This article considers the state of research on the two-way relationship of causation between politics and war in ancient Athens from the attempted coup of Cylon in 632 BC to the violent overthrow of its democracy by the Macedonians in 322. Also canvassed is how a closer integration of Ancient History and Political Science can enhance the research of each discipline into the important problem of democracy’s effect on war-making. Classical Athens is well known for its full development of popular politics and its cultural revolution, which clearly was a dependent variable of the democracy. By contrast, few are aware of its contemporaneous military revolution, which saw the classical Athenians intensify the waging of war and gain an unrivalled record of military success and innovation. Although a prima facie case exists for these military changes being due to popular government, ancient historians have conducted very little research on the impact of democracy on war. In the last decade our discipline has also witnessed the collapse of the longstanding understanding of the affect of military changes on political developments in ancient Greece, which means we can no longer explain why Athenian democracy emerged and was consolidated during the classical period. For the sake of ameliorating this situation the article proposes new directions.

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and a social-science approach for research into the military and non-military causes of Athenian democratisation and the relative effect of Athenian democracy on warfare. At a time when established democracies face complex challenges of foreign policy such research into the case study of ancient Athens is of real contemporary relevancy.

I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Classical Athens is famous for what is arguably the only fully developed democracy of pre-modern times and for its cultural revolution, which helped lay the foundations for the arts, literature and sciences of the ancient and modern worlds. In 508 BC the Athenian ἀνδρικός (‘people’) rose up against a leader once again aiming for tyranny, expelled him and the foreign troops backing his attempt, and arrested and executed his upper-class supporters.² 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.³ By the early


450s the people had consolidated their new demokratia (‘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.\(^4\) Admittedly Athenian leaders were still members of the upper class, struggling for pre-eminence with each other.\(^5\) Now, however, their rivalries were played out in agônes or political debates, with the final decision to support this or that politician resting with predominantly non-elite assembly-goers and councillors.\(^6\)

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.\(^7\) Out of this dynamic of elite performers and mass adjudicators 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 and ideas.\(^8\)

We now know several other Greek *poleis* (‘city-states’) experimented with popular government in the course of the sixth century.\(^9\) As such the invention of democracy can no longer be attributed to Athens.\(^10\) However, in contrast to the


\(^9\) Robinson, *First Democracies*, pp. 65-122. The reliability of the surviving evidence for political arrangements in half of the 17 early democracies Robinson identifies has been called into question (M.H. Hansen, Review of Robinson, *First Democracies*, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, September no. 17 [1999]).

\(^10\) But its invention can still be attributed to the Greeks, since attempts to push this to the Levant or Mesopotamia (e.g. B. Isakhan, ‘Engaging “Primitive Democracy”: Mideast Roots of Collective Governance’, *Middle East Policy*, 14.3 [2007], pp. 97-117) founder for lack of evidence for the political power of assemblies in earlier city-state cultures; see G. Barjamovic,
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 fiscal position meant it could pay assembly-goers, councillors, jurors and magistrates, allowing a wider social spectrum of citizens to be politically active. 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

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enjoyed the same extraordinary levels of engagement and participation among its citizens.\textsuperscript{13} 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 thirty-thousand citizens willingly served on the Council of Five Hundred.\textsuperscript{14} Not without reason Athens has been an inspiration for modern democrats since the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{15} 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.\textsuperscript{16} 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, with many of the works produced there becoming canonical for Graeco-Roman antiquity. Ever since Johann Winckelmann, the eighteenth-century founder of Classical Archaeology, this cultural revolution has been interpreted as the product of Athenian democracy.\footnote{D. Boedeker and K.A. Raaflaub, ‘Reflections and Conclusions: Democracy, Empire and the Arts in Fifth-Century Athens’, in Democracy, Empire, and the Arts in Fifth-Century Athens, ed. D. Boedeker and K.A. Raaflaub (Cambridge, Mass., 1998), pp. 319-44; Dawson, ‘Rousseau and Athens’, pp. 4-5. Contra L.J. Samons, ‘Democracy, Empire, and the Search for the Athenian Character’, Arion, third series, 8 (2001), pp. 128-57.}

Certainly the new requirement for elite playwrights, politicians and litigants to compete for the favour of mass audiences drove rapid innovations in oratory and drama.\footnote{For the development of oratory in classical Athens, see H. Yunis, 1998, ‘The Constraints of Democracy and the Rise of the Art of Rhetoric’, in Democracy, Empire, and the Arts in Fifth-Century Athens, ed. Boedeker and Raaflaub, pp. 223-40.} For example, the celebrated plays of Athens were performed in front of thousands of citizens at state-sponsored agônes or contests. While the chief magistrate selected and paid the playwrights, the training and costumes of the
performers were the responsibility of chorus sponsors. 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 jurors. For the sake of their careers poets too wanted to be victorious. Although the judging of choral contests was formally in the hands of magistrates, they were guided by the vocal and physically active responses of the largely non-elite theatre-goers. As the holding of biannual contests constantly enhanced the people’s appreciation of theatre, sponsors and poets found a competitive advantage not only by

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21 For the political advantages, see, for example, Plutarch *Nicias* 3.1-3. For so-called festival liturgies as a plus in legal proceedings, see, for example, Lysias 3.46, 12.38, 18.23, 20.31, 21.1-6, 25.12-13, 30.1.

22 E.g. Aristophanes *Wasps* 1043-50.

accommodating the points of view of lower-class citizens but also by pushing the boundaries of their genres.24

This performance dynamic of mass and elite did not constrain the historians and philosophers of classical Athens, who wrote for upper-class readers. As such they were free to express anti-democratic biases and elite preoccupations.25 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 by its championing of personal liberty and open debate.26 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.27


Certainly never praised and not widely known is the contemporaneous military revolution.28 Athens of the fifth century intensified and transformed the waging of war, ignored some of the traditional customs of battle, killed tens of thousands of fellow Greeks, and attacked other democracies. This represented a qualitative change from its past military record.29 Soldiering did not dominate the lives of sixth-century Athenians: they usually went to war for the sake of contested border land or colonies overseas and did so very infrequently.30 Indeed from the attempted tyranny of Cylon, in 630, to the assassination of Hipparchus, in 514, Athenians mounted less than a dozen recorded military ventures. Their campaigns typically went only for days or weeks and were settled by a solitary clash of hoplite phalanxes. They were initiated – not by the rudimentary political institutions of the city – but by leaders of aristocratic genē (‘clans’), who raised volunteers by promising them the land to be won in battle. The hoplites of each

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30 E.g. Ath. Pol. 14.1; Herodotus 1.59.4, 1.139.2, 6.36.
venture were predominantly upper-class and numbered only in the hundreds.31 A
good example of such a campaign is the last battle between Athens and Megara
for the control of Salamis.32 Solon reawakened Athenian interest in taking the
island by performing a ‘nationalist’ poem in the city’s marketplace and
promising its land to those wishing to volunteer for the campaign. Five-hundred
Athenians ended up doing so, with the portion charged with the capturing of the
island’s town fitting on one ship. The same type of warfare was also waged by
the other mainland cities of sixth-century Greece.33 Even in the classical period
those cities not aspiring to be regional or imperial powers, like Athens, Sparta
and Thebes, persisted with this style of limited land warfare.34

31 J.M. Hall, *A History of the Archaic Greek World* (Malden, 2007), pp. 168-70; Singor,
pp. 37-45, 55-60.


33 V.D. Hanson, ‘Democratic Warfare, Ancient and Modern’, in *War and Democracy: A
Comparative Study of the Korean War and the Peloponnesian War*, ed. D.R. McCann and
B.S. Strauss (Armonk and London, 2001), pp. 3-33; pp. 5-7; K.A. Raaflaub, ‘Archaic and
Classical Greece’, in *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Asia, The
Mediterranean, Europe, and Mesoamerica*, ed. K. Raaflaub and N. Rosenstein (Cambridge,

34 W.R. Connor, ‘Early Greek Land Warfare as Symbolic Expression’, *Past and Present*
The Cleisthenic reforms of 508 gave control of foreign affairs to ordinary Athenians and massively increased their military capacity.35 In 506 their army defeated those of Chalcis and Boeotia in back-to-back battles, in 499 they sent twenty ships to help the Ionian Greeks revolt from the Persian Empire and, in 490, at the battle of Marathon they deployed nine-thousand heavily armed soldiers, which was a hoplite army far larger than any other city-state (including Sparta).36 The transformation of military practice by the Athenians effectively began with their novel decision of 483 to use a windfall of silver to build a navy of two-hundred triremes and with the expedition of the Persians, three years later, to subjugate the Greeks of the mainland as they had recently done to those of Ionia and the Dardanelles.37 The final destruction of this huge Persian force, in 479, and the inability of the Spartans to effectively lead 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.38 For its first decade this league campaigned frequently to expel Persian forces from strong points and naval

35 E.g. Herodotus 5.66, 96-7.

36 Herodotus 5.74-7, 97-103; Nepos Miltiades 5.

37 For the building of this fleet, see Ath. Pol. 22.7; Herodotus 7.144; Plutarch Themistocles 14.2. Pritchard, ‘Hoplite Republic’, p. 121.

bases across the Aegean, destroy the Phoenician fleet and liberate Greek cities.\(^{39}\)

At the same time the Athenians began a process of eroding the independence of their allies, who, by the early 440s, were obliged to pay annual tribute, subject to relevant laws of the Athenian *dēmos* and forcefully prevented from pulling out of the Athenian *arkhē* or empire.\(^{40}\)

This revenue allowed the Athenians to employ vast numbers of lower-class citizens as soldiers and to perfect new forms of warfare, which broke decisively from the traditions of phalanx battle.\(^{41}\) They were now able to launch large fleets, which was an exceedingly expensive business, and to train their crews for weeks or months.\(^{42}\) So trained, each crew could work collectively to make their warship an offensive weapon in its own right and take part in manoeuvres at

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\(^{42}\)For the training of Athenian sailors, see, for example, Plutarch *Cimon* 11.2-3; Pseudo-Xenophon 1.19-20; Thucydides 1.80; 1.142.6-7; 2.84-6, 89; Xenophon *Memorabilia* 3.5.18.
speed with other ships.⁴³ In this new form of mobile sea warfare a standard tactic was retreat, which was a source of shame among hoplites.⁴⁴ Among several other innovations, the Athenians also built tens of kilometres of walls to protect their city and its port and to fortify the corridor between the two.⁴⁵ 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 tribute which were guaranteed by their sea power.⁴⁶

By the time the democracy and its empire were consolidated, war dominated the politics and popular culture of Athens and the lives of its citizens. The Athenians were now the dominant military power in the eastern Mediterranean and were moving large forces over long distances for campaigns which lasted months, or in the case of sieges, up to a year.⁴⁷ The city could

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⁴⁴ For this tactic, see, for example, Thucydides 2.91.1-92.2. For retreat as a source of shame, see, for example, Aeschylus *Seven against Thebes* 411; Euripides *Trojan Women* 401-2; *Children of Herakles* 700-1. Van Wees, *Greek Warfare*, pp. 192-4.

⁴⁵ E.g. Aeschines 2.174; Andocides 3.7; Thucydides 1.89.3-103.8, 108.3-4.


support multiple theatres of operation simultaneously. Athens now waged war more frequently than any other contemporary *polis*, doing so on average for two out of three years and never enjoying peace for more than a decade. War consumed more money than any other public activity. In addition war and foreign policy were the main topics of political debate, with war and peace being compulsory items on the agenda of the *ekklēsia kuria* or main assembly-meeting of each month.

Military service was now understood as the duty of every citizen. The Athenian people took this obligation very seriously: they passed laws stripping

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48 E.g. Thucydides 1.105; 2.39.3; Lysias 2.50-1.


52 E.g. Aeschylus *Seven against Thebes* 10-20; cf. 415-16; Euripides *Children of Herakles* 824-7; Thucydides 1.144.4, 2.41.5, 2.43.1.
political rights from those found guilty of draft-dodging or desertion and accepted very high numbers of battle casualties.\textsuperscript{53} For example, in 460 one of its ten tribes lost 177 members in battles by land and sea in mainland Greece, Cyprus, Egypt and the Levant.\textsuperscript{54} 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.\textsuperscript{55} Despite these high costs, the military power and victories of the Athenians were constantly glorified and legitimised in the city’s public art and architecture, public discourse and civic ceremony.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{53} For these laws, see for example, Aristophanes \textit{Knights} 443; \textit{Wasps} 1117-21; Pseudo-Xenophon 3.5; cf. Lysias 14.7-8.

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Inscriptiones Graecae} (Berlin 1973–), third edition, volume 1, no. 1147. (Hereafter cited as \textit{IG}.)


II
THE IMPORTANT PROBLEM

A striking feature of the history of fifth-century Athens is the timing of this so-called 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 clearly brought about by democracy. The near contemporaneousness 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 flip side of its cultural revolution. For Herodotus such a relationship was patently clear: the personal liberty and isēgoria (‘equal right of speech’) which were brought about by the reforms of 508 turned the Athenians into the world’s best soldiers. 57 Indeed this shaping of military affairs by civilian life may have been profound in classical Athens where the army literally was the democracy under arms; for those who participated so actively in its politics and determined its military policies also served as its generals, hoplites and sailors. On the other hand, as the public activity which dominated the lives and politics of classical Athenians, war could have impacted significantly on the consolidation of their democracy.

57 Herodotus 5.78-9. Some near contemporaries made a similar link (e.g. Demosthenes 60.25-6) or acknowledged the exceptional commitment of their fellow citizens to warfare (e.g. Aristophanes Acharnians 540-54; Euripides Suppliant Women 572-6; Lysias 2.55; Thucydides 2.62.3).
In other words, there possibly was a two-way relationship of causation between democracy and war in ancient Athens.

The possibility of this causal symbiosis finds support in two groundbreaking studies on modern democracy and war, which have appeared in the last five years. Dan Reiter and Allan Stam put beyond doubt the general superiority of democracy in waging war. Drawing on the database of all 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 percent of the wars they have initiated and around 80 percent of all wars they have fought.\textsuperscript{58} The main hypothesis Reiter and Stam propose for explaining this military success is institutional: as citizens of a democracy are able to vote leaders out of office and usually do so if a war is lost or too many of their sons and daughters are killed in action, governments prefer to wage wars which are easily winnable and only initiate them if broad public support exists.\textsuperscript{59} The second study by Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder proves statistically and via case studies that while democracies in general are as prone to wage war as other types of regime, modern states undergoing a democratic

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\textsuperscript{58} D. Reiter, and A.C. Stam, \textit{Democracies at War} (Princeton, 2002), pp. 11-57.
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\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 3-4
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transition start them much more frequently than either consolidated democracies or authoritarian governments.\(^60\)

Needless to say these new studies confound two pieces of conventional wisdom about democracy. The first of these popular views is that democracies are particularly bad at prosecuting wars.\(^61\) Expressed most famously by Alexis de Tocqueville, the nineteenth-century commentator on American democracy, this assumes that the liberty of a democracy undercuts military discipline, while the fear its leaders have of the voters and the complexity of its decision-making mean the tough policies necessary for security are not always introduced quickly enough or at all. Secondly, 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.\(^62\)

In recent decades political scientists have developed this second popular belief into a general theory, which postulates that democracies never fight each other

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and hence should be promoted on a regional basis for the sake of peace and security.⁶³ This theory has had an enduring influence on foreign policy in the United States, since the early 1990s, and continues to be used by President George W. Bush to account for the 2003 invasion of Iraq.⁶⁴

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.⁶⁵ In this regard historians of ancient Greece have not been an exception: they have assumed warfare to be a coherent subject of study in its own right and hence explicable without reference to political and social factors.⁶⁶ As such most of our military studies have focussed on the organisation and battlefield record of a particular wing of the Athenian military or the general

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⁶⁵ For this lack of attention, see Merom, How Democracies Lose, pp. 3-18, 250; Reiter and Stam, Democracies at War, p. 2. Another reason is the long dominance of the so-called realist school of international relations which assumes states make the same calculations about security and economic advantage in foreign affairs regardless of differences in regime-type.

⁶⁶ Van Wees, Greek Warfare, p. 1.
contribution of a class of soldier to Greek warfare. 67 Others have studied the battles and strategies of particular wars or the general evolution of military practices in the Greek or Graeco-Roman world. 68 Nonetheless some examples of a broader approach have appeared: good work has been done on the social background of Athenian soldiers and the transformative impact of Athenian democracy on traditional military ideology. 69 Promising too have been important  

67 For studies of different wings, see, for example, G.R. Bugh, The Horsemen of Athens (Princeton, 1988); Morrison and Coates, Athenian Trireme; A. Plassart 1913, ‘Les archers d’Athènes’, Revue des études grecques, 26 (1913), pp. 151-213; M.F. Vos, Scythian Archers in Archaic Attic Vase-Painting (Groningen, 1963). For general studies of a type of fighter, see, for example, J.G.P. Best, Thracian Peltasts and Their Influence on Greek Warfare (Groningen, 1969); R.E. Gaebel, Cavalry Operations in the Ancient Greek World (Norman, Oklahoma, 2002); Hoplites: The Classical Greek Battle Experience, ed. V.D. Hanson (London and New York, 1991); M. Trundle, Greek Mercenaries: From the Late Archaic Period to Alexander (London and New York, 2004).

68 See most famously the four-volume study of the Peloponnesian War by Donald Kagan, The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War (Ithaca, 1969); The Archidamian War (Ithaca, 1974); The Peace of Nicias and the Sicilian Expedition (Ithaca, 1981); The Fall of the Athenian Empire (Ithaca, 1987). For histories of military practices, see, for example, J.E. Lendon, Soldiers and Ghosts: A History of Battle in Classical Antiquity (New Haven and London, 2005); van Wees, Greek Warfare; and especially W.K. Pritchett, The Greek State at War, 5 volumes (Berkeley, 1974-91).

articles by three scholars, who address directly the relationship between Athenian politics and war. Victor Hanson has considered the effect of democratic decision-making on Athenian military performance.\textsuperscript{70} Kurt Raaflaub has probed deeply the relationship between Athenian imperialism and the political situation and psychology of its poorer citizens, while Pierre Vidal-Naquet first sketched the intertwined histories of Athenian politics and war.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{70} Hanson, ‘Democratic Warfare’, especially pp. 16-24.

However, the work of each scholar leaves something to be desired: Hanson largely postulates rather than proves the impact of democratic decision-making, Raaflaub accepts a straightforward military determinism, which no longer seems valid (see below) and, in view of its publication forty years ago, the sketch of Vidal-Naquet is somewhat out of date.

This lack of scholarly attention should be 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 a field. In these circumstances we should understand better than we do whether our democratic institutions are properly designed for the optimal development and execution of foreign policy and whether our democracy-promotion efforts are well conceived. The two-way relationship of democracy and war would appear then to be an important problem for ancient historians: through its investigation our discipline can explain a striking feature of Athenian history, help fill a

significant gap in current scholarship and potentially enhance our understanding of contemporary security challenges.

III
NEW DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

To help address this gap in our knowledge the author has invited sixteen leading archaeologists, ancient historians, classicists and political scientists from around the world to explore collaboratively the relationship between war, culture and democracy in classical Athens. The papers of this group were delivered at a Sydney conference in July 2006 and will be published as an edited collection by Cambridge University Press.72 Josiah Ober (Stanford University) presents the new democratic mechanisms for aggregating and testing useful knowledge as a major reason for its military success. Ryan Balot (University of Toronto) shows how the integration of deliberation into the Athenians’ ideal of courage contributed to their superior initiative as soldiers. Alastair Blanshard (University of Sydney), Iain Spence (University of New England) and Matthew Trundle (Victoria University of Wellington) demonstrate how the open debates and flexible popular culture of the Athenians freed them to invent forms of combat and solutions to military problems which strictly contradicted the traditional ideology of war. The paper of the author explains how the dynamic of mass and

elite propelled the military innovations of classical Athens, its efficient prosecution of campaigns and the democratisation of military ideology, which in turn enhanced the military commitment of ordinary citizens. Peter Hunt (University of Colorado at Boulder) and David Rosenbloom (Victoria University of Wellington) suggest the moral justifications of empire and triumphal versions of military history permeating popular culture raised the propensity of Athenians to wage war. Polly Low (University of Manchester) and Sumio Yoshitake (Nagoya University) explain how the public commemoration of the war dead by the Athenians legitimised war and downplayed its human cost. David Konstan (Brown University) and Sophie Mills (University of North Carolina at Asheville) demonstrate how Athenian militarism was never seriously challenged on the stage: despite depicting some of the 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. Finally Patricia Hannah (University of Otago), Margaret Miller (University of Sydney) and Robin Osborne (University of Cambridge) give new insights into the representations of soldiers in private art and their relationship to the democracy’s evolving popular culture, while John Keane (Westminster University/University of Sydney) compares the politics and culture of war in Athens to those of modern democracies.

These chapters may not add up to the full story of politics and war in ancient Athens but they do shed significant new light on the impact of the
former on the latter during the classical period. With respect to this side of the causal symbiosis they not only provided tested and untested hypotheses but also highlight important unanswered questions and significant gaps in our knowledge. As such they help map out promising new directions for future research by historians of classical Athens.

There are also great opportunities for new research on the other side of this causal relationship: the impact of military changes on the political development of archaic and classical Athens. For nearly a century ancient historians agreed that the emergence and consolidation of Athenian democracy were caused by extensions of military participation. Our discipline accepted the testimony of Aristotle that the sudden appearance of phalanx-based battles in the mid-seventh century compelled elites to involve in their military ventures prosperous non-elite citizens, who quickly demanded more popular forms of government in recognition of their new military contributions.73 Also widely accepted was the proposition of Aristotle and other philosophers that the fifth-century consolidation of Athenian democracy was a consequence of the demands of sub-

hoplite citizens for greater political rights, whose military service had been made possible by the creation of a large navy.\textsuperscript{74}

In the last decade, however, the purported evidence for this simple military determinism has been called into question. Aristotle may be the recognised founder of Comparative Politics but his reliability as a source for early Greek history is now seriously doubted.\textsuperscript{75} Among others, his comments on the so-called hoplite revolution are internally contradictory and historically inaccurate. The recent identification of mass fighting in the eighth-century poetry of Homer strongly suggests that the hoplite phalanx resulted – not from a destabilising


revolution – but from slow, incremental changes in tactics and weaponry. We have also seen how in Athens, before 508, hoplites remained predominantly upper class, while any major impact of military activity on political change is unlikely in view of the infrequency and small scale of sixth-century campaigns. Finally the linking of democracy and sea power has been shown to be a purely ideological construction, which was forged for polemical purposes by Pseudo-Xenophon, Plato and other philosophical critics of the Athenian democracy. There is simply no evidence that non-elite Athenians ever believed their legal and political equality were a result of their ability to contribute militarily to the city.

With this discrediting of military determinism, ancient historians and political scientists can no longer explain why Athenian democracy emerged and went from strength to strength. As Athens is the most fully developed democracy of pre-modern times and our best documented example of a


participatory or direct democracy in any period of world history, new research into this process of democratisation seems a matter of some urgency for our discipline. A good place of departure for this research would be the revolution of 508 and the reforms of Cleisthenes. These reforms not only institutionalised the rule of the dēmos (‘people’) but effectively integrated Athens and its countryside for the first time. 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 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 mobilization and the standard way for raising hoplites until the mid-fourth century. As Athens and its surrounding territory were around twenty times larger and more populous than the average-sized polis, this mechanism gave the

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Athenians a huge military advantage. Demography appears to be one of the three major causes of the military revolution of fifth-century Athens.

The reforms which Cleisthenes devised may have brought democracy and strong state structures to Athens for the first time, but they were not (as is regularly suggested) the product of upper-class ‘social engineering’ and hence ‘a vision from above, not below’. Our sources put beyond doubt that his reforms were only enacted because of the unprecedented collective actions of the Athenian people: they were made possible by the popular uprising of 508 (Ath. Pol. 20.1-4; Herodotus 5.66, 96-7) and only survived because of the immediate commitment of ordinary Athenians to the new democracy (Herodotus 5.66, 96-7) and its defence militarily (5.74-7). This activism on the part of non-elite citizens presupposes they already had a common identity as Athenians and strong political aspirations, which would have taken much of the sixth century to form and consolidate. With few exceptions, historians have not investigated why

\[82\] For these measurements, see Hansen, Polis, pp. 77-84; Hansen and Nielsen, Inventory, pp. 70-3.


ordinary Athenians formed these perceptions. As a consequence much more research is required on the possible long-term factors behind this new imaginary. These include the growing worship of Athena as a city-protecting goddess, increasing economic prosperity, the perceived designs of neighbours on Attica and non-elite participation in the emerging legal and political institutions of the city.

Although the new navy of 483 can no longer be taken as the direct cause of the democratic consolidation of fifth-century Athens, its military hyperactivity is likely to have had indirect and multifaceted impact on its political development. The two decades of fighting after the Persian Wars clearly affected the economy and society of Athens, probably causing political changes in turn. With the tribute of their allies the Athenians built the massive port facilities and hired the

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86 For this perceived threat and possible military reasons for the reforms of Cleisthenes, see Anderson, Athenian Experiment, pp. 148-51; P. Siewert, Die Trittyen Attikes und die Heeresreform des Kleisthenes (Munich, 1982); Scheidel, ‘Military Commitments’, pp. 5-6; H. van Effenterre, ‘Clisthène et les mesures de mobilisation’, Revue des études grecques, 89 (1976), pp. 1-17.

thousands of workmen which were required to maintain their warships. The needs and salaries of these ship-builders encouraged the development of secondary businesses, while the bringing in of ever-larger amounts of cargo to service this military-led expansion quickly made the Piraeus the busiest trading port of the eastern Mediterranean. New urban jobs in turn attracted large number of impoverished citizens from the countryside, making it easier for more citizens to attend the city-based meetings of the democracy.\footnote{Pritchard, ‘Hoplite Republic’, pp. 127-9 with bibliography.} The sheer number of campaigns and the complex task of running a league greatly increased the volume of public business, forcing the convening of assembly- and council-meetings more regularly. Coming on top of the socio-economic changes, this intensification of politics presumably developed the democracy practically and ideologically. At the same time the regular political participation of large numbers of non-elite citizens is likely to have given the Athenian \emph{dēmos} the confidence to take further control of the city and its magistrates.

The likelihood of this indirect impact of war on democracy is clear enough but the long dominance of military determinism means no ‘comprehensive and well-documented study’ of this democratic consolidation has ever been undertaken.\footnote{Quotation from Raaflaub, ‘Transformation of Athens’, p. 348.} Likewise, few have paid any attention to the institutional strengthening of Athenian democracy in the balance of the fifth century and
throughout the next. As such there are also significant new opportunities for research by ancient historians on the military and non-military causes of the consolidation of Athenian democracy and its subsequent enhancements.

IV

THE UTILITY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

For the pursuit of these new directions for research ancient historians will probably get some assistance from the social sciences. The use of social-science theory may be uncontroversial in other disciplines of the humanities but it is not yet standard practice in our discipline, at times raising the ire of its more traditional practitioners. However, the use of social-science theory holds great promise for ancient historians: it helps us ensure the ‘common-sense’, discipline-based and ethnocentric assumptions, inevitably informing our interpretations, are plausible and scientifically valid. In addition social-science models allow us to make better sense of our evidence and to develop explanatory hypotheses of phenomena which go well beyond those of ancient writers. Such self-conscious historiography is important if we are to contribute

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to wider scholarly debates and to prevent the ghettoisation and long-term decline of our discipline.92

Social scientists have also pioneered the use of the scientific drawing of causal inferences in qualitative research. Since these suggested new lines of investigation into Athenian democracy and war involve complex issues of causation and will probably end up confounding long-held orthodoxies, the adaptation of this scientific method by the social sciences seems particularly valuable. This generation and empirical testing of hypotheses are the foundation of natural- and human-science research and the predominant approach of social scientists. Humanities-based researchers regularly employ aspects of this approach but normally do so intuitively and usually do not make explicit how a research plan fulfils its methodological requirements. In these circumstances the classic study of social-science research by Robert Keohane, Gary King and Sidney Verba proves to be useful: this describes how the drawing of scientific inference works in qualitative research and the steps researchers need to follow to have scientifically valid knowledge of a case study. Their first step is demonstrating the importance of proposed research by showing how its question concerns a striking subject, fills a gap in the knowledge base of a discipline and contributes (even if modestly) to a deeper understanding of contemporary

92 Ober, Athenian Revolution, p. 17.
problems. The next step is developing an untested theory answering this question. This needs to be complex enough to allow for the possibility of proving it false. Such a theory normally consists of a number of subordinate hypotheses, which must accord with the evidence already available and be logically consistent with each other. Keohane, King and Verba explain how the testing of a theory is guided by its ‘observable implications’. These are the results of our hypotheses which we anticipate and are able to detect if our theory is correct. With a good number of such predictions in hand, we know what data needs to be gathered for empirical testing. Such evidence usually confirms some of our hypotheses, disproves others and suggests new ones requiring testing in due course.

An empirically proven theory, however, is not necessarily the end of the matter; for a serious problem of causal inference is its unacceptably high uncertainty, when only applied to a solitary unit of study. Comparative Politics has demonstrated how this ambiguity can be satisfactorily reduced through

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94 Ibid., pp. 19-23, 99-114.

95 Ibid., pp. 23-9, 46-7.

96 Ibid., pp. 208-30.
comparison. As a theory in one unit of study should be applicable to other examples of the same class, proving our hypotheses work elsewhere makes more likely our classification of the phenomenon we are explaining as a dependent variable and our identification of its independent variables or causes. In addition the comparison of a case study with two or more independent variables to a comparable example where one of these is absent helps determine the relative importance of these in our original unit. The final step is the using of evidence at hand to describe the ‘causal mechanisms’ whereby our causes bring about their established effects.

The advantages of this social-science approach can be seen clearly when it is applied to the impact of democracy on Athenian warfare: this method not only ensures scientifically valid knowledge but brings focus and structure to the research process. We have already seen how this side of the causal symbiosis meets the criteria Keohane, King and Verba discuss for an important question: it concerns a striking feature of Athenian history, addresses a gap in our knowledge and encourages more critical thinking about contemporary security challenges. In addition progress has also been made on a theory to answer this question: the Sydney conference of last July marshalled plausible hypotheses


98 King, Keohane and Verba, Designing Social Inquiry, pp. 91-6.

about this side of our causal symbiosis. The open debates and dynamic of elite contenders and mass adjudicators facilitated the development of new forms of war by the Athenians, their innovative responses to security problems and their efficient prosecution of wars. These same features saw the epic values of soldiering extended to non-elite citizens and a stronger culture of militarism, encouraging ordinary Athens to be soldiers and to campaign frequently. The participation of so many in day-to-day politics and a new concept of deliberative courage produced soldiers and commanders with greater initiative. Finally the other causes of the military success of fifth-century Athens were demography and imperial revenue.

The observable implications of these hypotheses serve as a good guide for what evidence ancient historians working on this question should collect. The first predictable results are that the Athenians would have conducted longer and larger campaigns than they did before 508, done so more frequently and successfully and would have regularly made changes to their ways of fighting and the organisation of their armed forces. Probably the best way to test these is to produce a thorough survey of every military venture and reform of the Athenians, subdividing this into the sixth century before Athens was a democracy, the fifth century, when the city had imperial income, and the fourth century after its loss of empire. A second observable implication is the extension of the traditional praise of upper-class hoplites to every class and type of soldier. The military conceptions of sixth-century Athens can serve as a good
benchmark, against which the extension of this ideology to other social strata can be measured. For determining how the predominantly upper-class hoplites represented their exploits archaeology will be important: the finely painted pots of sixth-century Athens and its tombstones sport hundreds of images of soldiers, telling us a great deal about the conception of war among upper-class Athenians.\textsuperscript{100} By contrast, the best evidence for what happened to this ideology under the democracy is its surviving plays and speeches.\textsuperscript{101} A third observable implication is that ordinary citizens would have had a constantly high devotion to soldiering. This could be tested by comparing military participation in the sixth century, from 508 to the naval reform of 483, in the rest of this century,


and in the fourth century before and after the ephebic reform of 335. A final observable implication is that Athenian soldiers and commanders would have displayed greater initiative and the \textit{dēmos} better management of campaigns than their non-democratic enemies. To evaluate this, historians of classical Athens could, for example, compare the records of the Athenians and the Spartans in Peloponnesian War from 431 to 422 and, to avoid selection bias, in its last phase from 415 to 405, which ended in a crushing for Athens.

The scientific drawing of causal inferences also requires us to show the applicability of our confirmed hypotheses in multiple units of study. As such historians investigating this question could study, for instance, the impact of democracy on the Thebans’ waging of war from 379 to 338. In this period Thebes was the dominant power of central Greece and made innovative changes to its military organisation and ways of fighting. Very suggestively this new


military success of the Thebans clearly followed a democratic revolution.\textsuperscript{104} The second way of reducing the uncertainty of causal inference is the breaking down of a case study into distinct units of study, which underlines the importance of segmenting data-selection on ancient Athens into century-long periods. While the comparison of the military records of Athens in the sixth and fifth centuries suggests democracy was an independent variable for its military revolution, this leaves a troubling ambiguity: we cannot determine the weight of democracy relative to the other causes of demography and imperial revenue. Here the treating of fourth-century Athens as a separate unit of study can be very useful. Athens of this century probably had the same-sized citizen-body as in the sixth but no longer enjoyed the imperial revenue it had in the fifth.\textsuperscript{105} Traditionally this loss of income and the deaths of more than half of Athenians in the Peloponnesian War were thought to have pushed Athens into a century of decline.\textsuperscript{106} But scholarship of recent years has forced a wholesale revision of this thinking: Athens recovered quickly, strengthening its democracy and becoming

\textsuperscript{104} E.g. Xenophon \textit{Hellenica} 5.4.8-9, 46.

\textsuperscript{105} Hansen reliably calculates the citizen population of Athens in the second half of the fourth century as thirty thousand (M.H. Hansen, \textit{Demography and Democracy} [Herning, 1986]; \textit{Athenian Democracy}, 90-4; Pritchard, ‘Kleisthenes, Participation, and the Dithyrambic Contests’, pp. 219-20 with bibliography), which is the conventional estimate of its population in 490 (e.g. Vidal-Naquet, ‘La tradition de l’hoplité athénien’, p. 170).

a cultural innovator again. Fourth-century Athenians were also seriously committed to soldiering, waged wars even more frequently than in the previous century, made innovative changes to their military institutions and practices, and were the period’s most consistent regional power. Tellingly this apparent renewed success points to democracy as the decisive independent variable for the military revolution of the previous century.

For a number of reasons the conducting of research into the military and non-military causes of the political development of archaic and classical Athens will need to take a slightly different course. In contrast to the longstanding neglect of the question of democracy’s impact on waging war (see above), since the so-called third wave of democratisation in the 1970s political scientists have systematically studied the preconditions for the emergence of contemporary democracies in different regions, the political and social actors in these recent transitions, and the internal and external causes of their consolidation. As such

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108 See especially Burckhardt, Bürger und Soldaten.

there is a rich body of political theory which ancient historians can draw on to
develop and test what hypotheses we already have on Athenian democratisation
(see above) and to come up with some others. Another difference between the
investigation of each side of this symbiosis concerns the validating of proven
hypotheses in other units of study. With respect to the emergence of democracy,
we may compare Athens before the early 450s to other newly instituted Greek
democracies.\textsuperscript{110} Unfortunately the same cannot be done from this point down to
322, when the democracy was increasingly treated at Athens as the natural
system of government and modified very effectively as the need to do so
became clear, because of our almost total lack of detailed evidence for the
operation and history of other Greek democracies. As a result, comparison can
probably only be made with modern case studies of democratic consolidation.

\section*{V
THE CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCY OF ANCIENT ATHENS}

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 sure 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. ¹¹¹ The results of these democracy-promotion efforts are decidedly mixed. In Iraq the United States and its allies have been unable to encourage the national cohesion and shared identity, which are preconditions of democracy, and to prevent the slide into civil war. The adoption of democracy-promotion by President Bush as the main justification for the 2003 invasion of Iraq has also exacerbated the backlash against democracy in the Middle East and further afield. ¹¹² 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 not consolidated sufficiently. While there are good humanitarian and security reasons for supporting these democracies, ‘Australia

¹¹¹ The funding of the Centre for Democratic Institutions at the Australian National University, for example, which provides much of this training, comes directly from the foreign-aid budget of Australia (http://www.cdi.anu.edu.au/about_cdi/about_cdi.htm).

remains a long way from having a clear idea how to help our small weak neighbours build stable effective governments’.¹¹³

At the same time established democracies face deepening problems internally, which threaten their long-term viability and their effectiveness at the making of policy.¹¹⁴ 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.¹¹⁵ Since the open debates and electoral contests which underwrite the superiority of democratic decision-making require an actively engaged citizenry,


the addressing of this so-called democratic deficit is a matter of some urgency.\textsuperscript{116}

A good way to deepen our thinking on these contemporary problems lies in the so-called lessons of history.\textsuperscript{117} 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 averaged-sized modern state and had a participatory rather than representative democracy, which was based on different social relations.\textsuperscript{118} These differences make it impossible to project conclusions about Athens directly onto contemporary affairs. On the other hand, this city-state had the only fully developed democracy of pre-modern times, whose richly documented history allows us to analyse its operation thoroughly. The canonical status of its drama and oratory means hundreds of its literary works have survived, while its so-called epigraphical habit of recording decrees on stone has given us a huge archive of its political activity.\textsuperscript{119} As a result, historians of what is by far the best

\textsuperscript{116} Reiter and Stam, \textit{Democracies at War}, pp. 160-1.

\textsuperscript{117} Morley, \textit{Writing Ancient History}, pp. 133-61.

\textsuperscript{118} For a judicious discussion of the differences and similarities between ancient and modern democracy, see Robinson, \textit{First Democracies}, pp. 13-16, 25-33.

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 their causal symbiosis, 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. The relationship of political science to ancient history then is not a one-way street: Athens can help build theory on modern democracies at war.

But Athens does more than stimulate better thinking and new lines of research on our political and security challenges: it has the potential to give us novel ways for solving 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.¹²⁰ In this world Athens was clearly 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. As such 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 Athenians provides us with well tested possibilities for addressing current political challenges. 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. Likewise, Athens should offer us possible solutions to our security challenges, even if its

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potential as a military model has been almost completely ignored.\textsuperscript{124} Thus by investigating how the open debates and general democratic design of classical Athens contributed to its military success, ancient historians can make available potential solutions to our security challenges. Admittedly these 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 we face, they will undoubtedly be valuable.\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{124} E.g. D.M. Pritchard, ‘Lessons for Us from the First Democracy’, \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 3 July (2006), p. 11. Another exception is an article by William Antholis and Bruce Russett which seeks to deepen our understanding of the foreign policy of our own democracies by studying the Peloponnesian War on the grounds that the city-state culture of the Greeks is ‘the only other well-documented state system with a large number of democratic regimes’ (Russett and Antholis, ‘Do Democracies Fight’, p. 415).

\textsuperscript{125} A short version of this article was delivered to the Sydney Democracy Forum (http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/departs/cah/news/sdf.shtml) at the University of Sydney in August 2007. I am grateful for the thoughtful comments of those who were present. Sincere thanks also go to those who commented on early drafts of this article or discussed with me issues it touches upon. They include Anthony Alexander, Ryan Balot, Jumana Bayeh, Alastair Blanshard, Lyn Carson, Eric Csapo, Graeme Gill, Margaret Harris, Christopher Hilliard, Christopher Hobson, Josiah Ober, Iain Spence and Hans van Wees.