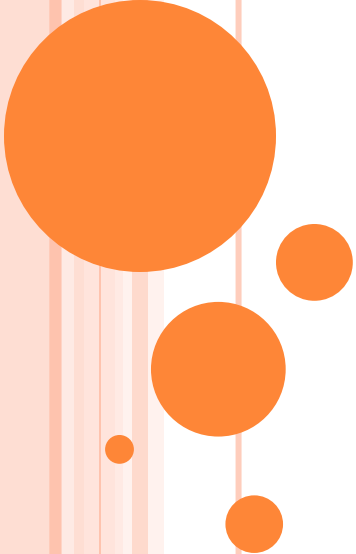




SPARTA: AN EXTRAORDINARY CITY

Lecture 12: Brasidas

THE “TRUE CAUSE” OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR

All this came upon them with the late war, which was begun by the Athenians and Peloponnesians by the dissolution of the thirty years' truce made after the conquest of Euboea. To the question why they broke the treaty, I answer by placing first an account of their grounds of complaint and points of difference, that no one may ever have to ask the immediate cause which plunged the Hellenes into a war of such magnitude. **The real cause I consider to be the one which was formally most kept out of sight. The growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Lacedaemon, made war inevitable.**

Thucydides 1.23



THUCYDIDES' "TRUE CAUSE"

- Many scholars agree with Thucydides' assessment that the real cause of the Peloponnesian War was the Spartan fear of Athenian power.
- However, you are entitled to your own opinion, so long as it is based on evidence, and there are several possibilities as to the "true" cause of the Peloponnesian War.



THE IMMEDIATE CAUSES OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR

- The Akarnanian alliance
- The Corcyra affair
- The Potidaia affair
- The Aigina problem
- The Megarian Decree



THE AKARNANIAN ALLIANCE

- Akarnania was a close neighbour and a habitual enemy of Ambrakia, an important Corinthian colony that controlled the Ambrakian Gulf and part of the route to the west.



THE AKARNANIAN ALLIANCE

- An Athenian base in Akarnania coupled with the existing alliance with the Messenians at Naupaktos would make certain that any supplies or support from the west would never reach the Peloponnese.
- Thucydides 2.68



THE CORCYRA AFFAIR

The city of Epidamnus stands on the right of the entrance of the Ionic Gulf. Its vicinity is inhabited by the Taulantians, an Illyrian people. The place is a colony from Corcyra, founded by Phalius, son of Eratocleides, of the family of the Heraclids, who had according to ancient usage been summoned for the purpose from Corinth, the mother country. The colonists were joined by some Corinthians, and others of the Dorian race. Now, as time went on, the city of Epidamnus became great and populous; but falling a prey to factions arising, it is said, from a war with her neighbours the barbarians, she became much enfeebled, and lost a considerable amount of her power. ... and the Epidamnians, finding themselves hard pressed, sent ambassadors to Corcyra beseeching their mother country not to allow them to perish, but to make up matters between them and the exiles, and to rid them of the war with the barbarians. The ambassadors seated themselves in the temple of Hera as suppliants, and made the above requests to the Corcyraeans.

Thucydides 1.24-5



THE CORCYRA AFFAIR

But the Corcyraeans refused to accept their supplication, and they were dismissed without having effected anything. When the Epidamnians found that no help could be expected from Corcyra, they were in a strait what to do next. So they sent to Delphi ... The answer he gave them was to deliver the city and place themselves under Corinthian protection. So the Epidamnians went to Corinth and delivered over the colony in obedience to the commands of the oracle. They showed that their founder came from Corinth, and revealed the answer of the god; and they begged them not to allow them to perish, but to assist them. This the Corinthians consented to do. Believing the colony to belong as much to themselves as to the Corcyraeans, they felt it to be a kind of duty to undertake their protection. Besides, they hated the Corcyraeans for their contempt of the mother country.

Thucydides 1.24-5



THE CORCYRA AFFAIR

- Corcyra was the second most powerful naval power in Greece (i.e. after Athens).
- Athens would have wanted the Corcyraeans on their side, while the Peloponnesians on theirs.



THE CORCYRA AFFAIR

- The clash between Corinth and Corcyra provided a perfect opportunity for the Athenians to make certain that the large Corcyraean fleet would not support the Peloponnesians.



THE POTIDAIA AFFAIR

Corinth was forming schemes for retaliation, and Athens suspected her hostility. **The Potidaeans, who inhabit the isthmus of Pallene, being a Corinthian colony, but tributary allies of Athens, were ordered to raze the wall looking towards Pallene, to give hostages, to dismiss the Corinthian magistrates, and in future not to receive the persons sent from Corinth annually to succeed them. It was feared that they might be persuaded by Perdiccas and the Corinthians to revolt, and might draw the rest of the allies in the direction of Thrace to revolt with them. These precautions against the Potidaeans were taken by the Athenians immediately after the battle at Corcyra. Not only was Corinth at length openly hostile, but Perdiccas, son of Alexander, king of the Macedonians, had from an old friend and ally been made an enemy. He had been made an enemy by the Athenians entering into alliance with his brother Philip and Derdas, who were in league against him.**

Thucydides 1.56-7



THE POTIDAIA AFFAIR

In his alarm he had sent to Lacedaemon to try and involve the Athenians in a war with the Peloponnesians, and was endeavoring to win over Corinth in order to bring about the revolt of Potidaea. He also made overtures to the Chalcidians in the direction of Thrace, and to the Bottiaeans, to persuade them to join in the revolt; for he thought that if these places on the border could be made his allies, it would be easier to carry on the war with their co-operation. Alive to all this, and wishing to anticipate the revolt of the cities, the Athenians acted as follows. **They were just then sending off thirty ships and a thousand heavy infantry for his country under the command of Archestratus, son of Lycomedes, with four colleagues. They instructed the captains to take hostages of the Potidaeans, to raze the wall, and to be on their guard against the revolt of the neighboring cities.**

Thucydides 1.57



WHY POTIDAIA?

- Potidaia was the only potential Peloponnesian ally in the Chalcidice in terms of tribal ties.
- The Chalcidice was the point of access to Macedon and its timber supplies as well as a very good place for an enemy base trying to take away the Athenian allies in the north.



THE AIGINA PROBLEM

With her, the Aeginetans, formally unrepresented from fear of Athens, in secret proved not the least urgent of the advocates for war, asserting that they had not the independence guaranteed to them by the treaty.

Thucydides 1.67.2



THE AIGINA PROBLEM

- One of the issues of the Peloponnesian League against Athens was that Aigina had not allowed to be autonomous as had been stipulated in the 446 Treaty.



THE AIGINA PROBLEM

- The breaking of the treaty does not have to do with Aigina paying tribute to Athens but probably with Athenian intervention in domestic matters, possibly on the ability of the Aiginetans to judge capital cases.



THE MEGARIAN DECREE

There were many who came forward and made their several accusations; among them the Megarians, in a long list of grievances, called special attention to the fact of their exclusion from the ports of the Athenian empire and the market of Athens, in defiance of the treaty.

Thucydides 1.67.4



THE MEGARIAN DECREE

- The Megarian Decree effectively cut off Megara from the major part of its income, which was from sea-borne trade.
- Also it stopped the last major Peloponnesian trading power in the Aegean, since Corinthian interests were toward the west mostly not the Aegean and Asia Minor.



BREAKING THE TREATY

With these words he, as Ephor, himself put the question to the assembly of the Lacedaemonians. He said that he could not determine which was the loudest acclamation (their mode of decision is by acclamation not by voting); the fact being that he wished to make them declare their opinion openly and thus to increase their ardor for war. Accordingly he said, “All Lacedaemonians who are of opinion that the treaty has been broken, and that Athens is guilty, leave your seats and go there,” pointing out a certain place; “all who are of the opposite opinion, there.” They accordingly stood up and divided; and those who held that the treaty had been broken were in a decided majority.

Thucydides 1.87-8



BREAKING THE TREATY

Summoning the allies, they told them that their opinion was that Athens had been guilty of injustice, but that they wished to convoke all the allies and put it to the vote; in order that they might make war, if they decided to do so, on a common resolution. Having thus gained their point, the delegates returned home at once; the Athenian envoys a little later, when they had despatched the objects of their mission. This decision of the assembly judging that the treaty had been broken, was made in the fourteenth year of the thirty years' truce, which was entered into after the affair of Euboea.

Thucydides 1.87-8



THE TRUE CAUSE

The Lacedaemonians voted that the treaty had been broken, and that war must be declared, not so much because they were persuaded by the arguments of the allies, as because they feared the growth of the power of the Athenians, seeing most of Hellas already subject to them.

Thucydides 1.87-8



BREAKING THE TREATY

- The Spartans broke the Thirty Year's truce.
- Formally, none of the Athenian actions were against the letter of the treaty (although all of them were against its spirit)
- The Peloponnesian War was largely caused by Athenian aggression but the formal instigator was Sparta.
- This is the first time since the Persian Wars where takes a stand and acts on its own account, i.e. not merely reacting to the actions of others.



SPARTA THE LIBERATOR

The good wishes of men made greatly for the Lacedaemonians, especially as they proclaimed themselves the liberators of Hellas. No private or public effort that could help them in speech or action was omitted; each thinking that the cause suffered wherever he could not himself see to it. So general was the indignation felt against Athens, **whether by those who wished to escape from her empire, or were apprehensive of being absorbed by it.**

Thucydides 2.8



SPARTA THE LIBERATOR

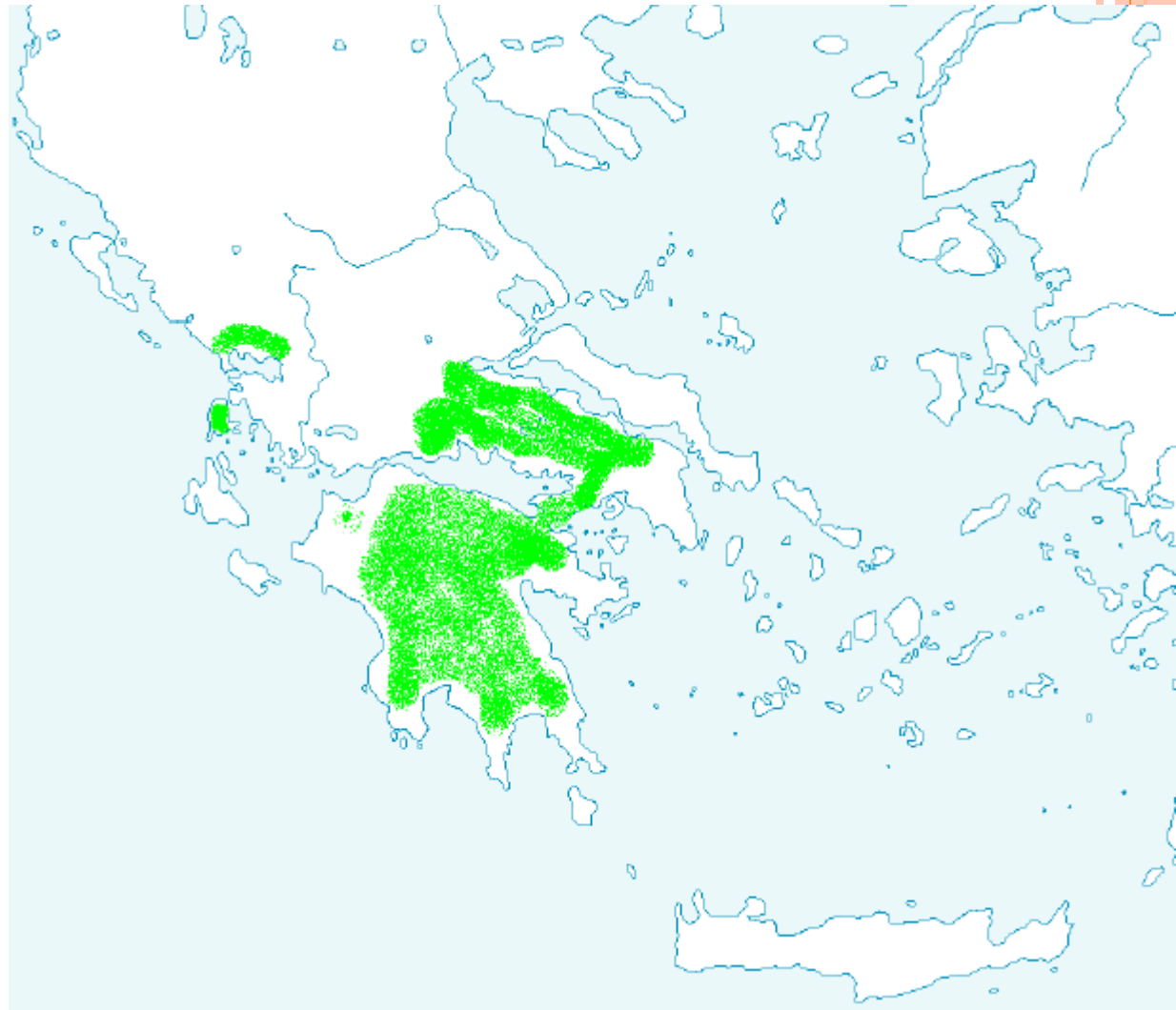
- Although Sparta was formally the aggressor in the Peloponnesian War, it was also the liberator of the Greeks.
- In effect, Sparta acted towards Athens as it used to do with the tyrants in the archaic period.
- There are important political advances for Sparta, since the defeating Athens meant that Sparta would be the greatest power in Greece.



THE TWO SIDES: PELOPONNESIAN LEAGUE

These were the allies of Lacedaemon: **all the Peloponnesians within the Isthmus except the Argives and Achaeans**, who were neutral; Pellene being the only Achaean city that first joined in the war, though her example was afterwards followed by the rest. Outside Peloponnese the Megarians, Locrians, Boeotians, Phocians, Ambraciots, Leucadians, and Anactorians.

Thucydides 2.9



THE TWO SIDES: PELOPONNESIAN LEAGUE

Of these, ships were furnished by the Corinthians, Megarians, Sicyonians, Pellenians, Eleans, Ambraciots, and Leucadians; and cavalry by the Boeotians, Phocians, and Locrians. The other states sent infantry. This was the Lacedaemonian confederacy.

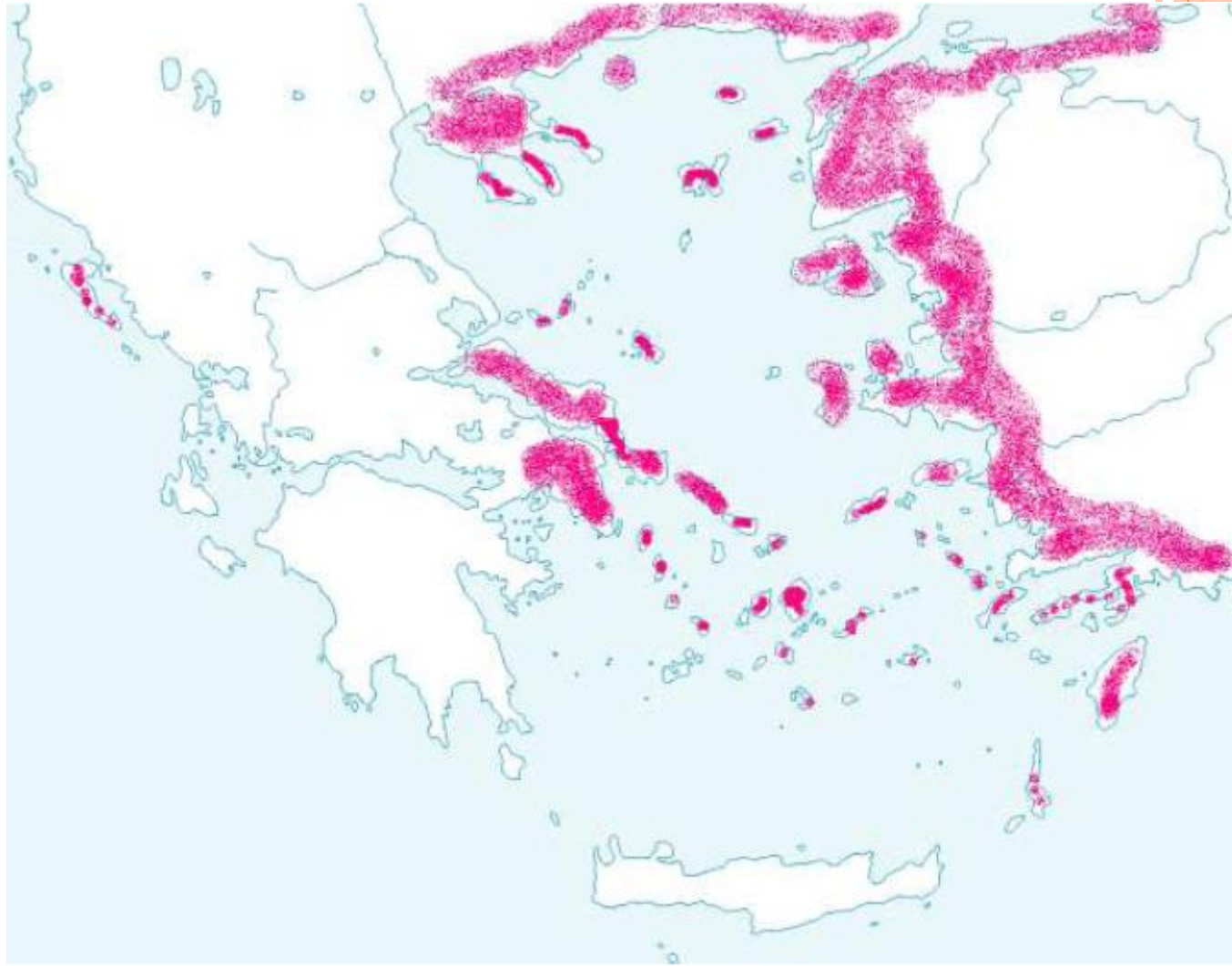
Thucydides 2.9



THE TWO SIDES: ATHENS AND THE ALLIES

That of Athens comprised the Chians, Lesbians, Plateans, the Messenians in Naupactus, most of the Acarnanians, the Corcyraeans, Zacynthians, and some tributary cities in the following countries, viz., Caria upon the sea with her Dorian neighbors, Ionia, the Hellespont, the Thracian towns, the islands lying between Peloponnese and Crete towards the east, and all the Cyclades except Melos and Thera. Of these, ships were furnished by Chios, Lesbos, and Corcyra, infantry and money by the rest.

Thucydides 2.9



THE ARCHIDAMIAN WAR

- The first ten years of the Peloponnesian War (431-421 BCE) are called the Archidamian War after the Spartan king Archidamos.
- This phase of the war was characterised mainly by the Peloponnesian invasions of Attika.



THE ARCHIDAMIAN WAR: TIMELINE

- 431: War Begins, first invasion of Attika
- 430: Plague appears in Athens
- 429: Perikles dies of the plague, Siege of Plataia begins.
- 428: Mytilenean Revolt begins
- 427: Plataia reduced, Mytilene reduced, Stasis at Corcyra
- 426: Spartan colony at Herakleia, Athenian campaign in Ambrakia,
- 425: Pylos episode
- 424: Delion Campaign by Athens, Campaign of Brasidas to the north,
- 423: Fighting in northern Greece
- 422: Kleon and Brasidas killed
- 421: Peace of Nikias



THE SPARTAN STRATEGY IN 431

- The **main Spartan strategy in 431 was to invade Attika** yearly, destroy the crops and thus force Athens to surrender.
- This is the main hoplite tactic of warfare, where an invading force destroys the countryside until the defenders come out to fight, thus forcing a battle.
- Sparta was trying to play to Athenian weakness, i.e. the army.
- However, Sparta also had a view to inciting the Athenian allies to rebel and to challenge Athens at sea.



THE PERIKLEAN STRATEGY

He also gave the citizens some advice on their present affairs in the same strain as before. **They were to prepare for the war, and to carry in their property from the country. They were not to go out to battle, but to come into the city and guard it, and get ready their fleet, in which their real strength lay.** They were also to keep a tight rein on their allies--the strength of Athens being derived from the money brought in by their payments, and success in war depending principally upon conduct and capital ...The Athenians listened to his advice, and began to carry in their wives and children from the country, and all their household furniture, even to the woodwork of their houses which they took down. Their sheep and cattle they sent over to Euboea and the adjacent islands. **But they found it hard to move, as most of them had been always used to live in the country.**

Thucydides 2.13-4



THE ATHENIAN STRATEGY IN 431

- Athens followed Perikles' advice, although there were several problems in the beginning.
- Thus the Athenians did not react to the Spartan invasions of Attika but instead used their fleet to inflict damage on the Peloponnesians.



THE PLATAIA EPISODE

- Plataia was initially besieged by the Peloponnesians in 429.
- The siege lasted for the better part of 2 years.
- The final capitulation came in 427, after the reduction of Mytilene by Athens.



THE PLATAIA EPISODE

About the same time in this summer, the Plataean being now without provisions, and unable to support the siege, surrendered to the Peloponnesians in the following manner. An assault had been made upon the wall, which the Plataeans were unable to repel. The Lacedaemonian commander, perceiving their weakness, wished to avoid taking the place by storm; **his instructions from Lacedaemon having been so conceived, in order that if at any future time peace should be made with Athens, and they should agree each to restore the places that they had taken in the war, Plataea might be held to have come over voluntarily, and not be included in the list. He accordingly sent a herald to them to ask if they were willing voluntarily to surrender the town to the Lacedaemonians, and accept them as their judges, upon the understanding that the guilty should be punished, but no one without form of law.**

Thucydides 2.52



THE PLATAIA EPISODE

The Plataeans were now in the last state of weakness, and the herald had no sooner delivered his message than they surrendered the town. **The Peloponnesians fed them for some days until the judges from Lacedaemon, who were five in number, arrived. [4] Upon their arrival no charge was preferred; they simply called up the Plataeans, and asked them whether they had done the Lacedaemonians and allies any service in the war then raging.**

Thucydides 2.52



THE PLATAIA EPISODE

- It is very interesting to note that the Spartans, at least according to Thucydides, were devising their strategy not only in relation to the war but also in relation to a probable aftermath.
- If Plataia was not allowed by a future treaty to go back to Athens, then that meant that Athens would not longer have a foothold in Boiotia.



HERAKLEIA

About this time the Lacedaemonians founded their colony of **Heraclea in Trachis, their object being the following. ... [4] After hearing them, the** Lacedaemonians determined to send out the colony, wishing to assist the Trachinians and Dorians, and also because they thought that the proposed **town would lie conveniently for the purposes of the war against the Athenians. A fleet might be got ready there against Euboea, with the advantage of a short passage to the island; and the town would also be useful as a station on the road to Thrace. In short, everything made the** Lacedaemonians eager to found the place. [5] After first consulting the god at Delphi and receiving a favorable answer, they sent off the colonists, Spartans and Perioeci, inviting also any of the rest of the Hellenes who might wish to accompany them, except Ionians, Achaeans, and certain other nationalities; three Lacedaemonians leading as founders of the colony, Leon, Alcidas, and Damagon. [6]The settlement effected, they fortified anew the city, now called Heraclea, distant about four miles and a half from Thermopylae and two miles and a quarter from the sea, and commenced building docks, closing the side towards Thermopylae just by the pass itself, in order that they might be easily defended.

Thucydides 3.92

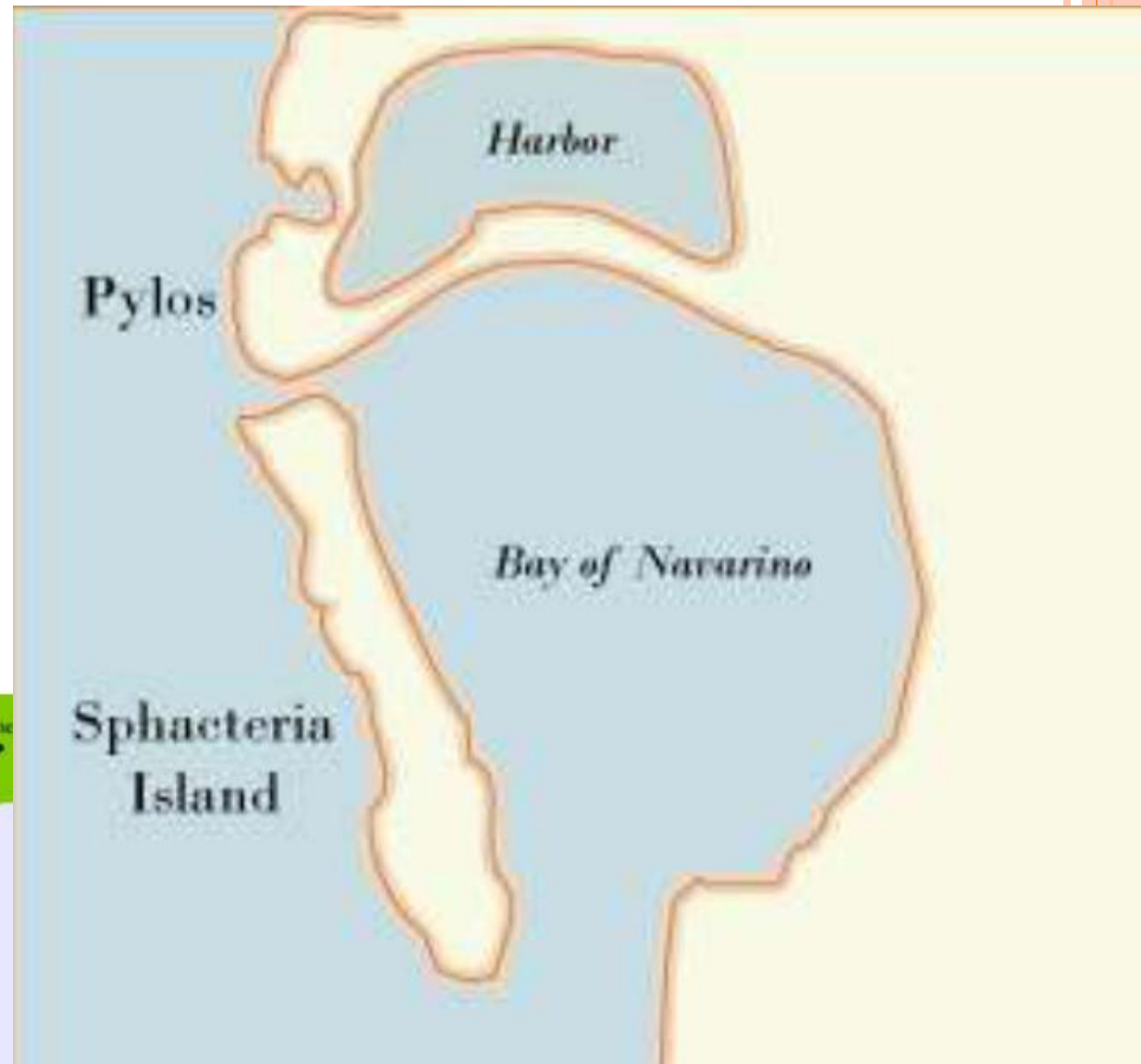


HERAKLEIA

- Clearly the Spartans were looking towards the northern Athenian allies when they founded Herakleia.
- They also had a view towards naval warfare.
- Further, Euboia was an important target, since the Athenians kept their movable property (mainly animals) there.



PYLOS



PYLOS

- In 425 BCE, the Athenian general Demosthenes (***not the orator!!***) captured the island of Sphakteria and Pylos.
- After a long siege, the Athenians captured around 400 Spartans.
- With these Spartans as hostages, Sparta immediately tried for peace.



BRASIDAS IN THE NORTH

- Brasidas, a hero of Pylos (but not one of the hostages) with a force of helots campaigned to northern Greece.
- His route was strictly overland passing through Megara, Boiotia and Thessaly to reach the Chalcidice.
- There he managed to incite Athenian allies to revolt, among them Amphipolis.



BRASIDAS

- Brasidas himself was sent out by the Lacedaemonians mainly at his own desire, although the Chalcidians also were eager to have a man so thorough as he had shown himself whenever there was anything to be done at Sparta, and whose after service abroad proved of the utmost use to his country. At the present moment **his just and moderate conduct towards the towns generally succeeded in procuring their revolt, besides the places which he managed to take by treachery; and thus when the Lacedaemonians desired to treat, as they ultimately did, they had places to offer in exchange, and the burden of war meanwhile shifted from Peloponnese. Later on in the war, after the events in Sicily, the present valour and conduct of Brasidas, known by experience to some, by hearsay to others, was what mainly created in the allies of Athens a feeling for the Lacedaemonians. He was the first who went out and showed himself so good a man at all points as to leave behind him the conviction that the rest were like him.**

Thucydides 4.81



BRASIDAS

- The portrayal of Brasidas is unique for a Spartan in Thucydides.
- Brasidas is shown as the best specimen of Sparta and it is clear that his conduct had considerable impact on how others viewed Sparta during the Peloponnesian War.
- Brasidas is portrayed as noble, just, a good orator and a brave soldier.



BRASIDAS AND THUCYDIDES

- Thucydides came up against Brasidas when Brasidas took over Amphipolis.
- Thucydides was the Athenian general in charge of the area and he did not stop Brasidas; for that reason he was exiled.



THE PEACE OF NIKIAS

Now, however, after the Athenian defeat at Amphipolis, and the death of Cleon and Brasidas, **who had been the two principal opponents of peace on either side—the latter from the success and honour which war gave him, the former because he thought that, if tranquillity were restored, his crimes would be more open to detection and his slanders less credited**

Thucydides 5.16



THE PEACE OF NIKIAS

- The Peace of Nikias was established in 421 BCE and marks the end of the Archidamian War.
- In some ways, Sparta lost the Archidamian War, since it was forced to treat with Athens for the return of the Pylos hostages.
- At the same time, however, the campaign of Brasidas to the north exposed the greatest weakness of Athens: the willingness of the allies to revolt with only a little encouragement and support.



FOLLOW-UP READING

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- Pazdernik, C.F. “Procopius and Thucydides on the Labors of War: Belisarius and Brasidas in the Field” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-), Vol. 130, (2000), pp. 149-187

