



Thucydides, Pericles, and Periclean Imperialism

Edith Foster

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In this book, Edith Foster compares Thucydides' narrative explanations and descriptions of the Peloponnesian War in books one and two of the History with the arguments about warfare and war materials offered by the Athenian statesman Pericles in those same books. In Thucydides' narrative presentations, she argues, the aggressive deployment of armed force is frequently unproductive or counter-productive, and even the threat to use armed force against others causes consequences that can be impossible for the aggressor to predict or contain. By contrast, Pericles' speeches demonstrate that he shared with many others figures in the History a mistaken confidence in the power, glory, and reliability of warfare and the instruments of force. Foster argues that Pericles does not speak for Thucydides, and that Thucydides should not be associated with Pericles' intransigent imperialism. On the contrary, Thucydides composed Pericles' speeches to expose his character and views to the reader, and he both introduced and surrounded them with narrative illustrations that contrast Pericles' claims.

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