PERICLEAN IMPERIAL POLICY AND THE MYTILENEAN DEBATE

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In view of the fact that Thucydides intended his work to be a possession for ever,¹ to be a handbook for statesmen, such description as he gives of the individual leaders of Athens, subjectively coloured or true to life, was intended to convey some particular trend to the reader. In II.65, after dealing with Pericles as the ideal statesman, Thucydides gives a general evaluation of Pericles’ successors to the end of the war, indicating the lack of leadership and the consequent disunity of the demos which ultimately led to the downfall of Athens. In view of this, and the fact that Thucydides does not relate every event that occurred in the period covered by his subject, but in the words of Finley ‘only presses forward with the matter in hand, leaving all minor questions until the moment that they become dominant’,² such analyses as he gives from time to time must be politically significant,³ especially when he is dealing with the leaders responsible for Athenian policy.

To establish the significance of the Mytilenean debate in Thucydides’ History, and, more particularly, the role of this debate in delineating the imperial policy of Athens in the hands of Cleon as compared to Periclean policy has been the purpose of this study.

This I have sought to do in the light of the History of Thucydides in its final form. Whatever the manner in which it gained this form, whatever the date of composition, the author, in presenting it as we have it, aimed at imparting some lesson of history to his readers.

The speeches naturally constitute a large body of my evidence, and hence I must state the view adopted regarding this much disputed aspect of Thucydides’ History. I have accepted that of Finley, whose views seem in

³ J. B. Bury, The Ancient Greek Historians (repr. in Dover Ser. 1958), p. 101. Of particular value in this respect are the speeches as they indicate what was to Thucydides the dominant note of each particular circumstance.
line with the general tendency at present. In thought and style Thucydides did not give a faithful copy of any individual speaker. 'The speeches are compressed examples of the reasoning to be followed under different circumstances, though at the same time more than that, because they both convey the point of view of the actual speakers and are the means of presenting the compelling forces in the history of the time.'

Regarding the external policy of Pericles, Dienelt sees a certain development through the years. After the banishment of Cimon in 461 b.c., hostilities were waged with Persia and Sparta. This war on two fronts, although successful at first, achieved very little of lasting nature. Consequently Pericles, realising as a result of the Egyptian disaster that his resources were inadequate to wage a war on two fronts, adopted a new policy. Pericles avoided a conflict with the King, but within his new sphere of operations, demarcated by the Peace of Callias, he took measures to be prepared if the King should not abide by the agreement. Hence from 446 b.c. Pericles embarks on a policy of consolidation of his power and the establishment of a powerful Panhellenic instrument to ensure peace.

When a peace agreement had been concluded with Persia, and the tribute was thus no longer warranted, Pericles called a Panhellenic Conference with the object of securing peace and security at sea, in fact the Panhellenic leadership of Athens by negotiation. These aims were diplomatically linked with factors concerning the Persian Wars, as can be seen from the items on the agenda of the proposed conference. This ideal of unity and peace for the entire Greek world never had a hearing as the conference did not materialise. The wider Periclean ideal of Panhellenic co-operation

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5 Finley, p. 99. See further p. 284, 94–104, 272 and 274.


7 A disaster which Walker (*C.A.H. V.*, p. 84) considers as great as the Sicilian disaster, but for an opposite view see H. D. Westlake, 'Thuc. and the Athenian disaster in Egypt', *Cl.Phil. XLV* (1950), p. 209ff. Westlake is of the opinion that Thucydides has over­estimated the greatness of the Egyptian disaster. He says it is all the more striking as Thuc. uses terms closely parallel to those which end his account of the Sicilian expedition.

8 According to Dienelt not a formal peace, but a mere agreement. See too A.T.L. III, p. 275ff. For a different view see Sealey, 'The Peace of Callias once more', *Historia* III (1954/5), p. 325–337. Sealey does not believe in any peace or agreement, but notices that in 450 the hostilities between Athens and the Persian Empire came to an end (p. 332).

9 p. 16ff. See further A.T.L. III, p. 279.

10 Dienelt, p. 18.

and unity was then narrowed down to involve the Sea-league only. 12 Dienelt, intent on the peaceful measures to secure Hellenic leadership, draws attention to the diplomatic measure of extending influence by the system of cleruchies at this time. 13

To achieve this Athenian leadership, Athenian relations with Sparta (at this time resting on a five-year truce) had to be defined. Thus in the winter of 446/5 a 30-year peace agreement was concluded with Sparta—a goal, according to Dienelt, desired since the early fifties. This peace policy towards Persia and Sparta was pursued until, despite efforts on the part of Pericles to maintain peace (witness the defensive alliance with Corcyra), war seemed inevitable. Pericles realistically accepted the fact of war, but according to Dienelt only to achieve peace. His evidence for a ‘Friedenspolitik’ of Pericles is thus based on Periclean efforts towards peace. 14 However, it seems to me an open question whether Pericles resorted to war to gain peace, or whether he turned to war to ensure his limited empire when a peaceful policy was no longer successful, or whether this was all merely a stage towards his ideal of a Panhellenic empire now being followed by a different strategy, viz., to secure a smaller part, the sea empire, and then to extend it to include the land and ultimately the entire Greek world. Thus he would be building out from an ensured and secured nucleus.

Dienelt is unwilling to speak of an imperialistic policy of Pericles; in fact he believes that he was opposed to imperialism. 15 It is quite true that Pericles warns the Athenians against the extension of their empire (I.144.1), but looking at the context of this opposition to territorial expansion, it seems quite clear to me that, when Pericles says: ‘... I have many other reasons for believing that you will conquer, but you must not be extending your empire while you are at war, or run into unnecessary dangers’, the emphasis should fall on ‘while at war with Sparta’. That this was merely wartime strategy, De Romilly 16 too seems to understand by this sentence. Further support for this view I find in II.65 when Thucydides in his general survey of Pericles’ successors says: ‘Pericles survived the commencement of hostilities two years and six months; and after his death, his foresight was

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12 Dienelt, p. 22. Worthy of note is the fact that it was at this stage that the overt steps (D.7, D.13, D.14) were taken to complete the transition to Empire (see A.T.L. III, p. 264). D.7: Decree of Cleinias (A.T.L. II, p. 50); D. 13: the Papyrus decree; D.14: Decree of Clearchus (A.T.L. II, p. 61).
13 p. 22/3.
14 See especially p. 58ff.
15 p. 79.
16 J. de Romilly, Thucydide et l’impérialisme athénien (1947) p. 102–6. Even Thuc. II.62.2 she finds is not encouraging the Athenians to new conquests, but just as the limitations of Thuc. I.143.4, it rests on the principle of division of influence established in 446 a.c. according to which Athens renounced encroachment on land. See p. 110. It thus involves a definite imperial programme involving the sea and its islands.

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even better appreciated than during his life, for he had told the Athenians that, if they would be patient and would attend to their navy, and not seek to enlarge their dominion while the war was going on, nor imperil their city, they would be victorious'. The fear of expansion, clearly linked to the circumstances of war, cannot be made representative of Periclean policy in general.

Against Dienelt’s view, I favour the reality of an active Periclean imperial policy. True enough the aims of empire are no longer Panhellenic after the peace with Persia and Sparta, but in aiming at the dominion of the islands of the Aegean it is decidedly imperial in character. In Thucydides II.64 Pericles defends himself, when, after the second Peloponnesian invasion and the inroads of the plague, the Athenians blamed him as the author of all their troubles. In this defence Pericles acknowledges the designs of empire when he says: ‘The indolent may indeed find fault, but the man of action will seek to rival us, and he who is less fortunate will envy us. To be hateful and offensive has ever been at the time the fate of those who have aspired to empire’. Here there seems to be complete identification of the Athenians with ‘those aspiring to empire’. So subtle has this aspiration to empire been that Dienelt fails to see any imperial policy on the part of Pericles.

Even some Greeks at that time found themselves enveloped within the overwhelming tentacles of empire before they had fully realised it. How this could happen the Mytileneans approaching Sparta for aid, after they had revolted in fear of being subjugated by Athens, reveal in their complaint: ‘The Athenians thought to gain an empire they must use fair words and even out their way by policy and not by violence’. Can there still be doubt as to the reality of Periclean imperial aims when Thucydides considers the fear of the growing power of Athens to be the truest cause of the war? Even if one were to deny this as the truest cause of the war, it would not remove the reality of the existence of fear for the growing power of Athens.

Though Dienelt has adequately shown Periclean endeavours for peace with Sparta and Persia, this policy is shown by the agreement with Persia [demarcating spheres of activity] and with Sparta [stipulating that they deal with their own affairs as they please, but without interfering with each other’s allies] to be paving the way to the building of the empire as a powerful unit within a specific region—and this not only by diplomacy. When this limited empire had been all but attained, it was quite a general fear in

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17 Thuc. III.11.3.
18 N. G. L. Hammond, A History of Greece (1959), p. 303 re agreement with Persia, and p. 308/9 re agreement with Sparta whereby encroachment on land by Athens was renounced in 446 B.C. by the 30-year Peace. For a practical demonstration of this agreement see Thuc. I.40.
the Greek world that the limits of empire would ultimately extend to all Greeks. Hence the Mytilenean envoys at Sparta could say: 'We were never the allies of the Athenians in their design of subjugating Hellas, we were really the allies of the Hellenes whom we sought to liberate from the Persians'.

As the Mytilenean debate is the immediate result of a revolt and reveals the course of action taken by Athens after Pericles' time in Athenian-ally relationships, it will be of value to examine Periclean policy in comparable circumstances. The revolts and the subsequent arrangements made once the recalcitrant city had been subdued clearly reveal Periclean aims and the methods adopted when diplomacy failed him.

The vast majority of revolts Thucydides deals with by way of a general remark in 1.99 where he analyses the causes of revolt and shows how the revolts were caused by the dissatisfaction at obligations towards Athens, whether these obligations consisted in service with their fleets or contributions of money. However, as the majority had commuted to cash contributions rather than do service with their fleet, they were no match for the powerful Athenian fleet and were consequently easily subdued when they did revolt. From the evidence of the inscriptions we know that by 454 B.C. there remained apart from Samos, Chios and Lesbos 14 cities from an original 200 (approx.) contributing ships rather than money. The gradual change described in 1.99 reached its final stages when in 450 B.C. Athens began the final move to change the remaining ship-contributing states to states contributing cash. This was completed by the end of the second assessment period (447/6 B.C.).

The terms, that were stipulated when these allies (to whom the general statement of 1.99 refers) were reduced, were such that they did not evoke particular mention by Thucydides. They probably conformed to the general pattern, viz. to provide money rather than ships, possibly receiving a garrison or even a cleruchy. Co-operation was thus insisted upon whether it be by the contribution of ships or money. When this co-operation failed to be voluntary, it was assured by compulsion even if it went to the extent of subduing a state that had revolted against the compulsion that Athens applied.

Those revolts that Thucydides specially mentions could not entirely have conformed to this general pattern, but must have involved circumstances of special merit. In the Pentekontaetian history those revolts that are treated separately and that are of importance to us as they fall within that period

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19 Thuc. III.10.3.
21 A.T.L. III, p. 249, the second assessment period being 450/49-447/6 B.C.
of Pericles' leadership when Athens aimed at a limited empire, are those of Euboia, Samos and Byzantium, and Potidaia. 23

It was in the midst of the very important stages of transition from Athenian domination to the naked fact of empire, after the failure of the Panhellenic Conference, that Euboia revolted in the early summer of 446 B.C. 24 According to the authors of A.T.L. the revolt of Euboia and its suppression was the last manifestation of the old and recurrent tragedy in which the allied cities one by one had found that they were indeed not free, but completely at the mercy of Athens. 25 Apart from the fact that the revolt formed an aspect of the general take-over of the islands, Euboia was also significant for another reason. Westlake 26 has shown the importance of Euboia in supplementing the corn supply of Athens. She also had strategic value for Athens. Now that central Greece had been lost, the Euripos became the frontier between peninsular Greece and the maritime empire.

Consequently when she revolted, the crisis was grave. One would expect that the punishment upon reduction would not be light. Yet Gomme 27 describes the whole settlement as one of appeasement, though Athenian control was more evident than before. Histiaia 28 seems to have suffered the worst—the whole population was expelled and the place colonised; at Chalcis the Hippobatae were expelled and their lands, the richest in Euboia, were confiscated by Athens. At Chalcis and Eretria every adult citizen was forced to take an oath to be loyal to the Athenian democracy, while men and boys were taken as hostages from Chalcis, Eretria, and probably from other cities, and kept for some years in Athens. Military measures were taken to prevent revolt. 29 These were the terms made by Pericles in spite

23 In the case of Thasos Pericles could possibly have exerted some influence on the policy adopted. Certainly the Democrats were responsible for the terms enforced. We know from Thuc. I.100.2 that the revolt of the Thasians was due to the Thasian disagreement with Athens concerning the trading stations on the coast of Thrace opposite, and the mine which they owned. Here a powerful and independent ally was for the first time forced to succumb to the interest and welfare of the Athenian state. Ennea Hodoi was probably conceived as part of the overall strategy to secure Thrace and would serve too as bastion against Macedonia. See A.T.L. III, p. 258ff.

24 According to A.T.L. III, p. 179.


28 The treatment of Histiaea under Pericles' leadership, though more human than practices of the day, was bracketed with that of other cities as examples of cruelty in Xen. Hef. II.2.3. It must, however, be remembered that this judgment was made when standards of cruelty towards conquered foes had very much changed. See note 30.

29 Hammond, op. cit., p. 313, for a good summary of the terms. For further details see A. W. Gomme, 'Euboia and Samos in the Delian Confederacy', C.R. L (1936), p. 6ff.
of the fact that the Athenian people seem to have clamoured for severer terms. 30

30 According to Gomme, Com. vol. I, p. 344–5, only Histiaea was depopulated when Euboia was reduced. This settlement Gomme describes as one of appeasement. There is no doubt that it was lenient in comparison with the treatment of the Argives at the hands of the Spartans under Cleomenes when they were besieged at Tiryns after 500 B.C. (Herod. VI. 76–83. Re date, see How and Wells Com. Appen. XVII). In the middle of the fifth century the Messenians besieged Oeniadae and the population surrendered δεισαντες οἱ Ἕδων μὴ ἀκόσις τῆς πέλεως αὐτοὶ τὰ ἀπόλογαντα, καὶ αἱ γυναικεῖς σφατι καὶ οἱ παιδες έξαναπέστοιθασι, εἴλοντο ἀπελθεν ὑπόσκονοι (Paus. IV. 25. 2). It was an acknowledged right of the victor to kill the men, burn the city, and lead the women and children into captivity. In 447–6 B.C., just prior to the revolt of Euboia, the revolted city of Chaeroneia was enslaved (Thuc. I. 113. 2), whereas Euboia in spite of being involved in the Boeotian revolution was not enslaved.

Pericles is described by Thucydides as δυνατος ὅν το τῷ ἀξίωματι καὶ τῆς γνώμης Χρημάτων τῷ διαφωνος ἀδερφότατος γεννήμενος κατέτη τῷ πλῆθος ἐλευθέρος, καὶ οὐς ἥγετο μᾶλλον ὅπ' αὐτῷ ή αὑτός ἤγει (II. 65. 8)—a characteristic which could hardly be earned only by his restraining the Athenians from making sallies against the Spartans devastating Attica during the first years of the Peloponnesian war. We know from Plut. Per. XX. 2, for example, that at the time of Pericles’ expedition to the Euxine his arrangements in securing influence in these parts were not entirely what the people desired, as Plutarch having described Pericles’ measure adds: τὰλλα δ' οὖν συνεχάρη ταῖς ὀρμας τῶν πολιτῶν. It was a general characteristic of Pericles that he was more clever than his successors in ministering to the appetite of the mob (Gomme, Com. Vol. I, p. 65)—he conceded sufficiently to stem their violent mood.

In view of the way in which, for example, the Argives were treated, in view of the natural fear of the inhabitants of Oeniadae, and the enslavement of Chaeroneia, together with the characteristic restraint Pericles exercised, it seems unlikely that Plut. Per. VII. 6 παραβαίνειν οὐκέτι τολμῶν ἄλλα δάκναν τὴν Εὔβοιαν καὶ ταῖς νήσοις ἑκατονδαυν indicates ‘Athens’ overbearing conduct towards Euboia’ [Holden, Plutarch’s Life of Pericles (1894), p. 104] at the time of its reduction. When Xen. Hell. II. 2. 3 quotes Histiaeas as an example of harsh treatment of a reduced ally, it must be remembered that this statement was made at a time when by later standards it was considered severe. [See F. Kiechle, ‘Zur Humanität in der Kriegführung der griechischen Staaten’, Hist. VII (1958).] If we examine the actual terms enforced they can hardly be overbearing by the standards of that time.

To say that Pericles was responsible for a particular mood of the people by his earlier democratic measures is perhaps more correct, and only in this sense can it be a criticism of Pericles when Plutarch quotes Telecleides in Plut. Per. VII. 6. The present tenses here used cannot refer to continuous or repeated action on the part of Athens towards Euboia in the time of Pericles—this would be contradictory to the known leniency of Pericles’ terms as well as to our knowledge of Athenian treatment of Euboia at that time. It would be fully in accordance with the character of Pericles, viz., not yielding to the demands of the people, in accordance with the context of the particular passage in Plutarch where quite clearly the demos is the subject of δάκναν τὴν Εὔβοιαν, and in accordance with our knowledge of events at this time if δάκναν denotes conative action, i.e., tried to bite—champing at, implying that the demos was being restrained.

This fragment quoted by Plutarch and reputed to be of Telecleides seems therefore to be a reference not to the actual measures of Athens towards Euboia, but rather the mood of the people at the time. Just as in the case of Pericles’ arrangements with his visit to the Euxine, Pericles here too ὁ συνεχάρη ταῖς ὀρμας τῶν πολιτῶν. Hence their champing at Euboia in the face of Pericles’ appeasing settlement.
The most significant revolt after that of Euboia, and since the empire had become publicly acknowledged, was that of Samos. Athens interfered when Samos seemed to become too powerful with her victory over Miletus seemingly assured. Samos revolted, and the situation became critical when the alliance of the Persian satrap Pissuthnes was enlisted and Byzantium revolted seizing control of the Bosporus. To quote Hammond: 

31 If other states should follow their example and Persia support the action of Pissuthnes, there was a real danger that the eastern half of the empire would break away. Sparta too was approached for help and the danger of a Persia-Sparta-Ionia 'alliance' became acute. When they were reduced, the terms of submission were very much the same as that of Thasos reduced 23 years earlier. Samos lost her fleet, had to pay a heavy indemnity, and the Samians were bound by an oath of loyalty to the Athenians—generous but firm terms.  

If we should date this revolt in 432 B.C. as Busolt does, it gains added significance as counterpart to the revolt of Mytilene. In the next few years Pericles intensified his control of the empire, and extended his net of alliances. From his activities in the years immediately after the revolt of Samos and especially those in the regions of the Pontus and north-western Aegean, one can form no other conclusion but that Pericles, having been awakened by the Samian revolt to the dangers that could exist for the empire, made a determined effort to establish the empire as a strong enough unit to oppose even an Ionia-Sparta-Persia alliance.

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31 Thuc. VIII.76.4—exaggerated according to Gomme, Com. Vol. I, p. 358, but he notes further: 'It is clear, however, from the large numbers of warships that were sent that Athens was very much alarmed, if not at the power of Samos alone, at least at the possibility of a general revolt and a war with Persia as well'.

Diod. Sic. XII.27.5 mentions a fleet sailing against the Athenian fleet, whereas Thuc. talks only of a report of a fleet sailing against the Athenians.

32 Hammond, op. cit., p. 315.

33 A. W. Gomme, 'Euboia and Samos in the Delian Confederacy', C.R. L(1936), p. 9, notes, 'Samos in 439 was treated in a much more generous spirit than the other allies who had revolted, for she paid no tribute and later an oligarchic government was allowed'. It seems, therefore, typical of Periclean policy to gain goodwill and thus leadership even in the application of forceful measures. This is still within the ideal of a cultural leadership.

34 Busolt, Griechische Geschichte III, p. 836.

35 Hammond, op. cit., p. 316. G. W. Cox, The Athenian Empire (1887), p. 41: 'the great aim of Pericles was to strengthen the power of Athens over the whole area of the Confederacy. The establishment of cleruchs who retained their rights as Athenian citizens, had answered so well, that he resolved to extend it. The islands of Lemnos, Imbros, and Sycros were thus occupied, and Pericles himself led a body of such settlers as far as Sinope which became a member of the Athenian alliance.' See too A.T.L. III, p. 114-17, and p. 308 for 435 B.C. or 405 as proposed date of campaign.

36 Thuc. III.11.6. Here mention is made of the restraining influence Lesbos' power had been prior to 428 B.C., and the possibility of an alliance of Lesbos with Sparta or other powers (no doubt the 'other powers' included Persia). In the fifties there was considerable Persian activity on the coast of Asia Minor as the regulations for Erythrai show (R. Meiggs, 'The Growth of Athenian Imperialism', J.H.S. LXIII (1943), p. 23). Furthermore the
The Potidaean incident was part of this strategy. The settlement when Potidaia capitulated was considered too lenient by the Athenian people. They required that the city should have surrendered at discretion which would have entailed the death of the prisoners, or that they be sold in slavery. Once again a more lenient settlement was fully in accordance with Periclean policy of maximum appeasement.

Thus the policy of Pericles was at first on a grander scale involving Panhellenic ideals. When the Athenian empire on land crumbled at the conclusion of the 30-year Peace it was limited to the sea. At all times Pericles ardently endeavoured to establish its supremacy by extending its influence where states were prepared to co-operate, but when this failed the desired control was secured by forceful reduction. Hence the need existed for a powerfully maintained leadership. This imperialism was not just the fulfilment of an ideological ideal. Periclean imperialism had already passed through the stages where it had been motivated by fear and ambition. Self-interest had stepped in. Apart from the interest of survival which did not allow them to relax their hold, there were economic advantages which Grundy has discussed. In brief the empire secured the foreign food supply and provided for the necessitous element in the imperial proletariat. This necessitated economic control of the empire which was ensured by laws of general application—so effective that Megara could be plunged into a very difficult predicament by Athens merely applying economic sanctions. Control of the empire was thus assured by political and economic supremacy. Those that refused to ally themselves with the aims of Periclean imperialism and

Note continued from previous page
Athenian regulations for Miletus (A.T.L. II, re D.11) in 450/49 B.C., and the Athenian decree of 451/0 (I.G.1.32) praising Sigeon to whom protection is guaranteed against any enemy on the mainland of Asia, clearly reveal the reality of the Persian danger (see A.T.L. III, p. 256 and R. Meiggs, J.H.S. LXIII). When Athens could no longer after the peace of Kallias install garrisons as she had done in the case of Miletus and Erythrai, she solved the problem of maintaining her influence by a system of cleruchies. See A.T.L. III, p. 282-84 and Plut. Per. XI.5.

39 Thuc. I.75 and VI.82-83.
41a A continuation therefore of Peisistratean policy which annexed Thracian Chersonese and recovered Sigeum to ensure the Propontis trade.
b R. J. Bonner, 'The Commercial policy of Imperial Athens', Cl.Phil. XVIII (1923), p. 196 and 197.
c For a different view see P. A. Brunt, 'The Megarian Decree', A.J.Ph. LXII (1951), p. 269ff. Though he admits that Athens did inflict loss on Megara by her action, it seems to him that trade was much less important in Megarian economy than generally supposed.
revolted were subdued, and by the very terms of reduction, always within reason, were compelled to toe the line.

De Romilly in her book *Thucyde et l’impérialisme athénien* has noted that Thucydides expressed a complete theory of Periclean imperialism essentially in two speeches of Pericles, viz. that in bk. I.140–145 urging the Athenians to war, and that in bk. II.60–65 in which Pericles endeavours to appease the anger of the Athenians against him. To this she feels she should add the Funeral Oration which deals with analogous ideas in a different tone. The first speech deals with the immense possibilities regarding the war because of Athens’ position as leader of a maritime empire—her invulnerable position and strategy. The second speech deals with the lasting possibilities for Athens because of her empire. In fact she controls all the islands and this is her dominion, but it has brought dangers in that her subjects hate her, consequently for the sake of her very existence she dare not renounce her empire. Her greatness and the nature of her rule are the justification of her position. These speeches thus deal with general aspects of Athenian imperialism as existing at the time immediately before and at the outbreak of the war, i.e. at that stage when it had as its goal the supremacy and absolute control of the islands. Yet in spite of these determined aims the imperialism of Pericles is found to be moderate in its application. This view is well attested by the terms enforced when a city had revolted.

Maddalena in the introduction to his *Thucydidis* finds that in Thucydides the law of domination of the stronger is considered natural to man. Hence though the empire is unjust, he who seeks it is merely obeying a law of nature. The Athenian empire, necessarily unjust, doesn’t merit blame as it moderates injustice; it keeps security and peace, or lesser injustice. It can

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42 p. 100ff.
43 p. 123. ‘L’Oraison Funèbre apparaît ainsi comme une double défense. Défense de la souveraineté athénienne . . . mais en même temps, défense de Péricles.’
44 De Romilly, *Impérialisme athénien*, p. 125. It may be noted that regarding Athenian interest in the West, A. R. Burn, *Pericles and Athens* (1960), p. 181, seems to me to be correct when he says that the Athenian trade to the West (Sicily and Italy) did not press Corinth to urge Sparta to war, as Athenian trade had been penetrating the West for a century already and the motive for securing a good position in the West, as seen in the Corcyrean affair, was rather this: ‘This new world of Italy and Sicily if united on either side, in alliance with Athens, or friendly to Corinth and Sparta might seriously upset the balance of the Old World’—a factor that had to be considered now that war with Sparta seemed only a matter of time. Such interest as was maintained in the West was with this purpose in mind as Pericles seems to have curbed the popular idea which desired expansion to the West. See too de Romilly, p. 105–6. In fact Thuc. I.68 seems to indicate clearly that Athenian interest in Corcyra was to prevent a formidable alliance with a potential enemy. The Corcyrians are referred to as ‘a great naval power which might have assisted the Peloponnesians’.
46 See also Thuc. I.76.2, I.8.3. D. Grene, *Man in his Pride* (1950), p. 53: ‘the subjection of the weaker states in some form is the necessary trend of the times—to Thucydides and his most penetrating contemporaries’.

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destroy the weak, but does not do so. The Athenian ambassadors at Sparta say: 'if others took over our empire, it would put our moderation in evidence'.\(^{47}\) In fact the entire tone of the Mytilenean plea at Sparta, in explaining why they had revolted from Athens, is described by Grote\(^{48}\) as apologetic—as if the treatment of Athens was such that it did not merit revolt. This moderation is a branch of intelligence, it is a manifestation of theoretical and practical intelligence. Periclean imperialism is thus an ideal of imperialism springing from a whole mode of life (cf. Funeral Oration), rather than from military strength; it is moderate in not exercising the natural right of the stronger to excess, the naturally accepted law of the time; it is wise in its applying moderation which is primarily based on principle and at times also involves advantages that such moderation holds for the continuance of empire. Such was the imperialism of Thucydides’ ideal\(^{49}\) statesman.

The details of the Lesbian revolt need not be discussed here. Of importance to this study is the following: As in the Samian revolt Athens stepped in when there was the danger of a powerful naval ally becoming strong opposition. Other states before Lesbos had revolted and had been subdued. Some states had been subdued in Athenian interests contrary to agreements. As this pattern of imperialism took more definite shape in the revolts of Samos and Euboia, the Mytileneans already in Pericles’ time planned a revolution against the Periclean imperialism that threatened to overwhelm them at any time—in their own words (III.10.6): 'For the Athenians had subdued others to whom, equally with ourselves, their faith was pledged, and how could we who survived expect to be spared if ever they had the power to destroy us'. However, the desired help from Sparta before the war was not forthcoming.\(^{50}\) Now that the war was on and Athens had been weakened by the plague they revolted because, as they believed (Thuc. III.11.8), 'we were not likely to have survived long, judging by the conduct of Athens towards others, if this war had not arisen'. It was a revolt against Periclean imperialism that could at any time deem it expedient to subdue a state which did not co-operate to ensure a limited empire. In Pericles’ time they, if unsuccessful, would have been brought under control by terms lenient by the standards of

\(^{47}\) Thuc. I.76.3 and 4.


\(^{49}\) G. F. Bender, Der Begriff des Staatsmannes bei Thuk., Wurzburg, 1938. It is interesting to note an apparent Spartan counterpart to Pericles as F. M. Wasserman, 'The Speeches of Archidamos in Thuc.', C.J. 48 (1953), points out: 'Although Archidamos is a different type from Thucydides' Periclean ideal, he too upholds the honour of responsible and far-sighted leadership in the face of growing danger of the defeat of political reasons by mass emotions.'

the day,51 but nevertheless a cause of dissatisfaction to the subjects. The Lesbian revolt was not the first to reveal the precarious tenure of the empire.62 This had been done by the revolt of Samos and that of Euboia. Again, as at the time of the Samian revolt, an Ionia–Sparta–Persia ‘alliance’ threatened63 the empire, a fact the Athenians would fully have realised at the time. Furthermore, it was not the first time that Sparta rallied to the side of a recalcitrant city64—this had been the case when Sparta rallied to the aid of Potidaia. This would have been the case in Samos, had not the 30-year Treaty held (Thuc. I.40). Now that the treaty had fallen away as a result of the war, Spartan aid to cities in revolution was to be expected, and in fact was expected as is clear from the speeches in Thucydides’ preliminary to the Peloponnesian war.65

At the time of the Mytilenean revolt Athens was once again threatened with the possibility of a breakaway of the eastern and strategically most important part of her empire—and this at a most inopportune time (see note 53). The Persian danger was greater than ever before. Ever since the Peace of Callias it had become clear that Persia no longer unified the Greeks through fear, but had in fact become the potential ally of the dissatisfied allies of Athens.66 Would Persia remain aloof when the power of Athens, which had kept her in her place, received a severe blow? As Euboia had held a strategic position in the maritime empire and had been an important link to the grain-supplying regions, so Lesbos, less than 40 miles from the entrance to the Hellespont, now in revolution once again involved dangers faced in the days of Pericles—dangers to the very life-blood and welfare of the empire. It was possibly at the time of the revolt of Euboia that the Athenian people clamoured ‘to rend Euboia to pieces and to trample the islands underfoot’, 57 a but, just as in his arrangements with his visit to the Euxine some time after the revolt of Byzantium, Pericles did not comply with the ‘giddy impulses of the citizens’.57 b When Potidaia surrendered, the terms of settlement certainly did not satisfy the desires of the Athenian

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52 As, for example, Cox, Athenian Empire, maintains (p. 70): ‘No event had yet happened so seriously endangering the Empire of Athens as the revolt of Lesbos. At no time, therefore, had the feeling of resentment and the desire for vengeance run so high.’
53 One plan of strategy was to raise revolt in Ionia and then gain the co-operation of Pissuthnes (Thuc. III.31). See too Thuc. III.15 and my note 36.
54 As Grote (Vol. V, p. 169) would have it.
55 E.g. Thuc. I.81.3 and I.122.
56 Thuc. III.34 offers an example of a state calling in aid in local disputes. See also A.T.L. III, p. 68–9, and p. 282 re desertion of Colophon to Persia in 431/430 b.c.
57a See Plut. Per. VII.6 and my note 30.
people for harsher measures. On the occasion of the Lesbian revolt there was again a desire on the part of the people for severe punishment, but this time there was no Pericles to curb their passions and a decree was passed in the Assembly to execute the Mytilenean male population.

The debate that Thucydides records reconsiders the punishment. Both Cleon and Diodotus are concerned about the manner in which the Mytileneans were to be brought to heel. As Pericles had accepted the reality of empire (a just empire or not), had accepted the necessity to ensure its continued welfare, by military action and strict measures when necessary, so Cleon and Diodotus, arguing in terms of expediency, pursued the same aims of empire. The empire had to be maintained tyrannously or go under; for the welfare of Athens the allies had to be kept well in hand to ensure the all-important money contributions. The similarity in imperial designs seems to be indicated in the History of Thucydides by Cleon re-echoing Pericles. In II.63 Pericles says: 'Neither can you resign your power, if at this crisis any timorous or inactive spirit is for playing the honest man'. As the Periclean empire had to ignore moral goodness for reasons of expediency, so the Athenians in the days of Cleon and Diodotus are for the same reason exhorted by Cleon ‘to play the honest man and forget about empire, or maintain the empire rightly or wrongly’. In achieving his ideal of empire Pericles is resolute and declares: 'I am the same man and stand where I did . . .', implying by contrast the changeable mob moved by circumstances. Very much the same mob Cleon addresses in the words: 'I myself think as before, and I wonder at those who have brought forward the case of the Mytileneans again . . .', as if to emphasise the character of the mob as very much the same as in Pericles’ day. The best-known echo is that describing the empire as a tyranny. ‘You should remember that your empire is a tyranny exercised over unwilling subjects, who are always conspiring against you’, says Cleon. Pericles on the other hand had said: ‘Your empire has become like a tyranny which in the opinion of mankind may have been

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68 At the surrender of Potidaea the people had also clamoured for harsher terms than were actually granted. They certainly voiced their dissatisfaction at the arrangements made. See Thuc. II.70.4 and Gomme, Com. ad loc.
69 Thuc. II.13. This summary of Pericles’ injunctions include an admonition to the Athenians to keep their allies well in hand, for their power depended upon the revenues derived from them. Cleon in Thuc. III.39.8 is also aware of the importance of revenues. One is reminded though of Thuc. II.38 where it is said that wise policy and money secures the power of a state. Is it perhaps then the wise policy which is lacking in the case of Cleon?
70 This apparent similarity between Periclean and Cleonic policy we find reflected in Aristophanes. See Acharn. 423 and Knights 424.
71 Thuc. II.63.2–3.
72 Thuc. III.40.4.
73 Thuc. II.61.2.
74 Thuc. III.36.1.
unjustly gained, but which cannot be safely surrendered.\textsuperscript{65} If we are to follow those who do not bracket \(\Delta\) before \(\tau\rho\alpha\nu\gamma\nu\iota\delta\alpha\)\textsuperscript{64}, there seems to be a hint at a deviation in the nature of this ‘tyranny’ by the time of Cleon.

Although, therefore, Cleon’s and Pericles’ policies have much in common,\textsuperscript{67} as is also emphasised by Thucydides in selecting an historical episode involving circumstances similar to those faced in Pericles’ day, and more so by the similarity of certain phrases, there is nevertheless a difference. By the very echoes the difference between the two leaders is brought out. In the words of Zahn,\textsuperscript{68} ‘so macht er damit aufs Wirksamste den Abstand der beiden Männer voneinander fühlbar, bei denen sich in denselben Worten eine völlig verschiedene Geistesart und Gesinnung ausspricht’. The apparently similar imperial policy is altered by this very fact of attitude towards the allies, and it is this very approach to the allies that is under discussion in the Mytilenean debate. Periclean policy has been described as moderate—it rests on two principles, the one idealistic and the other practical. The idealistic note is portrayed by Pericles’ remarks in the Funeral Oration which sets out the inspiring nature of Athenian leadership, a cultural leadership. It is in this particular oration that Pericles says: ‘We make our friends by conferring, not by receiving favours’.\textsuperscript{69}

Gomme\textsuperscript{70} has well described the difference between Pericles’ and Cleon’s policy in the words: ‘The only part of Cleon’s policy which was un-Periklean, certainly, but even so by implication rather than explicitly, was its cruelty’. Add to this the fact that Aristophanes speaks of both Pericles and Cleon as war-mongers, and the close similarity of policy seems clear.\textsuperscript{71}

Cleon is described as \(\beta\mu\sigma\tau\alpha\tau\rho\alpha\zeta\), and such is the character of the new leader on the scene as we see it in this debate. But in demanding a severer punishment Cleon gave expression to the mood of the people—a mood we have noted already present in Pericles’ Athens at the time of the revolt of

\textsuperscript{65} Thuc. III.37.2 and II.63.2.
\textsuperscript{66} Gomme, Com. Vol. II, p. 175 finds \(\Delta\) essential, whereas Dobree and Hude bracket it.
\textsuperscript{67} Such a close similarity that Müller-Strubing in his \textit{Aristophanes und d. historische Kritik}, p. 393–6 claims that Cleon could be regarded as Pericles’ political heir. However, Gomme (\textit{J. H. S.} 71 (1951), p. 74) remarks that in doing so he is correcting, not giving Thucydides’ view. Gomme recognises deviations, but nevertheless finds Cleon and Alcibiades heirs to Periclean policy (p. 79).
\textsuperscript{68} Zahn, \textit{Die erste Periklesrede} (1934), p. 65. See too H. B. Mattingly, ‘The Growth of Athenian Imperialism’, \textit{Hist. XII} (1963), p. 272: ‘There can be no doubt that from 443 Pericles deliberately began transforming the Confederacy into an Empire and that towards the end he became as firm a realist as any. But there was always a diplomatic fineness about his policy which his successors for the most part conspicuously lacked.’ One may differ as to the date at which the transformation to Empire started, but here again there is the emphasis on the difference in policy being in particular a difference of attitude.
\textsuperscript{69} Thuc. II.40.4.
\textsuperscript{70} \textit{J. H. S.} 71 (1951), p. 78.
\textsuperscript{71} Aristoph. \textit{Acharn.} 425, \textit{Knights} 424.
Euboia, Byzantium, and Potidaia. Cleon was no statesman like Pericles to oppose the people, and to determine a punishment less severe than they demanded. No longer was there a Pericles to inspire respect for Athenian leadership by ensuring an Athens that could be looked upon as a great cultural leader, even in her dealings with recalcitrant cities. Now by the methods of Cleon her leadership was to be maintained by fear. The common element between Pericles and Cleon was in the aims at a continued maritime empire, the difference consisted in the manner in which this empire was to be maintained. This was true at least at the time of the Mytilenean debate.

This difference in moderation not only reveals a difference in statesmanship, it also reveals what is to Thucydides a greater difference. Moderation in Thucydides is a branch of intelligence. Cleon, therefore, not only without moderation but unwise. The folly of Cleon is also an accusation of Diodotus. I can conclude this comparison with Pericles no better than by quoting Taeger.72 'Bezeichnend für Kleons Art ist es, dass er, der Gewaltmensch, ängstlich nach Rechtsgründen sucht, seine Vorschläge zu verteidigen. Sein Wille zur Macht ist kleinbürgerlich, nicht herrisch, nicht von Tatwillen, sondern von Streben nach Genuss und Gewinn getragen. Von den Ideen, welche das Reich geschaffen haben, lebt keine mehr in diesem Geschlecht, das, seines Bestehens froh, nur noch die Früchte von der Vorfahren Tat zu ernten gewillen ist.' The spirit of Periclean policy was no longer present, the goals of empire had now to be achieved by force.73

Seemingly in radical contrast to Cleon’s immoderation is Diodotus’ plea for more moderate treatment. Yet he is as cold and calculating as Cleon.74 He can say, as a Cleon too has argued, ‘do not yield to pity nor to lenity’.75 Both he and Cleon are ruthlessly realistic, and refuse to consider any reasons, but reasons of state.76 Diodotus’ moderation is only determined by expediency: ‘If I prove them ever so guilty, I will not on that account bid you put them to death, unless it is expedient. Neither, if perchance there be some degree of excuse for them, would I have you spare them, unless it be clearly for the good of the state’.77 No longer is there the desire to maintain a dignity in Athenian leadership. Diodotus clearly reflects a severe contrast to a Pericles who said to the Athenians: ‘You are bound to maintain the imperial dignity of your city in which you all take pride’.78

73 It is significant that Thucydides does not describe Cleon as cruel as Diodorus does (XII.55). Cleon’s immoderation seems to be a far cry from the moderation of Pericles, but by Greek standards of cruelty it was still no worse than accepted practices in the Greek world of that time.
74 T. A. Sinclair, History of Greek Political Thought (1952), p. 103.
75 Thuc. III.48.1.
77 Thuc. III.44.2.
78 Thuc. II.63.1.
No longer is Diodotus’ moderation displaying the Periclean attitude which was revealed in the Funeral Oration: ‘We alone do good to our neighbours not upon a calculation of interest, but in the confidence of freedom . . .’?  

No moderation could be more calculating and cold than that of Diodotus in his argument for a more lenient punishment, based entirely on reasons of expediency. Thus, as Cleon had deviated from Pericles in the application of his imperial policy, so too Diodotus deviates from Periclean imperialism in this very same respect.  

Furthermore, as De Romilly, and before her Bodin, have noted, Diodotus makes an innovation in policy when recommending: ‘Even if they were guilty you should wink at their conduct, and not allow the only friends whom you have left to be converted to enemies. Far more conducive to the maintenance of our empire would it be to suffer wrong willingly . . .’—a doctrine of empire described by Gomme as ‘remarkable’. This doctrine would in practice lead to wide toleration, and it was quite unrealistic in view of Athens’ position requiring a firm hold on her subjects, a hold very much like that of a tyrant over his subjects—a position fully acknowledged by Pericles (Thuc. II.63.2), and Cleon for that (Thuc. III.37.2). Even Diodotus apparently conforming to the same principles of toleration as Pericles carries these principles to an unrealistic extreme.

Significantly neither Cleon’s decree, nor that of Diodotus wins the day—the people decide not to wink at their conduct, neither to make a ruthless example of them. It was decided to execute the most guilty, and these amounted to approximately 1,000. Compared to Periclean settlements with reduced allies even this decision was cruel.

The speeches being ‘the proposals on either side which most nearly represent the opposing parties’ have thus served to acquaint us with the forces prevalent in Athens, especially as appears when considering the problem of the attitude to be adopted towards recalcitrant allies.

That Athens was not alone in resorting to immoderation the entire context of the Mytilenean episode reveals. Immediately after the Mytilenean debate Thucydides deals with the atrocities of the Spartans when Plataia fell, and this is followed by the atrocities of the democracy in Corecyra. These three

79 Thuc. II.40.5.
80 p. 142.
81 de Romilly, p. 142, note 5.
82 Gomme, Com. on Thuc. III.47.5.
83 de Romilly, p. 142/3.
84 B. Meritt, 'Athenian Covenant with Mytilene', A.J.Ph. 75 (1954), p. 362/3. Diodotus is thought to be responsible for the later arrangements of D.22 (IG. I.60). The lenient terms of the cleruch settlement and the subsequent decree (D.22) seem to indicate that the moderate element even subsequent to the Mytilenean debate had considerable influence.
notable occasions of cruelty are concluded with the following words: 'In peace and in prosperity both states and individuals are activated by higher motives, because they do not fall under the dominion of imperious necessities; but war which takes away the comfortable provisions of daily life is a hard master, and tends to assimilate men's characters to their conditions'.

Regarding the Athenian leaders, it is clear from Thucydides that only Pericles had the ability to surmount these conditions.

The introduction of Cleon at the beginning of this debate as βιοτόπως does not merely serve to prepare the reader for Cleon's lack of moderation, revealed in his particular imperialism, but also prepares us for the manifestation of an entirely new trend as seen in the events at Mytilene, Plataia, and Corcyra. An epithet has been used to make the reader aware of a new force in Athens, in fact in Greek society.

Upon examining the entire Mytilenean debate, it is amazing that at least half of Cleon's speech and half of Diodotus' speech have nothing which is relevant to the Mytilenean revolt, and hence imperial relationships. Gomme finds that the quarrel between Diodotus and Cleon is as much about how to conduct a debate in the Assembly as about the fate of Mytilene. Andrewes suspects that through these speeches Thucydides was trying to say something that he himself thought important about the Assembly and its leaders. I believe that the emphasis falls, not as commonly supposed on Cleon as the ultra-democratic counterpart to Pericles, but that it involves Diodotus too—he is no longer the director of a moderate and wise policy. This means that not even Diodotus is the successor to Periclean policy. In fact the emphasis falls on the new democracy.

In delineating Cleon and Diodotus as deviating from Periclean imperial policy, especially in their

85 Thuc. III.82.2.
86 Thuc. II.65.
87 A trend previously noted in smaller and more isolated incidents (e.g. Thuc. II.67 imputing both Athens and Sparta). Hitherto the rule of war had been to kill the most guilty, but now the death penalty assumed larger proportions. Kiechle, Hist. VII (1958), 'Zur Humanitat in der Kriegführung der griechischen Staaten', traces the loss of humanitarian influence in the Peloponnesian war. This humanitarian feeling prior to the war is amply revealed in Pericles' dealings with the states that revolted and were subdued by Athens. In this Pericles had the support of a section at least of the population. (See Eurip. Troades 95ff. and the division of votes at the Mytilenean debate.) That Athens had not previously dealt ruthlessly even with the guilty, is implied by the fact that the Mytileneans stipulated as terms of surrender that their fate be decided by Athens, not by the general who would probably have followed the custom of war and killed the most guilty (Thuc. III.32 and III.36).
90 A new democracy, but still revealing in many ways a continuance of Periclean policy. For example, when cleruchs (a typical Periclean policy) proved to be unsuccessful to secure for Athens the desired control of Mytilene the arrangements of D.22 (B. Meritt, A.J.Ph. 75 (1954), p. 363) were made to ensure the desired control.

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attitude towards the subjects, an aspect of that democracy has been sketched, and hence the rest of the debate is devoted to an analysis of this particular new democracy.

To sum up: I contend that the Mytilenean debate has been inserted here not to reveal Cleon as inaugurating a new imperial policy of extension by aggression, neither to portray Cleon as cruel in the manner of maintaining the empire—Scione would have afforded a better occasion for this. Thucydides seems rather to have used this debate to portray Cleon and Diodotus as successors to Periclean leadership; not to reveal Cleon's imperial policy as differing in its application from Periclean policy, but rather Athenian policy as determined by Cleon and Diodotus. In fact, we have a demonstration of Thucydides' judgement of Pericles and his successors: 'Pericles, deriving authority from his capacity and acknowledged worth, being also a man of transparent integrity, was able to control the multitude in a free spirit; he led them rather than was led by them; for, not seeking power by dishonest arts, he had no need to say pleasant things, but, on the strength of his own high character, could venture to oppose and even to anger them. When he saw them unseasonably elated and arrogant, his words humbled and awed them; and, when they were depressed by groundless fears, he sought to reanimate their confidence. Thus Athens, though still in name a democracy, was in fact ruled by her first citizen. But his successors were more on an equality with one another, and, each one struggling to be first himself, they were ready to sacrifice the whole conduct of affairs to the whims of the people.' It was thus the Athenian people, formerly restrained by Pericles, that determined Athenian imperial policy at the time of the Mytilenean debate. Thus in describing the new democracy the Mytilenean debate forms the counterpart to the Funeral Oration which sang the praises of the ideal Periclean democracy. Andrewes' suspicion that in this debate we have a sketch of the Athenian Assembly and its leaders is therefore justified. And as Cleon merely illus-

91 In this new democracy Cleon par excellence and Diodotus form the counterpart to the statesman, Pericles. Just as Athens, Sparta was undergoing changes. The significant change taking place at Sparta at this time is revealed in the speech of Archidamos as compared to that of Sthenelaidas. The Greece of Pericles and Archidamos was becoming the Greece of Alcibiades and Lysander and Critias. This incidently is according to F. M. Wasmann the tragic theme of the History (C.J. 48, 1953).
92 J. B. Bury, Ancient Greek Historians, p. 140.
93 Significantly Diod. Sic. XII.76.3 offers Scione as an example of rule by fear. In Pericles' time the violent element had been restrained, in the Mytilenean debate it was tempered by Diodotus and his supporters, but in the case of Scione and later Thyrea it prevailed.
94 Thuc. II.65.
95 For the Funeral Oration see J. Kakridis, Der Thukydideische Epitaphios, 1961. (Zetemata: Monographien zur klassischen Altertumswissenschaft, Heft 26.)
trates, as Diodotus does, an aspect of this changed Athens, his role is a subordinate one. In this debate Cleon is representative of the tendency to cruelty in the application by the new democracy of an imperial policy originally set out by Pericles. Hence, when Cleon does later play a leading role, Thucydides introduces him a second time, but no longer with the conditioning epithet ἰμιότατος. He is simply introduced as ‘Cleon, the son of Cleaenetus, a popular leader of the day, who had the greatest influence over the multitude’.96

96 Thuc. IV.21.3.
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