WAR, DEMOCRACY AND CULTURE IN CLASSICAL ATHENS

Dr David Pritchard (The University of Queensland)

ABSTRACT

Athens is famous for its highly developed democracy and its veritable cultural revolution. Not widely known is its military revolution. More than any other city Athens invented new forms of combat and was responsible for raising the scale of Greek warfare to a different order of magnitude. The contemporaneity of these revolutions raises the possibility that democracy was one of the major causes of Athenian military success. Ancient writers may have thought as much but the traditional assumptions of Ancient History and Political Science have meant that the impact of democracy on war has received almost no scholarly attention. This paper summarises the finding of an international consortium which has investigated this important problem from multiple perspectives and considers what insights we can learn from ancient Athens for contemporary foreign policy.

1. Introduction: Democratic and Cultural Revolutions

Classical Athens is famous for what is arguably the most fully developed democracy of pre-modern times and for its cultural revolution, which helped to lay foundations for the arts, literature and sciences of the ancient and modern worlds. In 508 BCE the Athenian *dēmos* ('people') rose up against a leader who was once again aiming for tyranny, expelled him and the foreign troops backing his attempt and arrested and executed his upper-class supporters (Ober 1996, 32-52; Pritchard 2005a, 141-4 with ancient sources). They could no longer tolerate the internecine struggles of the elite and demanded an active role in the decision-making of the city. This was quickly realised by the reforms of Cleisthenes, which made the assembly and a new popular council of five-hundred members the final arbiters of public actions and laws. By the early 450s the people had consolidated their new *dēmokratia* ('democracy') by making decisions on an increasing range of public affairs and by taking over entirely the administration of justice and the oversight of magistrates (Pritchard 1994, 133-5). Admittedly Athenian leaders were still members of the upper class, struggling for pre-eminence with each other. Now, however, their rivalries were played out in *agōnes* or political debates, with the final decision to support this or that politician resting with predominantly non-elite assembly goers and councillors (Pritchard 1998, 38-44). To win over such notoriously boisterous and censorious audiences, politicians were forced to negotiate and articulate the self-perceptions, norms and perceived interests of lower-class Athenians (e.g. Aesch. *Suppl.* 483; Ar. *Ach.* 37-9; Pl. *Resp.* 492b-c). Out of this dynamic of mass adjudicators and elite performers in competition with each other emerged a strong popular culture, which supported the liberty and political capability of every citizen, the rule of law and the open debating of policies (Raaflaub 1989).

We now know that several other Greek *poleis* ('city-states') experimented with popular government in the course of the sixth century (e.g. Robinson 1997). Thus the invention of democracy can no longer be attributed to Athens. However, in contrast to the other democracies of the Greek world the Athenian example avoided the *stasis* or civil strife, which destroyed so many others and, with the exception of short periods of oligarchy in 411 and 404, enjoyed two centuries of unbroken operation. In addition the Athenian democracy handled a significantly larger amount of public business, while its strong budgetary position meant it could spend around 100 talents per annum on pay for assembly goers, councillors, jurors and magistrates, which allowed a wider social spectrum of citizens to be politically active (Pritchard 2010a). As a consequence the ideological and practical development of the Athenian democracy was very much fuller than any other of pre-modern times. Indeed no subsequent democracy has ever enjoyed the same extraordinary levels of engagement and participation among its citizens (e.g. Sinclair 1988). For example, the weekly

assembly-meetings of classical Athens were attended by several thousand, while in the fourth century two thirds of the city's 30,000 citizens willingly served for one or two years on the Council of Five Hundred (Pritchard 2004, 210).

Not without reason Athens has been an inspiration for modern democrats since the nineteenth century (Rhodes 2003, 29-33). George Grote and other leading liberals of Victorian England assiduously employed this example of a prosperous and stable democracy to build political support for extending the right to vote. Athens today is celebrated as the ancient predecessor of our democracies and its participatory politics increasingly studied for new ways to address current political challenges.

Classical Athens was also the leading cultural centre of the Greek world. The disciplines of the visual arts, oratory, drama and literature were developed to a far higher level of quality in this city than any other, with many of the works produced there becoming canonical for Graeco-Roman antiquity. Admittedly these innovations were dependent on the extraordinary wealth of classical Athens and its upper class and the ability of both to spend significant sums on festival-based *agōnes* or contests and publicly displayed art. Between 430 and 350 *khorēgoi* ('chorus-sponsors') and the city's magistrates, for example, spent a total of 29 talents on each celebration of the City Dionysia (Wilson 2008), while public and private spending on the full program of *polis*-based festivals probably added up to 100 talents per year (Pritchard 2007; 2010a). But ever since Johann Winckelmann – the eighteenth-century founder of Classical Archaeology – this so-called cultural revolution has been interpreted primarily as the product of the democracy (e.g. Boedeker and Raaflaub 1998; Ober 2008, 81-2).

Certainly the new requirement for elite poets, politicians and litigants to compete for the favour of mass audiences drove rapid innovations in oratory and drama. For example, the celebrated plays of Athens were performed in front of thousands of citizens in the theatre of Dionysus on the southern slope of the Acropolis. While the eponymous archon selected and paid the poets, the training and costuming of the performers were the responsibility of chorus sponsors (e.g. *Ath. Pol.* 56.3). These elite citizens had a great deal riding on the performance of their choruses. Victory translated into political influence and support, while the generous financing of choruses could be canvassed during trials to help win over lower-class jurors (e.g. Lys. 3.46; 21.1-6; Wilson 2000, 109-97). For the sake of their careers poets too wanted to be victorious. Although the judging of choral contests was formally in the hands of randomly selected judges, they were guided by the vocal and physically active responses of the largely lower-class theatre goers (e.g. Ar. *Av.* 444-7; *Ran.* 771-80; Pl. *Leg.* 659a-c, 700a-1b). Since the regular attendance of ordinary citizens at dramatic and choral *agōnes* continually enhanced their appreciation of the different forms of performance, sponsors and poets found a competitive advantage by pushing the boundaries of the genre, whether it be tragedy, comedy, satyric drama or dithyramb (Revermann 2006).

This common dynamic of mass adjudicators and elite performers in competition did not constrain the historians and philosophers of classical Athens, who wrote only for upper-class readers (Pritchard 1998, 40). Therefore, they were free to express anti-democratic biases and elite preoccupations. However, we now have a better understanding of how their works were critical responses to the democracy, shared some of its ideological assumptions and were facilitated in part by its championing of personal liberty and open debate (e.g. Ober 1998). Finally, the visual arts of classical Athens greatly influenced the artists and architects of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, while echoes of its surviving literature continue to resound in our own cultures today (Hardwick 2003).

2. The Transformation of War by Fifth-Century Athens

Athens is rightly revered for such achievements; by contrast, its contemporaneous military revolution is never praised and is not widely recognised. During the fifth century Athens 'widened, amplified, and intensified' the waging of war, regularly attacked other democracies, and was 'a constant source of death and destruction' among the Greeks (Hanson 2001, 4, 24). More than any

other *polis* this city invented or perfected new forms of combat, strategy and military organisation and was directly responsible for raising the scale and destructiveness of Greek warfare to a different order of magnitude. In so doing the Athenian *dēmos* overcame popular prejudices which elsewhere tended to stifle military innovations.

By the time its *dēmokratia* was consolidated Athens was the dominant military power in the eastern Mediterranean and had long moved large forces over hundreds of kilometres for campaigns which lasted months or, in the case of sieges, up to a few years (Raaflaub 1999, 141-4). War now dominated the politics of the city and the lives of thousands of upper- and lower-class citizens. Foreign policy was the mainstay of political debate, with war and peace being a compulsory item on the agenda of the *kuria ekklēsia* or main assembly-meeting of each prytany (*Ath. Pol.* 43.4; Ar. *Ach.* 19-27). Fifth-century Athenians waged war more frequently than ever before: they launched one or more campaigns in two out of three years, on average, and never enjoyed peace for more than a decade. They also directed more public money to war than to all other polis-activities combined, spending, for example, between 500 and 2000 talents per year on their armed forces during the Peloponnesian War (Pritchard 2010a). By the 450s military service was also perceived as the duty of every citizen, which the Athenian *dēmos* appears to have taken very seriously (e.g. Aesch. *Sept.* 10-20; cf. 415-16; Eur. *Heracl.* 824-7; Thuc. 1.144.4, 2.41.5, 2.43.1). They passed laws stripping political rights from those found guilty of draft-dodging or desertion (Pritchard 1999, 84-6), conscripted whole swathes of the citizen-body, on several occasions, to man the ships or march against a neighbouring city (e.g. Thuc. 3.16.1, 17.1-3; 7.16.1; Xen. *Hell.* 2.6.24-5), and continued to accept the high numbers of citizens which were regularly killed in action. For example, in 460 or 459 one of the city's ten tribal subdivisions lost 177 members in battles by land and sea in mainland Greece, Cyprus, Egypt and Phoenicia (*IG* I³ 1147; cf. 1147bis) Even more extraordinary is the impact of the Peloponnesian War on Athenian demography: in 431 there were most probably 60,000 citizens living in Attica, but, after twenty-five years of war, only 25,000 adult citizens were left (Hansen 1988, 14-28).

This represented a qualitative change from its past military record: sixth-century Athenians went to war very infrequently and usually only for the sake of contested border lands (Pritchard 2005b, 18-21 with ancient references). Their campaigns went for days or weeks and were settled by one clash of hoplite phalanxes. They were initiated – not by the rudimentary political institutions of the city – but by leaders of aristocratic factions, who raised volunteers by promising them the land to be won in battle. The hoplites of each campaign were predominantly upper class and numbered only in the hundreds. This limited form of warfare was typical of sixth-century Greece and continued to be waged by the city-states of subsequent centuries not aspiring to be imperial or regional powers.

This small-scale and unexceptional warfare of the Athenians was transformed in the first instance by the political reforms which Cleisthenes developed and introduced immediately after 508 (*Ath. Pol.* 20-1; Hdt. 5.66-73). These massively increased the readiness of non-elite Athenians to serve as soldiers and sailors and to initiate wars: in 506 their army defeated those of Chalcis and Boeotia in back-to-back battles (Hdt. 5.74-7), in 499 they sent 20 ships to help the Ionian Greeks revolt from the Persian empire (97-103) and, in 490, at the battle of Marathon they deployed 9000 heavily armed soldiers (Nepos *Miltiades* 5). These reforms effectively integrated Athens and its countryside for the first time (Pritchard 2005a, 137-40). Each free male of Attica was now registered as a citizen of Athens in his local deme and groups of these villages and suburbs from across Athenian territory were linked together in ten tribes, which served as the subdivisions of the new popular council and a publicly controlled army of hoplites. The new registers of citizens in the demes were used to conscript hoplites for each tribal corps. This was the city's first-ever mechanism for mass mobilisation and the standard way for raising hoplites until the second quarter of the fourth century (Christ 2001). As Athens and its surrounding territory were around twenty times larger and more populous than the average-sized *polis*, this mechanism gave the Athenians an

enormous military advantage (Hansen and Nielsen 2004, 70-3). Demography would be one of the three major causes of Athenian military success.

Interrelated events of the late 480s and early 470s set in train a second phase of Athenian military innovation. To help win an ongoing war against Aegina and to ready for the likely return of the Persians the Athenian people decided, in 483, to direct a windfall of locally mined silver towards the massive expansion of their new publicly controlled navy (*Ath. Pol.* 22.7; Hdt. 6.87-93; 7.144.1-2; Thuc. 1.14.1-2). The 200 triremes which they possessed at the end of this shipbuilding represented 'the largest fleet of *polis*-owned warships yet seen' (de Souza 1998, 286). Three years later the Great King launched his expedition to subjugate the Greeks of the mainland as the Persians had recently done to those of Ionia and the Hellespont. The final destruction of this huge Persian force, in 479, and the inability of the Spartans to lead effectively the liberation of the Ionians saw the Athenians invited to found the so-called Delian League, which initially was a voluntary alliance of city-states contributing ships and soldiers or annual tribute to Athenian-led expeditions (e.g. Thuc. 1.94-7). For its first few decades the league campaigned frequently to expel Persian forces from strong points and naval bases across the Aegean and to liberate Greek cities (e.g. Thuc. 1.97-8). At the same time the Athenians began a long process of eroding the independence of their allies, who, by the early 440s, were obliged to pay annual tribute and subject to relevant laws of the Athenian *dēmos* and had long been forcefully prevented from pulling out of the Athenian *arkhē* or empire.

Imperial revenues allowed the Athenians to employ vast numbers of lower-class citizens as soldiers and to perfect forms of warfare which broke decisively from the hoplite-based conception of courage. They were now able to launch large fleets, which was an exceedingly expensive business, and to train their crews for weeks or months (e.g. Plut. *Cim.* 11.2-3). So trained, each crew could work collectively to make their warship an offensive weapon in its own right and to take part in manoeuvres at speed with other ships. In this new form of mobile sea warfare a standard tactic was retreat (e.g. Thuc. 2.91.1-92.2), which was a source of stigma among hoplites. Among numerous other innovations, the Athenians also built tens of kilometres of walls to protect and link their city and its port of the Piraeus (e.g. 1.89.3-103.8, 108.3-4). With these fortifications in place, they developed a new way of responding to the invasion of a hoplite army: instead of the traditional sending out of one's own hoplites for a pitched battle, they could now withdraw their farmers and moveable property within the Athens–Piraeus complex and rely on the imported grain and guaranteed by their sea power (Hanson 2001, 10-11). This unprecedented supply of money was clearly another major reason for the military success of fifth-century Athenians.

3. The Important Problem

A striking feature of the history of fifth-century Athens is the timing of this military revolution: the intensification and transformation of war by the Athenians directly follow the popular uprising of 508 and coincide with the flowering of Athenian culture, which was brought about in large part by democracy. The near contemporaneity of these developments opens up some challenging possibilities. The military hyperactivity of fifth-century Athens may be another product of popular government and hence the dark side of its cultural revolution. Among contemporary witnesses of Athenian war-making perceptions of the positive impact of democracy on military performance were more widespread than is usually assumed. Herodotus put down the unexpected Athenian victories of 506 over Boeotia and Chalcis to the new democracy. The personal liberty and *isēgoria* ('equal right of speech') which were consolidated by the reforms of Cleisthenes turned the Athenians into the world's best soldiers (Hdt. 5.78-9; cf. Isoc. 16.27; Pl. *Leg.* 694a-b). In his funeral speech of 338 Demosthenes similarly argued that the *parrhēsia* ('freedom of speech') of the Athenians guaranteed their strong feeling of shame about cowardly behaviour and hence undergirded their unsurpassed resolve on the battlefield (60.25-6).

That democracy itself may be the third major cause of the Athenian revolution in military affairs finds support in a number of groundbreaking political-science studies to have appeared in the

last several years. In particular Dan Reiter and Allan Stam put beyond doubt the general superiority of democracy in waging war. Drawing on the database of modern wars compiled by the US Army, they demonstrate statistically that modern democracies have enjoyed far greater military success than other types of regime, winning over 90 per cent of the wars which they have initiated and around 80 per cent of all wars which they have fought (2002, 11-57). In addition other political scientists have recently shown that while modern democracies rarely fight each other, they have frequently fought colonial wars or attacked weak non-democratic neighbours (e.g. Ferejohn and Rosenbluth 2008). Finally Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder prove statistically and via case studies that modern states undergoing a democratic transition start wars much more frequently than either consolidated democracies or authoritarian governments (2005).

This research directly challenges the so-called Realist School which has dominated the theory of international relations since the Second World War and whose antecedents can be traced back to Thomas Hobbes' interpretation of Thucydides. Proponents of this school assume that every state rationally calculates its foreign policy on the basis of what will maximise its security, power and economic wellbeing, regardless of the type of political regime which it may have. In addition, these recent studies confound two pieces of popular wisdom about democracy. The first of these popular views is that democracies are particularly bad at prosecuting wars (Reiter and Stam 2002, 2-3, 146-7). Expressed most famously by Alexis de Tocqueville, this assumes that the liberty of a democracy undercuts military discipline, while the fear which its leaders have of the voters and the complexity of its decision-making mean that the tough policies necessary for security are not always introduced quickly enough or at all. Second, this evidence of democratic bellicosity contradicts a cherished view of our post-war era that democracies are intrinsically peace-seeking: they abhor violence in international relations, prefer non-violent forms of conflict resolution and fight wars reluctantly, doing so only in self-defence (Merom 2003, 244-5). In recent decades political scientists have developed this second popular belief into a general theory, which postulates that democracies rarely fight each other and hence should be promoted on a regional basis for the sake of peace and security (e.g. Russett and Oneal 2001). This theory has had an enduring influence on foreign policy in the United States, since the early 1990s, and was used by President George W. Bush to justify retrospectively his 2003 invasion of Iraq.

These widely held beliefs go a long way to explain why the relationship of democracy and war in any period of world history has attracted relatively little scholarly attention. This lack of scholarly attention is a cause of concern. The end of the Cold War has presented established democracies with a range of new security challenges, which have become more complex since the terrorist attacks of September 2001. Today, governments are under strong public pressure to intervene in civil wars or failing states and are wrestling with how to reconcile open government, due legal process and personal liberty with the perceived demands of counterterrorism. In addition, the United States and some of its allies are promoting democracy militarily in the Middle East and further afield. These deployments are exposing soldiers, Australians and others, to the risks of death, injury and post-traumatic stress, costing enormous sums but reaping mixed results. In these circumstances we should understand better than we do whether our democratic institutions are properly designed for the rigorous development, testing and execution of foreign policy and whether our democracy-promotion efforts are well conceived. The impact of democracy on Athenian war-making appears then to be an important problem for ancient historians: it concerns a striking feature of Athenian history and its investigation would fill a gaping hole in our knowledge-base and potentially stimulate critical thinking about issues of contemporary relevancy.

Historians of ancient Greece have done little more work on the impact of democracy on war than those of more modern periods. Most of our military studies have focussed on the organisation and battlefield record of a particular wing of the Athenian military or the general contribution of a class of soldier to Greek warfare (Hanson 2007). Others have dealt more generally with the evolution of military practices in the Greek or Graeco-Roman world (e.g. van Wees 2004). Nonetheless some examples of a broader approach have appeared: some work has been done on the

transformative impact of Athenian democracy on traditional military ideology (e.g. Pritchard 1998). Promising too have been important articles by three scholars, who address directly the relationship between Athenian politics and war. Victor Hanson considers the effect of democratic decision-making on Athenian military performance (2001). To his credit Kurt Raaflaub has overcome the prevalence of Realist assumptions in our discipline in order to probe deeply the interplay between the imperialism of fifth-century Athens and the social psychology of lower-class citizens (e.g. 1994), while Pierre Vidal-Naquet first sketched the intertwined histories of Athenian politics and warfare from the sixth to the fourth centuries (1968). However, the work of each leaves something to be desired: Hanson largely postulates rather than demonstrates the impact of democratic decision-making, Raaflaub relies on a straightforward military determinism which no longer seems valid, and, in view of its publication more than forty years ago, the sketch of Vidal-Naquet is out of date. Thus this project will significantly advance our knowledge of democratic war-making in classical Athens.

4. The Impact of Democracy on Athenian War-Making

To begin exploring this important problem I invited ancient historians, classical archaeologists, classicists and political scientists from around the world to contribute to an edited collection on the impact of democracy on Athenian war-making. The chapters of this international research consortium were first presented as papers at a conference at the University of Sydney, in 2006, or for the Sydney Democracy Forum in the following year. They have been published by Cambridge University Press this year (see the appendix). In this edited collection Josiah Ober (Stanford) presents the new democratic mechanisms for aggregating and testing useful knowledge as a major reason for its military success. Ryan Balot (Toronto) shows how the integration of democratic deliberation into the Athenians' ideal of courage contributed to their superiority in formulating foreign policy and in their initiative as soldiers. Alastair Blanshard (Sydney), Iain Spence (New England) and Matthew Trundle (Victoria University of Wellington) describe how the open debates of the Athenians freed them to invent forms of combat and solutions to military problems which strictly contradicted the traditional ideology of war. My chapter explains how the dynamic of lower-class voters and upper-class politicians in competition with each other propelled the military innovations of classical Athens, its efficient prosecution of campaigns and the democratisation of military ideology, which encouraged ordinary citizens to fight and die with disturbing regularity. Peter Hunt (Colorado) attributes the decidedly rose-coloured view which the Athenian *dēmos* had of their military history to the high value which they placed on military performance and explains how this view adversely affected their foreign-policy decisions. Finally, David Konstan (Brown) and Sophie Mills (North Carolina) demonstrate how Athenian militarism was never seriously challenged on the stage: despite depicting some of the human costs of war, comedy and tragedy confirmed bravery and soldiering as virtues, presented the war-making of the Athenian people as innately just, and reminded them of the importance of democratic deliberation for foreign policy.

Taken as a whole the chapters of our edited collection suggest that the political regime of classical Athens affected its war-making in two general but quite divergent ways. The democracy's common dynamic of lower-class audiences and upper-class performers competing with each other led to a pronounced cultural militarism which encouraged the *dēmos* to become hoplites or sailors in ever larger numbers and to initiate wars very frequently. This was partly counterbalanced by the regime's highly competitive and public debating of war and peace, which normally reduced the foreign-policy risks of this militarism, facilitated military innovations and efficiency, and helped develop the initiative of the Athenians on the battlefield.

Significantly the political debates, legal trials and dramatic competitions of classical Athens were the main forums for systematising and broadcasting the agreed communal identities and shared culture of its citizens (Pritchard 1998, 40; 1999, 2-12). As lower-class citizens had the strongest influence on the democracy's speeches and plays, this so-called civic ideology reflected

their evaluations of themselves and others, particular points of view and perceived self-interests (Pritchard 2009, 216). Poor Athenian audiences understandably had a generally positive view of the military contributions of their own social class and hence showed preference for those public speakers and playwrights who employed the epic values and terminology of soldiering, which had been the preserve of Athenian aristocrats before the democracy, to describe the soldiering of rich and poor alike (Pritchard 2005b, 18).

This positive representation of the military contributions of lower-class citizens contrasted markedly with the widely agreed evaluation of their social circumstances (Pritchard 2005b, 22-3). Poor Athenians may have taken control of public life and civic ideology under the democracy, but they were still ashamed of their poverty (e.g. Thuc. 2.40.1-2; Rosivach 1991). Poverty was considered a disability, like old age or a physical handicap (e.g. Lys. 24.16-17), which resulted in socio-political disadvantages and, at times, shameful acts and criminality (e.g. Ar. *Plut.* 565; *Eccl.* 565-7, 667-8; Lys. 31.11). Poor citizens understandably longed to be wealthy one day (e.g. Ar. *Plut.* 133-4). This negative view of their personal circumstances made warfare psychologically satisfying for a poor citizen. 'In the military, Athenian men were able to meet the masculine expectations of courage, strength, fraternity, order, self-control, discipline, self-sacrifice, loyalty, and service to the state, and to defend Athens's cherished ideals of justice and democracy' (Roisman 2005, 105). In addition soldiering put lower-class citizens on the same level as upper-class citizens and the heroes of epic poetry. By reason of his military service a poor Athenian was recognised as 'a useful citizen' or 'useful to the city' (e.g. Aeschin. 1.11; Ar. *Ach.* 595-7; Eur. *Supp.* 886-7; Lys. 16.14). Thus fifth-century Athens gave its vast numbers of non-elite citizens compelling economic *and* cultural reasons to serve as hoplites or sailors.

But this flattering treatment of the soldiering of lower-class Athenians proved to be a double-edged sword. While a source of pride, it put them under new social pressure to authorise, and participate in, wars. Poor citizens may have welcomed the ascription of *aretē* or courage to themselves, but they also believed it was necessary to prove constantly their possession of this virtue on the battlefield and to be reminded of their duty to display it. Courage had heavy requirements and some individuals naturally struggled to meet them. Thus the Athenian *dēmos* saw war as a way to put their *aretē* beyond doubt and welcomed the regular calls to emulate the courageous exploits of their mythical and historical ancestors (e.g. Lys. 2.4-66; Pl. *Menex.* 239b-46a). In addition, Athenian boys of both social classes were sent to the lessons of the *grammatistēs* or letter teacher where they memorised the exploits of Homer's warriors, which, their fathers believed, would help turn them into *agathoi andres* or courageous men (Pritchard 2003, 306-18). To be accused by others of falling short of the *aretē* of the ancestors or of acting cowardly caused *aiskhunē* or an intense feeling of shame (Roisman 2005, 65-7, 105-6, 111). Although the Athenians associated courage and cowardice primarily with personal behaviour in battle, they also employed these terms less frequently to describe individuals who made important decisions in the lead up to a war. If someone, for example, who fled from the fray of battle out of fear could be called a coward, on the basis of analogy so too could a similarly motivated individual who refused to serve if he was conscripted or who failed to initiate a war which was necessary. Critically this extension of the terms' application allowed Athenian politicians to exploit regularly the people's fear of shame (also called *aiskhunē* or *aidōs*) when trying to gain support for a proposed war (e.g. Aeschin. 2.137-8; Thuc. 6.13.1). Since they claimed that their military ventures were indispensible, they could warn the *dēmos* that rejection of what they proposed would be very shameful and make plain their cowardice and degeneration from the high standards of their forebears (e.g. Dem. 1-4, 6, 8-9). Such arguments had the potential to shut down scrutiny of foreign-policy proposals which were excessively dangerous or poorly conceived (Balot 2004).

In addition, this extension of *aretē* distorted the Athenians' judgement of their own military record. Since military defeats were widely thought to be due to cowardliness, the military setbacks of the Athenians tended to be slowly forgotten or, if rhetorically necessary, actively falsified (Thomas 1989, 1-13, 197, 200-1). The result was that the Athenian *dēmos* viewed their military

history as an almost unbroken series of victories, which caused them to overestimate the likely success of proposed wars and to downplay their potential human costs.

The open debating of foreign policy in the democracy may not have tempered the willingness of the Athenian *dēmos* to be soldiers and to start wars, but it did normally reduce the risk that they would endorse poorly conceived foreign policy proposals. In the assembly, politicians were free to make contentious arguments and their intense rivalries with each other ensured that any proposal for war met opposing arguments and alternative options. The failure of Cleon in 427, for example, to convince the Athenians to execute every last Mytilenean (Thuc. 3.36-50) and of Demosthenes, before the mid-340s, to shame them into accepting his risky proposals for war against Philip of Macedon show how soundly based calculations of self-interest did regularly carry the day (Badian 2000, 26-37). This performance dynamic also promoted the efficient prosecution of ongoing campaigns, as politicians closely scrutinised the military expeditions which their rivals had successfully proposed and volunteered suggestions for their improvement (e.g. Thuc. 4.27). Lower-class Athenians welcomed this intense rivalry between politicians, because they would personally be in harm's way if a campaign which they were serving on proved to be poorly conceived and were suspicious of the motives of their political and military leaders (e.g. Ar. *Vesp.* 650-724; *Pax* 632-48, 668-9; *Lysistrata* 103, 490-1; Lys. 27.6-8).

This adjudication of the frequent debates of foreign policy by the Athenian *dēmos* constantly consolidated their general knowledge of foreign affairs, developed their ability to weigh up their sense of shame against practical considerations and hence improved the overall quality of the decisions which they made between different foreign policy proposals. In addition, this high-order deliberative capacity of ordinary Athenians enabled them to see the merit of innovative solutions to military problems which strictly contradicted traditional morality or popular prejudices and to take more initiative as combatants than their non-democratic rivals.

This is the general theory which our chapters as a group suggest for the impact of the Athenian democracy on foreign policy (Pritchard 2010b). Admittedly they are far from the final word on this important problem. But together they provide what is a strong case that democracy was a major cause of the intensification and transformation of Athenian war-making in the fifth century and go a reasonably long way to illuminating the substance of this causal relationship.

5. Conclusion: Ancient Athens as a Valuable Case Study for Political Science

The interplay of democracy and foreign policy is of clear importance today. Established democracies face increasingly complex security challenges and are generally committed to the promotion of democracy worldwide. The United States and coalitions of its allies have deployed their armed forces to Afghanistan and Iraq ostensibly for the sake of democracy, while many first-world states individually or as part of the European Union continue to provide practical support for emerging democracies and the pro-democracy campaigners of non-democratic regimes. For example, the Australian government has sent soldiers, police and government advisors to East Timor and the Solomon Islands to shore up new democracies on the verge of internal collapse and helps train the politicians and public servants of neighbouring countries in parliamentary procedures, electioneering and public finance. The results of these democracy-promotion efforts are decidedly mixed. In Iraq and Afghanistan the United States and its allies have found it extremely difficult to forge the national cohesion and shared identity which are commonly considered to be preconditions of democracy, and to prevent intense sectarian violence. The adoption of democracy-promotion by President Bush as the retrospective justification for the 2003 invasion of Iraq has also exacerbated the backlash against democracy in the Middle East and further afield (Carothers 2006). The democracy-promotion efforts of Australia closer to home may be more successful but are indicative of the weakness of many neighbouring states, which are threatened by insubordinate militaries or are not consolidated sufficiently. While there are good humanitarian and security reasons for supporting these democracies, 'Australia remains a long way from having a clear idea how to help our small weak neighbours build stable effective governments' (White 2006, 31).

At the same time, established democracies face deepening problems internally, which threaten their long-term viability and their effectiveness at the making of public policy. Contemporary voters display unprecedented levels of political apathy and disdain towards politicians and the operation of parliament. Growing numbers of young citizens are not registering to vote and the membership of political parties is in steep decline. In recent years these problems have been compounded by assertive executives, which have sought to stifle parliamentary scrutiny and discredit voices of criticism in civil society and the media. Since the open debates and electoral contests which underwrite the superiority of democratic decision-making require an actively engaged citizenry, the addressing of this 'democratic deficit' is a matter of some urgency (Reiter and Stam 2002, 160-1).

A good way to deepen our thinking on these contemporary problems lies in the so-called lessons of history (Morley 1999, 133-61; Rhodes 2003, 88-9). The track records of past democracies can help us identify and test our own assumptions about democracy and war and suggest new ways for thinking about their interaction. Athens was of course smaller than an average-sized modern state and had a direct rather than representative democracy which was based on different social relations (Robertson 1997, 13-16, 25-33). These differences make it impossible to project conclusions about Athens directly onto contemporary affairs. However, this city-state had the most fully developed democracy of premodern times, whose richly documented history allows us to analyse its operation thoroughly. The canonical status of its drama and oratory means that hundreds of its literary works have survived, while its so-called epigraphical habit of recording political decisions on stone has given us a huge archive of its political activity (Rhodes 2003, 25-6). As a result, historians of what is by far the best documented community of the Greek world can undertake what Clifford Geertz famously described as 'thick description': we can give well rounded descriptions of Athenian politics and war over three centuries, test empirically a complex theory on the impact of democracy on foreign policy, and detail the so-called causal mechanisms of proven hypotheses. Such a case study – as Comparative Politics shows – has great heuristic value for researchers. Proven explanations of Athenian democracy and war-making can be suggestive hypotheses for researching contemporary case studies and serve as a good point of comparison for identifying unique features of our own system of government. Thus Athens can help build political-science theory on modern democracies at war.

But Athens may do more than stimulate better thinking and new lines of research on our political and security challenges: it has the potential to suggest to us novel ways for trying to address them. The *poleis* of classical Greece existed in a highly competitive international environment where political or military failure frequently resulted in a combination of regime-change, loss of independence, loss of territory and the not infrequent annihilation of entire communities (Hansen and Nielsen 2004, 87, 120-3). In this world Athens was a runaway success: its democracy was more fully developed and longstanding than any other and largely avoided the *stasis* which destroyed so many democracies. Athens also outperformed others militarily: it dominated the eastern Mediterranean in the fifth century and remained a major regional power and military innovator in the next. Thus its democratic institutions and practices were proven successes.

Since the 1970s ancient historians have increasingly pointed this out: while rightly abhorring its patriarchy and chattel slavery, they have nonetheless suggested that the democracy of the classical Athenians provides us with well tested possibilities for addressing current political challenges (e.g. Balot 2006, 51-7; Euben, Wallach and Ober 1994; Farrar 2007, 184-9; Finley 1973; Ober and Hedrick 1996; Ober 2008). In treating Athens as a model for political reform they are of course following in the footsteps of George Grote. In recent years political scientists have taken up this suggestion: Athens is now seen as a good comparison for advancing our understanding of modern democracy, while its institutional inventions are treated as viable solutions to the problems of voter disengagement (e.g. Carson and Martin 1999; Chou and Bleiker 2009; Schwartzberg 2004). Likewise, Athens should offer us possible solutions to our security challenges, even if its potential as a foreign policy model has been almost completely ignored.

Thus by investigating how, for example, the open debates and general democratic design of classical Athens contributed to its military success, this project will make available to political scientists and governmental policymakers thought-provoking alternatives and possible solutions to current security challenges. From this project they may also learn that peace-seeking is not an essential feature of democracy. The most fully developed democracy of premodern times was an unrivalled killing machine. Thus if we truly want our neighbours to co-exist peacefully, we may, in fact, have to reflect deeply on what social norms and cultural forms promote peace and to develop domestic and foreign policy accordingly. Admittedly these conceptual and practical contributions of Athens to the modern world may be modest. However, in light of the relative lack of scholarship on democracy and war in any period of World History and the complexity of the foreign policy challenges which we face, the findings of this project will undoubtedly be valuable.

Dr David Pritchard (d.pritchard@uq.edu.au)

16 July 2010

6. Bibliography

Badian, E. 2000, 'The Road to Prominence', in I. Worthington (ed.), *Demosthenes: Statesman and Orator*, 9-44, London and New York.

Balot, R.K 2004, 'The Dark Side of Democratic Courage', *Social Research* 71.1, 73-106.

--- 2006, *Greek Political Thought*, Oxford.

Boedeker, D. and K.A. Raaflaub (eds.) 1998, *Democracy, Empire, and the Arts in Fifth-Century Athens*, Cambridge.

Burckhardt, L.A. 1996, *Bürger und Soldaten: Aspekte der politischen und militärischen Rolle athenischer Bürger im Kriegswesen des 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.*, Stuttgart.

Carothers, T. 2006, 'The Backlash against Democracy Promotion', *Foreign Affairs* 82.5, 55-68.

Carson, L. and B. Martin 1999, *Random Selection in Politics*, London and Westport (Connecticut).

Cartledge, P. 2001, 'The Effects of the Peloponnesian (Athenian) War on Athenian and Spartan Societies', in D.R. McCann and B.S. Strauss (eds.), *War and Democracy: A Comparative Study of the Korean War and the Peloponnesian War*, 104-26, Armonk (New York) and London.

Chou, M. and R. Bleiker 2009, 'The Symbiosis of Democracy and Tragedy: Lost Lessons from Ancient Athens', *Millennium* 37.3, 659-82.

Christ, M. 2001, 'Conscription of Hoplites in Classical Athens', *CQ* 51, 398-422.

De Souza, P. 1998, 'Towards Thalassocracy?: Archaic Greek Naval Developments', in N. Fisher and H. van Wees (eds.), *Archaic Greece: New Approaches and Evidence*, 271-93, London and Swansea.

Euben, J.P., J.R. Wallach and J. Ober (eds.) 1994, *Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy*, Ithaca.

Farrar, C. 2007, 'Power to the People', in K. A. Raaflaub, J. Ober and R.W. Wallace, *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece*, with chapters by P. Cartledge and C. Farrar, 170-95, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London.

Ferejohn, J. and F. Rosenbluth 2008, 'Warlike Democracies', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50.6, 783-808.

Finley, M.I. 1973, *Democracy Ancient and Modern*, London.

Hansen, M.H. and T.H. Nielsen 2004, *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical* Poleis, Oxford.

Hansen, M.H. 1988, *Three Studies in Athenian Demography*, Copenhagen.

Hanson, V.D. 2001, 'Democratic Warfare, Ancient and Modern', in D.R. McCann and B.S. Strauss (eds.), *War and Democracy: A Comparative Study of the Korean War and the Peloponnesian War*, 3-33, Armonk and London.

--- 2007, 'The Modern Historiography of Ancient Warfare', in P. Sabin, H. van Wees and M. Whitby (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare: Volume I*, 3-21, Cambridge.

Hardwick, L. 2003, *Reception Studies*, Oxford.

Landman, T. 2000, *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction*, London and New York.

Mansfield, E.D. and J. Snyder 2005, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War*, Cambridge (Massachusetts) and London.

Merom, G. 2003, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars: State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam*, Cambridge.

Morley, N. 1999, *Writing Ancient History*, Ithaca.

--- 2004, *Theories, Models and Concepts in Ancient History*, London and New York.

Ober, J. 1996, *The Athenian Revolution: Essays on Ancient Greek Democracy and Political Theory*, Princeton.

--- 1998a, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens: Intellectual Critics of Popular Rule*, Princeton.

--- 2008, *Democracy and Knowledge: Innovation and Learning in Classical Athens*, Princeton.

Pritchard, D.M. 1994, 'From Hoplite Republic to Thetic Democracy: The Social Context of the Reforms of Ephialtes', *AH* 24, 111-40.

--- 1998, ''The Fractured Imaginary': Popular Thinking on Military Matters in Fifth-Century Athens', *AH* 28, 38-61, available online at http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:179597.

--- 1999, *The Fractured Imaginary: Popular Thinking on Citizen Soldiers and Warfare in Fifth-Century Athens*, PhD dissertation, Macquarie University (Sydney), available online at http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:152267.

--- 2003, 'Athletics, Education and Participation in Classical Athens', in D.J. Phillips and D. Pritchard (eds.), *Sport and Festival in the Ancient Greek World, 293-349*, Swansea.

--- 2004, 'Kleisthenes, Participation, and the Dithyrambic Contests of Late Archaic and Classical Athens', *Phoenix* 58, 208-28.

--- 2005a, 'Kleisthenes and Athenian Democracy: Vision from Above or Below?', *Polis* 22, 136-57

--- 2005b, 'War and Democracy in Ancient Athens', *Classicum* 31, 16-25.

--- 2007, 'Costing the Armed Forces of Athens during the Peloponnesian War', *AH* 37.2, 125-35.

--- 2009, 'Sport, War and Democracy in Classical Athens', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 26.2, 212-45, available online at http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:154936.

--- 2010a, 'Costing Festivals and War: Spending Priorities of the Democracy', in H. van Wees, P.J. Rhodes, D.M. Pritchard, P. Fawcett and G. Oliver (in press), *Public Finance in Athens, 594 BC to AD 14*, Oxford, available online at http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:179496.

--- 2010b, (ed.) *War, Democracy and Culture in Classical Athens*, Cambridge, the first chapter of this edited collection is available online at http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:185408.

Raaflaub, K.A. 1989, 'Contemporary Perceptions of Democracy in Fifth-Century Athens', *C&M* 40, 33-70.

--- 1994, 'Democracy, Power and Imperialism in Fifth-Century Athens', in J.P. Euben, J.R. Wallach and J. Ober (eds.), *Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy*, 103-46, Ithaca.

--- 1999, 'Archaic and Classical Greece', in K. A. Raaflaub and N. Rosenstein (eds.), *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Asia, The Mediterranean, Europe, and Mesoamerica*, 129-62, Cambridge (Massachusetts) and London.

Reiter, D. and A.C. Stam 2002, *Democracies at War*, Princeton.

Revermann, M. 2006, 'The Competence of Theatre Audiences in Fifth- and Fourth-Century Athens', *JHS* 126, 99-124.

Rhodes, P.J. 2003, *Ancient Democracy and Modern Ideology*, London.

Robinson, E.W. 1997, *The First Democracies: Early Popular Government outside Athens*, Stuttgart.

Roisman, J. 2005, *The Rhetoric of Manhood: Masculinity and the Attic Orators*, Berkeley.

Rosivach, V.J. 1991, 'Some Athenian Presuppositions about 'The Poor'', *G&R* 38, 189-98.

Russett, B. and J.R. Oneal 2001, *Triangulating Peace*, New York.

Schwartzberg, M. 2004, 'Athenian Democracy and Legal Change', *American Political Science Journal* 98, 311-25.

Sinclair, R.K. 1988, *Democracy and Participation in Athens*, Cambridge.

Van Wees, H. 2004, *Greek Warfare: Myths and Realities*, London.

Vidal-Naquet, P. 1968, 'La tradition de l'hoplite athénien', in J.-P. Vernant (ed.), *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne*, 161-82, Paris.

White, H. 2006, *Beyond the Defence of Australia: Finding a New Balance in Australian Strategic Policy*, Sydney.

Wilson, P. 2000, *The Athenian Institution of the* Khoregia*: The Chorus, the City and the Stage*, Cambridge.

--- 2008, 'Costing the Dionysia', in M. Revermann and P. Wilson (eds.), *Performance, Reception, Iconography: Studies in Honour of Oliver Taplin*, 88-127, Oxford.

APPENDIX

David M. Pritchard (ed.) 2010 *War, Democracy and Culture in Classical Athens*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press). (See http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:185408.)

TABLE OF CONTENTS