47.9, all four members of the alliance were democracies at this moment.

³³Even after the Athenian defeat at Syracuse ideology can be seen to operate in ways which did not exist before 427. At the beginning of the war Thucydides asserts (2.8.4) that every city was sympathetic to the Spartans and hoped to be freed by them. Yet by 411, once support had crystallized around the ideological distinctions of 427, it remained so. Speaking of Thasos' revolt from the empire (8.64.4-5), Thucydides directly asserts that the democrats of Thasos would have opposed defection from the empire but that Pisander's installation of an oligarchy there removed the last obstacle to Thasian rebellion.

³⁴In this light we can see Lysander as the final executor of this interpretation. His general means of liberation and pacification was the installation of oligarchic regimes, and this was his key, too, to the final defeat and pacification of Athens in 404. Plutarch *Lysander*, 5.5, 8.1-3, 13.5-14.2, 15.6, 21.3; Diodorus Siculus 13.70.4, 14.3.4-5, 14.10.1, 14.13.1; Xenophon *Hell.*, 2.3.2-3, 2.3.13-14, 2.4.28-29.

In addition to specific changes of policy, the introduction of ideology brought general changes in the character of the war, and created the opportunity for its expansion in new directions. Previously, the initiative for bringing the war to a new theatre had lain with the great powers, and new cities were attacked as either of the powers deemed fit. The introduction of ideological alliances, however, significantly enlarged the number of cities which could take the initiative, and at the same time opened the way to dramatic shifts in the military situation. With the declaration that alliances and military aid would now be based on ideology, it became possible for political parties in relatively minor cities to call the great powers into new areas by involving them in what had previously been merely domestic conflicts. Further, the introduction of ideological alliances also created the opportunity for more decisive events in areas already touched by the war. Up to this time the capture of cities had depended solely on military superiority, and in general the results had been less than dramatic. From this moment the appearance of an army before a city could precipitate open political warfare, and bring about the betrayal of the city to the army by the victorious political faction. Military successes thus became more frequent as military power was supplemented by ideological support. Athens' near success in taking Megara (4.66–74) stands out as an example, and also reveals the depth of ideological hatreds. On this occasion the democrats felt that delivering the city to the Athenians (including the possible loss of the city's autonomy) was a smaller price to pay than accepting the return of their oligarchic exiles, and the probable overthrow of the democracy (4.66.3).³⁵

The true significance of the debates at Athens and Plataea is thus to be discovered not in the specific results of those debates, but in the speeches of the debates as political events in their own right, and in the changes of policy embodied in those speeches. Moreover, it is in the light of these new policies that the answers to the questions raised earlier about the *stasis* in Corcyra can be found, and its role in the narrative of this war made manifest. The form the Corcyrean *stasis* took required the availability of a new kind of alliance. The new alliance was a specifically political one, and it, in turn, required an underlying political interpretation of events which did not exist at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. Neither the new alliance nor the new *stasis* could emerge until this political interpretation had been applied to international affairs. Thucydides is emphatic that the moment at which this interpretation became effective was the fifth year of the war, on the occasions of these two decisions (themselves of no great importance) taken by Athens and

³⁵The same priorities can be seen within the empire after 427 at Mende (4.123.2), Chios (at least at the beginning of the revolt, 8.9.3, 8.14.2, 8.38.3), Samos (8.47.2, 8.76), and Thasos (8.64.4).

Sparta. Although we have been looking to the changes of policy in this fifth year to explain the Corcyrean *stasis*, it is clear that of the two—the *stasis* and the new political interpretation—the latter is the more important event. The *stasis* at Corcyra figures in this history not so much because of its intrinsic interest, but because it enables us to recognize the larger political movement.

If we look, finally, at the whole of Book Three, we can see the structure of Thucydides' careful explanation of this political change. Large-scale political shifts occur over some time, and Thucydides provides early indications of the shift of 427 in the speech of the Mytilenean ambassadors to the Peloponnesian League. It is there asserted (3.10.1) that community among nations is not possible unless they are similar in their customs (*ὁμοιότροποι*). With this to signal the emergence of a desire for homogeneous alliances, we can see the two debates of Book Three as the public articulation of the principles that would make such homogeneity possible. The principles, in turn, inform a new interpretation of the war that then becomes available to the powers for use in forming their own policies, and to other nations for use in influencing the actions of the powers. In this sequence, the *stasis* at Corcyra stands as the first fruit of the new policies. It is the first use of the policies by the political leaders of some outside nation, and it shows the willingness of the powers to act on them. It is also an example of the intransigence and the cruelty with which the war was to be fought under the new interpretation.

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