

RARITAN

A Quarterly Review

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confuse itself with virtue and a great nation is peculiarly susceptible to the idea that its power is a sign of God's favor, conferring upon it a special responsibility for other nations—to make them richer and happier and wiser, to remake them, that is, in its own shining image." At the time, the Vietnam War was the most recent example of this mission at work in the world. Now we are engaged in another imperial adventure, as misbegotten as the last one, but with wider potential for disaster.

Leaving aside the Iraq war's corrosive impact on our relations with our allies and on our standing in the world, consider its effect on public talk. "Contractors" include not only builders of schools and hospitals, but also mercenaries—private soldiers for hire, many former Rangers or Seals with special training in intelligence gathering. "Prisoners" are detainees, most of whom have no criminal convictions and have been rounded up on the mere suspicion that they might hatch a terrorist plot or know someone who has. The "war on terrorism" is not a war, having never been declared by Congress, and terrorism itself is not a fit object of attack. It is a tactic deployed by specific (usually stateless) people with specific grievances that may or may not have political solutions (Palestinian nationalists, Irish republicans, Basque separatists, Islamic fundamentalists). We need to focus on specific terrorists and the threat they pose, not conduct a limitless campaign against "evil." We need to freshen the stale language of contemporary debate.

But that is not—and never will be—my whole agenda. While I intend to incorporate some political commentary in the pages of this journal, I am aware how necessary it is to sustain other modes of thought and feeling. *Raritan* remains committed to criticism in the largest sense, and also to beauty and pleasure—rejecting the fashionable assumption that "the personal is [always and only] political," recognizing that the aesthetic dimension of life constitutes a refuge and a resource for resistance against the deep utilitarianism of our dominant culture. With any luck, we will provide our readers with some lasting satisfaction, even in these dark times.

Jackson Lears
New Brunswick, New Jersey
June 2004

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Thucydides and the Powell Doctrine

SHIFRA SHARLIN

WHAT IS Thucydides doing on a website devoted to sadomasochism? Why is he the caption to a photograph of a naked man and woman silhouetted against a mullioned window? What am I doing visiting a website devoted to sadomasochism? I am looking for a new perspective on the Middle East. Many websites back, I had discovered that when Secretary of State Colin Powell was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he kept on his desk a framed copy of the same Thucydides quotation that served as that porn site caption: "Of all manifestations of power, restraint impresses men most."

In his valedictory speech on his retirement from that post in 1993, Powell repeated this quotation. It appears on website after website about Powell and Vietnam, Powell and Somalia and Kosovo and Bosnia, Afghanistan, 9/11, and the Middle East. It is seen as the locus classicus of the Powell Doctrine, which says that military action should be used only as a last resort; that the force should be overwhelming and disproportionate in relation to the enemy's force; that there must be clear objectives and public support for the military action; and that there must be a clear exit strategy from the military conflict. I simply wanted to locate the Thucydides quotation exactly. Exactly where did he write, "Of all manifestations of power, restraint impresses men most"?

The website-to-website search for Thucydides that led me to the silhouetted sadomasochists also took me to wrestling fans, U2 fans, therapists, two groups of business consultants, peace activists, a graduate student at Carnegie Mellon, Buddhists, Muslims, computer tech help, someone compiling humorous quotations, a girl studying for the GMAT, a boy studying for the TOEFL, the House of Lords, and two additional groups of sadomasochists. What kind of company was that for an austere and ancient historian? Or had Thucydides, like so many others, found in the Internet a space where

identity is subject to chance, opportunity, and URL? My searches turned up Thucydides unbound, but not his exact citation.

I decided to contact webmasters, Thucydides scholars, and a professional fact-checker. The professional fact-checker gave me the phone number of Richard Boucher, the assistant secretary of state for public affairs. In response to my reservations that the state department had better things to do (it was in mid-April 2002, during Powell's postponed and ultimately failed mission to the Middle East), he assured me that they are "fielding more inane questions than this."

Neither the professional fact-checker nor I could get a response from the state department. Since April 2002 he's been waiting for a callback from a person who said she would check with Powell's deputy chief of staff. The next move the fact-checker recommended was to "up the ante a bit" by saying that I would go public with the fact that the quotation is a fabrication.

The quotation is a fabrication. E-mail replies filled my inbox. Website managers answered the fastest. David Petrou, the graduate student at Carnegie Mellon, responded near midnight: "sorry! i don't know! i copied that quote from someone else. if you find out, let me know." Next I heard from Professor Walter Blanco, translator of the Norton Thucydides: ". . . while I at first thought this search would be a cinch, I can't find any statement either in my translation or Hobbes's that might be rendered as you quote in your e-mail." Professor Laurie Johnson Bagby of Kansas State University wrote: "I can't think of a single character in the *History* who would utter this sentiment, nor do I think this represents Thucydides' view." The last reply, from Professor Donald Kagan of Yale University, author of numerous books on Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War, was also the most decisive: "I have never found this in Thucydides or anything like it."

♦ ♦ ♦

Thucydides was an Athenian general who was elected to his post in 424 BCE, the eighth year of the Peloponnesian War. This war that began in 432 BCE and ended in 404 BCE was fought between

the two great powers of the Greek world, Athens and Sparta, for regional domination through the acquisition of colonies and allies. Thucydides served as general for only one year before he was exiled for having lost the battle of Amphipolis. Twenty years later he returned when Athens, starved into submission, had lost the war to Sparta. Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War—written during his exile—does not describe this tragedy. His book goes only to 411, ending abruptly. Nothing is known about how Thucydides died, very little about his life. He tells us that his family owned gold mines in Thrace. He was probably younger than Euripides (b. 480 BCE) and older than Socrates (b. 469 BCE) but roughly contemporary with both. Scholars, most prominently John Finley and Adam Parry, assume that he was a student of the sophists, itinerant teachers of rhetoric, because his dates and social class are right. In addition, they see in Thucydides a similar analytic cast of mind. The abundance and prominence of speeches in his work contribute to this conviction. Intellectual affinities have also been found between Thucydides and the medical school of Hippocrates who preceded him, as well as the mathematical school of Archimedes who followed him.

We know the most about Thucydides' views on the methods and purposes of history, because he tells us about them at the beginning of his book. Thucydides is not considered the father of history. That title belongs to Herodotus, a generation older, whose history of the Persian Wars includes the "fables" that Thucydides purposely excludes. Thucydides is the proud proponent of dull history. He warns the reader that his book will be neither entertaining nor delightful let alone well liked. Rather than entertainment, Thucydides promises that his history will reveal general rules of human behavior in the specifics of the Peloponnesian War. Dull history is useful. In Thucydides' words it is a *kteima aiei*, "an everlasting possession."

Not Herodotus but Thucydides is required reading for future officers at the National War College, which Colin Powell attended. Thomas Hobbes's first publication was his translation of Thucydides. The British posted quotations from Pericles' funeral oration (as reproduced in the *History*) on London buses during World War

I. Alfonso V of Aragon, Emperor Charles V, John Adams, Hans Morgenthau, George C. Marshall, Henry Kissinger, and Senator Wyche Fowler, Jr. of Georgia have all had occasion to consult Thucydides. In Thucydides they have found both a set of rules and a set of roles for evaluating international relations. Thucydides, along with Hobbes, is the acknowledged father of modern political realism, the theory of international affairs that starts with the principle that power differentials govern relations between states, based on natural law, which valorizes self-interest and expediency. Hobbes owes a debt to Thucydides for his grim and reductive analysis of human nature and the human condition.

And then there is the contrast between Athens and Sparta. Robert Campbell, writing for *Life* magazine in 1951, revealed the moral freight that the city-states' struggle had acquired in midcentury America: "Of these two, one was a great democracy: rich in freedom, its citizenry proud to rule themselves. The other was a police state: compact, powerful, mobilized within and insulated against the outer world." America the beautiful democracy was always the Athenian Us against the Spartan Them that was East Germany, the Soviet Union, or Korea. Thucydides was the perfect historian for the bipolar world of the Cold War.

After World War II, Americans saw themselves repeating the story of that earlier democracy. The Athenians' leadership in defeating a foreign aggressor survived in the Americans' self-proclaimed role of defender of "the free world." After their victory over the Persian Empire in 479 BCE, the Athenians built their own empire based initially on alliances with other Greek city-states. Like Americans, Athenians also believed that their superior form of government made them morally entitled, virtually obligated, to lead.

The writer from *Life* magazine borrowed his ominous contrast between us and them from Pericles' funeral oration. Its placement at the beginning of book 2, at the beginning of the war, combined with its eloquence has made it the paradigmatic statement of Athenian character and the democracy that nurtured it. But that is to read it out of context, ignoring Thucydides' grim account of Athenian

behavior during the plague that followed and their rejection of Pericles' advice. Out of context the funeral oration reads as fact, in context, as panegyric.

Pericles attributed the greatness of Athens to its democracy, Spartan vice to its oligarchy. He claimed that democracy guaranteed a near-utopian perfection for both city and citizen. The democratic ideals of freedom and equality shaped not only governance but culture, recreation, education, and character. The citizen of a democratic city-state is the ideal man. When Pericles called Athens "the school of the Grecians," he turned Athenian imperialism into benign altruism. Cold Warriors were similarly confident that democracy was an all-purpose justification for any action against the Soviet Union or its allies. Their evil underwrote our good.

Henry Kissinger knew who was us and who was them, yet Ronald Reagan criticized him for his use of the Athens/Sparta analogy. In the spring of 1976, Reagan was campaigning for the Republican presidential nomination against the incumbent Gerald Ford. On a nationally televised political address Reagan cited former Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt as quoting Kissinger who, on a train ride to Philadelphia on 28 November 1970 for an Army-Navy football game, said that since the United States was Athens to the Soviet Union's Sparta, "The day of the United States is past and today is the day of the Soviet Union. My job as secretary of state is to negotiate the most acceptable second-best position available." Kissinger was summarily denounced as "gloomy," and thus unfit to direct American foreign policy. The Ford campaign was thrown into crisis.

In defending himself, Kissinger did not plead the historical accuracy of his analogy (except to add that Athens had "outlasted" Sparta by several centuries). A perfectly accurate historical analogy is an analogy *ad absurdum*: historical analogies have to know when to stop. In the case of Athens, that would be Pericles' funeral oration. Beyond that, Athens becomes more warning than analogy. Such was the import of the passages about Athens' disastrous expedition to Sicily in 413 that Senator Wyche Fowler, Jr. of Georgia read during

the debates about the Gulf War. Analogy turned warning is history as George Santayana understood it. To avoid repeating history's mistakes we change course at the point where the analogy becomes a warning. Kissinger's un-American gloom lay in his pessimism about the possibility of changing course. Warnings, from his view, were worthless.

In defending himself, Kissinger explained his pessimism by citing "a period of great national difficulty, of the Vietnam War, of Watergate, of endless investigations." Democracy's moral entitlement had been shaken both abroad and at home. Saving Southeast Asia from Communism, supposedly an act of altruism, had failed miserably. An American president had been removed from office for attempting to sabotage the democratic process. The analogy between the United States and Athens owed its optimism to democracy's secure moral standing. Shake that and not only did the optimism fail, but so did the analogy itself, since it was based on a stark contrast between the two national models.

No one would be more shocked than Thucydides at Americans' willingness to identify with the Athenians. The real danger of historical analogies is that they become ahistorical. When we assimilate Athenian thought into our world, we lose sight of the Athenian world. The classicist Gregory Crane provides an antidote. His *Thucydides and the Ancient Simplicity* restores Thucydides to his fifth-century context, bringing to light both the traditional and the iconoclastic elements of his thought.

Thucydides had iconoclasm forced upon him by the rise of the Athenian Empire and the Peloponnesian War, both of which contributed to an apparent collapse of the archaic Greek values that prized kinship bonds as well as the civic and religious traditions that sustained them. These are the values that constituted the "ancient simplicity." Crane borrows the term from Thucydides, who used it to describe what was lost during the Corcyraean Revolution, which arose from the competition between Athens and Sparta for allies and promoted factionalism within many Greek cities. In Corcyra this internecine struggle led to increasingly brutal civil strife. Altars were

defiled. Suppliants killed. Fathers murdered sons. In the face of moral chaos and anarchy, Thucydides proposed an alternative to the traditional values of the old and the new that would be a *kteima aiei*, an eternal possession. In the event of future Corcyraean revolutions, this alternative would not collapse.

In their first speech in the *History* the Athenians propose what subsequent scholars have called the "Athenian thesis." First, they reduce human behavior to three motives, the "Athenian triad": "fear, honor, and interest"; second, they identify a single "law" that governs interstate relations: "the weaker should be subject to the stronger." This is the set of rules, grounded in natural law, that Hobbes (like Thucydides, a survivor of a civil war) and the political realists who followed have taken as an explanation of relations between states. Crane calls the Athenian thesis their "modern simplicity." If it offered a vision of human nature as brutal as the Corcyraean Revolutions, it also made human nature predictable.

Political realism claims realism and not utopianism. But a vision of unrelieved brutality is no more realistic than one of universal harmony. Thucydides' own vision tends toward cynical realism, which is the reason that so many classicists could be so sure that Thucydides never would have written anything about restraint in connection with the use of power. Not only is Powell's treasured quote not to be found in Thucydides, even its key words are virtually absent.

Back to the web. One (now defunct) site, www.concordance.com, could retrieve all occurrences of specified words in a given author, title, or simply all the "great books" in its database. Searching "power and restraint" in Thucydides' *History* (Richard Crawley's translation) yielded the following result: "these two words never appear together." "Power," without restraint, occurs 152 times. "Restraint" appeared a grand total of three times in the entire book. Dissent from the Athenian ideology has been rendered nearly speechless in Thucydides' world. In the contest between us and them, they are always at a disadvantage. In the case of Thucydides, the advantage lies, if not in character, then in words. We might be nasty and brutish, but we definitely get the best lines.

High praise in Thucydides' lexicon is *axiologos*, worthy of words. The Peloponnesian War is *axiologotatos*, most worthy of words. The shortest speech in the *History* goes to a Spartan. As if the childish simplicity of Sthenelaidēs' syntax did not make Spartan inferiority clear enough, he begins his speech by saying, "The many words of the Athenians I understand not." Thucydides does not waste words on panegyrics to the Spartan character. Most of what gets said about Sparta is contained in comparisons, brief and unfavorable, to Athens. The single exception is a comment on the Spartan character put into the mouth of the Polonius-like Spartan king, Archidamos, in a debate at Sparta attended by the Athenians and the Corinthians. This is the closest Spartan equivalent to Pericles' funeral oration. The Spartans also often fail to live up to the idealized version of their civic character and, like the Athenians, they also fail to appreciate the leader who had such high expectations for them.

On the question of whether or not Sparta should go to war against Athens, Archidamos counsels delay. Archidamos wanted to postpone going to war with the Athenians, perhaps indefinitely, for reasons that would have sounded unpleasantly familiar to Madeleine Albright. As Powell recounts in his autobiography, during the debates within the Clinton administration over Bosnia in the early months of 1993, Albright responded to Powell's plea for limited, definable objectives by asking, "What's the point of having this superb military that you're always talking about if we can't use it?"

Like Powell, Archidamos does not want to start a war he cannot finish. "I fear rather that we may leave it as a legacy to our children." Archidamos articulates a principle for military engagement that sounds like a fifth-century BCE version of the Powell Doctrine: "war undertaken for sectional interests, whose progress there is no means of foreseeing, does not easily admit of creditable settlement." Although Archidamos claims that a delay will give the Spartans time to build up military resources, Archidamos advises caution on the principle that well-defined objectives, both military and diplomatic, are necessary to the successful pursuit of war. This view was as popular with the Spartans as it was with the Americans. Powell was

dubbed "yesterday's man" by *Time* magazine days before 9/11 returned him to center stage. The Spartans did not follow the advice of Archidamos.

Like Powell, Archidamos defends his caution by making inaction a virtue. Archidamos praises the Spartan character: "We are warlike, because self-control contains honor as a chief constituent, and honor bravery." Self-control, like restraint, is manifested by inaction. Its effect is moral more than material. If generals believe that their restraint is impressing people, then they believe—however mistakenly—that character not armaments impresses.

That Powell has been impersonating a Spartan general is neither bad nor surprising news. The same historical events that have led scholars to revise the Athens/Sparta contrast led Powell to prize restraint. Powell regularly credits his experience in Vietnam with teaching him to formulate the Powell Doctrine.

By the end of 1970, when Kissinger made his fateful train ride to Philadelphia, ping-pong diplomacy was just around the corner. Negotiations for President Nixon's visit to the other China, Red China, had begun. Kissinger was negotiating secretly with North Vietnam. In 1972, the SALT I treaty was signed with the Soviet Union, beginning the era of détente. Scholarship imitated life. After the Vietnam War, the Periclean glorification of democracy was less plausible, at least to many, than it had been after World War II. As the Cold War ended, the bipolar view of Thucydides' Athens and Sparta seemed simplistic. No single group could claim a monopoly on justice.

Or truth. The truth of historical events was mediated, not absolute. The Princeton classicist, W. Robert Connor, credits Jonathan Schell's essay on the destruction of Vietnam in the 9 March 1968 issue of the *New Yorker* with transforming his reading of Thucydides. Connor was at the forefront of a new generation of scholars who debunked an earlier generation's rationalist, objective, and scientific Thucydides for Thucydides the self-conscious and biased writer. These scholars understood the funeral oration as panegyric, not fact. Gregory Crane, a generation younger than Connor, has shifted

the scholarly focus again. Crane's Thucydides is torn between Spartan and Athenian values. Crane was the only classicist who suspected that Powell's Thucydides might have been genuine. Crane replied to my e-mail query: "I have the nagging feeling that this [quotation] may be from one of the less studied speeches."

The Gulf War influenced Crane's reading of Thucydides. The complexity of overlapping and conflicting interests among the various hostile parties impressed him most. Before war was actually declared, groups had to calculate where their best interests lay. Some, like the PLO and the Kurds, miscalculated dramatically. All had to negotiate among competing objectives and systems of values in order to form alliances. This insight is central to Crane's analysis of Thucydides' *History*: Crane writes: "Thucydides' *History* is not a celebration of realism but an arena in which many realisms compete." There are as many realisms as truths.

Athens and Sparta, argues Crane, present two competing ways of evaluating self-interest and alliances: the one based on the traditional values of the Greek elite, the other on Athenian ideology. The Spartans were the traditionalists whose alliances were embedded in the web of panhellenic loyalties based on family and religious practices. The Athenians were the mercantile upstarts who disentangled their alliances from affective loyalties, basing them on power alone. Athenian allies paid tribute. Spartans still recognized the symbolic value of charity, gratitude, generosity, and kinship ties—which the Athenians had rejected in favor of money and power. For Sparta, alliances aimed at continuing reciprocal relationships based on shared values; for Athens, alliances aimed at profit. Crane identifies Spartan values with Thucydides' ancient simplicity and Athenian values with what he calls the modern simplicity.

Success in the Peloponnesian War hinged on alliances. Speakers advanced either the ancient or modern simplicity in order to determine the best alliance. Thucydides, like Pericles, argued that success in war depended solely on capital. To them alliances were purely instrumental, a means to the end of financing the Athenian navy. For the Spartans, in contrast, alliances confirmed reciprocal obligations.

The writer for *Life* had it wrong. It was the Athenians not the Spartans who were “insulated against the outer world.” Athens was open the way stores are: for business. It was a port city of a naval empire. Although Sparta itself might be more closed to foreigners, Spartans demonstrated their engagement with other Greek states by maintaining reciprocal alliances and respecting panhellenic authority. The story of the war was the story of alliances made and broken, both within and between cities. From the start cities attempted to determine not what was in their best interest, but who. Thucydides devotes less of the *History* to coining phrases suitable for buses than to tracking the ever-changing alliances among the hundreds of factions in the Greek city-states. The lists of who’s with whom are the dullest parts of the *History*, and the most essential.

In January 2001, when Colin Powell was the secretary of state-designate, the columnist Thomas Friedman speculated about the perspective he would bring to the job. Powell had spent the previous two years on the board of America Online. Friedman contrasted the army, or America Onduty, which separates people with walls, with America Online, which connects people via webs. Friedman hoped that Powell’s experience with America Online would shape his perspective as secretary of state. But Powell learned the America Online perspective while he was on duty. It was his experience in Vietnam that led to the Powell Doctrine. When the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff displays a quotation that equates character with power, then at least one person in the world of America Onduty has recognized the importance of webs. Character matters when relationships do.

Relationships matter to Secretary of State Powell. In his testimony before the Senate Budget Committee on 12 February 2002 in support of the state department’s 2003 budget request, Powell cited his relationship with his Russian counterpart, Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, as evidence of the state department’s success in foreign operations. Powell described an informal and spontaneous relationship based on mutual understanding and respect:

I’m able to talk to my Russian counterpart three, four, five times a week. We no longer even ask for talking points from our staff.

My staff knows what I do now. I just call out to the front office, “Get Igor on the phone.” And within a few minutes, Igor’s on the phone, Foreign Minister Ivanov. And we talk, and he doesn’t delay the phone call waiting for his talking points from the staff. We know what is in each other’s mind; we know what our two presidents want us to do to make this a stronger, better relationship.

Clearly, Instant Messaging could have been the next step in Colin and Igor’s relationship. Unlikely though it is that high government officials from Russia and the United States have reached a state of perfect mutual understanding, Powell clearly believes that easy and spontaneous access is inherently good. What could be more America Online than that?

Or more Spartan? A secretary of state who thinks that character impresses will value an ongoing reciprocal relationship that is more like friendship and less like business. The secretary of state who thinks that “knowing what is in each other’s mind” is better than talking points will form judgments based less on historical precedent or analogy and more on the present situation.

In the Middle East those who remember the past are the ones who are condemned to repeat it. The current leaders, Ariel Sharon and Yasir Arafat, are the proverbial uneducable old dogs, perpetuating historic explanations that do nothing but perpetuate historic problems. When writing about the possibility for Middle East peace, veterans of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations—such as Hussein Agha of St. Antony’s College, Oxford, Robert Malley, U.S. Special Assistant for Arab-Israeli Affairs between 1998 and 2001, Martin Indyk, former U.S. Ambassador to Israel, and Khalil Shikaki of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research—emphasize that old alliances and animosities do not correspond to current realities. As Kanan Makiya, an Iraqi dissident, wrote in the Spring 2002 issue of *Dissent*, “It is very difficult to make peace between peoples when at some primal level they are still in competition with one another over who has suffered the most and whose cause is more just.” The old historically based talking points address the wrong issues as well as the wrong people.

Thucydides himself knew that there was a notable exception to the Athenians' transcendent laws of human behavior: the behavior of the Athenians themselves. In 404 BCE, immediately following the Athenian defeat, an oligarchic faction, the Thirty, controlled Athens and killed 1,500 Athenians (five percent of the population). Civil war ensued. The so-called "men of the Piraeus" attacked the oligarchs. The Spartans imposed an end to this civil war. The reconciliation agreement imposed an amnesty, a collective act of forgetting. Literal amnesia was, of course, impossible. Andrew Wolpert, in *Remembering Defeat: Civil War and Civic Memory in Ancient Athens*, analyzes a process of selective remembering that served the same purpose. Only the Thirty were held accountable for the slaughter of those 1,500 Athenians. That the Thirty could not have succeeded without the help of their many sympathizers was forgotten. The Athenians created a fiction about the past to make a future possible. So much for history.

Thucydides left his *History* unfinished. It ends abruptly in the middle of book 8, the middle of the twenty-first year of the war. Should we add the Athenians' peaceful reconciliation to the list of speculations about why Thucydides might not have finished his *History*? Did the sight of his fellow Athenians moderating the rule of the strong by creating a fiction sour Thucydides on his great historical project? And so we return to Powell and his fabricated quote.

In addition to being the "father of political realism" and the "father of scientific history," Thucydides should also be given credit as the "father of the quotation." Thucydides exploited the facility of the Greek language to form abstract nouns more than any other Greek writer before him (Plato and Aristotle found it useful after him). These abstractions made it possible for the Athenians to formulate their thesis. The Athenians could not have said "it hath been ever a thing fixed for the weaker to be kept under by the stronger" without abstract nouns. It is Thucydides' habit of writing in abstractions that makes him so quotable. For instance: "sensible men are prudent enough to treat their gains as precarious." The classicist Adam Parry suggests that Thucydides' abstractions are his certainties

in the uncertain world: "that the free human intellect, by a sophisticated and analytic language, could dominate the outside world was transformed by Thucydides into the *central problem of history*." Thucydides, failed general, exile, witness of a twenty-eight-year war, knew as well as we do that the problem was insoluble, although supremely worthy of attention. "History, then," says Parry, "is the story of man's *attempt* to impose his intellect on the world" (italics added). Quotations testify to that effort. Kudos, some at least, to our secretary of state for making the effort to find a quotation—along with the wish that he had made a better effort at heeding it.

More universal than any law of human behavior is the inevitability of exceptions. "Chance" is one of Thucydides' recurring abstract nouns. Adapting to chance, making the leap between the quotation and reality, is a quality Thucydides admired above all others. Thucydides reserves his most lavish praise for Themistocles:

For Themistocles was a man who exhibited the most indubitable signs of genius; indeed, in this particular he has a claim on our admiration quite extraordinary and unparalleled. . . . He could. . . excellently divine the good and evil which lay hid in the unseen future. In fine. . . this extraordinary man must be allowed to have surpassed all others in the faculty of intuitively meeting an emergency. (trans. Crawley)

The unpredictable was not an obstacle but a resource for Themistocles. He found not just refuge but also favor in the court of his former enemies, the Persians, after his own Athenians had exiled him for treason. He had a talent for finding the opportunity in every crisis. After his death, the Persians erected a monument in his honor, but his family moved his bones to Attica in defiance of Athenian law. Alliances have to be as flexible as events are unpredictable.

An anecdote about Themistocles shows how historical memory can be antithetical to the ability to cope with the unpredictable. Themistocles, according to Cicero, refused to learn the "art of memory," saying: "Ah! rather teach me the art of forgetting; for I often remember what I would not, and cannot forget what I would."

Forgetfulness and fiction rival history as that "eternal possession" Thucydides wanted his *History* to be.

Historical memory can make events predictable. Ariel Sharon and Yasir Arafat think they know what will happen next. Contra Freud, remembering might well be easier than forgetting. The Israelites' god ordered them to forget their enemy, Amalek, by "blotting out his name." This verse has given rise to the tradition among some Jews of writing "Amalek" and then crossing it out on first using a pen. It is a verse more worthy of study than the ones about "Greater Israel." Remember to forget, the Israelites were commanded. The apparent paradox mirrors the command's difficulty.

The admiration, bordering on awe, that Thucydides expresses for Themistocles shows Thucydides' own fear of "the unseen future," and "emergency." But Themistocles was right: the unpredictable is a resource. Consider Powell and his fabricated quote. It seems highly likely that Powell is himself the locus classicus of the numerous citations of his favorite "Thucydides" quotation found on the web. Lord Howe, speaking in the House of Lords (14 September 2001), seemed to be making that point when he remarked: "I close with a quotation, perhaps remarkably from Thucydides, which was first brought to my notice by the present American Secretary of State, Colin Powell. . . ." Questionable though the provenance of this quotation is, Lord Howe still cites it, probably because it enabled him to utter the names of both Secretary of State Colin Powell and Thucydides.

Quotations are alliances. Powell has created a very Spartan alliance with Thucydides. The quotation's use invokes loyalty and shared values. In profile after profile of Powell this quotation defines him. Other people want to define themselves the same way. Thucydides is embedded in websites of affective ties: kinship, friendship, religion, therapy, sex. Powell's alliance with Thucydides has fostered other alliances that multiply via the Internet, unpredictably.

On the Internet Thucydides is found on quotation lists that read like conversations. Buckminster Fuller, Napoleon, Adlai Stevenson, Erich Fromm, Mother Teresa, Buddha, Mohammed, Mae West, the Marquis de Sade, Albert Einstein, Albert Schweitzer, Homer

Simpson, and Bob's mom among others have something to say to Thucydides. More conversations get started on the web every day. GMAT and TOEFL test-preparation sites invite lengthier ones. "Whatsszup," a student preparing for the TOEFL exam, writes in his "analysis of the issue," "That's the universal truth of this world. Big fish eats the small fish. It's not surprising that people are impressed more with the restraint of the use of power because it's not easy to do the same." Thucydides has found another kindred spirit.

Commendable though it is for Powell to have linked Thucydides to a company of bloggers and others; wonderful though it would be if he could form the same unlikely alliances in the Middle East; and shrink though I might from upping anyone's ante, Powell ought to know that not only alliances but also accuracy mattered to Thucydides. Thucydides' claim that his history would be an enduring possession is preceded by a lengthy explanation of the pains he took to check his facts. Unfortunately the secretary of state was not the only one who was deceived by the Bush administration's inaccuracies concerning Iraq's weapons program, but he was the one who presented those so-called facts to the United Nations in February 2003.

If Powell had taken Thucydides' precautions to find multiple sources and check them "by the most severe and detailed tests possible," then perhaps he would not have found himself in the embarrassing position of having to admit to those inaccuracies one year later. One intelligence analyst, Greg Thielmann, speculated to a CBS reporter (reported 4 February 2004) that Powell had accepted the questionable story about Iraqi weapons out of loyalty to the president. And perhaps the source of Powell's bogus Thucydides quotation is another too-trusted friend. Powell's gift for alliances compromised the necessity for skepticism. Thucydides would have understood (and so would the fact-checker who would appreciate getting that promised call back).

Thucydides understood that historians have a power that can easily be abused: the power to tell the story. He exercised the kind of restraint in the use of his power that he did not expect from Athens or Sparta in the exercise of theirs. His claim to accuracy was not a

naive claim to objectivity. On the contrary, he recognized that "undue partiality for one side or the other" as well as "imperfect memory" will always influence our accounts of events. Historians, Thucydides suggested, are tempted to flatter friends and themselves. He checked his sources to check this impulse, aware that he might have to pay the highest price a writer can pay: loss of readership. Thucydides' restrained *History* is potentially dull, as he himself admits. Perhaps restraint is not all that impressive.

The Athenians knew that restraint in the use of military power would not impress anyone. And, based on current American foreign policy, this also appears to be Powell's view. In military matters, then, nothing impresses like military force. Apparently, restraint was important to Powell only as a means to an end. Impressing people, compelling people, mattered more. Maybe what most needs restraining is the desire to impress. That is something Thucydides knew. Stronger than the desire to impress, for him, was the desire to create that *kteima aiei*, the enduring possession. Checking his facts, dull accuracy, compromised his *History's* entertainment value, but ensured its lasting value. Secretary of State Powell, take note.