

ATHENIAN DEFENSIVE STRATEGY  
IN THE FOURTH CENTURY

P. HARDING

*In memoriam F. W. Mitchel*

WHEN GEORGES CLEMENCEAU acquitted Demosthenes of knowing “defeat only through the weakness of his soldiers,”<sup>2</sup> he was rehearsing a prejudice of western literature towards fourth-century Athens that was a cliché even in Demosthenes’ time: Athenians of the fourth century were not quite up to snuff, when compared with their ancestors. But these ancestors, it turns out, were imaginary supermen, a by-product of Athenian national propaganda.<sup>3</sup> Remove them and the way is open to an appreciation of a reality that some have already suspected.<sup>4</sup> Not lacking in resilience, courage, or creative energy,<sup>5</sup> the Athenians struggled manfully throughout the fourth and third centuries—at least to the Chremonidean War—to keep their city’s place in a changing world of superpowers. But at the eleventh hour a new thesis has been advanced to explain Athens’ defeat at Chaironeia and all that and to block the road to a positive evaluation of Athens’ history in the fourth century. This is the theory of the “defensive mentality” and it is inextricably involved with a new interpretation of the system of border fortresses of northern Attika as a sort of Maginot line.

<sup>1</sup>J. Ober, *Fortress Attica* (Leiden 1985).

<sup>2</sup>G. Clemenceau, *Demosthenes*, tr. C. M. Thomson (London 1926) 10.

<sup>3</sup>N. Loraux, *L’invention d’Athènes* (Paris 1981) 133–173.

<sup>4</sup>Not least Fordyce Mitchel, to whose memory this is dedicated.

<sup>5</sup>For resilience and courage it should be sufficient to point out that within a year of losing the Peloponnesian War the Athenians had restored the democratic constitution and regained control of their own affairs from a government that was being propped up by Spartan military and economic assistance and that they were sending men and weapons to Konon before the Demainetos incident and by 395 were at war with the Spartans again, even though their city was largely defenceless—not to mention the formation of a new league, Thermopylai (352), Chaironeia, the Lamian War, and, at the end of the century, the Four Years’ War. No small sign of spiritual resilience can be found in the list of titles of Old Comedies (dated with reasonable certainty from 404 onwards) given at pages 998 f. of J. M. Edmonds, *The Fragments of Attic Comedy* 1 (Leiden 1957). The Athenians had not lost their sense of humour. As for creative energy need one point out that the fourth century saw the acme of Athenian sculpture, philosophy, and rhetoric, and the creation of New Comedy, to name just a few of the contributions this period of Athenian history made to western civilization?

The strategy of preclusive frontier defense based on a comprehensive system of border fortifications and watch posts was uniquely a product of the economic and military conditions of the fourth century and of the mentality of defensivism that grew up among the citizens of Athens after the Peloponnesian War.

This quotation is taken from the last page of a recent book on the defence of Attika in the fourth century and summarises the central thesis of the work. The author, J. Ober, has argued with great vigour that the occupation of Dekeleia by the Spartans in the last phase of the Peloponnesian War and the consequent devastation of Attika had an equally devastating effect upon the national psyche of the Athenians. Almost overnight, he feels, those go-getting imperialists we had come to know so well from the pages of Thucydides suffered a loss of moral fibre and developed a neurosis called the "defensive mentality," whose overriding strategic consideration was the defence of the *chora*. In Ober's opinion the polis-based strategy of Perikles, which had treated the countryside of Attika as expendable, had been thoroughly discredited by the outcome of the Peloponnesian War and would never again be seriously espoused by any military strategist or theoretician worth his salt. From the beginning of the fourth century onwards the Athenians developed a system of forts and towers throughout northern Attika that was designed to prevent an enemy from penetrating the *chora*. In the matter of military strategy *nothing* was more important to any Athenian, whatever his stripe, than the defence of Attika.

Ober supports his thesis with arguments both numerous and varied, all of which establish beyond doubt, if there was any doubt, that fourth-century Athenians made defence of Attika an important element in their overall strategic planning. What is not so clear is (1) that this was a completely new idea and not a sophistication of an earlier fifth-century system; (2) the extent to which it was a reaction to the devastation of Attika in the Dekeleian War; (3) that defence of Attika was the *primary* concern of Athenian defensive strategy in the fourth century.<sup>6</sup>

On the first point there can be no disagreement. Even Ober concedes in his penultimate chapter that the Athenians had several forts on their frontier at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War—Eleusis, Oinoe, Panakton, and Oropos (192–193)—and others were built in response to the occupation of Dekeleia (193)—Sounion, Thorikos, and Rhamnous (rebuilt). Furthermore, despite Perikles' strategy, it is clear that the Athenians maintained troops in these forts (Thuc. 2.13.6; Ober 192). How seriously they treated the loss of one of them, Panakton, we know from the negotiations before and after the

<sup>6</sup>"Rejection of the Periclean city defense strategy, fear of invasion, determination to protect Attica, and reluctance to send citizen armies to distant theaters of war are the major components of the defensive mentality which grew up in fourth-century Athens" (Ober 64–65).

Peace of Nikias.<sup>7</sup> The unpleasant reality of night-time guard-duty in the *chora* is portrayed by Aristophanes in the final scene of the *Acharnians*.<sup>8</sup> So it is quite wrong to describe Athenian defensive strategy in the Peloponnesian War as exclusively polis-based. Ober is not unaware of this but maintains in response that these forts could not have prevented an enemy invasion and, since there is no occasion when they were used for that purpose, that they were never intended to. He is surely right in his claim (194–195) that they were guard-posts against brigands and small-scale raids and places of refuge for the countryfolk. We should not forget that they could also be used for aggressive purposes, as is clear from Thucydides' description (3.51.2) of Nikias' capture of the Megarian fort at Minoa, for it was being used to mount attacks upon Attika. By contrast, Ober argues (85), the fourth-century system was, like some Maginot line, intended to preclude an enemy invasion. It was Athens' first and most important line of defence. The relationship between frontier-fort and city-walls had been reversed. I shall return to this argument under point (3), but will content myself now by pointing out that the ability of the fourth-century system to preclude a serious attempt at invasion is an assumption that cannot be demonstrated, since there was no time in the fourth century when it ever did.<sup>9</sup>

On the second point, the close association between the development of a preclusive frontier defensive system and the devastation of Attika in the Peloponnesian War, precision of chronology is vital. Unfortunately the crucial archaeological evidence for dating the forts is, all too often, a matter of guesswork. Dating is largely by pottery and masonry styles (130–131). For most sites the pottery has come from surface-sherding, and this is quite unreliable. The difficulty in dating styles of masonry is notorious. The fact that one fort looks like another, which, in turn, looks like a third fort that is built in a style of masonry similar to that used in the walls of Messene is not an adequate criterion for dating them all to the same period.<sup>10</sup> This reservation aside, however, the majority of the forts analysed by Ober are most reliably datable to the mid-fourth century, or no more than a decade or two earlier. This archaeological fact is confirmed by the literary evidence. The changes in the military establishment that Ober postulates, modification of

<sup>7</sup>The history of Panakton from its loss to the Boiotians until its eventual dismantling is in Thucydides 5.3.5, 5.18.7, 5.35.5, 5.36.2, 5.40.1–2, 5.42.1–2.

<sup>8</sup>*Acharnians* 1071 ff. Lamachos' task, of course, was to guard against Boiotian bandits.

<sup>9</sup>Conceded by Ober (203), who has to invent a hypothetical invasion (205).

<sup>10</sup>Cf., for example, Ober 145–148, where the similarity of the Tsoukrati tower in "size, layout, and masonry" is used to argue that it was the twin of the Limiko tower (148), whose "masonry and surface treatment" is, in turn, "so strikingly similar to that of Phyle that we are justified in assuming rough contemporaneity" (147), while "the architecture and masonry" of Phyle itself is "very reminiscent of the north wall at Messene" (146).

the ephebic system<sup>11</sup> and assignment of one of the 10 *strategoi* to defence of the *chora*,<sup>12</sup> cannot, even on his approach to the evidence, be reliably pushed back much beyond the 370s. Likewise the passages from authors such as Isokrates, Xenophon, Plato, and Aristotle, as well as Aeneas Tacticus, that he feels show an interest in and conceive of the feasibility of defending Attika are no earlier than the second quarter of the fourth century. Thus there is a disquieting gap of about 30 years that renders the association with the Peloponnesian War quite uncertain. The growing Athenian fear of Thebes, a closer and more long-standing enemy, in the last half of the 370s, a fear that increased during the 360s, provides a much more compelling motive for re-developing a frontier defensive system and conforms better to the evidence.

At any rate it is worth noting that the immediate Athenian reaction to the resumption of hostilities against Sparta that we call the Corinthian War was the refortification of Peiraeus and rebuilding of the Long Walls,<sup>13</sup> a basic feature of so-called Periklean strategy. Furthermore the Athenian frontier defences must have been far from complete as late as 379/8, when Sphodrias walked right into Attika one night without anyone knowing (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.20–21). Either that or the system was not as effective as Ober would have us believe. On the whole I feel the evidence is not sufficient to establish a connection between Athens' fourth-century frontier defensive system, for whatever purpose it was intended, and the devastation of Attika in the Peloponnesian War.

The idea of the "defensive mentality" is inextricably combined with Ober's main argument (point 3) that in the fourth century Athens put all her defensive eggs in the Attic basket. There are two main contentions put forward. (1) The loss of the fifth-century empire opened the Athenians' eyes to the important contribution the produce of Attika could make to the economy of Athens and rendered Attika no longer expendable (Ober ch. 1). This situation was exacerbated by the fact that at the end of the fifth century the Greeks discovered economic warfare (ch. 2). Prior to that time they were much more sporting about things. When two states had a disagreement they found an open field and slugged it out until one won and the other lost. Trophies erected, corpses collected, they departed homewards, dispute set-

<sup>11</sup>The earliest fourth-century evidence for the service of ephebes as border-guards is Aisch. 2.167, a reference to 372/1, most probably. On the other hand, Thuc. 2.13.6–8 shows that the oldest and youngest, the latter surely the 18–20-year-olds, constituted the reserve that protected Attika in the forts and on the walls—as a rule, not occasionally as Ober (90) would have it. The forts of this period—at Eleusis, especially, and the Peiraeus—are precisely the places that we find associated with Ephebes in the later fourth century (*Atb. Pol.* 42.2–5, *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1156). In short, there was probably no change at all in the system at this time.

<sup>12</sup>The earliest evidence for a "general in charge of the *chora*" is *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 204, lines 19–21. This document is dated to 352/1. Cf. Ober 89.

<sup>13</sup>*IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1656–64; Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.10; Diod. 14.85.3.

tled. That, at least, is the way Mardonios described it (Hdt. 7.9β.1) and Ober (32) is prepared to take a Persian's word for it. This is the so-called "agonal" nature of hoplite warfare (Ober 34 and note 10). If one side was reluctant to fight, the other might chop down a tree or two or burn some crops, not to do economic damage but to stir the sluggards to come out to fight. After all, this was the rule of the game and, anyway, a hoplite army was poorly suited for the task of devastation (*ibid.*). Light-armed troops such as those who were used by Demosthenes in Akarnania and did such excellent work on Sphakteria (in neither case were they involved in devastation, however) and were so successful in the fourth century (one thinks immediately of Iphikrates' defeat of a *mora* of the Spartan army; devastating but not devastation) were ideal for that job (Ober 45 f.).

The man who must bear the blame for the development of economic warfare was Perikles. By refusing to let the Athenians go out to fight he broke the rules of the "agonal" system (Ober 35 *et al.*). All Archidamos could do was try the old trick of chopping down some trees and burning some crops to induce the Athenians to come out. It is ancient history that the Athenians did not go out. What is new is the idea that as a result the Spartans were forced to realise the economic value of devastating the countryside (Ober 36–37).

To be quite honest I find this latter argument so implausible that I can hardly take it seriously. In the first place it is based upon a view attributed to a person who did not understand Greek warfare (as Artabanus' reply shows). Most Greek wars before the Peloponnesian War were, as Thucydides claimed, small affairs. Before the Persian Wars they were usually border disputes that *could* be settled by a single battle. Conquest of the opposing *polis* was not the aim. (The wars of Sparta in Messenia and Arkadia are notable exceptions, but they were in no sense "agonal.") This would be quite amusing to a Persian general, for whom victory in battle was a prelude to conquest, but to maintain that his view is a correct interpretation of Greek military attitudes is ludicrous. Why did so many cities waste time and money building walls, if withdrawing behind them and not fighting was considered unsporting? Anyway, the Eretrians in 490 trusted in their walls against Datis and Artaphernes and in 480 the Athenians took the alternate route to avoiding an *agon*. They refused to take up the challenge and would rather abandon their *chora* than fight Xerxes.<sup>14</sup> Un-Greek attitudes, Ober concedes, but only perpetrated because the enemy was not Greek. Just like those Greeks, you say; they follow the rules only when they have to! But why, in that case, did the Athenians play the agonal game at Marathon? We cannot have it both ways. And Ober will never convince me that, if the

<sup>14</sup>Ober quotes these (34) and the reaction of the Naxians to the threat of invasion in 499 as instances of states not playing the "agonal" game, but attributes this (35), in large part, to the fact "that the Persians were not participants in the agonal system."

Athenians had been invaded by a Greek force of the same magnitude as the one led by Xerxes, they would have made an *agon* of it. Finally, Mardonios' statement was shown to be completely outdated, if it was ever realistic, by the Athenian activity during the *Pentekontaetia*. Naxos, Thasos, Aigina, Samos, and Potidaia are only five examples of the Athenians not being content just to slug it out in a field, but rather following up victory with a siege that they prosecuted until capitulation. In every case the defendants fell back upon their walls. And pardon me for thinking that a siege, in which one cuts an opponent off completely from his *chora*, is a rather effective form of economic warfare. That certainly is the way Archidamos saw it in his speech before the war.<sup>15</sup>

More interesting is Ober's first argument about the importance of the agricultural produce of Attika to the Athenian economy in the fourth century. Ober calculates that Attika could produce about one quarter of the grain Athenians consumed in a year and that, probably, this fed more than a quarter of the citizen population, because possibly as many as half the citizens lived in the country, where the local grain would be consumed first. Perhaps as many as half the *citizens*, he concludes, could, therefore, have been fed by home-grown produce (25–26). Replacing this, on any computation of the cost of grain, would represent a substantial drain on Athenian state-resources in time of war, when the state would be obliged to feed the displaced peasantry (26).

Whilst some of Ober's figures are inflated and many are in contention, the probability that the produce of Attika was an important economic resource for Athens in both peace-time and war is not to be denied. To conclude from this, however, that the Athenians decided to build a sort of Maginot line on their northern frontier and make the defence of Attika the main feature of their defensive strategy is to fail completely to understand the complexity of Athenian fourth-century strategy.

Any military theorist or practitioner with any intelligence could have drawn three conclusions from the outcome of the Peloponnesian War. (1) The occupation of Attika by the Peloponnesians did *not* bring Athens to defeat.<sup>16</sup> (2) The loss of control of the shipping routes from the Black Sea to Lysander after the battle of Aigospotamoi *did* defeat Athens. In fact, it reduced her to surrender faster than many *poleis* a fraction of her size.<sup>17</sup> (3) Money was important to war. The Great King had lots of it. It was a good idea to keep him onside.

These three points would have sunk into the dimmest brain after the Corinthian War, which demonstrated the following. (1) Defence of Attika

<sup>15</sup>Thuc. 1.80–85, throughout which the logic requires that devastation is for economic harm. See especially 81.1–2; 81.6; 82.4–5.

<sup>16</sup>Realised by Ober, 36–37.

<sup>17</sup>Realised by Ober, 37.

was no more the key to national security than it had been in the Peloponnesian War. With the right allies and a bit of manipulation wars could be fought beyond the *chora*, i.e., in the Corinthia.<sup>18</sup> (2) The real or perceived revival of imperial ambition turned the Great King (and his money) off. (3) The beneficiary of (2) was Antalkidas, who proceeded to strike at the Hellespont. Athens was immediately compelled to negotiate terms.

Any sensible defensive strategy for Athens demanded recognition of these basic facts. The evidence shows that the Athenians were not stupid. From the Great King's Peace onwards for at least three decades there is ample documentary proof of the care Athens took not to offend the Great King.<sup>19</sup> Correspondingly there is no doubt that the Athenians continued to treat the shipping route to the Black Sea as of paramount importance to national security. Not only the insistence on Athenian ownership of Lemnos, Imbros, and Skyros (Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.15; 5.1.3), but the sending of cleruchs to the Chersonese<sup>20</sup> attests to this. So, too, do the careers of the great Athenian generals of the fourth century, Chabrias, Iphikrates, Timotheos, and, not least, Chares,<sup>21</sup> all of whom spent time campaigning in the Thraceward region. From that side lay the threat to the Chersonese. Whether it was Kotys or Kersobleptes or Philip who was the aggressor, if the Chersonese was in danger, the Athenians sat up and took notice, for it was essential to the grain-shipping route. So, too, was Byzantion. The defection of that city in the 360s was the primary purpose of Epameinondas' Aegean campaign. Likewise, when the Byzantines turned against Philip, the Athenians were

<sup>18</sup>Lysias recognised the value of extra-territorial defence at this time, when he praised the Athenians who had died in the Corinthian War for "keeping the war far from their own territory" (2.70). Ober does not distinguish extra-territorial from territorial defence (62 f.).

<sup>19</sup>This attitude manifests itself first in *IG II<sup>2</sup> 34* (the alliance between Athens and Chios of 384/3), reappears in *IG II<sup>2</sup> 43* (the decree of Aristoteles), and often thereafter. At the time of the Satraps' revolt (probably late 360s) the Athenians, like the rest of Greece, remained uninvolved, and as late as 355/4, when the Great King protested Chares' presence in Asia, the Athenians immediately recalled him (Diod. 16.22.2). As Didymos observed, it was a bad move when in 344/3 (the archonship of Lykiskos) they openly rejected the Great King's friendship (*Didymos Kommentar zu Demosthenes*, eds. H. Diels and W. Schubart, col. 8, line 7 f.).

<sup>20</sup>At the latest by 353/2 (Diod. 16.34.4).

<sup>21</sup>Konon, of course, and Pharnabazos began the operations in the Hellespont (Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.6 f.) but it was Thrasyboulos who made the first overt move to regain Athenian control of the region in 390/89 (Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.26) and, as one of his first actions, settled a dispute between Medokos and Seuthes. Possibly Chabrias was there with him (*IG II<sup>2</sup> 21*). He was succeeded by Agyrrhios and, later, Iphikrates (Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.31 f., a passage that makes abundantly clear the importance that Athens attached to Byzantion and the Hellespont). The battle of Naxos was fought and won by Chabrias out of a need to open up the shipping-routes for the grain-ships (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.60–62). The Athenian campaigns in Thrace of first Iphikrates (367), then Timotheos (366) need no documentation, but Chabrias was back there in 358, negotiating with the Thracian kings Kersobleptes, Amadokos, and Berisades, in which post he was succeeded by Chares (Dem. 23.170–173). After the Social War Chares spent most of his time in Thrace and the Chersonese.

prompt to send help. The attack upon Perinthos and Byzantion and Philip's seizure of an Athenian grain-convoy were the reasons for the declaration of war in 340.<sup>22</sup> And it was quite a convoy—230 transports in all. Given that the average tonnage of a grain-freighter of this period was 3000 medimni,<sup>23</sup> then this convoy alone was bringing 720,000 medimni of grain to Athens—almost twice the 402,000 medimni that can safely be postulated as the annual produce of Attika.<sup>24</sup> In short, we have abundant testimony to the care the Athenians gave to their overseas grain supply from literary<sup>25</sup> and epigraphic sources, especially several inscriptions of the fourth century honouring the dynasts at Pantikapaion in return for the favour they showed Athenian grain-merchants.<sup>26</sup>

The harsh economic reality, of course, was that Athens was so heavily dependent upon food-supplies from overseas that she could not survive without them. For that reason alone talk of a Maginot line, or even a Maginot-line mentality, is quite inappropriate to the Athenian situation. The Peloponnesians might think of hiding behind a wall on the Isthmus, but the Athenians knew the idea was strategic madness. After all, it was an Athenian, Themistokles, who had made the point.<sup>27</sup> The Romans might fortify their *limes* and the French might seriously believe the Maginot line would work, because they could supply themselves from within. Athens could not. A closer analogy, if we must draw analogies, would be with Britain in the Second World War. Attika might be one big Victory garden, but if the Athenians could not win the Battle of the Hellespont, they were done for. So, Athens' first move in the Lamian War was to try to secure the Black-Sea route.<sup>28</sup> And the loss of control of the sea at the battle of Amorgos was decisive for both the Lamian War and Athens' future independence.<sup>29</sup> In sum, Athens' overseas food-supply had to be a more important factor in her strategic planning than her home produce, to the extent that the overseas supply could, in emergency, be increased to compensate for the loss of Attika, but the reverse could never be true.

<sup>22</sup>For the sources see P. Harding, *Translated Documents of Greece and Rome* 2 (Cambridge 1985) 118–120.

<sup>23</sup>L. Casson, *Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World* (Princeton 1971) 183–184.

<sup>24</sup>On the basis of *IG* I<sup>2</sup> 76 and II<sup>2</sup> 1672. Cf. Ober 23.

<sup>25</sup>E.g., Lysias, *Against the Grain-Merchants* and Demosthenes, *Against Leptines*, especially 31–32.

<sup>26</sup>For the evidence see S. Burstein, "IG II<sup>2</sup> 653, Demosthenes and Athenian Relations with the Bosphorus in the Fourth Century B.C.," *Historia* 27 (1978) 428–436, who, however, notes a breakdown in relations between the late 340s and 327. This does not help Ober's theory, since by this time, he feels, the defensive system had become obsolete, anyway.

<sup>27</sup>Hdt. 8.60; Thuc. 1.74.4.

<sup>28</sup>Diod. 18.15.8–9; *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 505.19.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. N. G. Ashton, "The *Naumachia* near Amorgos in 322 B.C.," *BSA* 72 (1977) 1–12.



Of course, it would be ideal if one could preserve both sources of supply, and it would not be surprising if the Athenians developed their already extensive fifth-century frontier-fortifications into a system that could deter any but a determined opponent from invading Attika. That the system was designed to withstand a full-scale invasion, however, cannot be demonstrated in fact, especially if we are to extrapolate intention from performance, as Ober does in the case of the fifth century. Rather the evidence suggests a different conclusion: the Athenians attempted to keep warfare as far from their frontier as they could—at the Isthmus in the Corinthian War, at Thermopylai in 352, in Boiotia in 339/8, and in Thessaly in 323/2.<sup>30</sup> Coupled with this was the extensive use of diplomacy and diplomatic propaganda to create buffers around and against an enemy or, more aggressively, to provoke conflict for an opponent on his borders.<sup>31</sup> In short, whatever theorists might be thought to believe, Demosthenes was only describing Athenian practice throughout the fourth century when he wrote:

What course of action was proper for a patriotic citizen who was trying to serve his country with all possible prudence and energy and loyalty? Surely it was to protect Attika on the sea-board by Euboea, on the inland frontier by Boeotia and on the side towards the Peloponnesus by our neighbors in that direction; to make provision for the passage of our grain-supply along friendly coasts all the way to the Piraeus; to preserve places already at our disposal, such as Proconnesus, Chersonesus, Tenedus, by sending succor to them by suitable speeches and resolutions; to secure the friendship and alliances of such places as Byzantium, Abydus, and Euboea; to destroy the most important of the existing resources of the enemy, and to make good the deficiencies of our own city.<sup>32</sup>

On the other hand when all these systems failed the Athenians invariably fell back upon the *polis* and its walls.<sup>33</sup> They never once stood and fought at

<sup>30</sup>This is the philosophy of extra-territorial defence mentioned above (n. 18). It is quite different from the territorial approach described by Ober.

<sup>31</sup>For diplomacy and diplomatic propaganda the most obvious example is *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 43, the decree of Aristoteles. After the battle of Mantinea the Athenians accepted into alliance Arkadia (Mantineian faction), Elis, Achaia, and Phlious, probably to prevent them from falling under Theban control (*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 112). In the next year Athens moved into the vacuum created by the death of Pelopidas and made an alliance with the Thessalian League. Not only was this a step to eliminate Theban influence in Thessaly, the alliance was also aggressively directed against Alexander of Pherai (*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 116.31 ff.). In 357 Athenian diplomacy was used to protect Athenian interests in the Chersonese (*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 126), whilst in 356 the alliance with Ketriporis, Lyppeios, and Grabos (*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 127) was aimed aggressively at Philip (line 40 f.). This sample should suffice. It is no argument that alliances did not last long. The point is that they were made.

<sup>32</sup>Dem. 18.301–302. Cf. Ober, 74, whose translation this is.

<sup>33</sup>In 346, 338, 335, and 322 (not to mention 304). Noted by Ober (55, n. 10; 200).

their northern frontier. Just as the Athenians had rebuilt the Long Walls at the very beginning of the Corinthian War, so, when threatened by Philip in 346 and later, they set to work strengthening the city-walls. In the time of Lykourgos the whole fortification of the *polis* was modernised,<sup>34</sup> and abundant epigraphic evidence attests to the attention given to the city-walls thereafter.<sup>35</sup> Some may feel happy with Ober's explanation of this (218 f.): that Philip's improvement of the art of siegecraft rendered the forts obsolete and compelled the Athenians to think once again of the *polis* as their main defence. But, again, this contention is not capable of proof, since there was no major threat to invade Attika in the first half of the century, so we cannot be sure how they would have reacted. On the other hand, if Ober is right about this, then the frontier-defences ceased to be effective before the middle of the century. Since, however, they were clearly not in place by the time of the raid of Sphodrias (379/8), their effectiveness was rather ephemeral. Even worse, given the mid-century construction date assigned to a large number of the forts, we find the Athenians creating a large part of their "Maginot line" at a time when their actions show they knew it to be obsolete.

About one thing, however, Ober is correct—as a result of the Peloponnesian War there was a considerable increase in the number of displaced persons, who made their living off plunder and booty (46 f.). Since it is clear that the main purpose of the fifth-century forts was to protect the countryside against plundering raids, whether by brigands or by small groups of enemy soldiers, it is only reasonable to expect that, as this danger became more prevalent, the Athenians should improve their defences against it. In this case it would not be surprising to find them building forts even beyond the middle of the century, because this problem was only getting worse, as Alexander was to find out. The developed fortification-system that Ober has demonstrated was quite capable of dealing with such low-level attacks, but there is no reason to believe that it was ever intended to resist or ever could have resisted a full-scale attack.

In conclusion, Ober has greatly overstated his thesis and performed a great disservice to the understanding of Athenian defensive strategy in the fourth century, by allying himself with those who, through a lack of sensi-

<sup>34</sup>Aisch. 3.27–31; *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 244. Cf. F. W. Mitchel, *Lykourgan Athens* (Cincinnati 1970) 34 and n. 129. Lykourgos was only carrying on what had been begun by Euboulos, as was the case also with his completion of the great arsenal of Philon.

<sup>35</sup>Cf. *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 463; F. G. Maier, *Griechische Mauerbauinschriften* (Heidelberg 1959) 49–56. For the overall emphasis of expenditures on military structures since Euboulos see *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 505, an honorific inscription for Nikandros of Ilion and Polyzelos of Ephesos.

tivity to the difficulties faced by Athens, believe that there is a single, simple explanation for her failure to resist the rise of Macedon.<sup>36</sup>

DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS  
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA  
VANCOUVER, V6T 1W5

<sup>36</sup>I have concentrated my argument against Ober's theory, because it is the most recent manifestation of the phenomenon described in my introductory paragraph, but it is fair to point out that he is not alone. For example, H. Montgomery, *The Way to Chaeronea* (Bergen 1984) attributes Athens' defeat to the inability of her system of government to handle the complexity of fourth-century international politics. Whilst there is some truth in this, it is not the whole story by any means. On the other hand, there is a certain irony in the fact that another recent critic of Athenian strategy against Macedon can argue the opposite line from that put forward by Ober. G. L. Cawkwell, *Philip of Macedon* (London 1978) *passim*, repeatedly ridicules the extra-territorial strategy, which he attributes to Demosthenes, and argues that the Athenians would have been better off staying close to home, whilst Ober believes the Athenians were deterred from vigorously prosecuting the overseas war against Philip by the ingrained "defensive mentality" that kept them at home behind their "Magenot line." The situation for the Athenians was much more complex than any of these theories allows.