

Thucydides and US Foreign Policy Debates after the Cold War

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Introduction

Whilst researching online articles for an earlier essay looking at Thucydides' portrayal of the Sicilian Expedition, I was surprised by the number I stumbled across which discussed instead Thucydides' role in the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Despite being irrelevant to my aims at the time, I was fascinated by the contemporary relevancy of a historian whose work, I am in complete agreement, is 'by far the best historical work that has come down to us from antiquity' (Ste. Croix 1972: 1). This thesis is the result of my research into how Thucydides had become embroiled in such controversies.

Thucydides stated that his 'work is not a piece of writing designed to meet the taste of an immediate public, but was done to last forever' (1.22). Despite enduring interest from ancient historians, I underappreciated his success in other fields, particularly in international relations, where he has been 'credited with introducing balance of power and the distinction between underlying and immediate causes of war' and his Melian Dialogue 'remains the starting point of discussions about the relative role of ethics and interests in foreign affairs' (Lebow 2003: 26). His *History of the Peloponnesian War* is still compulsory reading on the international relations courses of American universities and he is considered the founding father of the realist theories which have dominated foreign policy debates since WWII.

Aware of the notorious difficulty of Thucydides' Greek and that many renowned ancient historians disagreed on their interpretations; I was interested in seeing the conclusions reached by international relations theorists. Thucydides is one of the few ancient writers, and perhaps the only ancient historian, still read today for his universal insights into human

nature, rather than to learn more about the time he was writing about or to appreciate his literary qualities. Rather than focus entirely on academic dialogues, I also look at works designed for a wider audience, where Thucydides has again been interpreted to support different, often opposing, viewpoints. I intend to bring insights and interpretations from ancient historical methodology to bear on these debates and, perhaps optimistically, to provide new insights into current foreign policy issues.

A further aim is to look for areas where the crossover between international relations theory and ancient history can lead to a fruitful interchange. If ‘antiquity and modernity... are always implicated in each other, always in dialogue’ (Martindale 2006: 5), then modern readings will not only tell us about the context of the interpreter, but may also help us to better understand Thucydides. The approach of international relations theorists in using and adapting the ideas of Thucydides shows how classicists can still be relevant today, and that a study of ancient history can still teach us something about our own society. ‘Most versions of reception theory stress the mediated, situated, contingent... character of readings’ (Martindale 2006: 3), and it is this aspect which is perhaps most interesting in respect to Thucydides. By looking back to what Thucydides said, and comparing it with the readings given by interpreters, I hope to establish whether, and in what ways, he has been misrepresented for current political aims.

I begin with an account of the different approaches taken to Thucydides before and during the Cold War. The ‘realist’ school of international relations adopted Thucydides as its earliest and perhaps still most influential exponent, but doubts have increasingly been raised about the extent that Thucydides actually adhered to these realist beliefs. Chapter Two examines how the end of the Cold War challenged realism and its adoption of Thucydides. His discussion of the power relations between Sparta and Athens may have seemed apt during a

period in which a similarly bi-polar world order was said to exist, but in a radically altered international landscape this relevance could be expected to decline. I examine the increasing influence of liberal international relations theories during the 1990s, and how Thucydides was reinterpreted to support these viewpoints. Chapter Three examines Thucydides' position in neoconservative foreign policy thinking, which drew upon interpretations of Thucydides from both the realist and liberal schools. Finally, Chapter Four focuses on the 'War on Terror', and how Thucydides was utilised by neoconservatives post 9/11 to support the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

1. Background

Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* has been described as 'the only acknowledged classic text in international relations' (Boucher 1998: 67) and always seems to have been especially studied for its universal values and judgements as much as for the particularities of the historical period it describes. Thucydides expressly hoped that 'these words are judged useful by those who want to understand clearly the events which happened in the past and which (human nature being what it is) will, at some time or other and in much the same ways, be repeated in the future' (1.22). If anything, the use of Thucydides by practitioners beyond the field of historians of ancient Greece has increased with the passage of time, rather than diminished as we might expect, and Thucydides has been viewed as 'modern in a recognizable sense' (Doyle 1997: 10).

The largest theoretical debts to Thucydides were amassed in the twentieth century by the proponents of the international relations theory of realism, whose 'worldview was shaped by the ancient Greek historian' (Doyle 1997: 18). After WWI, there was a 'universal revulsion against war' (Carr 1939: 98), which led to a greater interest in understanding the international system. The first chair of International Politics was founded at Aberystwyth University in 1919 with the stated goal of investigating 'the best means of promoting peace between nations' (quoted in Low 2007: 9). In the early years the field of international relations was dominated by a liberal agenda (subsequently termed idealism), which asserted that there was 'a basic harmony of interest among all people' (Vasquez 1998: 33) and therefore attempted to place moral considerations at the heart of interstate politics. The League of Nations was also created amid such optimism for the future and disgust at the 'great game' of 'behind doors

diplomacy', balance of power politics and great power alliances which were blamed for World War I.

The failure of the League in the 1930s gave force to an alternative theory of international relations known as 'realism'. The outbreak of WWII 'confirmed, for the realists at least, the inadequacies of the inter-war idealists' approach to studying international politics' (Dunne and Schmidt 2001: 162). This reaction was spearheaded by E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau. Despite the general acceptance nowadays that Thucydides 'was the inspiration for the realist school of international relations' (Tritle 2006: 127), he is not directly referenced in the key texts of either of these founders of modern realism. Carr asserted that 'the thesis that 'justice is the right of the stronger'' was, indeed, familiar in the Hellenic world' (1939: 81), which surely refers to Thucydides; but otherwise the link between Thucydidean realism and the realism of Carr comes indirectly via Hobbes (Carr 1939: 83 and 194). Morgenthau did not explicitly reference Thucydides either, although Tritle (2006) says that Morgenthau did include a quote from Thucydides about the importance of national interests in early editions. Morgenthau again uses some of the Thucydidean formulations of Hobbes regarding morality and the state (1951: 34), and some of his key arguments, such as bipolarity (1951: 45-52), have later been directly associated with Thucydides. Johnson-Bagby makes the point that immediately after World War II the key lessons drawn from Thucydides were those of tragedy (Athens, like America, had achieved so much by character, but her character was eventually corrupted), but with the Cold War the realist interpretation, focusing on balances of power and bipolarity of power, took precedence (2000: 22)

The key concerns of realist international relations theory usually ascribed to Thucydides are that he is the first writer to describe the 'security dilemma' as a cause for war, that he justifies

expediency over morality or ideology in interstate relations and that he argues that ‘might is right’ (Boucher 1998: 67). In a ‘security dilemma’ scenario a nation in fear of another nation tries to increase its own security which then increases the fear among other states, who then increase their own security, and so on leading to eventual war (Doyle 1997: 52). Waltz argues that ‘because some states may at any time use force, all states must be prepared to do so’ (1979: 102). During the Cold War this factor was cited as a reason for the build up of nuclear weapons on both sides (Jervis 1989: 53). Thucydides is often interpreted as explicitly stating that the Peloponnesian War was not caused by the issues stated by the participants, but instead by ‘the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta’ (1.23). For realists, this is ‘a classic example of the impact that the anarchical structure of international politics has on the behaviour of state actors’ (Dunne and Schmidt 2001: 162).

Kenneth Waltz, one of the founders of neo-realism, seems to be describing the Spartans’ motivations for war with Athens when he claims that ‘given two coalitions, for example, the greater success of one in drawing members to itself may tempt the other to risk preventative war, hoping for victory... before disparities widen’ (1979: 126). Waltz argues that ‘secondary states, if they are free to choose, flock to the weaker side; for it is the stronger side that threatens them... thus Thucydides records that in the Peloponnesian War the lesser city states of Greece cast the stronger Athens as the tyrant and the weaker Sparta as their liberator’ (1979: 127). This view of international politics (also known as structural realism) emphasises that the structure of the international system and a state’s place within that system are more important for interstate relations than the internal workings or culture of individual states. This belief may have helped American foreign policymakers to believe that great power coexistence was a possibility, even if their ideologies were opposed, during the Cold War (Dunne and Schmidt 2001: 162).

As well as being used to support the tenets of structural realism, Thucydides is often considered an exponent of 'classical realism', according to which the anarchy of the international system is not caused by the system itself but is a product of the individual characteristics and human aims of each state. Thucydides, through the speech in the Mytilene debate given by Diodotus, is viewed as an exponent of the view that human nature is 'self interested and unconstrained by any higher moral laws', a view which leads to the belief that 'everything and everyone is a means to an end, and has to be justified in terms of its, or his, usefulness' (Boucher 1998: 29). Applied to international relations theory this means that 'fear and distrust of other states provide the motive for increasing ones power by prosecuting wars to subdue those who when the scales change will seek to subdue you' (Boucher 1998: 30). The Melian dialogue has been used to argue that Thucydides believed that 'Athens, with the power and ability to acquire an empire, was compelled to do so by the laws of nature, which dictate that the powerful rule the weak; that one must rule wherever one can; that self interest overrides considerations of justice; and that others will rule over you if you do not rule over them' (Boucher 1998: 34). Besides fear, Thucydides also recognised that the search for glory could instigate wars (1.75). For these reasons, states will always seek to increase their power at the expense of other states. This cutthroat competition will lead to states using *Realpolitik* to achieve their ends, and 'balance of power theory purports to explain the result that such methods produce' (Waltz 1979: 117).

Besides these universalist theories based upon his work, Thucydides' history of war between two evenly matched great powers seemed to provide a direct parallel with the Cold War world which most other, multi polar, epochs of history did not. Observers and actors in 'contemporary affairs from George C. Marshall onward compared the standoff between the

United States and the Soviet Union to that between Athens and Sparta' (Crane 1998: 2). The apparent 'unromantic' style and methods also appealed to modern writers aiming at objectivity rather than moral improvement. Beyond the realms of academic realism, where the ideology of states is viewed as less important than international power structures, the ideologically divided nature of the Athenian-Spartan contest was also attractive to those who took the ideological differences between the USSR and the USA seriously. Louise J. Halle, an academic then working for the US Department of State, wrote in 1952, that the USA, like Athens before, was 'called upon to assume the leadership of the free world' and that the meaning of Thucydides 'has been heightened by the events of our day, how the history that he wrote has become altogether more vivid and poignant' (quoted in Trittle 2006: 129).

Professional historians have made similar observations. G.E.M. de Ste. Croix's (1919-2000) defence of Athenian Imperialism can be seen in the light of his Marxism (Ste. Croix 1981: 29) and possible sympathy for the Soviet Union. He argued that the Athenian democracy had 'affinities with the "dictatorship of the proletariat" in Marxist theory' (1954: 22), and through the prism of the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe during the late 1940s and early 1950s his comment that people in states occupied by Athens might 'even be glad to have an Athenian garrison on hand while they were learning to work their new constitution' (Ste. Croix 1954: 39) is particularly interesting. Fliess took the converse approach to the international relations theorists and applied modern conceptions of realist foreign policy theory to write a history of the Athenian/Spartan relationship drawing explicit comparison with the Cold War, and arguing that in the ancient struggle 'the absence of ideological complication makes the power issue appear in far greater clarity' (Fliess 1966: xx).

So we have two strands in the reception of Thucydides in modern international relations thinking: the purely theoretical approaches of academics, looking for general principles to be applied in diverse situations (balance of power theory, the security dilemma as a cause for war, expediency over morality etc) and the search in Thucydides for direct parallels with the present (for example seeing the USA as Athens), which will resonate more or less powerfully depending on the similarities between the present and late fifth century Greece. Both uses have led to criticisms and problems. Besides arguing against realist theories in themselves, a number of critics have argued that Thucydides was simply not the realist he is portrayed as; and some ancient historical scholarship historians supports these alternative interpretations.

Among ancient historians Thucydides' history has long been perceived as something more than a straightforward retelling of events. Cornford's *Mythistoricus* argued that Thucydides was trying to write history but was heavily influenced by ancient myth, which gave him a tragic mindset (1907: ix). This would suggest that some of the Athenian arguments could be seen as examples of *hubris* rather than Thucydides' own views about how international relations should be conducted. Cornford's particular conclusions have not generally been accepted (Kirby 1983: 183), but the approach itself has. Romilly (1963) viewed Thucydides work as a discourse on the nature of imperialism, but heavily influenced by epic. By analysing the language used and reading between the lines a picture of the nature of Athenian Imperialism could be developed. Her analysis of the character of Athenian imperialism emphasised psychological and cultural factors, such as the Athenians' need for action and power, rather than the structural aspects of the international system emphasised by Waltz. What this approach emphasises is that the sections, such as the Melian Dialogue, cannot be taken out of context and should be seen in the light of what precedes or follows them. For example, the Athenian 'might is right' stance at Melos is followed by the failure of the

Sicilian Expedition. So it can be inferred that Thucydides, in writing the tragedy of Athens, has positioned them like this in order to show 'the Melians' belief in *tyche* is in a way vindicated by the Athenian's misfortunes' (Edmunds 1975: 186). Nonetheless, Ste. Croix points out that 'the fact that they [the Melians] are being foolishly over-optimistic is made very clear' (1972: 14). For Ste. Croix, Thucydides does not argue that 'the stronger ought to rule but... that they actually do' (1972: 15). Whilst accepting that Thucydides was a realist, it has also been observed that 'the complexity of Thucydidean realism is difficult for us to gauge, because our assumptions are so different from those of the fifth century elite' (Crane 1998: 4).

International relations theorists from non-realist schools of thought have also criticised realist theories because they provide 'an intellectual justification for a range of policies at odds with core democratic and humanitarian values' (Lebow 2003: 16). Unsurprisingly, some critics have sought to draw Thucydides away from the realists. Lebow (1984: 10) argued that if it was so important for Athens to annex Melos in 416 BC, why did she not do so in 431 BC? His answer was that, rather than being a manual for how states should behave toward one another, the Melian dialogue is in reality an example of the type of desperate measures states will go to when they are afraid. The annexation was a sign of Athenian weakness. In 416 BC 'they felt the need to convince others of their power and resolve in order to deter both adversarial challenges and allied defections', so the lesson of the Melian Dialogue is that 'aggressive foreign policy can be as much the result of a state's perceived weaknesses as it can be an expression of its perceived strengths' (Lebow 1984: 11).

Some analysts have also argued that the Cold War world was not as bipolar as often thought. For example, large parts of the world were in the 'third world' camp of states aligned with

neither of the superpowers. This calls into question the usefulness of Thucydides' account as a guide to the Cold War. In contrast, Finley, in reviewing Fliess' work on ancient bipolar relations, argued that fifth century international relations were not themselves bipolar and that other powers such as Persia played important roles. Fliess' belief that there was an absence of 'ideological complication' in the Athenian/Spartan rivalry could also be challenged, and seems to ignore the debate started by Ste. Croix about the nature of Athenian imperialism and the extent to which the *demos* in other states fought willingly for, and under, Athens rather than be subjected to oligarchies.

Simplistic uses of the Cold War/Peloponnesian War analogy have also sometimes been the cause of political problems. Henry Kissinger got into trouble during the 1976 Presidential campaign for remarks (which he denied making) comparing Athens to the USA and Sparta to the USSR; especially the suggestion that the USA, like Athens, would ultimately lose due to the less disciplined nature of her citizens in comparison with her opponents' (for a summary of this episode, see Hodkinson, forthcoming). Whether or not Kissinger actually made these remarks, the use made of this gaffe by political opponents, the accompanying press criticism and the fact that the prediction was ultimately so far off the mark, illustrate both the dangers of such parallels and their potentially misleading role as a predictive guide to future events.

Regardless of the justice of these criticisms, the Cold War world, viewed by some as so similar to the world described by Thucydides, changed radically in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. The superficial analogies between the USSR and Sparta become redundant with the later demise of the USSR but, more importantly for Thucydides' influence on realism, 'by the end of 1990 the world was no longer bipolar in a politically meaningful sense' (Keohane and Nye 1993: 104). So Thucydides' role as guide to

a bipolar world was no longer needed. In addition, some of the key tenets of realist theory linked to Thucydides were challenged with some critics suggesting that realism, which had predominated in US foreign policy making since World War II, was no longer necessary.

In 1992 Francis Fukuyama published *The End of History and the Last Man*, outlining how the new solo superpower age would look. For Fukuyama, the triumph of the USA in the Cold War, and the subsequent growth in the number of democratic states worldwide, had proved the superiority of liberal democracy over totalitarianism, paving the way for the spread of liberal, peace-loving democracies throughout the world. Although realism had ‘played a large and beneficial role in shaping the way Americans thought about foreign policy after World War II’, its use after the Cold War would simply be a case of ‘treating a disease which no longer exists’ (Fukuyama 1992: 253). Nor was Fukuyama alone: as another contemporary realist insisted that ‘the kind of foreign policy and national security problems that were central to the politics of the Cold War are bound to become less salient in the years ahead’ (Hogan 1992: 243). In such a benign and idealistic world, ‘with a good deal of realism now inappropriate’ (Jervis 1992: 267), it would be expected that Thucydides’ lessons would become irrelevant. As it turned out, such optimistic forecasts were fairly short lived. By the end of the 1990s new threats to American hegemony were being detected by foreign policy analysts in the form of rising powers, particularly China but also the other ‘BRIC’ nations of Brazil, Russia and India, which has led to talk about the re-emergence of a multi-polar world. In addition, there has been an increased emphasis on non-state actors in international affairs, such as the power of multinational corporations and terrorist groups acting across and within state boundaries.

I will now examine whether these radically altered circumstances have caused new questions to be asked of Thucydides and whether even a work as layered and open to different interpretations as his history can maintain its relevance in such an altered environment. Since 1989 arguments over whether or not Thucydides was a realist at all have continued but the rise of neoconservatism in the USA has also brought a new band of Thucydidean adherents, taking very different lessons from his work, onto the policy-making stage. In the following chapters I will review these changes and assess some of the interpretations made of Thucydides.

2. Challenges to Realism

Fukuyama may have been optimistic about the triumph of liberal democracy, but he was not alone in seeing the end of the Cold War as the beginning of a new era. Former Secretary of Defense in the Nixon and Ford administrations, James R Schlesinger, suggested that with 'the end of the Soviet empire ... a kind of euphoria swept over much of the industrial world' and it was widely expected that 'the post-Cold War era would be reasonably peaceful' (Schlesinger 1995: vii). George H. W. Bush, in an address to the U.N. in 1990, announced that 'we've seen a century sundered by barbed threats and barbed wire give way to a new era of peace' (1990: 151).

The apparent shift towards a more peaceful and democratic world has undermined realist theory in two significant ways. On one level, in a world of democratic cooperative states, realism was no longer relevant. In fact, beyond irrelevance, realism was perceived as a threat to the new world order. Lebow (1994: 277) argued that realist 'theories and some of the policy recommendations based on them may now stand in the way of the better world we all seek'. Realists, such as Kissinger, were still arguing in the early 1990s that the west should seek to balance 'Russian power by aiding Ukraine... in a classic balance of power logic' (Doyle 1997: 25), and such views now looked out of step with the times. Secondly, realist practitioners 'since Morgenthau have all had in common, as one of their principal objectives, the anticipation of the future', but the end of the Cold War caught all by surprise (Gaddis 1992: 11). Realists, 'perhaps under Thucydides' spell' had 'tended to concentrate on dynamic challengers and moribund *hegemons*' (Wohlforth 1994: 99) whereas the USSR had been a moribund challenger to a dynamic *hegemon*.

Events in the final years of the Cold War had ‘contradicted the structuralism upon which contemporary realist theory is often based’ (Johnson-Bagby 2000: 25). The Soviet Union intentionally reduced its own power whereas ‘*hegemons* are expected to make every possible effort to retain their principal sphere of influence’ (Lebow 1994: 263). This view of great power behaviour had been traced back to Thucydides’ portrayal of the Athenians, who felt it too dangerous to give up their empire (Thucydides 1.75), so contemporary events were seen as directly contradicting a realist reading of Thucydides. In consequence of these perceived failures, it has been argued that ‘the doctrine of realism was mortally wounded by the end of the Cold War’ (Miller 2004: 4). A conference organised by R.N. Lebow and B. Strauss in 1988 (which ultimately led to the 1991 work they edited, *Hegemonic Rivalry: From Thucydides to the Nuclear Age*) brought together political scientists and ancient historians. One of their goals was ‘to say something novel and useful about the relevance of Thucydides to the study of international relations’. A number of contributors doubted that Thucydides was a realist, whilst others doubted that either the Greek or Cold War eras were actually bipolar (Lebow and Strauss 1991). Ober, positing Athens’ aggressive behaviour as a result of her long walls and comparing them to the Reagan ‘Star Wars’ program, suggested that defences can ‘distort the flow of power’ with unpredictable consequences (Ober 1991: 262). These tendencies to reposition Thucydides outside of realism increased during the 1990s.

The new optimism, combined with newly apparent weaknesses of realism, led liberal theorists to hope that they could now ‘transcend the *Realpolitik* that has dominated discussion of international affairs for the past five decades and invite a reconstructed paradigm, perhaps one inspired by the idealist ideas associated with the Wilsonian vision’ (Kegley 1993: 1). As for the left of American politics, ‘its Wilsonian juices flowed with renewed force and it was eager to right injustices around the world’ (Schlesinger 1995 ix). In international relations

theory, liberals often have widely different views, but share a core belief about ‘the possibility of a state of peace’ throughout the world (Doyle 1997: 19). Rather than being naively idealist, as realists would assert, liberal international theorists argue that human progress makes peaceful cooperation between states much more likely to succeed. There are three reasons often given for peace being more easily attainable in the future than the past; commercial pacifism, liberal institutionalism and democratic peace theory. None of these ideas is new, but all three ideas rose in popularity during the early 1990s.

Commercial Pacifism is the liberal belief that increased economic interdependence between states makes war between them more costly and ultimately obsolete. Adam Smith, the founder of free market economics, credited commerce with providing ‘the liberty and security of individuals... who had before lived in a continual state of war’ (Smith 1784/1976: 412), John Stuart Mill wrote in 1848 that commerce was ‘rapidly rendering war obsolete’ (Mill 1848/1965: 594) and Norman Angell, writing during the first great period of globalisation in 1910, argued that economic interdependence made a state of peace too valuable for states to give up, so that war would therefore become obsolete (Angell 1910/1994: 177).

WWI suggested that these predictions were premature, but some argue that the world has reached a point today in which with ‘access to markets and vital resources, the benefits of international cooperation outweigh the benefits of international conflict’ (Miller 2004: 126). Increasing economic interdependence by lowering trade barriers was a key plank of U.S. foreign policy in the 1990s. The Clinton administration completed the NAFTA Treaty, supported the creation of the World Trade Organisation and passed the African Growth and Opportunity Act (*Foreign Policy* leader 2000: 19). A logical next step from this belief in the

efficacy of trade in discouraging conflict is the use or threat of economic sanctions, rather than military force, to achieve international goals. The Clinton administration used sanctions more regularly than previous administrations, including 'controversial "secondary sanctions," which punish foreign companies doing business with the targeted state (*Foreign Policy* leader article 2000: 19).

Institutional liberals believe that international ties and legal treaties can make states behave more peacefully in contrast to the realist argument that anarchy characterises the international system because there is no ultimate authority which can enforce agreements (Lebow 1994: 276). George H. W. Bush had 'a vision of a new partnership of nations... based on consultation, cooperation and collective action, especially through international and regional organisations' (Bush 1990: 152) and believed that the end of the Cold War meant that the United Nations would now be able to fulfil 'its promise as the World's parliament of peace' (Bush 1990: 153). It is argued that because of such institutions 'international relations among the developed democracies has taken on many of the characteristics of relationships in domestic societies' (Lebow 1994: 277). The E.U. has also been held up as an exemplar of states handing over sovereignty and cooperating against the dictates of structural realist theory (Miller 2004 148), although Waltz argues that the E.U. is an exception because its security is provided by an outside power; so long as European states were great powers there was no incentive for cooperation, as each would prefer to see the others weaker (Waltz 1979: 70).

'Democratic peace' liberals believe that democracies are much less likely to go to war against each other, and therefore as democracy becomes the predominant form of government war will become rarer. Liberals have cited Thucydides as evidence in support of this theory

(Moravcsik 1997: 527). This theory had less relevance during the Cold War for the simple reason that the opponents of the U.S. were not democratic. George H. W. Bush announced in 1991 that ‘as democracy flourishes, so does the opportunity for a third historical breakthrough: international cooperation’ (quoted in Doyle 1997: 205). Bill Clinton declared during the 1992 presidential election that ‘democracies rarely go to war with each other’ (quoted in Russett and Antholis 1992: 1). This view was not restricted to politicians: ‘in the modern international system it is now apparent that democratically governed states rarely go to war with each other’ (Russett and Antholis 1992: 1) and thus with the end of the Cold War this could mean ‘a fundamental transformation of world politics away from principles (anarchy, the security dilemma) that have dominated realist theory and practice to the exclusion of liberal or idealist ones.’ Again, the security dilemma, traced by realists back to Thucydides, appeared no longer relevant in a world of democracies because ‘democracy seems to transcend the security dilemma’ (Miller 2004:34). Confidence that ‘the United States is the only Superpower’ (Bill Clinton 1993, quoted in Clarke and Clad 1995: 29), the success of the first Gulf War and a renewed faith in liberal foreign policy led to increased uses of US power for humanitarian missions in the early 1990s. Combining a belief in commercial pacifism and democratic peace theory, ‘the notion of expanding the community of free-market democracies emerged as the central tenet of the Clinton administration’s foreign policy’ (*Foreign Policy* leader 2000: 18).

Some academics went back to Thucydides to assess the impact of democracies in another international system with ‘a large number of democratic regimes’ (Russett and Antholis 1992: 1). Despite the proviso that ancient Greek states had fewer of the ‘institutional and structural complexities of democracies in modern nation states’ (Russett and Antholis 1992: 5), which some have given as the reason that modern democracies are less likely to make war

on each other, they concluded that the ‘evidence shows democratic states reluctant to fight each other, precisely because of their ties of constitution and ideology.’ Nonetheless, ‘despite the ties - often fragile - of democratic constitution and ideology that might have kept them at peace. ... they sometimes broke down’ (Russett and Antholis 1992: 14). With this conclusion Russett and Antholis attacked the realist adoption of Thucydides as a historian portraying rational, unitary state actors and instead argue that Thucydides gives an ‘analysis of the role and weaknesses of democratic politics in formulating security policy, and of the linkages between the *demos* in one state and the *demos* of others. These influences... are more familiar in contemporary liberal-institutionalist and idealist paradigms that compete with realism’ (1992: 17).

This view of the restraining influence of democracy has its critics. Bachteler argued that the evidence put forward by Russett and Antholis is flawed and that the ‘theoretical explanation of the observation that democracies rarely go to war with each other is still a matter of dispute’ (1997: 315). Instead, Bachteler uses Thucydides to show that ‘the advantage of democratizing another city was less rooted in the utility of common democratic culture than in the improved control over the allies’ because once democracy was instituted ‘the democrats had to fear the revenge of the oligarchs for the cruel treatment during democratization’ (1997: 318). Secondly, Bachteler shows that the war with democratic Syracuse was not a case of the Athenian *demos* misreading the democratic nature of the Syracusan regime (1997: 320). In 1994 another attempt was made to bring ancient historians and international relations theorists together. The Strauss/Lebow conference’s emphasis on hegemonic relations was sidelined and democratic peace theory, which was not mentioned in the earlier book, is discussed. Kauppi suggests that there is no evidence for it in Thucydides, who shows instead that democracy was ‘a driving force behind imperialism’ (1994: 143).

Again though, it was 'argued that realist analysis cannot explain the proliferation of new actors, processes and norms of international behaviour' following the Cold War (Johnson 1994: 195).

Citing Thucydides as evidence for the theory of democratic peace was not the only way in which critics of realism sought to show that Thucydides' 'lessons' were at odds with realist theory. Johnson-Bagby argued that 'a close reading of Thucydides will show that he does not agree with some of the most important emphases and conclusions of classical realists' (1994: 132). Nor can Thucydides 'completely be identified with neo-realism' because in contrast to the neo-realist view of the importance of the structure of the international system rather than differences between states, he 'thinks that an understanding of the political and cultural differences among city-states before and during the Peloponnesian War is crucial for understanding their behaviour (1994: 133).

Ahrens Dorf argued that, although Thucydides agreed with realists about 'the self-interested character of states and the anarchic structure of international politics', he 'doubts that realism can form the basis of a successful foreign policy because he believes that, although the moral passions and hopes that realism opposes are unreasonable, they are also indelible features of political life' (1997: 233). Any 'attempt to conduct a strictly and unabashedly self-interested foreign policy inevitably risks provoking an extreme and self-destructive moralistic or religious reaction' (Ahrens Dorf 1997: 233) because while 'the case for realism is theoretically compelling, political realism tends to be psychologically naive' (1997: 262). The speech of Diodotus, during the Mytilene debate (Thucydides 3.42-48) has been used to show that Thucydides provided arguments to show how 'justice and expediency coincide' (Johnson-Bagby 2000: 38). However, Ste. Croix interpreted this speech like the realists, arguing that

Thucydides intends it to show that ‘public and political argument should always be conducted on purely rational lines’ (Ste. Croix 1972: 13).

Lebow also noted that Thucydides could be viewed as a realist, only with significant provisos. In Lebow’s case, the emphasis in Thucydides was on the internal political structure of states which determined their responses to hardship. ‘When language was subverted and conventions ignored or destroyed... the rational construction of interest was impossible, war aims were limitless, and the rules of warfare were disregarded’ (Lebow 2001: 558-559). For Garst too, Thucydides saw ‘the internal structures of states, particularly their political institutions’ as ‘equally, if not more, important in determining states’ behaviour’ (2000: 80). As an example, he suggests that the structure of the Spartan government weakened their position in the war because ‘the opposition of the *demos* to oligarchic rule’ limited ‘Sparta’s ability to rally weaker cities against Athens’ (2000: 84). This view is very similar to the liberal view that ‘domestic values and institutions shape foreign policy’ (Doyle 1997: 19).

Some went further, to show that Thucydides was not a realist on any level. Monoson and Loriaux argued, from Thucydides’ portrayal of Pericles, that Thucydides was really criticising Pericles for his amoral, realist foreign policy (1998: 285) and Johnson-Bagby made a similar point that Thucydides has a focus on moral behaviour throughout (2000: 41). Again, suggests that ‘Periclean Athens may be a microcosm of the modern project: a powerful city-state that satisfied the appetites of its citizens by war and commerce. Athens, like America today, was a political unit running on passions’. Pappas goes on to criticise the USA for its amoral, power oriented, and Athens-like, foreign policies from World War II to 2000 (2000: 236).