blackmail. Pericles carefully articulated this danger in his speech to the assembly:

> Let none of you think that you are going to war over a trifle if we do not rescind the Megarian Decree, whose withdrawal they hold out especially as a way of avoiding war, and do not reproach yourselves with second thoughts that you have gone to war for a small thing. For this "trifle" contains the affirmation and the test of your resolution. If you yield to them you will immediately be required to make another concession which will be greater, since you will have made the first concession out of fear. (1.140.5)

For many Spartans, and for some Athenians as well, it must have been difficult to understand why this trifle of a decree merited a military engagement. Was Athens justified in its position? The grievances at hand were actually important only as they related to the quarrel between the two sides; Sparta's single nonnegotiable demand contained nothing of material or strategic significance. If the Athenians had withdrawn the Megarian Decree, the crisis would probably have been averted, and subsequently several circumstances might have encouraged a continuation of the peace. Sparta's betrayal of Corinth would surely have led to coolness between the two states, and possibly even a rift serious enough to have distracted the Spartans from the conflict with Athens. Other problems might also have arisen in the Peloponnesus, as they had in the past. The longer peace could be maintained, the greater was the chance that all would be reconciled to the status quo.

On the other hand one faction in Sparta, dating back at least half a century, remained jealous and suspicious of the Athenians and implacably hostile to their empire. An Athenian concession might have calmed the fears of a majority of the Spartans for a time, but the enemies of Athens would always be a disruptive force. Yielding in 431 might only have encouraged greater Spartan intransigence and have made war in the future all the more likely.

Such considerations were foremost in Pericles' mind, but his decision rested also on the strategy he had formulated for fighting the war. Strategy is not merely a matter of military plans, as tactics may be.

Peoples and leaders turn to war to achieve their goals when other means have failed, and they formulate a strategy that they believe will attain them through force of arms. Before the outbreak of war, however, different strategies can have different effects on the very decisions that bring on the war or avoid it. In the crisis of 432/1 both Sparta and Athens chose strategies that inadvertently helped foster the war.

The usual pattern of warfare between Greek states was for one phalanx to march into enemy territory, where it would be met by its foe's phalanx. The two armies would clash and, within the span of a single day, the issue that precipitated the conflict would be decided. Since Sparta's forces would greatly outnumber those of the Athenians the Spartans had every reason for confidence if the Athenians engaged them in the typical manner, and most Spartans had no doubt that they would. If they chose a different course of action, the Spartans were certain that a year, or two, or three, of ravaging Athenian territory would bring either the decisive battle they sought or an Athenian surrender. At the beginning of the war, the Spartans, as well as the rest of the Greeks, were convinced that this simple offensive strategy guaranteed swift and sure victory. Had they believed they would need to fight a long, difficult, costly war of uncertain outcome, as the Athenians and Archidamus tried to persuade them would be the case, they might have acted differently.

Pericles, however, devised a novel strategy made possible by the unique character and extent of Athens' power. Their navy enabled the Athenians to rule over an empire that provided them income with which they could both sustain their supremacy at sea and obtain whatever goods they needed by trade or purchase. Although Attica's lands and crops were vulnerable to attack, Pericles had all but turned Athens itself into an island by constructing the Long Walls that connected the city with its port and naval base at Piraeus. In the current state of Greek siege warfare these walls were invulnerable when defended, so that if the Athenians chose to withdraw within them they could remain there safely, and the Spartans could neither get at them nor defeat them.

Pericles' strategy, which Athens employed so long as he was alive, was fundamentally defensive, although it did contain some limited offensive elements. He believed that "if the Athenians would remain quiet, take care of their fleet, refrain from trying to extend their empire

in wartime and thus putting their city in danger, they would prevail" (2.65.7). They were therefore to reject battle on land, abandon the countryside, and retreat behind their walls, while the Spartans ravaged their fields to no avail. Meanwhile the Athenian navy would launch a series of raids on the coast of the Peloponnesus, not meant to do serious harm but merely to annoy and harass the enemy and to give it a taste of how much damage the Athenians could do if they chose. The intention was both to demonstrate to the Spartans and their allies that they were powerless to defeat Athens, and to exhaust them psychologically, not physically or materially. The natural divisions within the loose organization of the Spartans Alliance, such as the one between the more vulnerable coastal states and the safer interior states, would assert themselves in costly quarrels. It would soon become obvious that the Peloponnesians could not win, and a peace would be negotiated. Thoroughly discredited, the Spartan war faction would lose power to the reasonable parties who had kept the peace since 446/5. Athens could then look forward to an era of peace more firmly founded on the enemy's awareness of its inability to gain a victory.

This plan was much better suited to Athens than the traditional one of confrontation between phalanxes of infantry, but it did contain serious flaws, and reliance on it helped cause the failure of Pericles' diplomatic strategy of deterrence. Its first weakness was its fundamental lack of credibility. Events would show that Pericles was indeed able to persuade the Athenians to adopt his scheme and hold to it so long as he was their leader, but few Spartans, and indeed few Greeks, would believe it was feasible until they saw it put into practice. The Athenians would, for example, have to tolerate the insults and accusations of cowardice the enemy would hurl at them from beneath their walls. That would represent a violation of the entire Greek cultural experience, the heroic tradition that placed bravery in warfare at the peak of Greek virtues. Most of the Athenians, moreover, lived in the country, and they would have to watch passively from the protection of the city's walls while the enemy destroyed their crops, damaged their trees and vines, and looted and burned their homes. No Greeks who had ever had any chance of resisting had been willing to do that, and little more than a decade earlier the Athenians had come out to fight rather than allow such devastation.

A second weakness in the Periclean plan was that it would be hard to persuade the Athenians to go to war with such a strategy and harder still to keep them committed to it once the war began. When the Spartans invaded, the Athenians were "dejected and angered at having to abandon their homes and the temples that had always been theirs, ancestral relics of the ancient polity, at facing a change in their way of life, at nothing less than each man having to abandon his own polis" (2.16.2). When the invaders came closer to the city many Athenians, especially the younger men, insisted on going out to fight, and turned with fury against Pericles, "because he did not lead them out to battle, and they held him responsible for all their suffering" (2.21.3). Finally, Pericles was forced to use his extraordinary influence to prevent meetings of the assembly, "fearing that if the people came together they would make a mistake by acting out of anger instead of using their judgment" (2.22.1).

No one but Pericles could have persuaded the Athenians to adopt such a plan and hold to it. He was, however, in his mid-sixties, and if the crisis passed quickly but flared up again after his death, the strategy would no longer be possible, and the alternative was almost certain defeat. Such thoughts may have made Pericles' diplomacy more intransigent.

The Athenian scheme had still another flaw. At first glance its approach might seem to have been especially suitable: because Athens had defensive aims, it should also have adopted a defensive strategy. But since the most desirable goal was to avoid war by means of deterrence, a defensive plan was not appropriate. The objective of deterrence is to arouse such fear in the enemy as to make him to decide against fighting, but Pericles' strategy actually presented the Spartans with little to fear. If, for example, the Athenians refused to fight, the only cost to the Spartans would be the effort it took to march into Attica for a month or so and wreak what havoc they could. If the Athenians landed forces on the Peloponnesus, they could do little harm unless they built forts and remained for a considerable period. If they built forts away from the coast they could be surrounded, and starved out; if they built them on the coast, they could be cut off and prevented from doing any destruction. None of these efforts would be particularly painful or costly to the Spartans. More perceptive individuals might have seen that over time

the Athenians would have been able to damage at least the coastal states by raids and by interfering with their trade, while Sparta's inability to protect them might have eroded its leadership of the alliance and encouraged dangerous defections. But few would have had the imagination to see that prospect in the dim future.

Had the Athenians been able to foresee such an outcome and to devise an appropriately offensive plan they might not have gone to war, but that option played no part in Pericles' plan. Without an obvious, credible, frightening offensive threat his diplomatic strategy of deterrence was crippled and doomed to failure.

Had he believed that he needed a more powerful offensive to deter war Pericles might not have imposed the Megarian Decree, or might have withdrawn it as the Spartans had asked, accepting the risks of future trouble. But Pericles was confident that his own defensive strategy would succeed, so he remained firm. He persuaded the Athenians to adopt his very language in their final answer to the Spartans: "They would do nothing under dictation, but they were prepared to resolve the complaints by arbitration according to the treaty on the basis of reciprocal equality" (1.145.1).

Part Two

PERICLES' WAR

IT IS CUSTOMARY to refer to the first ten years of the war as the "Archidamian War," by the name of the Spartan king who led the early invasions of Attica. But Archidamus was a player of the second rank in its origins and in the strategies that governed it. A more accurate title would be the "Ten Years War," but the first part of it would rightly be called "Pericles' War," for it was the Athenian leader who dominated its beginnings and its first direction. Although Pericles' diplomacy aimed at avoiding a war against Sparta and its alliance, the conflict that broke out in 431 deserves to bear his name. The failure of his plan of moderation and deterrence led to the war, and the strategy that he formulated and insisted upon shaped its course for its first years. It was not until several years after his death that the Athenians departed from his strategy and sought a new way to win. Even after his death his shadow influenced its course and the behavior of many of its chief figures.

THE PLAGUE IN ATHENS

PERICLES PROBABLY broke off his expedition because he received word of the effects of the plague that had broken out in Athens at the start of the campaigning season. It was said to have started in Ethiopia and moved on to Egypt, Libya, and through much of the Persian Empire before appearing in Athens. Thucydides, who was stricken with the plague himself, carefully described its symptoms, which have similarities to those of pneumonic plague, measles, typhoid, and many other diseases, but fit no known illness precisely. Before it had run its course in 427 it killed forty-four hundred hoplites, three hundred cavalrymen, and an untold number of the lower classes, wiping out perhaps one-third of the city's population.

The expedition returned sometime after the middle of June, when the plague had been established in Athens for well over a month. The Athenians, crowded into the city as a result of Pericles' policy, were particularly vulnerable to the contagion, which was deadly to some and demoralizing to all. The panic, fear, and collapse of the most sacred bonds of civilization were such that many neglected to give proper burial to the dead, the most solemn rite of the Greek religion. They had tolerated the first year's miseries with difficulty, but "after the second invasion of the Peloponnesians, the Athenians, since their land had been devastated a second time and the plague and the war together pressed hard on them, changed their minds and held Pericles responsible for persuading them to go to war and for the misfortunes that had befallen them" (2.59.1).

It was in this climate that the Athenians sent the force that had only recently returned from the Peloponnesus on a new expedition under Pericles' associates Hagnon and Cleopompus, with the charge of ending the resistance of Potidaea and of suppressing the Chalcidic rebellion in general. Potidaea still held out, and Hagnon's troops infected the original Athenian besieging army, which had been free of the plague. After forty days Hagnon took the remnant of his army back to Athens, having lost 1,050 of the original 4,000 men.

Pericles, attacked from two directions, had decided on this disastrous campaign chiefly because of the pressure of Athenian politics.

Any label used to describe political groups in the Greek cities is merely convenient shorthand and does not refer to anything resembling a modern political party. Athenian politics typically involved shifting groups that often came together around a man, sometimes around an issue, and occasionally with reference to both. There was little or no party discipline in the modern sense, and while the groups had only limited continuity, throughout the early years of the Ten Years War popular opinion seems to have fallen into three distinguishable categories: (1) those who desired immediate peace with Sparta; its advocates we call the peace party; (2) those who were determined to wage an aggressive war, to run risks in the attempt to defeat Sparta rather than to wear her out; this group we may call the aggressive war party; (3) those who were willing to support the policy of Pericles, avoiding risks, wearing down the Spartans, and working for a negotiated peace on the basis of the status quo ante bellum; these men we call the moderates. The peace forces, dormant since the first Spartan invasion, renewed their urging to make terms with the enemy. The advocates of more aggressive warfare could point to the great harm done to Attica and the meager results of the attack on the Peloponnesus. The war could not continue at the current rate of expenditure, with the siege of Potidaea continuing to represent a major item in the budget. Athens needed a significant victory to save money and to bolster Athenian morale. Instead it had suffered a painful failure.

PERICLES UNDER FIRE

LATE IN THE SUMMER of 430, with the plague raging, the Athenians turned against their leader. They had never experienced anything like this epidemic, and its crushing effect on the city had by now severely undermined Pericles' position, popular confidence in his strategy, and the continuation of a war that was blamed on his intransigence.

Traditional religion also played an important role in the change of opinion. The Greeks had always believed that plagues were divine punishments for human actions that angered the gods. The most familiar example is the one described at the beginning of Homer's *Iliad*, sent by Apollo to avenge Agamemnon's insult to his priest, but they

were often connected with the failure to heed divine oracles and with acts of religious pollution. When the plague came to Athens the older men recalled an oracle from the past that had predicted: "A Dorian war will come and a plague with it." That implicitly cast blame on Pericles, a staunch advocate of war against the Dorian Peloponnesians and a man likewise known for his rationalism and for associating with religious skeptics. The pious pointed out that the plague that ravaged Athens did not enter the Peloponnesus.

Others simply held Pericles responsible for causing the war and for imposing a strategy that made the effects of the plague far more terrible than if the Athenians had been scattered around Attica as they usually were. Plutarch explains how Pericles' enemies persuaded the people that the crowding of the city by the refugees from the countryside caused the plague: "They said that Pericles was to blame for this; because of the war he had poured the mob from the country within the walls and had given this mass of people no work to do" (*Pericles* 34.5). When the Spartans retired and the force Pericles led returned from the Peloponnesus he could no longer prevent a public debate, for an assembly had to be convened to vote the expenses and command for the expedition to Potidaea. The departure of that army and its generals weakened political support for Pericles, and it must have been in their absence that the attacks against him were finally successful.

PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

AGAINST PERICLES' WISHES and advice, the Athenian assembly voted to send ambassadors to Sparta to sue for peace, a decision that disproves more clearly than any incident of this period the claim of Thucydides that Athens at the time of Pericles was a democracy in name only, but in fact was or was becoming the rule of the first citizen. The nature of these negotiations is vital to understanding the further course of the war, but since the ancient writers are silent on the subject of what terms the Athenians proposed and how the Spartans answered, we must try to construct them as well as possible.

The Spartans probably asked of the Athenians what they had demanded in their penultimate proposal before the war: to withdraw

from Potidaea, to restore autonomy to Aegina, and to rescind the Megarian Decree. In the favorable situation of 430, they probably added the condition of the last embassy: to restore autonomy to Greece, by which they meant the abandonment of the Athenian Empire.

Such unacceptable terms would have left Athens helpless before its enemies, and Sparta's insisting on them amounted to a rejection of the Athenian peace mission. The outcome only served to prove that Pericles was correct in arguing that the Athenians could achieve no satisfactory peace until they had convinced the Spartans that Athens would not yield and could not be defeated. But the peace party continued to regard him as the main obstacle to peace, and they were determined to remove him.

Sparta's rejection of the Athenian overtures also demonstrated that Archidamus and those of like mind had gained no ground among their compatriots. The Athenians' refusal to fight for their homes and crops served only to convince most Spartans that they were cowardly and would eventually yield if the pressure was maintained or increased. The attacks on the Peloponnesus had done no serious damage but caused considerable annoyance, inflaming the Peloponnesians even further. The plague in Athens provided additional incentive, for it weakened the enemy and promised early and easy victory.

But the aggressive faction in Sparta had misjudged badly, for while the plague did debilitate the Athenians, it did not destroy their ability to fight on. A more reasoned examination of developments to that point would have given the Spartans little justification for expecting victory in a long war. Once recovered from the plague, the Athenians would again be invulnerable behind their fleet and their walls, and the Spartans had still not formulated a plan that could overcome them. A more moderate approach might have consisted in persuading the Athenians to relieve Megara, to abandon Corcyra, and even to surrender Aegina and Potidaea. At the very least, that would have helped divide Athenian opinion, but because most Spartans believed that the enemy had no recourse, they set conditions that Athens could not accept even in its desperate condition.

In Athens, meanwhile, Pericles' enemies concentrated increased attacks on him, until he finally rose to defend himself and his policies.

He was that rare political leader in a democratic state who had told the people the truth, while pursuing disputed and even unpopular policies. Pericles' constant forthrightness left his angry listeners with no rejoinder, for they could not claim they had been uninformed or deceived. The responsibility, he made plain, was theirs as well as his. "If," he said to the Athenians, "you were persuaded by me to go to war because you thought I had the qualities necessary for leadership at least moderately more than other men, it is not right that I should now be blamed for doing wrong" (2.60.7).

On the occasion of this speech he also introduced a new argument for persisting. He extolled the greatness and power of the Athenian Empire, and the naval force upon which it rested, and which enabled it to master the entire realm of the sea. Compared to this, he argued the loss of land and houses was nothing, "a mere garden or other adornment to a great fortune. Such things can easily be regained if Athens retains her freedom, but should she lose her freedom all else will be lost as well" (2.62.3).

Although he had previously urged the Athenians not to extend their empire, in this oration he seems to encourage expansionist sentiment. We must recognize that here he speaks to address a new situation: while earlier attacks on him came from those, like Cleon, who wanted to fight more aggressively, the danger now came from those who did not want to fight at all, which called for a different emphasis. With the unique power they held, the Athenians need not fear losing the war but rather making a bad peace and withdrawing from empire. The Athenians had a tiger by the tail: "By now the empire you hold is a tyranny; it may now seem wrong to have taken it, but it is surely dangerous to let it go," for "you are hated by those you have ruled" (2.63.1–2).

Pericles' remarks indicate that the opposition had revived the moral argument against the empire and the war, but rather than rejecting their charge of the innate immorality of empire, he used it instead as a weapon to defend his policy. The time for morality was past; it was now a matter of survival. He called on the Athenians to look beyond their current sufferings, far into the future, for

> the splendor of the present and the glory of the future remain in memory forever. And with the foreknowledge that you will have a noble future as well as a present free of shame, and that you will obtain both by your zeal at this time, do not send heralds to the Spartans and do not let them know that you are tormented by your present sufferings. (2.64.6)

PERICLES CONDEMNED

Although Pericles won the debate over policy, and the Athenians sent no further embassies to Sparta, his enemies did not withdraw. Unable to defeat him in the political arena, they turned now to the law courts. Athenian politicians frequently attacked a man and his policies by charging him with corruption; Pericles himself had begun his public career with such an accusation against Cimon. Probably in September 430, at the meeting when the usual vote confirming the magistrates in office was taken, Pericles was deposed and ordered to stand trial on a charge of embezzlement.

The peace faction was not strong enough to bring this about alone, but events played into their hands. After the failure of negotiations Hagnon and what was left of his decimated army returned from the unsuccessful attack on Potidaea. Their failure helped produce the widespread malaise reported by Thucydides: the Athenians "grieved over their private sufferings, the common people because, having started out with less, they were deprived even of that; the rich had lost their beautiful estates in the country, the houses as well as their expensive furnishings, but worst of all, they had war instead of peace" (2.65.2).

Pericles was eventually convicted and punished with a heavy fine. The jury was obviously not fully convinced of his guilt, or unwilling to take extreme action against a man who had been their leader for so many years, for the crime of peculation might have carried with it the death penalty. With the aid of his friends, he soon paid the fine, but he was probably out of office from about September 430 until the beginning of the next official year in midsummer 429.

cratic leaders. So threatening was their influence that the advocates of peace believed they had to be removed; when Theramenes returned to Athens he found that Cleophon had been tried and executed. Even then, influential Athenians continued to complain to Theramenes. In response the supporters of peace, now in the majority, brought charges against the leading dissidents and had them jailed. The day after Theramenes' return the Athenians met to consider Sparta's proposal, and though to the very end some Athenians voted against it, the great majority voted to accept.

On that day in March 404, a little over twenty-seven years since it had begun, the great war between Athens and Sparta came to an end. Later in the month Lysander arrived to enforce the peace terms; the exiles who accompanied him expected this to begin a new era in Athenian history. Sparta's allies, covered with wreaths of flowers, danced and rejoiced. "With great zeal they set about tearing down the walls to the music of flute-girls, thinking that this day was the beginning of freedom from the Greeks" (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.2.3).

Archidamus' prediction that the Spartans of 431 would leave the war to their sons had come true, but he would have been astonished to learn that the conflict ended in a great naval victory for the Spartans in alliance with the very "barbarians" they had been so proud to have defeated in 479. Pericles' predictions for the course of the war had long since been discredited. No one, in fact, had foreseen a contest so long, so bitter, so costly, and so destructive of life, property, and the ancient traditions and institutions of the Greeks. War, as Thucydides said, is a violent teacher, and no Greek war had ever been as brutal. The thin tissue of civilization that allows human beings to live decently and achieve their higher possibilities was repeatedly ripped asunder, plunging the combatants into depths of cruelty and viciousness of which only human beings at their worst are capable. The declared purpose of the victors, the liberation of the Greeks, became a mockery even before the war ended, and the peace that followed was of short duration. It was, as Thucydides called it, "the greatest movement ever to roil the Greeks, including also to some part of the barbarian peoples, even, one might say to the greatest part of mankind" (1.1.2). If it was indeed the greatest of Greek wars it was also the most terrible of Greek tragedies.

Conclusion

IN THE END, the Spartan victory brought no freedom to the former subjects of Athens, for Lysander held many Greek cities in Asia Minor, and the Persians recovered many others. The Spartans replaced the Athenian naval empire with one of their own, installing narrow oligarchies and Spartan garrisons and governors in the "liberated cities" and reimposing tribute on them.

On Athens itself, the Spartans imposed a puppet government of oligarchs whose brutality soon earned them the name "The Thirty Tyrants." The new regime began a reign of terror consisting of widespread confiscation of property and judicial murder, first against well-known leaders of the democracy, then against rich men for the sake of gain, and finally against moderates, even those among their own number who protested these atrocities. As hostility and resistance grew, the Thirty had to call in a garrison of Spartan troops to protect them from their fellow citizens.

Having taken control of the former Athenian Empire the Spartans now dominated the Greek world, suppressing democracy and replacing it with oligarchic satellite governments everywhere. In an Athens that had become an occupied territory where even suspicion of democratic sympathies could bring death, the Athenians found a leader to challenge the situation in Thrasybulus son of Lycus. Unwilling to live under the Thirty, the bold Thrasybulus fled to Thebes, formerly hostile to Athens but now alienated from Sparta. There, escaped Athenian democrats and patriots rallied to him and formed a small army, which he established in a fort in the mountains on Athens' northern frontier. When the forces of the Thirty unsuccessfully attempted to suppress the rebels, more Athenians were encouraged to

flee and join the resistance. At last Thrasybulus was strong enough to march out and capture the Piraeus and to fight a Spartan army to a stalemate. The Spartans chose to abandon Athens, and in 403 Thrasybulus and his men restored the full democracy.

Athens was free and democratic again, but the danger was not past. Angered by the outrages committed by the Thirty, many wanted to hunt down and punish the guilty men and those who had collaborated with them, a process that would have brought trials, executions, and banishments. Athens would have been torn by the very factional strife and civil war that had already destroyed democracy in so many other Greeks states. Instead Thrasybulus joined with other moderates to issue an amnesty that protected all but a few of the worst criminals. The newly restored Athenian democracy held firmly to a policy of moderation and restraint, behavior that later won extraordinary praise from Aristotle: "The reaction of [the Athenian democrats] to their previous calamities, both privately and publicly, seems to have been the finest and most statesmanlike that any people has demonstrated." Not only did they declare and enforce the amnesty, they even raised public money to remunerate the Spartans for the sum the Thirty had borrowed to fight against the democrats. "For they thought that this was the way to begin the restoration of harmony. In other cities, when democrats come to power, there is no thought of expending their own money; on the contrary, they seize and redistribute the land of their opponents" (*Constitution of the Athenians* 40.2–3). The moderation of the democrats of 403 was rewarded by a successful reconciliation of the classes and factions that enabled the Athenian democracy to flourish without civil war or coup d'état almost to the end of the fourth century.

Remarkably, the defeat that had threatened to wipe out Athens and its people, to destroy its democratic constitution, and to compromise its ability to dominate others and even to conduct an independent foreign policy, failed to accomplish any of those things for long. Within a year the Athenians had regained their full democracy. Within a decade they had recovered their fleet, walls, and independence, and Athens became a central member of a coalition of states dedicated to preventing Sparta from interfering in the affairs of the rest of Greece. Within a quarter-century they had regained many of their former allies and restored their power to the point where it is possible to speak of a "Second Athenian Empire."

To be sure, the Spartans had become the dominant force in Greece, but their victory brought no repose and much trouble. Within a few years they were compelled to abandon their empire and its tribute, but not before enough money had flowed into Sparta that its traditional discipline and institutions were undermined. Soon the Spartiates had to contend with internal conspiracies that threatened their constitution and their very existence. Abroad, they had to fight a major war against a coalition of former allies and former enemies that held them in check within the Peloponnesus, and from which they were able to emerge intact only through the intervention of Persia. For a short time they clung to a kind of hegemony over their fellow Greeks, but only so long as the Persian king wanted them to do so. Within three decades of their great victory the Spartans were defeated by the Thebans in a major land battle, and their power was destroyed forever.

The costs of the long and brutal Peloponnesian War were enormous. Loss of life was unprecedented and, in some places, devastating. The entire male populations of Melos and Scione were wiped out, while Plataea lost a great portion of its men. A decade after the end of the war the number of adult male Athenians appears to have been about half its size at the start of the conflict. The Athenians lost more people than other states, for they alone suffered from the plague that killed perhaps a third of their population, but the war's devastations of land and interference with trade brought poverty, malnutrition, and disease to other states, as well. The Athenians ruined Megara's crops and cut off its commerce for many years, leaving the Megarians so decimated and impoverished that they were forced to increase their reliance on slave labor to restore the city's prosperity. The Corinthians were able to send as many as five thousand hoplites to fight the Persians at Plataea in 479 but could provide only three thousand—surely their full force—to Nemea to defend their own territory in 394. Poverty caused by the restriction of trade during the war deprived men of the requisite wealth to serve as hoplites, but that alone can not explain the attrition. If only half the decrease was the result of a falling population,

that would indicate a decline in the number of adult males of some twenty percent in less than a century. The hardships of war, direct or indirect, took a comparable toll in human life throughout the Greek world, from Sicily to the Bosphorus.

Economic damage, even when it did not involve the loss of life, was severe in many places. The loss of her empire put an end to the source of Athens' great public wealth and with it the extraordinary building programs of the fifth century. Agricultural depredation took many years to repair. Not only Megara but the Aegean islands were subjected to frequent ravaging. Corinth, Megara, and Sicyon, Isthmian states for whom commerce was critical, were shut off from trade with the Aegean for almost three decades, and during most of that period their trade with the west was at least severely curtailed. In many parts of Greece, especially the Peloponnesus, poverty was so severe that many men were forced to seek their livelihood as mercenary soldiers, often in foreign armies.

Within the cities the dangers and hardships of war only exacerbated existing factional conflict. Thucydides, Xenophon, Diodorus, and Plutarch all tell of the growing prevalence of civil war, whose horrors became more commonplace as violent and vicious conflicts broke out everywhere between democrats and oligarchs. Anger, frustration, and the desire for vengeance increased as the war dragged on, and they gave rise to a progression of atrocities rarely or not at all known before that time.

Even the powerful ties of family and of the most sacred religious observances succumbed to the pressures of the long war. Its terrible effects encouraged the questioning of the traditional values on which classical Greek society rested and in the process further divided society. Some reacted by rejecting all faith in favor of a skeptical or even cynical rationality, while others tried to return to a more archaic and less rational piety.

The defeat of Athens in the war was also a blow to the prospects for democracy in other Greek cities. The influence of political systems on people outside them is closely connected with their success in war. The democratic constitution of a powerful and successful Athens was a magnet and a model for others, even in the heart of the Peloponnesus. Athens' loss in the war against Sparta was taken as proof of the inadequacy of its political system; Athenian failures were seized upon as democratic errors; ordinary human mistakes and misfortunes were judged to be the peculiar consequences of democracy. The Spartan victory over the democratic coalition at Mantinea in 418 was the turning point in the political development of Greece toward oligarchy rather than democracy, but the final defeat of Athens reinforced the trend.

In spite of its apparently decisive outcome, the war did not establish a stable balance of power to replace the uneasy one that had evolved after the end of the Persian War. It did not create a new order bringing general peace for a generation or more. Instead Sparta's victory over Athens brought only a temporary rise in Spartan influence far beyond its normal strength. The Spartans lacked the human, material, and political resources to maintain the empire they had won or to control events outside the Peloponnesus for long. Their attempts to do so only brought division and weakness to their own state and to the rest of Greece.

The settlement of 404 was finally neither a "Punic Peace" that permanently destroyed Athenian power nor a moderate, negotiated settlement whose purpose was to mollify hard feelings. Athens, moreover, had greater real and potential strength than was apparent at its moment of defeat, so that in time its power was bound to reassert itself. No sooner were the Athenians free than they began to plan for the return of the empire, power, glory, and resistance to Spartan domination of the Greek states. Athens in 404 was disarmed but unappeased, and to keep her disarmed would have required a degree of strength, commitment, cooperation, and unity of purpose not possessed by the victorious powers. Theban ambition had already grown to the point of demanding parity with the leading states and, after a while, hegemony. Sparta's vain attempts at domination of Greece brought only weakness that soon put an end to the Greeks' independence and subjected them to the control of outsiders, first to the interventions of Persia and then to conquest by Macedonia.

It is both legitimate and instructive to think of what we call the Peloponnesian War as "the great war between Athens and Sparta," as

one scholar has designated it, because, like the European war of 1914–18 to which the title "the Great War" was applied by an earlier generation that knew only one, it was a tragic event, a great turning point in history, the end of an era of progress, prosperity, confidence, and hope, and the beginning of a darker time.

SOURCES FOR THE HISTORY OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR

THE MAJOR SOURCE for the Peloponnesian War is the history of Thucydides, the son of Olorus, an Athenian who was born about 460 B.C. and may have lived as late as about 397. Although he was of a noble family, he became a great admirer of Pericles, the leader of the Athenian democrats. He was elected general in 424, a year in which Cleon and the more radical democrats were in favor, and assigned to command the fleet near Amphipolis in Thrace. When the city was lost to the Spartans Thucydides was held responsible, brought to trial, convicted, and sent into exile for the remaining two decades of the war.

Thucydides' work quickly won admiration, and for more than two millennia its meticulous attention to detail and objectivity have won the deepest respect. He believed that establishing the facts with the greatest possible accuracy was crucially important for his purpose: to understand and illuminate the workings of human nature, especially in the realms of politics, international relations, and war. His interpretations, however, like those of any historian, especially one deeply engaged in the events he describes, require careful scrutiny and evaluation.

Three documents, two of them contemporary to the period of the war, supplement Thucydides' account. The *Athenaion Politeia* (Constitution of the Athenians) has come down among the works of Xenophon, but scholars now agree that it cannot be his. The work appears to have been written in the 420s, and its unknown author is sometimes referred to as the "Old Oligarch," although his age at the time of writing has not been determined. Although his oligarchical sympathies are unmistakable, the pamphlet presents a hardheaded analysis arguing that the Athenian democracy, though immoral, is effective. Another *Constitution of the Athenians*, this one written in the last part of the fourth century B.C. by Aristotle or someone in his school, offers a brief history of the development of Athenian politics from