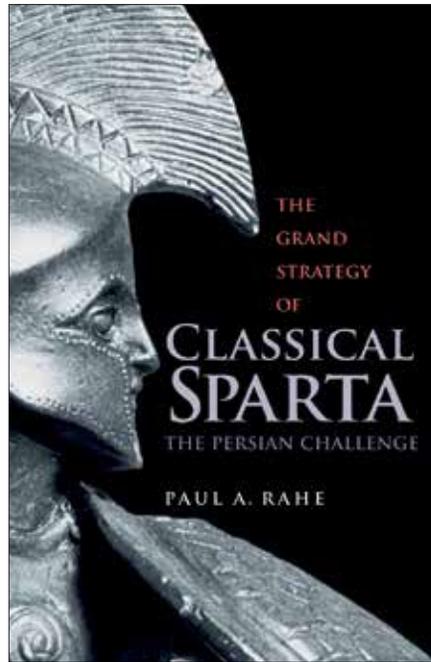


with the tools to conduct such an inquiry. With only a limited bibliography and a paucity of notes, however, such an inquiry would prove daunting.

Despite these minor issues, Horne's work is instructive, especially because of the author's consistent reminder of the fate awaiting those who ignore the past. In fact, such a theme could have easily taken pride of place in this work. Horne's explanation of how the Battle of Tsushima, the 1940 Blitzkrieg, and the Battle of Verdun persisted as analogies for the Japanese at Midway, for Hitler during Barbarossa, and for the French in Indochina, respectively, shows the power analogies wield within the mind of the decisionmaker. In fact, Horne's examples provide additional evidence of the power of historical analogy, much as Yuen Foong Khong described in *Analogies at War*. For Horne, the arrogant not only tend to ignore history, but they also are heavily inclined to extend beyond their abilities. Indeed, Horne's six examples demonstrate the validity of Clausewitz's concept of a culminating point and the importance of reading the strategic context correctly to assess when such overreach will prove detrimental. Given the complexity of the strategic environment in the Pacific and ongoing operations in the Middle East, such reminders are helpful.

Finally, some may find Horne's lack of any prescriptive counters to the influence of hubris to be a detriment. Yet this, too, is a strength. With a prescription, one can easily fall prey to "checking the box," all while treading the path of hubris. Instead, Horne cautions that hubris is insidious. While one is most vulnerable to its effects during triumphant moments, the pathogen lingers. Thus, an awareness of its presence is, for Horne, the best medicine of all. The knowledge of hubris's infectiousness and the willingness to admit one's fallibility may prove the closest thing to an inoculation against hubris and its most dangerous manifestation, peripeteia. JFQ

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The Grand Strategy of Classical Sparta: The Persian Challenge

By Paul A. Rahe
Yale University Press, 2015
\$34.95, 424 pp.
ISBN: 978-0300116427

Reviewed by Williamson Murray

At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, Americans and their military leaders have had all too little sense of the importance of history and too little grasp of literature on thinking about strategy and the role of military power in the world. In fact, in the massive assault by the literati of the intellectual world, America's elites have come to regard the dead men of ancient Greece as thoroughly suspect and not worthy of serious study. In that regard, the *stèle* (tombstone) that marked the grave of the great Greek dramatist Aeschylus identifies him as a veteran of the pitched battle between the Persians and the Athenians at Marathon in 490 BCE, with no mention of his dramatic triumphs. His memorial reads:

Beneath this stone lies Aeschylus, son of Euphorion, the Athenian,

who perished in the wheat-bearing land of Gela;

of his noble prowess the grove of Marathon can speak,

and the long-haired Persian knows it well.

It serves as one more reminder of why the past appears to be of little use to Americans who look forward to a brave new world.

Professor Paul Rahe has directly challenged those assumptions that history is bunk. His *Grand Strategy of Classical Sparta* is a brilliant study of Spartan strategy during the Persian Wars (500 to 479 BCE) that deserves to be read by those few still interested in the conduct of grand strategy and the choices, good and bad, made by leaders under the pressures of war. He has laid out the obvious as well as the underlying factors that eventually led to victory on the part of the Spartans and their Greek allies against the great empire of Persia. The victory of the Greek states was by no means inevitable. Their opponents not only had an immense superiority in numbers, but from the beginning also possessed an advantage in the general disunity of the Greek city-states. Thus, it took extraordinary political and strategic skill for a few Greek leaders to hold their fragile alliance together.

For Sparta, its leaders, and their strategy, the problem was both internal and external. On one side, they confronted a deeply hostile population of helots, whom they ruled with a ruthlessness that still echoes through the ages. Those helots were essential to Sparta's military power because they provided the sustenance on which the economy and warrior polis depended, since the Spartans forbade any kind of industry or trade to its warrior citizens, whose sole business was preparation for war. Not surprisingly, the Spartans confronted the potential of massive revolt among the helots, revolts that their neighbors were more than willing to support. Thus, they were deeply conscious of the importance of balancing their internal dangers with the external threats in the Peloponnese. Against Sparta's ancient opponent,

Argos, they waged a series of wars over the centuries to maintain their superiority in the Peloponnese. For the Arcadians, the other independent Peloponnesians, the Spartans bound their city-states as tightly as possible to the Spartan regime. As Rahe underlines, Sparta maintained a highly successful strategy “designed to keep their Argives out, the helots down, and the Arcadians . . . in.”

But Sparta’s strategic approach would work only so long as the Peloponnese confronted no external threat. And at the end of the 6th century BCE, that threat appeared with the rise of Persia and the creation of a great empire lying to the east of the Aegean. Rahe’s story then is a brilliant account of how the Spartans adapted their strategy to an entirely different world that they had ruled so successfully in the past. It is a tale of great leadership, the difficulties of making effective grand and military strategy in the face of quarrelsome allies, and the importance of the sharp end of combat. The Persian threat to the Greek city-states had begun to emerge at the turn of the 6th century BCE as the Persians spread their control over the Middle East and through Anatolia toward the Aegean. The city-states along the western fringes of Anatolia resisted, but received insufficient military aid from the Greeks in the Western Aegean to fend the Persians off. It was inevitable that the Persians would attempt to spread their power and rule across the Aegean into Europe. In the late 490s, they moved against the Greek city-states on the mainland of Europe. Many Greeks “medized” (threw their lot in with the Persians), but the Spartans and the Athenians refused.

The result was an invasion of Attica and the astonishing victory of Athenian hoplites over the Persian army on the plains of Marathon in 490 BCE. Almost 200 Athenians died in the battle, and their epigram noted:

*Reputation, indeed, as it reaches the ends
of the sun-lit earth*

*the valor of these men shall make manifest:
How they died*

*Doing battle with the Medes and crowning
Athens*

*Very few, awaiting and welcoming war at
the hands of the multitude.*

The Spartans arrived late for the battle because of a religious festival, but it was not due to chance. The Persians’ intelligence on the Greeks obviously knew the Spartans and their religious sensibilities and struck the Athenians when the Peloponnesians would not be available. The same factor in Sparta’s deeply religious commitment to its traditions occurred a decade later. As Rahe points out, Leonidas and the 300 would go down to defeat in 480 BCE at Thermopylae because the main Spartan army was detained at home celebrating a religious festival in the Peloponnese.

Ten years after Marathon, the Persians returned with a massive land army and navy. Here, the alliance between the Spartans and the Athenians would hold together in spite of the extraordinary differences in their cultures and politics. The Athenian Themistocles, son of Neocles, perhaps the greatest strategist of all time, had seen the danger with the greatest perception. Well before the Persians moved in 480 BCE, Themistocles had already persuaded his fellow countrymen to spend the whole windfall they had received from their silver mines at Laurium to expand the Athenian fleet instead of spending it on themselves at a time when the Persian threat still appeared distant. It was as if in the present day and age, the American people agreed to spend their entire social security payments on buying new equipment for the American military. That fleet was to provide the margin of Greek superiority in defeating the Persian fleet at Salamis.

But, as Rahe points out, the naval victory at Salamis did not end the threat, as accounts of the war, most written by Athenian sympathizers, suggest. While Xerxes and the Persian fleet scuttled off from the Aegean in flight after Salamis, the massive Persian army remained to threaten the Greeks not only with battle, but also with efforts at subversion to break up the Greek alliance. The Spartans

were largely responsible for keeping the alliance together, and then in the summer of 479 BCE, the Spartan generals directed the combined force of hoplites to a great victory that ended the Persian threat to Greek freedom.

In the largest sense, it was the superiority of Greek strategy that would allow them to hold onto their freedom. Rahe’s history, then, is crucial because it ties the pressures of war and battles to the execution of an effective strategy. Here, both the Spartans and the Athenians proved far superior to their Persian opponents. Rahe sums up what the Spartans and their allies had achieved in the following terms: “That an alliance of small cities . . . should stand up to and annihilate what was arguably the largest army and most formidable fleet ever assembled—this was and still is a wonder well worthy of extended contemplation.” For those interested in understanding strategy in the real world and the price that men have been willing to pay for their freedom, this is a book well worth reading. JFQ

Professor Williamson Murray is the author or editor of over 20 books, most recently *A Savage War: A Military History of the Civil War* (coauthored with Wayne Wei-siang Hsieh).