If War is the Answer, what is the Question?

A Genealogy of Ideas in the Greek Just War Tradition

Theodoros Kaloudiotis

MA

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Doctorate of Philosophy

School of Social and Political Sciences, College of Social Sciences

University of Glasgow

September 2024

Abstract

Just War theories are shaped by distinct cultures, collective mentalities, and historical developments. However, the existing International Relations literature on Just Wars has not effectively integrated the role of ideas in how actions acquire meaning and legitimacy. Even within the literature on the Just War tradition, there has been a predominant focus on the evolution of Roman 'Ciceronian' concepts through the Western medieval system, which became ingrained in Western thought as part of the collective mentalities and experiences of recent centuries.

My study tried to address this gap by examining the genealogy of the Greek Just War tradition. The central question of my research is: how did the concept of Just War develop within Greek thought from antiquity to the establishment of an independent Greek state in the 19th century, and can we trace a distinct (Greek) Just War tradition shaped by unique collective experiences, norms, and ideas? References to the Greeks are not ethnological; they refer to the Mediterranean culture centred on the Greek language, concepts, and way of life, which leads to a precise analysis on ideas and practices that construct Just War mentalities. My study demonstrated that the origins of Western Just War traditions can be traced back to Ancient Greek thought and examined how these ideas contributed to the Greco-Roman and Christian synthesis. I explored how Christianity, alongside factors such as geopolitical circumstances, interactions with other cultures, and pre-existing ideas and norms, shaped Eastern Roman practices and created a distinct normative environment, i.e., a different Just War tradition. This environment influenced the evolution of Modern Greek thought, particularly among the Greek diaspora, during the Greek War of Independence, and in the social constructions that legitimised armed conflict as a core element of Greek identity and future Greek security discourses on various domains.

Analysing Just War traditions as part of the evolution of ideas across different cultures is both methodologically and ontologically significant. Such an approach enables a deeper understanding of how communities justify warfare, how ideas give meaning to action, and ultimately challenges the positivist view prevalent in modern International Relations, which often treats war merely as a strategic manoeuvre in the game of international politics, rather than as a reflection of diverse cultures. In a globalised interdependent world, the understanding of how warfare is an extension of different communities' mentality and how ideas legitimise practice is crucial for any aim to improve security discourses, multilateral strategy, and crisis management.

Contents

Abstract 2
Acknowledgments 6
Author's Declaration 7
Chapter 1 Introduction 8
1.1 Ideas, words, and deeds 8
1.2 Research Question/Aims 11
1.3 On Identity Constructions and Imagined Communities: Who are the Greeks? 12
1.4 The Case(s) of the Greek Just War Tradition: The Eastern branch of the European Tree 18
1.5 Literature Review 20
1.6 Theory and Methodology 22
1.6.1 Constructivism and the Genealogy of Ideas 22
1.6.2 Causation or Facilitating Conditions? 27
1.6.3 Important Terminology 33
1.7 Sources 37
1.8 Structure 41
Chapter 2 War in Ancient Greece: An Evolving Tradition 45
2.1 The Perceptions of the Greeks about War, and the Genealogy Logic 45
2.2 Legitimate Aims 50
2.2.1 Aristeia and Honour*:* The pulses of competition 50
2.2.2 *Autonomia* 55
2.2.3 *Autonomia* vs. Collective Identity: The Hidden Dialectic of the Peloponnesian War 60
2.2.4 *Autonomia* and Defence 66
2.2.5 Responsibility to Protect 71
2.3 Religion and Law 76
2.4 Enemies 81
2.4.1 Identity Constructions: The Self vs. the Other 81
2.4.2 Greeks vs. Greeks 88
2.5 Responsibility to Wage War: Who fights and who decides? 98
2.6 Beyond Good and Evil: Ethical Perceptions and Noncombatants 104
2.6.1 The Good, the Bad and the…Natural 104

2.6.2 Non-combatants and Prisoners of War 107
2.7 Conclusion 111
Chapter 3 Roman Warfare: The Just War Doctrine, the Seed of Universality, and the Roman-Christian Synthesis 115
3.1 Introduction: Romans and War 115
3.2 Legitimate Aims 120
3.2.1 The Just War Ideas and the 'Offensive' Defence 120
3.2.2 The Pursuit of Glory and Honour 124
3.2.3 The Roman Cosmopolitanism vs. the Greek Communitarianism and Just Wars 128
3.2.4 The Responsibility to Protect 132
3.3 Religion and Law 135
3.4 Enemies 139
3.5 The Responsibility to Wage War: Who fights and who decides? 143
3.6 Beyond Good and Evil: Just War Ideas, Christianity, and Non-Combatants 147
3.6.1 The Christian Antithesis and the Fertile Roman Norms 147
3.6.2 Non-Combatants 153
3.7 Conclusion 159
Chapter 4 The East Roman Warfare: The Defence Doctrine, the Impact of Adversaries in Strategy, the 'Seed' of Interdependence, and a Different Just War Legacy 162
4.1 The East Roman (Byzantine) State: A Brief Overview 162
4.2 Legitimate Aims 169
4.2.1 Defending the Faith: The Architect of the Byzantine Warfare 169
4.2.2 Peace: A foundation of Legitimate Warfare 172
4.2.3 The Responsibility to Protect 176
4.2.4 The Responsibility to Reclaim 181
4.3 Religion and Law 184
4.4 Enemies 191
4.4.1 Identities and Legitimacy 191
4.4.2 Christians vs. Christians 198
4.4.4 'Otherness' and the Seed of Interdependence 203
4.5 The Responsibility to Wage War: Who Fights and Who Decides? 210
4.6 Beyond Good and Evil: The Byzantine Synthesis of Ethics 214
4.6.1 Ontological Innovations: War as a human construction 214

4.6.2 Non Combatants and Prisoners of War 218
4.7 Conclusion 220
Chapter 5 The Greek War of Independence: The 'Virtuous Aggression' of *Klepthes*, the Naturalisation (?) of 'Friends and Foes', and the Legacy of the Byzantine Just War Foundations for Modern Greek Security Discourses 222
5.1 The Greek War of Independence: A Historical Overview 222
5.1.1 Armatoloi, Klephtes…and Merchants! 224
5.1.2 Methodological Problems: The Choice of Sources 227
5.2 Legitimate Aims 230
5.2.1 Religion 230
5.3 Enemies 236
5.3.1 Turkish Otherness 236
5.3.2 The 'Other' and the Western Influences 241
5.4 The Responsibility to Wage War: Who Fights and Who Decides? 246
5.5 Beyond Good and Evil 250
5.5.1 Ethics and the Camouflaged Impact of Nationalism 250
5.5.2 Non-combatants and Prisoners of War 251
5.6 Conclusion 259
Chapter 6: Conclusion 262
6.1 A genealogy of the 'self': 'Us and them', war, and communitarian identities 262
List of References 269
Select Bibliography of Primary Sources 269
Secondary sources 273

Acknowledgments

I owe a debt of gratitude to my supervisors, Professor Craig Smith and Dr Adrastos Omissi, as well as Professor Beatrice Heuser, for their unwavering support throughout this project. They read all of my drafts, providing invaluable feedback that helped me unlock my potential and strengthen my arguments. Professor Smith offered decisive intellectual support, guiding me in clarifying, deepening, and refining my thesis, while sustaining confidence in our progress, which was crucial to its completion. Dr Omissi was always willing to offer insights, often identifying details that I had overlooked, which was critical for my focus and clarity. Professor Heuser's guidance during the early stages of my PhD was instrumental, both cognitively and methodologically. I continue to regard this mentorship as a great privilege. The School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Glasgow, the GTA team and Karen Wright have provided an inspiring environment throughout all these years, which made this academic journey a rewarding experience.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Professor Evanthis Hatzivasiliou, Maria Euthymiou, and Kostas Gaganakis from the University of Athens. The same appreciation goes to my professors at the University of Groningen—Professor Jaap de Wilde and Dr Christoph Humrich —whose teaching opened new worlds for me and solidified my academic passion.

I am deeply grateful to my parents, Fotis and Euaggelia, for their unconditional love, their ethos, their influences, and their total acceptance of my ambitions, as part of who I am. They have given everything to help me get to where I want to be. My thanks also go to my aunt Orsalia, for her unique trust and love in all my endeavours. I am equally indebted to my partner, Eleanna, for always being my strongest supporter and – mainly – for showing me what truly matters in life since the day we met.

I am also thankful to my friends from Greece, the Netherlands, and Scotland, each of whom, with their unique personalities, has contributed to my happiness and self-fulfilment. The moments shared with them have been integral to shaping who I am today.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to all of the above, with special thanks to late Professor Anjo Harryvan. He was the first person to openly express his faith in my path and remains an endless source of inspiration—a legacy I strive to pass on to my own students. I also dedicate this work to my late aunt Spyridoula and my late grandparents, Theodoros, Georgitsa, and Maria, whose happy faces will always be missed in my future endeavours, yet whose indescribable impact on me endures.

Author's Declaration

'I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.'

Printed Name: Theodoros Kaloudiotis

Signature. T. Kaloudiotis

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Ideas, words, and deeds

There is always a 'Just'[1] source of legitimacy that defines warfare, a 'good cause'. Force is always used in response to a rightful reason, or at least any group that chooses aggression wants to perceive its choice as noble. War is a universal concept but 'good causes' are a more complicated story. Without ignoring the significance of material factors, it is safe to say that causes of conflict vary due to distinct collective experiences, diverse ideologies, and varying cultural impacts.[2] Beatrice Heuser explained that 'War and warfare stand at the interface between instinctive behaviour and the driving force of ideas, invoked when collective violence is organized',[3] highlighting the importance of ideas in the exploration of war. Ideas differ among cultures, especially when it comes to legitimising the use of force. What might be a legitimate reason in one culture could be deemed unjust or inconceivable elsewhere.

Before presenting the main research objectives, I want to stress the significance of the uniqueness of different historical periods and cultures. My logic is distinct from the dominant International Relations (IR) theoretical schools, as I am using the divergence in collective identities, beliefs, and memories, across various eras and cultures- following Beatrice Heuser's methodological approach, and the logic of framing the study of IR in the appropriate historical context(s).[4] Throughout the project, culture stands for 'the creation and communication of memory, ideology, emotions, life styles, scholarly

---

[1] The capitalised 'Just' is used throughout the analysis to denote 'justified'.

[2] Jack Snyder, 'Anarchy and Culture: Insights from the Anthropology of War', *International Organization* 56, no. 1 (2002): 7.

[3] Beatrice Heuser, *War: A Genealogy of Western Ideas and Practices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 1.

[4] Anja Hartman and Beatrice Heuser (eds), *War, Peace and World Orders in European History* (London: Routledge, 2001); Cyril Buffet and Beatrice Heuser, 'Of Myths and Men', in Cyril Buffet and Beatrice Heuser (eds), *Haunted by History: Myths in International Relations* (Oxford: Berghahn, 1998).

and artistic works, and other symbols'[5] that gives 'meaning to a social group'.[6] It is culture that forms the habitus of a community, while mentality and identity shape the lifestyle of each individual within that community.[7] The specific theorisation defines the project's epistemology, through its methodological principles of examining the repetition of ideas that shape habits (the Aristotelian *ethos*)[8] and determine what makes wars Just or unjust and how the use of force is understood and practiced by different communities in different periods.

Although I occasionally use the term *state*—particularly when referring to governmental or imperial decisions, diplomatic interactions, or formal institutional frameworks—this study deliberately privileges the term *community*. The state-centred approach can be contested, as Benedict Anderson's notion of community also embraces bonds formed through shared religion or class affiliations. Communities may be defined by common religious beliefs, similar socio-economic status—such as the solidarity of 'workers of the world' or distinctions between free citizens and slaves—shared political orientations, or even a collective identity forged by persecution and injustice.[9] Here, for the purposes and nature of this research (the exploration of a genealogy of Just war ideas) community refers to a socio-political entity that, although not necessarily a modern nation-state, is defined by shared cultural norms, institutionalised structures (even if these structures are based on local norms and unofficial frameworks - e.g. the Greek partisans during the War of Independence were not operating as part of a legal political entity), and recognised leadership that confers it with a measure of self-governance and legitimacy (which is linked to a normative aspect).

Ideas function as the cognitive framework upon which actions are justified. To comprehend the motivations and intentions underpinning foreign policy decisions, especially when it comes to warfare, one must uncover the underlying ideas that

---

[5] Akira Iriye, 'Culture and International History', in Michael Hogan and Thomas Paterson (eds), *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 215.

[6] Snyder, 'Anarchy and Culture', 14

[7] Pierre Bourdieu, La distinction: Critique sociale du jugement (Paris: Minuit, 1979).

[8] Aristotle believed that behavioural patterns, virtues, and morals are acquired through practice and habituation. See Aristotle, *Ηθικά Νικομάχεια (Nicomachean Ethics)*, trans. Dimitrios Lypourlis (Thessaloniki: Zitros, 2006), B.1.

[9] Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1983); Heuser, War, 2.

legitimise actions. IR is, therefore, woven with the threads of these ideas, and unravelling their meaning and impact is crucial to a comprehension of the dynamics at play.[10] While the objective of collecting this genealogy of ideas is based on discussing notions of change and continuity, we need to keep in mind that history also has a very practical role in security, warfare, and strategy. As Alastair Iain Johnston noted, anchoring strategic decisions in historical ideational legacies is a fundamental element of foreign policy.[11] In practical terms, when we try to understand the question that different communities ask when deciding to act aggressively, we need to study how ideas and experiences construct collective mentalities and shared knowledge.

According to Beatrice Heuser, the meaning of words in written or oral tradition varies based on the experiences of each group and generation, including those shared through 'living memory'. Experiences and circumstances give words specific meanings, so a single word can have different meanings across time and space depending on these lived experiences.[12] This is where the typical IR theorising on shared knowledge needs the contribution of a cultural history perspective. Shared knowledge differs across different periods and one way to understand the lasting impact of certain ideas is through a historical methodology that examines developing perceptions, norms, and values in different communities.

Exploiting collective mentalities is something that leaders and governments do, as they can stimulate shared emotional reactions by advocating and praising the advantages of resorting to military action.[13] But is this process unilateral, only stemming from ' above'? Clearly not, as these actions are undertaken within a context of societal norms and supported by the articulation of deeply rooted cultural values -i.e. the way in which questions that lead to the choice of war are based on a framework of consent. These values and norms constitute a blend of customary practices and conceptual notions,

---

[10] Richard Price, 'A Genealogy of the Chemical Weapons Taboo', *International Organization* 49, no. 1 (1995): 73–103.

[11] Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 9.

[12] Heuser, *War,*,9.

[13] Roxanne Lynn Doty, 'Foreign policy as social construction: A post-positivist analysis of US counterinsurgency policy in the Philippines', *International Studies Quarterly* 37/3 (1993): 297-320; Karin Fierke, *Critical Approaches to International Security* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007); Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap De Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998).

representing collective convictions and recognised standards.[14] Thus, , ideas establish the normative framework that governs a society's conception of its own identity, interests, and aspirations when interacting with 'others'.

While much of the IR theorising on war has focused either on using anarchy to support a scientific logic in which ahistorical laws dictate behaviour or on deconstructing the concept as superficial, I align with Snyder's theoretical framework, which approaches the culture of war in the absence of higher authority as an empirical question:

'What evidence should be examined? To assess the claim that behavior in an anarchical system is what the units and their culture make of it, the obvious methodological move is to vary the culture of the units or of the system as a whole and then assess the effect on behavior.'[15]

This perspective forms the starting point of my research. I aim to study the impact of ideas and culture on Greek thought and practice, suggesting that understanding the meaning of Just war in different units necessitates a genealogical understanding of how these perceptions came into existence, how they changed, and how they influenced action.

1.2 Research Question/Aims

The primary objective of this study revolves around the question of how the concept of Just war originated and evolved in Greek thought from ancient times to the establishment of the independent Greek state in the 19th century. This study's central objective is to unravel the process by which the ideas surrounding Just war took form within the collective mentality of the Greek community. Focusing on a question that aims to explore the influence exerted by different intellectual traditions and understand how these influences evolved over time and synthesised dominant perceptions and actions, the sub-question of my project asks to what extent this evolution constructed a distinct (Greek) Just war tradition.

Remembering Snyder's notion, I intend to suggest a way of exploring how different cultures incorporate the influence of ideas into the way they perceive war. These ideas are all human constructions and as they rely on collective mentalities,[16] they will be

[14] Heuser, *War*, 1.

[15] Snyder, 'Anarchy and Culture', 10.

[16] Anja Hartman and Beatrice Heuser, *War, Peace and World Orders in European History* (London: Routledge, 2001), 7.

explored by analysing the language employed to create these normative bases. The particular structure of the research design is to demonstrate how adopting a methodology centred on studying the genealogy of ideas can effectively reveal that the shared identities, beliefs, memories, and myths held collectively by various cultures across different time periods are subject to variation. This is because distinct communities (that have historical connections – in normative and identity-based logic) will be examined using a theoretical approach that seeks to reveal distinct attributes shaping their logics, strategic customs, and ethical bases that validate diverse patterns of behaviour. Ultimately, the ambition of this research initiative is to create an enriched comprehension of the interaction between ideas and actions, thereby revealing the dynamics governing the perception of Just or unjust war conduct within the collective consciousness of a given community.

1.3 On Identity Constructions and Imagined Communities: Who are the Greeks?

In this study, the term Greek political and military thought is situated within a comprehensive paradigm that is disconnected from 'DNA-centered' supernatural/nationalistic understandings and instead intertwined with a distinct cultural framework. This framework involves the interplay of notions that influenced specific societies, gradually forming sense of identity.

The essence of Hellenic identity requires an exploration of the ideological constructs that influence the perception of war within the communal psyche. This study examines the principles that defined war in societies whose interconnected experiences and shared norms collectively forged a broader conception of 'Hellenism'. The analytical framework herein adopts a constructivist ontology grounded in Anderson's conceptualisation of 'imagined communities.'[17] Nonetheless, the genesis of these communities is an outcome of various facilitating factors, encompassing cultural affinities, predominant narratives, and collective experiences. Furthermore, it is crucial to clarify that the use of the term 'imagined communities' does not disregard the significance of culture or collective mentality. Identities and their meanings are social constructions, but they establish norms and principles that acquire growing significance and strength over time, defining

---

[17] According to Anderson's approach, in the same way that envisioning our fellow members is essential for the community to establish its tangible existence, the construction of a shared historical narrative demands substantial effort and challenging collective decisions. Anderson emphasises that the existence of a nation involves not only remembering common aspects but also arriving at a consensus about what to omit from collective memory. Anderson*, Imagined Communities.*

expectations and behaviour - while also acting as facilitating conditions for legitimising warfare.[18]

The most precise definition of the term 'Greeks' comes from Antonis Liakos' work *How the past becomes history*:

> 'The references to the Greeks do not have an ethnological character. They do not refer to the ancestors claimed by modern Greeks, but to the culture that developed around the Mediterranean centered on the Greek language, a framework of concepts, and a way of life. Furthermore, we should not reduce the Greek experience to a linear evolutionary history…There are at least three major cycles. The first concerns the expansion from city-states along the Mediterranean coast, which included the archaic and classical periods. The second pertains to the era of empires and includes the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Finally, the third pertains to the creation of a culture that survived through Greek-speaking and the culture of the Greek city.'[19]

Throughout the IR discipline, scholars of strategy and security have researched the extent to which distinct national approaches to operations exist.[20] The way nations wage war is not necessarily a direct reflection of predefined national interests, nor does it negate the fact that identities are socially constructed. Instead, it suggests that cultural and geographical factors (among other important dynamics) can shape how diverse communities develop their strategic principles in both theory and practice.[21] As our study

---

[18] The theoretical tool on the importance of the way the past influences collective mindsets is based on Friedrich Nietzsche's notion on the practical impact of tradition: '…the more tradition lies in the past… the origin becomes sacred and awakens awe.' The term facilitating conditions is a constructivist ontological insight, referring to the contextual factors or circumstances that enable or support the emergence or consolidation of certain norms. Alexander Wendt defines it as a way to understand the shared understandings that lead to identity establishments and behavioural patterns. Martha Finnemore analyses how social norms and institutions drive state behaviour, including facilitating conditions for new norm diffusion. Finally, Peter Katzenstein discusses how cultural factors and identity formation influence security policies, addressing facilitating conditions in IR. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All-Too-Human*, trans. Marion Faber with Stephen Lohmann (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 67; Alexader Wendt, *Social theory of international politics* (Cambridge: Cambrdige University Press, 1999); Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1996); Peter Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

[19] Antonis Liakos, *How the past becomes history?* (Athens: Polis, 2007), 45-46.

[20] Beatrice Heuser and Eitan Shamir (eds.), *Insurgencies and counterinsurgencies: national styles and strategic cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[21] Stathis Kalyvas, 'Comparing Three Greek Unorthodox Wars', in Basil Gounaris et al. (eds.), *Unorthodox Wars: Macedonia, Civil War, Cyprus* (Athens: Patakis, 2010), 14.

spans from antiquity to the 19th century, it is important to clarify that investigating a Greek Just war tradition does not imply an unbroken national legacy, as Antonis Liakos suggested. Additionally, it recognises the distinction between different periods as separate historical eras, each with distinct attributes and cultures. The genealogical logic of the study implies that these ideas influenced the development of a specific tradition and thus should be examined under the framework of 'Greek thought' umbrella, due to cultural influences, geography, and linguistic variables. While Liakos takes a historical approach in which the circles have strict boundaries, I will try to show how influences became structural factors throughout these circles and played an important role in the synthesis of Just war ideas and practices.

My research follows a constructivist approach, demonstrating how identities evolve over time. The nation can be understood as an imagined political community where cultural or ethnic boundaries align with political ones. Crucially, it is defined by the widespread identification of its members with the concept of a sovereign people as the foundation of political legitimacy and human solidarity. [22]

The concept of Greek identity, traceable to the ancient world, gained significant identity-constructive potential during the late Byzantine period, particularly through the Palaeologan Renaissance. Yiannis Stouraitis argues that the late Byzantine *Rhomaioi* did not concern themselves with identifying solely as Roman or Greek in modern national terms. Instead, they fostered a distinct identity centred on Constantinople, which they viewed as the cradle of their civilisation—a synthesis of the finest aspects of both ancient Roman and Hellenic cultures.[23] Even though that is an accurate observation, the Palaeologan Renaissance (13th–15th century) was a period of cultural revival in the Byzantine Empire, marked by the recovery and dissemination of Greek texts, particularly in science and philosophy. During the Palaeologan Renaissance, numerous Greek scientific and philosophical works that had previously been neglected were rediscovered, including *Homer*, ancient tragedies, and comedies, leading to innovations in various fields.[24] This marked a paradigm shift, shaped by the ongoing dialectic between Byzantines who perceived ancient Greek works as dangerous due to their association

---

[22] Rogers Brubaker, Nationalism reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the new Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3-14.

[23] Yiannis Stouraitis, 'Reinventing Roman Ethnicity in High and Late Medieval Byzantium', *Medieval Worlds,* vol. medieval worlds/no. Volume 5. 2017, (2017), 87.

[24] Edmund Boleslaw Fryde, *The Early Palaeologan Renaissance (1261–c. 1360)* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

with paganism and prioritised the inner wisdom of Christianity, and those who believed there was valuable wisdom in these Hellenes (a synonym for pagans).[25]

While ancient Greek thought influenced both the Romans and the Byzantines, the latter institutionalised the Greek as the official state language, shaping the later national identity of the Greeks through a linguistic dimension. While a Greek nation-state did not exist before the 19th century, Byzantine heritage—especially its language, Orthodox Christianity, and administrative traditions—played a crucial role in shaping modern Greek identity. This aligns with the broader debate on state-centric versus community-based nationalism, where Greek nationalism developed from shared history, language, and religious continuity rather than from the restoration of a specific political entity – even though, as I will discuss later, the correlation between those who 'belong' to the Greek community and borders/lands became part of the relevant discourse and a significant variable of Just war ideas.

In the early 19th century, the geographical boundaries of the Greek nation were fluid, extending beyond the borders of the newly established Greek state. *Megali Idea*[26] reflected this evolving vision, seeking to unite Greek-speaking and Orthodox Christian populations, but the establishment of this doctrine is better understood after presenting the Byzantine foundations of Just war and identity-based discourses.

Rory Cox's caution against assuming direct historical transmission when similarities appear,[27] is also central to my approach. The persistence of certain Just War principles across different periods does not necessarily indicate unbroken inheritance but rather reflects recurring challenges societies face when legitimizing war. In the Greek case, factors such as the continuity of the Greek language, the preservation of classical texts within Byzantine scholarship, and the rediscovery of the Greek past during the Palaeologan Renaissance provided an intellectual framework that facilitated the reception

---

[25] Ibid. 11; Edwin Hanson Freshfield, *Roman Law in the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), 55.

[26] The 'Great Idea' (*Megali Idea*) is perceived as a foreign policy doctrine and an ideological compass of the 19th- early 20th century Greece that constructed a national mission based on the history and geography of the country, i.e. the country's history and geographic position calls for Greece to influence the West positively and bring progress to the East. While 'Ancient Greek' ancestors accomplished the first goal, the responsibility for civilising the East falls on the current generation, motivating representatives to make decisions not only for the nation but for the broader Hellenic community, driven by this 'Great Idea'.As I will discuss in the later sections, the construction of this doctrine was linked to previous constructions and ideas.

[27] Rory Cox, 'Approaches to Pre-modern War and Ethics: Some Comparative and Multi-disciplinary Perspectives', *Global Intellectual History* 6 (2021), 594-596.

of earlier ideas. However, it was in the 19th century—when nationalism redefined interpretations of the past—that these ideas were actively reconstructed to serve identity-driven narratives of war. Intellectual traditions were not passively inherited but deliberately reshaped in response to evolving historical and ideological needs, even though, as I argue in this project, these reconstructions take place through facilitating conditions and normative influences, not just based on mere pragmatism.

Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos' *History of the Greek Nation*[28], linked Byzantium and the notion of '*Megali Idea'* into the realm of Romantic National Identities, where continuity is part of a community's self-identification. Through his portrayal of Byzantium, he furnishes readers with an extensive and substantive understanding of Byzantine history, which, in his view, embodies the history of the Greek people. This perspective perceives East Roman history as the history of the Greek nation, seen as a collective historical entity. What Paparrigopoulos initially outlined is that 'The Byzantine state is responsible for preserving the Greek language, religion, and, in a broader sense, the Greek nationality.'[29] Even critical scholars, e.g. Konstantinos Dimaras in his monograph *Paparrigopoulos*, accept that the *History of the Greek Nation* responded to profound needs and cravings in Greek society and collective consciousness.[30] The establishment of a framework that allowed for a (constructed) self-identification through history legitimised aspirations that surpassed the size and capabilities of the new-born Greek state.

Stathis Kalyvas attempted to identify the themes that define Modern Greek history and to test whether there are patterns that explain the development of Modern Greece.[31] As he accurately explains, although we can observe common characteristics with the Modern period, the Ancient Greek world did not constitute a unified or homogeneous political and social entity; even from late antiquity, it was evolving in a particularly intricate manner. The Roman period succeeded late antiquity, while the Byzantine Empire emerged from its midst, both in terms of organisation and legitimisation as a political entity. The institutions of Byzantium derived from Rome, its culture from Christianity, and its language from the Greek tradition. The nobles and intellectuals of the Byzantine

---

[28] Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, *Istoria tou ellinikou ethnous* (Athens: Estia, 1999).

[29] Konstantinos Dimaras, *Konstantinos Paparigopoulos: I epochi tou, i zoi tou, to ergo tou* (Athens: Morfotiko Idrima Ethnikis Trapezis, 1986), 17.

[30] Ibid. 227-231.

[31] Stathis Kalyvas, *Modern Greece: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

elite primarily considered themselves Romans and Christians.[32] Meanwhile, the geographically present-day Greece was a relatively economically backward province of the empire. Simultaneously, the ancient Greek culture was condemned due to its association with its pagan past. in early Byzantine society, the term *Hellenes* was often used to refer to pagans, reflecting a prevailing scepticism towards the ancient Greek past due to its association with pagan practices. This scepticism is evident in legal and ecclesiastical texts such as the *Ecloga*, which condemned pagan rituals like seasonal festivals honouring deities such as Bacchus and Pan. Despite official prohibitions, these practices persisted in regions like Sicily, mainland Greece, and the Aegean Islands, where local populations continued to engage in traditional rites and mythology.[33]

Moreover, while the Byzantines preserved and studied ancient Greek sources, they were critically selective, incorporating only those elements that could be adapted to reinforce their unique normative, religious, and imperial foundations.[34] This approach highlights that, until the late Byzantine period, their engagement with ancient Greek tradition was not an uncritical acceptance of pagan ideas but a deliberate process of reinterpretation that contributed to a continuous and distinct Byzantine identity.

Why then are we studying ideas before the 'birth' of Modern Greece? Why does our Just war genealogy start from the ancient era and why does the study stops at 1830? This study aims to explore a specific tradition of thought within a genealogical framework. It aims to uncover the evolution and articulation of ideas, their impact on shaping both theoretical constructs and practical applications, and the construction of a normative 'ecosystem' that led to the development of a distinct Just war tradition.

The decision to conclude the investigation at the year 1830 is based on two parameters. Firstly, after the successful War of Independence, Greek thought enters a period of change, i.e. the period where the new-born Greek state is part of a growing interdependent world, which differs from the pre-modern period. This transition marks a departure from the pre-modern milieu, necessitating a separate, comprehensive inquiry into the Modern Greek Just war paradigm and its place in the development of contemporary Just war thinking. Such an endeavour would draw upon the foundational insights from this genealogical analysis, facilitating an assessment of their impact on the

---

[32] Yiannis Stouraitis, 'Collective identifiations in Byzantine Civil Wars', in Stouraitis, Yannis (ed.), *'War and Collective Identities in the Middle Ages: East, West, and Beyond'* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2023).

[33] *Ecloga: A Manual of Roman Law*, issued by Emperors Leo III and Constantine V at Constantinople in AD 726, trans. Edwin Hanson Freshfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), 55.

[34] Katerina Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Byzantine Philosophy and Its Ancient Sources* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 9.

evolution of ideas and practices amidst the conflicts and foreign policy challenges of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Secondly, the boundary of 1830 aligns with the intent to study the intellectual landscape preceding the establishment of the Modern Greek state. By probing the ideas predating this historical watershed, the aim is to discern the normative legacy inherited by the Greek community. This approach seeks to unravel the ideologies that were embedded into the collective consciousness, and the way they acquired concrete shape. Only by understanding the meaning of ideas can we assess their practical impact as it is that meaning that gives sense to actions and influences identities and legitimacy.

But, still, why does the analysis start at Ancient Greece and why does it follow this 'Odyssey' of historical periods, including the Roman and Byzantine times? The answer is both ontological and methodological.

1.4 The Case(s) of the Greek Just War Tradition: The Eastern branch of the European Tree

The long history of Just war ideas can be tracked in the ancient world. In the late Roman Republic, the notion shifted from piety ensuring divine support in warfare to the idea that wars must meet specific criteria to be lawful, known as Just war (*bellum iustum*).[35] Cian O 'Driscoll identified that 'ideas homologous to Just war principles were evident in classical Greek political thought and practice'.[36] As the first chapter of this analysis will show, this identification is not only accurate but one can argue that the Greco-Roman synthesis regarding Just and unjust wars cannot be fully understood without adding both traditions in the equation. However, Ancient Greece did not have any ritual as elaborate as that of Roman law. The criteria of Just war have been methodically formalised by experts in the academic field of war. This process has brought to light a correlation between historical foundations and the current context, as these very criteria resonate within modern legal norms pertaining to warfare. A war is considered Just if it has a legitimate cause, such as self-defence or defence of another, and its sole aim is to achieve peace. It must be a last resort, formally declared, and conducted with moderation and proportionality. Before engaging, it should be reasonable to assume that the anticipated destruction and suffering will not exceed the evil being fought against.[37]

---

[35] Heuser, *War,* 113.

[36] Cian O'Driscoll, 'Rewriting the Just War Tradition: Just War in Classical Greek Political Thought and Practice', *International Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2015): 8.

[37] Beatrice Heuser, 'The Neglected Trinity', *Joint Force Quarterly* 69 (2013): 6.

The moral and political anatomy of war has been approached and discussed by different thinking traditions in historical, political, and security discourses. Looking at the interpretations that have been discussing Greek thought, traditional schools in IR reflected on Thucydides, trying to track a theoretical origin to justify their ahistorical 'scientific' Realism. According to this tradition, Thucydides believed that the ontology of war is the inevitable clash of rising powers combined with a cynical human nature.[38] Unfortunately, the discussion of Classical thought has been perceived as a theoretical terrain to test different hypotheses and paradigms without trying to identify its evolution and impact in next centuries' theory and practice, but also without exhausting the contextual sides that shape the meaning of the sources.

Talking about evolution of ideas and practice, we should address the fact that while the 'Just war' scholarship has extensively looked at the Western evolution of the Roman Just war ideas, there is less interest in examining the East Roman (Byzantine) attitudes, as part of a genealogy of ideas that influenced different foreign policy behaviour. Studying how the use of force was justified, which were the long-term aims of military campaigns, and how the legitimacy of violence obtained moral shape, can work as a canal for understanding the evolution of ideas and for comparing the conclusions with different traditions. As collective mentalities, collective experiences, cultural particularities, linguistic constructions, and normative developments vary among different traditions, the hypothesis of examining a distinct tradition when following the genealogy of Greek thought becomes an ontological foundation of my study.

Michael Walzer cites mostly Western Christian authors, e.g., Aquinas, Augustine, Grotius, etc., when tracking the origins of Just war concepts.[39] Cian O 'Driscoll encourages the relevant discipline to reassess the notion that the just war tradition is primarily rooted in Christianity. He does this by pinpointing pre-Christian concepts that contribute to our comprehension of the tradition's origins.[40] East Roman Emperor Leo VI the Wise (886 – 912) expressed a strong belief that those with a rightful cause would have the assurance of divine support in their military endeavours.[41] This concept aligns

---

[38] Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the state, and war: A theoretical analysis* (N.Y: Columbia University Press, 2001), 159.

[39] Graham Parsons, and Mark A. Wilson, *'Walzer and War: Reading just and Unjust Wars Today'* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 18.

[40] O'Driscoll, 'Rewriting the just War Tradition', 1.

[41] Leo VI the Wise, *Τακτικά* (*Taktike Theoria*) (c.900), trans. George Dennis, *The Taktika of Leo VI* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010), Epilogue 14–17.

more closely with the Just war principles of the Greco-Roman era rather than the early Christian values. It highlights the interdependent connection that led to the synthesis of Just war principles in both Western and Eastern Roman thinking that has its origins in a pre-Christian context. The initial sections of this study are focused on this relationship, aiming to investigate the ideas that engaged in a dialectic interaction with early Christian principles, which led to a synthesis that shaped how medieval societies perceived the concept of Just war.

Interestingly, we can observe different practices, when it comes to waging war, when examining the Western and Eastern Christian world in the medieval years. The East Roman Empire was much more reluctant to conduct military operations and followed a diplomatic foreign policy where prioritising other (non-military) tactics became a powerful norm.[42] This practice was part of a continuous discursive development where war was (mostly) described as evil and its defensive character became a compass for the East Roman strategy. Practically, such clues uncover the trail of a different tradition that originates from the foundations of Just war theorising but expands in a different normative direction that influenced different practice through the Greek thought. As I like to depict it, they reveal the 'Eastern branch' in the European tree that did not fade away after the fall of Constantinople but kept influencing the Modern Greek thought.

1.5 Literature Review

Given the nature of this study, which dives into a genealogy of ideas, each chapter can be in a sense regarded as a distinct literature review. In each chapter, my aim has been to identify prevailing interpretive trends in the existing literature and situate my reflections within the broader ongoing discourse. In this manner, each chapter serves as a comprehensive exploration of the existing scholarship while also contributing to the scholarly debates through my findings and reflections. It is important to note that no existing study has attempted to codify the entire history of ideas within the pre-Modern Greek traditions and my research serves as an invitation to consider these ideas in both methodological and theoretical dimensions.

Numerous studies have discussed warfare across various epochs within Greek history. However, these analyses exhibit certain notable gaps, rooted in two aspects. Firstly, they tend to be concentrated on discrete historical epochs, thus engendering a restricted understanding of the impact of ideas in long-term constructions and cultural influences. Secondly, the evolution of crucial concepts—such as legitimacy, 'self', and 'other'—across disparate periods has not been studied thoroughly, which limits the potential to use

[42] Yannis Stouraitis, 'State War Ethics and Popular Views on Warfare', in Yannis Stouraitis, ed., *A Companion to the Byzantine Culture of War, c.300–1204* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 78.

these concepts in a concrete way when studying the history of interpolity relations or the meaning of these terms for interpolity interactions – particularly expressed by a specific culture that chooses war over other actions. In response to the research gap(s), I will examine how the culture of a particular society shapes its thinking about war over time and doing so will show how thinking about war is culturally embedded rather than abstract and detached from historical context as some in the field of IR would make it.

Furthermore, a third gap emerges in the realm of re-evaluating the Just war tradition, intriguingly characterised by a lack of exploration concerning the possibility of an alternative strand of Christian-oriented theory and practice, i.e., the Greek-Orthodox ideas. This gap is both theoretical and methodological. The Greek Just war tradition has not been analysed in a genealogy discourse setting. This is due to the dominance of IR theoretical patterns that overlook the importance of these dynamics for contemporary security discourses. Interestingly, the need to examine Greek culture has been raised in a few recent studies on strategy and security. Charalampos Karpouchtsis discussed the importance of symbols, educational influences, and collective experiences in Greek shared knowledge.[43] Similarly, Stamatia Boskou and Engelbrekt Kjell looked at the Greek strategic culture to interpret the country's behaviour in four recent foreign policy cases, i.e. global security crises that required action (Afghanistan, Iraq, the NAVFOR Operation Atalanta, and the intervention in Libya).[44] Both studies reflect on the importance of ideas and strategic cultural elements that define legitimacy, but the concept of identifying the evolution of these norms and ideas in a historical genealogy is still absent, i.e. how these ideas came into existence and what was the normative foundation behind their growth? Panayiotis Tsakonas discussed some social elements of the Greek strategic approach in the 20th century, mostly regarding East Mediterranean security issues and multilateral defence, echoing the debates on how the strategic perceptions of Greece during mid-20th century moved towards interdependence in its Balkan neighbourhood, the different positions *vis a vis* Turkey, and its European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) future.[45] Such empirical studies provide

---

[43] Charalampos Karpouchtsis, 'Greek Strategic Culture: Education, Symbols and Experiences.' *Zeitschrift für Außen-und Sicherheitspolitik,* 2/11 (2018): 203-215.

[44] Stamatia Boskou and Kjell Engelbrekt, 'Keeping a Low Profile: Greek Strategic Culture and International Military Operations', in Kjell Engelbrekt and Jan Hallenberg eds. *European Participation in International Operations: The Role of Strategic Culture* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 77–99.

[45] Panayiotis Tsakonas, *The Incomplete Breakthrough in Greek-Turkish Relations: Grasping Greece's Socialization Strategy* (New York: Basingstoke, 2010), 55; Charalambos Tsardanidis and Stelios Stavridis, 'The Europeanization of Greece's Foreign Policy: A Critical Appraisal', *Journal of European Integration* 27, no. 2 (2005): 217-239.

valuable insights on how different administrations perceive the strategic priorities of the community, but still emphasise a strict framework that does not incorporate historical elements and cultural understanding of recent security discourses.

The most important approach regarding the genealogy of ideas in the Greek thought is Nikolaos Ladis' doctoral dissertation *Assessing Greek grand strategic thought and practice: insights from the strategic culture approach*.[46] Ladis' reflection on the historical elements of the Greek strategic culture examined a rich and complex tradition that has been ignored despite its contemporary relevance. My contribution to the research he began can be divided in two areas. First, I intend to explore the ideas, norms, and experiences that shaped a Just war tradition, a set of beliefs that justified warfare. In this context, I will analyse the importance of language in the construction of the Greek Just war approach, looking at the way meanings defined behaviour or how behaviour reshaped meanings and the ways continuity is reflected in specific discourses. In Friedrich Nietzsche's words, 'not only what ideas do, but also what they mean'.[47] Secondly, writing a genealogy of ideas mirrors a more analytical reflection in different periods. I intend to discuss how ideas became part of dialectics, how we can identify them in events and foreign policy decisions, how they were replaced or ignored, and to what extent they can be tracked in different periods. While his study attempted to provide a cultural analysis in the neo-Realist approach, I develop ideas from history rather than impose ideas upon history, looking at how the actors involved thought about their actions. Plus, my study can be used as an instrument to understand the meaning of the evolving Greek strategic culture and the reasons behind certain changes and repetitive patterns in past and present security discourses.

1.6 Theory and Methodology

1.6.1 Constructivism and the Genealogy of Ideas

A genealogy of ideas embeds the meaning of uncovering elements that define legitimacy, normality, morality, and reality.[48] Does the field of IR possess the tools to comprehend

---

[46] Nikolaos Ladis, Assessing Greek grand strategic thought and practice: insights from the strategic culture approach (Dissertation, Southampton: University of Southampton, 2003).

[47] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality and Other Writings*, 3.23 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[48] Constructivism is epistemologically about the social construction of knowledge and ontologically about the construction of social reality: Stefano Guzzini, 'A Reconstruction of Constructivism in International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations* 6, no. 2 (2000): 150-162.

these disparities when analysing interactions between societies or attempting to forecast behaviours?

Unfortunately, when it comes to the study of war, the discipline tends to ignore the 'genealogical complexities that give rise to the uncertain frameworks we wrongly perceive as fixed, stable, and unchanging, both in the future and in the past.'[49] Thus, IR theory has overlooked the investigation of factors triggering aggressive actions in distinct communities, since the only way to identify these factors is linked with genealogical methods.

The neo-Realist approach focuses on the security concerns of nations functioning as rational actors within a system of structured political disorder, i.e., anarchy.[50] Thus, states employ their aggressive military capacities to bring about the calamity of conflict to achieve their security objectives. The liberal perspective in IR prioritises the role of international institutions and cooperation to 'cure' humankind from war. Liberals assert that democratic governance, economic interdependence, and adherence to international law foster a stable global order.[51] Yet, liberal institutionalism falls short in accounting for institutions' roles in situations of opposing state interests. The root cause is apparent: these divergent interests obscure underlying identities, rendering the conventional state-centric power analysis inadequate for unpacking complexities and devising conflict-avoiding, cooperation-promoting strategies. Critical traditions try to challenge this state-centred approach and the former paradigms of positivist logic. Feminist theorising seeks to dismantle the conventional discussion about war by giving prominence to investigating the subject as a connected endeavour. Instead of prioritising elites and perceived power hubs of warfare while sidelining those indirectly affected, the focus shifts to acknowledging the 'collaterals' who encounter war but are often overlooked, relegated to a different realm for examination.[52] Subsequently, Critical [53] scholars who originate from

---

[49] Alexander Nehemas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1985), 110.

[50] Kenneth Waltz, 'Structural realism after the cold war.' *International Security* 25/1 (2000): 5-41.

[51] Robert Keohane, 'International Institutions: Two Approaches,' *International Studies Quarterly 32* (December 1988): 379-96.

[52] Christine Sylvester, War as Experience: Contributions from International Relations and Feminist Analysis (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 14.

[53] Critical (with capital C) refers to the scholarship influenced by the Frankfurt School's theorising. Richard Shapcott, 'Critical Theory': Between Utopia and Reality' *The Practical Discourses of International Relations* 3/18 (2008): 1-22.

the Marxist tradition have attempted to look at war and conflict through a universal and normative lens. The work of Max Horkheimer asserts that understanding the current 'problem constellation' requires more than just empirical facts; values also play a significant role.[54] This idea worked as a milestone for the emancipatory critical theories that perceived the concept of knowledge in a value-based orientation *vis a vis* a strictly problem-solving attitude.[55] These value-based commitments guide assessments of state-led counterterrorist impacts, considering factors like dehumanisation and rights violations.[56] Still, such approaches neither look at why communities or individuals are influenced by authorities to act in specific ways (human rights violations, adaptation of dehumanising narratives in theory and practice) nor at how the construction of legitimising violence reflected practice in different epochs (and thus became part of a normative development).

All strands of constructivist thought share a common focus: the belief that it is imperative to examine facets of shared societal existence that are rooted in ideas – dominant norms, knowledge, culture, discourse, and broader intersubjective notions – in order to attain an analytical comprehension of international relations.[57] The constructivist methodological approach employed in this study places particular emphasis on the role of language as an instrument of legitimacy and identity formation. Language is not merely a means of communication but operates as a social practice that constructs realities.[58] In different historical settings, language has functioned as a medium through which political, religious, and identity-based justifications were framed, contested, and institutionalised. By analysing historical literature alongside primary sources, this study explores how

---

[54] Berma Goldewijk, 'Why still critical? Critical intelligence studies positioned in scholarship on security, war, and international relations', *Intelligence and National Security* 36/4 (2021): 476-494.

[55] Matt McDonald, 'Emancipation and Critical Terrorism Studies', in Richard Jackson, Marie Breen Smyth, and Jeroen Gunning (eds.), *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 123–137.

[56] Lee Jarvis, 'The spaces and faces of critical terrorism studies', *Security Dialogue*. *40*/1, (2009): 5-27

[57] Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, 'Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics', *Annual Review of Political Science* 4 (2001): 399–410; John Gerard Ruggie, 'What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge', *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 855–885.

[58] Ted Hopf, 'The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory', *International Security* 23, no. 1 (1998): 171–177.

language has shaped and legitimised normative claims, including those surrounding war and justice. Constructivism, in this context, helps us understand how fundamental concepts such as 'self', 'other', and political legitimacy are socially constructed rather than inherently fixed categories. Alexander Wendt focused on discussing how social structures shape units' behaviour.[59] This is particularly relevant when analysing how Greek alliances and legal restrictions reflected broader cultural norms, rather than being mere strategic calculations. Meanwhile, the theory engages with the deeper ideological and historical transformations that shaped Greek political thought, enabling me to assess questions on change, continuity, and exploitation of facilitating conditions regarding justifying warfare in different periods. The methodological approach thus entails a normative exploration of how war-related justifications have evolved through linguistic frameworks, reflecting broader socio-political transformations.

Combining this principle with the constructivist methodological emphasis on the importance of language, we can identify a theoretical approach that can work as a methodological tool in the study of war.

The logic of genealogies is not based on understanding the past but on interpreting the way past constructions can explain present questions.[60] While this study's analysis ends in 1830 its objectives include the utilisation of our findings for assessing contemporary elements of the Greek Just war tradition. Modern Greek discourses reveal divided perceptions regarding the country's responsibility towards allies when required to engage beyond its borders. Consequently, contemporary debates on Greece's stance towards a more inclusive approach to defence within transatlantic and European frameworks have sparked heated discussions. These inquiries are not merely reflections of current circumstances but are rooted in dialectic interactions of ideas that have shaped particular norms and contextual frameworks of legitimacy. These frameworks are not only identity-related but also founded on distinct constructions of Just and unjust wars.

Throughout the analysis, there were significant reflections on the way security, warfare, and strategy were conceptualised as a synthesis of communitarian and cosmopolitan ideas, particularly when it comes to the Ancient Greco-Roman world and the legacy of this tradition in the East Roman norms. Concerns about communities and their members are reflected in various ethical perspectives, which differ in their views on whether communities possess intrinsic normative value positioned between humanity as a whole

[59] Wendt, Social theory of international politics, 31.

[60] Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 8.

and individual humans.[61] Cosmopolitanism highlights humanity as the primary community of moral concern. Communitarian thinkers on the other hand, argue that individuals are inherently tied to the communities they belong to, and these communities shape their understanding. They reject the idea of an 'original position' detached from social context, asserting that communities are integral to identity and moral understanding.[62]

Since the analysis will discuss this dichotomy, as well as the synthesis between such attitudes, I need to clarify that the Roman universality does not mirror elements of the Cosmopolitan Just War Theory (CJWT). In *Cosmopolitan War*, Cécile Fabre presents an egalitarian approach to Just War approaches, emphasising the moral significance of human rights and the individual rather than national borders or group membership. She argues that all humans deserve equal moral concern and fundamental rights, which are necessary for a minimally decent life. These rights are not tied to political borders or group affiliations but are instead inherent to individuals. This perspective challenges the traditional view that group identity, such as nationality or military status, can justify the use of force in war. For Fabre, the justification for defensive force lies in whether an individual's actions threaten the fundamental rights of others. Fabre also revises several traditional Just War principles. She contends that a war can be deemed just if it defends human rights, not merely the territorial integrity of states. This includes situations where human rights are at risk, even across national borders. The legitimacy of a state's right to wage war, according to Fabre, depends not on its *de jure* legal authority but on its ability to protect the fundamental rights of its citizens. Additionally, combatants are only justified in using force if the cause is Just and proportional. The principle of discrimination emphasises that the use of force should target individuals based on their actions, not their group identity[63] – which is a crucial element that will be discussed as part of analysing the Roman.

John Lango also argues for a paradigm shift in Just War Theory (JWT), moving away from a state-centric approach to a cosmopolitan one. Traditional JWT has been rooted in monarchical and state-based authority, but Lango contends that war should be justified

---

[61] Catherine Lu, 'The One and Many Faces of Cosmopolitanism', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 8 (2000): 244–267; Michael Zürn and Pieter de Wilde, 'Debating Globalization: Cosmopolitanism and Communitarianism as Political Ideologies', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 21, no. 3 (2016): 290–312.

[62] Andrew Dobson, 'Thick Cosmopolitanism', *Political Studies* 54 (2006): 165–184; Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice. A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

[63] Cécile Fabre, *Cosmopolitan War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

and constrained by principles that apply beyond the state level, incorporating global governance and universal moral obligations.

His core claim is that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) should be the primary authority governing war, but it must also be democratised—meaning that global citizens should have a role in defining just war principles. This creates a dual focus:

Top-down – The UNSC should be the legitimate governing body for security and war decisions.

Bottom-up – Individual global citizens should be seen as moral agents with a say in the ethical considerations of war.[64]

These concepts are crucial (especially the distinction between individuals and states as moral agents), particularly as the chapter on Ancient Rome will explore the meaning of Roman expansionism, the ideas that defined its legitimacy, the differences with Greek warfare, and the fundamental distinctions from CWT.

1.6.2 Causation or Facilitating Conditions?

In this part, there will be a clarification of the importance of distinguishing correlation from causation when discussing the transmission of ideas. While Byzantine and modern Greek thinkers often engaged with ancient texts, this does not always imply direct influence in a strictly causal sense. Instead, I approach this as a case of intellectual continuity, where ideas are reinterpreted across different historical contexts.

Rather than viewing intellectual inheritance as a linear transfer, my approach examines the facilitating conditions that enable certain ideas to persist, resurface, or transform across different periods. Just as IR constructivists explore how norms and identities evolve through reinterpretation rather than static transmission, Byzantine and modern Greek engagements with ancient philosophy reflect a dynamic process of adaptation. By tracing explicit cases where Byzantine scholars reworked Ancient Greek sources, I aim to strengthen my research design, demonstrating how intellectual traditions are shaped by their historical contexts rather than merely inherited. Furthermore, I explore how influences function as channels of communication, leading to identity constructions and legitimising certain ideas and practices – such as the development of a Greek Just war understanding.

Byzantine engagement with Ancient Greek sources is evident in both direct citations and the broader intellectual genealogy that shaped Byzantine strategic and political thought. One clear example is Emperor Leo VI's familiarity with Onasander's *Strategikos*. In his

[64] John Lango, *Ethics of Armed Conflict: A Cosmopolitan Just War Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 6–10.

military writings, the Emperor echoes Onasander's strategic principles, as well as a broader engagement with ancient strategic thought.[65] This example demonstrates not only Leo's engagement with classical texts but also the transmission of strategic and broader war-related thought from antiquity to the Byzantine era.

Beyond military strategy, Leo VI's conception of Just War reflects a synthesis of Greek philosophical and Christian theological traditions. His emphasis on self-defence as the foundational justification for war aligns with Aristotelian principles, particularly Aristotle's argument that the punishment of aggressors and the defence of allies and subjects are essential for political stability. Aggressors were a natural condition for Aristotle and thus the polis must be capable of reaction. St. Augustine built upon this by acknowledging that while war is generally a tragic necessity, it can be morally justified when fought in self-defence or to protect the innocent. While it is difficult to assert direct causation between Aristotle and Leo VI, the preservation and continued study of Aristotelian texts in Byzantium and the Aristotelian influences in St. Augustine's work[66] create a methodological framework for tracing these conceptual parallels. This approach highlights the interactive patterns between Byzantine and Ancient Greek thought, rather than suggesting a simplistic one-directional influence.

Furthermore, the Byzantine conception of war as a necessary means to achieve a higher state of peace reflects a synthesis of Greek, Roman, and Christian traditions. Aristotle's influence on early Christian thinkers—particularly Saint Augustine—was pivotal in shaping medieval Just War discourse. Augustine's adaptation of Aristotelian principles informed Byzantine imperial ideology, which justified war under strict conditions while maintaining peace as its ultimate aim.[67] Leo VI's Christianised interpretation of Just War mirrors this Augustinian framework, reinforcing the idea that war should serve the preservation of peace and imperial stability.

This intellectual transmission extends beyond Leo VI and remains evident in later Byzantine historiography, most notably in Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*. Komnene explicitly articulates the notion that *'peace is the ultimate end of all war'*, underscoring a core Byzantine belief that war, when justified, must be oriented toward stability rather than conquest. Her writings further illustrate the depth of Byzantine engagement with Ancient

---

[65] Leo, *Taktika,* Z, 10

[66] Katerina Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Byzantine Philosophy and Its Ancient Sources* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[67] Aurelius Augustinus, *De Civitate Dei*, in *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, vols. 47–48, pars 14.1–2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), XIX.12.

Greek thought. She was not only well-versed in Greek philosophy and rhetoric but also actively drew upon classical texts in her historical analysis, e.g. Aristotle and Plato.[68] Furthermore, her invocation of Homer's *Iliad*—particularly Achilles as a model of excellence—demonstrates a conscious effort to frame Byzantine leadership and military ethics within an ancient intellectual tradition.[69]

This continuity of ideas across different Byzantine periods suggests an enduring engagement with Greek philosophical and historical thought. Rather than being a passive inheritance, these concepts were actively interpreted, integrated, and reshaped within Byzantine intellectual and political discourse. While the Aristotelian ideas are not unique, as Rory Cox rightly observes, their assimilation into Byzantine Just war thinking shows how ancient Greek ideas became embedded within a broader genealogical framework that influenced Byzantine military, political, and ethical reasoning over centuries.

Parallels to Greek *Just War* thinking can be found in various ancient Near Eastern cultures, particularly in Jewish and Hittite traditions. In these societies, war was recognised as a legitimate legal instrument of foreign policy. In the Hittite context, several just causes for war were clearly articulated: the defence of territory, property, and people; the restitution of property; the pursuit of vengeance the defence of allies; and the suppression of rebellion.[70]

In the Jewish tradition, vengeance held not only religious legitimacy but divine imperative. Warfare was often depicted as a response commanded directly by God. Divine authority did not merely justify violence—it dictated it. God himself was portrayed as taking violent vengeance against those who harmed Israel or denied His exclusive claim to divinity.[71] These contrasts sharply with Roman notions of divine legitimacy, where religion served to sanction wars retrospectively or ceremonially, but did not prescribe specific causes (see Chapter 3, 'Religion and Law').

Cox's research challenges the conventional Western narrative that positions the Just war tradition as a uniquely Western intellectual development. My own approach builds on this by suggesting that such traditions are best understood genealogically, through the circulation and filtering of ideas across cultures under specific historical and linguistic conditions. Hence, the focus on the Greek Just war tradition is not to assert isolation or

---

[68] Anna Komnene, *The Alexiad*, trans. E.R.A. Sewter (London: Penguin Books, 1969), 1.1.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Rory Cox, Origins of the Just War: Military Ethics and Culture in the Ancient Near East (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), 198, 205.

[71] Ibid. 305.

originality, but to highlight its position within a broader, dynamic communicative environment—one shaped by interaction with Roman and Byzantine thought, shared language, and identity-forming narratives.

Geographical proximity to Near Eastern traditions, as well as the sustained Roman and later Byzantine presence in these regions, raises the possibility that these ideas were part of a dialectic that helped shape the Greek normative imagination. This remains a fertile area for future research: to what extent did these intercultural exchanges influence the development of Greek *Just War* thinking, and how did they contribute to the broader Mediterranean moral and legal landscape?

At this point, in order to explain my genealogy/constructivist logic more, there will a brief description on the correlation between the Byzantines with the Ancient Greek thought and the 19th century Greeks with ideas and discourses of the Ancient and Byzantine period. This part aims to establish a solid methodological framework on the project's attempt to discuss the influence of ideas, based on facilitating conditions, rather than strict causation.

Far from rejecting classical ideas, Orthodox clergy actively engaged with ancient Greek philosophy, drawing on Aristotle and Plato to refine Christian doctrine. Neoplatonic and Aristotelian concepts became essential tools for Byzantine theologians, who used them to explore questions of morality, divine order, and justice within a Christian framework.[72]

Education played a central role in sustaining this intellectual tradition. Byzantine scholars did not merely preserve ancient Greek texts; they studied, commented on, and adapted them, ensuring their relevance within a Christian empire. The Byzantine curriculum remained steeped in classical learning, reinforcing a continuous interaction between Greek philosophy and religious as well as political thought.[73] The fact that Greek remained the official language of the state further strengthened this connection, allowing scholars to engage directly with classical texts without the distortions of translation. This linguistic continuity was crucial in maintaining an unbroken dialogue with the intellectual legacy of antiquity.

Byzantine attitudes toward ancient Greek texts, however, were not uniform. Some authors, like Tatian, rejected classical literature outright as incompatible with Christian teachings. Others, such as St. Basil, argued that when interpreted correctly, ancient Greek

---

[72] Ruth Macrides, 'Emperor and Church in the Last Centuries of Byzantium', *Studies in Church History* 54 (2018): 123–143; Ierodiakonou, *Byzantine Philosophy and Its Ancient Sources*, 7–10.

[73] Νίκος Σβορώνος, Σπύρος Ασδραχάς, and Νίκος Βαγενάς, Το ελληνικό έθνος: γενέση και διαμόρφωσή του νέου ελληνισμού (The Greek Nation: The Genesis and Formation of the New Hellenism) (Athens: Polis, 2004).

works could serve as powerful tools in defending the faith against heresy.[74] This selective engagement shaped Byzantine scholarship, as manuscripts were preserved, studied, and circulated primarily in major intellectual centers such as Thessaloniki, Constantinople, and Mystras.[75]

This selective appropriation of ancient Greek sources—guided by imperial authority, Christian norms, and the power structures of Byzantium—had two key implications. First, it underlines that Byzantine intellectual tradition was not an attempt to revive ancient Greek thought in its original form, whether in political theory or military strategy. Second, it highlights how ancient ideas did not survive as static relics but as elements of a broader synthesis. This recognition of classical influence became a crucial foundation for 19th-century narratives of national continuity, as Greek nationalism sought to construct an unbroken historical lineage connecting ancient Greece, Byzantium, and modern Greece. The strategic reappropriation of both classical and Byzantine legacies reinforced the idea of an enduring Greek identity, shaped by a continuous engagement with its intellectual past.

An even more important clue on the correlation between Ancient Greek thought and the Byzantines is the late-Byzantine period (and the period of Palaeologan Renaissance). The late Byzantine engagement with ancient Greek thought was not merely an intellectual exercise but a crucial element of identity construction. Figures like George Gemistos Plethon sought to anchor Byzantine identity in antiquity's intellectual legacy. Unlike Michael Psellos, who interpreted Neoplatonism through a Christian lens, Plethon embraced a fusion of pagan traditions with influences from the Middle East and Renaissance Italy.[76] These works are indicators that the Byzantines did not merely preserve Greek philosophy but actively reinterpreted it. This intellectual revival, particularly in the Palaeologan period, reinforced the idea that Byzantines were direct heirs of the classical Greek past. This self-conscious re-appropriation of Greek thought contributed to a cultural shift where language, heritage, and philosophical traditions became increasingly central to Byzantine identity.

When it comes to the 19th century Greeks, there are numerous examples of engagement with Byzantine and Ancient Greek ideas. Spyridon Trikoupis, the Prime Minister of

---

[74] Ierodiakonou, Byzantine Philosophy and Its Ancient Sources, 9.

[75] Ibid; Vojtech Hladký, The Philosophy of Gemistos Plethon: Platonism in Late Byzantium, Between Hellenism and Orthodoxy (London: Routledge, 2017).

[76] Polymnia Athanassiadi, 'Byzantine Commentators on the Chaldaean Oracles: Psellos and Plethon', in Katerina Ierodiakonou ed., *Byzantine Philosophy and Its Ancient Sources* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 247–250.

Greece in the early days of Greek Independence, wrote an account of the war. Trikoupis, not only engages with ancient Greek sources to construct a narrative of national continuity but also reveals the intellectual influence of Byzantine historiography, particularly in its treatment of war and liberation. His references to Philip of Macedon and the Corinthian League demonstrate an effort to frame the Greek War of Independence through the lens of classical political and military strategies, reinforcing the idea that modern Greeks were not merely heirs to ancient Greece but active participants in its enduring historical and ideological legacy.[77] However, Trikoupis does not limit his historical framework to antiquity; he also draws upon Byzantine history, particularly in instances where Greek regions were conquered and later liberated.

One significant example is his discussion of the Arab conquest of Crete and its subsequent reclamation by Byzantine Emperor Nikephoros Phokas (963-969). Trikoupis presents the Byzantine struggle to protect Christian populations in a manner that mirrors his depiction of the Greek War of Independence. He emphasises how Cretans who had converted to Islam returned to Christianity upon Byzantine reconquest, only to face forced conversion again under Ottoman rule.[78] His deliberate use of the term 'Greeks' rather than 'Byzantines' suggests a conscious effort to present the modern Greek cause as an extension of historical struggles for self-liberation. This framing effectively integrates Byzantine Just War doctrines—particularly the principle of *offensive reclamation* when Christian lives and populations were at stake—into the ideological framework of 1821. In doing so, Trikoupis reinforces the legitimacy of the revolution as a historical and moral imperative, embedding it within a broader genealogy of warfare aimed at reclaiming national and religious identity.

Beyond historiographical narratives, direct references to Byzantine and classical precedents appear in the rhetoric of key revolutionary figures. Theodoros Kolokotronis, one of the most respected military leaders of the Greek War of Independence, describes the fall of Constantinople as the catalyst for a legacy of perpetual war, wherein the Greek *klephtes* of Mani and Souli assumed the role of the Byzantine *Imperial Guard*,[79] symbolically continuing the struggle for liberation. Other Generals, i.e., Odysseas Androutsos and Yiannis Makrygiannis similarly draw upon classical motifs, likening the heroic death of Athanasios Diakos to that of the Spartan King Leonidas, and comparing

---

[77] Spyridon Trikoupis, *Ιστορία της Ελληνικής Επαναστάσεως* (*History of the Greek Revolution*), vol. 4, book 1 (London: Taylor and Francis, 1860), 107.

[78] Ibid. 111.

[79] Theodoros Kolokotronis, *Διήγησις Συμβάντων της Ελληνικής Φυλής* (*Account of Events of the Greek Nation*) (Athens: Nikolaïdou Philadelpheos, 1846), K.

the war to the defence of Thermopylae, emphasising that both Spartans and Modern Greeks died fighting for their religion and *patris* (fatherland).[80]

Finally, Cox's warning about the dangers of cultural solipsism—where historians unconsciously impose their own national or cultural assumptions onto the past[81]—is especially relevant in the context of war narratives. My approach challenges this by tracing the development of war ethics as the product of sustained intellectual engagement over time, rather than as a simple inheritance. By a genealogical (facilitating conditions-based) and non-strictly-causal framework, I highlight how ideas about Just War evolved contingently, shaped by specific historical circumstances and how certain normative foundations and entrenched mentalities contributed to constructions that defined Just wars.

Thus, this process of intellectual engagement with pre-modern traditions does not suggest a direct causal link between Byzantine or classical Just War doctrines and the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence. Rather, it highlights how these ideas defined certain aspects of the war, particularly in its moral and ideological justifications. Furthermore, they became integral to an identity construction process, wherein modern Greeks perceived themselves as the rightful heirs to both ancient Greece and Byzantium. This is particularly evident among Greeks of the diaspora, who played a crucial role in shaping nationalist discourse and thus influenced the establishment of Just war mentalities – of course as part of a synthesis with other elements that will be analysed later.

1.6.3 Important Terminology

As mentioned earlier, culture, as a system of symbols, creates meaning within a social group, shaping material goals and capabilities while being influenced by material variables in an interactive relationship.[82] Jack Snyder introduced the term strategic cultures, trying to define the collective accumulation of notions, emotional reactions shaped by circumstances and patterns of usual actions that individuals within a nation's strategic community develop through learning from each other concerning nuclear

---

[80] Claude Fauriel, *Ελληνικά Δημοτικά Τραγούδια* (*Greek Folk Songs*), vol. A (Heraklion: Panepistimiakes Ekdoseis Kritis, 1999), 120; Yiannis Makrygiannis, *Απομνημονεύματα Μακρυγιάννη* (*Memoirs of Makrygiannis*) (Athens: Vagionakis, 1947), 33.

[81] Cox, 'Approaches to Pre-modern War and Ethics', 595-596.

[82] Snyder, 'Anarchy and Culture', 10–12.

strategy.[83] Snyder asserted that when a unique strategy is adopted by those who make strategic decisions and those who discuss strategy, it tends to remain even if the situations that initially led to it change, thus highlighting the importance of 'culture'.[84] This persistence happens due to how people are taught and accustomed to this strategy over time, as well as the way strategic concepts are used to justify these established ways of doing things.

Beatrice Heuser's endeavour to comprehend a national mentality, a dynamic framework of beliefs and perspectives, draws from the French Annales School's historiography of mentalities. This school aimed to uncover the collective mentalities of past societies, a term which refers to the shared beliefs, values, and thought patterns of a society or group over time, and draw correlations between these perceptions and the construction of identities. A critical study from Heuser revealed that the collective mentalities of diverse communities often give rise to preferences for specific martial approaches.[85]

Subsequently, Alexander Wendt explained that the nature of international life is determined by the beliefs and expectations states[86] hold about each other, which are primarily constituted by social rather than material structures. Therefore, he introduced the concept of shared knowledge, which refers to the collectively held beliefs, norms, and values that shape the identities and actions of states.[87] The terms are interconnected when studying ideas about war, as understanding shared knowledge for different communities is a way to understand the context that defines collective mentalities.

To bring the constructivist school into this discussion, the term strategic culture (or national style) is perceived as a human-made construct that undergoes periodic redefinition. Any strategic culture, like any social construction, is susceptible to

---

[83] Jack Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1977), 8.

[84] Jack. Snyder, 'The Concept of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor', in Jacobsen ed., *Strategic Power: The United States of America and the USSR* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 4.

[85] Beatrice Heuser, Nuclear Mentalities? Strategies and Belief Systems in Britain, France and the FRG (London: Macmillan, 1998).

[86] Wendt uses the term 'state' instead of 'community', which has a Realist ontological influence.

[87] Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 31.

modifications regardless of its depth and normative strength.[88] Thus, the methodology I implement in this work acknowledges culture's inherent dynamism as transformation and change are essential aspects of my analysis when presenting the history of ideas around war in the Greek tradition.

Finally, essential clarifications regarding the project's terminology are linked with the IR constructivist vocabulary. Alexander Wendt identified three possible cultures of anarchy (structure), i.e., the Hobbesian (a culture of enmity), the Lockean (a culture of rivalry), and the Kantian (a culture of friendship). Each of these terms signifies a distinct stance or attitude of the 'self' vs. the 'other'. These attitudes manifest in various ways on a smaller scale. Enemies adopt a position of menacing adversaries unbounded by restrictions in using violence against each other. On the other hand, rivals are competitors who employ violence to promote their interests but abstain from lethal actions against each other. Friends adopt the stance of allies who settle disputes without violence and collaborate as a united front against security challenges.[89]

Cultural analysis examines norms, values, and collective beliefs that influence communities. These shared characteristics are created by different variables such as geography, collective experiences, and historical narratives. However, let us remember that change is also an integral part of studying ideas, as even within these distinct cultural frameworks, communities change and adjust to different circumstances. The dialectic process of ideas leads to other syntheses, but even in these various social realities, we can identify the continuity that differentiates Just war traditions and cultures.

Friedrich Nietzsche introduced the genealogical approach, a methodology aimed at revealing the circumstances in which moral institutions are formulated and interpreting the intrinsic worth of norms in different traditions.[90] Nietzsche's main contribution is the logic of looking at the evolution of ideas to understand phenomena that are perceived as unchangeable. If we accept that culture functions as a set of symbols that generate meaning within a community,[91] we also accept that anything that has been constructed

---

[88] Beatrice Heuser and Jeannie Johnson, in Heuser, Beatrice, and Eitan Shamir, (eds.) *Insurgencies and counterinsurgencies: national styles and strategic cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 17.

[89] Wendt, *Social theory of international politics*, 247-258.

[90] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality and Other Writings*, 3.23 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[91] Snyder, *Anarchy and Culture*, 14.

through ideas can equally be deconstructed through ideas. Genealogies enable us to track both the symbols and the constructions that defined their meaning in different periods.

Culture defines how communities perceive politics (and consequently war). This is Alexander Wendt's shared knowledge, a term that refers to the collective body of information, beliefs, perceptions, symbols, and norms commonly held and understood within a particular group of people. It represents the shared understanding and cultural context that members of the community use to interpret the world and to structure their social interactions.[92] Jack Snyder wrote that 'ideas and symbols play a crucial role in helping people maintain group solidarity, coordinate behaviour with others…and predict the consequences of their actions'.[93] The maintenance of coherence within a community is an integral part of Just wars, as it embeds both the concept of self-perception and the one of 'otherness' i.e. the case of identities. Studying war requires a deep dive into identities.

Regarding the examination of warfare, Beatrice Heuser is a pioneer in employing the history of ideas as a methodology across various aspects of this field. Heuser has utilised this approach in dissecting the notion of strategy and has demonstrated that delving into the history of ideas offers insight into the formation of our current perceptions and the distinctive ways each culture mirrors the nature of warfare. Jack Snyder presented three sets of variables that define the ontology of war, i.e., material variables, economic factors, geography, technology, social institutions (norms that have been imposed by kingship or statehood) and culture (shared ideas, collective mythologies, and symbols that define expectations and behaviour).[94] Snyder elaborated that a comprehensive study of war demands a multivariable approach, given that the key identified sets of factors are interconnected causally. This connectivity underscores why focusing solely on one set of factors is insufficient. By synthesising Snyder and Heuser's approaches, we can see why a genealogy of ideas can reveal how different communities exploit cultural concepts, material factors, and social institutions to legitimise warfare, which brings us to the necessity to investigate the context in which this multifaceted approach operates to elucidate how actions acquire meaning and purpose.

Focusing on the significance of how individuals perceive and create 'worlds', the interpretive approach indicates that the source of meaning and comprehension in political

---

[92] Wendt, *Social theory of international politics*, 141.

[93] Snyder, *Anarchy and Culture*, 26.

[94] Ibid. 14.

actions and practices does not lie in an 'objective' reality.[95] The interpretation of worlds transmitted through written or spoken traditions are influenced by the experiences of distinct groups and generations, encompassing narratives shared within 'living memory'—stories conveyed by individuals' predecessors during their lifetimes.[96] This study constitutes a continuation of methodological propositions that aim to integrate history in the methodology of IR.

Harry Sidebottom accurately wrote that 'How a society makes war is a projection of that society itself.'[97] This is the fundamental idea behind this methodological approach. Understanding how warfare mirrors specific societies will bring us closer to understand the concept of war and communicating effectively in an international society of numerous 'genealogies of ideas'.

1.7 Sources

Stone Tatum contributed significantly to the understanding of why the choice of sources matters in genealogy studies:

> 'Texts are cases. Thinking about texts in this way helps us rethink texts we look at, how we discover patterns across a discourse and how we can make broader arguments about 'systems of thought' through the analysis of texts.'[98]

Considering texts as individual cases provides a valuable perspective for our analysis. It prompts us to reconsider the texts we pattern that have legitimised various actions. Genealogists adopt a historicist approach, which allows them to delve into historical patterns spanning extended periods and across vast archives of texts.[99] This historical perspective enables researchers to uncover long-term trends and shifts in the discourse surrounding war. Furthermore, texts, e.g., writings, speeches, and debates, serve as artefacts that offer insights into broader contextual factors such as culture and norms.

---

[95] Doty,'Foreign policy as social construction', 300.

[96] Heuser, *War*, 9.

[97] Harry Sidebottom, *Ancient warfare: A very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 35.

[98] Dillon Stone Tatum, 'Discourse, Genealogy and Methods of Text Selection in International Relations', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 31/3–4 (2018), 345.

[99] Ibid.

Additionally, genealogy aids in establishing links between discursive transformations and the formation of identity, which is a crucial factor when studying war. Scholars like Epstein have employed genealogical methods to investigate how discursive changes influence identity development.[100] Subsequently, Colin Coopman emphasises that genealogy uncovers unique connections by studying concepts that bring to light linkages, assemblages and networks, ultimately enhancing our comprehension of their overall coherence for understanding a group's behaviour.[101] Srdjan Vucetic defined the term genealogy as 'historical–philosophical accounts of how reality comes into being',[102] which works to track the construction and reconstruction of regimes of truth. As we noted earlier, war and regimes of truth (founded on ideas) are interconnected concepts; nobody wants to be perceived as greedy and regimes of truth facilitate the construction of noble causes. Overall, genealogy is fundamentally a historical exercise that views history as a continuous process encompassing narratives, counter-narratives, and hidden narratives. Thus, sources become crucial in applying such methods in research that aims to understand the development of ideas.

The methodology of my research defines the project's epistemology. Since I conducted a genealogy of ideas, I needed to ensure that the range information was diverse and reflected ideas that defined practice and *vice versa*. The objective is to demonstrate that these seemingly separate eras are connected through the persistence of perceptions, values, and identity formation. For the first part, in my exploration of Greco-Roman thought, my sources predominantly drew from the writings of select individuals who offered extensive insights into the significant events of their era. These sources serve as valuable repositories of dominant ideas, prevailing perceptions, and moral judgments that revolved around the intricacies of warfare. The subsequent phase, focusing on the East Roman period, expanded the spectrum of sources. Here, in addition to religious texts and certain legal documents, I incorporated insights derived from the works of Emperors who addressed matters of strategy and security. These writings provide a rounded view of the East Roman milieu, incorporating both theological and strategic dimensions that influenced the shaping of their distinct branch of Just war thought. Secondary literature

---

[100] Charlotte Epstein, *The Power of Words in International Relations: Birth of an Anti-Whaling Discourse*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008); Charlotte Epstein, 'Constructivism or the Eternal Return of Universals in International Relations: Why Returning to Language Is Vital to Prolonging the Owl's Flight', *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 3 (2013): 499–519.

[101] Colin Coopman, *Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

[102] Srdjan Vucetic, 'Genealogy as a Research Tool in International Relations', *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 3 (2011): 1295.

was also employed to establish a coherent historical framework and engage with discourses that have discussed the concept of war in different periods.

The final part proved more demanding due to the lack of sources required to trace the genealogy of ideas and their role in shaping a collective Just war mentality. Limited sources compelled me to draw extensively from memoirs, secondary historiography informed by folk songs, poems, oral traditions, and diaries. These diverse sources offered insights into the grassroots sentiments, the cultural narratives, and personal perspectives that were rooted into the foundations of this historical phase.

The analysis of these sources within their original linguistic context is founded upon the principle of not solely examining historical events or concepts, but also striving to ascertain the underlying significance of these occurrences and ideas. Instead of adhering to a Realist approach that disregards centuries of historical evolution to construct a systematic theory of international politics solely rooted in their interpretation of Thucydides, the etymological exploration of these sources underscores the distinctiveness of each historical period, the connotations embedded in the language, and its enduring influence on subsequent epochs. For instance, it prompts us to investigate the importance of different identities within the same culture, e.g., *philopolis* (friend of the polis) reflects something different from *Philellin* (friend of the Greeks).[103] The appearance of the latter gives a completely new and more inclusive meaning to the identification of the 'self' when legitimising conflict. Moreover, the 'Thucydidean' acknowledgement of ideas that do not define an inherited tendency to warfare, but present the importance of negotiations,[104] reveals elements that have been ignored when theorising the cultural ontology of war. Looking at the distinction between 'military and strategic expertise' (*φρόνησίν τε καὶ πολυπειρίαν στρατηγικήν τε καὶ στρατιωτικήν')*, through Anna Komnene's work[105] reveals a normative side of East Roman warfare, as strategy focuses on the social institutions, norms, and behaviours that shape it, the policies that guide it, and the cultural influences that affect it[106] and not merely about material capabilities. Moreover, the importance of modern descriptions of War of Independence Greek Generals as 'descendants of those who were fighting against Turks' (*απόγονοι*

---

[103] Xenophon, *Αγησίλαος (Agesilaus)*, trans. Herbert Hailstone, *Agesilaus of Xenophon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1889), 7 4-7.

[104] Thucydides, *Ιστορία* (*History of the Peloponnesian Warι)*, trans. Nicholaos Skouteropoulos, *Θουκιδίδη Ιστορία* (Athens: Polis, 2011), Δ 59, 1-4. 'if it is not possible to secure one's interests by departing from here, each of us can start the war again' (και ην 'αρα μη προχωρήση).

[105] Komnene, *Alexiad* 1.1.3.

[106] Heuser, *The Evolution of Strategy*, 3.

Τουρκομάχων)[107] reflects the significance of perpetuate struggle as part of the dominant national narrative.

The sources used in this study come with several challenges, particularly regarding reliability, representation, categorisation, and authorial bias. These limitations need to be acknowledged to provide a clearer understanding of the subject.

For the section on Greco-Roman thought, the sources are largely drawn from the writings of educated elite men—philosophers, historians, orators, and statesmen—who had the means to record their ideas. This creates an unavoidable bias, as the perspectives of women, the lower classes, and enslaved people are mostly absent. As a result, our understanding of Greek warfare and ethics is shaped by elite viewpoints, with little access to how ordinary soldiers or dissenting voices saw these issues.

Another issue is the agendas of the authors themselves. Writers such as Thucydides and Polybius were not neutral recorders of events; their accounts were influenced by political motives and personal perspectives. Thucydides' accounts of speeches and debates, for example, can present challenges when attempting to understand norms that may have been more aligned with the author's personal perspective than with widely shared societal mentalities. Additionally, the loss of many ancient works means that what has survived was often preserved by Christian or Byzantine scholars, filtering our view of Greek warfare through later reinterpretations, and leaving gaps in alternative perspectives. However, the significance of these individuals is not merely a limitation of methods; it is also a strength. Those who had the power to write and record history also held the authority to influence it. Moreover, their works can shed light on certain tendencies and ideas that contributed to the establishment of norms.

In the Byzantine period, my sources include religious texts, legal codes, and imperial writings on strategy and defence. These provide a deeper look at Byzantine ideas on war but come with their own problems. Religious texts often justified military action as a duty to protect Christian populations, framing conflicts in moral and theological terms. These narratives, however, were written to legitimise imperial rule and often depicted opponents as heretical or unlawful. Legal codes give insight into official policies but reflect ideals rather than the realities of war, while imperial writings focus on statecraft and diplomacy, leaving out the perspectives of ordinary soldiers and civilians.

The Ottoman period brings additional challenges, particularly due to the scarcity of sources before the 19th century. Unlike earlier periods, Greek intellectual output was limited under Ottoman rule, and records on war are sparse. Many of the sources that do exist were written later, often influenced by nationalist historiography, which tends to mythologise the past. Folk songs, oral traditions, and memoirs offer valuable insight into

[107] Trikoupis, *History of the Greek Revolution*, 4. Ξ, 9.

popular perceptions of war, but they are shaped by memory and exaggeration rather than objective history. Moreover, the selection of folk songs that were recorded and published was not random; it was shaped by national identity-building efforts, meaning they do not provide a complete picture of public attitudes at the time. This does not make them useless, but it does require careful analysis to separate historical fact from later reinterpretations.

The section on the Greek War of Independence presents the most difficulties in terms of sources. Due to the lack of systematic records, the study relies heavily on memoirs and folk traditions, alongside secondary sources. While these provide important insights into national consciousness and grassroots perspectives, they also bring issues of bias, exaggeration, and selective memory. Memoirs by revolutionaries often portray the war in heroic terms, reinforcing nationalist ideas of an unbroken struggle against Ottoman rule. These are not neutral historical records, but personal recollections shaped by later political contexts. Folk songs and oral traditions also play a role in mythologising the revolution, emphasising national destiny while overlooking internal conflicts within the movement.

A further issue is the tendency of sources from this period to draw direct links between ancient Greek, Byzantine, and modern Greek warfare, often exaggerating continuity to fit nationalist narratives. While these sources help us understand how Greeks viewed their own history, they must be examined critically to separate ideological constructs from historical reality.

1.8 Structure

The research framework is built upon four foundational pillars. The first pillar investigates the realm of Ancient Greek thought. Moving onward, I explore the Roman tradition. The narrative weaves through the development of a synthesis of Greco-Roman thought following the dialectical exchange with early-Christian principles, shedding light on the ideas that led to a fusion of worldviews. The third chapter widens its gaze to analyse the East Roman tradition, offering an exploration of a distinct branch of Just war thinking that branched away from its Western counterpart; a branch that kept influences from Greek norms, Roman universality, and Christian ethics. This exploration reveals the unique characteristics of this Eastern perspective, tracing how ideas evolved into foreign policy doctrines. The fourth chapter looks into the Greek War of Independence (1821 – 1830). This section uncovers the processes of identity construction, as Greek communities interacted with burgeoning European ideas of nationalism.

Here, I need to clarify the methodological reasons behind the project's structure. The research design is based on four chapters each of which focuses on a different historical period. To draw insights from methods such as genealogy, it is essential to believe that

research should be driven by questions rather than methods.[108] Therefore, when investigating the development of Just war ideas in Greek thought, we must examine how these ideas evolved from ancient times through various periods that shaped the Hellenic world's perception of war. The question shapes the methodology, which necessitates starting with the Ancient World and continuing our inquiry through the East Roman medieval period until the establishment of the Greek state in the 19th century.

Furthermore, ideas about Just war are periodically reinvented and changed.[109] This fundamental principle was a key reason behind the choice of tracking the development of ideas in different periods; instead of trying to create a typology of how Greek thought can be identified as a static doctrine, I am trying to show how using a genealogy method can reveal change, continuity, and interaction between ideas.

My research follows the idea that the conduct of war is influenced by culture (among other variables).[110] To test this, one should examine the underlying beliefs that influence warfare and thus the cultural foundations of the Ancient World are important for assessing the development of Just war ideas during Medieval Times (in our case the East Roman period). Likewise, when looking at the Greek War of Independence from its historical framework and the construction of a modern Hellenic identity we cannot ignore the cultural impact of the past – given the fact that this past was used as a structural component of this new identity. A conceptualisation of a Hellenic identity *vis* a *vis* 'others' can be observed from the Ancient Greek discourse, despite the structure of *poleis*.[111] After the Roman-Christian synthesis and the Roman domination in the Greek world, the 'Hellenic' identity acquired a different meaning – mostly linked with a pagan past, contradictory to the new Christian identity.[112] The East Romans called themselves Romans – not Greeks – and also the term '*ethnos*' (nation) mirrored the collective

---

[108] Price, 'A genealogy of the chemical weapons taboo', 103.

[109] Heuser and Shamir, *Insurgencies and counterinsurgencies*, 17.

[110] Heuser, *Nuclear Mentalities*, 1.

[111] Herodotus, *Ἱστορίαι (Histories*), trans. by Ilias Spyropoulos(Athens: Govosti, 1992), 6.29.1 (ὡς ἐμάχοντο οἱ Ἕλληνες τοῖσι Πέρσῃσ), Aeschylus, *Πέρσαι* (*The Persians),* trans. I.N. Gryparis *Οι Τραγωδίες του Αισχύλου* (Athens: Estia, 1930), 402-405. (Ω παίδες Ελλήνων ίτε λευθερούτε Πατρίδα, ελευθερούτε δε παίδας, γυναίκας, Θεών τε Πατρώων έδη, θήκας τε προγόνων΄ νυν υπέρ πάντων αγών).

[112] Stathis Kalyvas, *'Modern Greece: What Everyone Needs to Know'* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015).

Christian community.[113] Yet, the Ancient Greek ideas, literature, and language contributed to the construction of an identity that had underlying Greek elements (geographic, normative, and linguistic), which worked as facilitating conditions for the discourse on national continuity during the War of Independence and the early 19th century.

After explaining the rationale behind looking at different historical periods as part of the research aims and methods, I will briefly explain the significance of each period for the main objectives. Firstly, Ancient Greece is an important piece of the methodological puzzle that attempts to answer the research question. It is the period where a Hellenic identity is slowly constructed, a period where wars were frequent and their justification has been ignored by the way the discipline of IR is using the period to verify certain theoretical assumptions, and a period of normative developments that align with the Roman Just war criteria (even without a structured doctrine) and also interacted with the Roman-Christian tradition in the later development of the East Roman ideas.

Secondly, the examination of Roman Just war ideas is methodologically crucial because the Roman thought established a systematic Just war doctrine and became integral to East Roman ideas. Thus, without the discussion of the Roman Just war tradition, we cannot analyse and comprehend the East Roman developments. Moreover, the interaction between Roman thought and Christian ideas is a significant aspect of this genealogy study because of the link of this dialectic with the concept of Just war and its impact in the future constructions during the East Roman period(s).

Thirdly, studying East Roman thought is based on the continuity of the Greek language that provides a linguistic bridge from ancient to medieval contexts, allowing for an exploration of ideological developments. This study also contributes to understanding the 'Eastern branch' of the European Just war tradition, offering insights into how these ideas evolved distinctly – an under-researched element in the relevant literature. In addition, the historical narrative of the modern Greek identity utilised the East Roman period as the connection between the Ancient and Modern Greeks and such utilisation implies a normative interaction – at least as part of collective experiences, collective mentalities, and the establishment of 'self' vs. 'other' identities. Lastly, the War of Independence is the period of the construction of the modern Hellenic identity, as part of the revolutionary war of 1821. Thus, the links with the past, the notions of change and continuity on how war is justified, the look in the past and the establishment of identities as part of rediscovering the 'self' work as a clear closing chapter to discuss how the Greek Just war

---

[113] Yiannis Stouraitis, 'Collective identifiations in Byzantine Civil Wars', in Stouraitis, Yannis ed., *'War and Collective Identities in the Middle Ages: East, West, and Beyond'* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2023), 99-100; John Haldon, *The Empire That Would Not Die: The Paradox of Eastern Roman Survival, 640–740* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 72–119.

tradition was formulated at the dawn of the community's modern period. Let us remember, that genealogy aims to uncover history in unexpected places, such as within moral institutions, norms, and 'legitimate' practices typically seen as free from historical complexities.[114] The choice of the periods is based on the cultural interaction between these periods and their and their distinct historical characteristics and influences.

Finally, when it comes to each chapter's structure, the logic is linked with significant Just war criteria. As these criteria mirror aims, the first section of each chapter's analysis is searching for legitimate aims, i.e., which were the legitimate aims behind the use of force. In addition, the Just war criteria are influence by who is the enemy 'other' (and the ally 'other' when it comes to the criterion on assisting allies). Hence, the second section is exploring who were the 'enemies' and how enemy identities influenced warfare. Furthermore, as a key Just war criterion is based on legitimate authority and formal declaration, section three is based on the responsibility to fight and decide. Finally, as the entire Just war conceptual framework is based on an ethical discourse, where material, normative, and idealistic variables play a significant role in the change and continuity of these ideas, the last section in each chapter is based on whether war was seen as good or evil. The section always includes evidence on the treatment of non-combatants and on the way, war became part of different period's moral perceptions. This final dialectic enables us to understand the meaning of these ideas for the changing perceptions on legitimacy in theory and practice. Each chapter has a unique historical framework and background, which inevitably led to different sub-sections in the key themes, without eroding the methodological coherence of the analysis but contributing to a more historical contextualisation of the evidence.

[114] Price, 'A genealogy of the chemical weapons taboo', 87.

Chapter 2
War in Ancient Greece: An Evolving Tradition

2.1 The Perceptions of the Greeks about War, and the Genealogy Logic

Ancient Greece could be easily depicted as an enormous battlefield, among many other precise representations. The numerous internal and external conflicts defined the interaction between the different political entities (*poleis*) of the time. Subsequently, the 'texture' of conflict was brutal and destructive.[1] However, discussing only the frequency and brutality of war can be misleading. Despite the swords, shields, armours, and phalanxes, war was also part of a continuous development of ideas. In fact, norms, values, and ideas defined the battlefields of Antiquity just like the fighting equipment: war reflected society.[2] The regular conflicts among the Greek city-states during the archaic and classical eras (approximately 700–500 and 500–300 BCE) were neither an outcome of systemic factors nor a natural condition dictated by human nature; the specific interactions between political entities in Ancient Greece were (also) influenced by ideas.[3] Remember that we are talking about the Ancient Greek tradition, where virtues were depicted as beings (*όντα)* through the Platonic explanation of idealistic dynamics that had the same importance with the material world;[4] how can we ignore ideas in such a normative environment for political and military theorising?

---

[1] Sara Phang, Iain Spence, Douglas Kelly, and Peter Londey, 'Conflict in Ancient Greece and Rome: The Definitive Political, Social, and Military Encyclopedia' (New York: ABC-CLIO, 2016), 4.

[2] Walter G. Runciman, 'Greek Hoplites, Warrior Culture, and Indirect Bias', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4, no. 4 (1998): 734.

[3] Hans Van Wees, 'War and peace in ancient Greece.' in Anja Hartmann and Beatrice Heuser eds. *War, peace and world orders in European history* (London: Routledge, 2001), 33.

[4] Plato, *Σοφιστής* (*Sophist)*, trans. Dimitris Glynos (Athens: Zacharopoulos, 1990), XIV, 227-228. It is true that the Platonic idealism was not shared by numerous philosophers; still the Ancient Greek thought was heavily focused on the 'spirit', the 'virtue', and the 'purpose' (*telos*), which indicates the aforementioned significance (more reflections on such analysis in Richard Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Unraveling the evolving perceptions of war demands that special attention is given to the way war was linked to society and reflected the normative environment of different periods and communities. Studying the countering evolution of the perceptions around conflict enables us to understand why war was endemic in the Greek tradition and how it was understood as part of the social and political life.

Scholars (especially in the realm of IR) have discussed the importance of Thucydides' ideas on human nature and the paradigmatic character of the Peloponnesian War. Matthew Sears explained why the frequent past misconceptions of portraying the Peloponnesian War as a conflict between democratic Athens and oligarchic Sparta are not compatible with the author's complexity.[5] Yet, there is still room for interpreting Thucydides' work when thinking from an IR perspective as there are no answers on the meaning of this expanded conflict – was the conflict a power-centred outcome or was it a result of Athens attempting to break the norm of institutionalised autonomy and become a hegemon? Such questions will be addressed in the following pages.

Dominant IR theories have turned to the ancient world to support ideas from different theoretical traditions. Realist thought looks at classical Greece to support its ahistorical logic, where the human societies are dancing an eternal power balance around the fire of a selfish and suspicious human condition.[6] Thucydides has been (ab)used as the 'prophet' of Realism and as the origin of structural laws and natural insecurities that make war inevitable. The Realist tradition uses Thucydides to impose a pessimistic and unchangeable theoretical *status quo*, ignoring the normative elements of war.[7] Awarding Thucydides with the title of the father of Realism, this particular branch of the IR theory ignored various sides of his work, only using the Melian Dialogue as its theoretical instrument. The Greeks constructed and reconstructed the norms of war in a continuous setting, just like they did with their political reality,[8] and thus, the war in Ancient Greece was not a carousel, turning around the same set of structural laws. It was what

---

[5] Matthew Sears, *Understanding Greek Warfare* (London: Routledge, 2019).

[6] Jonathan Monten, 'Thucydides and Modern Realism', *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (2006): 3.Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the state, and war: A theoretical analysis.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 159; Steven Forde, 'International Realism and the Science of Politics: Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Neorealism', *International Studies Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (1995): 141.

[7] Waltz refers to Thucydides to explain an unchangeable anarchic system where fear from one power's rising will always be a systemic root of war. Waltz, *Man, the state, and war*,159.

[8] Cornelius Castoriadis, *Η αρχαία ελληνική δημοκρατία και η σημασία της για μας σήμερα* (The Ancient Greek Democracy and Its Significance for Us Today) (Athens: Ύψιλον, 1999).).

constructivist thinkers conceptualised as a political realm, where different social realities exist in the human minds and were not pre-ordained by any natural structure but were constructed through specific discourses.[9]

Robert Keohane argues that Thucydides was one of the earliest proponents of the three foundational principles of classical political realism: firstly, that states (or city-states) are the primary actors; secondly, that they pursue power, whether as an ultimate objective or as a means to other goals; and thirdly, that their actions are generally rational and thus understandable to external observers in rational terms.[10] Similarly, Robert Gilpin emphasised the distribution of power as a critical factor behind the *poleis* actions.[11] Thucydides indeed delves into the interactions between city-states (*poleis*) given the structure of the Ancient Greek world. While it is true that these *poleis* occasionally sought power, Keohanne's assertion that this pursuit was solely for 'its own sake or as a means to other ends', is oversimplified. To understand the pursuit of power, it is crucial to examine the relationship between using force and culture, and how this dynamic has been reinterpreted over different periods.

Laurie Bagbie wrote that Thucydides can expand our understanding beyond the Realist paradigm by emphasising four contextual areas, i.e. the significance of 'national character', the impact of the moral traits of individual leaders, the importance of political rhetoric for action, treating Realism as just one argument within political rhetoric, and the integration of moral judgments as an essential component of politics.[12] These four points were very important in deconstructing the dominant IR related approach, but were also limited in creating a framework to understand Thucydides' ideas *vis* a *vis* the pre-Peloponnesian War society of *poleis*. Subsequently, this study will try to assess not only the different arguments in Thucydides' History, but also the language that allows us to understand normative foundations that contributed to the evolution of Just war ideas.

Post-traditional schools have also studied the Ancient Greek institutions of war, denying the emphasis on the institutionalised virtues of glory and heroism after the observation of

---

[9] Andreas Osiander, Before the State: *Systemic Political Change in the West from the Greeks to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.

[10] Robert Keohane, 'Realism, Neorealism and the Study of World Politics', in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 7.

[11] Robert Gilpin, 'The Theory of Hegemonic War', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (1988): 591.

[12] Laurie Bagby, 'The Use and Abuse of Thucydides in International Relations', *International Organization* 48, no. 1 (1994): 133–134.

the social standards that were necessary to enjoy the fruits of competition.[13] Indeed, even from the Archaic times, Hesiod gives much attention to describe the complex and cruel life of the ordinary people, explaining that only the rich and powerful could enjoy the competitive and heroic side of conflict.[14] Meanwhile, he underlines that war is devastating for the common folk, by highlighting that the just ones would be protected by Zeus, who would preserve their *polis* from war.[15] Hesiod shows that the common folk are excluded from the glory of the aristocratic heroes. Post-structural interpretations attempted to detect power-discourse characteristics in the normative scenery. They borrowed the reflections of Nietzsche as a hermeneutic route to understand the power relations in pre-Archaic Greece. Nietzsche claimed that the legitimacy that occurred from *aristeia* (excellence) and *doxa* (glory) mirrored power privileges.[16] The kings' role was that of warlords. Their superior equipment facilitated achieving *aristeia* (excellence).[17] Plus, the individual's *philotimia* (the love of glory) and public worth were measured by combat skills, making *aristeia* a legitimate war aim and conserving a social reality that favoured only the ones who could participate in it.[18]

Hans Van Wees accurately explained how Ancient Greek communities' variety of relationships reflects a 'society of states' rather than an anarchic state system.[19] This chapter will follow this principle, trying to show how our sources prove this special normative environment but also uncovering the meaning of these relationships and the

---

[13] Joseph Bryant, Moral Codes and Social Structure in Ancient Greece: *A Sociology of Greek Ethics from Homer to the Epicureans and Stoics* (New York: SUNY Press, 1991), 31.

[14] Hesiod, *Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι* (Work and Days), trans. Stavros Girgenis (Thessaloniki: Zitros, 2001), 174–179..

[15] Ibid. 224-228. The term *ptochos* (πτωχός) does not only mean poor but also beggar.

[16] On the specific Nietzsche's interpretations, see Bryant, Moral codes and social structure in ancient Greece, 31.

[17] Donald Kagan and Gregory Viggiano (eds.), *Men of Bronze: Hoplite Warfare in Ancient Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 6; Bryant, Moral codes and social structure in ancient Greece, 18-30.

[18] Bryant, Moral codes and social structure in ancient Greece, 30-31.

[19] Hans van Wees, 'War, Peace and World Orders in Ancient Greece', in *War, Peace and World Orders in European History*, ed. Anja Hartmann and Beatrice Heuser (London: Routledge, 2001), 33–34.

way they portray a Just war perspective. The methodological instruments of this study will present primary evidence to understand the value of norms and ideas and reflect on whether these perceptions had tangible impacts on how the Ancient Greeks shaped their sociopolitical reality. For example, equality among the aristocratic circle was necessary for developing the virtues of excellence and glory. Glory and excellence were considered important because of the numerous champions and capable rivals. The competition did not result in expansion and large territorial entities that attempted to swallow the external others because it was the competition that mattered and not the absolute domination over all. Athens tried to take the latter path during the 5th century BCE, and, as Thucydides and Xenophon showed, it ended poorly.

Herodotus describes a dialogue between the tyrant of Miletus, Aristagoras, and the Spartan King Cleomenes, during the beginning of the 5th century BCE, a time where the former was asking for Sparta's military support against the Persian rule. Aristagoras appeared in front of Cleomenes with very specific arguments:

> 'Cleomenes, my sudden arrival may surprise you; but let me explain the situation today: children of the Ionians live as slaves rather than free, a great shame and sorrow not only for ourselves but also for you, the leaders of the Greek world (Ἰώνων παῖδας δούλους εἶναι ἀντ᾽ ἐλευθέρων ὄνειδος καὶ ἄλγος μέγιστον μὲν αὐτοῖσι ἡμῖν, ἔτι δὲ τῶν λοιπῶν ὑμῖν, ὅσῳ προέστατε τῆς Ἑλλάδος). Therefore, in the name of the gods of the Greeks, liberate the Ionians from slavery, for the same blood runs in their veins as yours (νῦν ὦν πρὸς θεῶν τῶν Ἑλληνίων ῥύσασθε Ἴωνας ἐκ δουλοσύνης, ἄνδρας ὁμαίμονας)…Moreover, those who dwell on that continent possess wealth as much as the entire rest of the world, foremost gold and then silver and bronze and embroidered garments and slaves, which, if your heart desires, can become yours. (ἀπὸ χρυσοῦ ἀρξαμένοισι, ἄργυρος καὶ χαλκὸς καὶ ἐσθὴς ποικίλη καὶ ὑποζύγιά τε καὶ ἀνδράποδα· τὰ θυμῷ βουλόμενοι αὐτοὶ ἂν ἔχοιτε.)'[20]

This quote shows that Ancient Greek wars cannot be understood in a monocausal approach. This complexity reveals that Just war ideas had different normative layers and thus trying to examine how to define political behaviour and interaction requires an in-depth analysis of the language, the values, the events, and the debates of the Ancient Greeks surrounding the concept of war and the legitimacy behind waging it.

[20] Herodotus, *Ἱστορίαι* (Histories), trans. Ilias Spyropoulos (Athens: Govosti, 1992), 5.49.1–5.49.4.

2.2 Legitimate Aims

2.2.1 Aristeia and Honour*:* The pulses of competition

Homer, credited with composing the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, transmitted his epics orally before they were transcribed. Despite his significance as a primary source of knowledge for the Greeks, Homer's authenticity and work were debated in ancient times. Herodotus, for instance, noted contradictions within Homeric creations, questioning which works could truly be attributed to Homer.[21] Homer's work is not only a way to understand the dominant perceptions of the Archaic Greeks. Homer's Epic is a window on the military matters and the *ethos* of pre-Archaic Greece, with references to the Dark Ages or at least to the ideas and perceptions that survived until the 8th-century and dominated the representation of the past.[22]

While Homer's portrayals may not accurately represent Mycenaean society, they do reflect the dominant perceptions of his time. His tales aim to connect with the past, providing continuity and relevance for his contemporaries. Skepticism has been expressed regarding the credibility of Homer as a source, primarily due to his occupation as a poet, which may raise doubts about the consistency of his narrative. However, Hans Van Wees has contested this perspective, asserting that poets can indeed maintain consistency in their work in both historical and normative areas.[23]

In the *Iliad*, the portrayal of war reflects the significance of individual heroes over the concept of a collective 'army'. Men often exit the battlefield due to fatigue, discouragement, or to attend to personal matters such as retrieving weapons or handling acquired spoils. The frequent departure and return of individual men highlight the decentralised nature of the warfare, as returning warriors do not necessarily reposition themselves within a predetermined formation but rather choose their locations freely.[24]

---

[21] Barbara Graziosi, *Homer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 8.

[22] José Vela Tejada, 'Warfare, History and Literature in the Archaic and Classical Periods: The Development of Greek Military Treatises', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 53, no. 2 (2004): 130; Kagan and Viggiano, *Men of Bronze*, 6..

[23] Hans van Wees, 'The Homeric Way of War: The "Iliad" and the Hoplite Phalanx (I)', *Greece & Rome* 41, no. 1 (1994): 1–18.

[24] Ibid. 4.

Suppose we trust the Homeric values as a part of a broader oral tradition that can present evidence for the Mycenaean elite warriors. In that case, honour was part of a general competitive culture. Understanding the Greek word *aristeia* in the Homeric vocabulary explains the significance of not being a great fighter *per se* but a more extraordinary fighter than others, highlighting the core concept of competition. Paris issues a challenge for a one-on-one duel with Menelaus, proposing that the victor claim Helen and thus end the war.[25] Homer's use of the term 'glorify' (δοξάσει) is a fundamental factor behind this one-on-one duel; the winner would be glorified, a reward that is equally important to the spoils of war. For the Homeric understanding such virtues were motivating variables when it comes to the decision to wage war, reminding us of Plato's statement where virtues were perceived as real and concrete as 'beings', despite their idealistic nature.

In the *Iliad*, gods inspired heroes; gods intensified the desire for battle when whispering in heroes' ears.[26] The divine approves warfare and urges the participants to be fierce on the battlefield, 'fueling them with the desire to fight' (ορμή πολέμου, οπού θεός τούς άναψε εις τα στήθη),[27] which shows the legitimacy of competitive motives for Homeric thought. Achilles explained that the trouble and risk of war are concerning only because the 'brave' (ανδρειωμένον) are treated similarly to the 'cowardly' (άνανδρον).[28] The hero does not challenge warfare but the attitude of Agamemnon against him, as the accepted norm was that *aristeia* in battle was what justified both the slaughter and the desire of men to risk their lives on the battlefield.

Joseph Bryant raised the question '*aristeia* for whom?' to address the class-oriented characteristics of archaic warfare.[29] The ordinary soldiers of the Dark Ages were 'an unorganised and fluid mass subordinated to the elites'.[30] Furthermore, the elite-heroes of Homer enjoyed particular advantages such as the superiority of equipment that made their

---

[25] Homer, *Ἰλιάς* (*Iliad*), trans. Iakovos Polylas (Thessaloniki: KEG, 2015), ΡΓ, 86–94 'Let him who shall be victorious and prove to be the better man take the woman and all she has, to bear them to his own home, but let the rest swear to a solemn covenant of peace.'

[26] Ibid. ΡΕ, 133-137.

[27] Ibid. ΡΝ, 82.

[28] Ibid. ΡΘ, 319-322.

[29] Bryant, *Moral Codes and Social Structure in Ancient Greece*, 30–31.

[30] Kagan and Viggiano, *Men of Bronze*, 6.

excellence on the field more accessible than for the ordinary soldiers.[31] The aristocratic identity of the champions shows that significant parts of the ordinary people were excluded from the virtue of *aristeia*.

However, such explanations have significant contextual gaps. The aristocratic privilege indeed covered the entire spectrum of *aristeia* and bellicosity. Looking at the ways the poet Hesiod describes this social dynamic we can understand that ideas about competition and war were more complicated. By the late sixth century BCE, the Greeks attributed several poems to Hesiod, though none survive in their original written form. The most significant surviving Hesiodic texts are the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*.[32] The *Theogony* is a theological, genealogical, and cosmological poem, detailing the origins of gods and natural forces, while his *Works and Days* is based on a moral conceptulisation of different aspects of life; both sources can reveal perceptions and ideas of the Archaic Greeks. Hesiod explained that there are two kinds of *erides* (disputes): One is the inevitable evil of war, and the other is the good one, and it is the driving force behind progress. It is the feeling of envy that leads people to work harder in order to meet the living standards of the more prosperous ones. Hesiod describes this competitive feeling as a blessing that leads to prosperity and progress within societies and concerns everyone, from the craftsmen to the beggars.[33]

The heroes were *aristoi* because they were responsible for waging war. Their lives were at stake, and just like the medieval knights, they were ready to die for their *τιμή* (honour).[34] Dying, though, meant an afterlife in the Underworld; there was nothing pretty in this contract, i.e., dying honourably to be rewarded with something in the afterlife. The Ancient Greek tradition differs from the European pre-Christian tradition of Valhalla. Regardless of the privilege of the elite in the vocabulary of the time, we cannot ignore the significance of glory, pride, and honour by considering them as covert means for the aristocrats to dominate society. These aristocrats were the first to serve the purpose of the specific values and risk their lives on the field. In the Iliad, Odysseus supports the responsibility of the Greeks to stay and fight in Troy, by emphasising that 'only cowards abandon the battle' (οι δειλοί τον πόλεμον αφήνουν), 'but whoever is brave will remain

---

[31] Ibid.

[32] Jared Carter, 'Hesiod: Poet and Peasant Overtures', *Chicago Review* 37, no. 1 (1990): 89–112.

[33] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 11-26.

[34] Anja V. Hartmann and Beatrice Heuser, *War, peace and world orders in European history* (London: Routledge 2012), 238.

unyielding, to either give death to the enemy or take it' (αλλ᾽ όποιος είναι ανδράγαθος, ακλόνητος θα μείνει τον θάνατον εις τον εχθρόν να δώσ᾽ ή να τον λάβει).[35] The aims and objectives of a battle were tied to the honourable conduct of its participants and Homer suggests that archaic warfare was propelled by motives not inherently material or systemic.

Andreas Osiander highlighted that the driving dynamic behind the Trojan War 'is the vanity and wounded pride of certain high-ranking male individuals, not the interests of any community associated with them'.[36] Such reflections show the significance of pride, honour, and humiliation as factors that could be seen to legitimise armed conflict. Emotions were factors that could lead to conflict. Cian O'Driscoll emphasised the significance of Homer's epic is for the development of ideas that defined vengeance as a legitimate aim in the Greek tradition. Yet, as mentioned earlier, Rory Cox has presented further evidence, mirroring earlier examples from the Near East tradition.[37]

It is important to clarify that I do not suggest Homeric thought introduced the idea of vengeance in war as a novel concept. Rather, the influence of Homer lies in the formative and enduring role his epics played in Greek intellectual and cultural life. Homeric texts were frequently cited, performed, and invoked in various political, educational, and philosophical contexts, which amplified their normative authority. The significance of Homer, therefore, rests not in originality but in the central position of his work within Greek discourses, enabling the entrenchment and further development of norms such as vengeance within the Greek moral imagination.

The beginning of the poem is Homer's epiclesis for inspiration to sing the tale of Achilles' *minis* (rage).[38] Wees explained how the rage of Menelaus or Achilles during the war led to indescribable killings, regardless of the potential of taking prisoners (for

---

[35] Homer, *Iliad*, ΡΛ, 408-410.

[36] Osiander, *Before the state* 43.

[37] Cian O'Driscoll, 'Rewriting the Just War Tradition: "Just War in Classical Greek Political Thought and Practice"', *International Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2015): 4. Rory Cox, *Origins of the Just War: Military Ethics and Culture in the Ancient Near East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), 204–205.

[38] Homer, *Iliad,* A.1. The rage of Achilles occurred when the hero felt mistreated by Agamemnon. Wounded pride is a source of rage, which can be legitimately expressed with violence. It is only due to the destiny of Agamemnon and the divine plan of him being assassinated by his wife that the goddess Athena stops Achilles from killing him. In addition, the rage Achilles gives legitimacy to a divine intervention of misleading Agamemnon in order to take a wrong strategic decision and lose crucial battles in order to understand the worth of Achilles. At: Geoffrey Kirk, 'Homer', in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, ed. Patricia Easterling and Bernard Knox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 53.

material profit).[39] Thus, the pre-Archaic perceptions of the legitimate aims of war rested upon two fundamental pillars: *Aristeia* and Honour. *Aristeia* gave the war a divine hypostasis and was also the meaning of 'being', something important in the vain mortal world, through glory.[40] Such virtue and the fame that would survive the end of the mortal life could legitimise the use of force and was based on a powerful normative environment of competition.

These norms can be tracked centuries after in sources describing the Peloponnesian War. The Spartan King Archidamus gave a speech to his generals and all the Spartan allies' officials as the Peloponnesian League's commander-in-chief. In his speech, he clarified that the enemy had an exceptionally strong and excellent army and thus the campaign could not appear inferior to their ancestors and their reputation (μήτε τῶν πατέρων χείρους φαίνεσθαι μήτε ἡμῶν αὐτῶν τῆς δόξης ἐνδεεστέρους).[41] The acknowledgement of the Athenian power as a motivating element shows how the concept of excellence and competition defined the nature of war during the 5th century BCE.

However, despite Spartan generals emphasising the importance of bravery and military excellence during the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides' account shows that strategy during that time was more complicated and flexible than the traditionally accepted norms of competitive warfare; While preparing the Spartan forces for battle against the Athenian expeditionary corps, Spartan general Brasidas chose to employ a stratagem by concealing the true strength of his forces, believing that revealing their numbers and armaments would decrease their chances of victory. He opted to surprise the enemy by selecting only one hundred and fifty hoplites, leaving the rest of his army under the command of Clearidas, with the intention of making a sudden attack: 'The greatest glory comes from those stratagems which effectively deceive the enemy and greatly benefit one's allies' (καὶ τὰ κλέμματα ταῦτα καλλίστην δόξαν ἔχει ἃ τὸν πολέμιον μάλιστ᾽ ἄν τις ἀπατήσας τοὺς φίλους μέγιστ᾽ ἂν ὠφελήσειεν).[42]

---

[39] Hans Van Wees, *Defeat and Destruction: The ethics of the ancient Greek warfare* (Graz: Grazer Universitatsverlag, 2011), 75.

[40] The pursuit of a glorious reputation was crucial for some heroes. 'Achilles chooses a short life of violence and fame to one that would have been long, peaceful and obscure. War was a means to a good reputation, a way of living in glory, since all men were to die.' Louis Rawlings, *The ancient Greeks at War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2007), 5.

[41] Thucydides, *Ιστορία* (*History of the Peloponnesian War*), trans. Nicholaos Skouteropoulos (Athens: Polis, 2011), 2.11.1–2.

[42] Ibid.5.9.5.

Despite these complexities, the driving force behind motivating 5th century armies often remained rooted in notions of honour. Thucydides explained that abandoning positions during battle was punishable for the Spartan military; on the contrary 'those who exhibited bravery were rewarded' (οἱ δὲ ἀγαθοὶ τιμήσονται τοῖς προσήκουσιν ἄθλοις τῆς ἀρετῆς), showing the lasting importance of military *aristeia*, even in the late 5th century BCE.[43] Those ideas were expressed to the Spartan forces by their generals before the battle, showing the significance of communicating the ideas behind the virtue of warfare. Xenophon's perspective on competition extends into later centuries, emphasising not only victory in war but also the pursuit of fame among all men.[44]

In modern times, the importance of normative elements such as honour or respect is often overlooked as causes for war, favouring strategic and material advantages instead. Yet, examining our sources portrays such factors as important triggers for conflict. In a culture where honour held significant ethical role, defending communal prestige cannot be ignored or overshadowed over practical benefits.[45]

2.2.2 *Autonomia*

The legitimacy of war in ancient Greece evolved alongside the development of city-states. Conflict arose over agricultural resources, as well as between aristocrats and social classes.[46] In the 7th century BCE, tyranny emerged as a solution to internal conflicts, supported by hoplite citizens.[47] Tyrannies were established to maintain local coherence threatened by inner conflicts. The importance of local prosperity and domestic stability leads to another factor concerning legitimate war aims: The concept of *autonomia.*

---

[43] Ibid. 2.87.8 – 9.

[44] Rawlings, *The Ancient Greeks at War*, 6.

[45] Hans Ven Wees, 'War and peace in Ancient Greece', in Anja Hartmann and Beatrice Heuser (eds.), *'War, Peace and World Orders in European History'* (London: Routledge, 2001), 45.

[46] Phang et al., *Conflict in Ancient Greece and Rome*, 9.

[47] Nicholas Kyriazis and Xenophon Paparigopoulos, 'War and Democracy in Ancient Greece', *European Journal of Law and Economics* 38, no. 1 (2014): 172.

Since the present study is framed in genealogy logic, we need to pay special attention to its roots despite the historical context of the term *autonomia* and its domination after the 7th century BC. The etymology of the term means the freedom of one to determine its own laws, but essentially meant the ability to determine one's future without others' control. Lucas Swaine cites Persian general Mardonius' peace offer to Athens, emphasising its importance for Athenian territorial autonomy. He also mentions Athenian concerns about potential Mytilenean revolts over *autonomia*. These examples highlight the seriousness of the term in peace and alliance, as it could spark legitimate conflict.[48]

A key conceptual distinction in this study is that between freedom (*eleuthería*) and autonomy (*autonomía*), an issue central to Greek political thought. The work of Kurt Raaflaub has highlighted how the notion of freedom was increasingly politicised from the Greco-Persian Wars onwards, shifting from a general idea of independence to a key ideological dividing line.[49] However, as Cornelius Castoriadis has argued, autonomy is a far more radical concept than mere freedom. While *eleuthería* denotes the absence of external constraint—whether on individuals or states—*autonomía* entails collective self-institution, in which citizens actively participate in shaping the laws and structures that govern them.[50] Aristotle wrote that self-sufficiency is the only path towards *eudaimonia,* as the ultimate purpose of the state is to enable a good life. The state itself is formed through the union of families and communities to create a self-sufficient and complete society—one that fosters happiness and virtue.[51] His distinction is crucial in differentiating *autonomia* from mere freedom. Autonomy, in the Aristotelian sense, refers to a state or entity's ability to sustain itself and determine its own course without dependence on external forces. This is different from personal freedom, which relates to individual liberty and the absence of coercion. Self-sufficiency is the foundation of autonomy because a state must be capable of providing for its own needs to truly govern itself. This form of autonomy ensures stability, ethical governance, and the capacity for its citizens to lead fulfilled lives. Freedom, on the other hand, does not necessarily entail self-sufficiency—it can exist within a system where individuals rely on others or external powers. Thus, autonomy, rooted in self-sufficiency, defines the role of the state as a

---

[48] Lucas Swaine, *Ethical Autonomy: The Rise of Self-Rule* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 2-3.

[49] Kurt A. Raaflaub, *The Discovery of Freedom in Ancient Greece*, 1st English edn, rev. and updated from the German (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[50] Cornelius Castoriadis, *Η αρχαία ελληνική δημοκρατία και η σημασία της για μας σήμερα (Ancient Greek Democracy and Its Meaning for Us Today)* (Athens: Ypsilon, 1999).

[51] Aristotle, *Πολιτικά* (*The Politics*), trans. Stephen Everson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), III, 9.

protector and enabler of the good life, whereas freedom is a condition that can exist within, but does not alone define, the state's purpose. This is the theoretical foundation of the use of such terms throughout the chapter on Ancient Greece. The relevance of autonomy to the study of warfare lies in its implications for legitimacy and justifications of war. If autonomy was a fundamental political value, then war could be framed not simply as a struggle for survival but as a moral imperative to preserve self-rule. This adds an important dimension to the constructivist argument: warfare in the Greek world was not merely a contest of power but was embedded in broader normative debates about governance, legitimacy, and identity.

Herodotus, born in Halicarnassus around 484 BCE, authored *Histories*, which described the Greco-Persian Wars, offering insights into cultural, normative, and military aspects of that era. Living in the 5th century BCE, he witnessed the rise of the Persian Empire and its conflicts with Greek city-states, amidst the emergence of democracy in Athens. Herodotus chronicled conflicts like the Tegean-Lacedaemonian wars of the 6th century BCE, highlighting the absence of a prevailing norm of conquest among Greek city-states despite 'the repeated victories of Lacedaemonians' (πολλῷ κατυπέρτεροι τῷ πολέμῳ ἐγίνοντο οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι).[52]

Prior to the Battle of Marathon Bay (490 BCE), the Athenian generals (*strategoi*) held contrasting views: some were reluctant to enter into combat, citing their perceived numerical disadvantage against the Persian army, while others, among them Miltiades, advocated for confrontation. Miltiades, in his capacity as an Athenian general, endeavoured to convince General Callimachus to support the decision to wage war and outnumber the opposition. His argument was:

> 'the fate of Athens now lies in your hands, whether to subject her to slavery under the Medes or to make her free (ἢ καταδουλῶσαι Ἀθήνας ἢ ἐλευθέρας) and ensure that your name remains honored as long as people exist...Athens now faces the greatest danger since its founding...if you add your vote to mine, you will have a free homeland, and your city will be the first among the Greek cities' (ἔστι τοι πατρίς τε ἐλευθέρη καὶ πόλις πρώτη τῶν ἐν τῇ Ἑλλάδι).[53]

The existential threat is not the only noble factor in Miltiades' argument. The glory of Athens and the emergence of the city as 'the first among the Greek cities' shows the importance of honour and competition even during the early 5th century. Subsequently, the existential threat posed by the Persians is reflected on the term slavery and on the responsibility to choose what's best for the Athenian freedom (and *autonomia*).

---

[52] Herodotus, *Histories*, 1.68.6.

[53] Ibid. 6.109.3 – 6.109.6.

Herodotus' account demonstrates that the concept of *autonomia* was a fundamental theme in the Ancient Greek Just war tradition. Despite the varied political systems and ideological orientations of the city-states, the principle of autonomy as a pan-Hellenic value served as a facilitating condition for the formation of a coalition against the Persian threat. The Greeks' commitment to *autonomia*—the freedom of each *polis* to govern its own affairs—was directly challenged by the centralised and autocratic rule of Persia. Despite past conflicts and rivalries among the Greek city-states, Persia's strategy, while attempting to exploit these divisions,[54] ultimately failed to create significant fractures within the Greek world before the Greco-Persian Wars. In that case, freedom obtains the meaning of *autonomia* and *vice versa*; thus, the core existential threat for the 5th century BCE Greeks was the loss of their capacity to define their domestic affairs. While the inner-Greek conflict did not challenge that, as it was not based on conquests, the Persian threat was existential due to its distinct nature.

Hans Van Wees identified a crucial element of Greek warfare (that has been completely ignored by the traditional IR scholarship and their theoretical principles). While expansionism existed as a concept, e.g., the Athenian military oath to pass on the fatherland 'larger and stronger', this expansionism typically sought recognised leadership rather than territorial conquest, aiming for status as a regional power, ruler of the sea, or dominant Greek state. Expansionism was driven by dual motives: material gain (profit) and immaterial prestige (honour).[55] High status was over territorial or material gains, which is a crucial tool for our later analysis on Thucydides and the actual motives of the Peloponnesian war in its precise historical context. Even the Greek colonies, i.e., city-states that were created (mostly) in two colonising waves by Greek poleis in South Italy and Asia Minor were established by each choosing their own laws or their own legislator, tasked with drafting the laws that were appropriate for each case,[56] showing the ontological aspect of *autonomia* for the Greek collective mentality and political thought.

According to Thucydides, the Greeks 'never attempted to conquer distant lands' (καὶ ἐκδήμους στρατείας πολὺ ἀπὸ τῆς ἑαυτῶν ἐπ᾽ ἄλλων καταστροφῇ οὐκ ἐξῆσαν οἱ Ἕλληνες).[57] Thucydides noted the Greek fleets' modesty, with Athenians boosting naval

---

[54] Ibid. 9.2.

[55] Van Wees, 'War and Peace in Ancient Greece', 47.

[56] Castoriadis, Η αρχαία ελληνική δημοκρατία, 14.

[57] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.15.2.

power under Themistocles due to Persian threat.[58] Greek warfare was not primarily about conquest. Internal conflicts may have prompted earlier naval growth, but it took the insecurity of external aggression to fully reform the Athenian naval might. During the early period of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides described a battle between the Athenians and the Corinthians; the former confronted the Corinthians, 'resulting in a stalemate where both sides claimed victory' (καὶ ἐνόμισαν αὐτοὶ ἑκάτεροι οὐκ ἔλασσον ἔχειν ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ).[59] The Athenians erected a trophy after the Corinthians retreated. Yet, 'after the Corinthian army returned home and faced criticism from their city's elders, they returned to Megara approximately twelve days later to raise another trophy, convinced of their triumph' (οἱ δὲ Κορίνθιοι κακιζόμενοι ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν τῇ πόλει πρεσβυτέρων καὶ παρασκευασάμενοι, ἡμέραις ὕστερον δώδεκα μάλιστα ἐλθόντες ἀνθίστασαν τροπαῖον καὶ αὐτοὶ ὡς νικήσαντες.).

The Ancient Greek competitive style of warfare was not always expressed in this way; many other battles were fought in different ways, by following different strategies. Thucydides described operations during the early Peloponnesian War, including battles in Boeotia and naval operations around the Peloponnese. The Athenians, led by Myronides, later defeated the Boeotians at Oenophyta. The Athenians forced their enemy to destroy their walls and when they left they took hostages (ἑκατὸν ἄνδρας ὁμήρους τοὺς πλουσιωτάτους ἔλαβον, τά τε τείχη ἑαυτῶν τὰ μακρὰ ἀπετέλεσαν). [60] After this victory, they also conducted successful naval operations, forcing the Aeginetans to demolish their walls and surrender their fleet. When Thucydides uses the term 'ἐκράτησαν' to describe how one side 'took' the other city (τοὺς Βοιωτοὺς νικήσαντες τῆς τε χώρας ἐκράτησαν τῆς Βοιωτίας),[61] he does not imply an actual conquest. Thucydides described the diverse strategies employed by the Greeks in warfare. Despite victories and imposing terms such as forcing adversaries to demolish walls and surrender fleets, he highlighted that conquest was not the objective and a *polis* did not try to enlarge its territories by conquering the others. Rather, he showed how the Greeks aimed to weaken their adversaries while maintaining a degree of autonomy.

---

[58] Ibid. 1.14.3.

[59] Ibid. 1.5-6.

[60] Ibid. 1.108.2-3.

[61] Ibid. 1.108.3.

The responsible citizens in the democratic *poleis* were not called to choose only based on their profit or interest but also on institutionalised norms and values, such as honour and solidarity. When Demosthenes, a leading Athenian orator and statesman known for his speeches opposing Macedonian expansion under Philip II, asked the Athenians to stand against Phillip, he clarified that the decision to do so was a way to defend their honour and none should expect profit or easy escalation of the coming events in favour of them:

> 'In most of these speeches… we can trace the conviction that honour ought to be persuaded for its own sake. In all these orations, Demosthenes does not try to persuade his fellow citizens to do what is most agreeable, easy-going, or profitable, but time and again, he argues that they ought to place their honour and their obligations before their safety or self-preservation.'[62]

Military excellence was not only based on combat skills but mostly on believing in the legitimacy of the cause. This 4th century BCE politicalisation of Just wars shows how *auotnomia* became a synonym of specific political systems.

The best way to understand the impact of *autonomia* to Just war constructions comes from the Aristotelian thought and the correlation of the well-being of the living with the dead. Aristotle wrote that to claim the fortunes of our descendants and all our friends do not affect our own fortune (even after our death) at all shows a lack of friendship (αφιλία) and contradicts common beliefs.[63] He emphasised that the dead and the living are bound together through the concept of *eudaimonia*, the supreme good of the community, highlighting how important such notions were to the Greeks. This concept, in which mortality gains meaning through the existence of the community, was a foundational element in justifying warfare for *autonomia*—the ideal condition where the community could survive and thrive freely. The community acquires an immortal quality that stands in contrast to the mortal nature of individuals, thereby establishing the community's superiority over individual life and making sacrifices justifiable when fighting for the community's well-being – in the Greek case, the community's *autonomia*.

2.2.3 *Autonomia* vs. Collective Identity: The Hidden Dialectic of the Peloponnesian War

---

[62] Paul Robinson, *Military Honour and Conduction of War. From Ancient Greece to Iraq* (London: Routledge 2006), 16.

[63] Aristotle, *Ηθικά Νικομάχεια* (*Nicomachean Ethics)*, trans. Dimitrios Lypourlis (Thessaloniki: Zitros, 2006), A.11..11

Jack Snyder contends that theorising expansionistic campaigns or imperial foreign policy functions as a rhetorical tool to justify imperialistic actions, which are driven by material gains. Snyder supports the significance of individual leaders in IR, as they pay attention and emphasise persuading both the public and themselves of the necessity of imperial actions for national interests. Yet, Snyder also argues against falling into the Realist trap of neglecting ideologies when analysing political groups' perceptions of their interests [64] —a stance that holds merit. Snyder also argued that when assessing the logic of constructions that legitimise imperial action, we need to pay attention to the myth that supports the correlation between a state's security and the strategy of territorial expansion.[65] However, in the case of IR and Ancient Greece, while different works attempted to use the Athenian imperialism through Thucydides' work, there has been a lack of discussion of Athenian ideology as part of its imperialistic approach.

The discussion on the Athenian behaviour should start from contecptualising the concept of imperialism and territorial expansion. From the era of Homer, the Greeks revered Ares less than other gods, particularly in comparison to the Roman tradition.[66] Additionally, historical accounts by authors such as Thucydides and Xenophon suggest that Greeks did not pursue conquests in distant lands.[67] Despite their belief in superiority over 'barbarians', they did not have a doctrine of 'enlightening' others through conquest – evident in both their actions and material capabilities that did not mirror any overseas aims. Their understanding of Just war concerning Greeks vs. non-Greeks aimed at avoiding enslavement, which extended beyond mere loss of autonomy to encompass a dismantling of their superior cultural and political foundations. Territorial expansion did not align with the Greeks' normative foundations, indicating a perception of themselves as a distinct inter-polity society uninterested in exerting control or cultural influence over the external world – possibly explaining the prioritisation of other gods over Ares vis-à-vis the Romans.

---

[64] Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), 18.

[65] Ibid. 1.

[66] Heckel Waldemar, Edward Garvin, and John Vanderspoel, *A Companion to Greek Warfare* (NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2021), 2; Homer, *Iliad,* PE, 890 – 891.

[67] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*,1,15.2.

Athens aimed for a Greek empire confined to the Greek world, which, following the Persian Wars, saw the development of a stronger sense of Hellenic identity. Thucydides' Melian Dialogue presents a cynical perspective on legitimate war aims, emphasising the Athenians' assertion of dominance and power: 'We wish to leave you in no doubt that what we want is to rule you without trouble to ourselves, sparing you to our mutual benefit.' Furthermore, when the Melians wondered 'how would we benefit from such enslavement?' the Athenian response was: 'Because you would get the chance to submit before suffering a terrible fate, whereas we would gain from not destroying you.'[68] Athens justified its intentions to rule the Melians for mutual benefit, indicating that submission spared the Melians from destruction. This reflects Greek notions of hegemonic freedom, where legitimacy is tied to power. The Athenians see themselves authorised to punish disobedient allies, akin to maintaining order within their own city-state.

Staying on Thucydides, we can observe the importance of fear. The Realist tradition based its fundamental theoretical instruments on this characteristic. At the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, representatives of Corfu and Corinth appeared before the *Ekklesia*. While the former sought Athenian support in case of a Corinthian attack, the latter asked for neutrality. The representative of Corfu explained that Athens should side with Corfu because the Corinthians were friends of the Spartans. He clarified that war was inevitable since the Corinthians 'will fight you because they fear you. First, they will attack us, then strike at you.'[69]

Similar patterns can also be found throughout Thucydides' account. The Corinthians reminded the Athenians, 'We voted in favour of you when Samos left the alliance and supported the claim that the central authority can punish the problematic allies unilaterally.'[70] Despite the power-oriented argument, we detect the attraction of punishing the offender. Punishment was part of the legitimacy of war since the Homeric era and the absolute war the Greeks declared on the Trojans to punish them. Aristotle supported the significance of punishment as a legitimate war aim, especially after being wrong, as did Plato, when he stated that punishment is the only way to restore a Just condition. Plato also believed that punishment could lead to the correction of the unjust and not only mirror deserved punishment.[71]

---

[68] Ibid. 5, 91-93.

[69] Ibid.1, 34, 3-4.

[70] Ibid.1, 41, 2-3.

[71] Plato*, Sophist,* XVI, 231.

But is this power-based logic the reason behind the Athenian behaviour and the belief that they held the right to punish allies in such a hegemonic pattern? Did Athenian power growth tempt them to pursue a hegemonic foreign policy outside the boundaries of inner-Greek institutionalised *autonomia*? We discussed the interactions among pre-Persian Wars city-states, governed by norms of autonomy where wars of conquest were not common. Looking at the discourse, we first see that the Athenians presented their hegemonic tendencies as legitimate due to their contribution to the Persian Wars, explaining that the Lakedaimonians or any other actor would have acted the same way after leading the Greeks and protecting them from such an existential threat.[72] Evidence reveals the emergence of a Pan-Hellenic identity before the 5th century, which intensified during the Persian Wars. Greeks fought not only for city-state autonomy but also viewed their struggle against Persia as a Just war against the enslavement of Greece as a whole. This mindset led to the punishment of those who sided with Persia, known as 'Medising.'

Michael Doyle argued that imperialism is not only dictated by materialism but is usually a combination of political, military, and cultural factors.[73] Following this principle, we understand the necessity to examine the importance of ideas and cultural elements to assess Athenian behaviour and to conceptualise their strategic objectives. Examining Pericles' speeches in Thucydides' work reveals that Athenian hegemonic behaviour was not driven by a selfish human nature or by systemic laws (otherwise such attempts would have been evident in previous centuries) but was a synthesis of pan-Hellenic identity and Greek competitive norms. Athens believed in the superiority of its political system and saw the post-Persian Wars era as one of tighter bonds under its leadership, setting an example for other city-states. Despite divisions in the Greek world, each polis maintained strict domestic organisation and power structures. The Persian Wars subtly ushered in a society less centred on city states and hinted at a more integrated future. Athens justified its hegemonic role as legitimate among Greeks because a) competition was part of the way *poleis* perceived their interaction and b) because in the new 'Greece vs. Persia' interpolity reality the collective identity of the former paved the way for a different structure in the Greek *poleis system.* In simple terms, Athens suggested a federal approach, where Greek *poleis* would act in a more integrated pattern to strengthen themselves against the Eastern threat and the best leader of this initiative would be the *polis* with the supreme political system and the most crucial contribution to the recent past conflicts against the Persians (according to the Athenian narrative).

---

[72] Thucydides*, History of the Peloponnesian War,*1.76, 3-4.

[73] Michael W. Doyle*, Empires* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 1986), 19.

More evidence from Thucydides can be used to support this argument. While the Corinthians portray Athenians as courageous and innovative risk-takers, they characterize Spartans as hesitant and inactive, contrasting Athenians' proactive stance with Spartans' reactive behaviour. King Archidamus of Sparta acknowledges these disparities, urging Spartans not to be ashamed of their perceived slowness, as it reflects their distinct approach. This divergence in action reflects deeper implications, shedding light on the significance of Athenian hegemony amidst established norms of autonomous city-states.[74] Sparta was not scared of the Athenian power *per se*, but became aware of the problematic implications of that power when realising the Athenian suggestion for a less autonomous society of *poleis* under the leadership (and influence) of a democracy. Laurie Bagbi wrote that Thucydides demonstrated that the Athenian rise to power, which triggered the war, resulted from two factors: Spartan hesitancy and Athenian daring.[75] While this is an accurate assumption, it does not explain why Athens decided to pursue that kind of power contradictory to the old norms and thus the reason behind the Spartan reaction. The aforementioned Corinthian insights, suggest that Sparta's apprehension was not triggered by the mere rise of Athenian power but by Athens' potential to disrupt the prevailing order by advocating different societal model from autonomous poleis.

The Peloponnesian War was based on a political dilemma, which has been under-discussed in the relevant literature. Athens assumes a hegemonic posture, imposing obedience upon its allies and resorting to brutal measures against dissenters. This behaviour is rationalised by Athenian belief in their entitlement to leadership within the Greek world following the Persian Wars. Athens proposes the establishment of a Pan-Hellenic federation under its leadership, advocating for reduced autonomy and a more collective approach. Conversely, Sparta advocates for greater autonomy and a less collective framework. Both positions are influenced by the traditionally accepted norms of competition, but they also mirror a completely unique dialectic that justified the use of force.

This dilemma itself is based on two pillars. Firstly, the entrenched traditional norms of autonomy, which have withstood the test of time. Secondly, the political schisms within the Greek world, evident in the dichotomy between democracies and non-democracies. The Athenian democracy, coupled with its proposal for a less autonomous inter-polity society and a shift towards a more collectivised domestic and foreign policy, served as the crux of the dilemma that precipitated the Peloponnesian War. Consequently, the Peloponnesian War witnessed civil conflicts erupting in numerous city-states, with both

[74] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.71– 1.84.

[75] Bagby, 'Use and Abuse of Thucydides', 138.

principal adversaries providing support to factions aligned with their respective interests. Even Sparta, which historically opposed bilateral pacts between Greeks and Persians, found herself compelled to explore diplomatic avenues due to the perceived lack of alternatives, as the Athenian reconstructive policy appeared as alien and catastrophic as a Persian (non-Greek) dominance. Perceiving the Athenian federal suggestion as equally catastrophic as the Persian threat shows the power of autonomous norms but also the political divisions between different Greek constitutions. Peter Berger wrote that 'Identity, with its appropriate attachments of psychological reality, is always identity within a specific, socially constructed world'.[76] Thus, Sparta's identity as the protector of the Greek world emerged in reaction to Athens and was an outcome of a socially constructed normative environment where the Athenian actions were illegitimate and posed an existential threat to the institutionalised *autonomia*. Lacking these theoretical tools can lead to the Realist misinterpretation of the Peloponnesian War and the ahistorical application of systemic explanations that are not affected by the aforementioned constructions.

Overall, the genealogy of ideas concerning the interaction between Greek *poleis* until the 5th century BCE centered around the concept of *autonomia*, characterised by the absence of conquest and territorial expansion, with a focus instead on militaristic competition for prestige, honour, and material strength (leadership status). The aftermath of the Greco-Persian Wars, however, was a facilitating condition for the development of a more cohesive Hellenic identity, born from the shared experience of existential conflict. These wars were existential because the Greek belief in their cultural and political superiority held that a Persian victory would undermine their societal and political foundations. Athens emerged as a leader during these wars and subsequently sought to assert a hegemonic role, challenging the traditional notion of *autonomia*, as this very logic of hegemony differed from the old expression of such aims. Athens proposed a centralised system under its leadership, justified by its significant role in the wars. While hegemonic status, prestige, and power had always been motives behind warfare, Athens' claim to hegemony over multiple *poleis* -framed as the protector of Hellenic identity against the Persians - disrupted the established norms of *autonomia* and the poleis system. This shift explains why Sparta delayed its response and why it ultimately felt threatened.

Richard Lebow concludes that the swift rise of Athenian power was enough to endanger Sparta's dominance as the primary hegemon, along with the identities and self-esteem of its citizens.[77] The concept of honour and pride are variables that cannot be replaced

[76] Peter L. Berger, 'Identity as a Problem in the Sociology of Knowledge', *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 7, no. 1 (1966): 111.

[77] Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations*, 25.

holistically by structural factors when assessing legitimate war aims within a specific historical context. What Lebow does not explain is that this threat to self-esteem was based on a political suggestion where the traditional *autonomia* (and thus the condition that allows for competition) would disappear if Athens would become the hegemon, because of a new understanding of hegemony that mirrored a general (Pan-Hellenic) leadership. Spartan and other Greek reactions, including demands for Athens' complete destruction, stemmed from Athenian post-Persian Wars behaviour, which challenged established norms of autonomy, creating another political existential threat within the Greek world which had no similarities with pre-Peloponnesian war conflicts and no structural or human nature-based ontological characteristics.

2.2.4 *Autonomia* and Defence

Looking carefully in the *Iliad*, we can track early ideas on the significance of defensive warfare. In *rhapsody* M. where the battle rages before the walls of Troy, the Trojan Polydamas approaches Hector and advises him not to attack the ships of the Achaeans because the omens were not favourable. Hector responded that 'one omen is best, and that is to fight for the fatherland' (εἷς οἰωνὸς ἄριστος ἀμύνεσθαι περὶ πάτρης). He also clarified that if Polydamas 'would try to flee or persuade any other Trojan with his words, he would strike him dead by his spear' (εἰ δὲ σὺ δηϊοτῆτος ἀφέξεαι, ἠέ τιν᾽ ἄλλον παρφάμενος ἐπέεσσιν ἀποτρέψεις πολέμοιο, αὐτίκ᾽ ἐμῷ ὑπὸ δουρὶ τυπεὶς ἀπὸ θυμὸν ὀλέσσεις.).[78] Hector's words reveal an early understanding of the superiority of defensive warfare and its virtuous nature. Turning away from battle or inspiring others to flee was a contradiction to the norms of aristeia, honour, and competition, they reflected the opposite ethos from the Homeric virtues, but in the case of this dialogue, Hector's words reflect the idea of deeper importance. Praising defence mirrors the latter centuries' logic of *autonomia*, as defence is an instrument towards protecting the autonomous life of each community.

In the 5th century BC, the Cynic philosopher Antisthenes expressed the belief that adversaries could not end through debate, but only through conflict. He argued that 'one must either engage in battle and emerge victorious or refrain from fighting and risk enslavement' (καὶ γὰρ ὁ πόλεμος οὐ λόγῳ κρίνεται ἀλλ᾽ ἔργῳ· οὐδ᾽ ἀντιλέγειν ἔξεστι πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους, ἀλλ᾽ ἢ μαχομένους κρατεῖν ἢ δουλεύειν σιωπῇ).[79] Perceiving war

[78] Homer, *Iliad*, PM, 240-250.

[79] Antisthenes, *Αἴαντος λόγος* (*Speeches of Ajax*), trans. Nicholaos Skouteropoulos, in *Οι Αρχαίοι Κυνικοί. Αποσπάσματα και Μαρτυρίες* (Athens: Gnosi, 1998), 7..

as a tool to avoid enslavement gives a different meaning to the nature of warfare. If war was seen as a means to avoid slavery it was primarily a defensive behaviour; this is an evident switch from the conceptualisation of warfare as a means to achieve glory or to compete. Yet, even this discourse on Just wars and freedom reflects the significance of *autonomia*, as in different sources we can see how opposing sides legitimised aggression to avoid enslavement, even though the inner Greek conflicts did not result in absolute conquest of different poleis – enslavement was linked with the freedom from fear and the access to honour that cannot exist when being defeated in battle by a superior 'other' – something that refers to the Greek wars and not to the Greco-Persian wars, where the term enslavement acquired a different meaning (see 'Enemies' section below).

The latter centuries and the introduction of legal and political filters in the structure of Greek thought present a different view on legitimacy. Thucydides recounts a speech delivered by an Athenian general to his troops before an expedition into Boeotia. The general sought to convince the soldiers for having no doubts that risking their lives on foreign soil was a necessity. Engaging in war on enemy territory (ἐν τῇ ἀλλοτρίᾳ) was seen as a duty to safeguard their homeland (ὑπὲρ τῆς ἡμετέρας ὁ ἀγὼν ἔσται).[80] The general clarified that success in this endeavour would ensure that the Peloponnesian forces could never again invade Athens supported by the formidable Boeotian cavalry. Victory in that case meant securing the safety of their land. This speech reflects the strategic concept of 'offensive defense', a tactic later perfected by the Romans. Thucydides' example shows that generals had to justify such decisions despite the frequency of external campaigns. The argument reveals the importance of justifying campaigns through a defensive lens, through an argument that explained how an offensive war would be beneficial for the protection (and the *autonomia*) of the *polis*. Consequently, such campaigns were not about expansion but served as a means to weaken the enemy and deter Spartan attacks.

Plato described that a justifiable cause for war was wrongdoing. In a dialogue with Socrates, Alcibiades swiftly suggests citing deceit, violence, or spoliation as reasons to rally the community to war. When Socrates probes further, asking if there could be instances where war against a non-aggressive community is warranted, Alcibiades insists that he would hesitate to declare such enemies blameless. According to him, wars waged against innocent parties can never be justified.[81] Aristotle supported Plato's 'defensive' logic by expanding the argumentation with more conditions. Legitimacy flows from being mistreated or being attacked. This is also an idea of Xenophon, whose descriptions

[80] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 4.95.2.

[81] Plato, *Αλκιβιάδης* (*Alcibiades*), trans. Nicholas Denyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 40–42.

of Spartan King Agesilaus' virtues highlighted the logic of fighting defensively.[82] Finally, Aristotle noted that the state's interests (glory, respect, wealth, or power) are part of the legitimate conditions of potential conflicts. This idea is interesting because of its offensive window to the discourse on legitimate war aims.[83]

Xenophon's work criticised the concept of unjust claims. He argued that desiring foreign things is unjust, and he used the enemy advancing against Greeks as an example of unjust action.[84] Here we observe the logic of defence and an idea that reminds us of the last-resort Just war criterion (the 'other' began an unjust war). The phrase 'τὸ δόξαι τῶν ἀλλοτρίων ἀδίκως ἐφίεσθαι' (it is unjust to desire foreign things/what is foreign) is an idea that contributes to the defensive Just war principles, as it directly opposes conquest.

Aeschines was an ancient Greek statesman and orator, born around 389 BCE in Athens. He played a significant role in Athenian diplomacy, serving as an envoy to Philip II of Macedon.[85] Orators' position makes individuals like Aeschines or Demosthenes significant sources as they had experience in foreign policy negotiations but also played a crucial role in legal and political proceedings; persuasive speech could determine the outcome of trials or the decisions of the Athenian Assembly and thus examining the construction of arguments can reveal norms or ideas that explain aspects of the Athenian thought.

Aeschines blamed the orator Demosthenes for his role in the way the Athenian diplomacy approached Phillip II, saying that 'Demosthenes took the floor and began to give them (the Athenian people) pretexts for war and unrest' (ὁ δὲ παριὼν ἀρχὰς αὐτοῖς ἐνεδίδου πολέμου καὶ ταραχῆς).[86] War, in the words of Aeschines is an outcome of bad policymaking. When he accused his opponents of 'violating the peace and constructing

---

[82] Xenophon, *Αγησίλαος* (*Agesilaus)*, trans. Herbert Hailstone, *Agesilaus of Xenophon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1889), 11.3.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Xenophon, *Κύρου Παιδεία (Cyropedia)*, trans. V. Kalampalikis in *Ξενοφώντος Κύρου Παιδεία* (Athens: Papyros, 1975), 1.5.13 'So let us begin with courage, for we are far from believing that we unjustly desire things that belong to others. Now, our enemies are marching against us, initiating their unjust actions, while our friends are calling for our help'.

[85] George Cawkwell, 'Aeschines and the Peace of Philocrates', *Revue des Études Grecques* 73, nos. 347–348 (1960): 347-348.

[86] Aeschines, *Κατὰ Κτησιφῶντος* (*Against Ctesiphon*), trans. A.I. Yagopoulos (Thessaloniki: KEG, 2012), 3.82.

disaster and war' (τὴν μὲν εἰρήνην διέλυσε, τὴν δὲ συμφορὰν καὶ τὸν πόλεμον κατεσκεύασεν), [87] he does not only clarify that war is a synonym of disaster, but also that it's an outcome of policymaking, a decision and an action that is prioritised over peace. The term *κατασευάσειν* means to construct, which could be used literally but also conveys how someone might fabricate a story to deceive others.

Aeschines said that every time Philip tried to reach an agreement with the Athenians by assigning a neutral city to arbitrate their disputes, Demosthenes claimed that impartial arbitration between Athens and Philip was impossible. In addition, when Philip offered the Athenians the island of Alonnisos Demosthenes encouraged the Assembly to decline the offer 'if he (Philip) simply offers it and does not return it' (ὁ δ' ἀπηγόρευε μὴ λαμβάνειν, εἰ δίδωσιν, ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀποδίδωσι) which Aeschines described as a 'manipulation of syllables' (περὶ συλλαβῶν διαφερόμενος).[88] Demosthenes accused Philip of using the word δίδωσιν instead of ἀποδίδωσι, which shows that the Athenian pride would not tolerate such diplomatic misconceptions, an idea that fuelled the people against the Macedonian King.

The 4th century BCE was the period after the catastrophic Peloponnesian war, a time where Philip II expanded his influence in different city-states and marked a period in which language played a crucial role in the design of policymaking. This case reveals two points for the way the 4th Century BCE Athenians perceived war. The first point is that persuading the people to choose war can be based on manipulative tactics and thus language can construct the causes for war. The second point is that there were indeed ways to trigger the peoples' attention, i.e., elements that could legitimise warfare, which shows that ideas defined action and that ideas defined the construction of specific arguments that could lead to action. The decision to wage war was an active construction that included accepted norms, e.g., the Athenian pride of demanding the use of certain words when negotiating with an inferior 'other' but was also based on an accepted dichotomy between two choices: war and peace.

Andokides was an Athenian politician who lived during the 5th and early 4th century BCE. He became involved in the political affairs of Athens during the Peloponnesian War, was exiled, but returned and undertook a diplomatic mission to Sparta (391 BCE) during the period of the Corinthian War (395–387 BCE).[89] After his return, he defended

---

[87] Ibid. 83.

[88] Ibid.

[89] The war was fought between Sparta and a coalition of city-states including Thebes, Athens, Corinth, and Argos, with the support of the Achaemenid Empire.

publicly the prospect of peace with the Spartans. In his speech we can identify important ideas on the post-Peloponnesian War perceptions about war. One of the first claims he made was that 'peace on just terms is better than war' (Ὅτι μὲν εἰρήνην ποιεῖσθαι δικαίαν ἄμεινόν ἐστιν ἢ πολεμεῖν). Subsequently, Andokides made an empirical argument based on the historical account of Athenian engagements in war and peace, emphasising the benefits of peace treaties while highlighting the risks associated with entering conflict. He recounted instances where peace brought prosperity and strengthened Athenian democracy, contrasting them with the turmoil and sacrifices of war. The argument was that 'peace is a source of democracy's power while war could only dissolve democratic constitutions' (τὴν μὲν εἰρήνην σωτηρίαν εἶναι τῷ δήμῳ καὶ δύναμιν, τὸν δὲ πόλεμον δήμου κατάλυσιν γίγνεσθαι).[90] The argument is empirical and utilitarian; the orator does not highlight the moral superiority of peace but the functionality of a peaceful democracy vis-à-vis the state of war. Furthermore, Andokides' empirical examples mirror power, i.e., how the *polis* became stronger militarily in times of peace. The correlation between peace and democracy, though, is a clear sign of a normative environment where war loses both its heroic aura and its meaning as a criterion of a prosperous *polis*. Thus, the 4th century BCE, reveals how the experience of the 5th century (especially the Peloponnesian War), as well as the development of a more sophisticated political constitution in Athens, ushered in a period where ideas about the city-states' are expressed in a framework of a 'society' of units.

The crucial conclusion we can derive from the above-mentioned normative influences is the tendency to legitimise war to support the one who is mistreated, to defend the autonomous rights of the 'self' and to achieve a state of peace that would benefit the 'self' as opposed to military engagements. This tendency shows a normative change. The heroic and competitive prioritisation of glory and honour was still alive, but Greek thinking was now moving to include defence as a condition. The Greeks did not denounce war, but they seemed to understand that waging it should be framed in specific rules, not only in a normative but also in an ethical perspective. This need to legitimise the use of force for the sake of the mistreated prepared the ground for the development of Romano–Christian norms about the legitimacy of war. While the Ancient Greeks did not systematically construct a Just war doctrine, the ideas on the significance of defence were there. Furthermore, these ideas were not only linked with legitimacy but also reflected the illegitimacy of utilitarian offensive warfare.

[90] Andokides, *Περί της προς Λακεδαιμονίους ειρήνης* (On the peace with Sparta), trans. A. Tyflopoulos in Στο Ανθολόγιο Αρχαίων Ελληνικών Κειμένων (Athens: Kentro Ellinikis Glossas, 2006), 3. 12.

2.2.5 Responsibility to Protect

City-states' relationships were influenced by the belief in shared kinship ties; this extended to the main dialect groups, i.e., Dorians, Ionians, Aeolians, and Achaeans. Subsequently, kinship bonds were observed between a 'mother-city' and her colonies.[91]

Herodotus's account on how the tyrant of Miletus tried to persuade the Spartan King to assist his people against Persia shows the importance of waging war to support Greeks in different regions. Living under the Persian rule was described as 'enslavement' (δούλους εἶναι ἀντ᾽ ἐλευθέρων) while accepting this would bring shame and pain to all Greeks – not just those who lived under the Persian rule (ὄνειδος καὶ ἄλγος μέγιστον μὲν αὐτοῖσι ἡμῖν, ἔτι δὲ τῶν λοιπῶν ὑμῖν, ὅσῳ προέστατε τῆς Ἑλλάδος). Sharing the blood of common ancestors (ἄνδρας ὁμαίμονας) was a bond that could legitimise military support, and the religious appeal of the tyrant when asking for help (ὗν ὦν πρὸς θεῶν τῶν Ἑλληνίων) shows that his claim was Just by all means – human and divine.[92] Thus, the responsibility to support fellow Greeks from 'others' was presented as a legitimate argument for persuading the Spartan King Cleomenes. Kinship was important in legitimising warfare and the rhetoric of Aristagoras shows that the identity constructions on the shared ancestry of the Greeks, i.e., through the emphasis on the 'children of the Ionians', held significance for foreign policy decision-making.

In Herodotus, we also read about the wealth and treasures of the Persians, e.g. gold, silver, and slaves, as a motivating argument towards the Spartan King that was asked to send military forces in support of the Ionian Greek city-states.[93] The tyrant of Miletus is trying hard to persuade the Spartans to change their legitimate war aims based on a utilitarian argument, i.e. why while the Spartans wage wars to protect their Peloponnesian allies' unwealthy lands (οὔτε χρυσοῦ ἐχόμενόν ἐστι οὐδὲν οὔτε ἀργύρου) they do not consider to send forces to Ionia and conquer Asia and its wealth παρέχον δὲ τῆς Ἀσίης πάσης ἄρχειν εὐπετέως, ἄλλο τι αἱρήσεσθε;)? [94]

The Spartan reaction was negative: 'may the sunset not find you in Sparta; for the words you speak will not be pleasing to the Spartans, as you wish to have them embark on a journey of three months from the sea' (ἐθέλων σφέας ἀπὸ θαλάσσης τριῶν μηνῶν ὁδὸν

---

[91] Van Wees, 'War in Ancient Greece', 34.

[92] Herodotus, *Histories*,5.49.2 – 5.49.3.

[93] Ibid. 5.49.4.

[94] Ibid. 5.49.8.

ἀγαγεῖν).[95] The Spartan response reveals a fundamental element of the Spartan strategic culture, i.e. the criterion of territorial proximity before sending troops to assist 'others'. Neither kinship nor material gains appear to be strong arguments compared to the nature of the expedition and the Spartan strategic culture.

Thucydides brings a Realist argument in the discourse, acknowledging the importance of pretexts; he does not seem to believe that kinship defined strategy, but could work as a successful argument to mobilise forces, e.g. he claimed how the Athenian decision to send their navy in Sicily was not due to common ancestry with Leonntini (καὶ ἔπεμψαν οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι τῆς μὲν οἰκειότητος προφάσει) and in reality they wanted to block the Peloponnesian grain supplementation (βουλόμενοι δὲ μήτε σῖτον ἐς τὴν Πελοπόννησον ἄγεσθαι).[96]

Yet, the argument on helping city-states of common ancestry was frequent in Ancient Greece. We see similar notions as Alcibiades tried to persuade the Athenians to sail against Sicily. Thucydides used the term '*ὡς χρὴois chron'*, meaning 'as we are obliged to do' (sailing on Sicily to support our allies), presenting a normative situation where fighting in favour of defending friends is not only legitimate but mandatory.[97] Xenophon has also supported the norms of defensive warfare, presenting not only the justice but also the nobility of waging war to defend the 'self' and kinsmen or allies: 'What is more lawful than self-defence? What is nobler than to succour those we love?'[98] Aristotle also underlined the importance of protecting kinsmen or benefactors when facing threats.[99] Thus, despite Thucydides skeptical approach, such factors were significant in legitimising conflict to those who fought. Thus, the responsibility to protect was a norm and defined Just wars in different periods of the Ancient Greek history.

The Persian wars brought an additional element in this responsibility. This small passage from Aeschylos' Persians (402-405) that describes the Athenian battle song before the naval battle in Salamis (480 BC) shows these norms of legitimacy as the noblest:

> 'Advance, ye sons of Greece, from thraldom save

---

[95] Ibid. 5.50.3.

[96] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 3.86.4.

[97] Ibid. 7.18.1-2.

[98] Xenophon, *Cyropedia*,1.5.13.

[99] O'Driscoll, 'Rewriting the Just War Tradition', 3.

> Your country, save your wives, your children save,
> The temples of your gods, the sacred tomb
> Where rest your honour'd ancestors; this day
> The common cause of all demands your valour.'[100]

Aeschylos wrote his tragedies in the 5th century BCE, a significant period marked by significant cultural and political changes in the Hellenic world. His notable works, such as the *Oresteia* trilogy, were influenced by the Persian Wars that left a mark on Greek identity. Aeschylus' writings, therefore, serve as a crucial source for comprehending the concept of Just war in a time when a distinct self-versus-other dynamic emerged in Greek thought due to the Greco-Persian conflicts.

The formation of the Hellenic League, despite involving only a minority of Greek city-states, marked a collective response against the Persian threat.[101] Herodotus notes that league members fought for Greece collectively, introducing a new notion of legitimacy in warfare centered around defence against an external 'other'.[102] Herodotus describes that the Athenians perceived the Persian conquest of Eretria as a Greek defeat, telling the Spartans that 'Greece is *asthenestere* (weaker) after this loss'[103] legitimising collective defence despite inner differences.

This shift in Pan-Hellenic norms also brought about the idea of the illegitimacy of internal conflicts. Plato distinguishes between wars among Greeks and those against external enemies, emphasising the ethical dimensions of identity constructions. Plato adopted the word *stasis* to emphasise the idea of the illegitimacy of *polemos* (war) between the Greeks.[104]

---

[100] Aeschylus, *Πέρσαι* (*The Persians*), trans. I.N. Gryparis, *Οι Τραγωδίες του Αισχύλου* (Athens: Estia, 1930),402-405. 'Ω παίδες Ελλήνων ίτε λευθερούτε Πατρίδα, ελευθερούτε δε παίδας, γυναίκας, Θεών τε Πατρώων έδη, θήκας τε προγόνων΄ νυν υπέρ πάντων αγών.'

[101] Phang et al., '*Conflict in Ancient Greece and Rome*', 11;, Frank Adcock, *The Greek and Macedonian Art of War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 11.

[102] Herodotos, *Histories,* 7.145.

[103] Ibid. 6.106.

[104] Plato, *Πολιτεία (Republic)*, tr. Ioannis Gryparis (Thessaloniki: KEG, 2015), E. 470b. Plato describes the terms *stasis* as a suitable description of a dispute among kinship and relatives (*oikeos kai syggenes)*, whilst *polemos* could mirror the external and foreign texture of the opposing sides (*allotrion*).

Interestingly, however, we need to be very specific in addressing who deserved protection to understand the ontology of the Greek Just war approach. At the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, the Athenians fought against the Corinthians, who attacked the Athenian-allied city of Megara. The majority of the Athenian forces were fighting in Aigina, which made the Corinthians confident to operate and achieve an easy victory. The Athenians did not withdraw their forces from Aigina but mobilised all available personnel, including both elders and youths to march towards Megara (οἱ δὲ Ἀθηναῖοι τὸ μὲν πρὸς Αἰγίνῃ στράτευμα οὐκ ἐκίνησαν, τῶν δ᾽ ἐκ τῆς πόλεως ὑπολοίπων οἵ τε πρεσβύτατοι καὶ οἱ νεώτατοι ἀφικνοῦνται ἐς τὰ Μέγαρα).[105] This is a clear example of the responsibility to assist allies in Ancient Greek thought; Greek allies that faced security challenges because of other Greeks.

The 'responsibility to protect' norm was based on an identity-related logic. The construction of a Pan-Hellenic identity made Greek *poleis* develop an understanding of collective defence, while before that, this responsibility reflected alliances and old kinship ties. The Greek value of autonomy, coupled with a hierarchical view of self and other based on social and political criteria, shaped their conception of Just wars. Unlike the Romans, the Greeks, except for Alexander III, did not seek to spread Hellenism or subscribe to universal definitions of Just wars. They prioritised their autonomy and distinctiveness, believing this to be the essence of their identity when engaging in conflicts with non-Greeks. Despite their sometimes-contentious behaviour among themselves, the notion of *autonomia* and reluctance to interfere in non-Greek affairs significantly influenced the evolution of defensive norms and legitimacy, especially when encountering Roman and later Christian influences.

To understand this concept we need to address the Aristotelian argument – applicable in both the identity-related constructions of different *poleis* but also in the broader Hellenic identity developments. Clausewitz is famous for stating that war is an extension of politics. Long before him, however, Aristotle made a similar ontological argument, asserting that strategy is inherently political. To understand how Aristotelian thought identifies the sociopolitical nature of strategy, we must consider his belief that everything in life has a *telos* (purpose). The *telos* of strategy is victory, but strategy (and thus victory) is subordinated to politics, since Aristotle argued that the highest and most comprehensive art is politics, which determines the *telos* of every other art or science, including strategy. As politics is the path to *eudaimonia* (the greater good of the *polis*)[106], the concept of strategy naturally becomes political; war and victory are simply parts of a

[105] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.105.2.

[106] Aristotle, *NE*, A.1,2,3.

larger political framework. The *telos* of strategy (victory) is part of the *telos* of the *polis* (*eudaimonia*).[107]

Aristotle explained that the *telos* of strategy, like the *telos* of medicine, cannot be understood in isolation from the 'greater *telos*'—the ultimate purpose behind these practices. Victory is meaningless unless we understand why it is desirable, just as medicine is meaningless if we do not understand why health matters. For Aristotle, *eudaimonia* for the *polis* provides the answer to these questions. Victory matters because it can serve as a means of protecting a fulfilling life that is desirable for the community. Moreover, Aristotle believed that only the pursuit of long-term happiness could lead to *eudaimonia*, underscoring the importance of enduring outcomes in victory—a precursor to Cicero's idea of a Just and durable peace as a legitimate war aim (as part of a condition where the community prospers and fulfills its moral duty).

Overall, the collective mentality of the Ancient Greeks went through transformations regarding legitimate war aims. From glory to political dialectics between *autonomia* and Pan-Hellenic centralised systems, Just War ideas became part of discourses and collective experiences. In anthropological and IR literature, political autonomy means no external authority has power over a unit.[108] In Ancient Greece, evidence shows that legitimate war aims constructed a collective mentality where *autonomia* involved both self-protection and respect for others' autonomy, rejecting expansionist aims. Philip and Alexander III followed an expansionistic strategy that was the exception that verifies this rule (interestingly, Alexander's Persian campaign was based on a discourse on revenge, which shows the power of emotional variables over mere conquest).

A limitation of this project is the lack of discussion on Philip and Alexander, whose campaigns warrant a separate, focused study. Their expansionist strategies, and the concept of a Pan-Hellenic army, are closely tied to the political thought of Isocrates, an Athenian orator in the 4th century BCE and an advocate for cooperative Greek resistance against Persia and Aristotle. Isocrates emphasised civic virtue as central to military identity and was an advocate of Pan-Hellenic military coalition.[109] Both thinkers were shaped by the legacy of the Persian Wars, which framed Greek identity around freedom versus tyranny and civilisation versus barbarism—an ideological framework that underpinned their vision of Just war and Pan-Hellenic unity. However, the extent to which these ideas' Hellenistic application were accepted and applied remains an area

---

[107] Ibid. A.1,2,3,4.

[108] Jack Snyder, 'Anarchy and Culture', 14.

[109] Isokrates, *Πανηγυρικός* (*Panegyricus*), trans. St. Barakou-Maragkoudaki (Athens: OEDB, 1967), 4.82-88

requiring further investigation, particularly in light of Greco-Roman interactions following the Hellenistic period and the Roman conquest of the Greek world.

2.3 Religion and Law

David J. Bederman argues that the ancient Greek polis was not just a political entity but also a religious and military institution. City-states cultivated specific religious cults and assigned religious duties to state officials, intertwining governance with divine authority.[110] At the same time, the polis functioned as a military structure, reinforcing the deep connection between religion, warfare, and state identity in Greek society. By adopting a constructivist methodology—which examines how ideas, beliefs, and social norms shape political behaviour—it becomes clear that religious institutions and rituals were not peripheral but central to how war was legitimised, regulated, and experienced in the Greek world. This was especially evident in the oracular traditions, where divine sanction was sought to ensure military action aligned with the will of the gods.

Cian O'Driscoll highlights that Greek warfare was governed by intricate religious and ritualistic practices, making the formal authorisation of war not merely a political or military decision but a sacred act.[111] Before launching a campaign, Greek leaders were required to secure divine approval through oracles, sacrifices, and omens. Xenophon, in his accounts of military life, frequently references these rituals, illustrating the depth of religious influence in war planning. He emphasizes that only after favourable signs from the gods war could be officially sanctioned,[112] reinforcing the notion that divine approval was not an optional formality but an essential precondition for conflict.[113]

One of the most significant religious institutions shaping Greek warfare was the Oracle of Delphi, whose pronouncements often guided military strategy. Before engaging in major conflicts—such as the Persian Wars—Greek city-states sought Delphi's guidance, believing that divine endorsement was necessary for a war to be just.[114] Hans van Wees

---

[110] David J. Bederman, *International Law in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 32-33.

[111] Cian O'Driscoll, 'Keeping Tradition Alive: Just War and Historical Imagination', *Journal of Global Security Studies*, vol. 3/no. 2 (2018): 240.

[112] Xenophon, *Ἑλληνικά* [*Hellenica*], tr. Loukas Roufos Kanakaris and Athanasios Roufos Kanakaris (Athens: Galaxias, 1966), 2.18 and V.4.20-24

[113] Xenophon, *Hellenica*, IV.7.7*; Cyropedia,* II.1.1.

[114] Herodotus, *Histories,* 7.140.

underscores the importance of Pan-Hellenic sanctuaries, such as Olympia, where religious rituals and festivals reinforced Greek identity and the distinction between the *self* (the Greek world) and the *other* (non-Greeks).[115] These sanctuaries were inextricably linked with the social construction of 'otherness', as well as the impact of 'otherness' for the broader understanding of legitimacy when it comes to warfare.

Greek states were deeply conscious of the need for religious justification before initiating hostilities.[116] Herodotus records that during their campaigns against the Persians, the Athenians justified their military actions as divine vengeance for the destruction of Greek temples.[117] The punishment of those guilty of sacrilege was severe; Herodotus recounts the crucifixion of a Persian official and the stoning of his son as acts of divine retribution.[118] Thucydides recounts how, in 432/1 BC, the Spartans sent three embassies to Athens, invoking religious offenses as grounds for war, claiming they sought to 'avenge the gods' for past sacrileges.[119] The Athenians, in turn, countered with their own demands for religious expiation. Such exchanges demonstrate that accusations of religious transgressions—whether desecrating sacred land or neglecting sacrifices—often served as pretexts for war.

Greek warfare was deeply ritualistic. Victor Alonso explained that sacrifices to gods such as Ares, Athena, and Zeus were common before battles, reinforcing the belief that war was not merely a political endeavor but a sacred duty. These rituals were crucial in shaping the moral framework of war, ensuring that military actions were perceived as aligned with divine will.[120]

As Greek warfare evolved, so too did its religious and ethical dimensions. The shift from aristocratic, individualistic combat in the Homeric era to the more collective, civic-based warfare of the hoplite phalanx marked a transformation in both military tactics and

---

[115] Van Wees, 'War and Peace in Ancient Greece', 38.

[116] Van Wees, *War and Violence in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 2000).

[117] Herodotus, *Histories*, 8.144.

[118] Ibid. 9.120.

[119] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.126.

[120] Victor Alonso, 'War, Peace, and International Law in Ancient Greece', in *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Asia, The Mediterranean, Europe, and Mesoamerica*, ed. Kurt Raaflaub and Nathan Rosenstein (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 216–219.

ideology. Peter Krentz argues that this transition reflected a growing emphasis on collective responsibility rather than individual heroism. The ritual of the *paean*—originally sung to appease the gods or celebrate victory—became a standard pre-battle chant, reinforcing unity and morale among hoplite soldiers.[121]

This evolution in military organization was accompanied by a shift in the religious understanding of war. Whereas earlier warfare was often framed as an individual's offering to the gods, by the 5th century BCE, war was increasingly seen as a civic duty. The decline in the practice of dedicating armor at sanctuaries suggests that war was no longer viewed as a personal act of devotion but as a collective endeavor tied to the city-state's survival. The refusal of the Eleians to allow Agis to pray for victory in battle illustrates an emerging effort to impose religious restrictions on warfare between poleis.[122]

While religion provided a moral framework for war, it did not necessarily act as a restraining force. On the contrary, religious principles could serve to justify extreme acts of aggression, including forced displacement and mass executions. The Athenian treatment of the Aeginetans is a clear example. Viewing them as perpetual enemies, the Athenians expelled the Aeginetans from their island in 431 BC and, in 424 BC, pursued them to Thyrea, where they razed the settlement and executed all captured Aeginetans, citing historical enmity as justification.[123] Similarly, religious transgressions could serve as pretexts for total destruction. The Amphictyonic League, which oversaw the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi, swore an oath to annihilate any city that committed sacrilege against the oracle; in 591 BC, the league destroyed the city of Kirrha for its aggression against the sanctuary.[124] Thus, rather than acting as a constraint on violence, religious principles could validate extreme retribution. War in ancient Greece was not the default mode of relations between city-states but was one of several legitimate means of resolving disputes, coexisting with diplomacy, which played a crucial role in preventing unnecessary conflict. Before hostilities commenced, diplomatic efforts sought to mediate and arbitrate disputes, with officials such as the *proxenos* and *presbys* serving as

---

[121] Peter Krentz, 'Fighting by the Rules: The Invention of the Hoplite Agon', *Hesperia* 71, no. 1 (2002): 23–39.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Hans van Wees, 'Genocide in the Ancient World.' in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, ed. Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[124] Ibid.

intermediaries.[125] This demonstrates that warfare was not a reckless or arbitrary action but rather an institutionalised procedure with legal and ethical considerations. The integration of war into a broader system of interpolity relations highlights its regulated nature, reinforcing the idea that war was the last resort rather than a constant state of affairs on numerous occasions, but also in a normative sense.

A key distinction in Greek warfare was that between private extralegal violence and state-sanctioned war. In cases where no legal agreements (symbola) existed between city-states, individuals could engage in reprisals to settle debts, but these remained personal disputes rather than official wars. States could also authorise raids against enemy territories (laphyron epikeryttein), a limited paramilitary action that sometimes served as a precursor to war but did not necessarily escalate into full-scale conflict. [126] Similarly, indirect wars fought on third-party territories allowed states to engage in hostilities without formally declaring war. However, open war (phaneros polemos) required formal declaration, distinguishing it from lesser forms of violence. [127] This reflects a proto-legal tradition akin to later Just War theory, in which the official recognition of war was necessary for legitimacy. Thucydides provides a clear example of this legal justification in the words of the Corinthians, who defend their decision to go to war against Athens: 'We are not acting improperly in making war against them, nor are we making war against them without having received signal provocation...'[128]

This passage reveals the importance of justification in Greek warfare. The Corinthians argue that war is not merely a tool of power but must be waged in response to provocation, reinforcing the principle that war required a legitimate *casus belli*. Greek diplomacy also played a crucial role in regulating inter-polis relations. Treaties such as spondai (temporary truces) and symmachia (alliances) provided structured frameworks for war and peace. For instance, the Peace of Nicias (421 BCE) was meant to last fifty years but failed to prevent renewed hostilities. Later, the *Koine Eirene* (general peace) treaties, beginning with the King's Peace (386 BCE), sought to end wars indefinitely rather than simply pausing them. [129]

---

[125] Alonso, 'War, Peace, and International Law', 216–219.

[126] Ibid. 219-221.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.40.

[129] Alonso, 'War, Peace, and International Law', 219-221

Victor Alonso traces the evolution of Greek diplomacy, noting its shift from informal personal agreements to formal treaties between city-states, a change that made diplomacy more structured and political. .[130] From a constructivist perspective, this transformation highlights how language and norms shaped political legitimacy, shifting from personal bonds to collective alliances (philia, symmachia). War was not the default state of Greek interstate relations but was regulated within a legal framework that distinguished between justified conflicts and illegitimate aggression. Diplomatic mechanisms, such as proxenoi and treaties, sought to resolve disputes before war became necessary.

Greek legal traditions were shaped not only by written treaties but also by moral imperatives embedded in unwritten laws (*agraphos nomos*). [131] Adriaan Lanni explores the nature of warfare laws in ancient Greece and their relationship to customary international law. The argument is that contrary to modern assumptions, customary law in Greece was not seen as inferior to written law but rather equally respected.[132] Indeed, the Greeks used the same term, *nomos*, for both customs and statutes, and courts did not require that lawsuits be based solely on written laws. In fact, as, Lanni argues, customary law may have held even greater weight than written law, particularly in the realm of warfare.

This idea—that moral imperatives exist beyond formal legal codes—was deeply embedded in Greek thought and influenced conceptions of war and justice. Aristotle reinforces this principle, arguing that just governance and military action must align with both written statutes and the higher moral order derived from reason and tradition. In his *Politics*, he explained that war must be undertaken only so that men may live in peace without suffering injustice, which is an idea that was first expressed by Plato.[133] Here, Aristotle presents war as a regulated necessity rather than an end in itself, aligning with Alonso's interpretation that Greek warfare was not anarchic but constrained by ethical and legal principles. The existence of divine law suggests an inherent moral limit on human decrees – strengthening Aristotle's argument that wars waged solely for power or gain violate the higher ethical order that governs just action.

---

[130] Ibid. 214.

[131] Ibid. 207.

[132] Lanni, Adriaan, 'The Laws of War in Ancient Greece', *Law and History Review* 26 (3) (2008): 469-89.

[133] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1333a30; Plato, *Laws*, 1.628, trans. Trevor J. Saunders (London: Penguin Books, 1970).

A key argumentative link between law and Just war emerges in the discussion of how the informal rules of war helped sustain the hoplite-dominated polis, imposing ethical and strategic constraints that mitigated unnecessary destruction. By preventing warfare from escalating into existential struggles, these rules functioned as a form of social contract, akin to legal principles that regulate civil disputes. The breakdown of these customs, particularly during the Peloponnesian War, illustrates how war became increasingly lawless, with massacres, the execution of envoys, and systematic attacks on civilian populations becoming more common.[134] Athens, with its democratic structure and expansive naval empire, played a crucial role in this transformation, as its military strategy diverged from the traditional hoplite-centred model.

Ober perceives this as a paradox: in the Archaic and early Classical periods, informal yet effective conventions limited war's destructiveness while reinforcing a rigid social hierarchy. However, the rise of Athenian democracy in the fifth century BCE disrupted this balance. By expanding political participation and reducing hierarchy, Athens encouraged military innovation that gradually eroded traditional wartime constraints. As these rules collapsed, warfare became more destructive and lawless, weakening the polis system. What Ober describes as a paradox aligns with my argument on the 'hidden dialectic of the Peloponnesian War'. Athens' behaviour was not merely deconstructive but aimed at reconstructing the deeply rooted norms of autonomous structures that had previously shaped Greek warfare—where conflicts were limited and did not seek total conquest. With Athens' hegemonic and imperial ambitions introducing a new model of Greek interstate relations, the former norms gave way to a more brutal and total approach. One side sought radical change, while the other saw this agenda as an existential threat to the accepted customs of the Greek world. This shift further eroded the ethical and legal constraints that had once governed warfare.

2.4 Enemies

2.4.1 Identity Constructions: The Self vs. the Other

According to Alexander Wendt, 'identity is at base a subjective quality, rooted in an actor's self-understandings.'[135] The Greeks developed a shared identity representation of a general Hellenic 'self' vis-à-vis a barbaric 'other'. Regardless of linguistic differences,

---

[134] Josiah Ober, "Classical Greek Times," in *The Laws of War: Constraints on Warfare in the Western World*, ed. Michael Howard et al. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 12–26.

[135] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 224.

the ability to comprehend various dialects served as a unifying force, despite occasional mockery.[136] Thus, this idea of a Hellenic identity that can be tracked from the Homeric thought pre-existed the interaction between Greeks and Persians. Yet, this dialectic relationship with external barbarians, differing in language, religion, and social customs,[137] was foundational to Greek Antiquity's ideas and norms, including the legitimacy of war. According to Simon Hornblower, the unity that contributed to the Greek victory over the Persians was partly due to the Persian threat, which dissolved once the threat receded, causing the Greeks to revert to their former poleis-based identities, e.g. 'the Athenians' 'the Spartans', etc.[138] However, as Hornblower acknowledges, this unity was based on an existing identity that was constructed upon factors that fostered a sense of Greekness, e.g. shared origins, customs, religion, and language, and can be found in Herodotus' texts.[139]

The term Pan-Hellenes is present in Hesiod's earlier texts.[140] The normative significance of the acknowledgement of the unifying dynamics in the Hellenic world reflects a spirit of collective identity. Such reflections can help detect the seed of what later became the idea of Just defensive warfare against external 'others'. In the stage where the developed entities turned into city-states, neighbours competed for agricultural resources.[141] Furthermore, when Herodotus described the Greco-Persian wars, even when referring to the Ionian Revolts, he uses the terms 'Hellenes fighting the Persians' (ὡς ἐμάχοντο οἱ Ἕλληνες τοῖσι Πέρσῃσι); thus, the Pan-Hellenic identity was acknowledged during his time.[142] In Herodotus, we learn that the Lacedaemonians 'rejected any Persian offers threatening Greek freedom' (δουλοσύνην φέροντας τῇ Ἑλλάδι), vowing to fight back

---

[136] Hartmann and Heuser, *War, Peace and World Orders*, 242.

[137] O'Driscoll, 'Rewriting the Just War Tradition,', 5.

[138] Simon Hornblower, 'Greeks and Persians: West Against East.' in Anja Hartmann and Beatrice Heuser (eds.) *War, Peace and World Orders in European History* (London: Routledge 2002), 50-51.

[139] Herodotus, *Histories*, 8.144.

[140] Osiander, *Before the state,* 55.

[141] Phang et al., *Conflict in Ancient Greece and Rome*, 6.

[142] Herodotus, *Histories*, 6.29.1.

despite Persian military might.[143] However, not all Greeks adhered to these principles; Herodotus lists several city-states that 'Midised'. Meanwhile, Corfu opted for neutrality, avoiding entanglement in the Greek-Persian conflict. They cited a reluctance to challenge Persian authority in the event of a Persian victory and attributed their absence during Greek triumphs to unfavourable weather conditions.[144] Nevertheless, those who fought against Persia swore to punish those who sided with the enemy.

> 'Those who, being Greeks, surrendered to the Persians without external force, when things are restored, they will be obligated to pay to the god of Delphi one-tenth of all they possess.'[145]

Examining the words of the oath reveals that the choice to oppose the Persians was undeniably founded on a sense of legitimacy, contrasting with the notion of prioritising survival through surrender. The divine aspect, wherein the city-states face punishment, underscores the justification for engaging in warfare to safeguard the Hellenic world against external threats.

The identity-oriented understanding of Herodotus provides an interesting insight into the legitimacy norms in a Pan-Hellenic 'self' vs. 'others' setting. Herodotus clarified that those who were reluctant to fight the Persians chose the worse option for the *polis*.[146] Andreas Osiander illustrates that Herodotus' idea was dominant in Athenian society since 487 BCE, as a lot of ostracised Athenians were accussed of pro-Persian ideas.[147] Punishing those unwilling to risk battle is a clear example of how identities shaped legitimacy for conflict.

Even though during the later years of the Peloponnesian War the Spartans made a pact with the Persians, we have evidence of discontent within the Spartan elite as a result of this condition. Xenophon wrote that the Spartan Admiral Callicratidas said that:

---

[143] Ibid.7.10.2.

[144] Ibid. 7.168.3-4.

[145] Ibid. 7.132.2. ('επὶ τούτοισι οἱ Ἕλληνες ἔταμον ὅρκιον οἱ τῷ βαρβάρῳ πόλεμον ἀειράμενοι. τὸ δὲ ὅρκιον ὧδε εἶχε, ὅσοι τῷ Πέρσῃ ἔδοσαν σφέας αὐτοὺς Ἕλληνες ἐόντες, μὴ ἀναγκασθέντες, καταστάντων σφι εὖ τῶν πρηγμάτων, τούτους δεκατεῦσαι τῷ ἐν Δελφοῖσι θεῷ. τὸ μὲν δὴ ὅρκιον ὧδε εἶχε τοῖσι Ἕλλησι)·

[146] Ibid. 6.109. Herodotus uses the phrase *χείρον των γνώμεων* (worse of all the possible opinions) to emphasise that there is no profit or survival instinct that could be considered as enough to lead any Greek hesitate join the alliance.

[147] Osiander, Before the state, 65.

> 'the Greeks had become pitiable, flattering the barbarians for money...declaring that if he reached his homeland alive, he would do whatever he could to reconcile the Athenians with the Spartans' (ἀθλιωτάτους εἶναι τοὺς Ἕλληνας, ὅτι βαρβάρους κολακεύουσιν ἕνεκα ἀργυρίου… κατά γε τὸ αὐτοῦ δυνατὸν διαλλάξειν Ἀθηναίους καὶ Λακεδαιμονίους).[148]

Callicratidas urged his forces to 'show the barbarians that even without worshiping them, we are capable of avenging our enemies!' (δείξωμεν τοῖς βαρβάροις ὅτι καὶ ἄνευ τοῦ ἐκείνους θαυμάζειν δυνάμεθα τοὺς ἐχθροὺς τιμωρεῖσθαι). Xenophon's evidence shows that despite the utilitarian and strategic importance of cooperation between Greeks and Persians, there were voices that challenged the ethical and normative hypostasis of these political choices.

William Connolly understood identities as 'a series of socially understood and recognised differences'.[149] But what is the significance of distinct identities? Isokrates, praises the Greeks for being more virtuous than their Eastern enemies since the latter did not embody civic virtues but lived as enslaved people under a tyrannical monarch.[150]

In addition to this political existential threat perception, the loss of the polis mirrored a religious existential threat. Aeschylus wrote that the Gods can grant victory to those who have 'the right to fight for their polis' (ὡς δικαίως πόλεως πρόμαχος ὄρνυται).[151] Contextualising the specific idea requires an understanding of the way the Greco-Persian wars were perceived as a clash of civilisations, i.e., 'the loss of Greek city-states would lead to the loss of their gods' (σαν μια πολιτεία χαθή, πάν κι οι θεοί της),[152] which is a clear statement of justifying warfare based on a cultural existential threat.

---

[148] Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 1.6.8.

[149] William Conolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1991), 64.

[150] Isokrates, *Panegyricus,* 4.82-88.. Similar ideas were expressed by Aristotle who described those who do not have civic virtues and political behaviour as slaves – even if he was referring to nobles and Kings, e.g king Sardanapalous, according to Aristotle, lived like a 'slave' (based on his absolute prioritisation of pleasure over anything else). Aristotle, *NE, A*.5.

[151] Aeschylus, *Προμηθεὺς δεσμώτης (Prometheus)*, trans. I.N. Gryparis (Thessaloniki, KEG, 2015), 417, 18, 10.

[152] Ibid, 216.

For Isokrates, civic virtues were part of the military culture, and thus, the discrimination between the two cultures shows an identity construction of superiority and inferiority. Moreover, this notion is interesting for the legitimacy of warfare. Isokrates praises the superior culture for Just war aims when fighting an inferior enemy. This notion is evident in the Aristotlean thought when it states that:

> Men may wage war, first, to provide against their own enslavement, second, to obtain empire for the good of the governed and third to establish mastery only over those who deserve to be slaves.[153]

Aristotle believed that being able to wage war has utilitarian origins since enslavement by an 'other' is a possibility. In addition, he distinguishes between good and bad governance, implying that the kind of political norms can define whether one should fight against a different (inferior) actor whose political culture is not as good as the former. Finally, his notions about 'those who deserve to be slaves' show a perception of identities with *a priori* superior standing to others. Aristotle's teacher, Plato, clarifies that one who will not accept criticism, even a great king, can only be considered *apaideutos* and *aischros* (uneducated and hideous).[154] For Plato, even kings should be judged. Thus, the despotic absolutism of the Persians was seen as cheap and decadent by the Greeks. In addition, Xenophon described the Persian King as having the best quality food and drink, with thousands working to assure his comfort, whilst Agesilaus, a virtuous and inspiring leader, lived frugally.[155] Therefore, the enemy was criticised not only for posing a threat but also for its sociopolitical characteristics. This ideology played a crucial role in the Greek perceptions of legitimate warfare. The Persians were not inferior because of their different DNA but based on political and cultural differences. This distinction included sophisticated societies like the Persians under the term 'barbarians', and in certain occasions, the term did not mirror negative sentiments but a clear linguistic and cultural distinction. For example, Xenophon repeatedly expressed his admiration for the Persian King Cyrus, but kept the term 'barbarian' when describing the Persian 'others' – still, as seen earlier he also criticised the way different Persian rulers lived as opposed to Greek ideals.[156] On the other hand, Plato suggested that war against barbarians could be fought more ruthlessly than against

---

[153] Aristotle, *Politics*, 7. 188.

[154] Plato, *Sophist*, E. 227.

[155] Xenophon, *Agesilaus*, Chapter 9.

[156] André Bernand, *Guerre et violence dans la Grèce antique* (Paris: Hachette, 1999), 166–167.

fellow Greeks and underlined that enslaving barbarians was acceptable (contradictory to the inappropriate enslavement of Greeks by Greeks).[157]

Scholars have discussed the importance of the Greco-Persian wars in shaping the identities of 'self' and 'other', particularly in generating the concept of 'barbarians.'[158] Others emphasize that these identities pre-existed in Greek discourse, as evidenced by the term 'barbarian' in the Homeric Epics.[159] While the concept did predate the Greco-Persian wars, these conflicts significantly intensified the construction of 'self' versus 'other' identities. The wars facilitated this establishment, but the normative foundations—such as a shared Hellenic identity in culture, language, religion, and kinship—already existed and worked as a facilitating condition.[160]

While reading Herodotus, I systematically recorded every instance of the term 'barbarian.' Interestingly, Herodotus uses 'barbarian' to describe anything non-Greek, from cities to languages, nations, and ideas. He applies it to various nations and communities, particularly the Persians, without implying inferiority or uncivilised behaviour. Although he occasionally describes atrocities against non-combatants, he does not only attribute the misfortunes of the Greeks to 'barbarian others'. Instead, he notes that most Greek misfortunes resulted from internal conflicts among Greek city-states, rather than the Persian threat.[161] In Herodotus's work, 'barbarians' simply refer to non-Greeks, naturally existing in the geopolitical landscape of his time, without suggesting perpetual hostility or justifying Greek offensive actions. In the beginning of his work, he even admits that 'almost all the names of the gods came to Greece from Egypt' (σχεδὸν δὲ καὶ πάντων τὰ οὐνόματα τῶν θεῶν ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἐλήλυθε ἐς τὴν Ἑλλάδα).[162]

One key theme is the inconsistency in applying the laws of war, particularly the distinction between laws applying to Greeks versus non-Greeks. While there were norms in Greek warfare—such as the protection of religious sites, immunity of heralds, and

---

[157] Plato, *Republic,* 6.5.470–1.

[158] Edith, Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

[159] Hornblower, 'Greeks and Persians', 58.

[160] Herodotus, *Histories*, 8.144.

[161] Ibid. 6.98.3.

[162] Ibid. 2.50.1.

rules of reprisal—these were not always followed consistently, especially in conflicts against non-Greek enemies.[163] These identity-based differences construct an unbridgeable gap between the 'self' and the 'other.' Ober argues that these informal rules of war among the Greeks primarily applied to conflicts between Hellenic city-states rather than between Greeks and non-Greeks. The core argument raised by Ober asserts that these rules—particularly those regulating the treatment of prisoners, the return of the dead, and the limited scope of pursuit—began to erode after 450 BCE, culminating in their collapse during the Peloponnesian War. The hoplite phalanx system, which had structured warfare in a socially sustainable manner, relied on these rules to maintain balance, limiting the duration and severity of conflicts and ensuring that wars remained manageable for the citizen-soldier class.[164] However, when Greeks fought non-Greeks, such as during the Persian Wars, they abandoned these conventions, demonstrating that adherence to the rules was largely voluntary. This shift signaled a move away from a structured, socially stabilising warfare system to a more total form of conflict.

This understanding helps explain Greek norms of legitimate enslavement against 'others,' indicating that this 'otherness' was not a constant source of insecurity or a Hobbesian conflict of identities. Instead, it was based on coexistence and mutual acknowledgment. This perpetual 'otherness' served as a normative foundation for defensive warfare, as conquering these 'others' was generally unattractive to the Greeks. The Greek world, with its sense of distinct superiority, was content without ruling over those whose language, culture, norms, and identities were perceived as inherently alien. Unlike Egyptians and Assyrians, who depicted enemies as smaller and as slaves in their bas-reliefs, and never showed their own soldiers injured or dead, Greek bas-reliefs portrayed both friend and foe at the same size, depicting suffering and casualties on both sides.[165] Regardless of the strong distinction between a superior 'self' from an inferior 'other' in various sources, the recognition/naturalisation of a society of entities is an indicator of accepting 'otherness' vis-à-vis the future Roman approach and the 'romanisation' of the map that shows a communitarian and less 'universal' normative attitude regarding war and foreign policy.

Overall, the discourse on 'enemies' has marked the Greek collective mentality in two ways: firstly, 'others' were fundamentally different, in a sense that Greekness remained a 'privilege' of the inter-polis society of the Greek poleis – thus, wars of conquest appeared

---

[163] Lanni, 'The Laws of War', 469-89.

[164] Ober, 'Classical Greek Times', 12-16.

[165] Bernard, *Guerre et violence*, 165–7.

both unattractive and unjust – why launch an offensive conquest when there is no way to export the political and social ontology of the 'self'? Secondly, the further we move from Herodotus towards Plato and Aristotle, the 'self' vs. 'other' discourse becomes more 'unbridgeable' and thus the 'Wendtian' notion of 'self-understanding' acquires a shape of a distinct, superior, and challenged culture, as an outcome of the collective experience of the Persian Wars and the development of political structures that enhanced the concepts of law and citizenship as opposed to the despotic nature of the Persian Empire. Interestingly, 'otherness' was seen as natural but also as fundamentally different, which worked as a facilitating condition for future normative developments.

2.4.2 Greeks vs. Greeks

During the late 6th century, the Athenians forged an alliance with the Persians, driven by their common foe at the time: Sparta.[166] Despite facing charges from the city's assembly for pledging earth and water to the Persians, the rationale behind forming alliances with non-Greeks to bolster a city-state's power in conflicts among Greeks was not uncommon.

Herodotus presents the words of the Persian General Mardonios, when arguing in favour of the Persian expedition against the Greeks.

> 'Greeks have a tendency to provoke war recklessly, driven by foolishness and ignorance (καίτοι [γε] ἐώθασι Ἕλληνες, ὡς πυνθάνομαι, ἀβουλότατα πολέμους ἵστασθαι ὑπό τε ἀγνωμοσύνης καὶ σκαιότητος). That is to say, when they declare war against each other, they seek out the most picturesque and convenient location and engage in battle there, leading the victors to withdraw from the conflict with significant losses, while for the defeated, there is no point in discussing, as they are utterly decimated. However, since they speak the same language—what purpose, after all, do their heralds and messengers serve?—they ought to resolve their differences through any means other than war (τοὺς χρῆν, ἐόντας ὁμογλώσσους, κήρυξί τε διαχρεωμένους καὶ ἀγγέλοισι καταλαμβάνειν τὰς διαφορὰς καὶ παντὶ μᾶλλον ἢ μάχῃσι); and in cases where war between them seems inevitable, they should seek out and find the most suitable location for the defence of both parties and test their fortunes there'[167]

This passage sheds light on two significant aspects. Firstly, it highlights the problematic nature of war as a policymaking tool among the Greeks. Mardonios critiqued the Greeks' tendency to resort to war instead of seeking peaceful resolutions. This critique suggests

---

[166] Herodotus, *Histories*, 5.73.1 -5.73.3.

[167] Ibid. 7.9.1 – 7.9.1.

the acknowledgement of the perception of the Hellenic identity as a factor that could limit warfare. Secondly, the passage underlines the perception of war as a form of competition and not as a means to conquest that was deeply ingrained in the Ancient Greek tradition.

City-states' past grievances could pave the way for bilateral agreements between a Greek city-state and Persia. Herodotus describes the Athenians accusing Aiginetans of making a pact with the Persian King because of their bilateral enmity; Herodotus uses the term *προφάσις* showing that the Athenians used this as pretext to accuse the islanders to other city-states, e.g., Sparta, as traitors of Hellas (ἐς τὴν Σπάρτην κατηγόρεον τῶν Αἰγινητέων τὰ πεποιήκοιεν προδόντες τὴν Ἑλλάδα.)[168] The specific accusation triggered Sparta's reaction prompting the Spartan King to dispatch an expeditionary force to Aigina with the aim of arresting those responsible for the bilateral treaty. At the time, Sparta did not have a contentious relationship with Aigina nor any significant alliance with the Athenians. However, Thucydides wrote how, during the Peloponnesian war Spartan ambassadors traveled to Asia seeking funds and support from the Persian King.[169]

Nevertheless, adherence to Pan-Hellenic norms and the perceived identity-related 'crime' of Aigina, coupled with the threat posed by Persian policies in Ionia, justified inter-Greek violence. Moreover, this episode illustrates the Athenians' need for a pretext to rally other city-states against Aigina, effectively isolating them based on specific allegations. The Athenian pragmatic foreign policy should not undermine the importance of the argument against their adversary. Turning Sparta against Aigina shows the significance of Pan-Hellenic identity, the credibility of accusations intertwined with identity constructions, and the perceived legitimacy of employing force against crimes not formally codified but which seemed to be part of a shared knowledge between different city-states.

Thucydides wrote that civil wars (*στάσις*) spread to different city-states, during the Peloponnesian War. Democratic factions sought aid from Athens, while oligarchs sought support from Lacedaemon. During peacetime, there was no call for assistance, but during war, factions manipulated external intervention to gain the advantage.[170] Thucydides' description from Coercyra and the civil condlict between the democrats and the oligarchs is one of the most brutal scenes of his 'History'. Trapped oligarchs being brutally killed, with some of them commiting suicide, until there was no one left alive are shocking

---

[168] Ibid. 6.49.2.

[169] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2.67.1.

[170] Ibid. 3.82.1.

images of extreme aggression.[171] Political identities legitimisd atrocities, showing a dialectic of 'self and other' that led to intense warfare and defined the inner Greek violence at the late 5th century BCE.

Thucydides described how, as the civil war spread, remaining states resorted to cunning tactics and extreme reprisals (καὶ τὰ ἐφυστερίζοντά που πύστει τῶν προγενομένων πολὺ ἐπέφερε τὴν ὑπερβολὴν τοῦ καινοῦσθαι τὰς διανοίας τῶν τ᾽ ἐπιχειρήσεων περιτεχνήσει καὶ τῶν τιμωριῶν ἀτοπίᾳ), trying to prevail over their political adversaries.[172] Civil wars made military tactics creative but also cunning; interestingly, here we observe how Thucydides did not prioritise effectiveness but criticised the way different sides tried to meet their objectives. The logic of *stasis* vs. war is evident here; Greeks fighting Greeks was described as catastrophic through the means each side chose for the war. *Stasis* brought the worse out of the Greeks, not only in the frequency of hostilities but also in the way they fought their battles. Such evidence proves the growing strength of the Pan-Hellenic identity and the slow deconstruction of aristeia and honour when it comes to inner-Greek conflicts. The mainstream IR discipline does not look at the sources to understand the way ideas defined actions and thus falls into the trap of systemic theorising that does not explain normative changes that denied this society of states.

A shared culture evolves over time and is not the product of laws of nature. The Homeric tradition, competitive aristocratic warfare, the value of *aristeia*, and the prioritisation of the polis, withstanding the development of shared identity with the rest of the Greeks, are vital to understanding the reasons behind the numerous intra-Greek wars. In the Platonic *Laws,* Cleinias described the interactive structure of the Greek city-states as a natural condition of undeclared war with each other.[173] However, despite the number of intra-Greek conflicts and the above-mentioned dominant ideas, we see that the Greek philosophers presented Greeks fighting Greeks as illegitimate. When specific thinkers, regardless of the dominant ideas of their culture, try to reconstruct what is morally right and wrong, we can understand that change is possible and detect how the competitive intra-Greek reality started to change. It is what Xenophon describes when he praises Agesilaus for being *philopolis*, but also *philellin*.[174] The polis was each individual's patris (fatherland), but in the 4th century BCE, Xenophon tried to link the *polis* with the

---

[171] Ibid. 4.48.2 – 5.

[172] Ibid. 3.82.3.

[173] Rawlings, *The Ancient Greeks at War*, 6.

[174] Philopolis (friend of the polis). Philellin (friend of the Greeks). Xenophon, *Agesilaus*, 7.4-7.

country through one of his noblest figures, presenting the significance of the normative influences of Pan-Hellenic ideas.[175] Xenophon introduces the importance of a common identity that reveals a slow reconstruction of the traditional notion of autonomous *poleis*. The genealogy of these norms led to Plutarch's description of Philip of Macedon's mission as to be the guardian of Greece (*kedesthai tes Ellados*), making the Macedonian king's interest compatible with a Pan-Hellenic interest.[176]

Plutarch's portrayal of Philip of Macedon can be seen as anachronistic, reflecting a more Romanised view. Plutarch's narrative, influenced by Roman perceptions, contrasts with contemporary Greek views, such as those of Demosthenes, who strongly opposed Philip and Alexander, who was describing them as 'barbarians'[177], highlighting the discrepancy between ancient Greek and later Roman interpretations of Macedonian kingship. Such differences matter, as they reflect a core difference between the two traditions, i.e., the communitarian vs. the universal approach, which will be discussed in the later chapters in a more analytical way.

After introducing key ideas and practices behind the 'Greeks vs. Greeks' case, it is time to answer a dominant IR-related question regarding Ancient Greece and the theoretical debates on war. Was Ancient Greece a depiction of the Realist 'State of Nature' or an interconnected society, as Hans Van Wees argues? While I have already explained that my approach aligns with the later, I intend to add a few missing insights into the discourse and enhance the debate with the methodological importance of tracking ideas, especially through the work and methods of Thucydides.

Thucydides posited that Athens' growing power provoked Spartan insecurity, leading to the Peloponnesian War.[178] This is the holy grail of the Realist tradition, i.e., an idea that seems compatible with the way the neo-realist paradigm describes how systemic imbalance of power can trigger conflicts. However, looking at Ancient Greek interstate relations from a genealogy perspective contradicts this, revealing a system based on respecting each city-state's autonomy. According to Thucydides, the war only erupted

---

[175] Ibid.

[176] Plutarch, *Βίοι Παράλληλοι Αλέξανδρος - Καίσαρ* (Parallel Lives Alexander - Caesar), tr. Kaktos' Translation Team (Athens: Kaktos, 1993), 9.13.

[177] Demosthenes, *Φιλιππικοί* (Philipics), trans. K. Tsatsos, [1975] 1983. *Οι τρεις Ολυνθιακοί, τρεις Φιλιππικοί και ο λόγος Περί των εν Χερρονήσω*. Μετάφραση, εισαγωγικά σημειώματα, σχόλια. 2η έκδ. (Athens: Βιβλιοπωλείον της Εστίας, 1983), 36-39.

[178] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.23.5.

when Athens challenged this norm, unsettling Sparta. It was a departure from accepted paradigms, not systemic structures that triggered conflict. Past city-state campaigns had diverse causes, highlighting the Peloponnesian War's specificity, and emphasising the role of ideas in legitimising force over timelessness in theory.

At the start of the Peloponnesian War, the Spartan King Archidamus' speech in front of his allies and Spartan generals argued that all Greece wanted the Peloponnesians to succeed.[179] This is a source of legitimacy that proves how hegemonic attitude of Athens was perceived as a provocation not just for Sparta but also for the Hellenic world and its normative foundations. The Athenians drove out the entire population of Aegina, including men, women, and children, blaming them for the beginning of the war. Subsequently, they dispatched Athenian settlers to Aegina.[180] This drastic action led to opposition against Athens, fuelled by resentment over their tyrannical behaviour. Thucydides' work reveals that legitimacy was communicated in the Ancient Greek world. War had to be justified and the communication of such ideas was crucial before the beginning of operations.

After the Athenian unrest during the siege of their city in the beginning of the war because of the destruction of every property that was outside the Long Walls, Pericles tried to bring back their trust in the cause. He told the Assembly that future generations will recall how, as Greeks, the Athenians had exerted control over other Greeks.[181] He added that some may criticise them for these achievements, but 'those who aspire to accomplish something will consider us as an example'.[182]

This attitude validates the 'uncanny'[183] nature of the Athenian policy post-Greco-Persian Wars, which aimed at ruling over other Greeks, a goal which the Spartans feared. Yet, as the hardship of war made many citizens rethink this aim, openly challenging it by accusing their leader and sending ambassadors to Sparta to reach a compromise, Pericles

[179] Ibid. 2.11.2.

[180] Ibid. 2.27.1.

[181] Ibid. 2.64.3.

[182] Ibid. 2.64.4.

[183] The Freudian term 'uncanny' (see Sigmund Freud, 'The uncanny', *Romantic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2017) refers to something that is strange or mysterious and especially in a way that evokes a sense of unease. It often describes things that are familiar yet foreign at the same time – in our context the familiarity comes from a deeply rooted culture of competition but at the same time includes a foreign suggestion where autonomy is replaced by a centralised structure of the *poleis* system.

attempted to boost their morale through his speech. The concept of fame and the ageless example for those who wished to accomplish something were based on the foundations of glory and *aristeia* - virtues that had passed the test of time. However, Thucidydes wrote that even though many Athenians were convinced by his speech and refrained from sending another delegation to the Spartans, each person still grappled with their own sorrows. The impoverished lamented the loss of their possessions, while the wealthy mourned the destruction of their grand estates. Finally, their greatest sorrow stemmed from the fact that they were embroiled in war rather than enjoying peace (τὸ δὲ μέγιστον, πόλεμον ἀντ᾽ εἰρήνης ἔχοντες).[184] Thucydides account provides a key clue to understand how unique the Peloponnesian War was for the Ancient Greeks. Political superiority could not create a Just war doctrine that would win the hearts and minds of the Athenians. Even from the first years of the war, Thucydides describes a sentiment of nostalgia for the pre-war condition.

Interestingly, Bagby has highlighted the significance of variances among poleis and their leaders. Bagby's interpretation is that according to Thucydides, the decision of Athens to become the hegemon resulted from human choices, with Sparta's tacit approval until its allies persuaded it that Athens' actions posed a significant enough threat to warrant declaring war.[185] Thucydides account on the Athenian nostalgia shows that the cause was not absolutely embraced by the *demos*. Individual leaders approach mattered in Ancient Greece – especially given the challenging of established norms and the suggestion towards a different interactive reality within the Greek interpolity society.

Considering the value of *autonomia* and the competitive social structure of the Greek world, we might provide an alternative to the Realist logic of insecurity and power balance. Andreas Osiander highlights that the Lacedaemonians' concern was that the larger part of Greece was subjected to the Athenians. Hitherto, the idea of empire had been alien to the Greeks. Moreover, the legitimacy to fight for *autonomia* was an institutionalised reality. Thus, it was not only the power of the Athenians that caused the insecurity to the Lacedaemonians, but their tendency to expand their hegemonic practice in an unusual way by Hellenic standards. *Ethike* (ethics) for Aristotle comes from the word *ethos*, which means habit.[186] Thus, what is ethical has been tested enough to be considered proper and legitimate. Fighting each other for *autonomia* or after being mistreated was part of Greek tradition that dominated the Greek world through a

---

[184] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2.65.2.

[185] Bagby, 'The Use and Abuse of Thucydides', 141.

[186] Aristotle, *NE,* 2. 1-3.

genealogy of norms and ideas. The Athenian behaviour was not ethical because it was alien.

During the early years of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides described how the Spartan King Archidamus spoke to the Plataeans about their responsibility to remember the oath they once took when the Greek city-states joined forces against the Persians. Comparing the Pan-Hellenic struggle against the Persians with the Athenian hegemony shows that the Spartan argument reflected a normative principle that city-states could embrace, i.e., the Just war against any threat to one's *autonomia*. The King uses phrases such as 'liberating other states'. Comparing the Pan-Hellenic struggle against the Persians with the Athenian hegemon Persians but are facing similar security challenges (αὐτονομεῖσθε καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ξυνελευθεροῦτε).[187] Thus, we can identify how violence becomes legitimate through constructions that had Pan-Hellenic importance and how ones' autonomy presupposed respecting the autonomy of the others – at least regarding the Hellenic society of city-states.

Similarly, when the representative from Mytilene appealed to the Spartans for support in their decision to withdraw from the Delian League, he made the case that their initial alliance with Athens during the Persian War was rooted in a common goal of 'liberating all Greeks from Persian rule, rather than seeking dominance for Athens over the Greek states'. Initially, they willingly followed Athens as long as there was equality in leadership. However, concerns arose when it became apparent that Athens was shifting its focus towards subjugating its allies rather than maintaining unity against the Persians.[188] This is another example of comparing the Athenian hegemony with the Persians. Looking at such arguments, we can see how the existential threat posed by both - not the cultural one but the political one - was a threat to *autonomia*, dictating emergency measures (mutiny). Finally, the anti-Athenian struggle was described as a 'beneficial struggle for all Greeks').[189] Evidently, Thucydides' narrations reflected a normative environment of interdependent logic that resembles a society of *poleis* and not a state of nature.

The most significant non-Realist aspect of Thucydides is the recognition that war can also be interpreted as a human construction. Thucydides described the civil conflicts between democrats and oligarchs in different city-states as a period of suffering; he stated that peaceful times bring tranquillity, but war becomes the 'teacher of violence' (βίαιος

---

[187] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2.72.1.

[188] Ibid. 3.10.2 – 4.

[189] Ibid.3.14.1.

διδάσκαλος).[190] This phrase is an interesting way to understand how Thucydides and the Greeks perceived the correlation of human nature and warfare, deconstructing the lasting misconception of his words for IR. First of all, the argument starts from the spread of civil wars because of the context of the Peloponnesian War, i.e., political groups found the perfect excuse to seek support from stronger city-states.[191] Let us remember that legitimacy for waging war in both the Athenian and the Spartan cases reflected ideas of political superiority. Then, Thucydides mentioned that 'for as long as human nature does not change, such misfortunes would be perpetual'.[192] Finally, he compared peace with war, emphasising how the former's prosperity surpasses the latter's suffering, describing war as the teacher of violence (βίαιος διδάσκαλος) that inflames the spirits of the masses according to the (brutal) situations it creates (καὶ πρὸς τὰ παρόντα τὰς ὀργὰς τῶν πολλῶν ὁμοιοῖ).[193]

The 'flawed human nature' Realist argument is also problematic. Thucydides identified that the habitual influence of war to peoples' nature defines the frequency and intensity of warfare and not *vice versa*; Thucydides describes the merit of peace over war, but also how wars 'teach' violence, and how they normalise violence as a means to achieve objectives that are not superiror to the tranquillity of peace. Thucydides did not seem to believe that war was unnatural but neither did he ever said that the reasons/causes/and characteristics of war are perpetual – hence the comment on the 'teacher of violence'. War is one of the aspects that shape human nature – not necessarily the opposite, even though he does not go as far as describing war as unnatural. Here, Thucydides introduces the Aristotelian logic of *ethos* (habit) and the way repetition and experience define people's behaviour, virtue, and priorities.

When a Sparatan ambassador suggested peace to the Athenian Assembly he highlighted two major advantages of stopping the war. Firstly, he underlined how agreeing to make peace is a shared interest (Ἡμῖν δὲ καλῶς, εἴπερ ποτέ, ἔχει ἀμφοτέροις ἡ ξυναλλαγή) and how ignoring this can lead to irreparable damage through the establishment of 'eternal hatered' (πρίν τι ἀνήκεστον διὰ μέσου γενόμενον ἡμᾶς καταλαβεῖν, ἐν ᾧ ἀνάγκη ἀίδιον

[190] Ibid. 3.82.2.

[191] Ibid. 3.82.1.

[192] Ibid.

[193] Ibid. 3.82.2.

ὑμῖν ἔχθραν).[194] Secondly, he explained that peace would be a chance for all Greeks to rest from their misfortunes.[195]

Identities played a crucial role in the way city-states perceived violence and Thucydides' account provides several examples that validate this claim. During the Peloponnesian War, the Athenians won many battles against different Spartan allies, e.g., Aegina and Kythera. The Athenians left most Kytherians on their island with the obligation to pay an annual tax of four talents, but decided to kill the majority of the Aeginetans because they were unrepentant enemies of the Athenians. Thucydides' account provides several examples.[196] Behaviour was linked the meaning of different 'others'. In Wendt's constructivist sense, the Hobbesian identity between Athens and Aegina (relationship based on hostile identities and thus hostile assumptions), was different to the one between Athens and Kythera – despite the engagement in warfare.

Finally, Thucydides paid significant attention to the *demegories* (public speeches) of the different representatives of city-states in order to understand their motives and political utility. Thucydides believed in the power of language and, through his work, reflects the significance of public speech in the military events of his time.[197] Alexander Wendt believes that 'shared ideas constitute the state of war'.[198] Reading the *demegories* of Thucydides, we understand that the opposing sides summoned words to describe both their legitimacy and the other's wrong behaviour, establishing specific perceptions that could even increase the martial spirit of the fighters. As Marc Cogan suggested, even if it serves as mere pretext, rhetoric remains crucial as it effectively initiates political actions through persuasive speech.[199]

---

[194] Ibid. 4.20.1.

[195] Ibid. 4.20.2.

[196] Ibid. 4.57.4.

[197] Thucydides is the only Ancient Greek historian who includes official interstate treaties in his attempt to write a historical piece, showing the decisive impact of understanding military and political contexts through reflections on the language. Moreover, he had realised the significance of treaties as attempts to control agonal warfare and, thus, believed in an interstate society of rules despite its selfish and fierce characteristics. Nicholaos Skouteropoulos, *Θουκιδίδη Ιστορία* [*Thucydides' History*], (Athens: Polis, 2011), 22-23; Daniel Garst, 'Thucydides and Neorealism', *International Studies Quarterly* 33 (March 1989): 3-7.

[198] Wendt, *Social theory of international politics*, 260.

[199] Marc Cogan, *The Human Thing: The Speeches and Principles of Thucydides' History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

After winning the Peloponnesian War, the coalition, particularly the Corinthians and Thebans, proposed complete destruction of Athens.[200] However, the Spartans disagreed, refusing to enslave a fellow Greek city that had provided crucial assistance during Greece's greatest peril, i.e., the Greco-Persian Wars.[201] Instead, they opted for peace under certain terms: Athens must dismantle the Long Walls and Piraeus' fortifications, keep only twelve ships, recall exiled citizens, align enemies and allies with Sparta, and join Spartan-led campaigns on both land and sea. Xenophon's evidence holds significant weight in understanding several key aspects of ancient Greek history. Firstly, it reveals the importance of Pan-Hellenic identity constructions, emphasising a sense of unity and common heritage among Greek city-states. Secondly, he provided insights into the legitimacy of Athens' role in the Persian Wars. The Athenian actions were viewed within the context of a broader Greek defense against Persian expansionism, highlighting the interconnectedness of Greek city-states in facing external challenges. Furthermore, Xenophon's narratives reflect the norm of *autonomia* prevalent among Greek city-states. Rather than outright conquest, Greek states aimed to weaken potential rivals to ensure their own security without completely subjugating them. Lastly, the desire for the annihilation of Athens by certain cities following the Peloponnesian War highlights the exception and not the rule. The Spartan refusal to endorse such extreme measures suggests a reluctance to completely dismantle a fellow Greek city. Yet, the brutal experience of the Peloponnesian War and Athens' perceived attempts to dominate Greece challenged established norms. The call for the punishment of the Athenians reflects the impact of the war and the perceived necessity of breaking the existing rules through severe measures in response to the Athenian behaviour.

Collective beliefs can be deconstructed and reshaped after certain experiences.[202] Yet, the normative strength of collective mentalities is evident in cases where norms are challenged, just like in the debate about the future of Athens after the Peloponnesian War. Xenophon's account reflects the way culture defined action in the Ancient Greek world. The Spartan response referred to values (resistance against the Persians), norms (reluctant towards complete subordination), and beliefs (peace and *autonomia*), showing the impact of cultural factors when assessing military behaviour and post-war dynamics. The Spartan reaction to the suggestion of the Thebans and the Corintheans, as well as the key

---

[200] Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 2.2.19.

[201] Ibid. 2.2.20.

[202] Alan Henrikson, 'Mental Maps', in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, ed. Michael Hogan and Thomas Paterson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 177-190.

reasons behind the city-states' discontent and reaction to the Athenian hegemonic behaviour are evidence of how ideas define expectations and actions. This is Bourdieu's 'style de vie'[203] describing how the habits (or the Aristotelian *ethos*) shapes a collective mentality and identity that defines legitimacy, norms, and behavioural patterns. Our sources indicate that the Ancient Greek world operated more as an international society rather than as an anarchic system of self-help.

2.5 Responsibility to Wage War: Who fights and who decides?

Homer's aristocratic heroes were the leaders of the Trojan War. Mycenaean noblemen, donning heavy armour and riding chariots, showcased not just organisational prowess but practical dominance on the battlefield. This elite-driven approach underscored the importance of leadership in both strategy and practical combat.[204] The chariots and the heavy armour mirrored that the significance of leadership was not only in organising the conflict but also in the practical domination of the field of battle.[205]

The emergence of the hoplite phalanx revolutionised responsibility for warfare. Hoplite citizens, crucial for defending the polis, saw their significance recognised in decision-making processes related to war and peace.[206] The phalanx symbolised political inclusion, granting legitimacy to more individuals to voice their opinions on warfare, given the risk their properties faced. The effectiveness of the phalanx required good combat skills by the front ranks and physical and moral strength from the lines that stood behind.[207] This shift towards a more political and collective form of norms mirrored the miniature society of the polis, where each hoplite citizen played a vital role in its survival and prosperity. In Cornelius Castoriades words:

> 'The invention of the phalanx is social rather than technical, and indeed socio-political: It presupposes the imaginative social (political) significance of the equality of political communities as warriors...in the unity and interdependence of

[203] Pierre Bourdieu, *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris, Minuit, 1979).

[204] Kyriazis and Paparigopoulos, 'War and Democracy in Ancient Greece', 165.

[205] Kurt A. Raaflaub, 'A Historian's Headache: How to Read Homeric Society?', in *Archaic Greece: New Approaches and New Evidence*, ed. Nick Fisher and Hans Van Wees (Bristol: ISD LLC, 1998), 182.

[206] Phang et al., 'Conflict in Ancient Greece and Rome',10.

[207] Adcock, *The Greek and Macedonian Art of War*, 4.

> the soldiers of the phalanx, the disappearance of the single combat hero. The phalanx is an integral part of the creation of the city.'[208]

War became more political because the concept of politics became an integral component of the development of the Greek *polis,* a condition that worked as a structural pillar for each community's *autonomia* and *eleftheria (freedom)*.

Herodotus described the late 6th century BCE invasion of Athens by the Spartan forces led by King Cleomenes as legitimate since it was part of the 'Athenian struggle to emancipate the city' (from the tyrants) (Κλεομένης δὲ ἀπικόμενος ἐς τὸ ἄστυ ἅμα Ἀθηναίων τοῖσι βουλομένοισι εἶναι ἐλευθέροισι).[209] After the Athenians overthrew tyranny with the Spartan help, they embarked on a successful series of expeditions against the Boeotians. Herodotus correlated military success with democracy, suggesting that Athenians could not fully demonstrate excellence in battle when fighting to represent a tyrant, in contrast to when they fought in defence of their democratic ideals. In such cases, 'soldiers fought as if they were defending their own well-being' (ἐλευθερωθέντων δὲ αὐτὸς ἕκαστος ἑωυτῷ προεθυμέετο κατεργάζεσθαι).[210]

In the famous Pericles Funeral Oration, the Athenian leader clarified that the brave fallen lost their lives in a Just battle to defend their *polis* from being seized, while for those who remain, it should be instinctive to be prepared to endure any hardship on behalf of its safety.[211] Thucydides' statement reveals the expectation that citizens would fight to defend their *polis*, considering it a Just cause. However, is this argument solely about sovereignty? The answer lies in Pericles' rationale, outlining why a 'particular *polis*' (περὶ τοιαύτης οὖν πόλεως) merits its citizens' sacrifices and why citizen duties include defending their *polis* regardless of the consequences. '*Eudaimonia*[212] cannot exist without freedom' (εὔδαιμον τὸ ἐλεύθερον) and Athens is a city that offers this supreme happiness because of the freedom it provides to its citizens.[213] This introduces the notion of

---

[208] Castoriadis, *Ancient Greek Democracy*, 13.

[209] Herodotus, *Histories,* 5.64.2.

[210] Ibid. 5.78.1.

[211] Thucydides. *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2.41.5.

[212] Supreme happiness (here used as the supreme happiness for the *polis*).

[213] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2.43.4.

justifying warfare through the construction of political identity. The concepts of 'self' and 'other' are shaped through the meaning of the political fabric of the *polis* and citizenship was an integral element of this discourse. The duty to safeguard the specific *polis* extends to protecting a constitution that fosters ideal conditions for its citizens.

Thus, citizenship was a motivational factor behind waging wars – something that did not necessarily reflect excellent combat skills. War became more normative, losing its focus on individual excellence in the way the Greek collective mentality evolved through social and political changes. After the Archaic period, many Greek communities expected eligible citizens to vote in assemblies to authorise military actions against enemies. These communities also developed formal military authority, appointing war officials like generals (strategoi), officers (taxiarchoi, dekarchoi), and administrators (tamiai) through election or state selection. Although these officials carried state authority on campaigns, their power was often limited, as common soldiers viewed themselves as equal citizens (isonomoi) under the law.[214] Such evidence does not suggest that only citizens participated in the military, but to show the importance of the growing strength of citizenship on the armed forces. Aristotle argued that mercenary soldiers, due to their experience and specialised training, may appear brave in the eyes of others because they seem to face the dangers of war without fear. However, he highlighted that their bravery is often superficial, as they were too concerned with self-preservation, i.e. when faced with significant danger or disadvantage, mercenaries were quick to flee, prioritising their own safety over fighting for a noble cause while citizens do not fear death in such circumstances (πρῶτοι γὰρ φεύγουσι, τὰ δὲ πολιτικὰ μένοντα ἀποθνήσκει).[215] Therefore, Aristotle suggested that true courage is not merely the absence of fear but the willingness to confront danger for the sake of a higher ideal or principle. This is an idea that correlates warfare with citizenship.

Greek city-states would often mobilise their entire army for major military operations, though 'the entire army' did not include slaves, children, and women, with exceptions like 35,000 Spartan helots at the Battle of Plataea. Plus, *poleis* had employed non-native units to fight for them, funded by citizen taxes.[216] Military service was tied to political rights, linking citizenship with military duty, although only young citizens were usually mobilised.[217] Compulsory service was often limited to those who could afford to leave

---

[214] Rawlings, 'War and warfare in ancient Greece', 14.

[215] Aristotle, *N.E,* 3.8.

[216] Heuser, *War,*222.

[217] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2.34.

their farms, managed by family and slaves in their absence. Younger sons were also sent to fight. Being a citizen meant being part of the elite, a status worth the risk.[218] Hans van Wees notes the gap between the ideal of a pure citizen militia and the reality, where soldiers were a small part of the population, in archaic and classical periods, with non-democratic poleis, e.g. Sparta, being closer to the norm of a homonegouns armed force due to its constitution.[219]

Therefore, the question 'who fights?' reveals a connection between citizenship, military service, and societal status. Participation in military campaigns was reserved for citizens, reinforcing their dominance and political rights. This selective mobilisation reflected the societal hierarchy, excluding women, children, and usually slaves. Thus, the Greek concept of war and citizenship was a construction that was structured upon the emphasis of the elite status and responsibilities of citizen-soldiers – at least in normative grounds. Earlier, we discussed Herodotus and Thucydides reflections on speeches that mirror the importance of fighting for the polis and its constitution, as a source of motivation, legitimacy, and pride. Such expectations require a narrative and hence the establishment of the 'citizen-soldier' idea.

On the decision-making norms, there are plenty of insights in the primary material of the period. When the Thessalian cavalry attacked the Spartan expeditionary force to protect the allied Athenian tyrant during the 6th century BCE, it was the King of Thessaly, who was responsible for the expedition.[220] In the same war, the Spartan armed forces were led by King Cleomenes.[221] The Spartan Kings were responsible for declaring war, 'to lead the expeditionary force in battle and to be the last to return' (στις εκστρατείες να βαδίζουν πρώτοι οι βασιλιάδες, αλλά στην επιστροφή να γυρίζουν τελευταίοι).[222] Furthermore, the Spartan norms dictated that even the elite military officials could never prioritise their survival – during the late Peloponnesian War, Spartan Admiral Callicratidas stated that it 'would not be a great loss for Sparta if he were to be killed,

---

[218] Bernard, *Guerre et violence dans la Grèce antique*, 215–16.

[219] Hans van Wees, *Greek Warfare: Myths and Realities* (London: Duckworth, 2004), 85.

[220] Herodotus*, Histories,* 5.63.4.

[221] Ibid. 5.64.1.

[222] Ibid. 6.56.1.

while it would be shameful to retreat.'(ἡ Σπάρτη οὐδὲν μὴ κάκιον οἰκεῖται αὐτοῦ ἀποθανόντος, φεύγειν δὲ αἰσχρὸν ἔφη εἶναι).[223]

Subsequently, as discussed earlier, during the early-Peloponnesian War and the Spartan siege of Attiki that led to the destruction of many Athenian properties, discontent grew behind the walls of Athens. Athenians accused Pericles of dragging them into war. They were willing to make concessions with the Spartans and even sent diplomats to negotiate, but their efforts proved futile. Pericles called an Assembly aiming to encourage the citizens. His argument was that their anger was unfounded and emphasised the importance of enduring hardship for the well-being of the city as a whole. He also explained that a city's prosperity benefits its citizens collectively, linking the political identity of the city with the legitimacy of the war and the responsibility to keep fighting.[224] Interestingly, the citizens' concerns reveal that self-interests could shape collective perceptions about wars, but also it made the communication of Just war ideas a necessity. And the responsible actor not only to decide on strategy but also to communicate these ideas was Pericles.

The only legitimate authority to make decisions on war was the *polis* and, in non-oligarchic or tyrannical entities, its *demos*. The *Ekklesia* was the Athenian assembly, where the citizens voted in favour or against military operations, as well as evaluating decisions on peace.[225] The responsibility to act aggressively against another city-state required a formal decision-making process. When the Spartan King Cleomenes attempted to use force against the Aiginitans who had decided to cooperate with the Persian King, he was accussed by the later due to acting without the consent of the Spartan assembly (ἄνευ γάρ μιν Σπαρτιητέων τοῦ κοινοῦ ποιέειν ταῦτα); instead, he was accussed of venality, i.e., having received Athenian money to operate against them (ὑπ᾽ Ἀθηναίων ἀναγνωσθέντα χρήμασι). Expeditions could not be justified in case formal procedures were ignored; yet the Spartan case is more complicated. While the Spartan kings had the responsibility to declare war without any Spartan being able to oppose their decision (καὶ πόλεμόν γ᾽ ἐκφέρειν ἐπ᾽ ἣν ἂν βούλωνται χώρην, τούτου δὲ μηδένα εἶναι Σπαρτιητέων διακωλυτήν),[226] the Aiginitans' acusation shows that Cleomenes attempt to invade the

[223] Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 1.6.32.

[224] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2.59.1 – 2.60.4.

[225] O'Driscoll, 'Rewriting the Just War Tradition'2.

[226] Herodotus, *Histories*, 6.56.1.

island and arrest those who approached the Persians was not a war declaration but an act that interfered with the autonomy of Aigina.

Overall, the decision-making norms regarding warfare emphasised the importance of both legitimate authority and formal procedures. Thucydides emphasised the importance of responsible authority in declaring war, contrasting with the logic of fighting solely because of superior power[227] – a significant norm that contributed to a collective mentality where war was legal and political. Each *polis* had its distinct processes to ensure that declarations of war were grounded in a structured and communal consensus. For example, in Athens, the *Ekklesia* played a crucial role in debating and deciding on military actions, thereby reflecting the collective will of the citizens. In contrast, Spartan kings had the authority to declare war but were still bound by the need to justify their actions within the framework of Spartan norms and expectations, as seen in the case of King Cleomenes. Each *polis* had different constitutions, but the concept of legitimate decisions was based on an interdependent relationship between authority and citizens – hence the necessity to communicate the aims and objectives of campaigns, as seen in the above-mentioned examples. This structured approach to warfare decisions laid the groundwork for the Roman Just war criteria, which similarly required a formal declaration of war and emphasised the legitimacy of the authority making such decisions. The insistence on formal procedures ensured that warfare was not merely a result of impulsive or unilateral decisions but a carefully considered act sanctioned by the appropriate governing bodies, reflecting a broader logic of formality and legitimacy that defined the ethical dimensions of warfare; an area that I will discuss in the following section on the ethical dimensions of war in the Ancient Greek thought.

[227] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, A.77.2-3.

2.6 Beyond Good and Evil:[228] Ethical Perceptions and Noncombatants

2.6.1 The Good, the Bad and the…Natural

Despite the virtuous norms of honour, glory, and *aristeia*, peace appears as an ideal condition in the Iliad; after Paris invites Menelaus to a one-on-one conflict both armies were happy, as their hope for the end of that 'painful war' (οδυνηρού πολέμου) was restored.[229] Similarly, even when the poet uses the gods' interaction throughout the war, similar ideas on the superiority of peace over war are reflected in their dialogues. In the Iliad there are many descriptions of war as φονικόν (lethal), or man-slaying, emphasising a brutal side that does not have heroic aura.[230] Zeus is talking to Hera and describes the war effort as dreadful (φρικτόν) the condition of peace between the two sides.[231] Subsequently, in other passages war is described as evil (του πολέμου θα ξαναρχίσει το κακό) due to the constant bloodshed and murder (τα αίματα κι οι φόνοι).[232] Peace is not described as a legitimate aim of war but as an ideal opposite, a condition that all the negative aspects of the former are absent. Furthermore, blind lust for battle is described as an inferior characteristic. Menelaus calls the Trojans 'lawless, thirsting for murder' (ω Τρώες ανομότατοι, για φόνους διψασμένοι), [233] which shows that fighting for the pleasure of the killing was perceived as illegitimate and morally inappropriate – *vis* a *vis* the lawful behaviour which appears contradictory to any lust for battler, even from the Homeric tradition of military *aristeia*.

---

[228] Nietzsche's concept of going 'beyond good and evil' involves understanding morality within the context of different normative environments (the moral interpretations of phenomena and norms). Applying this to the discourse on war, I use his phrase to explore how perceptions of good and evil evolve, highlighting the importance of contextual and genealogical analysis, as Nietzsche emphasises. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The birth of tragedy and other writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality and Other Writings*, 3.23 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[229] Homer, *Iliad,* ΡΓ 111-112.

[230] Ibid.ΡΘ 650, ΡΚ 78, ΡΛ 331.

[231] Ibid. ΡΔ, 14-16.

[232] Ibid. ΡΔ, 81-84.

[233] Ibid. PN, 621. Later in the same passage, there is a repetition of the specific accusation, i.e. 'The Trojans, who always hold lawless opinions and cannot curb their frenzy for war.' (τους Τρώας, που ανομότατην την γνώμην πάντοτ᾽ έχουν και του πολέμου δεν μπορούν την λύσσαν να κορέσουν)

Herodotus describes war as a source of misfortunes, considering the frequent campaigns between Greek *poleis* as destructive for the Hellenic world; plus, when discussing the Athenian intervention in the revolt of Greek city-states of Ionia against the Persians, he identifies the 'origins of misfortunes between both Greeks and barbarians'.[234] Thus, the impact of war had always a negative element, regardless of its heroic or justified meaning.

For Aristotle, war was neither good nor evil but part of nature. Aristotle believed that the 'art of war' is something that occurred naturally to the world of men since it can be used for utilitarian purposes, such as hunting wild beats or fighting against those who refuse to be ruled over even though they are destined to.[235] Aristotle also wrote that bravery is mostly evident when one faces the 'beautiful death' without fear, as well as all that constitutes an immediate threat of death - such are primarily those that occur in war (κυρίως δὴ λέγοιτ᾽ ἂν ἀνδρεῖος ὁ περὶ τὸν καλὸν θάνατον ἀδεής, καὶ ὅσα θάνατον ἐπιφέρει ὑπόγυια ὄντα· τοιαῦτα δὲ μάλιστα τὰ κατὰ πόλεμον).[236] This is how the concepts of glory and *aristeia* are transformed into the rationalised Aristotelian bravery. Unlike earlier Greek traditions that glorified war as an arena for demonstrating individual excellence (*aristeia*), Aristotle frames war as a natural instrument for achieving a just political order. His discussion of bravery reinforces this shift—courage is not about personal glory but about facing death rationally for the greater good of the *polis*. Crucially, Aristotle's teleological framework provides the basis for this interpretation, as his philosophy centres on the idea that all actions—including war—must be understood in relation to their ultimate purpose (*telos*). This teleology allows us to see how his view distances itself from pre-Classical ideals, positioning war not as a pursuit of competition for its own sake, but as a means to secure and sustain the political and ethical order of the *polis*. Aristotle discusses the concept of virtue as a balance between excess and deficiency, particularly in relation to fear, courage, and anger.[237] Courage is the mean between recklessness (excessive fearlessness) and cowardice (excessive fear). Similarly, the virtue of mildness lies between being too angry (irascible) and not angry enough (apathetic). Aristotle emphasises that virtue involves finding the right balance in these emotions.

---

[234] Herodotus, *Histories*, 5.97.3.

[235] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1. 20-25.

[236] Aristotle, *N.E. 2.* 1115b .

[237] Ibid. 2.7.

Based on Aristotle's concept of virtue as a balance, the Ancient Greek idea of a Just war would aim to avoid wars of conquest, seeing them as an excess of aggression and a departure from the middle-ground. A Just war would only be fought when maintaining a balance between cowardly inaction and reckless aggression.

Isokrates argued that the Persian Wars were engineered by the gods in order to ensure that those who participated would gain the fame they deserve and would not remain unknown, giving to the concept of war a positive aura.[238] Xenophon presented a good side of war, in order to highlight the nobility for fighting for one's *polis.* For Xenophon, the identity of the citizen embedded warfare and the excellent fighter was pursuing and killing enemies with a particular pleasure for the sake of his *polis*.[239] Xenophon fought as a mercenary in Persia, where he served under the Persian king, Cyrus. Even though, as we saw earlier, he perceived certain 'others' in a positive light, this can be seen as contradictory to these ideas. Indeed, the concept of mercenaries is an element that has been under-researched in terms of justifying ideas and legitimacy, and it poses limitations to the promotion of the norms of the citizen-soldier. Therefore, it can be an area for future research.

Hesiod described war as evil when referring to the lives of the simple folk. As we saw above, though, his notions reflected the harsh life of these people, who had no access to institutionalised glory or honour but were risking their lives instead of investing in the prosperity of their livestock and small property.[240] Even Homer, at the beginning of the Odyssey, described Zeus as pondering why humans blame the gods for the evil they are doing.[241] This idea stands in contrast with the Iliad in terms of one's pacificist ethos and the other's glorification of war.[242]

The Delphic oracle could legitimise warfare between the Greek city-states. Interestingly, Herodotus explained how the Spartans decided to send military forces to support

---

[238] Rawlings, *The ancient Greeks at war,* 6.

[239] Ibid.

[240] Hesiod, *Works and Days,* 224-228.

[241] Homer, *Οδύσσεια (Odyssey)*, tr. D. Maronitis (Thessaloniki: Institute of Modern Greek Studies, 2006), A: 28-47

[242] Geoffrey Kirk, 'Homer'. in Patricia Easterling and Bernard Knox (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 51.

Athenians who wanted to overthrow the Peisistrads' tyranny; even though they had bonds of friendship with the tyrant regime, they respected the Gods more than men.[243]

2.6.2 Non-combatants and Prisoners of War

The Homeric reflections on the protection of noncombatants present a brutal normative condition. Wees gives several examples of Greeks taking no prisoners by describing how the Trojans wanted to annihilate the Greeks to give a warning to anyone who would dare attack them in the future, while the Greek emotional bursts of pride would lead to declarations of indistinctive actions of violence.[244] Examining the manner in which Greeks appealed to the Gods in the Iliad reveals a notable absence of concern for proportionality. Their pleas for divine intervention to leave Troy desolate exhibit a lack of restraint.

> 'And, Apollo, may it be so, and Athena, and you, Father Zeus,
>
> if only all had the same spirit as you in their hearts,
>
> the city of Priamos would immediately bow down before us,
>
> completely deserted, left barren from our hands. (η πόλις του Πριάμου
>
> ολόβολη απου Πριέρια μας να μείνει ερημασμένη)' [245]

The importance of legitimising warfare based on revenge, an evident case throughout Ancient Greek history,[246] is clear when discussing the concept of proportionality. When the legitimacy behind the decision to wage war is linked with emotions, e.g., vengeance, proportionality is not compatible with the actual act of war.

Yet, when it comes to discussing the Homeric thought, we cannot ignore some normative rays of restrained violence (and even a seed of compassion among those who fight). After Patroclus' death at the hands of Hector, Achilles, consumed by grief and rage, decides to avenge his friend's death. However, Homer presents an extraordinary scene that

---

[243] Herodotus, 5.63.1 – 5.63.2

[244] Hans Van Wees, *Defeat and Destruction: The ethics of the ancient Greek warfare* (Graz: Grazer Universitatsverlag, 2011), 75.

[245] Homer, *Iliad*, PΔ: 88-91.

[246] Nick Fisher, 'Hybris, revenge and stasis in the Greek city-states.' in Hans Van Wees (ed.), *War and Violence in Ancient Greece*, (London: Duckworth and the Classical Press of Wales, 2000), 85.

challenges the prevailing cynical ethos of the Trojan War. Priam, Hector's father and the king of Troy, ventures into Achilles' tent to beg for the return of his son's body. Despite Achilles' previous acts of brutality, including decapitating fallen soldiers and desecrating Hector's corpse, he is moved by Priam's plea.

Priam appeals to Achilles' sense of compassion, invoking the universal desire of parents for the dignity of their children. In a remarkable display of empathy, Achilles agrees to return Hector's body for a proper burial, defying the norms of revenge, pride, and humiliation that have governed the war thus far.[247] The seed of compassion, empathy, and sympathy lies behind the lines of the rhapsody Ω. After the cynical bloodshed for revenge, after the emotional darkness of legitimising any form of violence, humiliation, and even mutilation of dead soldiers, Homer presents a dialogue that might contain the seed of a spiritual tradition that interacted with the norms of Christianity many centuries later. Priam's kiss for his son's killer underscores the shared humanity of all involved in war, transcending the boundaries of enemy and friend.

Religion was a key factor behind sparing the enemy. The sanctuaries and temples were sacred, even in war conditions. Priests and people who could find shelter in temples were usually spared. Xenophon gives an example from Agesilaus's decision not to chaise eighty armed enemies who were inside a temple by clarifying that 'Though he was covered with wounds he did not forget his duty to the gods but gave orders to let them retire unscathed and would not suffer any injury to be done to them'.[248] For Xenophon, there was no pity or compassion in Agesilaus' decision but an inherited value of respecting a sacred duty to the gods. Agesilaus argued that it is irrational to judge the ones who steal the temple's property if we are about to raise a sword and kill inside a temple or pull violently those who seek shelter outside. Meanwhile, Plutarch told us with approval how Alexander the Great destroyed Plataies but never touched the priests.[249] Homer recounts that Apollo sent a disease to the camp of the Greeks due to Agamemnon's arrogance and refusal to return the daughter of Apollo's priest to her father.[250] It was fear that kept people from breaking this rule, not an ethical standpoint of respect or compassion for noncombatants.

---

[247] Homer, Ω. 486-516

[248] Helen Law, 'Atrocities in Greek warfare', *The classical journal* 15/3 (1919) 133.

[249] Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, 11-12, 53

[250] Kirk, 'Homer', 52.

The treatment of 'barbarians' could differ from what was acceptable in the intra-Greek war.[251] Xenophon underlines that when fighting the barbarians (Persians), the Greeks should always be victorious, praising the decision of Agesilaus to join forces with the Egyptian Pharaoh and the satraps of the Asia Minor in order to fight the Persian King.[252] The identity constructions between the Greeks and the Persians were continuous and intense, since it is odd that Xenophon presented Persians as inferiors but not the Egyptians. His sympathy for the Persian throne claimant, Cyros, occurred only because the specific individual wanted Greek allies. After all, he considered them as superior to all the other people.

During the Peloponnesian war, both Athenians and Spartans killed noncombatant envoys, merchants, and naval prisoners that belonged to the other side. When Spartan ambassadors sought Persian support, during the early years of the Peloponnesian War, they stopped in Thrace, aiming to persuade Sitacles to break his alliance with Athens; yet Athenian ambassadors intercepted their plans by convincing Sitalces's son, who had Athenian citizenship, to hand them over. Subsequently, the Peloponnesian ambassadors were captured and delivered to Athens. Fearful of the consequences, the Athenians executed the Spartans without trial, reasoning that it was justified retaliation for Spartan actions during the war.[253]

In the early years of the Peloponnesian War, the Mytilaneans swiched sides and rebelled against Athens, Thucydides highlighted that the Athenian Assembly decided to kill all the adult men of Mytilene and sell women and children as slaves in a time of anger. The next day, the Assembly met again, and arguments were made against the former decision. They argue against imposing death penalties, emphasising that such harsh measures do not guarantee stability and may eliminate any chance of reconciliation or repentance. Instead, they suggest considering the potential consequences of changing policies, such as inciting further revolts and incurring unnecessary expenses from prolonged sieges. The Athenians advocate for leniency in punishments and proactive measures to prevent future uprisings, stressing the importance of preserving economic benefits and ensuring security through cunning politics rather than brute force. They propose monitoring and preempting revolts, punishing as few as possible if revolts occur, to maintain control effectively.[254]

---

[251] Osiander, *Before the State*, 54.

[252] Xenophon, *Agesilaus*, 7.6-7.

[253] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2.67.1 – 4.

[254] Ibid. 3.46.1.

Xenophon emphasises the execution of the Athenian General Philokles whom the Spartan commander of the fleet slaughtered (*esphaxen*) himself. [255] Yet Xenophon presents this execution that took place after the end of the naval battle that defined the outcome of the Peloponnesian War, as an outcome of acting lawlessly (*paranomein)*. The Athenians were not treated as prisoners of war but as war criminals. The infinitive *paranomein* does not imply breaking official laws but norms, costumes, and institutionalised legitimate behaviours. The term may reflect the general disapproval of the Athenian hegemony over the other Greeks. Lysander's actions after his victory in Lampasakos reflect not only the dynamics of power and conquest but also the presence of established norms and laws of war among the Greeks. Despite continuous conflict between Greek city-states, there existed a framework of rules and expectations governing warfare. Lysander's consultation with allies regarding the fate of Athenian prisoners demonstrates the recognition of these norms and the importance of upholding them even in the midst of conflict. The Athenians' proposed punishment for prisoners, including mutilation and executions, highlights the severity of transgressions against these laws.

During the actual battle, the ethics of warfare did not include mercy. Even after clear signs of defeat, the overpowered troops were slaughtered. Few prisoners were taken. Wees observes that massacres occurred occasionally before the Peloponnesian War, highlighting the example of Spartans killing Argives while sitting peacefully in their camp and burning the ones who tried to find shelter inside the sacred sanctuary of a local hero.[256] Plus, he mentions the Athenian annihilation of an isolated Persian unit that took place in a non-combat setting.[257] The years that followed the Peloponnesian war include examples of killing fleeing people, such as the Spartan pursuit and slaughtering of Argives (392 BCE) and Arcadians (368 BCE).[258]

Customs and ethics regarding the expected behavior in noncombatants and prisoners of war were Pan-Hellenic. For example, one chapter after the above-mentioned execution of the Athenians, Xenophon recounts how the Athenian-allied cities of Byzantium and Kalchedona surrendered to the Spartans, but the Athenian guards were left unharmed.

---

[255] Xenophon, *Hellenica,* B.2.1. 30-32.

[256] Van Wees, *Defeat and Destruction*, 72

[257] Aischylus, *Persians*, 462-64

[258] Hans Van Wees (ed.), *Defeat and Destruction: The Ethics of ancient Greek Warfare*, (Graz: Grazer Universitatsverlag, 2011), 71.

Xenophon explains that despite the brutal warfare between Athens and Sparta, there were institutionalised rituals, such as *spondes*: [259] The representatives of the fighting sides agreed on specific terms and sealed the agreement with *spondes* to the gods. Thus, the gods protected those who were leaving a city after agreed terms of surrender. This is why the term *ypospondos* is used to describe someone defeated in battle.

Noncombatants and prisoners were, in general, maltreated. However, even the fear behind their religious protection is not irrelevant to the evolving perceptions of the morality of war. Religious places offered asylum, and thus, for fear of disrespecting the gods, the Greeks had a connection between the disrespectful act of killing those seeking divine protection and divine punishment.

2.7 Conclusion

The first conclusion we can derive is based on the evolving ontology of what made war legitimate in the Ancient Greek thought. The concept of legitimate war aims in Ancient Greece evolved significantly from the Archaic to the Classical period. Initially dominated by the pursuit of honour and glory, these aims gradually shifted towards more political objectives, particularly emphasising the autonomy of city-states. This transition was marked by the Persian Wars, which established a stronger Greek identity and led to the Athenian attempts to centralise power under their hegemony, contrary to traditional norms of autonomy. Although honour and glory continued to be important, the diverse political systems within the Greek world increasingly politicised war aims.

Secondly, the concept of enemies in Ancient Greek warfare also transformed over time. The competitive dynamics between the *poleis,* were shaken by the Persian Wars, a series of conflicts that marked the period where the distinction between Greeks and non-Greeks solidified, highlighting an existential threat from the East. This period established a defensive logic that transcended mere competition, although it did not lead to any expansionist ambitions among the Greeks. Instead, they maintained a communitarian approach, recognising the existence of ‘others’. The Greeks did not develop any doctrines of universal conquest and in Herodotus’ time, we can identify plenty of sources that reveal the acceptance of a world of ‘barbarians’, whose positive and negative elements were part of an identity-based collective mentality. The Persian Wars contributed to a genealogy of a more hostile ‘otherness’ and so did the parallel development of a stronger Pan-Hellenic identity (*vis a vis* the ‘barbarian’ one). This is why Herodotus

[259] Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 2.2.1-4 (*Spondes* is a term that refers to rituals, usually followed by sacrificing animals to the gods).

acknowledgement of positive elements in the Persian 'others', the Platonic and Aristotelian reflections mirror developing norms of a deeper cultural superiority of the Greeks. The political development of constitutions that enhanced the power of citizens also contributed to this dichotomy, as the political gap between the 'self' and the 'other' became unbridgeable. Combining this with the collective experience of the Persian Wars, the threat from the East became a dominant discourse and so did the norm of a Greek superiority *vis a vis* a 'barbaric' inferiority. In the context of intra-Greek conflicts, the analysis of our sources revealed that the Greek world operated not as an anarchic system but as an interconnected society governed by norms that could trigger warfare if violated. Especially given the development of different constitutions, the Athenian behaviour was perceived as a political threat, challenging the very meaning of autonomy, i.e., 'the ability of a society to exercise control over its allocation of resources and choice of government',[260] as the Athenian identity embodied a different political system that would challenge the foundations of each polis freedom to self-rule according to its normative preferences. Thus, the Peloponnesian War, often misinterpreted in IR literature, exemplifies this, showing that Athenian hegemonic ambitions, rather than insecurity, prompted conflict, thereby affirming the Greek commitment to autonomy over conquest (in both domestic and external affairs). This communitarian approach alongside the development of the aforementioned 'otherness' is a missing element from the literature and shows a different approach to the Roman Just war understanding, thus creating a differentiated framework to analyse the development of ideas in the Greek thought.

Greek foreign policy in the Classical period reveals a distinct interplay between pragmatic constraints and normative commitments. While the limited demographic and logistical capacities of most *poleis* undoubtedly curtailed large-scale imperial ambitions, this material reality was neither the sole nor sufficient explanation for the absence of expansionist ideology. Instead, as mentioned above, Greek political thought developed within a communitarian framework that prioritised autonomy (*autonomia*), self-rule, and civic flourishing (*eudaimonia*) within the bounds of the *polis*.

This ideological orientation fostered a form of inward-looking Hellenism. The Greek worldview was shaped by a strong civilisational distinction between the *Hellenes* and the *barbaroi*, not merely on ethnic or linguistic lines, but in terms of values, institutions, and perceived cultural superiority. This contributed to a sense that Greek political and ethical life was not easily exportable, and that the imposition of Hellenic norms beyond the polis was neither desirable nor just.

The Persian Wars demonstrated that the Greeks were militarily capable of confronting a vastly more powerful enemy. Yet in the aftermath, there was no unified Pan-Hellenic movement to expand further. Instead, inter-polis rivalry and the defence of autonomy

[260] Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 235.

continued to dominate strategic thinking. Even Athens' imperial turn remained ideologically couched in language of leadership and protection, rather than open conquest.

The Sicilian Expedition, while could be viewed as a counterpoint, reinforces this normative lens. Though it was a bold and ultimately catastrophic campaign, its public justification rested on appeals to kinship, honour, and the obligation to assist allied populations in Sicily. The Assembly's rhetoric demonstrates that strategic ambition alone was insufficient; military action required moral and political legitimation grounded in shared norms. This reveals a recurring pattern in Greek warfare: the necessity of aligning action with ideational frameworks that conferred legitimacy, especially in cases where expansion or intervention exceeded local defence.

The interaction between material reality and ideological formation in the Greek context is thus not linear or causal but dialectical. Material pressures—such as the Persian threat—may have necessitated innovations like the Athenian fleet, yet their adoption and framing were embedded in discourses of duty, autonomy, and moral responsibility. Conversely, prevailing ideas about identity and justice helped define the conditions under which military action was deemed permissible. The normative weight of such concepts shaped how political communities perceived threats, responsibilities, and the limits of acceptable force.

In this sense, the Greek tradition of *Just War* reflects a deeply rooted tension between necessity and legitimacy—between what could be done and what ought to be done. Far from being merely constrained by weakness, Greek foreign policy reveals a distinct ideological pattern in which the ethics of warfare were shaped as much by communitarian identity as by geopolitical circumstance.

On the area of identities, the Persian Wars played a significant role in reshaping Hellenic identity, challenging traditional notions of autonomy among the city-states. This transformation is evident in Xenophon's praise of Agesilaus, who epitomised a profound love for both the *polis* and Hellas as a whole. This theme of common identity is echoed throughout the 4th century BCE discourse, as seen in Aristotle's exploration of Greek superiority and Plato's critique of intra-Greek warfare and unrestrained aggression towards non-Greeks, and in later centuries' sources, e.g., Plutarch's admiration of a Pan-Hellenic vision championed by the Macedonian king. These reflections further solidified the dichotomy between the 'self' and the perceived 'otherness' of non-Greeks, intensifying expectations of unity among Greeks, negative expectations when it comes to the actions of 'others', and, thus, also creating facilitating conditions for the future constructions regarding Just wars ideas and practices.

The evolution of who fought in Greek wars is also an important aspect of the analysis. In the Archaic period, warfare was largely the domain of elites who could afford the necessary equipment, with the poor often seeing participation as a misfortune. Over time,

the concept of the citizen-soldier emerged, creating a normative bond between the army and its leadership, fueling warfare with a new type of legitimacy – at least in the realm of ideas. This development paralleled the increasing politicisation of warfare, as conflicts between *poleis* intensified and formal procedures for declaring war became more crucial, revealing the collective responsibility and involvement of the citizenry. Such developments are interdependent variables with how we study identities, as the evolving perceptions on the 'self' inevitably influence the concept of 'otherness'.

Finally, the perception of war in Ancient Greece embedded both its good and evil aspects, rooted in a naturalisation of the phenomenon. While heroic ideals of the Archaic period initially glorified warfare, these ideals gradually diminished in the face of evolving Greek identity, especially regarding internal conflicts. The groundwork for many of the Just war criteria later codified by the Romans can be traced back to Greek sources. This includes the origins of restrained violence influenced by religious factors and the condemnation of deriving pleasure from killing, evident even in Homeric thought.

Chapter 3
Roman Warfare: The Just War Doctrine, the Seed of Universality, and the Roman-Christian Synthesis

3.1 Introduction: Romans and War

Greek ideas about war, - but also about different areas of the 'political' - significantly influenced Roman thinking, serving as a foundational intellectual framework for the Romans.[1] The Romans admired and adopted key aspects of Greek military philosophy, strategy, and tactics, incorporating them into their own military doctrine. The Roman military, drawing inspiration from Greek precedents, blended these ideas with their own practical innovations, contributing to the development of a distinctive Roman approach to war that played a significant role in the expansion and success of the Roman Republic and later the Roman Empire.

But what did the Romans believe about war? How did the Roman beliefs define the state's actions? Was warfare only cynical and utilitarian? Furthermore, how did the domestic political changes and the external influences affect Roman thinking? Many norms and ideas from Rome were preserved in Eastern Roman times, notwithstanding the inevitable changes due to the development of different political institutions and the influence of different factors, i.e., the dominance of Christianity and the different enemies of the Eastern Roman world, among others. Roman thinking is integral to the evolving concept of war in Greek thinking since it bridges Greek Antiquity and the Eastern Roman Empire. Therefore, this chapter has both methodological and epistemological utility for this research project, aiming to understand how the Romans developed a new way of thinking about war and identify Greek influences and differences that will contribute to the next centuries evolving ideas and practices.

It comes as no surprise that the Greeks influenced many Roman cultural characteristics. The interaction between the Greeks and the Romans began with Greek voyagers who reached Italy for trade purposes, centuries before the latter's cultural blossoming.[2] These

---

[1] John Rich, 'Warfare and external relations in the middle Roman Republic' in Anja Hartmann and Beatrice Heuser (eds.), *War, Peace and World Orders in European History* (London: Routledge, 2001), 63.

[2] Thomas Martin, *Ancient Rome: From Romulus to Justinian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 12.

influences concerned the development of literature, the recording of historical events,[3] domestic housing patterns as suggested by relevant archaeological evidence,[4] philosophical thinking[5] and even the Roman war machine, in terms of engineering and siege practices.[6] At the same time, Rome's interaction with the Greek cities of Italy, such as Neapolis and Tarentum, initiated a period of Greek influences which can be detected through the Greek names in Roman leaders, e.g. Philo, Sophus, and Philippus.[7]

Furthermore, by the third century BCE, the majority of the Roman elite had a basic knowledge of Greek;[8] therefore, this interactive relationship allowed for the spreading of Greek values and ideas. At the same time, the Roman conquests in the Greek mainland facilitated the exchange of influences from the Greeks to the Romans and *vice versa*. Some of the most influential writers of Roman affairs, e.g., Plutarch and Polybius, were Greeks, and thus, the sources about Roman affairs became accessible to the Greek world through their works.

The Roman military played a decisive role in developing the Roman state and was also an integral part of the state's political elite's life. Investigating the Roman tradition of war, one should try to set aside pop culture images, i.e., the bloodthirsty legionaries and the greedy emperors, since Rome offers much deeper examples of how ideas can define the practice of war. While the Romans were influenced to a large extent by the Greeks, they were nonetheless highly innovative. It is true that the Romans waged war at high frequencies against various 'others' and structured an essential part of their political and

---

[3] Elaine Fantham, 'Literature in the Roman Republic', in Harriet Flower (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 273.

[4] Evans Jane DeRose, *A Companion to the Archaeology of the Roman Republic* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 1.

[5] Gesine Manuwald, *Cicero* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2015), 90-92.

[6] David Potter, 'The Roman Army and Navy' in Harriet Flower (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2014), 70; Jonathan Roth, 'War' in Philip Sabin, Hans Van Wees, and Michael Whitby (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 394.

[7] Billows, Richard. 'International Relations' in Philip Sabin, Van Wees, and Michael Whitby, (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 318.

[8] Rich, 'Warfare and External Relations', 63.

economic life around the conduct of war.[9] Yet, the frequent mobilisation of troops and the distant military campaigns were backed by specific values that defined the Roman political culture. According to Gavin Stewart, Cicero aimed to use Greek philosophical influences to 'instil a sense in the Roman people of what constituted virtuous behaviour'.[10] The necessity to integrate virtue in the acts of the Roman state is a sign that validates the importance of ideas for the evolving concept of war.

One cannot but agree that there is plenty of evidence for the special relationship between the Romans and war. Paintings, commemoration, triumphs, and arches are some examples of how the concept of war influenced the Roman aesthetic and customs.[11] Such monuments were made to perpetuate the significance of victory.[12] At the same time, the most significant state offices, i.e. consul, praetor, dictator, had a military nature.[13] Martin Thomas argues that peace was not profitable for the Romans, whose willingness to engage in wars mirrored how military success was essential for the state's hierarchy since the military achievements of an individual were equally important as their record in office holding or the aristocratic family reputation.[14]

According to certain scholarly interpretations, the main factor that defined the Roman decision to engage in war was the fear of neighbours.[15] The advocates of Rome's defensive imperialism were challenged by different interpretations that highlighted the

---

[9] William Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome 327-70 BC* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 9.

[10] Gavin Stewart, 'Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 bce–43 bce)' in Hom Andrew, Cian O'Driscoll, and Kurt Mills (eds.) *Moral Victories: The Ethics of Winning Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 8.

[11] Harris, *War and Imperialism*, 20.

[12] Tonio Hölscher, 'The Transformation of Victory into Pwer: From Event to Structure' in Dillon Sheila, and Katherine E. Welch, (eds.), *Representations of war in ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006), 43.

[13] Simon Hornblower, 'Warfare in Ancient Literature: The Paradox of War' in Philip Sabin, Hans Van Wees, and Michael Whitby, (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 30.

[14] Thomas, *Ancient Rome: From Romulus to Justinian*, 8.

[15] Rich, 'Warfare and External Relations', 63Adrian Sherwin-White, 'Rome the Aggressor?', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 70 (1980), 177–181.

economic benefits of warfare and the pursuit of glory, as levers behind the Roman war machine.[16] However, without disregarding the importance of utilitarian motives behind Roman warfare, the effective mobilisation of troops and the consensus about the aims behind military expeditions required more than some upper-class commanders' ambitious career prospects: it required ideas.

The Romans waged war against external others who also had reasons to fight and whose ideas about war, expansion, and victory defined the interaction with the former. This military culture of the 'other' can define the 'self's' behaviour, and thus, studying evolving ideas and values should consider the characteristics of Rome's enemies. A methodological and epistemological problem regarding others' perceptions of war is that the vast majority of sources come from Greco-Roman authors and thus might include biased evidence or cultural misconceptions.[17] At the same time, the lack of primary sources for specific periods obliges us to be critical when reading the primary texts of the Roman thinkers. Livy was a Roman historian who lived from 59 BCE to 17 CE. Written during the reign of Emperor Augustus, Livy's work covers the history of Rome from its founding up to his own time. Livy explained that trustworthy records survived only after the Gallic sack of Rome.[18] Thus, the Regal and the Early Republican periods are not covered by reliable records. However, the values and ideas that survived until the time of Livy enable us to understand the dominant concepts behind the state's behaviour. In the books of Livy, we find ideas, values, and ideals that indicate that instead of focusing on precise storytelling patterns, the author attempted to promote the core values that defined Roman thinking and that should survive the test of time.[19]

In general, our understanding draws significantly from ancient historians, particularly Polybius, who chronicled the period from 264 to 146 BCE. Livy, writing during the reign of Augustus, covered the years 218–167 BCE, often relying on earlier Roman historians. Additionally, Diodorus Siculus and Plutarch were essential sources for our research aims. Diodorus lived in the 1st century BCE and his work covered events from the rise of Rome and the decline of Greek city-states. He lived during a time of significant political

---

[16] Harris, *War and Imperialism*, 20.

[17] Goldsworthy, 'War', 81.

[18] Titus Livius (Livy), *The History of Rome*, trans. D. Spillan (London: John Child and Son, 1857), 6.1.

[19] Gary Forsythe, 'A Critical History of Early Rome: From Prehistory to the First Punic War', in *Aestimatio: Critical Reviews in the History of Science*, vol. 2, ed. Alan C. Bowen and Tracey E. Rihll (California: University of California Press, 2012), 61. Stem Rex, 'The Exemplary Lessons of Livy's Romulus', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 137/2 (2007): 435–436.

and cultural change, witnessing expansionistic campaigns of the Roman Republic but also the internal strife that led to the rise of the Empire. Beyond historians, Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BCE–43 BCE), a leading figure in the late Roman Republic, introduced a systematic ethical approach that prominently included the concept of Just war. Cicero provides crucial insights not only into the criteria of Just war but also into his conceptualisation of war as a facet of broader Roman political affairs.[20] His perspectives enable precise interpretations rooted in the language and context in which he discusses warfare.

Another source was Dionysius of Halicarnassus, an ancient Greek historian who wrote 'Roman Antiquities', a detailed history of Rome from its legendary beginnings to the early Roman Republic. The Imperial period also offers important sources. Seneca, a renowned Roman philosopher and statesman of the 1st century CE is celebrated for his Stoic teachings on virtue and self-discipline. Serving as an advisor to Emperor Nero, his writings and plays offer insight into the intellectual and cultural milieu of ancient Rome during the Julio-Claudian era. Marcus Aurelius, Roman emperor from 161 to 180 CE, was particularly important for introducing his Stoic principles into his leadership approach during turbulent times, including conflicts with Germanic tribes and internal political challenges. Tacitus, a Roman historian and senator of the 1st and 2nd centuries CE wrote about the Roman Empire spanning from the demise of Augustus in CE 14 to the rule of Domitian in the late 1st century. Finally, Cassius Dio, (2nd and 3rd centuries CE), was a useful source for his extensive work 'Roman History', spanning from the legendary origins of Rome to his contemporary era in the early 3rd century CE.

As this chapter is trying to show how the Roman tradition became part of a dialectic process of interacting not only with Greek but also Christian ideas, there are relevant reflections from theological texts. Eusebius of Caesarea, a Christian historian and bishop in the 3rd and 4th centuries CE, is renowned for his 'Ecclesiastical History', which traces the early Christian Church's evolution until the early 4th century CE. His work provides crucial insights into the development of Christianity amidst the Roman Empire's political and religious landscape. Athanasius was also an important source, as a 4th-century Christian theologian and bishop of Alexandria known for defending orthodox Christianity against the Arian heresy – which concerned the Eastern provinces of the Empire but his ideas reveal the way the Roman-Christian synthesis incarnated two different value systems. Finally, Lactantius was an early Christian author and theologian who lived during the 3rd and 4th centuries CE. He is best known for his work 'Divine Institutes', a systematic exposition of Christian doctrine aimed at defending and explaining Christianity to the Roman world – another key epistemological tool for understanding the meaning of the above-mentioned synthesis.

[20] Stewart, 'Marcus Tullius Cicero', 8.

3.2 Legitimate Aims

3.2.1 The Just War Ideas and the 'Offensive' Defence

According to the dominant values of the Republic, if Rome was not wronged by the 'other,' there could be no war.[21] Cicero underlined that 'without the strong feeling of patriotism, neither had G. Duelius, Aulus Atilius or L. Metellus freed us from the terror of Carthage'.[22] The term 'terror' implies a defensive logic in the Roman decision to wage war against Carthage, as the necessity for emancipation from fear was used to justify the specific expedition and also the ultimate destruction of Carthage – if Carthage's foreign policy terrorised the Romans, war was the last resort.

The Ciceronian Just war thinking is influenced by Aristotle and the division of the free people versus 'those who are destined to be slaves':[23]

> 'Do you call slavery peace?...What juster cause is there for waging war than the wish to repel slavery?' [24]
>
> 'For life does not consist wholly in breathing; there is no life at all for one who is a slave. All nations can endure slavery. Our state cannot.'[25]

Every possible scenario of defensive warfare was considered necessary to avoid the scenario of slavery. This is an idea that blossomed in Ancient Greek thought and a central justifying argument behind numerous inner-Greek conflicts but also present during the Greco-Persian Wars.[26] Interestingly, though, another important influence by the Greek

---

[21] Sherwin-White, 'Rome the aggressor?', 177–81; John North, 'The development of Roman imperialism', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 71 (1981):1–9; Potter, 'The Roman Army and Navy', 68.

[22] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De re publica* I.1, in *The Republic and the Laws*, trans. Niall Rudd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1.1.icero, Marcus Tullius, *De re publica* (54 BCE), tr. Niall Rudd, *The Republic and the Laws* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1.1

[23] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis* I.35, I.36, I.38, I.80, in *On Duties*, trans. Margaret Atkins, ed. M.T. Griffin and E.M. Atkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991),

[24] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Philippics* 8.12, in *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, trans. C.D. Yonge (London: George Bell & Sons, 1903), 245.

[25] Ibid. 10.

[26] Herodotus, *Histories* 5.49.2–5.49.3, trans. Ilias Spyropoulos (Athens: Govosti, 1992), 387; Antisthenes, *Speeches of Ajax* 7, trans. Nicholaos Skouteropoulos, in *Οι Αρχαίοι Κυνικοί. Αποσπάσματα και Μαρτυρίες* (Athens: Gnosi, 1998)

tradition was linked with *autonomia*. Similarly, the Roman ideas about their political and cultural superiority help us to understand that slavery could not only mean the possibility of regional occupation but also a reality where the states' institutions would not be functional due to the dependency of Rome on a stronger 'other'. Greek *autonomia* was a major legitimate war aim, reflecting not just a fear of conquest but an existential threat to the ability to act independently and choose political structures without external intervention. The crucial difference, which will be discussed later, is the way Romans dealt with the specific insecurity and the ideas that differentiated them from the Greeks.

The Romans sealed their victories with a triumph ceremony. The triumphant marked his military success with a dramatic return to Rome, where the Roman population could participate, followed by his troops, enemy captives, and booty.[27] The public character of triumphs facilitated the social construction of linking the victorious generals with the population that stayed behind. Cicero explained that 'there is nothing sweeter than victory…and no more definite proof of victory than seeing the people you have many times been afraid of being led in chains to their execution.'[28] This example supports the statement mentioned above since it describes that the triumph was not proof of Roman superiority *per se*, but proof of being capable of protecting the state's population from threats. When Cicero described the external captives as 'the people you have often been afraid of', he underlined the defensive logic of war. The representation of the 'others' enslavement as those who had posed a threat to the Roman people is a way to support that in case of defeat, it would be the Romans who would become the slaves of 'others'. Cicero described Tarquinius' military campaigns as defensive wars favouring the Roman people.[29] Rome's wars were its people's wars, and potential defeat could affect their lives and privileges.

Plutarch described many of Caesar's Western expeditions based on the former ideas, highlighting that Caesar experienced expansionist and aggressive behaviour from Germanic tribes.[30] Similarly, he described the Roman fear regarding their Asian borders and how the war against Mithridates in 88 BCE was part of the same defensive

---

[27] Cian O'Driscoll and Andrew R. Hom, 'Introduction: Moral Victories – The Ethics of Winning Wars', in Andrew R. Hom, Cian O'Driscoll, and Kurt Mills (eds), *Moral Victories: The Ethics of Winning Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 4.

[28] Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *In Verrem*, *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, tr. C. D. Yonge (London: George Bell & Sons,1903), 2.5.66.

[29] Cicero *Phil,* 1.

[30] Plutarch, *Parallel Lives: Alexander – Caesar*, trans. Kaktos Translation Team (Athens: Kaktos, 1993), 22.

thinking.[31] Regardless of the necessity to be critical towards his potentially biased reflections, it would be also problematic to ignore the potential expansive tendency of 'others' that could play an essential role in the defensive logic of Rome.

Cicero believed that the aim of a Just war should be a Just and durable peace. If the 'other' was not a subordinate ally, the renewal of the conflict was considered inevitable. Thus, partial victories seemed unsatisfactory.[32] Livy also described that from the earliest days of Rome, one of the most important Roman legitimate war aims was the achievement of a long and durable peace. More specifically, he explained that 'Romulus, the founder of Rome, established his power wisely by the arts of war and peace, which led to the enjoyment of profound peace and security for many years'.[33] During the late 5th century BC, the battle of Lake Regillus was followed by a treaty between Rome and the Latins.[34] According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the bilateral conditions were:

> They are not to wage war upon one another, nor are they to introduce other parties into the land intending to wage war, nor grant safe passage to any such outside parties.
>
> In times of war, they are to aid one another with all their forces, and there is to be equal sharing of the booty captured in their joint operations.
>
> Disputes arising from contracts made between persons from two communities are to be settled within ten days in the community where the contract was made.

Nothing is to be added to or subtracted from this agreement without the consent of both the Romans and the Latins.[35]

The treaty highlighted the joint gains of the two sides in case of war and the bilateral responsibility for military support when needed. The first and final parts shows the tendency of the Romans to conclude the conflict with a stable and durable peace treaty. Livy observed how the military norms and war *ethos* were constructed. He

---

[31] Plutarch, *Marius*, *Plutarch's Lives* trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 31.2.

[32] Goldsworthy, 'War', 96-97.

[33] Livy, *The History of Rome*, 1.15.

[34] Ibid. 2.33.

[35] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities,* trans. Earnest Cary, on the basis of the version of Edward Spelman (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), 6.95

explained that continuous wars shaped people's behaviour and expectations, and thus, the principles of justice, law, and morality should be practised to become tangible dynamics in society.

This logic is reflected throughout different examples in the Greco-Roman literature. Plutarch also described how the absolute emphasis on military training over cultivating civil values made Gaius Marius harsh, bitter, and fond of war. Thus, regardless of the importance of the military *ethos* for the Romans, the indiscriminate prioritisation of war was not approved.[36] In addition, Cicero argued that there were limitations regarding revenge and punishment – based on the same logic. The acknowledgement of how revenge and punishment can brutalise the practice of warfare is a crucial element of how the Romans believed that habitual variables could influence the conduction of warfare – the Aristotelian *ethos*. However, the resilience to utter destruction had exceptions. The destruction of Carthage and the brutal suppression of Gallic uprisings combined with the enslavement of the remnants[37] reflect such exceptions.

Polybius recorded the peace terms that followed the end of the first Punic War:

> 'Friendship was established between the Carthaginians and Romans on the following terms, provided the Roman people always ratified them. The Carthaginians shall evacuate the whole of Sicily: they shall not make war upon Hiero nor bear arms against the Syracusans or their allies. The Carthaginians shall give up to the Romans all prisoners without ransom. The Carthaginians shall pay to the Romans in twenty years 2200 Euboic talents of silver.'[38]

It is evident that the terms favoured the victorious Romans but also attempted to establish non-conflictive interaction. The term 'friendship' mirrors the normative significance of shaping the conditions for a durable peace – at least as an attempt to establish shared knowledge that replaces 'Hobbesian' identities, i.e., based on a join understanding of hostile expectations and thus hostile interaction, with a different approach. Similarly, Polybius informs us that when the Romans conquered Illyria, the treaty showed that the Romans engaged in a war against Teuta, the Queen of the Ardiaei tribe in Illyria (229

---

[36] Plutarch, *Marius*, 2.

[37] Beatrice Heuser, 'Misleading Paradigms of War: States and Non-State Actors, Combatants and Non-Combatants', *War & Society* 27, no. 2 (2008): 6.

[38] Polybius, *Ἱστορίαι (Histories)*, trans. N.D. Triantafyllopoulos (Athens: Ministry of Education, 2002), 1.62.

BCE) but did not aim to annihilate her. The submission terms were enough to ensure future peace through their enemy's absolute territorial and military weakening.[39]

The Ciceronian laws of war were a significant influence for the later Just war thinkers and the development of the *ius ad bellum* and *ius in bellocategories*. Cicero believed that there are two types of conflict, distinguishing the human type that is based on debating from the use of force, which is the practice of beasts. The Just use of force occurs when all the other means have failed or when the ultimate aim is a durable and Just peace. Cicero even clarified that *postbellum* brutal actions towards the enemy could not be justified, advocating for mercy.[40] This *postbellum* idea indicated that redefining the concept of victory is the only way to secure a Just and durable peace, hence the previously discussed significance of the discourse-based constructions of 'friendly' relationships – through less Hobbesian identities. Thus, for Cicero, the post-victory scenario is a joint procedure of reconstructing the interactive dynamics between the opposing sides. This reconstruction can only occur without atrocities, punishment practices, and additional violence since such acts can traumatise people and keep the experience of war alive, creating identities of a maltreated 'self' vs. a merciless other. Cicero had impressively detected the crucial meaning of shared experiences and the potential utilisation of past traumas to define a social group's future point of view. Plutarch also highlighted that after conducting the war, Caesar tried to solve the tensions within the conquered regions in order to establish a stable and secure peace, showing the occasional application of the *postbellum* ideas.[41] The peaceful resolution and the Just aims of expanding *pax* and *humanitas*, were seen as signs of civilised culture vis-à-vis *vis a vis* the warlike ways that were considered as barbaric and inferior characteristics.[42]

3.2.2 The Pursuit of Glory and Honour

The militarised structure of the Romans was not excluded from the ideal of glory and honour, which is a similar norm to the Greek warfare, especially during the Archaic intra-Greek competitive logic. Glory was part of Roman elections since candidates with military experience were showing their scars to the people as factors that could ensure the

---

[39] Ibid. 2.12.

[40] Cicero, *De Officiis,* 1.34, 82; 1.23.80.

[41] Plutarch, *Ceasar*, 11-12.

[42] Greg Woolf, 'Roman Peace', in John Rich and Graham Shipley (eds), *War and Society in the Roman World* (London: Routledge, 1993), 178.; Plutarch, *Marius*, 11.5.

voters' sympathy and admiration.[43] Since Consuls had a limited amount of time in order to demonstrate their power and status, Harris believed that they were trying to find the right opportunities for military expeditions.[44] The military *ethos* was crucial for the Roman aristocracy and played a significant role in the competition among the elite, since 'the greatest honour was won by victory in war, either by individual feats of valour or by commanding successful military operations.'[45]

While honour could be attained through endeavours like oratory in civil life, the primary route to glory was through warfare, initially as a brave soldier in youth and later as a successful commander. Triumph in battle was commemorated with a grand procession, where in the victorious leader paraded through the city accompanied by their troops and a display of captured treasures.[46] In theory, no Roman individual could run for high political office before completing military service.[47] Although this observation is valid and partially explains the aims behind specific military campaigns, some sides remain unclear. Why, if glory and profit were such vital characteristics of the Roman normative standards, did the Romans develop Just war mentality to justify their expeditions? Moreover, how can we know that the urgency of the Consuls to achieve decisive victories was not linked with the responsibility to protect Rome? After all, no Consul would risk leaving Rome unprotected during the year he was responsible for its security. The sacking of Rome by the Gauls at the beginning of the 4th century BCE shows that the aggressive tendencies of Rome's neighbours were not fictional.[48]

At the same time, war taxes and expenses were also taken into account, and thus, the decision to wage war should have been well-balanced and not based on the acquisition of

---

[43] Jon E. Lendon, 'War and Society', in Philip Sabin, Hans van Wees, and Michael Whitby (eds), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 511.

[44] Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*.

[45] Forsythe, *A Critical History of Early Rome*, 285-286.

[46] Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 74–93.

[47] Polybius, *Histories*, 6.19.

[48] Tim Cornell, The beginnings of Rome: *Italy and Rome from the Bronze Age to the Punic Wars (c. 1000–264 BC)*, (London: Routledge, 2012), 316.

glory *per se*. Polybius described the extent of resource consumption during the First Punic War:

> 'The labours of the war wore them out; the perpetual succession of hard-fought struggles was, at last, driving them to despair; their strength had become paralysed, and their resources reduced almost to extinction by war taxes and expenses extending over so many years.'[49]

The primary way to conquer glory and honour was through victorious military campaigns. The victory was followed by the triumph, a ceremony in which the returning triumphant paraded through the city, followed by his troops and booty.[50]

The fame that occurred from military success was linked with the ideal of the great deeds of the ones who protected the liberty of the rest, which is different from the Archaic Greek ideas that considered glory for the sake of glory as a legitimate war aim.[51] For the early-Republic, the concept of virtue was linked with single combat skills.[52] Yet, as war became more political in its logic and its aims personal combat skills appeared to lose their heroic aura slowly.[53] Plutarch describes the death of Marcellus as a result of a stupidly rash personal reconnaissance, showing that, on the one hand, the Roman generals did not hesitate to risk their lives but on the other they criticised conditions where emotions overtook the rational side of fighting, i.e. the Just war aims.[54]

The pursuit of glory is not only an important legitimate aim but a way to understand the multivariable nature of Just war theorising. According to Livy, Camillus advised the Romans to reclaim their country through the sword, not gold, after the Celtic occupation in 386 BCE. He emphasised fighting for what they held dear: their temples, families, homeland, and principles of honour and justice.[55] The insights provided by Livy's

---

[49] Polybius, *Histories,* 1.59.

[50] Rich, 'Warfare and external relations in the middle Roman Republic', 66.

[51] Stewart, 'Marcus Tullius Cicero', 10.

[52] Polybius, *Histories*, 6.54.

[53] Roth, 'War', 375.

[54] Philip Sabin, 'Battle' in Philip Sabin, Hans Van Wees, and Michael Whitby (eds.) *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 409.

[55] Livy, *The History of Rome,* 5.44, 49.

account mirror the significance of understanding how Just war ideas were communicated to participants in warfare. By emphasising the pursuit of glory and the defence of cherished values over material gain, Camillus conveyed the moral imperatives driving their cause. This examination of language reveals the importance of the ideals and norms that inspired individuals to fight and believe in the justice of their endeavours, highlighting the multidimensional nature of Just war theorising beyond mere material considerations.

The Roman ruling class's names depicted the prestige of conquering foreign lands by integrating the names of the defeated to the Roman ones, e.g. 'Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus (the victor over Hannibal), or Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus Numantinus'.[56] Under the Republic, glory was a lever of war, due to the competition among the aristocracy, but under the Empire wars for status were limited to some minor conflicts along the borders 'and the very occasional large war when an emperor felt the need of military glory to shore up a shaky regime'.[57] In the Imperial period, Tacitus gave an example of conquest against Germanic tribes that did not take place for defensive reasons but to restore the status of QuintiliusVarus, husband of a great-niece of Augustus, who was utterly defeated in the forests of Westphalia.[58] Another example by Tacitus, presenting the end of the Roman war against Tacfarinas, who had earlier deserted from the army and engaged in armed conflict against the Romans in North Africa, clarified the significance of glory for the Roman commanders during the imperial years:

> 'This year, at last, freed the Roman nation from the long-drawn war with the Numidian Tacfarinas. For earlier commanders, once they considered their exploits sufficient for a grant of triumphal decorations, usually left the enemy in peace'.[59]

Tacitus explained that sometimes, the Romans were trapped in military engagements until the responsible commanders could fund their triumphal decorations. This notion shows the power of glory and status for the Roman commanders, but again, considering this variable as the core behind the Roman ideas of war would limit the quality of the

---

[56] Ruth Stepper, 'Roman-Carthaginian Relations: From Co-Operation to Annihilation' in Anja Hartmann and Beatrice Heuser (eds.), *War, Peace and World Orders in European History* (London: Routledge, 2001), 80.

[57] Harry Sidebottom, 'Roman Imperialism: The Changed Outward Trajectory of the Roman Empire', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 54, no. 3 (2005): 319.

[58] Tacitus, *Annales* 1.3.1, trans. Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb, ed. Sara Bryant (New York: Random House, 1942).

[59] Ibid. 4, 23.

understanding of ideas and ignore the importance of the reasons behind the mobilisation of the army when following commanders in military expeditions. After all, Tacfarinas' raids and destructive attacks damaged the province's production and, thus, created problems for the state, which was the actual argument in favour of waging the war instead of the need to fund the triumphant decorations.

In a broader context of Just war principles, the glorification of military achievements was integral to Roman ideology. That is why Cicero, while celebrating Rome's martial fame, emphasised the necessity for wars to be justified by righteous motives.[60] This element highlights the normative significance of different contexts and its influence on the development of a systematic Just war doctrine, while also exploring how justifying ideas intersect or diverge from Ancient Greek thought. While both traditions valued glory and honour, the Roman interpretation of glory reflected a more cosmopolitan outlook, closely tied to state affairs and indicative of Roman universality, which will be discussed in the next section. In contrast, the Greek communitarian approach to glory, i.e., the geographic restriction on legitimate expeditions differed in both theory and practice, and hence the different foreign policy objectives.

3.2.3 The Roman Cosmopolitanism vs. the Greek Communitarianism and Just Wars

Livy explained that the universal destiny of the Romans reflected its military superiority. Being the 'metropolis' of the world was seen as inseparable from the development of powerful military forces:

> 'Romans, yesterday at the dawn of day, Romulus, the parent of this our city, descending suddenly from heaven, appeared before me… Go, said he, tell the Romans that it is the will of the gods that my Rome should be the world's metropolis. Let them therefore cultivate the arts of war; and be assured, and hand this assurance down to posterity, that no human power can withstand the Roman arms.'[61]

Interestingly, Cicero attempted to justify the case where some of Rome's neighbours did not belong to the protective framework of the *ius gentium.* [62] In this category, we can find the people who do not have the culture and institutions to communicate politically instead

---

[60] Cicero, *De officiis,* 1.11.

[61] Livy, *History of Rome*, 1.16.

[62] Stewart, 'Marcus Tullius Cicero, 12-13.

of fighting. This idea could also justify the universal logic of the Romans since, under a universal Roman authority, the political culture of communication instead of the one of war could be seeded everywhere. Subsequently, Cicero's ideas on property also reflect the universal perspective regarding expansionism:

> 'There is, however, no such thing as private ownership established by nature, but property becomes private either through long occupancy (as in the case of those who long ago settled in unoccupied territory) or through conquest (is in the case of those who took it in war).'[63]

> 'The statues and decorations which Publius Servilius brought away from the cities of our enemies, taken by his courage and valour, according to the laws of War and his rights as commander-in-chief, he brought home for the Roman people'[64]

Cicero's quotes mirror a perspective on property ownership that diverges from some earlier Greek norms. In his view, property can become private through two primary means: long occupancy or conquest. The latter implies acquisition through force, typically in the context of war. Importantly, Cicero considers both forms of acquisition as potentially legitimate pathways to private ownership.

By acknowledging conquest as a legitimate means of acquiring property, Cicero aligns with a broader Roman perspective on expansionism and territorial acquisition. This perspective suggests that conquest, particularly in the context of a Just war, can confer rightful ownership over conquered lands and resources. In this sense, Cicero's view supports the notion of Roman property encompassing territories acquired through conquest, expanding the boundaries of what could be considered legitimate Roman territory. This stance reflects a cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, where Cicero's emphasis on conquest as a legitimate means of property acquisition suggests a more cosmopolitan outlook that prioritises the interests and expansion of the Roman state. It highlights a departure from the more communal ethos of some Greek thinkers towards a perspective that prioritizes the interests and expansion of the Roman Republic; even though the Greeks believed in the legitimacy of claiming spoils of war and booty, their normative foundations did not lead to overseas conquests (as discussed in the previous chapter).

Cicero's writings, particularly in '*De Re Publica'* and '*De Officiis'*, reflect a universal thinking that transcends the introverted communitarianism of the Greeks, advocating for

---

[63] Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.7.21.

[64] Cicero, *In Verem*, 2.1.57.

a Roman-based universality in law, ethics, and civilisation. He emphasises the Roman responsibility to establish a universal understanding of justice, particularly evident in his discussions on Just war principles.

Cicero argues that conflicts should be resolved through debate whenever possible, reserving force for situations where peaceful resolution is unattainable. Yet, we should acknowledge that he advocates for waging war to achieve peace and justice, revealing the logic of responsibility among the Romans to uphold universal principles of law and ethics without disregarding the use of force. This broader understanding of justice that extends beyond national borders and the emphasis on establishing a Roman-based universality reveals a mission of shaping moral and ethical norms on a global scale. The construction of 'self vs. other' identities in the Roman tradition is linked with the responsibility to define justice, ethics, norms, and legitimacy in a universal way, mirroring a discourse that practically led to power and will be discussed in the next section regarding identities.

Emperor Marcus Aurelius (121-180 CE) writings show that the ideas of natural laws defined Roman thinking and continued influencing the Romans in the years of the Empire.

> 'Wherefore, on every occasion, a man should say: this comes from God, and this is according to the apportionment and spinning of the thread of destiny, and such-like coincidence and chance; and this is from one of the same stock, and a kinsman and partner, one who knows not, however, what is according to his nature. But I know; for this reason, I behave towards him according to the natural law of fellowship with benevolence and justice.'[65]

Natural laws are linked with fellowship, benevolence, and justice, not suspicion, aggression, and hostility. Marcus Aurelius also wrote that 'in rational animals, there are political communities and friendships, and families and meetings of people; and in wars, treaties and armistices'[66] explaining that communication is part of a universal understanding and that human beings have the means to stop the perpetuity of war.

However, even though the Roman tradition held such universal elements, we need to clarify that the Romans were not fighting Cosmopolitan wars (in the sense of the Cosmopolitan Just war theory). As mentioned earlier, Cécile Fabre (and John Lango), argue for an egalitarian perspective that prioritises individual human rights over national borders or group identities. Fabre contends that all humans deserve equal moral concern and fundamental rights, which are inherent and not tied to political affiliations.

---

[65] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 3.11, trans. J. Boulton and David Widger (Project Gutenberg E-Book, 2001).

[66] Ibid.

Legitimacy for war, for Fabre, depends on a state's ability to protect these rights, and force is only justified if the cause is just and proportional, targeting individuals based on their actions, not group identity.[67]The Roman approach to Just war contained a universalist dimension rooted in the expansion of Roman law, order, and civilisation, yet it fundamentally differed from modern cosmopolitan Just War Theory in several key ways. At its core, the Roman tradition was deeply state-centric, with war justified through formal declarations by the Senate or religious rituals under fetial law. Legitimacy was thus inseparable from state authority, reinforcing a hierarchical and institutional framework for warfare. In contrast, cosmopolitan Just War Theory detaches legitimacy from state structures and instead locates it in the hands of individuals or groups acting in defence of fundamental human rights.

A further distinction lies in the underlying justification for war. Roman warfare was often framed as a means of bringing law and order to the world, embedding an imperial logic that justified conquest and assimilation under the pretext of civilisation. Cosmopolitan Just War Theory, however, explicitly rejects expansionist warfare, limiting its moral justification to the protection of human rights. Unlike the Roman model, which implicitly prioritised one civilisation over another, the cosmopolitan approach is not bound to political or cultural supremacy but is instead committed to universal moral obligations.

This difference is further reflected in their contrasting views on moral responsibility in war. The Roman tradition understood conflict through the lens of collective identity, classifying enemies based on their political or cultural affiliations rather than on individual culpability. This group-based framework meant that entire populations could be subject to war based on their status as adversaries of Rome. By contrast, cosmopolitan Just War Theory rejects the notion of collective guilt and instead focuses on individual responsibility. It holds that a person is liable to defensive force only if they actively contribute to unjust threats, regardless of their national or political identity.

The concept of legitimate authority also diverges significantly between the two frameworks. In the Roman model, only Rome had the legal authority to declare a Just War, reinforcing its sovereignty and the hierarchical order of international relations. Cosmopolitan Just War Theory challenges this state monopoly on war-making authority, arguing that legitimacy derives not from statehood but from the ability to uphold human rights. In this view, states, non-state actors, and even individuals may, in principle, possess the moral right to wage war if doing so prevents or responds to violations of fundamental rights.

Ultimately, while both traditions incorporate a universal dimension, they do so in fundamentally different ways. The Roman Just War tradition served the interests of

---

[67] Cécile Fabre, *Cosmopolitan War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); John Lango, *Ethics of Armed Conflict: A Cosmopolitan Just War Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 6–10.

empire and state sovereignty, embedding warfare within a framework of political domination and legalistic justification. In contrast, cosmopolitan Just War Theory prioritises individual moral responsibility, rejecting state-centric legitimacy and instead framing war as a means of protecting human rights beyond political borders.

3.2.4 The Responsibility to Protect

Defence was a fundamental pillar of Just war. However, the ideas about the legitimacy of defensive warfare did not stop at protecting the 'self' but expanded to the protection of 'others'. The Romans' responsibility towards friends and allies fundamentally changed the understanding of war, bridging the defensive ideas of protecting the 'self' with cosmopolitan ideas.

Polybius described the example of the Roman expedition to help the Mamertines in 265 BCE, who sought Rome's help when both Syracuse and Carthage attacked them. When the Romans sent help, the consul Appius sent ambassadors to Hiero of Syracuse and the Carthaginians. Polybius wrote that Appius only decided to launch the attack against his opponents when the diplomatic attempts failed. Interestingly, the author said that neither the Syracusians nor the Carthaginians responded to Appius' proposals, and therefore, from sheer necessity, he decided to start the conflict unilaterally.[68]

Appius's case was not a norm violation but a necessity since the Mamertines were in grave danger. Defending allies and friends was another crucial side of the Roman Just war thinking. Cicero explained that when aggression is inflicted upon people, it is unjust to abandon them. Just like a man does not abandon his family or his country, it is not possible to abandon those who are suffering from external brutality.[69] The Romans described many of their allies as *amici*. It is important to underline that *Amicia* did not mirror an equal relationship since the Romans were always superior. The term differs from friendship since the *amici* might not even like each other, but they were in a special relationship, like associates. Critical reflections underlined that the Romans exploited the concept of *amici* to pursue the state's international political aims by arguing that they were protecting their *amici* against threats to justify expeditions far from Rome.[70]

---

[68] Polybius, *Histories,* 1.11.

[69] Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.23.

[70] Billows, 'International Relations', 320.

Polybius described this first Roman expedition outside Italy in favour of the Mamertimes by saying that 'Such was the nature and motive of the first warlike expedition of the Romans beyond the shores of Italy', underlying the Roman tendency to support their allies and the Just cause of a military expedition far from the Italian peninsula.[71] Cicero explained how the Romans acquired their Empire by the concepts of faith and health.[72] Faith was about the responsibility to defend allies but also reflected the allies' commitment towards Rome. If an ally could not satisfy Rome's wishes, the faith was broken, and Rome could declare war. At the same time, a threatening attitude from an external 'other' or its mere existence could be perceived as a threat to the *salus* of the state, and thus, a potential declaration of war could be justified.[73]

Cicero argues that it is a matter of justice for the Roman authority to fulfill its promises of protection to states or nations that have been subdued in war:

> 'And among our countrymen justice has been observed so conscientiously in this direction, that those who have given promise of protection to states or nations subdued in war become, after the custom of our forefathers, the patrons of those states.'[74]

When Rome conquered other territories, it often entered into agreements or treaties with the conquered peoples, promising them protection. Cicero's notion of justice extends beyond the boundaries of Rome. He believes that it is not only the duty of Romans to uphold justice within their own state but also towards other nations or states with which they interact. This aligns with the cosmopolitan idea that there are universal moral principles that should govern the conduct of individuals and states, regardless of nationality or ethnicity. Cicero's discussion of fulfilling promises of protection to conquered states touches upon the principles of Just war. He suggests that when Rome engages in warfare, it should do so with Just cause and conduct itself in a manner consistent with moral principles. Fulfilling promises made to conquered peoples contributes to the justice of the war, as it ensures that the terms of engagement are fair and honourable.

---

[71] Polybius, *Histories,* 1.12.

[72] Cicero, *De re publica,* 3.34.

[73] Harry Sidebottom, 'International Relations', 25-26.

[74] Cicero, *De Officiis*, 11, 35.

Cicero also claimed that 'our people gained possession of the world by defending allies'.[75] The importance of defending others is mirrored in the case of the Roman war against Teuta. In 229 BCE, the Illyrians besieged Corcyra, and the islanders came to terms with them. The former sent the commander Demetrius and a garrison to the island. Nevertheless, Demetrius betrayed the Illyrians and asked for Rome's help.

> 'Demetrius…had sent messages to Rome, offering to put the city and everything else he was in charge of into their hands. Delighted at the appearance of the Romans, the Corcyreans not only surrendered the garrison to them, with the consent of Demetrius, Corcyra became a 'friend of Rome.' but committed themselves unconditionally to the Roman protection, believing that this was their only security in the future against the piratical incursions of the Illyrians.'[76]

This example indicates that the Romans may not have helped others without exchange. However, Cicero's idea and the responsibility to protect the ones being attacked is a crucial clue for the universal understanding of the Romans. The Greek responsibility to protect was strictly framed in a logic of kinsmen, allies who were usually Greeks, or professional assistance (fight for 'others' as mercenaries); while the logic of defending 'others' as a Just war understanding is similar, the Roman approach differed in terms of the cosmopolitan understanding of alliances and the way their responsibility was (geographically speaking) limitless. The Spartans refused to help fellow Greeks during the Ionian Revolts against the Persians due to strategic concerns linked with geography (distant expeditions)– which shows a much less extroverted foreign policy, but even those who did help the Ionian cities (such as Athens), justified it based on kinship ties - criteria that were not required in the Roman worldview.

Overall, we need to understand the meaning behind such ideas and their impact in constructing Just war behaviour through a more careful comparison of the two traditions. Other than self-defence or defending others, another Just cause for war was to address a wrong committed by the enemy. In Greek thought, Plato stated that war begins after accusing the enemy of an affront, with Alcibiades (as part of a Socratic dialogue in Plato's text) adding that it could be due an accusation of deceit, violence, or theft.[77] Interestingly, regardless of the normative similarity of the Greco-Roman ideas, the difference is huge as the Greek tradition emphasises accusations against the 'self' not

---

[75] Cicero, *De re publica*, 3.35.

[76] Polybius*, Histories,* 2. 11.

[77] Plato, *Αλκιβιάδης* (*Alcibiades*), trans. Nicholas Denyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 109.

general wrongdoing. In a more analytical approach, we can see Cicero's ideas, describing that that injustice arises both from those who commit wrongful acts and from those who fail to prevent harm when they have the power to do so.[78] This notion can be tracked in the Classic Greek thought, but as part of an 'official' responsibility, i.e. assisting allies, and not a general 'universal' commitment.[79] This differentiation is crucial for the genealogy of Just war ideas, as the Roman approach leaves room for a broader practice of military intervention and thus contradicts the restricted Greek logic. The normative foundation of rightful intervention to 'protect' as part of an ethical argument mirrors a discourse that constructs an identity of being capable of evaluating wrongdoings universally, which is part of the broader logic of the Roman conceptualisation of the world, i.e., 'Rome and beyond'.

3.3 Religion and Law

David Bederman explores the intersection of law, religion, and warfare in Rome, arguing that war was not merely a political act, but a sacred duty bound by sacred religious customs. The *fetial* priests, serving as both religious and diplomatic agents, conducted rituals that ensured war was declared within the bounds of divine and human law.[80] This religious dimension made divine approval essential to the legal justification of war, reinforcing the concept of Just war as a necessary condition for military action.

Cicero, in *De Re Publica*, emphasises that Roman war was governed by the fetial code, which combined legal and religious elements, ensuring that war was declared *iustum piumque* (just and pious).[81] Thus, religion and law played a fundamental role in Roman warfare, shaping not only the justification for war but also its conduct and rituals. Roman war was not merely a political or strategic endeavour—it was a religious act that required divine sanction and adherence to sacred legal procedures. The fetiales, a college of priests

[78] Cicero, *De officiis*, 1.23.

[79] Thucydides, *Ιστορία* (*History of the Peloponnesian Warι)*, trans. Nicholaos Skouteropoulos, *Θουκιδίδη Ιστορία* (Athens: Polis, 2011), 1.71.

[80] David J. Bederman, *International Law in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[81] Cicero, *De Re Publica* 3.35.

responsible for overseeing war declarations, ensured that Rome's conflicts adhered to religious law.[82]

The fetiales were essential in the process of declaring war, performing elaborate rituals to secure divine approval and demonstrate that Rome was acting within religious and legal bounds. Before war could be declared, Rome had to seek redress through the rerum repetitio, a formal demand for satisfaction from the offending state. If this was denied, the pater patratus, the chief fetial, conducted a ritual invoking Jupiter, Janus Quirinus, and other gods, testifying that the enemy had acted unjustly and that Rome had the divine right to retaliate.[83] If, after thirty-three days, no satisfactory response was received, the fetial would symbolically cast a spear into enemy territory, formally initiating war. The example of the delayed third Punic War, due to unclear evidence over its justification, is a sign of the power of the Just war ideas.[84]

Roman leaders frequently framed warfare as a manifestation of divine will, using religion to justify both military expansion and punitive destruction. Cicero's *Pro Fonteio* illustrates this belief, portraying the irreligious Gauls as enemies not just of Rome but of the gods themselves: 'Other people entreat the *pax* and pardon of the gods; these people wage war against the immortal gods themselves.'[85] This perception of foreign peoples as impious often legitimised their conquest and subjugation. Furthermore, religious rites were integral to military success. Before battle, generals conducted sacrifices to seek divine favour, and victories were celebrated through the above-mentioned triumphus, also a religious procession in which the victorious general was paraded through Rome as a figure chosen by the gods.[86]

Alan Watson's argument reframes the role of the fetiales in Roman warfare, asserting that their rituals were not mere religious formalities but a means of legally and morally legitimising war. He challenges the traditional view that the gods acted as witnesses or

---

[82] David J. Bederman, *International Law in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 234; Stewart, 'Marcus Tullius Cicero', 13; O'Driscoll, *Victory', 38-39:* Rich, 'Warfare and external relations', 67-68.

[83] David J. Bederman, *International Law in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 77, 232.

[84] Rich, 'Warfare and external relations', 67-68.

[85] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Pro Fonteio*, in *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, trans. C.D. Yonge (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1856), 30.

[86] Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita* 5.52, trans. B.O. Foster (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924), 5.52.

guarantors of Roman treaties, arguing instead that they were invoked as judges to assess the justice of Rome's cause. This distinction was crucial: Rome did not seek divine approval for victory, nor did it believe defeat signaled divine abandonment. Rather, the fetial procedure ensured that Rome always entered war with the appearance of legal and moral righteousness.[87] When Rome faced Pyrrhus in 281 BCE—its first overseas enemy—it faced a problem: how could it symbolically declare war by throwing a spear into enemy land when the enemy was across the Adriatic? The solution was a legal fiction—capturing a soldier from Pyrrhus' army and forcing him to purchase land in Rome's Circus Flaminius, which was then treated as enemy territory.[88] This adaptation highlights the flexibility of Roman religious law in reinforcing the legitimacy of war.

Watson further argues that the fetial system served as a mechanism to maintain Rome's claim to moral superiority in international affairs. Even as Rome expanded and absorbed other city-states with similar religious traditions, it retained the fetial ritual to demonstrate that war was a last resort, pursued only after Rome had exhausted all legal avenues for redress. Ultimately, Watson sees the fetial process as a ritualized legal strategy—one that allowed Rome to maintain the appearance of justice while aggressively expanding its power.[89]

Fetial law played a crucial role in shaping Roman Just War principles. Its ceremonial procedures, deeply rooted in archaic traditions, became integral to Roman political and diplomatic life under kings such as Numa Pompilius and Tullus Hostilius. The fetial process required a structured sequence: formal war declarations, the presentation of demands, and a waiting period before hostilities commenced.[90] This ritual not only provided a moral framework for international relations but also offered opportunities for strategic manipulation—allowing Rome to use the delay for military preparations or to impose impossible conditions on its adversaries.[91]

---

[87] Alan Watson, *International Law in Archaic Rome: War and Religion* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

[88] Bederman, *International Law in Antiquity*, 237–238.

[89] Watson, *International Law in Archaic Rome*.

[90] Polybius, *Histories*, III.

[91] Alexei B. Egorov, 'The Notion of Justice in Roman Wars and the Fetial Law', *Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica* 25, no. 1 (2019): 49–62.

Although Roman legal structures played a crucial role in declaring war and managing interactions with others, Carlin Barton explains that the Romans viewed peace (*pax*) as something imposed, not negotiated. True peace only existed after the enemy had completely surrendered (*deditio*) and begged for mercy (*supplicatio, deprecatio*). Seeking peace was perceived as a sign of weakness.[92] Surrender required total submission; the defeated not only lost militarily but also had to confess their defeat and accept Roman rule.[93]

Together, these perspectives reveal a consistent ideological logic underpinning Roman war and diplomacy: while *fetial law* provided a moralised structure to justify aggression, the ultimate goal was not mutual agreement but total subjugation. Roman warfare was thus cloaked in legal-religious ritual yet aimed at uncompromising supremacy, where even peace was a declaration of Roman power.

Seen through this lens, the Roman pursuit of *glory* (*gloria*) was not in tension with their pursuit of peace—because peace itself was a manifestation of Roman glory. The act of imposing peace through total victory served to amplify Rome's moral and military greatness. To wage war for *pax* and *gloria* was not a contradiction but a unified expression of Roman identity: peace was glorious only when it was Roman peace, and glory was enduring only when enshrined through conquest and submission. Thus, war became both justified and sanctified—an arena where Roman virtue, law, and domination converged.

One of the most important observations of Watson is linked with the actual role of the divine in Rome's wars and the consequences of that role:

the Romans have the psychological advantage of knowing that, even before the fighting begins, they have the verdict of the gods. Their war is just. Second, this conclusion is not shaken even by a Roman defeat. A defeat in the just war shows that the Romans were unable to execute the god's judgment. Execution of judgment is not the affair of the gods.[94]

---

[92] Carlin A. Barton, 'The Price of Peace in Ancient Rome', in *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Asia, The Mediterranean, Europe, and Mesoamerica*, ed. Kurt Raaflaub and Nathan Rosenstein (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 248–250.

[93] David J. Bederman, *International Law in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)**;** Carlin A. Barton, 'The Price of Peace in Ancient Rome', in *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Asia, The Mediterranean, Europe, and Mesoamerica*, ed. Kurt Raaflaub and Nathan Rosenstein (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 248–250.

[94] Watson, *International Law in Archaic Rome*, 27-28.

This perspective is crucial in establishing the Roman concept of a Just war. The gods' approval legitimised warfare, yet their non-intervention placed the responsibility of fulfilling their verdict on the Romans. This was not merely a psychological boost but a powerful normative framework that naturalised Rome's prioritisation of militarism. Even when the initial cause of war was not an obvious act of defence, the fetiales determined whether Rome *could* wage war based on divine authority, while the state decided *whether it should*, based on pragmatic considerations – religion did not provide a 'handbook' with legitimate aims, after all!

Even if the immediate cause of war did not inherently inspire morale, the belief that the gods had sanctioned it provided a significant psychological advantage for the Roman army. Crucially, in Roman thought, glory, profit, and justice were not in opposition. Rome sought divine endorsement for its wars, reinforcing the necessity of the fetiales in securing the gods' approval and maintaining the perception of war as both Just and necessary.

In the ancient world, law and war were intrinsically linked to religion. The fetiales exemplified this connection, performing both sacred and secular duties. While they conducted sacrifices and religious ceremonies, they also played a pivotal role in declaring war, negotiating treaties, and receiving foreign envoys.[95] This dual function highlights how Roman warfare was legitimised not only through legal formalities but also through divine sanction, further reinforcing Rome's belief in its own moral and political supremacy.

3.4 Enemies

Looking at the interactive patterns of the Romans, one can easily understand the distinguishing norms behind the concept of 'otherness'. The wild Germanic tribes and the Gauls were approached differently from Egypt, Carthage, or the Greek *poleis*. The level of political development was crucial to Roman perceptions – just like it was for the Greeks, whose ideas of supremacy were inextricably linked to political structures. Thus, conflictual interaction with 'politically advanced' enemies took place through official procedures and treaties, whereas the aim in wars against Western enemies was unconditional surrenders.[96]

---

[95] Bederman, *International Law in Antiquity*.

[96] Rich, 'Warfare and external relations in the middle Roman Republic'.

, 63-64.

The Roman exceptionality was based on an identity dichotomy of a civilised 'self' vs. an uncivilised 'other'. Similar to the Greeks, the Romans held the power to define these identities, but they also believed they borethe responsibility to apply this distinction in a universal way. In *De Officiis*, Cicero's differentiation between wars for supremacy and survival[97] suggests the Roman prerogative to define what was civilised and what was not, thereby establishing identity constructions. By categorising conflicts based on whether they took place among those under Roman protection (rivals) or outside it (enemies), Cicero implies a Roman-centric worldview where Roman authority determines the boundaries of civilisation and the 'other.' Gavin Stewart wrote that in Cicero's writings on warfare, a notable conflict emerges between the principles of justice and the demands of necessity[98] – yet it was the Romans who defined these meanings, as well as their self-imposed universal responsibility to establish them, through a discourse that constructed patterns of legitimacy.

The religious character of these treaties highlighted the importance of trust, challenging those who signed them to face the potential wrath of the gods should they be broken.[99] The decision to engage in conflict in order to suppress rebellions from tribes within established provinces were usually taken by the local commander, whereas wars against Hellenic city-states or Carthage were preceded by official senatorial procedures.

Punitive expeditions were military campaigns that did not aim to integrate the attacked kingdom or people into the Empire. Such campaigns were either launched to avenge enemy raids or to instil fear in the enemy through a military display of power. Similarly, wars responding to the invasion of allied regions did not always intend to incorporate the 'other' into the Empire.[100]

Polybius described the Western tribes as 'war-like'.[101] Plutarch also described the Celtic tribes as aggressive and expansionistic.[102] These Greek historians' accounts align with

---

[97] Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.41.

[98] Stewart, 'Marcus Tullius Cicero, 15.

[99] Ibid. 10.

[100] Goldsworthy, 'War', 83-84.

[101] Polybius, *Histories,* 1.2.

[102] Plutarch, *Caesar*, 18.

Roman perceptions, as Cicero also referred to many of Rome's enemies as 'warlike'[103] nations. This reflects a shared Roman belief in their own superiority—not one defined by an enjoyment of warfare, but by a structured, virtuous approach to it. This reflects a shared Roman belief in their own superiority – not one defined by an enjoyment of warfare, but by a structured, virtuous approach to it. It is true that the Romans had a special relationship with war and linked their highest offices and titles with military authority. It is also true that the Greco-Roman ideas of virtue and glory described chiefly those who engaged in wars. Nevertheless, warmongering was considered an inferior trait, distinct from the Roman conception of martial virtue. For Cicero, war should be the last resort, since the only civilised form of conflict is through reason and debate.[104] Choosing to wage war due to the inefficiency of others' political systems was framed as a response to the 'pre-political' condition of those 'others,' whose structures were deemed inferior and uncivilised. Consequently, the identity gap between Romans and 'others' became unbridgeable, reinforcing a Hobbesian division in which interactions were shaped by suspicion and the ever-present possibility of existential threats. The politics-versus-war paradigm is central here, as Cicero maintains that there is no such thing as political war—rather, war becomes a necessity only when no political avenues remain.[105]

Roman thought believed that universal laws applied to all nations (*ius genium*).[106] Yet, civil law (*ius civile*) was applicable only to the Roman political environment, showing a dichotomy of 'us and them' based on this political criterion. Cicero's ideas differentiated between 'civilised' human society bound thus by law and 'barbaric' society that could be treated differently.[107] The desecration of sacred temples in certain cases was linked with these identities, as the main norm was not supportive of such practices.

The hostile representation of the 'other' in the case of Carthage stemmed from the tensions between the two polities and was not inherently part of the Roman ideology, as the bilateral relations of the two entities before the Punic Wars were peaceful.[108] The

---

[103] Cicero, *Phil,* 1.

[104] Cicero, *De Officis*, 1.34-6.

[105] Benjamin Straumann, *Crisis and constitutionalism: Roman political thought from the fall of the Republic to the age of revolution*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 67.

[106] Gaius, *Institutes* (*The Institutes of Gaius*), trans. F. de Zulueta (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), 1.1.

[107] Stewart, 'Marcus Tullius Cicero, 9.

[108] Ibid. 74.

Roman historian Q. Fabius Pictor wrote an entire history in Greek to defend Rome's position, arguing that Rome's military actions were justified by the need to protect threatened allies. His work sought to highlight the Just nature of Rome, particularly to the Greek mainland. Livy's descriptions of Hannibal as uncivilised and brutal enable us to understand the significance of civilisation superiority for the Romans; the legitimacy of War did not only occur from the necessity to defend the 'self', but also from the representation of the 'other' as brutal, uncivilised and in need of containment.[109] Both sides used propaganda and identity constructions as strategic tools during the Punic Wars. Hannibal approached the Greeks and tried to persuade them that their ancient civilisation could not submit to the barbarian Romans. The latter were presented as exploiters, and Hannibal's call to the Greeks was based on the need to fight for their freedom and autonomy.[110] The Greek city-state structure was different from the universal ideas of Rome and thus, Hannibal's propaganda aimed to find fertile ground in the Greeks.

After the Roman military forces left Greece, they ensured that the Greek city-states continued serving their interests. Thus, after the last Macedonian War (172-169 BC), all the city-states that did not align with Rome were punished by the deportation of every political leader who tended to act independently. The politicians who ruled Greece were pro-Roman. This *status quo* showed that the similar norms between the Greek city-states and Rome could allow for a particular reality where there was no need for arms to impose the Roman universal aims – at least to a significantly different extent compared to non-Greek 'others'.[111]

Again, the constructivist ontology when it comes to foreign policy behaviour (and thus war and strategy) addresses the necessity to examine how identities are constructed in a specific socially constructed world.[112] The Roman discourse constructed a world of different 'others' but also a world where the 'self' has the right to expand for defensive and enlightening reasons. The Just, lawful, politically superior, and humanitarian 'self' was an identity that allowed for a foreign policy of romanisation; there were no anarchic security dilemmas when Romans conquered Greece or expanded Eastwards – just like

---

[109] Livy, *History of Rome*, 23.5 – 21.49

[110] Stepper, 'Roman-Carthaginian Relations', 77.

[111] Billows, 'International Relations, 321-322.

[112] Peter Berger, 'Identity as a Problem in the Sociology of Knowledge', *Archives Européennes de Sociologie / European Journal of Sociology* 7, no. 1 (1966): 111.

there are no natural security dilemmas in any interpolity interaction[113]; even though they used the defensive argument for their neighbours and their 'warlike' norms. It is true that 'when a security dilemma is established it is hard to change and thus the Roman collective mentality perceived the logic of offensive defence as part of a socially constructed world of existential threats. Still, the Roman Just war ideas – despite their defensive aura of legitimacy – were part of a deeper universal logic of expanding superior political and social structures, a mission of replacing the 'barbaric' warlike societies with a better suggestion – something that we did not encounter in the Ancient Greek discourses.

3.5 The Responsibility to Wage War: Who fights and who decides?

The formal declaration, as a factor that defined Just wars, as well as Rome's obligatory pursuit of resolving the wrongdoing of the 'other' via other means before deciding to wage war, was a dominant norm before Cicero's time.[114] The formal declaration had religious links in an institutional sense, i.e., the role of the *fetiales.* If the political institutions decided to wage war, the *fetiales* were responsible for formally declaring it through religious rites and a spear hurled into the enemy territory.[115] The question regarding the practice of the specific tradition in non-Italian conflicts highlights its potentially non-applicable nature at all fronts, but this does not undermine the importance of formal declaration for the Romans.[116]

Roman aristocrats served in the army for many years and came to be familiar with the military culture of the state. The state's nobility was expected to serve, showing the rooted perceptions of the successful nature of Rome's politico-military structure, as well as the connection between nobility and military *ethos*.[117]

---

[113] Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 414.

[114] Cian O'Driscoll, *Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Just War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 38.

[115] Sidebottom, 'International Relations', 15.

[116] O'Driscoll, *Victory,*38-39.

[117] Roth, 'War', 371.

All the free-born citizens of the Republic and Rome's Italian allies who could meet a relatively low property standard were able to complete their service in the legions.[118] The connection between the military *ethos* and the concept of citizenship was a decisive characteristic of the military norms of Rome. Polybius trusted that the Roman military was superior to the Carthaginian due to its citizen nature *vis a vis* the mercenary one.[119] War was framed as a matter of the Roman people – just like the Greek narrative of citizen-soldier.

The Roman army was recruited from citizens obliged to serve for at least four seasons. Initially, only those who could afford their own equipment were selected and the poorest were exempt from unpaid service, while wealthier recruits formed the cavalry, providing their own horses. This system reinforced a social hierarchy, with the senatorial class and the cavalry (*equites*) holding higher status than plebeians.[120]

During the period of the Republic, Consuls possessed *imperium* (absolute military command), which enables us to understand how civil and military authority was equally crucial for the state's leadership.[121] Leadership was a crucial concept for the Romans. Plutarch highlights the significance of leadership as a crucial variable for the willingness of soldiers to excel in battle, explaining how heroically the troops of Caesar fought, regardless of their injuries.[122] Another part of the increased political characteristics of war was that since the Roman army was an army of citizens, the unnecessary risk-taking regarding their lives was minimised. As Roth described, 'a reputation for not considering the lives of one's troops could jeopardise a commander's political career'.[123] This understanding that war was not always the better choice is crucial for the perceptions around war and the rising of diplomacy for foreign affairs.

During the early Republic, Romans refused to employ mercenaries and preferred to wage wars or collaborate with their allies. This multiclass consensus, regarding the role of the

---

[118] Rich, 'Warfare and external relations in the middle Roman Republic', 64.

[119] Polybius*, Histories,* 6.54.

[120] John Rich, 'Warfare and the Army in Early Rome' in Paul Erdkamp (ed.), *A Companion to the Roman Army* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 18.

[121] Stepper, 'Roman-Carthaginian Relations: From Cooperation to Annihilation', 73.

[122] Plutarch*, Caesar*, 16.

[123] Roth, 'War', 377.

military for the state, as well as the sustainable network between the centre and the allies, was considered as an element of superiority *vis a vis* the mercenary path of other countries, such as Carthage.[124] Refusing the employment of mercenaries show that the ones who were responsible for waging war should have a clear understanding of the legitimate war aims and the value-system they were defending. The legitimacy of engaging in military conflict was not based on dictating the mighty Roman authority but on a consensus between all Roman classes and mainly a decision that had a Just nature. These citizens did not protect only the borders of a specific territory but a way of life. Yet, when the Roman institutions failed to prove their efficiency, it would be the same army, whose defensive foundations protected them, who would undermine the Republic.[125] Based on the same consensus logic, under the later Empire, landowners had to supply a recruit or pool resources to pay for a mercenary, showing the consensus on responsibility to support the military.[126]

By 100 BCE, Roman armies included non-citizens mainly recruited from the Italian peninsula and men from low-income backgrounds paid by the state, following reforms by Consul Caius Marius. Disparities in treatment of Italian auxilia led to the Social Wars, resulting in their eventual citizenship.[127] As Rome was expanding, the military became more diverse. New auxilia were formed, e.g., from Gauls, with their ranks expanding until they increased significantly their representation within the army. By the late Roman Empire, entire units were recruited from these tribes and even commanded by officials of non-Roman background who were also professionals.[128]

After the fall of the Republic, Cassius Dio described the importance of the army as a crisis management institution as a political instrument to strengthen the Emperor's position *vis a vis* the institutionalised authority of the Senate and the Roman people.

---

[124] Ibid. 508-509.

[125] Potter, 'The Roman Army and Navy', 73.

[126] Beatricee Heuser, *War: A Genealogy of Western Ideas and Practices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 221-222.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Hugh Elton, 'Military Forces in the Later Roman Empire', in Philip Sabin, Hans van Wees, and Michael Whitby (eds), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 297–299.

> 'In this way he (Augustus) had his supremacy ratified by the Senate and by the people as well…and he did restore to the Senate the weaker provinces, on the ground that they were peaceful and free from War, while he retained the more powerful, alleging that they were insecure and precarious and either had enemies on their borders or were able on their account to begin a serious revolt. His professed motive in this was that the Senate might fearlessly enjoy the finest portion of the Empire while he had the hardships and the dangers, but his real purpose was that by this arrangement, the senators should be unarmed and unprepared for battle, while he alone had arms and maintained soldiers.'[129]

Military responsibilities were part of power and authority. The responsibility to wage war was a sign of power since the control of the army was an essential aspect of the control of the state, especially after the civil wars that brought down the Republic. The significant number of competing senators, understood as a defining aspect of the Roman military expeditions, no longer played an essential role when the Emperor became the absolute authority regarding all matters of war and peace. This new reality led to the 'demilitarisation of some among the Roman elite' and tried to put an end to the pursuit of military glory by the political elites of the state, as part of the Imperial office's centralisation of power.[130] Once Constantine I tolerated Christianity, Church fathers declared that the Roman emperor had authority delegated by God, aligning with Roman practice where the emperor decided when to go to war. God was still seen as the sole Just authority to authorise war.[131]

Overall, in both Rome and Greece, the idea of the citizen-soldier prevailed. Until the shift from the Republic to the Principate, many Romans viewed military service as a privilege that affirmed their status as prosperous citizens. However, only some were called up, and their ranks were increasingly filled by paid foreigners [132] – an inevitable consequence of the Roman growth but also a new norm that was supported by the way the Romans perceived their central position in a universal empire.

---

[129] Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, tr. Earnest Cary (London: William Heinemann, 2018), 53.12.

[130] Sidebottom, 'Roman Imperialism', 329.

[131] Heuser, *War,*151.

[132] Ibid. 222.

According to constructivist principles, norms, culture, and other social structures have a 'causal force'.[133] This is evident in the concept of the citizen-soldier, influencing Just war mentalities and social constructions about the necessity of war. The constructivist tradition emphasises normative variables, a necessity evident in Roman discourse. The Ciceronian argument, rooted in a social structure where the well-being and existence of citizenship necessitate aggressive action, highlights this. Despite acknowledging war's negative aspects, Cicero emphasised external threats and the failure to assist allies as part of unjust behaviour, creating responsibilities and expectations that defined the Roman identity. While similar approaches appeared in Greek discourse, the Roman initiative is notable for its expanded citizenship. New citizens, integrated into Roman society, shared the fear and insecurity of losing their privileged, 'Romanised' reality. This new identity carried the responsibility to defend their advanced status, even through defensive expansion.

3.6 Beyond Good and Evil: Just War Ideas, Christianity, and Non-Combatants

3.6.1 The Christian Antithesis and the Fertile Roman Norms

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Cicero believed that the enslavement of the Roman people was against natural laws and thus when freedom was at stake Romans had a sacred duty to fight.[134] The Aristotelian influence of conceptualising some peoples as destined to be free *vis a vis* others that can naturally endure slavery is evident in this example. He also believed that the fruits of peace are for those who can live freely. Thus, sometimes war is inevitable, especially if one does not wish to be enslaved. [135] Cicero thought of war as evil but sometimes as necessary and inevitable.

The Just war perceptions had a decisive role in cultivating a specific culture that favoured the justification of using force. However, the moral understanding of war is a more complex case in the Roman tradition. Polybius, for example, mentioned that one of the reasons behind the Senate's suggestion to wage war against the Dalmatians was due to the risk of being 'enervated by a lengthy peace.'[136] Previously, we discussed that the

---

[133] Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, 'Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics', *Annual Review of Political Science* 4 (2001): 397.

[134] Cicero, *Phil,* 6, 19.

[135] Ibid. 7.

[136] Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 10.

legitimacy of war aims was linked with the establishment of a durable and Just peace, but reading the phrase mentioned above, it appears that Polybius uncovered a paradox.

During the period of the Principate, the dominant Stoic philosophical thinking theorised war as an aberration from the natural state of peace. Yet, the justification of war presented was one where the naturalisation of peace was not always a dominant idea. Cassius Dio believed that Septimius Severus launched a military campaign in Britain to alter his son's life for the better due to the idleness that had covered the lives of the Roman legionnaires.[137] At the same time, a tremendous Roman figure was first a great warrior and then a politician or an orator, while a coward was mocked even by his own family.[138]

War was considered an evil practice due to its anti-universal nature. Seneca criticised the destruction of 'others' by highlighting that the justification of war based on glory was a paradox for a civilised polity that punished manslaughter and murder in its domestic affairs. War was seen as a paradox since the preaching of law-abiding and civilised behaviour could not coexist with glorifying the slaughtering of 'others'.[139]

For Seneca, 'the wise man…will prefer a state of peace to a state of war.' since 'War and the battle-front are not the only spheres in which proof is to be had of a spirited and fearless character'.[140] Cicero acknowledged that war was a misfortune. Yet, he grouped the possibility of conflict with pestilence and famine, i.e., with misfortunes that sometimes cannot be controlled by human activities.[141]

Tacitus recorded Caecina's words to his fellow men after reading Germanicus' letter that urged them to stop the mutiny because his forces would kill them all: 'For in peace, cases are judged on their merits; when war threatens, the innocent and the guilty fall side by side.'[142] Caecina's phrase shows the evil side of war that does not distinguish the

---

[137] Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 77.11.

[138] Lendon, 'War and Society', 510.

[139] Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, Letter LXXVIII, trans. Robin Campbell (London: Penguin Group, 1969).

[140] Ibid.

[141] Cicero, *Phil.* 1.

[142] Tacitus, *Annales*, 48.

innocent from the guilty. Thus, escaping war becomes synonymous with enjoying the privileges of peace. Peace is presented as a civilised condition where justice prevails, whilst war is depicted as the opposite.

Similarly, for Seneca, only peace could be considered as the ideal condition of human life Therefore, it should not be the fear of death that makes people avoid war but the choice of a universal harmony that lies only within peace. [143]

Cicero argued that by defeating the threats to the Roman state, he saved the lives of citizens, the peace of the world, and the light of humankind.[144] This idea enables us to derive three interesting conclusions:

> Rome's power was universal, and its cultural impact was not ethnic but political.
>
> The enemies of the state were a threat to all humankind since undermining the power of Rome was a threat to its universal potential.
>
> Those people were described as abandoned and mad, thus excluded from a universal humankind that shares similar characteristics, or at least has the potential to do so, through a natural human law.

The Stoic philosophy influenced the universal dominant thinking. According to the Stoic philosophy, humanity is inherently unified, and a universal understanding of justice is natural and achievable. As discussed earlier, the integration of external entities into the Roman state was based on a political expansion, i.e., an expansion of the Roman institutions and political structures. On the other hand, the Epicurean tradition was based on a different understanding of what is natural. The Epicureans believed that satisfying one's self-interest is a natural behaviour, and thus, the concept of justice is not universal but subjected to self-interest.

Early-Christian thinking declared War as evil. The synthesis that occurred from the dialectic relationship between the Christian and the Greco-Roman ideas was structured on the pillars of universality, justice, and ethics. Athanasius believes that the warmonger attitude of the pagan world was neither rational nor worthy of the meaning of the human being.

> 'And, in short, who persuaded men of barbarous countries and heathen men in diverse places to lay aside their madness and to mind peace if it be not the Faith of Christ and the Sign of the Cross?'[145]

---

[143] Seneca, Epistulae Morales, XC.

[144] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Pro Sulla* 33, trans. C.D. Yonge, in *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1856)

Athanasius wrote about the decadence of the world and the lawless practice of crimes with no limits. In his reflections of the pre-Christian world, war and battles between cities and nations are described as crimes:

> 'all crimes were practised everywhere…Cities were at War with cities, nations were rising against nations, and the whole earth was rent with civil commotions and battles, each man vying with his fellows in lawless deeds.[146]

He also described the Greek reality as a realm of war, explaining that the sword was the defining aspect of life, and the implacable fighting among the Greeks established a reality where war and cruelty dominated every aspect of interaction.

Greeks and Barbarians used to war against each other and were cruel to their kin. No one could cross sea or land without arming their hand with swords because of their implacable fighting among themselves. For the whole course of their life, carried on by arms, and the sword with them took the place of staff and was their support in every emergency.[147]

The Christian tradition dictated that nations should be at peace. Athenagoras of Athens wrote that divine laws prohibit wars, while Lactanius explained that God can save humankind from the terror of conflict.

> 'If the terror of war shall have resounded, if the pestilential force of diseases shall have overhung them if long-continued drought shall have denied nourishment to the crops, if a violent tempest or hail shall have assailed them, they betake themselves to God, aid is implored from God, God is entreated to succour them.'[148]

Eusebius of Caesarea presented the dialectic conflict between the old ideas regarding the legitimacy of war and the Christian influence by saying:

> 'Other writers of history record the victories of war and trophies won from enemies, the skill of generals, and the manly bravery of soldiers, defiled with blood and with innumerable slaughters for the sake of children, country, and other

---

[145] Athanasius, *Letters*, tr. Philip Schaff in *Select Works and Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), 50.5

[146] Ibid. 5.4.

[147] Ibid. 51.

[148] Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes* 3.1, trans. William Fletcher (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886).

> possessions. But our narrative of the government of God will record in ineffaceable letters the most peaceful wars waged on behalf of the peace of the soul and will tell of men doing brave deeds for truth rather than country and for piety rather than dearest friends.'[149]

The early Christians questioned the defensive Just war thinking due to the very nature of warfare and the brutal acts embedded in any military conflict. However, things changed when the Christian influence reached the peak of the power pyramid, i.e., the Emperor's attention. From the fourth century onwards, the questioning of Just war is transformed to a new Just war thinking that shares the main Roman principles but brings the Christian God into the equation. According to this new thinking, the protection of the innocent and the defence against unjust use of force might dictate that violence is acceptable and justified.

During the reign of Constantine, Lactanius criticised the Roman Just war practice as problematic. He explained that the Romans were trying to justify all their wars, but their wrongdoings and seising others' territories could not meet any Just war criteria. Christian thinking launched a new era of understanding the ethics of power and the legitimacy of warfare. War was questioned, not only due to its evil nature but also due to its unjust characteristics. Reading the descriptions of Lactanius, one can understand that Christian thinking is the ancestor of the critical reflections to the theory of defensive imperialism.

> 'For when Carthage was taken away, which was long its rival in power, it stretched out its hands by land and sea over the whole world until, having subdued all kings and nations, when the materials for war now failed, it abused its strength, by which it destroyed itself.'[150]

This reflection shows the dialectic interaction between the old norms and ideas of war and the Christian influences. While the Christian criticism sheds light on how Rome exploited the concept of Just war, it does not limit the impact of the ideas of Just war, not only as a revolutionary innovation in the realm of ideas but also as part of the practical characteristics of Roman warfare. After all, the *fetiales* were a religious institution that aimed to confirm the Just nature of choosing to wage war, seeking divine support.

God, as the ally of Constantine and Licinius, is the triumph of Just war thinking. Eusebius describes Licinius' expedition against Constantine in a way that reminds older descriptions of unjust behaviour that legitimise the decision to wage war:

---

[149] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History* 5 (Introduction), trans. Arthur Cushman McGiffert (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890).

[150] Lactanius, *Divine Institutes*, 5.12.

> 'Being envious of the common benefactor, he waged an impious and most terrible war against him, paying regard neither to laws of nature, nor treaties, nor blood and giving no thought to covenants… he determined to war against God himself as the ally of Constantine, instead of against the one whom he assisted.'[151]

The representation of Constantine as God's champion constructed a different dialectic identity pattern of 'us and them'. The enemies of Constantine, whose victorious wars had proven God's grace towards his face, 'were also the foes of God'.[152] Similarly, Eusebius described Licinius as a virtuous man, but things changed when he turned against his former ally Constantine, and Eusebius described him as a monster.

Reading carefully the early texts of Christian thinking, one can detect the influences of the militarised environment in which this new religion found itself in its early days. In the New Testament, we read that believers are exhorted to wear God's armour and prepare for the War between good and evil. [153] Moreover, Paul declared before the Corinthians that he bears the weapons that allow him to punish 'every act of disobedience'. Christians were depicted as spiritual soldiers.

Nevertheless, even using these military metaphors, the New Testament clarified its fundamental opposition to material warfare.

> 'We are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world… For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.'[154]

The equipment of the solider of Christ is peace and salvation, whilst the actual war is not between flesh-and-blood humans but between the spiritual sides of good and evil. Paul's declarations concerned the spiritual realm and not the material world.

> 'The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have the divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and

---

[151] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History,* 5.8.

[152] Timothy Barnes, 'Lactantius and Constantine' *The Journal of Roman Studies*, *63* (1973): 29-46.

[153] Ephesians 6:10-18.

[154] Ibid.

> every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.'[155]

To sum up, the Just war idea and the Ciceronian understanding of the *postbellum* responsibility towards the aims of peace worked as a normative environment that could engage in a dialectic relationship with the early Christian influences. War was considered a necessity when it came to protecting the 'self' or defending those mistreated, and, through this understanding, obtained a glorious echo to the perceptions of the Romans. The Just war thinking challenged the Greek naturalisation of war, but the glory behind military accomplishments was crucial for the Roman tradition. These challenges created a dominant idealistic framework that enabled Roman thinking to interact with the early Christians, whose perceptions of war were utterly alien from the pre-Christian approach.

3.6.2 Non-Combatants

The mid-second century BCE law obliged the Senate to consider the number of dead enemies to award triumph.[156] The Romans fought their wars aiming for decisive victories. Hence, the time of the actual battle was merciless. However, after the unconditional surrender of a city, the winner was morally obliged to respect the lives of the locals. On the contrary, when a besieged city was fallen without surrender, its inhabitants were subjected to mass killing and most of the survivors were enslaved.[157]

Plutarch gave an interesting example about when Germanic tribes tried to humiliate Caesar by hanging a small sword inside a temple, thinking they had defeated his army. Even after this mockery, after the final victory against them, he did not allow his companions to remove this little sword due to the sacred nature of the temple.[158] Similarly, Plutarch described how Sulla's need for more financial resources for the wars he was waging led him to seize sacred treasures from Greece, taking them

---

[155] 2 Corinthians 6:10–18.

[156] Nathan Stewart Rosenstein, *Rome at War: Farms, Families, and Death in the Middle Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 13.

[157] Rich, 'Warfare and external relations in the middle Roman Republic', 64-65; Polybius, *Histories*, 10.15.

[158] Plutarch, *Caesar*, 26.

directly from the sanctuaries. Plutarch highlights that Sulla's behaviour was an exception to the rule, describing the aversion of the Amphictyons while giving away these treasures, remembering other Roman commanders, who had not only spared the Greek sanctuaries but added more gifts to honour them.[159]

Roman behaviour was not based on a strict rule, but on 'otherness'. Tacitus' account of the Roman assault on the Druidic stronghold in Mona reveals both the psychological complexity and the ideological justification behind Roman desecration of enemy sacred spaces. As he describes, the Roman troops were initially paralysed by the unfamiliar and fearsome spectacle before them: armed warriors standing alongside women dressed in black, with dishevelled hair and flaming brands, invoking the image of Furies. Druid priests raised their hands to the heavens, issuing terrifying imprecations, and the soldiers—momentarily stunned—stood exposed, 'as if their limbs were paralysed.'[160] This moment of hesitation captures the visceral power of enemy religion, challenging Roman perceptions of spiritual superiority. Yet, the narrative quickly pivots to a Roman recovery: encouraged by their general and their comrades, the troops advanced, desecrated, and killed without distinction. The destruction extended to the sacred groves, which were burned as part of a moral campaign against what Tacitus calls 'inhuman superstitions.' The Druids, he writes, covered altars with the blood of captives and consulted the gods through human entrails—practices that, from a Roman perspective, legitimised the violent erasure of the sacred.[161] Tacitus' framing thus allows for a complex reading: while he acknowledges the emotional and symbolic power of the Druidic rites, he ultimately justifies their eradication as necessary for the imposition of Roman order and moral hierarchy.

Things appeared to be different when the Christian religion began expanding its influence. As Eusebius of Caesarea mentioned, the emperors who did not command the destruction of Christian temples were exceptions. In one of his texts, he praises Constantius, highlighting that.

> 'He took not the smallest part in the War against us and preserved the pious under him unharmed and unabused. Neither did he throw down the church buildings nor devise anything else against us.'[162]

---

[159] Plutarch, *Life of Sulla* 12.3–6, trans. Alexandros Rizos Ragavis (Athens: Dionysiou Koromila, 1864).

[160] Tacitus, *Annales,* XIV.30–31.

[161] Ibid.

[162] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History*, 8.13-13.

This description indicates that the Christian temples were not respected as some pagan sanctuaries of the Roman enemies.

The Greeks spared those seeking shelter inside sanctuaries due to the fear of divine rage, but the Romans developed a much more humanistic idea of sparing enemies. Cicero described how Marcus Marcellus' virtue described the responsibility to protect his allies and spare his conquered enemies.

> 'Afterwards, that illustrious man, Marcus Marcellus himself, whose valour in Sicily was felt by his enemies, his mercy by the conquered, and his good faith by all the Sicilians, not only provided in that War for the advantage of his allies but spared even his conquered enemies.'[163]

Cicero also described a successful *postbellum* condition by reflecting on the Roman acquisition of Sicily.

> 'See how the wisdom of our ancestors, who, when they had added Sicily, so valuable an assistant both in war and peace, to the Republic, were so careful to defend the Sicilians and to retain them in their allegiance that they not only imposed no new tax upon their lands, but did not even alter the law of putting up for sale the contracts of the farmers of the tenths, or the time or place of selling them; so that they were to put them up for sale at the regular time of year, at the same place, in Sicily,—in short, in every respect as the law of Hiero directed; they permitted them still to manage their affairs and were not willing that their minds should be disturbed even by a new name to law, much less by an actual new law.'[164]

For Cicero, the right to self-determination in some aspects of local traditions and everyday life practices could enable cooperation in peace. Romans did not tend to appreciate external influences since *res novae* meant 'revolution' and opposed the old norms that had been tested against time and had been proven functional.[165]

As discussed earlier, Cicero understood the trap of creating martyrs and explained that a Just and durable peace cannot exist if brutality overtook the *postbellum* reality. Cicero's idea was that:

---

[163] Cicero, *In Verem*, 2.2.4.

[164] Ibid. 2.3.14.

[165] Thomas, *Ancient Rome: From Romulus to Justinian*, 22.

> ‘The only excuse, therefore, for going to War is that we may live in peace unharmed, and when the victory is won, we should spare those who have not been bloodthirsty and barbarous in their warfare.’[166]

Cicero’s understanding of how people can be fueled with hatred if they believe their fellow men or leaders were killed unjustly is a diachronic idea that did not lose relevance in the later centuries. Cicero clarified that:

> ‘Not only must we show consideration for those whom we have conquered by force of arms, but we must also ensure protection to those who lay down their arms and throw themselves upon the mercy of our generals, even though the battering ram has hammered at their walls.’[167]

Ensuring protection for the defeated enemy is a sign of humanitarian morality and a political idea targeting a sustainable *postbellum* scenario with no enemy martyrs to undermine the shared experiences between Rome and its defeated former enemy.

The thesis of Cicero was that the *postbellum* aim of Just war should be a Just and durable peace. Cicero understood that atrocities after the surrender of one of the opposing sides would most likely lead to frozen violence rather than concrete peace. Cicero continues by saying that.

Our forefathers admitted to full citizenship rights to the Tusculans, Aequians, Volscians, Sabines, and Hernicians, but they razed Carthage and Numantia to the ground. I wish they had not destroyed Corinth; but I believe they had some special reason for what they did—its convenient situation, probably—and feared that its very location might someday furnish a temptation to renew the war. In my opinion, at least, we should always strive to secure a peace that shall not admit of guile. [168]

The integration of non-Romans into the Roman state shows that Roman expansionism had universal and political characteristics. Rome was a political system, not only an ethnic identity. The destruction of Carthage and Numantia shows exceptions to the previous Ciceronian statements. The Roman atrocities after the First Punic War and the enslavement of formerly free citizens could not lead to a durable peace since the trauma of these actions was unbearable for the Carthaginians, who would later seek revenge.[169]

---

[166] Cicero, *De Officiis*,1.35, 1.38.

[167] Ibid. 1.35.

[168] Ibid.

[169] Stepper, ‘Roman-Carthaginian Relations: From Cooperation to Annihilation’, 75.

Plutarch also explains how Caesar's army destroyed enemy territory but did not harm those who did not oppose the Romans,[170] indicating the impact of such ideas in warfare. Combining the legitimate war aim of a Just and durable peace with the sparing of enemies, the puzzle of the Roman ideas obtains a more concrete shape.

Violation of sparing the defeated troops can be observed through the texts of Polybius and Livy, who described grisly massacres after specific battles.[171] Usually, these violations took place when the Romans did not believe that the aim of a Just and durable peace was a tangible scenario. Roman writers tried to describe the fear of the 'other' as a justification for waging war. Cases where such descriptions were far from reality, i.e., Caesar's attempt to justify campaigns against Gaul, should not make us forget that regardless of the groundless nature of such decisions, the ideas behind it could have been primarily sincere since fear could legitimise the violation of norms, i.e., the utter destruction of Carthage.[172]

Similarly, during the Celtic wars, Plutarch explains how Caesar's battalion defeated the German tribes and chased them almost 300 stadia away, killing as many as possible. Plutarch describes how the Romans perceived the Germanic tribes as threatening neighbours, expecting they could invade Roman territory at any time.[173] Possibly, this is an attempt to justify the brutal chasing of the defeated armed forces as a violation of a dominant perception of sparing the defeated enemy. However, his descriptions clarify that the Romans did not consider them people with whom they could cooperate or communicate. Plutarch provided examples of disrespect towards the Roman ambassadors, highlighting that only 800 men managed to drive away 5000 legionnaires who did not expect an ambush since they had sent ambassadors to negotiate and agree on specific terms.[174] In general, the Celtic wars are full of examples of how Caesar's forces destroyed the enemy filling the landscape with dead bodies, showing that the Roman legions fought their wars in order to ensure that the enemy will not be able to fight back.

---

[170] Plutarch, *Caesar*, 23.

[171] Livy*, History of Rome*, 10.29, 37.43; Polybius, *Histories,* 3.84.

[172] Rich, 'Warfare and external relations in the middle Roman Republic',
68.

[173] Plutarch, *Caesar*, 19.

[174] Ibid. 22.

Plutarch recounts that the first Celtic wars were triggered by aggression from local tribes and their incursion into Roman territory. He notes that the Romans killed all, including women and children, but insists that this occurred only because every individual had taken an active part in the conflict.[175] Plutarch's justification of this mass killing reveals three important aspects of Roman thinking about warfare.

First, the framing of the war as a response to external aggression fostered sympathy for the Roman army, highlighting the importance of legitimacy in the decision to wage war. The conflict was not portrayed as expansionist, but as a defensive reaction to invasion. Second, by explicitly mentioning the killing of women and children, Plutarch implicitly acknowledges that such actions were not typical of Roman military conduct. His need to explain and justify the violence suggests it contradicted prevailing norms around how war should be waged. Third, his argument that all those killed had actively participated in the fighting serves to reclassify them as combatants, thereby legitimising their deaths under Roman standards. This rhetorical strategy reinforces the idea that the killing of non-combatants was not an accepted Roman practice and could only be defended if those individuals were considered active threats on the battlefield.

Tacitus describes how Germanicus approached the expedition in Germany.

> 'Germanicus, also, to make recognition easier, had torn off his headpiece and was adjuring his men to press on with the carnage: Prisoners were needless: nothing but the extermination of the race would end the war.'[176]

Like Plutarch's reflections, Tacitus presents a dominant idea that the Romans and the Germanic tribes could not coexist in a Just and durable peace. Germanicus's sentence incarnates this cynical idea that mirrors limitless aggression.

Plutarch's account of the early Celtic wars, in which the Romans killed everyone—including women and children—is revealing when seen within the broader Roman norms of warfare. His justification, that all victims had actively participated in combat, reflects the Roman effort to maintain a moral distinction between combatants and non-combatants. It also shows how violations of this principle had to be narratively excused, underlining that such killings were not standard practice but required legitimation through claims of universal participation.

This fits within a broader Roman logic where those who surrendered (deditio) were absorbed into Roman protection and judged by Roman authority, while those who resisted—especially in rebellions—were met with exceptional brutality. As seen in

---

[175] Ibid., 18.

[176] Tacitus, *Annales*, 2.21.1.

Eusebius of Caesarea ac of described the Jewish uprisings and how the Romans invoked the laws of war to justify the indiscriminate slaughter of men, women, and children when they framed the opposition as irrational or existential threats.[177]

Ultimately, Roman norms surrounding non-combatants and post-surrender treatment were shaped by a universalising political identity that offered protection to those who submitted, but withheld mercy from those who resisted. The ethical distinction between restraint and total destruction thus hinged not on abstract morality, but on the Roman-defined boundary between 'self' and 'other'—a boundary that was flexible, strategic, and rooted in their claim to civilisational supremacy.

While battle itself was merciless, those who surrendered—particularly combatants—were theoretically entitled to protection. Prisoners of war who submitted were often spared and sometimes integrated into Roman systems, as Cicero's writings affirm. In contrast, non-combatants were meant to be shielded, but this protection was frequently reinterpreted or revoked, especially when siege conditions, rebellion, or perceived dishonourable resistance were involved. Reclassification of civilians as combatants served to justify their deaths and preserve the illusion of normative consistency.

Crucially, Roman wartime conduct was deeply influenced by *who the enemy was*. Those seen as culturally closer or politically cooperative were more likely to be spared or rewarded, while others—especially those cast as 'barbarians' or existential threats—were dehumanised and annihilated. This differentiation remains an area for further research, particularly regarding how Roman moral categories influenced the laws of war and shaped the memory of conflict.

As discussed earlier, the Roman concept of *pax* itself encapsulated this asymmetry: it did not mean mutual peace but the imposition of Roman order. *Pax Romana* was a political construct—signalling domination, hierarchy, and the subordination of the defeated. It was not the absence of war, but the outcome of victory on Roman terms. Thus, Cicero's vision of a *Just and durable peace* was less about reconciliation and more about integration, control, and the denial of future resistance.

3.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, although ideas of limiting the justifications for war date back to the Ancient Greeks, the Roman tradition and its legalistic worldview established a Just war doctrine. This, however, does not imply that they consistently exemplified restraint – mostly due to another political suggestion (contradictory to the Greek), which allowed for the construction of a world where 'otherness' legitimised the practice of offensive defence and territorial expansion. The most critical takeaway from this chapter is the way

[177] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History*, 4.2

Roman norms and ideas embedded warfare within a legal and political discourse, thereby shaping a shared knowledge framework where warfare was expected to reflect the standards of a civilised polity. The importance of these constructions expands to the dialectic interaction between the Greco-Roman and Christian ideas; without Roman Just war thought, accompanied by a broader universal view, Christian ideas would not find a fertile ground to influence a new synthesis. Looking at the broader Greco-Roman tradition we have collected numerous ideas and norms that show how Christianity could be part of this new synthesis and the thus influencing a new era of Just war mentality in both Western and Eastern Roman thought.

Another important conclusion is the enduring concept of 'citizen-soldiers' originating from ancient Greece. Roman thought placed significant emphasis on the idea that Roman wars were fought by its citizens, constructing a broader framework of legitimacy. This aligns with the Just war theory, which posits that a politically superior entity must defend its citizens, whose exceptional freedom and political identity were considered exportable.

Though reality often diverged from this ideal, the normative power of the citizen-soldier persisted. It played a central role in embedding Just War into the collective mentality of the Roman community. This continuity is pivotal for genealogy studies, revealing how such social constructs not only endure but become integrated into the community's shared understanding of legitimacy and war, rather than remaining top-down impositions.

Finally, the Romans diverged from the communitarian Greek approach by embracing a cosmopolitan perspective. Their identity constructions were outward-looking, enabling the expansion of their civilised identity. While Greek superiority was predominantly their own privilege, it led to a doctrine of defending it against perceived 'others'. In contrast, Roman survival necessitated expansion. This perspective constructed a cosmopolitan Realism where survival was intertwined with the vision of improving the world—a messianic logic that resonated with the universal *ethos* of Christianity. Yet, Roman cosmopolitanism fundamentally differs from modern cosmopolitan Just War theory. Firstly, the authority to use force was firmly rooted in the power of the state, not in the rights or moral agency of the individual. Secondly, Rome's justification for war was based on its own binary interpretation of civilisation versus barbarism, rather than on contemporary principles such as humanitarian intervention or the protection of universal human rights.

This is the core concept behind the meaning of the differences between Greek and Roman Just war mentality. The Greeks did not develop a systematic Just War doctrine, a legal instrument that makes warfare part of a structured political foundation, as their war aims, and overall identity-based logic was fundamentally different. Keeping war as either a domestic issue first based on competition, honour, and material gains and then as a means to protect their polis' political autonomy, or a foreign policy behaviour dictated by their culture's existence being challenged from external 'others'. Rome's universal logic

required a stronger foundation of legitimacy both due to the insecurity of neighbours but also due to an identity-based rationale of legitimate expansion. Both traditions were rooted on ideas of superiority, but while the Greeks kept a communitarian approach, the Roman humanistic and political approach could be either expanded and survive or perish. By exporting a ‘Roman’ political recommendation, the Roman Just war tradition shaped a more humanitarian doctrine and at the same time a ‘Hobbesian’ dichotomy between ‘Rome’ and ‘others’. This notion is integral for the next steps of our genealogy study, as it becomes a crucial facilitating condition for the incorporation of Christian ideas and becomes part of a new dialectic through the future development of an East Roman tradition and ideas that rethought Just war in theory and practice.

Chapter 4
The East Roman Warfare: The Defence Doctrine, the Impact of Adversaries in Strategy, the 'Seed' of Interdependence, and a Different Just War Legacy

4.1 The East Roman (Byzantine) State: A Brief Overview[1]

The foundation of Constantinople as the new capital of the Roman Empire by Emperor Constantine the Great in the 4th century was followed by significant changes. Christianity became the official religion of the state and marked a different normative framework in political and military terms. The reign of Emperor Justinian I (527-565) and his efforts to reconquer lost Roman territories, such as Italy and North Africa marked the geopolitical and strategic context of this 'early-Byzantine' period. Furthermore, the interaction of this Eastern state with numerous adversaries became a norm from the early days of this period and continued to play a central role in Byzantine affairs until the fall of Constantinople. In the 7th century the Islamic expansion caused significant territorial losses, especially in the Eastern Mediterranean. The latter centuries, mostly during the Macedonian Dynasty (867-1056), saw the empire recover and stabilise after earlier setbacks. Domestic religious clashes were major security concerns for the state, i.e., the period of 'Iconoclasm'. Iconoclasm was a dispute regarding the norm of worship religious images that led to the destruction of icons and played a central role during this time. The Fourth Crusade in 1204 resulted in the sack of Constantinople by Western forces and the establishment of the Latin Empire. The Byzantines eventually recaptured their capital in 1261, but the state's foundations were eroded by these events. The rise of the Ottoman Turks led to a series of battles, until the fall of Constantinople at the hands of the Ottoman Mehmet II the Conqueror.

---

[1] On the term Byzantine: It is important to note that the term Byzantine was not used as a self-definition, as the Byzantines perceived themselves as Romans. See, Yiannis Stouraitis, 'Collective Identifications in Byzantine Civil Wars', in Yiannis Stouraitis (ed), *War and Collective Identities in the Middle Ages: East, West, and Beyond* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2023). Moreover, Eastern sources of the early-Byzantine period (Arab, Syrian, and Armenian) called the Middle East province of the state the 'land of the Romans'. Hélène Ahrweiler, 'L'Asie Mineure et les Invasions Arabes (VIIe–IXe siècles)', *Revue Historique* 227, no. 1 (1962): 1. Agathias, *The Histories*, vol. 2A, 1.2–3, trans. Joseph D. Frendo (New York and Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1975); John of Ephesus, *The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History of John of Ephesus*, trans. R.Payne-Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1860).

As John Haldon wrote, the sixth century acceptance of the cultural differences between the Greek East and Latin West define the actual beginning of the Byzantine period;[2] our analysis will avoid setting a chronological division of different periods[3] as many historians have done in the past, to underline three critical elements: change, continuity and normative coherence that worked as a new synthesis, facilitating the development of the modern Greek Just war ideas. To return to Haldon's analysis, continuity in every area, i.e. political, ideological, economic, and institutional, was a defining element of the specific community.[4] Change was of course present in this continuity; change in the borders of the state, change in the domestic and external affairs, changes in the adversaries, and changes in the way ideas were incarnated into actions, just like every historical period – and thus changes that are part of the Just war ideas of the Byzantines will be addressed.

Ideas were not trapped in the different periods of the Byzantine world but were continuously influencing the Empire's political thought. Emperor Leo VI's (886-912) '*Taktika'* incorporated the existing work of Emperor Maurice's (582-602) '*Strategikon'*.[5] At the same time, religious perceptions can be traced in Byzantine history's political and military texts.[6] Thus, it can be safely said that the continuous dialectic interaction of ideas reveals some of the most important means which defined the construction of the Byzantine strategic culture and the conceptualisation of war as part of the political realm.

When it comes to our sources and the aforementioned thinkers, Emperor Maurice reigned from 582 to 602 CE during a period marked by frequent military conflicts with the Persians, Avars, and Slavs. He authored the '*Strategikon*', a military manual offering practical advice on strategy, tactics, and army organisation. Maurice's work became a foundational text for Byzantine military doctrine, shaping the strategies and practices of the Byzantine army and influencing subsequent military manuals. Emperor Leo VI, also

---

[2] John Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World, 565–1204* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 1.

[3] There is a tendency to divide the history of the Byzantine state in 'Early, Middle, and Later-Byzantine' periods.

[4] Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, 1.

[5] James Gilmer, 'Maurice's *Strategikon*', *Medieval Warfare* 4, no. 6 (2014): 10.

[6] Edward Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

known as Leo the Wise, ruled from 886 to 912 CE during the Macedonian Renaissance, a period of cultural and military revival. His '*Taktika*' compiled and expanded upon the '*Strategikon*' of Maurice, reflecting the accumulated military wisdom and experience of the Byzantine Empire. Leo VI's '*Taktika*' exemplifies the synthesis and continuation of earlier military traditions, integrating Roman and Byzantine military knowledge into a coherent framework that guided Byzantine military strategy. Anna Komnena (1083-1153) was the daughter of Emperor Alexios I Komnenos, who lived during a period of significant external threats to the Byzantine Empire. Her most notable work, the '*Alexiad*' is a detailed historical account of her father's reign, providing rich narratives of military and political strategies. The '*Alexiad*' offers detailed descriptions of military campaigns, battles, and strategies, providing invaluable insights into Byzantine military operations in the late 11th and early 12th centuries. Anna's integration of classical theory with contemporary practices reflects the ongoing adaptation of earlier traditions to address current challenges. These works, demonstrate the Byzantine Empire's reliance on and adaptation of earlier Roman and Greek military knowledge, ensuring the continuity of military expertise. They reveal how Byzantine military thought evolved over time, incorporating practical experience and theoretical insights to address contemporary challenges.

John Haldon claimed that the belief system and the collective mentality of the Byzantines, combined with the strategic methods of fighting and avoiding warfare, contributed to the durability of the East Roman state.[7] Yet, before examining the development of a distinct Byzantine conception of Just War, it is essential to recognise that the term *Rhomaios*—used for the self-identification of the Empire's citizens—did not denote a shared ethnic lineage. Even Emperors like Leo V (813-820) and Basil I (867-886) were highlighted for their Armenian heritage in historical sources.[8] Chalcedonian Christianity was the key criterion for enjoying full Roman citizenship rights[9] which is an indicator of the religious element in the identity constructions of the Byzantine 'self'.

This chapter will examine how the synthesis between the Roman Just war tradition and Christian thought defined how the Empire conceptualised conflict and formulated new thinking on understanding inter-polity relations. War is not a static concept, and the numerous cultural and ethical influences the Byzantines were exposed to, led to a

---

[7] Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, 280.

[8] Yannis Stouraitis, 'Reinventing Roman Ethnicity in High and Late Medieval Byzantium', *Medieval Worlds* 5 (2017): 75.

[9] Ibid.

differentiated interpretation of the Roman Just war ideas. Paul Hedley Willmott's claim that 'man made war in his own image'[10] is mirrored in the East Roman strategic and military approaches, as part of a broader definition of the world and their role in it. Plus, the theoretical canvas of the constructivist approach where actions are defined by a 'constructed perception of the world'[11] will be part of the way we will track Just war ideas and the way they became part of the Byzantine praxis.

Alexander Vasiliev recognises that the collision of Christianity with Pagan Hellenism led to a gradual development of a Christian Greco-Eastern culture.[12] The understanding of this synthesis is crucial for the identification of how the East Roman ideas on war and strategy were part of a history of ideas and defined the state's foreign policy. While the conversion of Constantine the Great to Christianity is often approached as the starting point of the synthesis, Licinius and Maxentius had already launched new ideas of tolerance towards Christianity. As discussed in the previous chapter, looking at the pagan Greco-Roman thinking, we can detect ideas that paved the way for Christianity, e.g., the universal ideas of the Romans, as expressed by Cicero, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius, among others, and the tendency to seek legitimacy before launching an expedition.[13]

The Western Church, serving as the guardian of Latin language, culture, and Roman political ideas, developed unique theological perspectives and ways of thinking that impacted newcomers, notably the Franks. In contrast, the Eastern Roman Empire, maintaining its imperial structure and rooted in Hellenistic tradition, followed a distinct trajectory, which inevitably constructed a different Just war normative environment.[14] Constantine the Great legitimised the Christian religion, and soon, Christianity became the official religion of the state, but as discussed above, the East Romans never abolished some core characteristics of the pagan Greco-Roman heritage. Key features such as the

---

[10] Paul Hedley Willmott, *When Men Lost Faith in Reason: Reflections on War and Society in the 20th century* (Westport CT: Praeger, 2002), 14.

[11] Peter Berger, 'Identity as a Problem in the Sociology of Knowledge', *Archives Européennes de Sociologie / European Journal of Sociology* 7, no. 1 (1966): 111.

[12] Alexander Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire, 324–1453,* Vol. I(London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952), 43.

[13] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 3.11, trans. J. Boulton and David Widger (Project Gutenberg E-Book, 2001), 3; Gavin Stewart, 'Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BCE–43 BCE)', in Andrew Hom, Cian O'Driscoll, and Kurt Mills (eds), *Moral Victories: The Ethics of Winning Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 13.

[14] Julian Chrysostomides, 'Byzantine concepts of war and peace' in Anja Hartmann and Beatrice Heuser (eds.), *War, Peace and World Orders in European History* (London: Routledge, 2001).

link between religious legitimacy and Just War, and the understanding of *politeia* as a conduit for civilisation, remained integral to Byzantine ideology.

As discussed in the second chapter, Aristotle talked about the superiority of the Greeks over those who were destined to be ruled by highlighting that it was political superiority that legitimised conflict. Furthermore, he clairifed that war and strategy were pieces of the 'political puzzle', i.e., they are paths towards a society's *eudaimonia*.[15] Thucydides' *Pericles Funeral Oration* shows how the Athenians perceived themselves as politically superior to their enemies, with their political excellence reflected in the way they were waging their wars.[16] This idea is echoed many centuries later in Maurice's *Strategikon.* According to Maurice, Slavs had no tactical sophistication when waging wars. Maurice explained that Slavs were 'unorganised and anarchic' which was mirrored in their battle formations and lack of combat order (Ἄναρχα δὲ καὶ μισάλληλα ὄντα, οὐδὲ τάξιν γινόσκουσιν οὐδὲ τὴν κατὰ συστάδην μάχην ἐπιτηδεύουσιν μάχεσθαι.').[17] From Thucydides and Aristotle to Maurice we have a clear perception where war was a *mimesis* (imitation) of politics.

The Roman institution of the *fetiales*, whose responsibility was linked with the gods witnessing the Just war criteria, was also present in the East Roman mentality – through a different theological context, but following the same pattern, i.e., God's will = Just Wars. Leo VI wrote about the 'divine justice' (*θείαν δικαιοσύνην*) that accompanies those who have Just war causes.[18] Such ideas should be framed in the unique ideology of the state. Julian Chrysostomides described the self-perception of the Byzantines as a miniature *cosmos* (universe), where *logos* (reason) prevails and defined the concept of legitimacy and responsibility when it comes to the state's authority.[19] Legitimate authority was not perceived only as part of control and military superiority, but also as a canal of *philanthropia* (love for humankind). This set of ideas underlines the synthesis

---

[15] Aristotle, *Ηθικά Νικομάχεια* (*Nichomachean Ethics)*, tr. Dimitrios Lypourlis (Thessaloniki: Zitros, 2006), A.1,2,3,4.

[16] Thucydides, *Ιστορία* (*History of the Peloponnesian War)*, tr. Nicholaos Skouteropoulos, *Θουκιδίδη Ιστορία* (Athens: Polis, 2011), 2.37.

[17] Maurice, *Στρατηγικόν* (*Strategikon*), trans. George T. Dennis, *Maurice's Strategikon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 11, 51.

[18] Leo VI the Wise, *Τακτικά* (*Taktike Theoria*), trans. George Dennis, *The Taktika of Leo VI* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010),58, 289.

[19] Chrysostomides, 'Byzantine Concepts of War and Peace', 91.

between the Greco-Roman tradition and the values of Christianity. By this synthesis, warfare became more restrained, but also Christian values became more pragmatic, as protecting the *cosmos* against chaos required military force.

Scholars have examined the concept of war within Byzantine historiography, mostly reflecting on the Empire's structure and interactions. In a more IR-related setting, Evangelos Chrysos, in his examination of sovereignty in 7th-century state relations, explores the notion of 'self' amid recognised 'others' in the state's interactions with these different 'others'.[20] Jonathan Harris focuses on the ideology-related factors behind the interaction between Byzantium and the Crusades,[21] while Ralph-Johannes Lilie's work, *'Byzantium and the Crusader States*', examines the political and military dynamics between the Byzantine Empire and the Latin states in Syria and Palestine.[22] Athina Kolia-Dermitzaki's significant studies engage with the dialectical relationship between Byzantium and the West during the Crusades, emphasising the importance of the state's ideology in assessing the extent of Byzantine involvement. he argues that the Byzantine state's primary concern lay not in the expansion of Christendom but in the suspicion towards the intentions of Western armies and leaders. This analysis is close to the logic of our work, however it seems to adopt a different stance (a more 'Realist' perspective) that does not allow for the understanding of the normative division between the East and West, particularly regarding expansionism, large-scale offensive campaigns, and, most importantly, based on who is the responsible authority regarding the Christian world in the Middle East.[23]

A more analytical and historical approach comes from Yiannis Souraitis' work that constructed a new framework to analyse the identity-related ontology of the Byzantine state. Stouraitis has explained the imperial-related objectives of the state, examining practices like compulsory resettlement and the mingling of diverse populations to bolster the Empire's core realm and military forces. This strategy, characterised by little regard

---

[20] Evangelos Chrysos, 'The Title Βασιλεὺς in Early Byzantine International Relations', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 32 (1978): 35; Evangelos Chrysos, 'The Roman Political Identity in Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium', in Kaj Fledelius (ed), *Byzantium: Identity, Image, Influence. XIX International Congress of Byzantine Studies, University of Copenhagen, 18–24 August 1996* (Copenhagen: Eventus, 1996), 7–16.

[21] Jonathan Harris, *Byzantium and the Crusades* (London-New York: Hambledon Continuum, 2006).

[22] Lilie Ralph-Johannes, *Byzantium and the Crusader States, 1096–1204*, trans. J.C. Morris and J.E. Ridings (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993).

[23] Nikolaos Chrissis, Athina Kolia-Dermitzaki, and Angeliki Papageorgiou, *Byzantium and the West* (London: Routledge, 2019).

for cultural or confessional homogeneity, reflects the Byzantine power elite's pragmatic approach to governance but also deconstructs the narrative of a national identity in the pre-1262 period, showing how the use of sources reveals the importance of a religious-related self-identification.[24] My analysis takes Stouraitis' ontological approach and tries to expand on how these identity constructions led to a unique perception on war, on the responsibility of the 'self' towards other Christian entities, and on the long-run establishment of 'otherness'.

Finally, scholars have highlighted the significance of the Byzantine defensive norms and reconstruction of the Roman 'offensive defence', through a strategic understanding of avoiding conflict when possible.[25] Here, I want to highlight Julian Chrysostomides' work, which offers a significant perspective on the conceptualisation of Byzantine warfare within the broader framework of the Roman-Christian synthesis. He emphasises the influence of the Church in establishing Just war norms compatible with Christian ethics. His analysis of primary sources, particularly Leo's *Taktika* provides crucial insights into the normative environment of Byzantine strategy and contributes decisively to understanding the period's constructions of a new Just war tradition within the context of inter-polity relations – incorporating the examination of theological texts.

According to Chrysostomides, the Church supported war as a last resort for containing evil but underlined the importance of employing *philanthropia* (love of mankind) and *oikonomia* (moderation) in the use of force. This theological influence is evident in Leo VI's military treatise, where the Emperor highlighted the imperative of considering humanitarian principles and moderation in warfare (elements that will be evaluated and assessed as part of my genealogy study, as well).[26]

---

[24] Stouraitis, 'Reinventing Roman Ethnicity', 72; Yiannis Stouraitis, 'Trapped in the Imperial Narrative? Some Reflections on Warfare and the Provincial Masses in Byzantium (600–1204)', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 44, no. 1 (2020): 1–18; Yiannis Stouraitis, 'Collective identifiations in Byzantine Civil Wars', in Stouraitis, Yannis (ed.)*, War and Collective Identities in the Middle Ages: East, West, and Beyond* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2023), 99; Yiannis Stouraitis, 'Civil War in the Christian Empire', in Yiannis Stouraitis (ed.), *A Companion to the Byzantine Culture of War, c.300–1204* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 92–123; Michael Grunbart, 'The Enemies of the Empire: Portrayed Images', in Yannis Stouraitis (ed.), *A Companion to the Byzantine Culture of War, c.300–1204* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 124–59.

[25] Warren Treadgold, 'Byzantium, The Reluctant Warrior', in Niall Christie and Maya Yazigi (eds.), *Noble Ideals and Bloody Reality* (Leiden: Brill, 2006): 208–33; Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire.*;; Georgios Chatzelis, *Byzantine Military Manuals* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019)

[26] Chrysostomides, 'Byzantine concepts of war and peace'.

4.2 Legitimate Aims

4.2.1 Defending the Faith: The Architect of the Byzantine Warfare

Emperors Theodosius II (408-450), Anastasius I (491-518), and Justinian I were all dedicated to fortifying the Empire's territories as a defence against foreign invasions. Justinian, in particular, is renowned for his extensive construction projects involving fortifications and churches.[27] These projects hold a symbolic significance on two fronts. Firstly, the extensive fortification construction highlights the presence of numerous external threats. Secondly, the significant construction of churches served to define the bonds of identity within the Empire. A unified Christian church served as a common thread that bridged the multi-ethnic differences among the Empire's population.

The early Roman-Christian synthesis on the distinction between murder and war is traceable in the texts of theologian and pope Athanasios of Alexandria (fourth century CE). In one of his letters, he wrote that:

> 'it is not permissible to murder, but it is lawful to kill adversaries in wars, and such actions are considered legal and praiseworthy. Therefore, those who excel in warfare and achieve great honors are esteemed, and monuments are erected to proclaim their achievements.'[28]

Saint Athanasius also articulated a perspective on warfare that aligned with the Byzantine defence doctrine. He explained that if killing occurred in a defensive war, it should not be viewed as a sin due to its justifiable nature.[29] Thus, the ethical foundations of early-Christian thinking were reconstructed based on the frequency of threats, leading to a defence doctrine and distinguished the virtuous justification of warfare *vis a vis* other motives. Emperors like Leo VI critiqued the Saracens' war objectives, highlighting that engaging in expeditions for material gain was unjust and stemmed from their pagan beliefs.[30] In contrast, Roman soldiers were motivated by the defense of Christendom.

---

[27] Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, 103.

[28] Athanasius, *Επιστολή προς Ἀμούν μονάζοντα* (*Epistula ad Amun*), University of the Aegean Digital Archive (2006), sec. 26, 1.169–1.176. (φονεύειν οὐκ ἔξεστιν, ἀλλ' ἐν πολέμοις ἀναιρεῖν τοὺς ἀντιπάλους καὶ ἔννομον καὶ ἐπαίνου ἄξιον· οὕτω γοῦν καὶ τιμῶν μεγάλων οἱ κατὰ πόλεμον ἀριστεύσαντες ἀξιοῦνται, καὶ στῆλαι τούτων ἐγείρονται κηρύττουσαι τὰ κατορθώματα)

[29] Ibid.

[30] Leo, *Taktika*, 447-489.

This differentiation between superior and inferior war objectives sheds light on the moral framework of the Empire.

Emperor Heraclius (610-641) gave a speech to his troops before the Persian campaign:

> 'Let us, therefore, offer ourselves to God for the salvation of our brethren. Let us receive the crown of martyrs, so that the time to come may also praise us, and may God render rewards to those who endure.' ('θύσωμεν οὖν τῷ θεῷ ἑαυτοὺς ὑπὲρ τῆς τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἡμῶν σωτηρίας. λάβωμεν στέφος μαρτύρων, ἵνα καὶ ὁ μέλλων ἡμᾶς χρόνος ἐπαινέσῃ, καὶ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς μισθοὺς ἀποδώσῃ).'[31]

This passage reflects the Byzantines' reliance on religious justification for warfare, emphasising martyrdom and divine approval for the salvation of 'Christian brothers'. The fact that the Emperor delivered this speech to his soldiers highlights the significance of rallying their faith and commitment, aligning them with the religious objectives of the state's campaigns and the normative framework of Just wars.

The Church played a crucial role in justifying war as a last resort, considering it a means of containing evil. Consequently, the Church provided both ethical support by granting religious legitimacy and practical assistance by raising funds for military campaigns. For instance, during Heraclius' campaigns, the Patriarch Sergius financially supported the endeavours, reflecting the dominant idea of the state as the guarantor of Christians' safety.[32] The use of church funds also served as a diplomatic tool in negotiating the return of prisoners, emphasising the Empire's role as a protector of Christians – a norm that can be identified in later centuries too. As Anna Komnene elaborated:

> 'Furthermore, amongst them, they found that it was lawful to sell the sacred properties of the churches for the ransoming of prisoners of war (for it was well known that the Christians who remained under the domination of the barbarians in Asia and had escaped the massacre, became defiled by their intercourse with the infidels). Therefore, to furnish pay for the allies and the soldiers, they considered turning into coin a few church properties which served no purpose and were amongst those which had long been lying idle and neglected and only afforded the populace an excuse for sacrilege and impiety.'[33]

---

[31] Theofanis the Confessor, *Chronografia* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1883), 31- 3.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, V, 118.

Leo's writings mirror the significance of justifying warfare:

> 'Above all, when mobilizing for war, make sure that the cause of this war just (δικαίαν είναι την αρχήν του τοιούτου πολέμου) and never take up arms against the enemy unjustly (αδίκους) unless they, because of their accustomed impiety (συνήθους αυτών ασέβειας), have first initiated hostilities and are invading our land.'[34]

The quote warns against taking up arms 'unjustly' (αδίκους) unless provoked by 'the enemy's impiety' (συνήθους αυτών ασέβειας). Here, the Byzantines viewed themselves as defenders of the righteous and justified in responding to aggression with force. Observing Leo's *Taktika*, we can detect how the Emperor explained that if the troops love their general, they will be motivated to risk their lives at his command.[35] The concept of love was a fundamental part of the Roman–Christian synthesis, especially when the wars against Islam led to a prioritisation of religion as an ideological source of legitimacy. In one of his speeches, Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913-959) explained that while 'God sacrificed His only begotten son, Constantine gives his whole being in body and soul, linking and mixing his flesh with their flesh and his bones with their bones.'[36] The sacrificial love of Christianity becomes a bond between the Emperor/general and his soldiers, sealing this new norm. The Christian emphasis on love constructed a different understanding of the relations between generals and their soldiers, based on the idea of the bond between efficient warfare and the legitimacy of defensive fighting. In a similar context, many different East Roman adversaries tried to secure funds or valuable items like gold, silver coins, and precious textiles through the practice of ransoming prisoners. Generals who failed to engage in ransoming captives, when the chance presented itself, faced significant and unpopularity,[37] showing that their primary responsibility was the protection of prisoners. Success in ensuring the safe return of prisoners was expected of the army's leadership, as warfare itself was based on ideas of protection and welfare of the 'self'.

---

[34] Leo, *Tatika*, 29.193-196.

[35] Ibid. 111.

[36] Eric McGeer, *Two military orations of Constantine VI'* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 128–9.

[37] Emil Walter Kaegi, *Byzantine Military Unrest, 471–843: An Interpretation* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1981), 108–109..

Patriarch Nicholas I Mystikos, in 920, articulated a profound sentiment regarding Bulgarian hostilities, asserting that individual salvation was intricately tied to the community's preservation ('if the community is saved, then each will certainly preserve…but if the whole is ruined, there can be no salvation left for the individual').[38] This perspective reflects the collective mentality of the Byzantines, where the state held profound significance in each person's life. Drawing from Aristotelian and Platonic ideals, the Politeia represented the *telos* of every individual. Byzantines perceived the state as the *mimesis* (imitation) of heaven and, thus, the only place where God's *logos* (reason) could influence human beings.[39] Thus, defending the state was more than a civic responsibility; it became a sacred obligation. This sense of religious sovereignty was not only spiritual but also existential, endowing the state with the authority to define the meaning of human life itself. This concept aligned with ethical and political criteria that defined well-being, akin to Aristotle's *eudaimonia* concept, inseparably linked to a thriving *polis*. Moreover, this Byzantine notion of an existential duty to defend the state echoes Roman ideas, particularly the belief that Rome's survival equated to the survival of civilisation itself. In both traditions, war could transcend material survival and become a 'normative existential struggle', embedded in philosophical, political, and theological justifications.

4.2.2 Peace: A foundation of Legitimate Warfare

When describing the pre-Christian Greco-Roman world, Athanasius of Alexandria argued that prior to embracing Christianity individuals relied on violence and warfare as essential aspects of their lives. However, upon embracing the teachings of Christ, they undergo a transformation. They abandon their violent ways, experience a change of heart, and prioritise peace and friendship. Athanasius described how the condition of nations' interaction was defined by the normative switch to Christianity; according to his writings, nations will no longer engage in warfare; even 'barbaric societies, deeply entrenched in idol worship upon encountering the teachings of Christ will abandon warfare for peaceful pursuits like agriculture, and rather than wielding weapons, they uplift their hands in prayer.'[40] Athanasius' ideas are echoed in Leo's *Taktika:*

---

[38] Nicholas I Mystikos, *Letters*, ed. and trans. by R.J. H. Jenkins and L. G. Westerink (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1973), 92.

[39] Chrysostomides, 'Byzantine concepts of war and peace', 91.

[40] Athanasius, *Letters*, trans. Philip Schaff, in *Select Works and Letters of Athanasius*, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series II, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), 51.

> 'For honored by the image and word of God, all men ought to embrace peace and foster love for one another instead of taking up murderous weapons…In their hands to use against their own people. But since the devil, the killer of men (ανθρωποκτόνος) from the beginning, the enemy of our race (του γένους ημών εχθρός), has made use of sin to bring men to the point of waging war against their own kind.'[41]

This universal understanding of humanity is significant for both the defensive orientation of the Byzantine Just war tradition but also because it worked as a normative facilitating condition for the recognition of 'others' – a clear influence towards a less 'Hobbesian' interpolity logic. The terms *ανθρωποκτόνος* and *του γένους ημών* reveal a cosmopolitan aspect in the way Leo frames the state's normative foundations. According to Leo's descriptions the act of restoring and preserving peace embodies the essence of a Just war. In this context, all conflicts should culminate with the establishment of peace as the ultimate objective.[42] Justice can only be achieved when peace is the primary goal of any military campaign.[43] Leo stressed the importance of aiming for a durable and Just peace regardless of potential disrespect of the treaty from the 'other':

> 'The thoughts of the enemy who have signed a treaty or who have made peace are unclear. You, as a religious person, stick to what is firm and do not act unjustly.'[44]

The identity of the 'self' dictates foreign policy behaviour. Such constructions do not only dictate norms but also mirror the way cultural superiority was mirrored through the evolution of Just war principles. The importance of these ideas cannot be ignored when evaluating a foreign policy that gained renown for its overall reluctance to engage in military conflict, often resorting to diplomacy and financial negotiations instead.[45]

However, we cannot ignore the frequency of hostile interactions against 'others' when conceptualising the complicated constructions around war; starting from the experiences of the state before Leo's time. Peace was seen as an ideal condition but embedded in the

---

[41] Leo, *Taktika*, Prologue, 4. 25-29.

[42] Ibid. 30.197-207.

[43] Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, 13.

[44] Leo, *Taktika*, XVI, 15.

[45] Treadgold, 'Byzantium, the Reluctant Warrior', 208–33.

preparations for defending it. Maurice's advice was 'Make peace a time for training for war', showing that being prepared to defend this ideal condition was necessary. Preparations for war did not reflect the strengthening of the 'self' to conquer but to defend its territory and protect the peace. This idea can be traced to the pagan Greco-Roman tradition. Livy emphasised the virtuous character of the leader of the Achaeans, Philopoemen, by describing that:

> 'Philopoemen, however, was a man of unusual astuteness and experience in leading troops and choosing positions, and not only in wartimes but in peace as well; he had trained his mind, particularly in these arts.'[46]

Peace did not mean a perpetual absence of war. This idea was a construction based on the experience of a *Hobbesian* regional interactive environment, where numerous enemies attempted to conquer imperial territory or threatened Christian populations and the faith itself. This is why, regardless of the aforementioned ideological deconstruction of a pure Hobbesian foundation, concerns over potential enemy deceit in peace negotiations were expressed by Maurice, while Leo also cautioned against possible violations of peace treaties and agreements.[47]

Nevertheless, Leo, despite his skeptical approach and warnings, stressed the importance of listening to defeated foes seeking peace terms and proceeding to establish peace.[48] Prior to Leo, Maurice had advised seeking favourable peace terms even with defeated enemies, reflecting the Roman objective of assimilating adversaries.[49] Negotiating for peace was considered a solemn duty of Byzantine authorities and took precedence over pursuing total victories.

Maurice noted that:

> 'To try to overpower the enemy in the open, hand to hand and face to face, even though you might appear to win, is an enterprise which is very risky and can result in serious harm. Apart from extreme emergency, it is ridiculous to try to gain a victory which is so costly and brings only empty glory.'[50]

---

[46] Titus Livius (Livy), *The History of Rome*, tr. D. Spillan (London: John Child and son, 1857), 35.28.

[47] Leo, *Taktika*, XVI, 87–92.

[48] Ibid. XX, 112

[49] Beatrice Heuser, *The Evolution of Strategy: Thinking War from Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 43.

[50] Maurice*, Strategikon,* 65; see also 83, 96, 107.

The conceptualisation of such victories as sterile attempts to acquire empty glory shows that the concept of war was linked with the idea of reason. This perspective aligns with the Byzantine understanding of Just war, which integrated Ciceronian criteria with Christian ethics, producing a synthesis where military glory was subordinated to rational and moral imperatives. Glory devoid of ethical virtue was not worthy of admiration, and dominant values such as philanthropia challenged the pagan Greco-Roman celebration of *aristeia* (individual military excellence). The pursuit of glory for its own sake was not only morally questionable but also strategically unsound, and thus, not recognised as a legitimate war aim. Leo's *Taktika* reveals that a different strategic understanding replaced the old Roman open battles. Leo advocates for ambushes and avoidance of decisive battles when deemed necessary.[51]

Defence and peace as the only legitimate reasons behind war were highlighted by Leo, i.e. war was justifiable only when it aimed for defending one's country and not when there were conquest-related objectives, while afterward efforts should be made to establish peace.[52] Anna Komnene's texts echo these ideas, calling peace 'the end of all wars',[53] an idea traceable back to Aristotle.[54] The pillars of defence and peace constituted the fundamental pillar of Byzantine warfare, serving as the two most essential criteria for justifying the initiation of a war.

Crucially, the Byzantine concept of *philanthropia* was not interpreted as a call to Romanise or assimilate the 'other', as in earlier imperial ideology. Instead, it functioned within the state's boundaries, offering a framework of restraint in the treatment of enemies. This gives rise to two critical insights into the normative basis of Byzantine Just war thinking. First, *philanthropia* affirms the intrinsic value of human life, grounded in Christian theology, where dignity stems not from political status but from shared humanity. This principle infused foreign policy with a degree of restraint: *'otherness'* was acknowledged, and even amid conflict, the annihilation of the enemy was not a normative goal—not in a Kantian cosmopolitan sense, but in a theologically anchored one. Second, the expression of Christian love—the *imitatio Dei*—was geopolitically constrained. It applied within the imperial boundaries, reinforcing defensive norms and shaping a communitarian worldview, distinct from the universalism of earlier Roman ideology. Rather than seeking to universalise *Romanitas*, the Byzantine vision of Just war

[51] Leo, *Taktika*, XII, 25. 179-180.231.

[52] Ibid. II, 30.197-207

[53] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, 381

[54] Aristotle, *NE*, 1.1.

was defined by protecting a divinely ordered community—a *cosmos* bound by faith and imperial authority.

This fundamentally difference between Roman and Byzantine attitudes lies in how notions of peace were embedded into how each civilisation understood its identity. For the Byzantines, peace was an ideal precisely because war was considered inherently evil. Romanisation was neither a realistic goal nor ideologically compatible with Byzantine values. As mentioned earlier, reality and ideas constantly influenced one another—but not in a strictly causal relationship governed by one-directional logic.

For the Romans, by contrast, surrender meant total submission.[55] The defeated not only lost militarily but were required to acknowledge their defeat and accept Roman rule. Rome offered no guaranteed rights to the vanquished: land, freedom, even life itself, lay entirely at the victor's discretion.[56] Roman identity thus embedded the legitimacy of expansion and Romanisation. Generals often refused peace terms offered by enemies; their goal was not merely victory, but the destruction of the enemy's will.

Byzantine warfare reflected an identity centred on coexistence rather than conquest—reminiscent of ancient Greek practices, though not derived from them. Instead, this approach was shaped by Christian ethics, the empire's unique geography, and a strong sense of exceptionalism. The Byzantine 'self' was conceived as a reflection of the Kingdom of God—an identity less exportable than that of Rome, where religion supported legitimacy but, as Alan Watson explained did not prescribe the moral boundaries of warfare.[57]

4.2.3 The Responsibility to Protect

After Rome fell to the Goths, the East Roman Emperor, Justinian I (527-565), reacted. Perceiving the Western part of the Roman Empire as part of the 'self', the restoration of the lost territories was perceived as a legitimate objective for offensive operations. Legitimacy was also based on how Justinian perceived the Empire as a canal of civilisation, resembling the Greco-Roman ideas of cultural and political superiority. Agathias wrote that following a successful military campaign by Justinian's army against

---

[55] Carlin A. Barton, 'The Price of Peace in Ancient Rome', in *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Asia, The Mediterranean, Europe, and Mesoamerica*, ed. Kurt Raaflaub and Nathan Rosenstein (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 248–250.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Alan Watson, *International Law in Archaic Rome: War and Religion* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

the Goths, an agreement was reached that allowed the Goths to keep their territory without interference, under the condition that they would now be subjects of the Emperor.[58] Thus, in such cases, a Roman-like pattern can be observed but without the romanisation of the enemy.

Procopius of Caesarea echoed this sentiment, quoting Justinian as declaring: *'the Goths having seized by violence our own Italy, have refused to give it back.'*[59] Byzantium perceived itself not just as an empire but as the guardian of the Christian world, and thus, the protection of Christians from oppression became a key source of war legitimacy. This principle was established in the early years of the East Roman state and continued to shape Byzantine strategy for centuries. Leo VI, for instance, made clear that the defence of family, faith, and homeland was foundational to the justification of warfare. The Byzantines perceived themselves as defenders of the faith. Thus, the protection of Christians from oppression became a source of legitimacy. This idea started in the very early years of the East Roman state and continued to define the Byzantine strategy in the following centuries. Evidence can be tracked in the work of Leo, who clarified that the motives for protecting family, faith, and homeland were essential for the state's campaigns.[60]

Justinian's ideas were not confined strictly to elite foreign policy; rather as Vasiliev explained, they resonated with the populations subjected to Goth and Vandal rule.[61] The Vandals in Northern Africa persecuted the Orthodox inhabitants and confiscated their properties. Refugees from these regions, seeking sanctuary in Constantinople and appealing for the Emperor's assistance against the Vandals, demonstrated that the inhabitants of the lost territories shared Justinian's principles.[62] Similar examples can be detected earlier in the 421 war between the Byzantines and the Persians, which was heavily influenced by the persecutions of Christians in Persia and the refugees that found shelter in the Empire and advocated for of military intervention.[63]

---

[58] Agathias, *Histories*, 1.

[59] Procopius, *De bello gothico (The Gothic Wars)*, trans. H.B. Dewing (The Project Gutenberg EBook, 2007), I, 5, 8.

[60] Leo, *Taktika*, XII, 54-57.

[61] Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, 134.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World*, 18.

The significance of these ideas in shaping legitimate war objectives is evident in treaties that included clauses protecting Christians from persecution by Zoroastrian authorities.[64] A similar peace treaty after the Byzantine-Persian war in 562 reveals that besides the primary concern of settling the borders in geostrategic regions (Caucasus), the treaty highlighted concerns about religious freedom and the prohibition of proselytising by both Christians and Zoroastrians.[65] Vasiliev highlighted that losing territories, e.g. Egypt was a heavy economic blow to the state's resources. At the same time, Bury and Whittow emphasised the economic consequences of the Persian foreign policy as well as those from the Slavic invasion in the Balkan Peninsula, underlying the economic motives behind protecting the Empire's provinces.[66] Similarly, Julian Chrystostomides explained that a major preoccupation of both sides was to tie the Armenians, Georgians, and other Caucasian tribes to ensure access to trade routes and to enhance their defence lines with buffer states.[67] While geopolitical control and economic interests influenced these conflicts, these religious justifications were not mere proclamations; they reflected dominant ideas regarding Just military campaigns and how Byzantine strategy adhered to norms of protection while considering Christian populations as part of their identity.

Vasiliev noted that the kings of the Goths and Vandals recognised and respected the superior authority of the East Roman emperor, featuring his image on coins and attempting peaceful relations.[68] The state could have used them as vassals, not only to protect its Western borders from external threats but also to avoid the extreme financial cost of keeping these territories under its rule. However, Justinian's ideology, prevailing norms favouring Christian protection, the grievances of local populations, and past conflicts between Romans and Germanic peoples shaped a different foreign policy priority. Similar dynamics can be observed in Emperor Heraclius' offensive expeditions, as the Persians depleted Byzantine provinces of wealth and took captives, further illustrating the importance of protecting Christian populations. Refugee waves from

---

[64] Ibid.

[65] Roger Blockley, 'The Romano-Persian Peace Treaties of AD 299 and 363', *Florilegium* 6, no. 1 (1984): 28–49.

[66] Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire,* 196; John Bury, *A History of the Late Roman Empire from Arcadius to Irene (395-800)* (London: Macmillan, 1889), 300-308.

[67] Chrysostomides, 'Byzantine concepts of war and peace', 92

[68] Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, 134-135.

North Africa to Italy after the Arab conquest in the 7th century underscore the challenges faced by numerous Christians living under Arab rule.[69]

John of Ephesus documented that the sixth century East Roman Emperors engaged in conflicts with the Persians primarily to ensure the safety and protection of the Armenians, firmly committed to not abandoning those who had sought refuge under his rule. In a gesture of support, he granted them tax privileges for three years.[70] When the Persians asserted their demand for the return of Armenian territories, the Emperor refused. John recorded that the Persian claim was 'give me back my slaves who have rebelled against me'. This narrative mirrors the East Romans' belief that the Persians harbored intentions to subjugate other populations, portraying the Christians living under Persian rule as enslaved. Such notions present ideas of legitimacy based on the responsibility to ensure Christians protection from 'slavery' but also based on a central establishment of a norm that granted the state the right over Christian populations in different territories. Interestingly, as the Persians amassed sufficient forces, they extended assurances of safety to the Armenians, leading to a significant portion of the Armenian population deserting the East Roman side. Only a handful of Armenian princes found sanctuary in Constantinople.[71] The behaviour of Armenians show that they did not believe that the state could guarantee their security against external threats perpetually, but also how sectarian divisions made Christian allegiance more fluid.

In classical Greece, Xenophon had explained that nothing was more worthy of fighting to protect kinsmen, 'those we love'.[72] In the Byzantine context, love played a decisive role in Christian thinking, particularly in the context of Just and noble warfare to protect loved ones. The concept of love is integral to Christian thinking. This concept of defending those they loved underpinned the thematic system, an organisational structure that fused military forces with their local land and community. Armed forces were located in imperial districts (*themata*), while the supreme commander (*strategos*) was both the general and the governor of the district.[73] This thematic system constructed dedicated

---

[69] Ibid. 212-213.

[70] John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 402.

[71] Ibid. 403.

[72] Xenophon, *Κύρου Παιδεία (Cyropedia)*, trans. V. Kalampalikis in *Ξενοφώντος Κύρου Παιδεία* (Athens: Papyros, 1975), 1. 5.13.

[73] Brian Carey, Joshua Allfree, and John Cairns, *Road to Manzikert: Byzantine and Islamic Warfare, 527–1071* (Philadelphia: Casemate Publishers, 2012).

military structures that were bonded with the land and the people of their community, enhancing their motivation with the responsibility to defend a familiar territory, a place they loved. The norm for military officers was to be located close to their families and communities for the same purpose.[74] Since Just wars were defensive wars, fighting to protect the state, the family, and the Christian faith would be strategically successful, by providing the ideal motives when waging wars. For the Byzantine thinking, the responsibility to wage war became synonymous with the responsibility to protect – not only in the logic of intervention, but also in the logic of defence.

The term 'Rhomaiōn politeia' reflects the vision of an endless territorial empire, with its Roman identity anchored in imperial city-states like Rome and Constantinople.[75] In addition, the Byzantine ideology constructed a self-perception of the only entity which was responsible for being the keeper of the Christian *cosmos*.[76] Combining this ideological foundation with the frequency of interacting with 'others' – in both Hobbesian and non-Hobbesian patterns – can help us understand how these dialectics shaped a unique perception on legitimising the responsibility to protect.

Plus, even though there were Byzantine voices who embraced the Crusades' ideological foundations, there was also skepticism towards the Crusaders,[77] which regardless of the material variables that triggered insecurity, embed a clear distinctive identity of responsibility. Furthermore, the religious schism established a dichotomy on the broader Christian identity, which was reinforced after the sack of Constantinople in 1204. Finally, the early influence of a Greek-Byzantine identity at the dawn of the Empire[78] enhanced this identity-related dichotomy between the East and West, leading to a distinct norm of responsibility that grew even stronger after the creation of the Modern Greek state in the 19th century.

---

[74] Stouraitis, 'Reinventing Roman Ethnicity', 78.

[75] Stouraitis, 'Reinventing Roman Ethnicity', 73.

[76] Chrysostomides, 'Byzantine concepts of war and peace', 91.

[77] Chrissis, Kolia-Dermitzaki, and Papageorgiou, *Byzantium and the West* , 71; 71; Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, 10, 5, 10.

[78] The Nicaeans linked their assertion of Hellenic ethnicity to their claim that only Hellenes were the rightful heirs of Roman imperial culture, inherited through Constantine I's transfer of the capital to Constantinople. Stouraitis, 'Reinventing Roman Ethnicity', 85.

4.2.4 The Responsibility to Reclaim

A notable occurrence of offensive military operations was the East Roman expeditions against the Tzani. Up until the fifth century CE, the bilateral relations between the two were peaceful. Records depict the Tzani as marauding raiders, e.g., Tzani raids in Cilicia, and Syria during the reign of Theodosius I (379–395). Historical accounts from the mid-fifth century describe the Empire's borderlands suffering incursions from various groups, including Persians and Tzani.[79] East Roman sources also reveal the character of 'self' vs. 'other' identities in this bilateral interaction, e.g., 'civilised' vs. 'savages'. Procopius wrote that 'From ancient times the Tzani have lived as an independent people, without rulers, following a savage-like manner of life.'[80]

Procopius, in his work '*Buildings*', mentions a fort restored by Justinian known as Longini Fossatum, which had been associated with a Roman general's conquest named Longinus.[81] Thus, we can observe a justifying reasoning based on 'restoring' lost territories that used to be 'Roman'. Emanuele Intagliata analysed the East Roman behaviour after the campaign, mentioning that the first priority of the latter was to fortify the region.[82] The construction of forts in Tzanica did not primarily serve the purpose of exploiting the region's natural resources. Instead, it provided the Romans with a strategic corridor to access their allies, the Lazi, situated along the eastern coast of the Black Sea. Additionally, control over this territory allowed the Romans to safeguard the southeastern Black Sea harbors, preventing Persian threats to coastal cities. Securing Tzanica also established an advanced defensive line capable of intercepting or deterring attacks into Imperial territory.[83] Ultimately, this reveals that the defensive strategy of the East Roman Emperor was formulated in response to the Persian problem. Considering these aspects, it becomes evident that the early East Roman strategy did not demonstrate the concept of romanisation and expansion in the manner of pagan Rome.

---

[79] Emanuele Intagliata, 'Rome and the Tzani in Late Antiquity: A Historical and Archaeological Review', *Anatolian Studies* 68 (2018): 136.

[80] Procopius, *Buildings,* 3.6.2.

[81] Ibid. 3.6.23–24.

[82] Emanuele Intagliata, 'Rome and the Tzani in late antiquity: a historical and archaeological review', *Anatolian Studies* 68 (2018), 136.

[83] Ibid.

Examining the specific elements of imperial propaganda from the last centuries of the Empire provides insights into how emperors tailored their rhetoric to align with their foreign policy and security objectives. During the late Byzantine period, Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (1261-1282) framed his expeditions in the West as Just wars with a legitimate aim of reclaiming lost territories. The restoration of these lands was deemed a legitimate objective, a defining justification for warfare that endured from the inception of the East Roman state to its later centuries. In contrast, Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282-1328) employed different rhetoric, justifying war primarily for defensive purposes, given the looming threat posed by the Turks in Asia Minor.[84] Different security circumstances led to different priorities, but the justification of these operations is what matters for unraveling the logic of Just wars.

The Byzantine concept of a 'responsibility to reclaim' is clearly reflected in the policies and rhetoric of Michael VIII Palaiologos. His military campaigns were framed not as expansionist ventures, but as efforts to restore imperial authority and liberate territories considered inherently Byzantine. This justificatory narrative was supported by both religious and political figures. For instance, Patriarch Gregory of Cyprus characterised Michael VIII's campaigns as legitimate attempts to recover lands lost to Bulgarians and Muslims, who were portrayed as illegitimate occupiers. Michael VIII himself echoed this perspective by referring to his victories as the repossession of land from *renegades of the same Roman race*, underscoring the belief that certain populations and regions were integral to the Byzantine identity and political order. [85]

This logic was central to the Byzantine Just War doctrine, which prioritised reconquest over conquest, and perceived specific territories not as external gains but as rightful extensions of the imperial self. Within this framework, the Palaiologan Renaissance—a cultural revival that unfolded primarily during the 13th and 14th centuries under the Palaiologos dynasty—played a pivotal role. This renaissance marked a renewed interest in classical Greek learning, literature, and heritage, which the Byzantines increasingly saw as intertwined with their Roman imperial legacy.[86] As part of this cultural reawakening, the Byzantines redefined their historical consciousness, blending Roman political legitimacy with Hellenic cultural identity. The result was a strengthened belief that territories historically or ethnically linked to the Empire—especially those populated

---

[84] Savvas Kyriakidis, *Warfare in Late Byzantium, 1204-1453*. Vol. 67. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 16.

[85] Ibid. 21–22.

[86] Ruth Macrides, 'Emperor and Church in the Last Centuries of Byzantium', *Studies in Church History* 54 (2018): 123–143; Edmund Boleslaw Fryde, *The Early Palaeologan Renaissance (1261–c.1360)*, vol. 27 (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

by Greeks—were not simply lost, but unjustly taken, and thus subject to rightful reclamation.

The campaigns against the Frankish nobles in the formerly Greek provinces, seized after the Fourth Crusade, were similarly justified by the goal of restoring lost territories. According to the *Chronicle of Morea*, the Byzantine Emperor, Michael VIII Palaiologos, spoke to the defeated William II of Villehardouin and described his conquest as inevitable, telling him that:

> 'all men know, and it is the truth, that the land of Morea is not yours by rightful inheritance; you hold it by despotic force, but it is the patrimony of the basileus of the Romans.'[87]

This phrase reveals that the dominant norms of the late-Byzantines saw the Greek territories as their origin and, thus, as fundamental components of their identity. In the negotiations for Arta's surrender in 1339/40, Andronikos III's representative argued that it was unfair for the Arteans to accept Tarantine rule over Constantinople's historical authority.[88] They saw the Emperor's campaign as a divine restoration of rightful ancestral control, as he was a direct successor to the ancient Roman Emperors. Likewise, Emperor John Kantakouzenos (1347-1354) tried to explain the legitimacy of his expedition against the Epirots by highlighting that his war was no attempt to seize someone else's territory but only a war to reclaim his paternal authority.[89] Even though, the criterion of legitimate reclaim of ancestral territories, the justification was not based on nationality-related factors. Still, these ideas can be considered as the seed of the future Greek foreign policy of *Megali Idea*, as ideas and norms are reconstructed based on different influences and historical circumstances. Furthermore, we need to address that during the 13th century, Emperors of Nicaea, such as John III (1222-1254) and Theodoros II (1254-1258), promoted the idea that the Rhomaioi were Hellenes, direct descendants of Ancient Greeks.[90] The dominant ideas that constituted *Megali Idea* were based on the *ελληνικότητα* (Hellenism/Hellenic identity) of specific regions and the irredentism (αλυτρωτισμός) aimed at oppressed populations. The narrative that motivated John Kantakouzenos was a complex of ideas that linked the identity of the past with the

---

[87] *Crusaders as Conquerors: The Chronicle of Morea*, trans. Harold E. Lurier (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), line 5529.

[88] Stouraitis, 'Reinventing Roman Ethnicity', 84.

[89] Kyriakidis, 'Warfare in Late Byzantium' 33.

[90] Stouraitis, 'Reinventing Roman Ethnicity', 85.

present expectations and even though the national identity did not dominate the 14th century discourse, the logic of reclaiming ancestral territories from other Christians contributed to the development of an Eastern Christian Orthodox 'self' in a future synthesis of ideas. The dominant early-Byzantine concepts regarding the responsibility to protect Christians from oppression and the latter ideas of inherited territories based on their historical significance and populations were pivotal precursors that influenced the 19th century emerging Greek state and its dominant foreign policy ideology of irredentism (*αλυτρωτισμός)* during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The concept of *eudaimonia* concerned those who should be under the protective and civilised umbrella of imperial authority, constructing a Just war mentality where peace could neither be Just nor durable if Christian Orthodox populations were not incorporated in the 'self' (in territorial, religious, and political ways).

4.3 Religion and Law

Initially, the Christian Church was resistant to military service, maintaining a stance that opposed violence and warfare.[91] However, as Christianity spread, particularly within the Roman army, its position shifted. Vassilios Paipais challenges the scholarly view that the Eastern Orthodox Church never developed a Just war tradition solely due to theological and doctrinal reasons.[92] Paipais introduces another perspective: that Byzantine political theology itself discouraged a Just war doctrine. He argues that the Eastern Orthodox Church did not develop a Just war tradition, not only due to theological reasons but also because Byzantine political theology resisted sanctifying war or its martyrs. Unlike Western Christianity, which justified war through moral frameworks, Eastern Orthodoxy focused on ethical restraint, aligning more with concepts of Just peace than Just war.[93]

As a result, Eastern Christianity did not develop a doctrine that sacralized political authority or legitimized war as a moral necessity. Instead, it adopted what the author calls an 'oikonomic attitude to war'—a term derived from the Greek *oikonomia*, meaning pragmatic governance or flexible application of principles. Rather than framing war as a Just or divinely sanctioned act, the Orthodox Church saw it as a regrettable but

---

[91] John Helgeland, Robert J. Daly, and J. Patout Burns, *Christians and the Military: The Early Experience* (London: Fortress Press, 1987).

[92] Vassilios Paipais, 'Between Pacifism and Just War: *Oikonomia* and Eastern Orthodox Political Theology', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 37, no. 3 (2024): 657–668; Philip LeMasters, 'Orthodox Perspectives on Peace, War and Violence', *The Ecumenical Review* 63 (2011): 54–61.

[93] Ibid.

sometimes necessary reality.[94] This meant that the relationship between the church and political power was often complex and tense, rather than one of full endorsement or theological justification.

While Christianity's pacifist roots were evident in both the East and West, the Eastern Orthodox Church maintained a tense and reluctant stance on war.[95] Despite acknowledging the necessity of war, figures like St Basil imposed strict penances on those who killed in battle, distinguishing Orthodox thought from the Western tradition, which evolved toward the sanctification of holy war. Unlike Western Popes, who gradually legitimized Christian warfare, the Byzantine Church refused to canonize fallen soldiers despite political pressure. This shows a fundamental difference: whereas the West moved toward justifying and sanctifying war, Eastern Christianity remained cautious, treating war as a regrettable necessity rather than a divinely approved mission.

The Byzantine Empire did not develop a systematic theory of holy war like the Crusaders, but religious language was often used to justify wars of defense and the protection of Orthodoxy. One of the most notable cases was Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (963–969), who attempted to classify soldiers who died fighting Muslims as saints. However, the Patriarchs rejected this idea, arguing that killing—even in a just cause—did not confer holiness. According to Leo the Deacon, Phokas wanted to sanctify the soldiers who fell for the faith and the empire, but the Patriarch opposed this because killing, even when justified, does not make one a saint.[96]

In the dawn of the East Roman state, St. Athanasius made a crucial distinction between murder and killing on the battlefield. He argued that soldiers defending the Empire and their fellow Christians should not be labeled as murderers, as their actions were deemed heroic and necessary.[97] This viewpoint was shared by St Basil, who believed that killing in defence of Christian virtues and the state's well-being could not be equated with murder. The latter also advised that those who fought and killed in wars should abstain from receiving communion for three years, on the grounds that their hands

---

[94] Ibid. 664-665.

[95] Paipais, 'Between Pacifism and Just War', 663-665; Peter Bouteneff, 'War and Peace: Providence and the Interim', in H. Hamalis and P. Karras (eds.), *Orthodox Christian Perspectives on War* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2017), 251–75.

[96] Leo the Deacon, *History*, Introduction, trans. Alice-Mary Talbot and Denis F. Sullivan (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2005), 32.

[97] Athanasius, *Epistula ad Amunem*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, new edn (1887), vol. 26, col. 1173B.

had been polluted with blood'.[98] The Eastern Church consistently upheld St Basil's Canon and rejected imperial efforts to canonise soldiers who died defending the state as martyrs, refusing to establish liturgical honours such as hymns or feast days for them.[99] This dialectic relationship between Christian values and Roman Just war ideas led to an interesting synthesis, where sinful actions were not considered sins due to specific religiously accepted criteria.

Indeed, the Byzantine Church never fully sanctified warfare. Even when war was deemed necessary, it was still considered spiritually damaging, requiring repentance afterward. This moral framework clearly distinguishes Byzantine thought from both the Islamic concept of jihad and the Western Latin idea of holy war.

Yet, as this chapter argues, while Byzantium formally rejected the notion of 'holy war', it nonetheless developed a distinct and coherent Just War mentality rooted in its Roman-Christian synthesis. Unlike the Latin West, the Byzantine Empire never codified a formal doctrine of Just War—precisely because its normative culture aimed to discourage warfare, not to legitimise or ritualise it. Nonetheless, implicit criteria can be identified: the responsibility to protect fellow Christians (particularly in early periods), the responsibility to reclaim lost territories seen as integral to the imperial identity, the use of militant religious titles (e.g., *Ὑπέρμαχος Στρατηγός* – Champion General, for Virgin Mary),[100] and religious rituals preceding campaigns—all suggest an enduring moral logic behind the waging of war.[101]

Killing remained a sin, and ultimate judgment was believed to lie with God alone, as in the end, it was God who was responsible for the victory of the Byzantine arms and Christian behaviour was expected – and legal defined in *Ecloga* - even when campaigning.[102] However, war as a *last resort*—to defend the *mimēsis* (reflection) of the

---

[98] Basil of Caesarea, *The Letters*, Epistula 188, canon 13, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (London: William Heinemann, 1886); *Patrologia Graeca* 32 (1886), col. 681.

[99] Paipais, 'Between Pacifism and Just War', 661.

[100] *Ακάθιστος Ύμνος (The Akathist Hymn)*, tr. Euaggelos Karakovounis. The Akathist Hymn is a devotional chant praising the Virgin Mary (Theotokos), recited in all Orthodox Churches during the five Fridays of Great Lent as spiritual preparation for Holy Week and Easter. Originating in the early Christian Church, it was officially recognised in 626 AD.

[101] Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, 29.

[102] *Ecloga: A Manual of Roman Law*, issued by Emperors Leo III and Constantine V at Constantinople in AD 726, trans. Edwin Hanson Freshfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), 114. Issued under Emperor Leo III and his son Constantine V, the *Ecloga* represents a pivotal development in the evolution of Roman law under Christian influence.

Kingdom of God on Earth—provided a strong theological and moral foundation for the necessity of certain conflicts. Byzantine Just war thinking thus prioritised defence and the responsibility to protect—not humanity at large, but specifically the Byzantine *self*, understood as a political and theological community. The absence of a codified doctrine served as a deliberate safeguard against the misuse of war for unjust aims. This does not mean the Byzantines were unfamiliar with the principles of Just War; on the contrary, their implicit framework presents an exceptionally compelling case for further analysis.

If no war could ever be wholly sanctified—because violence remained fundamentally sinful—but some wars were nonetheless accepted as necessary evils, how did this tension shape the psychological and spiritual world of the Byzantine soldier? My stance is that the Byzantine military could only function effectively if war was, in some measure, perceived as *justified by God*. Drawing on primary sources, I propose that Byzantine Just War thought was built on two fundamental pillars:

Defensive criteria and the responsibility to protect – These concepts were inherited from the Roman tradition but reframed within a Byzantine worldview. Defence was not framed in universalist terms but in communitarian ones, rooted in Eastern Orthodox theology and the need to preserve the religious and political identity of the *Rhomaios*.

The construction of identity and 'otherness' as a facilitating condition – *Otherness*, in itself, was not necessarily seen as threatening. Byzantium coexisted with many external groups and often cooperated with them. However, when such groups became existential threats, their *otherness* was strategically emphasised to justify war. This served both as a legitimising discourse and a mechanism to mobilise Byzantine society—from the clergy and imperial administration to the lay population—who were encouraged to see these conflicts as battles between the *civilised Christian order* and external chaos.

This Byzantine Just War mentality left a lasting impact on modern Greek strategic culture, especially in how it shaped norms regarding war and responsibility. The enduring absence of a pan-human responsibility to protect others—a contrast to later Western ideas—reflects a tradition in which war was only justified for the defence of the Byzantine self, not for broader humanitarian aims.

Finally, let us look at the legal elements of Byzantine warfare. An interesting piece of evidence comes from Stouraitis' work, mirroring the institutionalisation of the responsibility to reclaim and liberate what was formerly part of the self (in population and territorial terms). The peace agreement with Persia in 532 allowed Justinian I to focus on the West. Following Belisarius' unexpected success in quickly reconquering North Africa from the Vandals in 533, a doctrine of *Just war* emerged to justify Roman intervention in Italy and Spain. This doctrine first appeared in the *Codex Iustinianus*, where the emperor declared that Africa had been liberated, and many provinces restored, thanks to God's favour. He expressed hope that divine assistance would help restore all

that had been taken from the Empire.[103] The entrenchment of Just war ideas in the *Codex Iustinianus* shows that the responsibility to protect and emancipate was legally tied to the central authority, making the normative impact crucial for the institutionalisation of this responsibility and its legitimacy.

Justinian's *Novels*, explicitly tie the role of the military to the enforcement of justice, demonstrating that soldiers were not merely instruments of war but also guardians of legal order within the empire. Provincial governors had direct authority over troops to uphold imperial law, allowing them to enforce legal decisions without waiting for direct imperial orders. This is evident in the assertion that officials 'need no special instruction either from us or from our officeholders, but can make use of the present law, and show it to them.'[104] The law itself becomes the guiding principle for action, reinforcing a legal-military framework where justice is upheld by force if necessary.

Justinian also made it clear that soldiers were bound by legal duty, with failure to enforce justice carrying severe consequences. As stated, 'the troops are to support them in exercising the right of their office, and to realise that if they should fail to do so, they will forfeit their stipends and even their military status and imperil their person.'[105] Military discipline was directly linked to justice, ensuring that soldiers upheld imperial governance as part of their fundamental obligations. The loss of stipends and status illustrates that justice was not merely a civilian concern but an essential function of the army, reinforcing its role in securing Roman order.

Military power also served as an instrument of imperial authority, ensuring that justice was upheld without corruption or undue privilege. Justinian asserted that 'no one has any licence at all to make use of any privilege in respect of the stated causes, nor to succeed thereby in offending with impunity',[106] reinforcing the expectation that officeholders and soldiers alike prioritised the law above personal gain. The army functioned as an extension of the legal system, preventing disorder, suppressing rebellion, and ensuring compliance with Roman governance. The concept of justice was closely linked to the military, yet the role of the armed forces extended beyond simply waging war. While war

---

[103] Yannis Stouraitis, 'State War Ethics and Popular Views on Warfare', in Yannis Stouraitis (ed), *A Companion to the Byzantine Culture of War, c.300–1204* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 68–69.

[104] David Miller and Peter Sarris, *The Novels of Justinian: A Complete Annotated English Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 140.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid.

was viewed as a necessary evil, the military's broader role as enforcer of justice blurred the line between warfare and governance. In this framework, just war was not merely permissible—it was an obligation grounded in legal and communal responsibility.

Another, even more important, source for understanding the role of law in Byzantine warfare is the *Ecloga*. It was written entirely in Greek—yet it remained deeply rooted in Justinianic legal tradition.[107] The *Ecloga* reflects a legal culture in which war was not merely a political or military affair, but a regulated function of state authority, firmly constrained by religious norms and legal frameworks. In contrast to the classical Roman tradition—where war was interwoven with imperial ambition and conquest—the Byzantine approach codified warfare as a necessary but controlled instrument of state survival.

Byzantine law reinforced the idea that war was an exclusive prerogative of the state, never a private undertaking. The *Ecloga* prescribed harsh penalties for desertion, treason, and evasion of military duty. One striking clause stipulates: '*If in time of war anyone takes his son out of the public service in an underhand manner, he shall be exiled and, according to the measure of his means, shall be fined'*[108]—underscoring the belief that military service was a civic obligation, not a matter of personal preference. Even deliberate injury of a son to render him unfit for service warranted exile, reflecting the state's prioritisation of military readiness above familial autonomy.

This stringent legal regulation reveals a deeper principle: war was not to be driven by individual ambition but conducted under the strict supervision of the law and the Church. Unlike the feudal structures of Western Europe—where private armies could be mobilised for dynastic or personal gain—Byzantine warfare remained subordinated to centralised imperial control, its legitimacy tied to legal process and divine sanction.

Despite recognising war's necessity, Byzantine law also subjected it to moral and religious constraints. The *Ecloga* echoes the recurring theme that *'victory is not won by the weight of numbers but by the power of God'*[109], reinforcing the belief that warfare, though tragic, must reflect divine will rather than human desire – a paradigm shift from the Roman tradition, where the divine was not a guarantor of victory but only a source of legitimacy.[110] It instructs that *'those who go to war against foes [must] keep themselves*

[107] Ecloga, preface IX.

[108] Ibid. 126.

[109] Ibid. 48.

[110] Watson, *International Law in Archaic Rome.*

from every evil word or deed and continually remember God and pray to Him'[111]—thus aligning the conduct of war with piety, restraint, and spiritual discipline.

The *Ecloga* also established formal rules around the distribution of spoils of war, ensuring that material gain did not become a motive for unrestrained violence. The law declared: *'Since victory is not won by the weight of numbers but by the power of God, it is fitting and proper that a sixth part of the spoils should belong to the State; and the survivors should share the remainder, share and share alike.'*[112] This institutionalised principle aimed to limit opportunism and reinforce state oversight. Generals and officers were not automatically entitled to additional rewards; only in cases of exceptional merit could they receive a portion of the state's share—disbursed at the general's discretion.

This legal structure served two crucial functions. First, it reinforced imperial authority over military operations, deterring personal enrichment. Second, it embedded warfare within a moral and religious framework, where military victory was attributed to divine favour, not human ambition. In doing so, the *Ecloga* helped recast war from a potentially opportunistic venture into a regulated, reluctant necessity—a clear departure from both the Roman Republic's model and the medieval Western tradition, in which warfare frequently served personal or dynastic aspirations.

The *Ecloga* represents a significant shift in the legal and moral framework of warfare. While war remained a tool of statecraft, it was deeply embedded in legal and religious constraints, ensuring that military action served the collective interests of the empire rather than individual ambition. By institutionalising war through laws on military duty, moral conduct, and the distribution of spoils, Byzantine law reinforced the state's central role in warfare, transforming it from a raw instrument of power into a regulated, reluctant necessity – still not a pacifist doctrine but reflects ecclesiastical *oikonomia*, acknowledging war as a necessity and permitting Christian participation. This legal and moral structuring of war not only strengthened state authority but also reflected the broader Byzantine worldview—where law, faith, and imperial power were inseparable.

---

[111] Ecloga, 114.

[112] Ibid, 48.

4.4 Enemies

4.4.1 Identities and Legitimacy

The Byzantines fought against numerous different enemies but did not define their strategy only by developing their 'hard power'. Instead, they paid particular attention to these different enemies to adjust different approaches based the unique characteristics of the 'other'.[113] Looking at the increased external threats from the seventh century, Haldon detected their significant impact on the state's identity, as the religious self-perception of protecting the Christian world from hostile 'others' defined the legitimacy of the use of force.[114] This new understanding of foreign policy influenced the conceptualisation of war and defined fundamental aspects of Greek-Orthodox political and strategic thinking.

Before we dive into the analysis of 'otherness', I will briefly discuss the impact of historical contextualisation of the Byzantine 'self', as defined by Yiannis Stouraitis work. The Byzantine identity was not based on nationality but on religious criteria, which constructed a broader sense of unity among the multiethnic empire's subjects. In the Byzantine Just war thought, the justification for warfare was grounded in religious legitimacy. The Byzantines emphasised how the struggle in warfare was on behalf of God, love for Him, and the entire Christian community (*ethnos*). In Stouraitis' analysis we can identify the importance of historical contextualisation when studying Just war traditions, i.e., how the term '*ethnos*' in Byzantine context could refer to various entities, including an army, city or provincial populace, cultural community, or religious group.[115] The term '*ethnos*' signifies the collective Christian community and hence the unity among soldiers of different ethnic backgrounds was based on their shared religious faith. This aspect is decisive in our genealogical analysis. Examining the Roman-Christian synthesis reveals how warfare evolved into a symbol of defence, last-resort strategy, ethical legitimacy, and imperial authority, all of which were interconnected and have nothing to do with anachronistic national narratives – even though they worked as normative foundations for the future theorising of war as part of identity-related factors.

---

[113] Murray Dahm, 'Learning from the Enemy', *Medieval Warfare* 6, no. 3 (2016): 10–13.

[114] Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, 28-30.

[115] Stouraitis, 'Reinventing Roman Ethnicity', 77; Stouraitis, 'Collective Identifications in Byzantine Civil Wars', 99-100. John Haldon, *The Empire That Would Not Die: The Paradox of Eastern Roman Survival, 640–740* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 72–119.

The Byzantine Empire found itself besieged by a multitude of adversaries, including the Avars, Bulgars, Sassanian Persians, and various Islamic factions. Internal Christian conflicts also erupted, notably following the Fourth Crusade.[116] Maurice advised that one should 'not be deceived by humane acts of the enemy'[117], showing that the Byzantines had a monopoly of *philanthorpia*, as defenders of the faith. This suspicion, rooted in religious distinctions between 'self' and 'others', left little room for trust. Simultaneously, the aggressive stance of numerous adversaries on different fronts provided fertile ground for shaping these contrasting identities. Wendt's observation that 'density and regularity of interaction must be sufficiently high' to shape social constructions defining behavioural norms in inter-polity relations aptly applies;[118] the density and regularity of external invasions profoundly shaped Byzantine collective mentality.

Heraclius' offensive campaigns found justification in the Persian invasion of Byzantine provinces and the maltreatment of the population, including the capture of Christian prisoners, plundering of religious treasures, and the captivity of the Patriarch of Jerusalem. During Heraclius' campaigns against the Persians, descriptions of relevant sources present the Persian invasion in Jerusalem by describing how 'the evil enemies entered the city with a rage which resembled that of infuriated beasts and irritated dragons'.[119] This representation of the *other* as inhuman supports the logic of war as a *last resort*, which further solidified the 'us vs. them' identities and the legitimacy of choosing the path of confrontation – as the last resort was linked with who the 'other' was. During the latter half of the seventh century (and beyond), the Empire faced escalating threats, leading to a heightened emphasis on its religious identity. This shift framed its struggle as one between Christianity and its adversaries, impacting not only warfare but also internal politics and social attitudes, with Hobbesian identities of 'good vs. evil'[120] dominating the defence justifications. With the survival of the God-protected

---

[116] Carey, Allfree, and Cairns, *Road to Manzikert.*

[117] Maurice*, Strategikon,* 81.

[118] Wendt, 'Anarchy Is What States Make of It', 414.

[119] Antiochus Strategus, *The Capture of Jerusalem by the Persians in the Year 614*, trans. F.C. Conybeare, The English Historical Review 25 (1910): 502–512.

[120] Michael Psellus, *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*, trans. E.R. Sewter (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966), 66–67.

realm at stake and the frequency of conflicts, future wars took on a holy significance.[121] Although wars, such as those led by Heraclius against the Persians, were imbued with religious symbolism and rhetoric, no formal doctrine of holy war emerged from these experiences.

Maurice wrote that:

> 'the Scythian nations are one, so to speak, in their mode of life and in their organization, which is primitive and includes many peoples. Of these peoples only the Turks and the Avars concern themselves with military organization, and this makes them stronger than the other Scythian nations when it comes to pitched battles. The nation of the Turks is very numerous and independent.' They are not versatile or skilled in most human endeavours, nor have they trained themselves for anything else except to conduct themselves bravely against their enemies.'

Earlier, Maurice underlined the necessity to capitalise on the diverse populations of the Scythian army.[122] The Emperor seems to interpret the lack of a common identity as a lack of purpose when it comes to the community's behaviour. Profit-driven warfare is presented as inferior to the Byzantine norms. The importance of Just reasons and the importance of kinship, i.e., the development of a common identity, are portrayed as crucial for successful warfare.

According to the Byzantine perceptions the Empire never sought the annihilation of the 'other'; rather, it was the 'other' who desired to disrupt the prevailing peace.[123] The construction of enmity through the frequent invasions and a collective mentality where religious identities of 'self and other' are different is only one side of the Byzantine security coin. Despite the dominant beliefs of cultural and religious superiority over these 'others', the Byzantines observed their adversaries keenly and structured their strategy based on the 'others' distinct characteristics. Leo suggested that enemies should be observed as strategy should be based on the identification and exploitation of their weaknesses.[124] Similarly, according to Maurice, the general's wisdom is linked with the ability to study the enemy before engaging in warfare.[125] Both authors highlighted the

---

[121] Mark Whittow, *The Making of Byzantium, 600–1025* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 294..

[122] Maurice*, Strategikon*, XI, 116; VII, 65.

[123] Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, 7

[124] Leo, *Taktika*, XII, 103.

[125] Maurice*, Strategikon*, 86.

crucial role of reconnaissance, underlining the importance of scouts in acquiring accurate knowledge of enemy behaviour.[126] It was the observation of the 'other' that usually defined the strategic approach of the 'self', showing that Byzantine warfare was, strategically speaking, flexible. The principles and the Just causes were based on the identity of the state, but the way war was waged could – and should – alter based on the unique characteristics of the different adversaries. This practice of observing the 'other' not only influenced military tactics but also reflected a broader curiosity about the cultural aspects of foreigners, encompassing psychology and sociology alongside specifics of enemy weaponry, tactics, and battlefield habits, as described by Edward Luttwak.[127]

It is often argued that collective identities, group cohesion, and uniformity result from warfare and intergroup violence, rather than being their cause.[128] However, interpreting the meaning of specific identity constructions in the Byzantine tradition can reveal the significance of collective identities and collective mentalities as sources of dominant perceptions that work as facilitating conditions for insecurity and conflict. Interaction with Islam introduced an existential threat in both practical and ideological realms. The sacred mission to conquer Jerusalem and the Muslim expectation to succeed in capturing Constantinople before the end of the world[129] reflects a dialectic relationship of Hobbesian identity establishments. The 'self', from both sides, is expected to defeat the 'other' to fulfill a divine mission. Consequently, coexistence became increasingly questionable, and the development of intolerant norms strained the pursuit of peace - not only in an elite-level strategy but in a broader public sentiment. Contemporaries faulted Byzantine emperors of the eleventh and twelfth centuries who showed reluctance to personally lead armies into battle for the loss of provinces to the Turks.[130] Moreover, in a public display, Manuel I (1143-1180) was praised for the belief that victory in war

---

[126] Ibid. 241.

[127] Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire*, 288.

[128] Siniša Malešević, *The Sociology of War and Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 17–88.

[129] Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, 237.

[130] Chatzelis, *Byzantine Military Manuals*, 66.

against the Turks would secure him eternal life, as depicted in the poem Manganeios Prodromos composed in his honor.[131]

Even in the midst of late-Byzantine civil conflicts, numerous voices called for peace and union in order to organise and wage a Just war against their natural enemies. The attempt to naturalise enmity between the Byzantines and the Turks was based on the above-mentioned long-term identity construction, positioning the state's sacred purpose as defending the faith and resisting those who sought to undermine the Christian Empire—especially those whose ideological principles dictated the conquest of Constantinople. Wars against the Ottomans in the late Byzantine period were described as a war between good and evil, with imperial propaganda emphasising Byzantine cultural superiority *vis a vis* an uncivilised and brutal enemy. According to Savvas Kyriakides, these narratives aimed not only to cultivate the perception of a comprehensive threat to both state and society but also to attract military support from the West.[132]

Byzantine general Eumathios Philokales (c. 1108) took retaliatory action against the Turks at Lampe as retribution for their earlier destruction of the prosperous city of Adramyttion. His response was an act of vengeance and is described as part of the way the 'other' was perceived. [133] The Byzantines during that period perceived the Turks primarily as a barbaric and existential threat to their empire, with both ideological and military dimensions shaping this portrayal. Despite the defensive and limited scope of Byzantine operations in Asia Minor, contemporary sources such as orator Nikolaos Lampenos framed the conflict as a heroic struggle against a savage enemy. Lampenos employed vivid imagery of massacres and rivers of Turkish blood to emphasise the emperor's success in punishing the enemy, reinforcing the view of the Turks as a dangerous adversary whose subjugation was both necessary and Just.[134]

---

[131] Chrissis, Kolia-Dermitzaki, and Papageorgiou, *Byzantium and the West*, 70.

[132] Kyriakidis, *Warfare in Late Byzantium*, 38.

[133] Nikephoros, *Short History*, ed. and trans. by C. Mango (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1990), 76; 148–50.

[134] Ioannis Polemis, Ο λόγιος Νικόλαος Λαμπηνός και το εγκώμιον αυτού εις τον αυτοκράτορα Ανδρόνικον Παλαιολόγον (The Scholar Nikolaos Lampenos and his encomium to the emperor Andronikos II) (Athens, 1992), 51.

Jihad promised victory over the 'other', and each successful operation or raid against imperial territory validated the Islamic promise of superiority.[135] The ideological threat was considered especially grave because the Byzantines attributed their success in expeditions to their ideology. Confronting formidable adversaries driven by territorial ambitions and wealth acquisition posed an inferior threat compared to an enemy whose ideology dictated Just criteria for waging war, especially given the military success of the latter. Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos' speech after a victorious campaign praised the enemy's capabilities but underlined that success lies in the moral superiority of his army:

> 'The enemy had horses whose speed made them impossible to overtake. The enemy's weapons were unmatched in strength, equipment unmatched in craftsmanship. But they could not win because they lacked 'the one paramount advantage, by which I mean hope in Christ'.[136]

Violating treaties was seen as hubris and an indicator of an inferior 'otherness':

> 'At that time, the Bulgarians had disregarded the peace treaty and were raiding through the Thracian country Justice pursued them for breaking their oath to Christ our God, the emperor of all, and they quickly met up with their punishment. While our forces were engaged against the Saracens, divine Providence led the Turks, in place of the Romans, to campaign against the Bulgarians.'[137]

Leo perceived the Magyars' intervention as divine retribution against the disrespectful Bulgarians, highlighting the centrality of treaties in Byzantine culture. As a *status quo* power that justified its military expeditions by achieving peace, the violation of treaties was seen as a characteristic of inferior cultures more interested in materialistic goals than maintaining peace.

'Otherness' cannot be understood outside the historical context of interpolity relations. Basil II, known as the 'Bulgar-Slayer' gained notoriety for his ruthless tactic of blinding Bulgarian soldiers in large numbers. This led Michael Psellos to describe an emperor as being 'more of a villain in war time, more of an emperor in time of peace.'[138] His actions

---

[135] Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire*, 265.

[136] McGeer, *Two Military Orations of Constantine VII*, 113, 116–117.

[137] Leo, *Taktika*, XVIII, 40.

[138] Psellus, *Chronographie*, 21.

should be framed in a continuous development of Hobbesian norms against a continuous aggressive interaction – not justified but explained based on a specific normative environment. While undeniably severe, blinding functioned as a non-lethal punishment, symbolising both imperial dominance and moral limitation. The act of sparing an enemy's life, even after their military defeat, reflects a normative framework rooted in proportionality—a key principle of the Byzantine Just War tradition. In this view, killing was not inevitable, even in the case of major enemies such as the Bulgars. From the 680s, the Bulgar Khanate rapidly gained power and posed a constant threat to Byzantine territories in the Balkans until Emperor Basil II's reign (976-1025). Despite initial successes under Emperor Constantine V in the 760s and 770s, Bulgar influence persisted and reached its peak in 811 when Khan Krum defeated and killed Emperor Nikephoros I. Efforts to stabilise Byzantium by converting some elites to Christianity in the 860s backfired, contributing to Bulgar expansionism.[139]

Anna Komnene described the Scythians as a barbarian threat whose assaults against the Empire were constant during the late eleventh century. She explained that 'in case of these barbarians, there is no injustice to believe that we ought not to allow them immunity at all'.[140] The passage continues by explaining that:

> 'For the incursions of the Scythians did not begin in one of the four seasons and cease in the following, for instance, starting in summer and finishing in autumn, or even in winter (or late autumn); nor was this evil limited to the cycle of one year, but for several years past they had been troubling the Empire'.[141]

The constant threat posed by the Scythians was translated into the obligation to respond decisively and mercilessly. The impossibility of communication dictated such brutal practices, revealing the importance of how the 'other' was perceived.

The Byzantine collective mentality was significantly shaped by the frequent interactions with various adversaries, which played a crucial role in constructing norms of defensiveness and suspicion. This regularity of conflict not only reinforced the Byzantines' defensive posture but also naturalised their interactions with 'others', strengthening the distinctiveness and uniqueness of the Byzantine 'self'. The continuous threats from diverse groups led to a perception of an enduring struggle between Christianity and its foes. Yet, this proximity to and frequent engagement with enemies

---

[139] John F. Haldon, *Byzantium at War AD 600–1453* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), 29.

[140] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, VII, II.

[141] Ibid.

also constructed the Byzantines' belief in their unique religious responsibility to guard the realm of God. They viewed themselves as the true defenders of the Christian faith, distinguishing themselves from non-Orthodox Christians who, due to their less frequent interactions with these 'others,' were slowly alienated from bearing this duty, especially given certain facilitating conditions that will be discussed in the following sub-section.

4.4.2 Christians vs. Christians

Following the Council of Nicaea, Constantine the Great stated that 'the devil will no longer have any power against us'.[142] This declaration reflects Constantine's stance against heresies, illustrating how inner-Christian conflicts and domestic prosecutions were justified by portraying heresies as incarnations of evil. The use of force against heretics stemmed from the challenge they posed to the state's orthodox interpretation.[143] Vasiliev highlights the state's intolerance towards Nestorianism, whose persecution led many Nestorians to migrate to Persia, where they established an independent Church.[144] This example reveals both the state's violent measures against 'different' Christians and the heresies' role in constructing identity, as Nestorians chose to live in Persia to practice their interpretation of Christianity freely.

The Fourth Ecumenical Council[145] led to a geographical alienation of the populations in the Eastern provinces, such as Syria, where Monophysitism had a significant following. The Arab conquest of Eastern provinces has been understood as a potential outcome of the alienation of the local communities from the Catholic central government.[146] Similarly, the Persian conquest of Syrian and Palestinian provinces could be attributed to the local population's opposition to Orthodox doctrine and the prevalence of Monophysitism.[147] Intriguingly, despite the central government's oppressive policies

---

[142] Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, 56.

[143] Heuser, *Evolution of Strategy*, 52.

[144] Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, 99.

[145] The Fourth Ecumenical Council, also known as the Council of Chalcedon, was held in 451 CE. It addressed the Christological controversy over the nature of Christ, affirming that he is both fully divine and fully human in one person

[146] Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, 99.

[147] Ibid.

towards Monophysitians, Emperor Justin's foreign policy supported the Monophysite Abyssinian king against the Persians, emphasising the dominant norms of protecting Christians.[148]

Another interesting example of religious divisions comes from the sixth century campaigns against the Persians. John of Ephesus documented that the Byzantine forces held the belief that their conflicts with the Persians had concluded following the successful recovery of the territories previously seized by the Persians. Consequently, the army adopted a relaxed stance, laying down their equipment and releasing their horses. However, an unexpected Persian offensive expedition reignited hostilities, catching the Byzantine forces off guard and causing them to flee in a state of terror due to their lack of preparedness. The underlying cause for this humiliating defeat can be traced to the ill-treatment of Christian populations residing in the territories the Byzantine forces were meant to liberate. Despite the warm reception of the East Roman army by the local Christians, who greeted them with religious symbols (crosses and gospels) as tokens of gratitude, the soldiers perpetrated grievous atrocities against civilians, including men, women, children, nuns, and monks.[149] Although John of Ephesus does not provide explicit reasons for these actions, but attributes it to greed—the pursuit of gold and This account sheds light on several key points. Firstly, the successful Byzantine conquest of Persian-occupied territories signaled the conclusion of the conflict from their perspective. The soldiers' attitude suggests that the campaign had a well-defined objective, and they were not anticipating further military expeditions. Secondly, the episode involving atrocities against Christians may be connected to prevailing anti-heretical sentiments directed at Monophysites. It is worth noting that John of Ephesus himself faced persecution for such beliefs.

Yiannis Stouraitis examines how identity discourse influenced the Byzantine understanding of civil war from the seventh to the fifteenth centuries. He argues that the Byzantine conceptualisation of internal armed conflict was deeply rooted in the Roman imperial legacy, focusing on the hierarchical and centralised nature of the Roman political community. Stouraitis accurately explains that this community's boundaries were defined by the reach of enforceable imperial authority rather than by ethnic lines.[150] Moreover, the Byzantine term for civil war, '*emphylios polemos*' etymologically implies common ethnic descent. However, in Byzantine usage, it referred to conflicts within a

---

[148] Ibid.

[149] John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 401

[150] Stouraitis, 'Collective Identifications in Byzantine Civil Wars', 100.

supra-ethnic imperial community. Civil wars were seen as struggles for usurpation within a community of imperial subjects and hence the reflection of the Roman tradition of centralised imperial rule. Political Romanness was defined by ideological allegiance to the Christian Roman emperor of Constantinople, rather than shared ethnic heritage. Civil war aimed to maintain or change the centralised rule, reaffirming the political order centered in Constantinople.

When Michael I Rangabes (811–813) was compelled to abdicate in favour of Leo V (813–820), Theophanes described the events, using a similar term: 'the *strategoi* and the army... implored Leo…to aid the common cause and defend the state of Christians' (Οἱ δὲ στρατηγοὶ καὶ τὰ πλήθη... ἐδυσώπουν Λέοντα…βοηθῆσαι τῷ κοινῷ καὶ τῆς τῶν Χριστιανῶν πολιτείας ἀνθέξασθαι).[151] The state of Christians reveals a crucial element behind the way East Romans perceived themselves. They were the representation of the cosmos in a world of inevitable 'otherness'. Their survival became a priority not because of systemic factors but because of the development of specific identity constructions. Being the state of Christians implied uniqueness, a strong communitarian perception despite the sophisticated interpolity interactive patterns of the Empire.

Shared Christian faith was crucial in creating a common cultural background for Byzantine civil wars.[152] This faith facilitated the use of metaphoric kinship language, uniting diverse ethnic groups under a common identity.[153] In the High Middle Ages, a dominant Roman ethno-cultural category emerged, consisting of native Greek-speaking Chalcedonian Christians. The events of 1204 (IV Crusade) further consolidated this identity. Despite this, the concept of civil war remained confined to the imperial state's boundaries, not extending to the broader Roman ethno-cultural community.

The Great Schism of 1054, profoundly changed how Byzantines viewed Western Christians. In 1176, Patriarch Michael III of Anchialus declared that 'it is not possible to have communication with heretics'[154], referring to the Pope himself. This highlights how the existing anti-heretical mentality reframed the Latin West as a religious 'other', solidifying the division not just in doctrine but in identity. This highlights how the

---

[151] Theofanis, *Chronografia*, 502.12–16.

[152] Stouraitis, 'Reinventing Roman Ethnicity', 75–76.

[153] Haldon, *The Empire That Would Not Die*, 72–119.

[154] Paul-James Dwyer, 'Schism: A History of the Latin Roman and Eastern Orthodox Churches', *Catholic Insight* 22, no. 5 (2014): 25.

existing anti-heretical mentality reframed the Latin West as a religious 'other', solidifying the division not merely in terms of doctrine but also in identity.

In earlier centuries, the Byzantines had viewed the West as part of a united Christian *oikoumene*.[155], However, over time, the bond with West changed (for some scholars that was an inevitable outcome) due to four Norman attacks (1081–1085, 1107–1108, 1147–1149, 1185), the rise of Italian merchants in the Empire from 1082, and encounters with the armies of the first three Crusades.[156]

When the Turks occupied Armenia, the Byzantine emperor led a failed counterattack in 1071 at the Battle of Manzikert. Subsequently, Christian cities fell to the Turks, and Byzantine efforts to reclaim them proved futile. After these failed attempts by the Byzantine emperor to resist, he sought help from the Catholic West in the early 1090s.[157] Here we observe a reluctant attitude to ask for help; indicator of the communitarian norms and the identity of a Byzantine state who holds the right of being responsible for applying its Just war ideas in its foreign policy. Only after significant failures, the Emperor asked for Western support.

Interestingly, Athina Kolia-Dermitzaki observed a crucial element of the Byzantine discourse on the Western Crusades, an element that enhances our analysis on the unique identity constructions that do not stop in the interaction between the East and the West but reflect the Just war ideas of the Byzantines *vis a vis* the Western universal spread of Christianity:

> 'Byzantine historical sources exhibit a notable lack of enthusiasm, even indifference, toward the crusades, and they do not characterize it as a divine task. Byzantine terminology for the milites Christi entioned by Latin chroniclers lacks religious connotations, instead using ethnological or purely military terms like 'Alemannians,' 'Celts,' 'Franks,' 'Western powers,' 'Western regiments,' and 'Latins'. Similarly, the Crusade itself is described without any connection to a sacred objective; terms like 'via Dei' and 'iter hierosolymitanum' are replaced with terms like 'assault, 'movement', 'massive movement,' 'nations' invasion', and 'march to Palestine'. These terms often imply aggression and suggest Byzantine suspicion or belief that the movement was directed against them. This

[155] Chrissis, Kolia-Dermitzaki, and Papageorgiou, *Byzantium and the West*, 62–63. Chrysos, 'Roman Political Identity', 7-16.

[156] Chrissis, Kolia-Dermitzaki, and Papageorgiou, *Byzantium and the West*, 63.

[157] Peter Frankopan, *The First Crusade: The Call from the East* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2012).

> impression was reinforced by Byzantine experiences during the First Crusade and its consequences for relations between the Eastern and Western Christian realms.'

This work from Kolia-Dermitzaki reveals how the Byzantines sense of alienation from the Western Crusaders stemmed not only from material concerns such as military insecurity and economic competition but also from differing perceptions of themselves and their place in the world. Their descriptions of the Crusaders and their interpretation of specific military campaigns with ideological underpinnings reveal this underlying tension. There are cases where Byzantine sources praise the Crusaders ideology and their decision to fight in the name of god; Athina Kolia-Dermitzaki[158] explained that the Byzantines did not condemn the idea of crusading; instead, they expressed suspicion regarding the true intentions of the crusaders towards the Empire, which is evident in Anna Komnene's skepticism towards the crusaders' motives, suggesting that their primary goal was to seize Byzantine territory rather reclaiming holy sites in Palestine[159]; still, the confusion of the state when interacting with them and the lack of a holistic joint operational design mirrors a clear normative dichotomy.

Examining our sources provides insight into how the Byzantine authority shouldered the responsibility of reclaiming, protecting, liberating, and establishing a state consonant with Christian principles. Despite meeting the criteria of a Just war, which echoed Crusade ideology, notably the reconquest of former Christian territories, the Byzantine tradition upheld an ideology reflecting a communitarian understanding of the responsible authority necessary to fulfill these criteria. This concept remains under-researched and under-theorised in relevant literature, demanding attention due to its intrinsic significance within genealogical methodologies. Delving into the genesis of identities and the establishment of normative foundations necessitates a careful examination of how contemporary sources perceive the role of the 'self' in relation to others, even when those others are also Christians with objectives aligned with the perceptions of Just war held by the 'self'. The Byzantine ideology surrounding war and peace was deeply rooted in their sense of duty to uphold Christian principles and protect Christians, while also seeing themselves as civilising forces and imitators of God's governance. This ideology was reflected in their political theory, which emphasised reason, love of mankind, and devoutness as attributes of imperial power;[160] not as pan-Christian responsibilities.

---

[158] Chrissis, Kolia-Dermitzaki, and Papageorgiou, *Byzantium and the West*, 71.

[159] Anna Komnene*, Alexiad*, 10, 5, 10.

[160] On the importance of Byzantine ideology and imperial power see: Stouraitis, 'Trapped in the Imperial Narrative?', 1–10; On the ideological/theological influence of the Byzantine Just war tradition, see Chrysostomides, 'Byzantine concepts of war and peace',

Patriarch Michael Autoreianos sanctified expeditions aimed at reclaiming Constantinople, after its fall to the Crusaders in 1204, by offering remission of sins. The significance of this gesture lies in the fact that it extended to wars waged between Christians themselves, reflecting the deepening religious divisions between East and West. Their sacred mission to reclaim Constantinople became a justifiable reason to wage war against other Christians.[161] This identity-based dichotomy intensified in the later Byzantine centuries, particularly during the Palaeologan period, when many Byzantines came to view the Latins not only as religious outsiders but as more dangerous than even non-Christians. Unlike heathens, who had yet to receive the true faith, heretics were seen as having knowingly distorted it—placing the Latins in an even more threatening category. Although not universally held across all strata of Byzantine society, this perception was widespread enough to influence foreign policy, ecclesiastical relations, and public discourse. During the early fifteen century, the Byzantine statesman Duke Notaras declared the famous 'κρειττότερόν ἐστιν εἰδέναι ἐν μέσῃ τῇ πόλει φακιόλιον βασιλεῦον Τούρκων ἢ καλύπτραν λατινικήν' [162] (it is better to see the Turkish handkerchief reigning in our city than the pope's tiara).The Palaeologan Renaissance, with its revival of classical Greek learning and cultural introspection, further contributed to this shift, as many Byzantines began to identify more with a Hellenic cultural heritage than with the older Roman legacy. Combined with the trauma of the Great Schism and the memory of Latin aggression—most notably the sack of Constantinople in 1204—this led to a deep-rooted sense of alienation, whereby Latin Christians were no longer viewed as estranged brothers but as spiritual adversaries.

4.4.4 'Otherness' and the Seed of Interdependence

Vasiliev described how a pagan historian explained that peace was tied to the extermination of the Goths, stating that 'peace was established in Thrace for the barbarians who had been there had perished'.[163] This idea echoes the Greco-Roman view of barbarians as inferior and incapable of upholding Just and enduring peace due to their perceived lack of political structures. However, Byzantine diplomacy exhibited a more intricate understanding of peace treaties. On numerous occasions, the direct consequences of such agreements included accepting humiliating terms, such as paying substantial

---

[161] Kyriakidis, *Warfare in Late Byzantium, 1204-1453*. Vol. 67 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 16.

[162] Apostolos Vakalopoulos, *Νέα Ελληνική Ιστορία, 1204–1985* (Modern Greek History, 1204–1985) (Athens: Vanias, 1979).

[163] Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, 87.

annual tributes to their foes. This approach was a means of averting conflict and redirecting focus to different terrains.[164] A striking example of this approach was the Byzantine handling of the Hun threat, where the state chose to generously compensate them before establishing diplomatic channels.[165]

A striking example is the Byzantine response to the Hun threat, where the Empire chose to offer generous compensation before pursuing diplomatic channels. Avoiding war thus became embedded in the state's strategic culture. Interestingly, Vasiliev wrote that the 'Endless Peace' in 532 between the Byzantines and the Persians was described as 'humiliating',[166] reflecting how the Byzantines perceived such diplomatic interactions. Similarly, Theophanes the Confessor described the annual tribute of the state to the Bulgarian Khanate as a 'great disgrace of the Roman name'.[167] Despite these perceptions, the recurring use of diplomacy underlines a foreign policy grounded not in pride, but in strategic realism. The Byzantines did not believe that annihilation of the 'other' was a prerequisite for peace.[168] Reality shapes ideas, but ideas also frame how reality is navigated. The Byzantine reluctance to sanctify warfare, combined with the deeply rooted normative emphasis on defence, and the absence of cosmopolitan military ventures or expansionist foreign policy ambitions, formed crucial enabling conditions for the development of these specific ideological foundations.

In Syrianos Magistros 6th century CE work, *De Re Strategica*, the author noted that:

> 'Strategy teaches us how to defend what is our own and to threaten what belongs to the enemy. The defensive is the means by which one acts to guard his own people and their property, the offensive is the means by which one retaliates against his opponents'[169]

---

[164] Maurice, *Strategikon*, 84.

[165] Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, 98.

[166] Ibid. 135.

[167] Theophanes, *Chronographia*, cited in George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 127.

[168] Heuser, *The Evolution of Strategy*, 44.

[169] *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, trans. George T. Dennis (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1985), 21.

The concept of an offensive strategy is rooted in retaliation rather than conquest. The decision to engage in offensive action is made in response to an initial threat posed by the enemy. Avoiding war did not mirror lack of preparation for different operational needs. Eusebius of Caesarea portrayed Emperor Constantine I's conflicts with Persia as endeavours to defend Christians under Persian rule.[170]

Furthermore, numerous symbolic justifications surrounded Heraclius' offensive expedition. The Persian king was described as the enemy of God, while the aim to recover the True Cross and carry it back to Jerusalem legitimised the campaign's purpose. Considering the Persian King Khusru's aim to restore the kingdom of Cyrus and Xerxes, we can understand that the offensive expedition of Heraclius also had defensive logic.[171] Without the religious motives (suppression of Christians, the humiliating capturing of the True Cross and other church treasures) the Emperor could have possibly tried to strengthen the state's defence structures or seek potential allies, instead of marching against Khusru, simply for lacking the criteria to justify his offensive campaign.

During the Bulgar-Byzantine conflicts of the tenth century, Emperor Romanus (914-944) confronted the dual Bulgar-Arab threat that arose after the Bulgar Czar Symeon attempted to forge an alliance to besiege the capital. Romanus countered by offering gifts and financial tributes to deter Arab support for Symeon.[172] Such diplomatic practices highlight the notion that war should be the last resort, not only in an ethical but also in a strategic sense. War was a necessary last resort but exterminating the 'other' was not seen as a route to peace. Exceptions, such as Emperor Romanos III's era (1028-1034), where the Emperor launched offensive campaigns to increase his status and glory, only seem to verify the rule.[173]

As mentioned earlier, Byzantine ideas diverged from their Roman predecessors in that they believed in the possibility of a peaceful interstate society, negating the need for territorial expansion to impose peace.

---

[170] Stouraitis, 'State War Ethic', 66.

[171] Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, 21.

[172] Carey, *Road to Manzikert*.

[173] Michael Psellos, *Χρονογραφία* (*Chronographia*) 7.132–43.

> ‘For we have always welcomed peace, both for our subjects and for the barbarians, through Christ, God and ruler of all, if the foreigners enclosed within their own bounds are content, professing no injustice, while you yourself (the general) withhold your hand from them, sprinkling the earth neither with foreign nor with our own blood… … But if the foe is not sensible, and himself commences the injustice, then indeed there is a just cause present— an unjust war having been begun by the enemy— to undertake war against them with good courage and with eagerness, since they furnish the causes, raising unjust hands against our subjects. So, take courage, for you have the God of righteousness as a help, and taking up the fight on behalf of your brethren you will achieve complete victory.’[174]

This passage reveals a crucial insight into the dominant Byzantine ideas. Just war was based on a *status quo* understanding of interstate relations. Peace was the absolute aim of interaction, and if the ‘other’ conducted no unjust and aggressive actions, violence was unnecessary and unjustified. The pagan Roman tradition established criteria for declaring a Just war, linking the decision to wage it with a divine justification. Nevertheless, the ‘other’ was often considered uncivilised to the extent that communication was impossible and thus offensive operations were justified as the only way to protect the ‘self’. The Byzantines believed that territorial expansion was unnecessary, acknowledging that different political entities would inevitably coexist. This perspective led to the development of a sophisticated foreign policy and the establishment of embassies in external territories—a significant step toward a less Hobbesian interstate interaction.[175]

In the year 917, Leo the Wise launched an offensive campaign against the Bulgars, a formidable adversary at the time. Before commencing operations, he took a strategic step by forging an alliance with the Pechenegs. The Byzantine Empire had a history of successfully employing such alliances, as evidenced by the Pechenegs’ previous involvement in conflicts against the Rus and Magyars on behalf of the Byzantines.[176] Leo, as part of this diplomatic acumen, conferred upon an Armenian prince the prestigious rank of *magistros*. This gesture aimed to secure the prince’s loyalty and attract other regional leaders to engage in peaceful interactions based on such rewards.[177]

---

[174] Nicholas I Mystikos, *Letters*. 70f.

[175] Chrysostomides, ‘Byzantine concepts of war and peace’, 100.

[176] Carey, *Road to Manzikert*.

[177] Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *De Administrando Imperio*, trans. R.J.H. Jenkins (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1967), 43.61–87.

Despite the state's inherent suspicion and the understanding that circumstances could lead to adversarial behavior, protecting fellow Christians remained a significant aspect of maintaining open channels of communication. Any violations against Christians prompted aggressive responses from the state. Although true interdependence might not have existed, the evolution of a multilateral foreign policy marked a significant development in political thinking for the future.

Basil II acknowledged the significance, as well as the potential hazards, associated with maintaining significant standing armies at the borders. He understood that buffer states offered a solution to these challenges, safeguarding the Empire and conserving valuable resources.[178] This recognition illustrates the Byzantine commitment to interdependent security, where alliances and diplomatic arrangements played a crucial role in maintaining stability. His concern about heavily militarised borders and the potential risks that can arise from this show that Byzantine thought aimed at avoiding provocations at the specific historical period. Isaac I Komnenos (1057-1059) also grasped the financial burden of sustaining constant warfare and maintaining large standing forces. In response, he favoured relying on vassals and the troops of neighbouring rulers rather than maintaining a massive standing army.[179] This approach aligns with the Byzantine understanding of the importance of balancing military expenditures and seeking support from external sources to alleviate the strain on the Empire's resources. It reveals the pragmatic nature of Byzantine military policy while highlighting the importance of diplomacy and cooperation in the pursuit of security and stability – which led to a steady normative development where 'others' could develop identities of partners, allies, rivals, and enemies.

Still, the construction of the 'self' identity was closely intertwined with the necessity for repeated defensive operations against aggressive enemies. This dialectic relationship between the 'self' and 'other' conserved the Roman conceptualisation of a hostile and aggressive outside world. However, Byzantine strategic culture recognised the value of pursuing peace as well. In contrast to the Roman approach, which often involved leaving garrisons or puppet regimes in conquered territories, Byzantine defensive doctrine prioritised diplomatic engagement with external powers to meet foreign policy objectives and maintain the prevailing *status quo*. One of the most intricate aspects of East Roman strategic culture was its adept use of diplomacy to persuade foreign entities to either promote the desired peace or engage in conflict against the Empire's adversaries.[180]

---

[178] Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, 91.

[179] Ibid.

[180] Luttwak, *The grand strategy of the Byzantine Empire*, 11.

The importance of diplomacy is further highlighted by the Byzantine perception of envoys and the significance of negotiation process.

> 'The envoys we send out should be men who have the reputation of being religious and who have never been denounced for any crime or publicly condemned. They should be naturally intelligent and public-spirited enough to be willing to risk their own lives . . . and they should undertake their mission eagerly and not under compulsion. A specific attitude is recommended: Envoys should appear gracious, truly noble, and generous to the extent of their powers. They should speak with respect for both their own country and that of the enemy and never speak disparagingly of it.'[181]

Speaking with respect reveals that both sides reveal a culture of communication. The specific norms were part of the early Byzantine thinking. A notable example is the 561-562 peace treaty negotiations between the Byzantines and the Persians, which were conducted in a very advanced diplomatic setting. The text was written in Persian and Greek and then translated to validate that both sides had the same understanding of the context. Byzantine-Persian legal relations were founded on mutual equality and respect for each other's sovereignty. Both the emperor and the Great King acknowledged each other's authority as heads of state, even after victorious conflicts.[182] The East Romans' avoidance of the title 'shahanshah' (the official Persian monarch's title 'king of kings') did not reflect reluctance to recognise his sovereignty. Instead, they used a simpler title shared by many other subordinate kings in Persia, which implies rejection of the exclusive imperialistic ideology associated with the full title[183] – but also held in identity-related significance based on the Byzantine ideology of perceiving the 'self' as the incarnation of the Christian *cosmos)*.

Mistreating envoys and ambassadors was a sign of barbarism – 'others' who mistreated foreign policy officials were harshly criticised, e.g. Bulgarian Czar Symeon.[184] Duroselle supported that the responsible authorities that design foreign policy should consider

---

[181] *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, 125–127.

[182] Stephan Verosta, 'International Law in Europe and Western Asia Between 100 and 650 A.D.', *Recueil des cours, Académie de droit international* 113, no. 3 (1964): 52.Evangelos Chrysos, 'Some Aspects of Roman-Persian Legal Relations', *Kleronomia* 8 (1976): 10–56;Chrysos, 'The Title Βασιλεὺς', 35.

[183] Chrysos, 'The Title Βασιλεὺς', 35.

[184] Nicholas I Mystikos, *Letters*, 28, 192, 32–6.

collective mentalities – not only their domestic one but also those of their allies and enemies.[185] Byzantine strategic culture appeared to align with this perspective, as careful observation of the enemy encompassed not only military aspects but also cultural characteristics. Leo's '*Taktica'* reveals a spherical understanding of the actors that interacted with the state – not only the adversaries but also the Western entities, which, at the time, posed no apparent threat. Yet, for Leo, their observation was deemed crucial. [186]

During the turbulent late Byzantine era, diplomacy remained the principal instrument of foreign policy. However, when confronted with Turcoman principalities lacking organised diplomatic structures, Byzantines considered diplomatic efforts futile.[187] This attitude was not due to religious differences but to the political chasm that blocked meaningful negotiations. The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Nicholas Mystikos, wrote a letter to the Emir of Crete, honouring the friendship between his predecessor and the Emir's father, and expressed a very interesting view of how he perceived the religious barriers:

> 'Although the barriers of religion stood between us, yet a strong intelligence, wit and character, a love of humanity, and all other qualities which adorn and dignify man's nature, arouse in the breast of good men an affection for those to whom the loved qualities are found. And so he loved your father, who was endowed with the qualities I speak of, even though the difference of religious faith stood between them.' [188]

This passage presents how the joint respect between religious officials proves that 'otherness' lost its Hobbesian identity. Interacting with the 'other' and communicating with the 'other' enabled Byzantine diplomacy to construct a strategic culture that resembles a society of mutually recognised units and not an arena of enemies.

The rise of foreign mercenaries in the 11th century further illustrates Byzantine adaptability and strategic interdependence. As the thematic armies declined, the Empire increasingly incorporated Western knights and ethnic groups such as the Paulicians and Turks from Macedonia into its military forces. While Alexios I Komnenos ensured these

---

[185] Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, 'Opinion, Attitude, Mentalité, Mythe, Idéologie: Essai de Clarification', *Relations internationales* 15 (1974): 18–20.

[186] Leo, *Taktika*, 463-467.

[187] Kostis Smyrlis, 'Contextualizing Theodore Metochites and His Refoundation of the Chora', *Revue des études byzantines* 80 (2022): 69–111.

[188] Nicholas Mystikos*, Letters*, 2, 14, 21–7.

units remained under Byzantine command to maintain oversight,[189] the growing presence of Western military elements marked a subtle transformation in the normative identity of the armed forces.

This calculated reliance on foreign troops—tempered by domestic control—reveals a pragmatic flexibility and a clear-eyed realism in late Byzantine military policy. The West, once seen primarily as a rival or threat, gradually assumed the role of a partial security guarantor, reflecting the multi-layered diplomacy and strategic diversity characteristic of late Byzantine foreign policy.

Crucially, this development also exposes a dialectic that resonates deeply within Modern Greek political thought: the simultaneous reliance on the West—and even the aspiration to belong to it—set against a persistent undercurrent of distrust and scepticism regarding Western motives and foreign policy aims. This tension, already present in Byzantine interactions with the Latins, became a defining element of the Greek strategic mentality, continuing into the modern era as a core aspect of the state's geopolitical identity.

4.5 The Responsibility to Wage War: Who Fights and Who Decides?

Notably, while the church played a significant role in mobilising Byzantine armies, especially given the normative aspects of Just wars, the ultimate authority to declare wars was institutionalised within the office of the Emperor.[190] Considering the ideology behind the political structure of the state, we can understand the importance of the imperial office in military affairs, i.e. the Empire was organised with a hierarchical structure of administrative layers, with the emperor occupying the highest position, seen as the representative of God.[191] We have observed the church's significance in funding and inspiring campaigns, along with soldiers bearing ‘religious symbols’[192] during expeditions, yet the responsibility for the decision rested squarely with the Emperor. This represents a clear adherence to the Just war criterion, emphasising the formal declaration of war while establishing the political authority as the ultimate decision-maker.

---

[189] Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, 92-93.

[190] Deno J. Geanakoplos, ‘Church and State in the Byzantine Empire: A Reconsideration of the Problem of Caesaropapism’, *Church History* 34, no. 4 (1965): 381–403.

[191] Haldon, *Byzantium at War*, 23.

[192] Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, 29.

Authors of the sixth century consistently portrayed soldiers' uprisings in an unfavourable and hostile light.[193] In this context, it becomes evident that the exclusive authority to employ force rested with the Emperor. The discouragement or suppression of army initiatives or protests served to enhance the Emperor's role in determining the use of force, establishing a normative framework that confined soldiers' actions within the boundaries of legitimacy as dictated by the Emperor's decisions.

During the era when the thematic organisation structured the imperial provinces, *strategoi* (generals) held not only the highest military command at the borders but also occupied the apex of political and administrative authority within their respective *thema*, second only to the Emperor himself.[194] Leo the Wise advised that the selection of military officers should weigh not only their merits but also their unwavering loyalty to the Empire.[195] The responsibility to engage in warfare was intrinsically tied to the preservation of the state's purpose, and thus, mere military prowess could not coexist with the doctrine of Just war and the values underpinning legitimate warfare.

The Byzantines considered the role of military commanders as crucial for the functionality of their armed forces. As stated by Maurice, it is preferable to have an army led by a valiant leader, even if the troops themselves are less formidable.[196] However, the position of the leader came with great responsibility and strict criteria regarding his character. Maurice articulated with precision that a general who indulged in luxury could potentially devastate the entire army.[197] Byzantine Just war thinking could not accommodate ambitious individuals driven by personal greed as such attributes had previously defined ill-advised military campaigns in pagan Rome.[198]

---

[193] Kaegi, *Byzantine Military Unrest*, 44.

[194] John Haldon, 'Military Service, Military Lands, and the Status of Soldiers: Current Problems and Interpretations', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47 (1993): 1–87.

[195] Leo, *Taktika*, 47.

[196] Maurice, *Strategikon,* 89.

[197] Ibid. 88.

[198] Diodoros Siculus, *The Library of History* 22.2, trans. C.H. Oldfather, *Loeb Classical Library*, 12 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933–1967).

Leo's insights about war – both regarding the main characteristics of 'others' but also about the importance of the responsibilities of leadership – came (also) from his father's accounts (Basil I, 867–86); The general's role was to inspire loyalty and sacrifice by sharing hardships with his soldiers – behaviour that was exemplified by Basil I during a campaign in Syria around 873, standing in the river at night, guiding his men across and rescuing those in danger. [199] Such evidence shows that the Byzantine emphasis on strategy was closely tied to the state's concern for the safety of its human resources when operating against enemies.[200]

Leo argued that the war against the Saracens was a war of the Christian faith against blasphemy.[201] Despite the emphasis on the religious differences of the opposing sides and the detailed descriptions of the barbarian inferiority, Leo advocated for the participation of ordinary people in the war effort.[202] This suggestion reveals that engaging in warfare was a matter not limited to the army alone but extended to every ordinary person when the situation warranted widespread participation. A conflict framed as a struggle between authentic faith and blasphemy concerned not just the military but the collective conscience of ordinary individuals. The Byzantine strategic culture was not an exclusive construct reserved for the elite but rather a set of values that encompassed society at large.

Highlighting the significance of the obligation to initiate warfare and the Emperor's role, it's essential to emphasise that during the imminent threat of a large-scale invasion, the responsibility to lead armies to the frontlines rested with the Emperor or the top commanders, rather than the local commanders. While local commanders could exercise initiative in dealing with raiders or smaller enemy groups, facing massive invading armies necessitated direct involvement from the highest authorities. For instance, historical instances include Basil II's march from Constantinople to Aleppo (995) and John I's (960-976) campaign against the Bulgars and Rus (970s), where they led alongside elite units.[203] Therefore, while strategic and security matters could be managed

---

[199] Chrysostomides, 'Byzantine concepts of war and peace', 94.

[200] Jean-Claude Cheynet and Eric McGeer, 'Sowing the Dragon's Teeth: Byzantine Warfare in the Tenth Century', *Revue des études byzantines* 55, no. 1 (1997): 332.

[201] Leo, *Taktika*, 447-489.

[202] Ibid.

[203] Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, 85-90.

at the local level, confronting major threats demanded the presence of official authorities, driven both by their expertise and normative considerations.

The fall of Constantinople after the Fourth Crusade served as a foundational pillar for the propaganda of the Laskarid emperors of Nicaea. The image of the Emperor had always been intertwined with military attributes. However, during this period, domestic and legal duties were completely overshadowed by the ideal of being a formidable warrior, which was not a norm in the former centuries.[204] Indeed, apart from a few exceptions, i.e., Heraclius and Nikephoros II Phocas (963-969), no emperor was solely seen as a warrior. While some scholars have correctly supported that the militarisation of the Emperor's identity intensified during the eleventh century,[205] it is essential to acknowledge that previous emperors also had a role closely linked to the military. As Haldon has described, during 812/13 soldiers cried out at the tomb of Emperor Constantine V (741– 75) for his return to lead them to victory, expressing dissatisfaction with the reigning of Emperors who had allowed the Empire to be humiliated by the Bulgars and the Arabs.[206] Moreover, Vasiliev noted that according to Justinian, the Emperor's role encompassed being the singular protector of the law and the triumphant conqueror of vanquished foes.[207] The domestic importance of the emperor-legislator should not exclude the Emperor from a military role. Describing pre-eleventh century emperors mainly as peacemakers overlooks the significance of their role in decision-making as a catalyst for the Empire's wars. Byzantine emperors led armies to war and the symbolic way they sealed imperial victory varied based on the scale and nature of the threat faced by the empire. Paul Stephenson wrote that the idea that the Byzantine emperor, much like the Old Testament figure of David, was seen as a divinely chosen priest-king whose right to rule was confirmed through military success.[208] While this is an interesting observation, we need to remember that the significance of victory was linked with the justification of the reason behind warfare - the *telos* was victory but this victory was based on a normative foundation that was supported and promoted by the imperial authority.

---

[204] Kyriakidis, *Warfare in Late Byzantium*,16.

[205] Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1118–1143* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 418–423.

[206] Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, 31.

[207] Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, 142.

[208] Paul Stephenson, 'The Imperial Theology of Victory' in Yiannis Stoyraitis (ed.) *A Companion to the Byzantine Culture of War, Ca. 300-1204* (Leiden, The Netherlands;Boston;, Brill, 2018), *23.*

Emperors, while utilising mercenaries and foreign auxiliaries, exercised caution when these individuals did not share the Christian faith.[209] Leo the Wise suggested that mercenaries of a different religion should not be entrusted with sensitive military information, as their religious affiliations could lead to treacherous acts.[210] Despite this cautious stance, which aligns with the normative importance the Byzantines placed on concepts like family, religion, and kinship, the state displayed a degree of openness to foreigners. While religious identity remained unquestionable regarding the occupation of high-ranking positions and superior offices, numerous foreign individuals and families managed to ascend the political hierarchy and even establish imperial dynasties.[211]

4.6 Beyond Good and Evil: The Byzantine Synthesis of Ethics

4.6.1 Ontological Innovations: War as a human construction

In 860, Patriarch Photios delivered two sermons vividly depicting an unexpected assault carried out by a sizable Rus' fleet. The outline of the consequences of this conflict describe war as evil, through the sorrow of orphaned children and widowed mothers, the ruin of crops, homes, and monastic establishments, and the enslavement or demise of communities.[212]

Agathias challenges the notion that war is beyond human influence, even though he underlines a complicated human nature.

> 'I am convinced, for my part, that our generation shall see no end to such ills, since, human nature being what it is, they are a permanent and ever increasing phenomenon and, indeed, one which is practically as old as man himself. History and literature, for example, are full of accounts of battles and fighting, almost to the exclusion of everything else. I do not, however, subscribe to the general view that such events are controlled by the movements of the heavenly bodies and by some blind impersonal fate. If the influence of fate were paramount in all things then there would be no place for free-will, we would be obliged to regard all

[209] Chrysostomides, 'Byzantine concepts of war and peace', 96.

[210] Leo, *Taktika*, 561.

[211] Chrysostomides, 'Byzantine concepts of war and peace', 96.

[212] Photios, Patriarch of Constantinople, *The Homilies of Photios, Patriarch of Constantinople*, trans. Cyril Mango, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 99.

> attempts at advice, instruction and methodical exposition as a complete waste of time and the hopes and aspirations of the virtuous would be extinguished and annihilated.'[213]

This perspective prompts a reflection on the construction of war as a human phenomenon. It underlines the idea that war is not an immutable force of nature but rather a product of human choices, decisions, and actions. By rejecting the deterministic view that war is preordained, Agathias acknowledges how societies and ideas influence the course of conflicts. In doing so, the author emphasises the role of free will that in a Byzantine context is tied to the Divine will.

During the reign of Heraclius, a significant event occurred when the Avars violated a peace treaty and launched an offensive against Constantinople. Joined by Persian forces that attacked Chalcedon, the Avars besieged the capital, but their efforts were ultimately thwarted. Simultaneously, adverse weather conditions led to the destruction of the Avar fleet. The salvation of the capital was attributed to the intervention of the Holy Mary, and in gratitude, the Byzantine people chanted the Akathist Hymn, which glorified her intercession.

> Τῇ ὑπερμάχῳ στρατηγῷ τὰ νικητήρια,
>
> ὡς λυτρωθεῖσα τῶν δεινῶν εὐχαριστήρια,
>
> ἀναγράφω σοι ἡ πόλις σου, Θεοτόκε·
>
> ἀλλ' ὡς ἔχουσα τὸ κράτος ἀπροσμάχητον,
>
> ἐκ παντοίων με κινδύνων ἐλευθέρωσον,
>
> ἵνα κράζω σοί·
>
> Χαῖρε Νύμφη ἀνύμφευτε.[214]

> To thee, the General (Champion) Leader,
>
> O Theotokos, we thy servants dedicate a feast of victory and thanksgiving
>
> as the ones (you) rescued from suffering;
>
> but as thou art one with invincible might,
>
> Deliver us from all possible dangers,

---

[213] Agathias, *Histories*, 1.2-3.

[214] Ἀκάθιστος Ὕμνος (Akathistos Hymnos), in Ἀκολουθία τοῦ Ἀκαθίστου Ὕμνου (Athens: Apostoliki Diakonia, 1997).

so that we may cry to thee

Rejoice, Unwedded Bride...

Interestingly, Holy Mary is portrayed as a *strategos* (general), as the chant ascribes the victory to her, the Champion who saved the city from a terrible fate. This portrayal revealed a 'militarisation' of a holy figure and underscored the Byzantine perspective that killing in self-defense was not a sin – or at least not the extent that won't be forgiven.

The notion that violent acts against other humans were manifestations of the devil's will underlines how Byzantine thought perceived war as a necessary evil, triggered by disruptions to the peaceful order.[215] Leo described the Turkic tribes as faithless, untrustworthy, and warlike, highlighting the undisciplined and deceitful way they waged wars and criticising them for fighting until the total annihilation of their adversaries.[216] Waging wars based on the Christian value of *philanthropia* constructed a self-perception of condemning warfare, considering it a necessary evil.

The period of *Eikonomachia* (the iconoclast controversy) revealed contradictions within the army and the influence of religion on Just war ideas. Soldiers believed that the humiliating defeats against the Bulgars and Arabs were linked to the policy of iconoclasm (the breaking of sacred images). As Haldon described, soldiers had painted images of saints on their military equipment and images were carried into expeditions. At the same time, priests followed the Byzantine forces in significant campaigns in order to boost the army's morale.[217] Maurice highlighted the importance of blessing the flags a day or two before expeditions.[218] The iconoclast emperors were seen as responsible for defeats, proving the significance of divine approval in justifying wars for the Byzantine collective mentality. Wars were seen as a necessary evil and thus, breaking the rule of ensuring God's approval was considered as an erosion of legitimacy.

---

[215] Chrysostomides, 'Byzantine concepts of war and peace', 91.

[216] Leo, *Taktika*, 455-461.

[217] Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, 29.

[218] Maurice, *Strategikon*, 60.

Even though the core belief on the ethical element of warfare was negative and numerous sources underline the wide acceptance of idealising peace over the misfortunes of war,[219] the frequency of hostile interaction with 'others' required a pragmatic interpretation on the use of force. Sources from 6th century BCE highlight the wide acceptance of peace but we also see the critique of officials against Emperors who did not fight 'others', during the same period. The 6th-century legal scholar John Lydus described Emperor Zeno the Isaurian as a coward who paid off enemies to avoid war (δειλὸς δὲ ἦν…καὶ τους πολέμους ἀπηργυρίζετο).[220] The reason for this paradox is simple: the fear of 'others' and the establishment of a defence-based foreign policy approach indicated careful observation of adversaries, as fragile peace (or as I like to call it 'frozen violence') could be a camouflaged threat in case the 'other' could grow stronger and challenge the 'self'. This is a repeated pattern in the Byzantine perceptions on the nature of warfare, as in future centuries the scale of threats defined the way they conceptualised war and peace – always trying to ensure that the use of force is the last resort and a lasting peace is associated with God's will[221] – an idea that did not only define their Just war mentality but also consolidated their identity and the superiority that characterised it.

The Byzantine concept of Just war aligns with Aristotle's idea of balancing extremes: war should be avoided when it stems from excessive aggression (conquest), but it is justified when it serves to defend the oppressed. In both frameworks, war is seen as acceptable only when it is the lesser evil, and when conducted in a balanced, virtuous manner. The intriguing element of this analysis lies in the social constructions that define extremes, and how the *middle ground* is identified. The perceived duty to reclaim and protect was considered a Just expression of a balanced foreign policy—consistent with both Aristotelian and Christian principles, and clearly distinct from the Roman 'offensive defence'.

This cultural element underpins the tradition of Just war: even when unprovoked, the 'self' was believed to hold the right to use force to reclaim and protect those considered part of its broader identity. This reflects a communitarian approach—not a universalised responsibility to protect—and illustrates how ideas shaped action and legitimacy. Such

---

[219] Menander Protector, fragment 6.1, in R.C. Blockley (ed. and trans.), *The History of Menander the Guardsman* (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1985), 56, ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἀγαθὸν εἰρήνη καὶ τοὐναντίον πονηρὸ ν ὁ πόλεμος οὐδεὶς ἀντερεῖ.

[220] John Lydus, *On Powers or the Magistracies of the Roman State* (*De magistratibus populi Romani*), ed. Anastasius C. Bandy (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1983), III.45.

[221] Tilemachos Lounghis, 'Alternative Means of Conflict Resolution', in Yiannis Stouraitis (ed), *A Companion to the Byzantine Culture of War, c.300–1204* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), 202.

norms enabled a refusal to accept a status quo that contradicted communitarian values, rendering peace fragile and closer to what I call *frozen violence*.

4.6.2 Non Combatants and Prisoners of War

Despite the strong ideological framework surrounding Just war in Byzantine thought, practical wartime conducts often diverged from normative ideals. Nonetheless, instances of less virtuous ideas can be traced in practice by exploring Byzantine sources. A tenth-century treatise on guerilla warfare dictated that in difficult situations, 'prisoners should either be killed or sent on ahead.[222] This pragmatic—if brutal—approach appears to contradict the broader principle of *philanthropia*, which called for mercy, especially towards those no longer posing a threat.

Leo VI's Taktika consistently emphasises the importance of moderation in victory, particularly concerning non-combatants and surrendered populations. He counsels generals to act with humility and *philanthropia, when negotiating terms of surrender* [223]: The non-combatant population should not be treated brutally but instead with mercy, while the besieged city's gates should be open to allow people to escape.[224] Leo noted that:

> 'when a city, fortress, or any stronghold is conquered, and the war concludes, do not be haughty due to your success, adversities, or those joining you. Stay calm, benevolent, philanthropic, and humble. Be philanthropic to captives and the distressed, as well as to those who may continue fighting or be besieged with you.'[225]

Maurice had a similar approach when it came to non-combatants, clarifying that 'when a city is taken, it is important to leave the gates open, so that the inhabitants may escape and not be driven to utter desperation'.[226] In '*Strategikon'*, he even suggests that 'When an enemy is surrounded, it is well to leave a gap in our lines to give them an opportunity

---

[222] *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, 184.

[223] Leo, *Taktika*, 355-365.

[224] Ibid. 547.

[225] Ibid. 107, 897.

[226] Maurice, *Strategikon*, 81.

to flee.'[227] After a city was conquered, the armed adversaries were killed, but those who threw their weapons down were spared. Allowing the defeated population to escape was seen as a strategic way to avoid the population's transformation into a hostile mass.[228] The avoidance of unnecessary violence, even when it comes to the enemy's critical human resources, e.g. spies, is apparent in another example from '*Strategikon'*, where Maurice advises that 'If an enemy spy is captured while observing our forces, then it may be well to release him unharmed if all our forces are strong and in good shape.'[229] The necessary criteria for not mistreating the spy were critical, but Maurice's claim shows the importance of resilience towards unnecessary killing. This reinforces the value of restraint even when dealing with non-traditional combatants, a nuance often overlooked in pre-modern warfare.

In terms of prisoners of war, the dominant principle was that of *philanthropia*—mercy, not retribution. This is evident in the case of Emperor Alexios I, who, despite strategic concerns, refused to execute a large group of captured prisoners, citing humanitarian reasons.[230]

One of the clearest examples of Byzantine restraint towards non-combatants appears in the conduct of General Belisarios during the Vandalic wars. He sent advance messengers to the countryside declaring that his army would punish only the Vandal leadership, not the general population.[231] This *distinction between political/military targets and civilians* is a hallmark of Byzantine Just war thinking, echoing the tradition of defensive legitimacy rather than indiscriminate conquest. Nevertheless, exceptions to this principle exist. After the death of the Ostrogothic King Totila, prisoners were massacred—a stark departure from *philanthropia* and a reminder that the application of restraint was not universal. Such episodes also demonstrate the tension between ideal and practice, especially in moments of emotional or political upheaval.[232]

---

[227] Ibid. 91.

[228] Chrysostomides, 'Byzantine concepts of war and peace', 97.

[229] Maurice*, Strategikon*, 85.

[230] Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, 245.

[231] Carey, *Road to Manzikert*, 15.

[232] Procopius, Δεὶ τοῦ Γοτθικοῦ πολέμου (De Bello Gothico / The Gothic Wars), trans. H.B. Dewing, The Project Gutenberg EBook, 2007)VIII.32.

Emperor Heraclius' statement that 'power must shine more in love than in terror'[233] reveals the outcome of the Roman and Christian synthesis. In virtuous authority, there was no room for terror, even though power needed to be projected when necessary. This restraint in killing revealed the practical result of a strategic approach rooted in Christian thinking and legitimised by the defence of faith.

4.7 Conclusion

War was not viewed as a path to glory but as a responsibility. It was understood as a necessary evil that could only be justified under strict criteria: defence, protection of fellow Christians, reconquest of lost territories, and the establishment of peace and stability. Interestingly, the offensive nature of reclaiming lost territories could be considered a precursor to the nineteenth–twentieth century Greek *Megali Idea*, as it combined the concept of irredentism with the belief in inherited rights over former territories of the 'self'. The supreme good of the East Roman community became synonymous with the protection of Christians (and later Orthodox Christians) under the authority of the Empire, illustrating how Aristotelian *eudaimonia* shaped strategic objectives,

The frequency of interactions with 'others' led to two significant normative outcomes. Firstly, it resulted in the normalisation and recognition of an international society in which 'otherness' did not exclusively bear Hobbesian characteristics, and therefore, there was no imperative to 'civilise' them. Secondly, the repeated exposure to conflict reinforced a survival-oriented norm, wherein the uniqueness of the 'self' granted the centralised authority a messianic role, charged with maintaining the earthly *cosmos* in opposition to the external world. Interestingly, this messianic role was bound to the geographic and ideological limits of the Byzantine state, rather than being extended to the salvation of external 'others'. This construct alienated the Byzantines from other Christians, and, given the conditions created by the Schism, the Fourth Crusade, and the material contradictions between East and West, a new identity emerged. This identity embraced a communitarian understanding of Just War.

It became the Byzantines' responsibility to preserve the Christian *cosmos*—not that of Western Christians. It was their responsibility to pursue a defensive foreign policy and to coexist with 'others', who were often sources of insecurity. It was the Byzantines' duty to keep Roman territories under the 'civilised' protection of the 'chosen state', in contrast to the Western role and influence. Finally, this identity was shaped by the Greek language,

---

[233] Immanuel Bekker (ed), *De Expeditione Persica*, *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* (Rome: National Central Library of Rome, impensis ed. Weberi, 1836), 91 (194).

the Orthodox religion, and a gradual reconnection with the Ancient Greek past, in an attempt to find renewed meaning in the declining ideology of the state.

These identity constructions and their interpretation as constructive forces shaping strategic culture and self-conception in relation to others represent a critical gap in existing scholarship. Although considerable and detailed work has been done to establish a historical understanding of Byzantium's relevance to international relations, this thesis offers a distinct perspective on the creation of a new 'self'—one whose norms, responsibilities, and Just War perceptions diverged from those of 'others'.

It was the Byzantines' duty to keep Roman territories under the 'civilised' protection of the 'chosen state', in contrast to the Western role and influence. Finally, this identity was shaped by the Greek language, the Orthodox religion, and a gradual reconnection with the Ancient Greek past, to find renewed meaning in the declining ideology of the state. This cultural reconstruction reached its height during the Palaeologan Renaissance, which played a pivotal role in the ideological shift by reviving classical Greek learning, arts, and philosophical inquiry. The movement did not merely reflect a nostalgic return to the Hellenic world but redefined the Byzantine self-perception, bridging Christian Orthodoxy with a more self-aware Hellenic heritage. As part of this chapter's analysis, the Palaeologan Renaissance is a vital moment in the reconstitution of identity, marking a significant step in the intellectual and normative separation from the Latin West and strengthening the internal coherence of the 'self'. Interestingly, when Byzantine norms of warfare are examined, one finds both an interdependent relationship with the West and a persistent suspicion regarding its long-term viability.

Chapter 5
The Greek War of Independence: The 'Virtuous Aggression' of *Klepthes*, the Naturalisation (?) of 'Friends and Foes', and the Legacy of the Byzantine Just War Foundations for Modern Greek Security Discourses

5.1 The Greek War of Independence: A Historical Overview

The Greek War of Independence was a series of military operations conducted by Greek and non-Greek Orthodox Christians belonging to the *Millet-I Rum* [1] against the Ottoman Empire from 1821 until the signing of the London Protocol in 1830. Ottoman control of Greece had begun before the fall of Constantinople (1453). Many areas in the southern region of the Balkan Peninsula were under the Sultan's rule several decades earlier.

During the period of Ottoman rule, local uprisings posed challenges to the state but lacked a united approach or claims for independence and were successfully suppressed. In contrast to the pre-19th century uprisings of the Orthodox populations, the specific war had clear aims that went beyond the local character of the past. These aims were expressed through ideas of self-determination and national emancipation.

The creation of the *Filiki Eteria* (*Φιλική Εταιρεία),* a secret organisation in the model of European illegal conspiratorial societies', in Odessa (1814) marked the beginning of the coming storm.[2] Many agents of the organisation belonged to the Greek merchant communities with contacts in European countries, creating a conduit for ideas and funds for the Greeks on the mainland.[3] Odessa was a centre of Greek mercantile communities

[1] The Millet system was an administrative separation of the Ottoman Empire's religious communities, e.g. the Millet-I Rum referred to the Christian Orthodox population of the empire. The term Rum mirrored the (East) Roman legacy of the Christian Orthodox populations in the Ottoman perceptions.

[2] Eleni Andriakaina, 'The Promise of the 1821 Revolution and the Suffering Body: Some Thoughts on Modernisation and Anti-intellectualism', *Synthesis: An Anglophone Journal of Comparative Literary Studies* 5 (2013): 50.

[3] Pantelis Lekas, 'The Greek War of Independence from the Perspective of Historical Sociology', *The Historical Review / La Revue Historique* 2 (2006): 171.

with access to wealth and connections in various countries.[4] The main objective of the *Filiki Eteria* was the organisation of the Greek- and non-Greek-speaking Orthodox populations of the Ottoman Empire for an armed uprising against their rulers.[5]

While the first steps of the revolts in the Danubian Principalities were successfully suppressed by the imperial armed forces (February 1821), operations in the Peloponnese (March 1821) resulted in impressive victories. More unsuccessful uprisings followed in other regions of the Millet-I Rum, e.g., Roumeli (Central Greece) and Macedonia. Despite their outcomes, these uprisings weakened the enemy forces and spread the ideas of independence in different areas. In the early 1820s, Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II attempted to reform the empire's domestic governance by centralising power. His reforms were aimed at countering the influence of Balkan officials and warlords who resisted the High Gate, including Ali Pasha. Ali Pascha's rebellion and the Greek independence movement occurred almost simultaneously. While attempting to confront both threats, Ottoman forces suffered significant defeats, notably losing Tripolitsa in 1821, which was the most strategic and administratively important centre in the Morea. Despite these victories, political differences between the Greek political and military elites escalated to two aggressive civil wars that risked the survival of the independence movement.

Weakened by consecutive civil wars, the Greeks faced the biggest challenge: The arrival of Ibrahim Pasha's forces in the Peloponnese. The Ottoman province of Egypt sent an expeditionary force to reclaim the lost territories of Millet-I Rum, and by the end of 1825, they had largely achieved this goal. A year later, Ibrahim's forces recaptured lost forts in Rumeli and Athens. The naval intervention of the three major powers of the time (Britain, France, and Russia) and the destruction of the Ottoman fleet in Navarino turned the tide once again. The 1830 London Protocol was followed by the official Treaty of Constantinople (1832), when the newly established Kingdom of Greece was recognised as an independent sovereign entity.[6]

The Ottoman Empire had a history of dealing with uprisings. Some scholars argue that the revolts of the empire's subjects served as precursors to the independence movement of 1821, while others see the pre-19th century struggles as attempts to acquire more local

---

[4] Yannis A. Stivachtis, "International Society" versus "World Society": Europe and the Greek War of Independence', *International Politics* 55, no. 1 (2018): 115.

[5] The first steps were military operations in the Peloponnese and the Danubian Principalities.

[6] Greece was recognised as a sovereign entity under the London Protocol in February 1830.

autonomous powers or tax privileges.[7] As we will discuss later, even though the War of Independence had no similar predecessors, claiming self-determination, national independence, the strategic culture of past uprisings and the collective experiences of the Orthodox populations of the Empire are crucial for understanding the dominant ideas and practices of the movement. The following sections will attempt to give a clear representation of the Just war thinking during the War of Independence that would lead to a new synthesis, which structured the foreign policy of the new-born Greek state for nearly a century.

5.1.1 Armatoloi, Klephtes…and Merchants!

The terms *armatolos* (*αρματολός*) and *klephtes* (*κλέφτης)* are of utmost importance for understanding the military core of the Greek independence movement. They served as the structural pillars of the movement in terms of military experience. In order to counter the threat of *klephtes* – highwaymen whose criminal activities often exhibited opposition to the Empire's authorities – the Ottomans established the armed corps of *armatoloi*.[8] Many of the first *armatoloi* were former *klephtes* who had been offered pardon for their smuggling activities or their actions against the state. However, the continuous shift in roles created a vague understanding of each group's loyalty.

Klephtes used to generate income through illegal activities, and many of them waited until they were financially stable enough to claim the lands and institutional positions held by *armatoloi*![9] Additionally, although in theory, *armatoloi* were agents of the state, they were deeply connected to the ways of *klephtes*, given that many of them had been former *klephtes* themselves. This led to cooperation with bandits on numerous occasions.[10] Nevertheless, it should be noted that the collective mentality of *klephtes* and armatoloi, as described in traditional songs from the Ottoman period, was profoundly

---

[7] Stathis Kalyvas, '*Modern Greece: What everyone needs to know*' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 53.

[8] John S. Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause: Brigandage and Irredentism in Modern Greece, 1821-1912* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

[9] Spyros Asdrachas, *Πρωτογόνη Επανάσταση:Αρματολοί και Κλέφτες (18ος–19ος Αιώνας)* , (Athens: EAP, 2019), 149-150.

[10] Ibid.

anti-Ottoman.[11] Consequently, their outlaw–military lifestyle gradually gave rise to a broader spirit of rebellion.

When Spyridon Trikoupis, the first Prime Minister of Greece, praised the military virtue of Theodoros Kolokotronis (General during the War of Independence), he highlighted his klephtic ancestry, referring to him as the 'descendant of those who never ceased fighting the Turks' (*απόγονος τουρκομάχων*).[12] Such statements not only reveal the presence of conflictive dynamics between the Ottomans and the Greeks in the collective experience of the pre-revolutionary era but also construct a narrative of a continuous and Just struggle that had been ongoing among the Greeks even before the events of 1821. By portraying Kolokotronis' ancestors as freedom fighters, Trikoupis legitimised the revolution as a continuation of an age-old and Just struggle. This cause becomes natural and deeply rooted in traditional values, which were initially unrelated to national independence. However, such constructions redefined these experiences. Subsequently, the identity of *klephtes* acquires its heroic echo,[13] with the smuggling activities of the past replaced by a culture of resistance.

It is true that *klepthes* and *armatoloi* had established a normative framework where violence was viewed as a virtue, and those who practiced it became symbols of heroism and justice, even before the years of the war.[14] Spyros Asdrachas explained that the collective mentality of communities, whose local rebellions aimed to oppose the *status quo* without necessarily linking these rebellions to the War of Independence, challenged the religious doctrine of accepting the Ottoman dominance until the Second Coming.[15] Practically, some groups would not tolerate oppression and would not passively accept their fate. Asdrachas explained the way of life of *klepthes* and *armatoloi* as a primitive

---

[11] Many examples of the information we can derive from these songs will be discussed in the following pages.

[12] Spyridon Trikoupis, *History of the Greek Revolution*, vol. D (Athens: Ora, 1888), ch. Ξ. Spyridon Trikoupis was the first prime-minister of Greece (1833) and a politician who had an active role in the years of the war, as a member of provisional governments and national assemblies. Theodoros Kolokotronis was an influential chieftain before the war and a General after 1821. In 1825, he was the commander in chief of the Hellenic forces in the region of Moreas (Peloponnese).

[13] Still today, where the term *klepthes* is mostly used to described common thieves, the reference to the *klepthes* of 1821 reflect heroism in the Greek collective memory.

[14] Asdrachas, *Πρωτογόνη Επανάσταση*, 149-150.

[15] Thanos Aggelidis, *1821 και Απομνημονεύματα* (Athens: Institution of the Hellenic Parliament, 2020), 48; Nikos Theotokas, cited in Spyros I. Asdrachas, *Πρωτογόνη Επανάσταση*, 26.

revolution that aligned with the ideas of 1821 and synthesised the objective of national self-determination, by already having deconstructed the *status quo* in the mindset of local communities.[16]

Nikolaos Kasomoulis, a participant in the War of Independence who later published a collection of memoirs,argues that the activities of outlaws who defied Ottoman rule reflected a gradual move toward a larger-scale war. At the same time, he highlights that the national character of the movement was fostered by the Greeks of *diaspora*. He even suggests that, despite the crucial contribution of the clergy, the lever of the war was literate men and merchants: 'The order of the exiled intellectuals and merchants... provoked the *Armatoloi* into the bloodshed' (*η τάξις των ξενιτευμένων λογιοτάτων και εμπόρων... έμβασεν και τους Αρματωλούς εις τα αίματα*).[17]

Although the contribution of the bandits, who were well-versed in the art of war during the Ottoman era, is undeniable—especially in terms of shaping a norm that legitimises revolutionary violence—Kasomoulis' account reveals the significance of our core theoretical and methodological principle that ideas, among other factors, give purpose to action.[18] Examining collective acts of violence from this perspective, we can argue that, in the Greek case, the art of war, mastered by *klepthes* and *armatoloi*, took the meaning that ideas ascribed to it. Ideas gave very specific meaning to past action, even if the actual meaning of the former uprisings had nothing to do with national self-determination. These ideas constructed a Just aim for the independence movement and redefined the meaning of collective action. Finally, we return to a central methodological tenet of this study: social constructions flourish in fertile ground. Without a pre-existing environment of collective experience and shared mentalities, it would have been extremely difficult to imbue new ideas with meaning or to generate new ways of thinking about Just War.

---

[16] Asdrachas, *Πρωτογόνη Επανάσταση,* 149-150.

[17] Nikolaos Kasomoulis, *Ἐνθυμήματα Στρατιωτικά τῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως τῶν Ἑλλήνων* (*Military Memoirs of the Greek Revolution*), Book 1 (Athens: Ἀρχεῖα Νεώτερης Ἑλληνικής Ἱστορίας, 1940), 8–9. (The term *armatolos,* despite its literal definition also refers to those who bear arms (from the Greek word *άρματα*). In this statement, he includes all those who participated in the theater of war, i.e. *klepthes* and *armatoloi.)* Kasomoulis participated in the war and he later wrote a detailed historical account of his experiences.

[18] Beatrice Heuser, *War: A Genealogy of Western Ideas and Practices*(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

5.1.2 Methodological Problems: The Choice of Sources

The first methodological question is rooted on the period between 1453 and 1821: How can we overlook nearly 400 years of Ottoman influence on Greek thought? While the Orthodox Church served as the guardian of the religious and linguistic identity of Hellenism, it is reasonable to wonder how Ottoman control affected the way the Greeks perceived the concept of war.

The scarcity of sufficient and detailed records for an in-depth analysis of popular and established ideas during this specific period, coupled with the exclusion of non-Muslim populations from the official armed forces of the Empire, compels researchers to turn to later evidence that discusses the collective experiences of the Greeks. Yet, this poses a significant limitation, as these sources are part of the post-Independence ideological environment, which does not necessarily represent older ideas and norms. In the 19th century, numerous Greek descriptions of the Ottoman era can be found, recorded in the views offered by key figures of the war. It is important to acknowledge that these accounts may have been influenced by a revolutionary spirit or personal interests. A tank of information about ideas and norms of the pre-war era is the folk songs that describe the experiences of *klepthes* (*κλέφτικα*).[19] While it is true that such sources might present a romanticised version of these outlaw communities,[20] the importance of examining the perceptions of *klepthes'* military virtue and the ideas that gave them legitimacy remains crucial.

In addition to primary sources like folk songs and speeches, the analysis primarily includes memoirs from the Greek military and political elite who were actively involved in the war and its organisation from its outset. These individuals include Generals such as Theodoros Kolokotronis and Yiannis Makrygiannis. Some were participants who chose to document their experiences after the war, becoming the first historians of the era, like Nikolaos Kasomoulis. Others were politicians, including Spyridon Trikoupis and Alexandros Mavrokordatos. Furthermore, as the Western influence played a crucial role in the synthesis of Just war ideas during this period, primary sources from the Western Philhellenes movement were also considered. Finally, as the Western element in the

---

[19] Spyros I. Asdrachas, *Μηχανισμοί τῆς ἀγροτικῆς οἰκονομίας στὴν Τουρκοκρατία (Mechanisms of the Agrarian Economy under Ottoman Rule)* (Athens: Themelio, 1978); Thomas W. Gallant, 'Greek Bandits: Lone Wolves or a Family Affair?', Journal of Modern Greek Studies 6, no. 2 (1988): 269–290; Pantelis Mpoukalas, 'Δημοτικά Τραγούδια ως Παράγραφοι Απομνημονευμάτων', in Dimitris Dimitropoulos, Vangelis Karamanolakis, Niki Maroniti, and Pantelis Mpoukalas (eds), *1821 και Απομνημονεύματα: Ιστορική χρήση και ιστοριογραφική γνώση* (Athens: Ίδρυμα της Βουλής των Ελλήνων, 2020)., 113.

[20] Gallant, 'Greek bandits, 269-290.

synthesis of Just war ideas was crucial for the specific period, other primary sources from the Western movement of *Philhellenes* were also taken into account.

This specific body of texts forms a canon that helps us understand the construction of Just war ideas. While this approach focuses on elite-driven constructions due to the scarcity of records on the general beliefs of common people regarding these influences, it is based on methodological logic and not a theoretical exclusion of the experiences of common people (which were also insufficiently recorded to form a comprehensive history of ideas). The relevant literature generally agrees on the influence of Greek chieftains on their soldiers and the widespread acceptance of their expertise.[21] Meanwhile, the importance of the actors who communicate narratives and ideas is integral to the long-term success in the development of norms.[22] As mentioned earlier, the attempt to track the common peoples' ideas through songs is a methodological endeavour to understand the pre-19th century ideas and the collective experiences of the old generations of *klepthes* and *armatoloi.* This combination of sources from 'above' and 'below', led to a rounded understanding of the War of Independence. The influence of new ideas met the collective mentality and combat experience of the outlaw local communities and led to the conditions that made the movement coherent and robust.

Kasomoulis clarifies that the role of the political leadership was to 'inspire' (*διεγείρη*) the people, spreading the ideals of the struggle in different revolting regions.[23] Therefore, examining sources from the specific individuals allows us to hear the voices behind the intellectual and moral constructions that defined the Just war narrative. Beatrice Heuser explained that the impact of words in written or oral tradition is fuelled by the meaning of peoples' experiences.[24] A tradition of chieftains perceived as experts in the art of war and resisted Ottoman rule in the past was a collective experience that filled the words of these leaders with constructive potential.

Another methodological concern occurs from the fact that the majority of the ideas that legitimised the specific war were influenced from abroad, i.e. by the Greeks of *diaspora*

---

[21] Ibid.

[22] Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen, *The evolution of international security studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[23] Kasomoulis, *Ἐνθυμήματα Στρατιωτικά* , 2.549.

[24] Heuser, *War,*9.

and from the European *philhellenes*.[25] Western Just war ideas, especially in the context of deconstructing the absolute dominance of sovereignty in favour of national self-determination, became part of a new synthesis that would define the future military thought of the Greeks. The main concern of the external influence is the impact on the Greek soldiers. How many Greek fighters comprehended Western ideas, and to what extent were the Just war perceptions of the Philhellenes shared by the majority of insurgents? For example, when Lord Byron sought to boost Greek morale by urging them to rediscover their identity, how many fighters' hearts and minds were touched by his words?

> 'When riseth Lacedemon's hardihood, When Thebes Epaminondas rears again, When Athens' children are with arts endued, When Grecian mothers shall give birth to men, Then mayst thou be restor'd.'[26]

While it is not easy to quantify Byron's impact, there is an abundance of primary evidence from the military and political leadership indicating that the external message of rediscovering the 'self' was embraced, e.g., Greek fighters presented as the garrison of the last Byzantine Emperor.[27] The reproduction of these European messages was a potent instrument in constructing a narrative that linked the Greek identity with a specific historical past. The correlation between this narrative and the first year's peoples' motives to wage the war remains unclear, but the distinction of this rediscovered 'self' from a fundamentally different 'other' cannot be dismissed. Ultimately, the war's leaders, the chieftains who had unparalleled influence over local populations, had fully embraced the national narrative that identified the Greeks as the descendants of Leonidas, Pericles, and the line of the East Roman Emperors.[28]

---

[25] Kasomoulis, *Ἐνθυμήματα Στρατιωτικά,* 1.8-9; Kalyvas, *Modern Greece*; Stivachtis, '"International Society" versus "World Society"', 115; William St, Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free: The Philhellenes in the War of Independence* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2008).

[26] Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, The Project Gutenberg EBook of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (2004), canto LXXXIV.

[27] Yiannis Makrygiannis, *Απομνημονεύματα Μακρυγιάννη* (Memoirs of Makrygiannis) (Athens: Vagionakis, 1947), 161; Theodoros Kolokotronis, *Διήγησις Συμβάντων της Ελληνικής Φυλής* (Account of Events of the Greek Nation) (Athens: Νικολαϊδου Φιλαδελφέως, 1846), K.

[28] Makrygiannis, *Memoirs,* 161; Kolokotronis, *Account of Events,* K; Claude Fauriel, *Ἑλληνικὰ Δημοτικὰ Τραγούδια* (*Greek Folk Songs*) (Crete: Iraklio University Press, 1999), 120.

While, we cannot verify the full accuracy or objectivity of these accounts, the utility of these sources is undeniable, as they offer a concrete way to understand which were the ideas and norms that were promoted to legitimise the use of force. Given that most of the population lacked familiarity with Enlightenment ideals or nationalism, these elite-driven sources are indispensable for understanding the mechanisms by which collective identity and memory were reconstructed after the war.

5.2 Legitimate Aims

5.2.1 Religion

Literature on guerrilla warfare has long examined the concept of 'popular support'. As Eqbal Ahmad explained, 'popular support for the guerrillas is predicated upon the moral alienation of the masses from the existing government'.[29] The ideas of justified violence in the War of Independence were undeniably tied to a moral alienation of significant portions of the Millet-I Rum's populations. This alienation stemmed from religious discrimination by the Ottoman authorities, exemplified by practices like the 'head tax'. Just like any Ottoman peasant, a Christian Orthodox second-class citizen had to give 1/10 of the agricultural production to the local authorities. In addition, non-Muslims paid a 'head tax'. During the 16th century the specific 'head tax' reached 1/3 of the value of the actual tax.[30] During the *philhellenic* movement, the call to arms against 'the 'Mohammedan oppressor who charged the Greek a tax only to be allowed to keep his head' resonated widely within various European *philhellenic* movements.[31]

Accounts from early stages of the war, particularly on the island of Crete, also reveal a collective mentality grounded in anti-Ottoman sentiment, fuelled by a history of Turkish atrocities (*αισχρουργίες*) and Christian suffering (*τα χριστιανικά παθήματα*).[32]

---

[29] Eqbal Ahmad, 'Revolutionary War and Counter-Insurgency', *Journal of International Affairs* 25 (1971): 15.

[30] Asdrachas, *Μηχανισμοί τῆς ἀγροτικῆς οἰκονομίας*, 14.

[31] Virginia Penn, 'Philhellenism in Europe, 1821–1828', *The Slavonic and East European Review* 17 (1938): 639. 639.

[32] Eleftheria Zei, 'Η Κρητική Επανάσταση του 1821 και η διπλή ματιά του Καλλίνικου Κριτοβουλίδη', in Dimitris Dimitropoulos, Vangelis Karamanolakis, Niki Maroniti, and Pantelis Mpoukalas (eds), *1821 και Απομνημονεύματα: Ιστορική χρήση και ιστοριογραφική γνώση* (Athens: Ίδρυμα της Βουλής των Ελλήνων, 2020), 144.

Interestingly, our major source for these events, Kallinikos Kritovoulides, explained that he did not condemn the entire Turkish population of his homeland, but those whose inhuman and evil behaviour turned even their compatriots against them.[33] The trauma of religious subjugation, the humiliation of enforced inferiority, and the pressure to convert to Islam left lasting imprints on the collective psyche of the Greeks. [34] These shared experiences helped sustain outlaw militant culture and gave the Orthodox population a moral framework that legitimised their participation in the revolutionary struggle.

The concept of moral alienation must be interpreted in light of Christian Orthodox identity. The Orthodox Church kept the Orthodox tradition alive in a simplistic 'good vs. evil' approach, where the fall of Constantinople and the end of East Roman dominance was a divine punishment. God's punishment (the Ottoman conquest) was a justified test for the Orthodox people, whose faith was lost in sin and the experience of oppression was the way to get it back.[35] Consequently, the Orthodox populations were inherently morally alienated from the Muslims. Despite the institutional causation, the deep-seated binary of 'self vs. other' enabled the popular embrace of a war perceived as sacred in many regions. [36] Interestingly, the klephtic culture had already merged the concept of Divine Grace into its ethos of outlaw resistance, without seeking validation from the Church. In the klephtika songs, we see this illustrated vividly:

> 'Leave it, Georgaki, the child, and grab the rifle
>
> Hold on! George shouted, with the sword in his hand
>
> And if God and the Virgin Mary allow us to make a charge,
>
> Try to capture Mitzombonos alive'[37]

The song describes a bandit (Georgakis) who baptised a child, but his comrades urged him to retrieve his rifle. He heard the call and exhorted his comrades to be prepared to fight. He obeys the call and prepares for battle, framing the act of attack as divinely

---

[33] Kallinikos Kritovoulidis, *Ἀπομνημονεύματα τοῦ περὶ αὐτονομίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος πολέμου τῶν Κρητῶν (Memoirs of the War of the Cretans for the Autonomy of Greece)* (Athens: Αθηνᾶς, 1859), ch. ιζ.

[34] St Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free*, 8.

[35] Nikos Theotokas, 'Παράδοση και Νεωτερικότητα: Σχόλια για το Εικοσιένα' (*Tradition and Modernity: Comments on 1821*), *Τα Ιστορικά* 17 (1992): 348.

[36] Makrygiannis, among others, describes the sweetness of dying for the fatherland (Αυτός ο θάνατος είναι γλυκός) and for defending the faith (*Memoirs*, 259).

[37] (Mitzobonon was an important official of Ali Pasha.) in Claude Charles Fauriel, *Chants populaires de la Grèce moderne*, vol. 1 (Paris: Dondey-Dupré, père et fils, 1824).

sanctioned. The song reveals significant information for many different aspects. First, we can detect the how the outlaw activities of *klepthes* were justified by religion – even though the official Orthodox Church condemned such actions before the War of Independence. Remembering Asdrachas approach, the violent norms of *klepthes* challenged the official doctrine of accepting the *status quo*.[38] Furthermore, a battle was seen as a blessing, as the specific man wishes that God, and the Holy Mary would orchestrate the circumstances for an offensive (*γιουρούσι*). Finally, the importance of catching such an enemy alive, underscores a typical utilitarian norm tied to economic benefits (ransom).[39]

General Makrygiannis does not hesitate to acknowledge the bravery displayed by Greeks and Turks, likening their valor to that of lions. However, he adds that bravery is pointless when a nation strays from the path of God.[40] The pinnacle of virtue is the right side of history – in the case of the Greek War of Independence the side of the Christians. Regardless of the enemy's bravery or honour, there could be no moral equivalence, as 'otherness' was equated with heathenism—a direct inheritance from Byzantine Christian identity discourse. For Makrygiannis, religious identity served as the ultimate moral compass, distinguishing Just from unjust violence.

Songs were sung before battles to boost fighters' morale.[41] Their lyrics often reveal a deep sense of injustice tied to Ottoman oppression. Examples of *Mouselimes* [42] commanding the execution of *klepthes,* proud declarations of refusing to submit to the Turks,[43] battles where the Turks suffered heavy casualties while the *klepthes* did not, dominate the themes of these pre-19th century songs.[44]

---

[38] Asdrachas, *Πρωτόγονη Επανάσταση*, 149-150.

[39] St Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free*, 49-50.

[40] Makrygiannis, *Memoirs,* 125.

[41] Mpoukalas, 'Δημοτικά Τραγούδια', 105-106.

[42] Mouselimes is a term that was used by the Greeks to described Ottoman local lords.

[43] The songs mostly use the term 'προσκυνάω'

[44] Songs were found in the collection of: Fauriel, *Chants populaires de la Grèce moderne*.

In the songs that became popular during the war, we can track ideas of justice for emancipating the enslaved Greeks and the fatherland.[45] Interestingly, even in some of these songs, the lyrics reveal a mentality of eliminating the 'other'.

'Εμένα κι αν σουβλίσητε, ένας Ρωμηός εχάθη

ας ειν΄καλά ο Οδυσσεύς και ο Καπετάν Νικήτας

αυτοί θα σβήσουν την Τουρκιά κι όλο σας το Δοβλέτι.'[46]

These folk songs reveal a mentality of Just war and a mission of 'eradicating Turkey' (*θα σβήσοουν την Τουρκιά*). The lyrics also reflect the religious identity of the fighters, as the divine power was a source of strength and protection. *Klepthes* and chieftains, who, according to the folk tradition, struck terror into the hearts of the enemy, carried swords and crosses.[47] The so-called *klephtika* songs referenced heroes of the past, who had also battled the Turks.[48] Even if earlier causes for resistance varied, the enemy remained the same, making the narrative of a long, righteous struggle both enduring and compelling.

This fusion of sacred and military symbols served multiple functions: it provided legitimacy, spread the ideals of war to religiously-identified populations, and resonated with those who had suffered discrimination under Ottoman rule. Subsequently, the Greek partisans waged an unrestrained and disproportionate war, marked by indiscriminate massacres of both combatants and non-combatants, as seen in the siege of Tripolitsa and other conflicts. Eyewitnesses described mass executions, looting, and brutal killings of civilians, including women and children, often carried out with religious justification. Religious symbols were prominently displayed amidst the violence, reinforcing the

---

[45] 'My children fight as one, don't let our motherland die, don't be responsible for such loss' «*Παιδιά μ', να νταγιαντίσετε, να γίνετ' ένα σώμα, να μη χαθεί η πατρίδα μας, την παρτε στο λαιμό σας*»; 'let's go to guard the bridge of Tricha…to break the chains and free the enslaved folks' «*να πάμε να φυλαξουμε της Τρίχας το γιοφύρι... να κόψουμε τους άλυσους να βγουν οι σκλαβωμένοι*» ; 'All these heroic bodies, lying in the fields, soaked in blood. All those poor bodies went to Hades, fighting for the fatherland.' «*Γι' αυτά τα ρωικά κορμιά στον κάμπο ξαπλωμένα, και μες στο αίμα το πολύ είν' όλα βουτηγμένα. Για την πατρίδα πήγανε στον Άδη τα καμένα.*», Mpoukalas, 'Δημοτικά Τραγούδια'113.

[46] Ibid. 114. 'Even if you skewer me, one Greek is lost may Odysseus and Captain Nikitas be well they will extinguish Turkey and all your dominion'.

[47] Acts of the Conference: "Rigas Ferraios, Ioannis Capodistrias, Francisco de Miranda – The Greek Thought on the Self-Institution of Societies, the Enlightenment and Knowledge", vol. B (Thessaloniki, 2013), 297. The Lyrics: 'In one hand he bears a cross, in the other one his sword, and he is feared in the entire Turkey and the regions of Vlachia' (Στο ΄να του χέρ' κρατά σταυρό και στ' άλλο το σπαθί του, τον τρέμει ούλη η Τουρκιά και της Βλαχιάς τα μέρη). Michael the 'Brave' was the local hegemon of the Ottoman province of Vlachia from 1557 until 1601. His revolts became traditional folk songs in the Western Thrace. We do not know if the song was written during his revolutionary activities or the oral tradition kept the events alive until singing his heroic tales had a meaning for the Greeks.

perception that their actions were divinely sanctioned. Despite occasional negotiations, surrendering enemies were frequently massacred, and efforts to restrain the fighters were largely ineffective. The warfare was merciless, driven by religious legitimacy and the erasure of the 'other'.[49]

In the Memoirs of Makrygiannis two major themes behind the justification of the use of force are discernible: The fatherland (*πατρίς*) and the divine grace (*θεία χάρη*).[50] The correlation between these two themes is that Divine Grace favours the Just struggle for liberating the motherland. While the belief of having 'God on Our Side' is not unique in the Just war literature – quite the opposite – it helps us understand a crucial aspect of the specific discourse: As many Greeks were not acquainted with the ideas of nationalism and the Enlightenment, a struggle for the 'fatherland' would have seemed alien to the Orthodox masses of the Millet-I Rum. However, due to the impact of the Orthodox Church, they were all well-acquainted with their religious identity. Moreover, this identity was the basis for their second-class citizen treatment. As soon as Divine Grace was seen to endorse the war for liberation, the idea of *nationhood* became less alien, more familiar, and ultimately more acceptable.

Spyridon Trikoupis reflects on how the leadership communicated the religious significance of the war. The Gospel, he argued, was never meant to legitimise slavery or despotism, but instead preached love, humility, and support for the oppressed. For Trikoupis, the War of Independence was not only about national freedom, but also about religious emancipation. He outlines three hypothetical paths for the Greeks:

1. Voluntary submission and faith in the Sultan's goodwill – which was seen as unrealistic.
2. Armed resistance – which was condemned by the so-called 'Holy Alliance' of European powers that supported the Ottoman status quo.
3. Religious apostasy (conversion to Islam) – the only option that guaranteed freedom but required renouncing their Christian faith.[51]

Given these options, the passage implies that taking up arms was not merely an act of political rebellion but a necessary means of preserving both national and religious identity. The argument presents the Greek War of Independence as a *justified war* fought for religious survival, since peaceful submission was impossible, and conversion was

---

[49] See 5.5.2 *Non-Combatants section*.

[50] Makrygiannis, *Memoirs*, 116, 259.

[51] Trikoupis, *History of the Greek Revolution*, A, 65-66.

unacceptable. It also criticizes the European powers' early stance for their hypocrisy in supporting Ottoman rule, as they effectively forced the Greeks to choose between slavery and abandoning their faith. Trikoupis also uses the term *ιερός αγώνας* (holy struggle),[52] which shows the establishment of a narrative where the Greek war of independence was legitimite also due to its religious character.

Holy war is broadly defined as warfare justified through religious legitimacy, where combatants believe their actions are divinely sanctioned. The term itself is of European origin and does not categorise war based on its nature—whether defensive, pre-emptive, or offensive—but rather as a form of religious justification for violence.[53] While modern just-war theory relies on legal and natural-law principles, medieval just-war theory incorporated religious ideology as a primary foundation for legitimacy. What was the case of Greek partisans?

The 19th-century Greek partisans waged a war that bore strong characteristics of a holy war, as their struggle was not solely national but deeply rooted in religious legitimacy. Their violence was justified through faith, with massacres, forced conversions, and indiscriminate killings of Muslims and Jews framed as divinely sanctioned acts. Religious symbols, such as icons, crosses, and images of saints, were prominently displayed even amidst bloodshed, reinforcing the idea that their war was blessed by God. The partisans' war differed from Byzantine warfare, despite their references to historical grievances like the fall of Constantinople. Whereas the Byzantines avoided a doctrine of Just war to limit violence, the partisans waged a far more unrestrained and total war, where even official treaties of surrender were often ignored, and civilians were slaughtered without hesitation.

However, the warfare of the Greek insurgents differed significantly from that of their Byzantine predecessors. The Byzantines, as shown earlier, avoided codifying a formal Just War doctrine, in part to establish normative limits on the scale and intensity of violence. In contrast, the insurgents' war was largely unrestrained and frequently total, disregarding surrender agreements and engaging in the systematic killing of civilians, including women and children. Religious symbols—crosses, icons, the invocation of saints, and even relics—were frequently displayed on the battlefield, transforming acts of violence into expressions of divine mission. Fighters often carried both swords and crosses, and blessings were offered before attacks, especially during ambushes or sieges.[54] The annihilation of the 'other' was not seen as a strategic calculation—it was a

---

[52] Ibid. A, 167.

[53] Reuven Firestone, *Jihād: The Origin of Holy War in Islam* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 15–16.

[54] Kasomoulis, *Ἐνθυμήματα Στρατιωτικά*, 152.

sacred duty. Their justification for violence was not legal or rational but emerged from a confluence of historical trauma, religious conviction, and collective emotional memory.

Importantly, while it is true that the war was existential in nature—many perceived it as a last resort with no viable alternative—this perception was also shaped and legitimised by prevailing ideas. The logic of holy war did not merely arise from the extremity of circumstances; it helped define them as extreme, thus giving moral weight to the use of force. Ideas, therefore, did not only reflect the reality of violent conflict—they constituted it. The notion that 'God was on our side' retroactively transformed necessity into justice, and violence into salvation.

Nevertheless, a key limitation to interpreting the Greek War of Independence strictly as a holy war lies in the fact that the insurgents who died in battle were not canonised as saints by the Orthodox Church. This reveals a clear dichotomy between the popular perception of the war as sacred and the Church's institutional stance, which remained cautious and distanced. The absence of official sainthood underscores that, despite religious rhetoric and imagery, the war remained outside the boundaries of orthodox theological war doctrine. The insurgents may have fought with religious conviction, but they did so without the full liturgical or sacramental endorsement of the Church hierarchy.

5.3 Enemies

5.3.1 Turkish Otherness

Following the analysis of religious legitimacy and the grassroots construction of Just War thinking, we must now turn to the importance of 'otherness'—and how the construction of the 'other' shaped the normative framework of violence, resistance, and necessity. In the case of the Greek War of Independence, the construction of the Ottoman 'other'—as tyrannical, irredeemable, and incompatible—did not merely reflect experience; it defined it. Identity was not static, but continuously forged through contrast, hostility, and the legitimisation of action against that hostile presence.

In memoirs such as those of Makrygiannis, the Turk is consistently portrayed as a cruel tyrant and cultural 'other', not primarily through ethnic lenses, but through a power-based and religiously informed framework. This conception of the 'other' as inherently oppressive creates a binary worldview where war becomes the only imaginable solution, i.e., the last resort.

One clear example that underlines these identity-based constructions is when the General describes the execution of Ali Pasha. Makrygiannis describes how Ali Pasha was deceived into thinking he received a pardon only to be taken to an island and beheaded. The passage states that 'They took him to the island, across the lake, and cut off his head

like a donkey's (κοψαν το κεφάλι του σαν του γουμαριού) and sent it to the other tyrant (του αλλουνού τύραγνου) Sultan to make a soup out of it and eat it' (φκειάση πατσά να το φάγη). [55] This vivid description emphasises the cruelty and tyrannical nature of the Turkish authorities – shaping a cultural and political 'otherness'.

Makrygiannis further recounts how, as the Greeks fled from Arta, the Turks enslaved and slaughtered civilians (σκλάβωνε ανθρώπους και σκότωνε).[56] This passage depicts the Turks as merciless oppressors, enslaving and killing Greeks indiscriminately. The killing is described as indiscriminate as those who fled were non-combatants – plus, the workd σκλαβωνε (enslaved) is a continuous theme in the way 'otherness' is described in the genealogy of ideas related to identities, i.e., the threat of being enslaved does not only trigger Just war actions but also defines significant 'others', whose dominance can only lead to the enslavement of the 'self'. Such discourses have been tracked and analysed throughout the entire genealogy of this study and depict a 'self' notion of continuous wars against enslavement. This was a facilitating condition to promote the necessity to fight against the Ottoman authorities but also to incorporate the national continuity narrative to the Greek insurgents. Makrygiannis describes the insurgents as 'liberators (*λευτερωταί*)[57], reflecting the Greeks' efforts to reclaim their freedom – a description that portrays a notion of illegitimate authority due to an 'enslaving' 'other'.

Through Makrygiannis' memoirs, Military Commander Karaiskakis is portrayed as fighting against the Turks since childhood, i.e., '(he) killed them in the woods and walked barefoot since he was a child for freedom (περπάταγε ξυπόλυτος από μικρό παιδί δια την λευτεριά).[58] This narrative paints the Turks as a brutal occupying force, against whom the Greeks had to resort to guerrilla tactics and endure great hardships. The age of Karaiskakis is important as an indicator of the necessity to resist (which is always inextricably linked to the conceptualisation of 'otherness') that pushed children to join the insurgents. Furthermore, such normative constructions go hand-in-hand with descriptions on the Ottoman atrocities, i.e., 'killings, enslavements, and numerous damages' (σκοτωμούς, σκλαβιές και ζημιές πλήθος),[59] which justify the above.

---

[55] Makrygiannis, *Memoirs*, 143.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid. A.156.

[59] Ibid. 172.

Another key dominant theme in different individuals' memoirs is the image of the Turks as the historical oppressors who subjected the Greeks to long-term suffering and martyrdom. Kolokotronis writes how his father's resisting operations and the violence that characterised them was justified by the statement 'how can I show restraint when you came and destroyed my fatherland, took us as slaves, and caused us so much harm?' (τι νησαφι να κάμω που ήλθατε και μου χαλάσατε την πατρίδα μου μας πήρατε σκλάβους και μας εκάματε τόσα κακά;).[60] In addition, a passage from Makrygiannis' memoirs states that 'the fighters...held on to their religion for so many centuries with the Turks - and they endured so many martyrdoms' (με τους Τούρκους -και τους κάναν τόσα μαρτύρια),[61] highlighting the perseverance and faith of the Greeks in the face of a continuous Turkish oppression – violent to the extent of leading to martyrdom. Here, we need to underline that even though this information comes from memoirs, the specific ideas were also communicated by the generals to their forces – as a main responsibility of the former was to inspire (*διεγείρη*) the insurgents[62] through communicating both legitimate aims but also ideas about 'otherness'. Therefore, by highlighting the oppression and sacrifices made by Orthodox Christians, the generals created a narrative that contrasted sharply with the occasional cooperation of some Orthodox individuals with Ottoman forces, that has been highlighted in different parts of the literature.[63]

Moreover, as several Albanian-speaking and Slav-speaking Orthodox Christians from the northern Balkans supported the Greek War of Independence,[64] reflections on how the Ottoman domestic policy led to martyrdom, was a facilitating condition to attract such populations to join the war, due to the oppressive nature of the 'other'. This narrative was essential for the normative and ideological coherence of (Greek) Orthodox population and legitimising the revolt as a fight for religious (and national) liberation. Let us remember, that, as Stathis Kalyvas wrote, rebellions by Muslims and non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire were common but lacked national identity; their aim was to strengthen

---

[60] Kolokotronis, *Διήγησις Συμβάντων,* 6.

[61] Makrygiannis, *Memoirs*, Γ.124.

[62] Kasomoulis*, Ένθυμήματα Στρατιωτικά*, 549.

[63] Stefanos Katsikas and Sakis Dimitriadis, 'Muslim Converts to Orthodox Christianity during the Greek War of Independence, 1821–1832', *European History Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (2021): 299–323.

[64] Mark Mazower, *The Greek Revolution: 1821 and the Making of Modern Europe* (London: Penguin, 2021), 44. Katsikas and Dimitriadis, 'Muslim Converts during the Greek War', 299.-310.

local autonomy or tax privileges, not to create independent nation-states.[65] Thus, the discourse of religious oppression served as a powerful tool in constructing a collective identity and motivating the Greek populace to pursue independence, as it used the religious experience to challenge those who cooperated with the state and also exploit the specific facilitating condition that defined a Hobbesian 'otherness'. Plus, the familiarity and frequency of local rebellions had established a normative ground of perceiving armed reaction as a legitimate behaviour against the Ottoman authorities.

Spyridon Trikoupis claimed that waging war for 'the salvation of all Greece' (*απολύτρωσιν όλης της Ελλάδας*) was a 'noble struggle' (*καλόν αγώνα*).[66] The term 'salvation' mirrors an existential conceptualisation of the war. The existence of the 'self' was at stake, not only due to the material death (killing) of Greeks but also due to the threat to the nation. The famous 'liberty or death' norm reflects this existential perception, where victory and independence were the only way to ensure the self's existence. Kolokotronis describes how the people of Messinia responded to Ibrahim's call for surrender by embracing their Just war idea until the very end (*και έτσι είναι το δίκαιον του πολέμου*), even if this decision would lead to their extermination.[67] Odysseas Androutsos was described as the hero trusted with guarding '*Thermopylae*' [68] - a narrative depicting a continuous existential war, where *klephtes* played the role of defending the 'self', and the term 'Thermopylae' evokes the iconic battle of the Ancient Spartans against an existential threat. This naturalisation of self-sacrifice is a recurring theme in many sources. As seen earlier, Makrygiannis described how Greek fighters believed that dying for their country and religion was a sweet death, while tales of lost battles where the defeated Greek forces chose death over captivity became ingrained in the collective memory of the Greeks.[69] To surrender was not peace—it was ontological death.

Makrygiannis describes the long experience of the Ottoman tyrannical rule as 'unbearable' (*δεν υποφερόταν πλέον*) for the common people.[70] In an attempt to highlight

---

[65] Kalyvas, *Modern Greece*, 53.

[66] Trikoupis, *History of the Greek Revolution*, Ξ, 8.

[67] Kolokotronis, *Διήγησις Συμβάντων*, ιθ.

[68] Fauriel, *Ellinika Dimotika Tragoydia*, 20.

[69] Trikoupis, *History of the Greek Revolution,* vol. D, Ch. Ξ; Makrygiannis, *Memoirs*, 86.

[70] Makrygiannis, *Memoirs*, 128-129.

the importance of a popular war, he recounts how ordinary people (*νοικοκυραίοι*) with no experience in the art of war (*δεν κατείχαν καλά την πολεμική*) reached the conclusion that armed conflict was the only solution.[71] He trusts that despite being militarily inferior in terms of experience and material capabilities, war was the last resort for an oppressed nation. Kasomoulis describes the ecstatic patriotic feeling that fueled him at the outset of the struggle.[72] The circumstances of being materially unprepared to fight a superior adversary did not deter them. The language used in these examples illustrates how ideas provide meaning and legitimacy to actions, allowing communities and individuals to perceive the use of force as the last resort.

When Ibrahim's attempt to negotiate surrender failed, Makrygiannis narrates that the small Greek force declared that 'War is our fate — and you fight, and we will fight until we are worn out, until we devour one another' (Ο πόλεμος είναι η τύχη μας - και πολεμάτε και θα πολεμήσουμε όσο-να λυώσουμε, να φάμε ένας τον άλλον).[73] War was seen as the last resort, as any other scenario was paralleled to a slow ontological death.

Simultaneously, Greeks of *diaspora* and the merchant class discerned a horizon of Ottoman stagnation *vis* a *vis* the Western progress. Trikoupis scrutinised the religious and cultural differences of the Greek Orthodox and the Ottoman traditions and saw the war as a clash of civilisations. He believed that the Greek and the Ottoman paths could not coexist and pondered whether the War of Independence was an outcome of the progress of the Greek thinking or the lack thereof the Turkish progress. [74] In Trikoupis' accounts, we can discern another important factor contributing to the development of the Greek Just war collective mentality: the necessity to dismantle the Ottoman system of governance to enable the nation's prosperity. A theoretical principle of constructivism underlines that 'acts of identification relate actors not only to other actors, but also to imaginations of past and future versions of the 'self'.[75] Considering the aforementioned

---

[71] Ibid. 127.

[72] Kasomoulis, *Ἐνθυμήματα Στρατιωτικά,* 133.

[73] Makrygiannis, *Memoirs*, 243.

[74] Trikoupis, *History of the Greek Revolution*, Ξ, 1-5.

[75] Bernd Bucher and Ursula Jasper, 'Revisiting "Identity" in International Relations: From Identity as Substance to Identifications in Action', *European Journal of International Relations* 23, no. 2 (2017): 391–415.

evidence, we can see how the idea of being free to continue the glorious tradition of their ancestors became a lever of both identifying the 'self' and justifying the eradication of the 'other', which seemed as a concrete obstacle towards the pursuit of a free Greek future.

Through these examples, the sources vividly portray the Turks as tyrannical and brutal oppressors. This representation creates a clear 'self and other' dichotomy, positioning the Greeks as noble victims fighting a Just and necessary war for their liberation against an oppressive and cruel adversary. The narrative not only highlights the immense suffering endured by the Greeks but also morally justifies their struggle for independence as a legitimate and essential fight against tyranny – shaping the normative core of the 'last resort' criterion.

5.3.2 The 'Other' and the Western Influences

One of the fundamental principles of the constructivist tradition is that ideas that ascribe meaning to 'otherness' shape expectations and behaviour.[76] Thus, the way a community engaged in a conflict perceives 'otherness' also influences the interpretation of victory. Examining the source below allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how the philhellenic movement and the Greeks of the diaspora conceptualised the idea of victory – as part of the concept of 'otherness'.

> 'If our voice could be heard, the barbarians who are massacring the Greeks, slaughtering priests, and prostituting Christian virgins to the frenzied soldiery, would soon be punished, annihilated, and driven back to the deserts of Africa and Asia; if our voice could be heard the standard of the Cross would fly over the roofs of Constantinople or over the Parthenon, and the Church of St. Sophia would soon be restored to its former use.'[77]

Interpreting victory as driving the enemy back to the desert reveals that the *philhellenic* European ideas were also distinguishing the two civilisations in Hobbesian terms. In addition, giving the enemy the identity of the brutal savage *vis a vis* the oppressed but morally and culturally superior victim is another constructive instrument that creates unbridgeable differences; yet the narrative of the Greco-Romans *vis a vis* barbarians or the East Romans *vis a vis* all those who could pose a threat to the keeper of God's *cosmos*, were facilitating conditions for the establishment of such identity patterns during

---

[76] Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics', *International organization*, *46*/2, (1992): 391-425.

[77] Cited in St. Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free*, 55.

the early 19th century. Another interesting example is the speech from a Greek Literature professor at the University of Strasburg, who emphasised the responsibility to support the Greek independence movement.

> 'The Turks . . . have on several occasions threatened our own civilization with total destruction, and the Greeks have a proverb that wherever they put their feet the grass ceases to grow…These men are the children of the heroes, the poets, the philosophers, the artists, to whom we owe our civilization. Because they wished to restore a nation, they are the prey to the most terrible massacres, they are in danger of having to flee over the seas with only the memory of their ancient glory and of their efforts to restore to their lands and islands the fruits which modern progress has perfected.'[78]

The arrival of European *philhellenes* was an important factor in the development of a Just War collective mentality. Volunteers from strong and wealthy nations decided to risk their lives fighting for the 'sacred cause' of freeing Greece from the Muslim control:

> 'The fight for Religion, Life and Freedom calls us to arms! Humanity and Duty challenge us to hurry to the aid of our brothers, the noble Greeks, to risk our blood, our lives for the Sacred Cause! The reign of the Moslems in Europe is nearing its end; Europe's most beautiful country must be freed, freed from the monsters!'[79]

When the 'other' is depicted as monstrous the legitimacy of violence (even the indiscriminate one) can be normalised. While the Western ideas on war would have never legitimised the behaviour of the Greek fighters against non-combatants and there were several occasions where Westerners saved Turks from certain death, the declarations of a Just war against 'monsters' and their presence in the theatre of war had a different impact on illiterate populations with a collective mentality of vengeance.

The virtuous militant culture of *klepthes* during the centuries of the Ottoman rule and the heroic representation of outlaw fighters whose tales generated fear into the Turks was also a dominant perception that influenced the ethics of warfare. As mentioned earlier, even though the official religious authorities did not try to influence this culture, *klepthes* kept used religion to justify their alienation from the Ottoman state and their offensive behaviour. Meanwhile, the oppression from the state contributed to the development of this ideas and the survival of this virtuous identity of bandits from generation to generation. During the war, the clergy contributed to the justification of atrocities as local

---

[78] Johannes Schweighauser, *Discours sur les Services que les Grecs ont rendus à la Civilisation* (Paris : Firmin Didot, 1821), 32.

[79] Cited St. Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free*, 43.

priests called for the extermination of the infidel adversary.[80] In addition, they also blessed the expeditionary forces, as soldiers of God before battles.[81]

European travellers and the Greeks of the *diaspora* constructed an image of Greece heavily influenced by their political ideas as well as by the connection between Greek political thought and European identity.[82] In the eyes of many Europeans *klephtes* were fighters of a broader conflict between Christianity and Islam, fighting on the front line of a clash of civilisations. Numerous lithographs present Christian Greeks assaulted by their adversaries. 'Dupré's lithograph La Vierge de Thyamis' depicts a Greek unarmed couple trying to find protection from Turkish soldiers under the icon of the Holy Mary.[83] The Ottoman tyranny in such expressions mirrored a holistic brutal behaviour against the Christian Greeks, a violation of the norms of respecting non-combatants and savage treatment of a nation that was presented as the root of the European tree.

The international support was partially an outcome of the representation of the war as a Just fight of Christianity against Islam, but another fundamental reason was the dominance of new ideas that prioritised national self-determination over sovereignty.[84] Looking again at the discussion of the synthesis between the Western ideas and the Greeks opens a new framework for analysing Greek thought: The rapprochement between the Greek-Orthodox and Western Christianity. In the following lines, there will be an extensive discussion on the importance of this rapprochement for the way the Greeks perceived their 'self', their 'natural allies', and their 'perpetual adversaries'.

The Orthodox identity was linked with the days of the Greek-speaking Emperors of the East Roman Empire, while the language spoken by the population of the Millet-I Rum was known as 'Romaic'.[85] Thus, the identity norms that were protected and reproduced by the Orthodox Church could have alienated the population from the West, especially

---

[80] St, Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free*, 12.

[81] Kasomoulis, *Ενθυμήματα Στρατιωτικά*, 370.

[82] Anna Efstathiadou, 'Representing Greekness: French and Greek Lithographs from the Greek War of Independence (1821–1827) and the Greek-Italian War (1940–1941)', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 29, no. 2 (2011): 191–218.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Lekas, 'Greek War of Independence and Historical Sociology', 164.

[85] St Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free*, 8.

due to the past schism and mostly due to the trauma of 1204. However, Stathis Kalyvas explains that despite the significance of the trauma of 1204 and the divisions between Orthodox Christianity and the West, the educated Greeks of diaspora turned to the West to seek support for their struggle.[86] The ideological momentum of the French and American revolutions, the rise of Enlightenment ideals, and the growing critique of absolute sovereignty proved more compelling than lingering suspicion towards Western Christians.

The popular belief - which was primarily expressed by elites, i.e., Petros Mauromichalis - of living under an 'uncivilised tyranny'[87] was integral to the burial of the past differences with the West. The idea that Greece and the West shared a historical and political bond, rooted in a common heritage of liberty and rationality, was instrumental in constructing a norm of natural friendship. The international understanding of 'friends and enemies' became a compass for the Greek thought. Being a small entity- a 'dwarf' in an interpolity system of 'giants'- the Greeks recognised that recognition alone would not suffice. The Greek thought had to be adjusted in an international environment where interdependence was as necessary as ever, not only in order to survive but also in order to pursue the broader victory that was dictated by the nationalistic norms of the time. If victory reflected the idea of re-establishing the Greek *grandeur* through controlling not only the regions in the Balkan Peninsula but also Asia Minor and Constantinople, Greece was heavily dependent on friendly 'others' – even though this far-fetched foreign policy norm would be a future cause for problematic relations with the West and would reactivate the introverted skepticism towards Western allies. This example highlights a core constructivist insight: that survival, interest, and strategic action are not mere reactions to timeless anarchy but ideologically constructed through narratives and identity. The prioritisation of national salvation and cultural belonging explains why, in the post-war years, Greece's 'Hobbesian' threat perception pointed East, while its 'Kantian' hope for order and peace pointed West. As previously discussed, the Ottoman political system was framed as decaying and stagnant, while the West was naturalised as dynamic, enlightened, and civilised.

An interesting outcome of the ideas surrounding the participation of the French in the Greek war of Independence was the start of a genealogy of friendship and military cooperation. French *philhellenes* propagandised the Greek cause in France, but we can also track more tangible contributions in the military sector since the early days of the

[86] Kalyvas, *Modern Greece*, 59.

[87] St Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free*, 13.

war.[88] The creation of the Paris Greek Committee[89] in 1825 managed to offer financial support for the purchase of material capabilities (ammunition) for the Greek cause. The committee's material support and the contribution of 100 armed men, strengthened the image of French General Fabvrier, whose task of organising the Greek armed forces and the later arrival of General Roche launched a Greco-French strategic bond.[90]

When Governor Kapodistrias arrived in Greece (1828) he nominated Camille Alphonse Trézel as commander in chief of the armed forces. After his arrival, many Greek officers felt undermined as the French military elite drafted military regulations in French, excluding them from actual participation.[91] However, Kapodistrias kept the commander, as he wanted to ensure that the French assistance would be a structural pillar of an independent Greece.[92] In addition, Trikoupis explained that Greek military officials arrived from France to serve the 'fatherland', showing the construction of common ways and aims.[93] While it is true that we cannot ignore the importance of the French imperialistic norms that contributed to the decision to support the Greek cause[94], the ideas that were generated from the French presence during the war and the Greek necessity to establish foreign policy partnerships played a significant role to the development of the future's interdependent strategic culture. Finally, as mentioned earlier, the importance of redefying the 'self' in a clash of civilisations framework dictated an identity of belonging

---

[88] Pierre Echinard, *Grecs et Philhellènes à Marseille de la Révolution française à l'Indépendance de la Grèce* (Marseille: Institut Historique de Marseille / CNRS, 1973), 193–98.

[89] Société philanthropique en faveur des Grecs.

[90] Jean Dimakis, 'La "Société de la Morale Chrétienne" de Paris et son action en faveur des Grecs lors de l'insurrection de 1821', *Balkan Studies* 7, no. 1 (1966): 27–48.

[91] Karpos Papadopoulos, *Ἀνασκευή τῶν εἰς τὴν Ἱστορίαν τῶν Ἀθηνῶν ἀναφερομένων περὶ τοῦ στρατηγοῦ Ὀδυσσέως Ἀνδρούτσου, τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ τακτικοῦ καὶ τοῦ συνταγματάρχου Καρόλου Φαβιέρου* (Refutation of What Is Said in the History of Athens about General Odysseas Androutsos, the Greek Tactical Army, and Colonel Charles Fabvier) (Athens: Petros Mantzarakis, 1837).

[92] Trikoupis explained that when Kapodistrias arrived in Greece, the French crown sent 500,000 francs to support the struggle for independence and confirmed an equal financial contribution on a monthly basis.

[93] Trikoupis, *History of the Greek Revolution*, ΞΔ, 99. (Πρό τινων εβδομάδων είχε φθάσει εις Ελλάδα ο εν Γαλλία εντίμως υπηρετήσας συνταγματάρχης Μπούρμπαχης, Κεφαλλήν, επί σκοπώ να υπηρετήση την κοινήν πατρίδα).

[94] Anna Karakatsouli, 'French Involvement in the Greek War of Independence', *Historein* 20, no. 1 (2021).

among the European powers. As the development of 'belonging' ideas is a continuous construction, the naturalisation of a Greco-French 'Kantian' relationship was an integral step for the future of Greek strategy and security – still with Greek voices challenging the strength of this relationship, due to the belief of a unique Greek foreign policy compass that is not shared by any 'other'.

5.4 The Responsibility to Wage War: Who Fights and Who Decides?

The debate concerning the construction of an organised army in the European model had its origins in the competition among the Greek leadership. Disputes between figures like Kolokotronis and other Greek leaders, along with the need for further European recognition of the military action against the Ottomans, led to the arrival of the French General, Charles Nicolas Fabvier, whose mission was to organise the army. Greek voices, e.g. the Minister of the Interior, Grigorios Dimitrios Dikaios (known as *Papaflessas*), criticised the chieftains for allowing chaos among the Greek ranks.[95] The numerous cases of plundering and massacres that were incompatible with the European Just war ideas could also be seen as potential concerns for the Greek leadership, especially considering the need for external aid.

Georgios Karaiskakis, a powerful and influential chieftain from Rumeli, despised the idea of organised armies. He argued that engaging a numerically superior enemy in a non-guerrilla manner would be a fatal mistake.[96] The vast majority of those who were experienced with combat were either *klephtes* or *armatoloi*, forged in outlaw warfare, guerilla tactics, and inexperienced in following orders.[97] Even the respected and feared Kolokotronis attempted to establish rules and punishments, especially after realising the difficulty of controlling or restraining his forces, but met with limited success.[98]

Snyder asserted that:

---

[95] Fotios Fotakos, *Ἀπομνημονεύματα περὶ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως* (Memoirs on the Greek Revolution) (Athens: Π.Δ. Σακελλάριου, 1858), 79–80.

[96] Trikoupis, *History of the Greek Revolution*, Γ. 242-245.

.

[97] Gallant, 'Greek bandits', 269-280.

[98] Apostolos Vakalopoulos, *Τὰ Ἑλληνικὰ Στρατεύματα τοῦ 1821: Ὀργάνωση, ἡγεσία, τακτικὴ, ἤθη, ψυχολογία* (The Greek Armed Forces of 1821: Organisation, Leadership, Tactics, Morals, Psychology) (Thessaloniki: Εταιρεία Μακεδονικών Σπουδών, 1948), 74–75.

> 'once a distinctive approach to strategy takes hold of members of a strategy-making elite and those writing about strategy, it tends to persist despite changes in the circumstances that gave rise to it, through processes of socialization and institutionalization and through the role of strategic concepts in legitimating these social arrangements.'[99]

This insight is evident in the resilience of Greek chieftains to accept the new concept of organised armies that threatened to disrupt a centuries-old culture. Genealogical methods seek answers in 'deep-rooted cultural and institutional constraints'[100] and it is essential to understand that Greek strategic approach had diverged from Byzantine military norms for almost 400 years. *Klephtes* and *armatoloi* fought their adversaries through ambushes, which was how most chieftains structured their forces during the War of Independence. The sophisticated strategy of the East Romans was inapplicable to this war, and the mentality of such a strategic culture had been buried by time and different collective experiences. Kolokotronis called for ambushes, robberies, and deceitful warfare (*ενέδρες, κλοπές, δόλους*). He also explained that, since defeating the enemy forces in open battle was impossible, he ordered his fighters to ambush the Turks day and night, burn their supplies, and ensure that everything happened with the least possible cost in Greek lives.[101] Even when victory seemed unattainable due to the enemy's superiority, the strategic approach of ambushes and guerilla tactics aimed to weaken the enemy and reduce its power for future battles or sieges. Spyridon Trikoupis described that when Ibrahim Pasha's forces reclaimed territories in the Peloponnese, the Greeks continued to resist through guerilla warfare (*κλεφτοπολεμούντες*).[102]

The system of *klephtes* and *armatoloi* was based on family bonds, local identities, and unorganised political structures.[103] Such norms seemed incompatible to the Western organised and disciplined armies. However, the agents of *Filiki Eteria* knew that it would have been impossible to launch a successful operational plan without respecting the old

---

[99] Jack Snyder, 'The Concept of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor', in C.G. Jacobsen, ed., *Strategic Power: The United States of America and the USSR* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 4.

[100] Richard Price, 'A Genealogy of the Chemical Weapons Taboo', *International Organization* 49, no. 1 (1995): 80.

[101] Kolokotronis, *Διήγησις Συμβάντων*, 164.

[102] Spyridon Trikoupis, *History of the Greek Revolution*, Δ. ΞΑ, 24.

[103] Gallant, 'Greek bandits', 269-290.

norms. The War needed the experienced *klephtes* and *armatoloi* for two reasons: they were familiar with warfare and they could inspire their people to join the struggle. Kolokotronis was one of the first chieftains approached and recruited by the secret organisation and he mentioned that hey ordered him to be ready to strike, implying his duty to gather loyal forces and light the beacons of war in the Peloponnese.[104]

Stathis Kalyvas wrote that it was the war that turned the peasants of the southern part of the Balkan Peninsula into 'Greeks'.[105] This theoretical perspective underscores the impact of social constructions and the importance of chieftain leadership in shaping people's perceptions and ideas. Kalyvas believes that it was the people's experience in actual warfare that fueled the ideology of a Just 'national' uprising. While many insurgents were non-Greek Orthodox, and most were not familiar with the concept of a nation or the narrative of national continuity, their participation in the war led to the adoption of the cause of national self-determination.

Some primary sources show that women also participated in the armed conflict against the Ottomans. In Souli it was normal for women fighters to contribute to the war effort. This reflects the local variations in different regions and the diversity of military cultures around the Balkan Peninsula. Souliotes had a militant culture of founding mountainous communities to escape Ottoman rule, which led to an inclusive norm regarding the responsibility to fight the enemy. On the other hand, as the communities of the Millet-I Rum were patriarchic, not many accounts of *klepthes*-women can be found in the relevant sources. Let us remember that in the pre-1821 period, *klepthes* did not aim for a perpetual life in exile but were organised to claim wealth and privileges, rather than abandoning their homes. While women fought against enemy forces during sieges, the strategic culture of ambushes concerned mostly those who had left the towns and villages to organise resistance groups in the mountains. The Greek Fund Committee in Baltimore which was organised by American women and aimed to collect financial support for Greek non-combatants reported the need to help Greek women 'whose sons and husbands are fighting the battles of the cross against the crescent.'[106] While famous paintings reveal the participation of women in the struggle, the norms of *klepthes*' strategic culture, as well as the organised armed forces that obtained an official role in the later years, did not include women fighters.

---

[104] Kolokotronis, *Διήγησις Συμβάντων,* 43.

[105] Kalyvas, *Modern Greece*, 64.

[106] Maureen Santelli, 'Depart from That Retired Circle: Women's Support of the Greek War for Independence and Antebellum Reform', *Early American Studies* 15, no. 1 (2017): 211.

As the years were passing, the political leadership of the movement tried to make the war more organised by limiting the power of chieftains. A war for independence meant that Greece aimed to find its place in international society, and there had to be ways to establish the means for an organised military. The abandonment of traditional bandit norms became necessary to move toward the construction of an army. After years of civil strife, external pressure, and the arrival of European assistance, leadership began to curtail the power of independent chieftains. An assembly in Western Rumeli ordered that local commanders hand over military authority to the central government, and that weapons be distributed to civilians only in emergencies. [107] Slowly, the responsibility for waging war was transferred to organised military units, but the heroic identity of *klephtes* persisted.

[107] Kasomoulis, *Ἐνθυμήματα Στρατιωτικά*, 1,361. The Assembly used the term *πολίται* (civilians), obviously referring to the institution of *klepthes*, who were simple peasants that were given weapons to fight and not enlisted members of any local armed force. In the Assembly there were also Western philhellenes, e.g. Lord Byron.

5.5 Beyond Good and Evil

5.5.1 Ethics and the Camouflaged Impact of Nationalism

After the end of the civil conflict[108] that ended with the imprisonment of major chieftains, e.g. Theodoros Kolokotronis, the Greeks faced a series of defeats from Ibrahim's army. Being incapable of blocking Ibrahim's expansion, the Greek political leadership decided to pardon the imprisoned chieftains. In a famous speech in the Peloponnesian city of Nafplio, Trikoupis tried to bury the civil disputes under layers of patriotic emotions and a Just war collective approach. During his speech, he paralleled the struggle of the Greeks against the Egyptian force of Ibrahim Pasha with the Old Testament's story of the suffering of the people of Judaea.[109] Such constructions not only lead to a Just war collective mentality but also shape a genealogy on the 'Just side' of history. What we should remember, when looking at this speech, is that the audience was familiar with the tale, due to the impact of the Orthodox Church.[110] Trikoupis depicts the Greek leadership as sinful that drove a 'desperate nation' in the brick of the abyss instead of salvation. Yet, he also explains that 'the minds of the revolutionaries were no longer blinded by sin but enlightened from the light of genuine patriotism'.[111] This genuine patriotism reveals the Just war idea behind the necessary union of all Greeks, while the hubris of the civil war should not mislead the Greeks from their Just cause. As mentioned earlier, the armed struggle for independence was seen as necessary and good (*καλόν αγώνα*)[112] because of its aims. In addition, the establishment of a national narrative of Greeks who have perpetually fought for their motherland and religion naturalised warfare to the living memory of the Greeks, making existential wars part of their identity.

---

[108] The specific civil war during the Greek War of Independence occurred between November 1823 and June 1824. This internal conflict was primarily rooted in political and regional disputes among the Greek revolutionaries.

[109] Thanos Aggelidis, 'Τα χαρακτηριστικά της Επανάστασης του 1821 στους Λόγους του Σπυρίδωνος Τρικούπη', in Dimitris Dimitropoulos, Vangelis Karamanolakis, Niki Maroniti, and Pantelis Mpoukalas, eds, *1821 και Απομνημονεύματα: Ιστορική χρήση και ιστοριογραφική γνώση* (Athens: Ίδρυμα της Βουλής των Ελλήνων, 2020), 47–48..

[110] Theotokas, 'Paradosi kai Neoterikotita', 348.

[111] Aggelidis, 'Τα χαρακτηριστικά της Επανάστασης του 1821', 48-49.

[112] Trikoupis, *History of the Greek Revolution*, Chapter Ξ, 8.

This point deserves emphasis: the war was not simply justified because of the violence suffered, but because of the identity it promised to resurrect. The mythos of a people who had eternally fought for their homeland and faith became embedded in the collective memory, naturalising existential war as part of the Greek political and cultural identity. This construction became a key facilitating condition for a uniquely Greek understanding of Just War—one that diverged significantly from the Western tradition. While Western Just War thinking often emerged from natural law and universalist ethical frameworks, the Greek approach was built on particularistic, communitarian foundations, rooted in shared history, collective trauma, and spiritual-religious identity. As such, it presented not only a distinctive interpretation of legitimate violence but also a normative barrier to adopting more multilateral, extroverted security logics. The emphasis on protecting and resurrecting the 'self', rather than integrating into international security norms, created a worldview in which external alliances were instrumental, but moral legitimacy remained internally generated. This difference would continue to shape the Greek strategic imagination in the post-independence period and beyond.

5.5.2 Non-combatants and Prisoners of War

When the siege of Tripolitsa (1821) ended the eye-witness Nikolaos Kasomoulis described the aftermath: Soldiers were executing hidden Turks, while piles of dead bodies covered the entrance of the fortress.[113] Surrendered combatants and non-combatants were assaulted indiscriminately in the streets.[114] Walking around the city, Kasomoulis noticed painted Greek flags, Christian crosses, Orthodox saints, and depictions of the Holy Mary in the houses' windows. Each chieftain that participated in the siege had collected booty which was locked for protection from their soldiers.[115] The coexistence of religious symbols, indiscriminate violence, and cynical chase of booty mirrors the unrestrained warfare that occurred through religious legitimacy and 'otherness'. In this moral landscape, there were no sins in killing Turks, and even the most brutal acts were performed in the presence of the sacred.

The killing was usually unrestrained and indiscriminate. Kolokotronis describes a Greek *askeri* (a Turkish term that described a military corps) slaughtering men, women, and children for three days. The specific passage also highlights an incident where how a

---

[113] Kasomoulis, *Ενθυμήματα Στρατιωτικά*, 151.

[114] Ibid. 81-83.

[115] Ibid. 152.

fighter from Hydra killed 90 Turks.[116] The first successful operations were characterised by an organised extermination of the non-Christian populations (mostly Muslim, but also Jewish). Many of the victims were not combatants, but unarmed civilians. As some of the most important acts in the theatre of the War of Independence were sieges, plenty of non-combatants and unarmed Muslim civilians who sought refuge in forts became victims of the conflict. There were accounts of indiscriminate violence against non-combatants by eyewitnesses, with women being stripped, searched for valuable materials, and then shot or thrown into the sea. Shockingly, even babies and small children were brutally killed.[117]

Contradictory evidence exists regarding sexual violence during the operations of the klephtes. According to Kolokotronis, the traditional norms of the *armatoloi* and *klephtes* included isolating rapists, as these groups purportedly adhered to a code that emphasised respect (*σεβας*) towards women.[118] However, other accounts present a starkly different picture. Reports from the Greek War of Independence describe incidents of rape and sexual violence—not only as acts of brutality, but at times even as sources of perverse pride. In one such case, perpetrators allegedly displayed the violated bodies of dead women to foreign volunteers, anticipating admiration. Far from being impressed, these volunteers—such as the German officers Lieber and Bayer—responded with shock and revulsion.[119]

Kolokotronis had a vested interest in portraying the klephtic tradition in a positive light. As a central figure in the Greek struggle, and one whose authority was institutionalised after independence, his narrative aimed to legitimise the moral standing of the movement. Within this framework, rape carried a distinctly negative moral weight—an act incompatible with the heroic ideal he sought to construct—and was therefore explicitly condemned. However, this condemnation was not necessarily reflective of a uniform set of values among all Greek combatants. On the contrary, the glorification of sexual violence in some accounts, along with extensive evidence of sexual exploitation, suggests significant regional and individual variations in conduct and moral codes.

Moreover, sexual violence was not confined to military contexts alone. It also appeared in civilian life, often rooted in the dynamics of class and gender hierarchy. Women working in subordinate positions, particularly those from lower social strata, were vulnerable to sexual harassment and coercion by their employers—sometimes under the

---

[116] Kolokotronis, *Διήγησις Συμβάντων*, 82.

[117] St. Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free*, 43.

[118] Kolokotronis, *Διήγησις Συμβάντων* 40.

[119] St Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free*, 83.

guise of consensual exchange. The boundaries between rape and prostitution were at times blurred, and accusations of rape could be countered with claims of blackmail or marriage entrapment. In both civilian and military contexts, sexual violence was closely tied to concepts of honour, power, and social status. Punishments, when they occurred, were often selective: men of higher status could be shielded from repercussions, as in the case where Makrygiannis, acting as a moral guardian, refrained from punishing young aristocrats for attempted rape, opting instead for paternalistic counsel.[120]

Importantly, these cases show that the way rape was treated—whether condemned or celebrated—was deeply influenced by the identity of the victim. While rape of Christian women by fellow Christians was often seen as an intolerable breach of honour,[121] the rape of *others* (such as Muslim women, enslaved persons, or socially marginalised women) could be tacitly accepted or even glorified. This stark discrepancy reveals how the boundaries of acceptable behaviour were defined not solely by moral codes, but by perceptions of otherness. Rape, in these cases, became both a weapon and a marker of dominance over those outside the imagined moral community.

Kasomoulis' accounts described how the local population of Naousa launched a violent attack on Turkish civilians in the market after a local assembly discussed whether to join the insurgents or obey the authorities' call for disarmament. Kasomoulis explained that the people's excitement stemmed from speeches that highlighted past tyrannical experiences and the belief that a free future would end their suffering.[122] Even young children engaged in violence. At the outset of the war, two distinguished Turkish prisoners were assaulted by children on the island of Hydra and barely escaped death after being locked in a monastery.[123]

---

[120] Katerina Mousadakou, 'Violence Against Honour: Shame and the Crime of Rape in the Age of the Greek Revolution (1821–1828)', in Judith Rowbotham, Marianna Muravyeva, and David Nash, eds, *Shame, Blame, and Culpability: Crime and Violence in the Modern State* (London: Routledge, 2013), 141–151.

[121] Ibid. 143-146.

[122] Kasomoulis, *Ἐνθυμήματα Στρατιωτικά*, 203.

[123] Ibid. 163-164. Kasomoulis was accompanying the prisoners and explained that 'it took serious effort to ensure that the children would not kill them' (*τρόμαξα να προφυάξω από τας χείρας των παιδιών τους δύο Τούρκους να μη τους θανατώσουν και τους έκλεισα εις το Μοναστήρι*). Interestingly, seeking asylum in holy temples was a guarantee of restraint from the Ancient Greek years. However, in this case, Kasomoulis 'locked' the prisoners in the monastery, showing that probably the temple *per se* would not have restrained the attackers.

While regular negotiations with besieged enemies can be found in various accounts, the preservation of lives was often not respected. Military leaders mention the difficulty to restraint their soldiers, but we cannot be sure that they tied hard to stop their forces from assaulting non-combatants.[124] In other cases, where negotiations were respected, there are accounts of successful enemy transportations.[125] During the siege of Monevasia in 1821, Greek soldiers executed sixty Turkish civilians (men and women) in front of the city's walls.[126] Ypsilantis ordered an officer to negotiate the town's surrender, promising to spare the lives and property of the enemy and transport the surrendered Turks to Asia Minor. However, the gates opened—only for the city to be plundered and many of the non-combatants and surrendered prisoners to be murdered. [127] Moreover, Alexandros Mavrokordatos described how after Lord Byron's attempts, the Greeks released non-combatant prisoners (mostly women and children), who might have otherwise been killed.[128]

Makrygiannis admitted that, after negotiating terms of surrender and officially agreeing to stop the attack and respect the lives of the enemy (he even uses the term treaty to highlight the official character of the agreement), the Greek fighters attacked the surrendered enemy and massacred numerous men but also non-combatants, including women and children.[129] He also describes that there were Turks who survived the killings, due to the 'treaty'. It is obvious that restraining the insurgents was extremely difficult, and even though after massacring enemies, the Greek leaders managed to stop them from exterminating everyone, respecting official agreements without any killing seemed impossible.

---

[124] Kolokotronis, *Διήγησις Συμβάντων* 80-83. Kolokotronis presents the negotiations with besieged enemies during the siege of Tripolitsa. Even though Kolokotronis' words depict a more Western approach where the lives of those who were fleeing the fallen city should be respected, the outcome was completely different.

[125] Ibid. 138-139.

[126] St, Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free*, 42.

[127] Ibid, 42.

[128] Alexandros Mavrokordatos, *Ἱστορικὸν Ἀρχεῖον Ἀλεξάνδρου Μαυροκορδάτου*, ed. Emmanuel Protopsaltis (Athens: Academy of Athens, 1978), 2:164.

[129] Makrygiannis, *Memoirs,* 173.

Prisoners of war that were transferred away from the fallen city of Tripolitsa were executed after a false alarm of a large Ottoman force being dangerously close.[130] The concept of prisoners of war was not similar to dominant ideas of the Roman-Christian synthesis of the East Roman period. Most prisoners of war, whose lives were spared, were wealthy, e.g., landowners or high-ranking civil and military officials, as they could pay high ransoms to escape or provide vital information. Cases, where important Ottoman officials were spared for ransom, have been reported in different sources.[131] However, even these 'important prisoners' were sometimes tortured to reveal information.[132]

Muslim prisoners of war from lower classes were either killed or forced to convert, while women were usually enslaved.[133] This behaviour shows a few important elements of the ideas surrounding Just warfare and 'otherness'. First of all, the utilitarian approach of treating prisoners differently based on the needs of the cause. The poorly equipped Greek insurgents needed funds to continue fighting and thus, forcing such Muslim prisoners to convert might have been considered strategically mistaken. On the other hand, poor Muslims' lives only meant something if converting to Orthodox Christianity.[134] Class in an interreligious context did not exist as a concept. Even though the majority of the Greek and non-Greek Orthodox fighters were poor, the treatment of the 'other', does not show norms of compassion towards fellow peasants.

Unrestrained and indiscriminate violence were outcomes of the understanding of victory. For the Greeks, victory meant independence, while for the Ottomans victory meant successful suppression of the rebellion. Both sides needed to invoke fear and achieve their goals. Athanasios Diakos was spotted heavily wounded after the end of a battle and was impaled by the Turks. The similarities between the brutal practices of the two sides toward survivors of conflict reveal a common norm of mistreating prisoners and a tendency of exterminating the 'other'. On both sides, the compromise did not seem like an option when pursuing victory.

---

[130] St Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free*, 49-50.

[131] Kolokotronis' accounts highlight the necessity to ensure that Ottoman officials (Pasha) were caught alive on numerous occasions.

[132] St Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free*, 49-50.

[133] Ibid. 40.

[134] Ibid.

Atrocities against non-combatants were regular from both sides during the years of the war. The insurgents were usually acting spontaneously, as various sources and historical accounts have highlighted that military leaders were negotiating terms and frequently explained how tough it was to restrain enraged people from revenge against the enemy. On the other hand, the systematic extermination of the Greek Orthodox population of Chios was based on official state crisis management policy, showing that the Ottoman norm when suppressing threatening movements was indiscriminate violence.

Indiscriminate warfare can also be detected in the official Ottoman practices. In case of revolutionary activity or atrocity against local Turkish populations, the state did not distinguish between those who supported these acts and those who were loyal to the regime.[135] Such approaches reveal an abysmal identity chasm, as indiscriminate violence was rooted in the perception that collateral damage did not matter. The identities of 'self' and 'other' were defining the behaviour of both sides in times of turmoil and the extreme aggression of this dialectic relationship stems from a powerful perception of 'Hobbesian' 'otherness'.

Dismembering enemies during the War of Independence it was considered typical behaviour.[136] Sources indicate that such practices were regular for the Ottoman army as Turkish commanders even sent bags of ears to the capital to highlight their triumphs to their superiors.[137] Lyrics from *Klephtika* reveal that brutality and dismembering were typical in the Ottoman forces.[138]

Makrygiannis and Kolokotronis described that the insurgents' strategy when besieging the enemy was cutting off supply routes (food and water).[139] The offensive measures were mostly based on artillery. The bombing could last an entire day and thus the Greek forces needed desperately the means to keep firing at the enemy. Makrygiannis highlights that when raiding enemy territories his soldiers were trying to eliminate the enemy and

---

[135] Ibid. 78

[136] Kolokotronis, *Διήγησις Συμβάντων*, 69

[137] St Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be*, 38.

[138] 'The fields are thirsty for water, and the mountains (are thirsty) for snow. The hawks (are thirsty) for preying on little birds, and the Turks (are thirsty) for taking heads'; 'And as he (*klepthes*) was roaming in Tyrnavos, the enemy found him and got his head' in Fauriel,*Chants populaires de la Grèce moderne*.

[139] Makrygiannis, *Memoirs*, 171; Kolokotronis, *Διήγησις Συμβάντων,* 118.

get as much booty and material capabilities as they could. [140] A theme that occurs from the analysed sources is the norm of chasing the defeated enemy. The chase aimed for the extermination of those who fled but also for the acquisition of booty. [141] Accounts of chasing the Turkish soldiers, followed by women and children, until 500 of them drowned trying to cross the river reveal that chasing the enemy was taking place regularly and did not distinguish between combatants and non-combatants. [142] In the aftermath of battle, the soldiers were taking any precious items from their dead enemies. Kolokotronis explains that it was not easy to restraint this habit, even though on a number of occasions this pursuit of booty delayed the operational plans, as troops seemed more eager to collect as much as they could from the dead than follow their commanders (*οι Έλληνες έπεσαν εις τα λάφυρα και εις τους σκοτωμένους και δεν ακολουθούσαν με προθυμία*). [143] Greek *klephtes* were raised in an outlaw environment and possibly stripping the dead enemy seemed a deserved prize after the conflict.

Primary sources highlight the significance of the Greeks collective experience of being treated 'tyrannically', partially explaining the legitimacy of indiscriminate brutality. Kolokotronis mentioned that after the mass atrocities during the plundering of Tripolitsa, he was taken in front of the plane tree that the Ottomans used to hang the Greeks. Only in the sight of the tree, where he thought of how many of his kinsmen (*πόσοι από το σόγι μου*) and fellow Greeks (*πόσοι από το έθνος μου*) had died there, he found comfort for the mass killing of the Turks (*παρηγορήθηκα για το σκοτωμό των Τούρκων*).[144]

Kolokotronis' describes a pre-1821 incident where his father participated in a local armed uprising, justifying the brutal practices of his forces by saying 'what else could I do, since for centuries you have ruined our lives by destroying my fatherland and enslaving our people?'[145] Kolokotronis' family's experience was linked with violence and men whose

---

[140] Makrygiannis, *Memoirs*, 171.

[141] Ibid. 171-172.

[142] Kolokotronis, *Διήγησις Συμβάντων,* 58.

[143] Ibid. 69.

[144] Kolokotronis, *Διήγησις Συμβάντων,* 83. (The term *σόγι* is used to describe family or kin and the term *έθνος* means nation. Finally, the term *παρηγορήθηκα* mirrors the feeling of comfort, after a sad or traumatic experience).

[145] Ibid. 6.

past was linked with the art of killing could inspire respect. [146] *Klephtika* songs offer numerous examples of the pre-19th century virtuous violence norms:

> 'Diplas (name of a *klepthes*) is alive, he is there in every war…
>
> They (his men) eat the gunpowder just like bread, the bullets like collations
>
> And they slaughter Turks like (they slaughter) goats, agades like (they slaughter) rams.' [147]

Thus, violence was an integral part of the peasantry's experiences, as numerous people committed themselves to an outcast life, while others had to face economic hardship and often the oppressive behaviour of the authorities. Slaughtering the 'other' and being forged into warfare were seen as virtuous acts. Such norms contributed to both the popularity of the independence movement and the ways the wars were fought, especially when it comes to cases of indiscriminate violence.

Overall, the brutal massacres, the destruction of surrendered forces despite negotiated agreements, and the near-complete disregard for distinguishing combatants from non-combatants all indicate that Greek insurgents saw their struggle not merely as a political rebellion but as a divinely sanctioned war of retribution. The presence of Orthodox Christian symbols—crosses, saints, and icons—alongside mass executions underscore how the fighters saw their actions as righteous in the eyes of God. In their worldview, there were no moral constraints when fighting 'infidels,' and even the most excessive violence was justified as an act of divine will. This perception was further reinforced by the klephtic oral tradition, which framed resistance as a sacred duty, merging Christian identity with the concept of self-defence and retribution against centuries of oppression. The war, therefore, was not legitimised solely by national aspirations, which were still a developing concept for many Greeks, but by a deeply ingrained religious consciousness that shaped their collective experience and sense of justice.

Despite the Greek partisans drawing from Byzantine identity constructs—often referencing the fall of Constantinople and the Palaeologan dynasty as part of their grievances—their approach to warfare significantly diverged from Byzantine practices. While the Byzantines, influenced by Roman-Christian traditions, sought to limit warfare by avoiding a fully developed *Just War* doctrine, the Greek partisans displayed a far more unrestrained and disproportionate use of violence. Byzantine warfare, despite its deeply

---

[146] Gallant, 'Greek bandits', 269-290.

[147] 'Ο Δίπλας είναι ζωντανός, πόλεμον δεν αφίνει...

Τρών την παρούτην σαν ψωμί, τα βόλια σαν προσφάγι,

Και σφάζουν Τούρκους σαν τραγιά, αγάδες σαν κριάρια.' Fauriel, *Chants populaires de la Grèce moderne*.

religious undertones, was often tempered by pragmatism and strategic restraint, recognising that indiscriminate slaughter could be counterproductive. In contrast, the Greek insurgents saw victory as both a political and theological necessity, a struggle in which total annihilation of the 'other' was not only permissible but desirable. This shift from a regulated, strategic approach to an almost eschatological perception of warfare—where victory meant divine justice and defeat was unthinkable—underscores how the Greek War of Independence was driven by a more holistic and absolute form of religious legitimacy. Let us remember, that Byzantine and Greek military theory and practice were continually influenced by and engaged with Islamic concepts, such as the notion of Holy War, which cannot be excluded from the Greek partisans' practice. The lack of proportionality and the absence of attempts to mitigate violence, even when leaders formally negotiated with their enemies, highlight that religious conviction did not merely justify warfare; it actively encouraged its most extreme expressions.

5.6 Conclusion

The Greek War of Independence is a crucial component of the genealogy of Just war ideas in the Greek thought, as it introduces the concept of the nation in the collective mentality of the Hellenic community. While religious factors defined the concepts of 'self and 'other' it was the self-determination from Ottoman rule that dominated the ideas of legitimate warfare. The merchant class and the Greeks of *diaspora* communicated these Just war ideas to a widely accepted military leadership, who absorbed the influence and constructed a manifesto that reached the hearts and minds of the people.

Proportionality was largely absent as a guiding criterion. The war featured widespread unrestrained violence, particularly against non-combatants, which was morally legitimised by a deep-seated perception of existential threat and historical injustice. At the same time, the criterion of last resort was redefined: it was not understood as the final option after diplomatic exhaustion, but rather as the inevitable and morally required path toward the holistic emancipation of the 'self'—that is, all Greek-Orthodox populations under Ottoman rule.

This redefinition was not unprecedented, but drew from facilitating conditions rooted in the Byzantine past, particularly in the Orthodox tradition, the use of the Greek language, and the intellectual continuity of the late Byzantine (Palaeologan) period, where attempts were made to reconcile Byzantine identity with ancient Hellenism. These elements shaped a distinct framework of identity, which was critical for the development of a Greek Just War tradition that diverged from its Western counterparts. Rather than direct causation, the Byzantine legacy functioned as a normative reservoir, enabling modern thinkers and revolutionaries to construct a war ethos that was simultaneously historical and adaptive.

Orthodox Christianity, preserved through centuries of Ottoman rule, served not only as a religious anchor but as a cultural boundary that defined the 'self' against a hostile 'other'. This spiritual identity, embedded in both elite discourses and popular traditions (e.g., klephtic songs), became the moral basis for both the legitimacy of the war and the sacralisation of its objectives. Religion and nation merged, forming a communitarian understanding of Just War that prioritised the protection, emancipation, and restoration of the collective community over universal norms – and over international rules, which facilitated the development of Megali Idea and the late 19th and 20th century Greek foreign policy.

The Palaeologan Renaissance played a crucial role in this construction. It revived Hellenic cultural memory within a Byzantine framework and provided the intellectual tool for 19th-century Greek nationalism. By linking Byzantine territorial legacy with ancient Greek civilisation, it offered an ideological template through which 19th-century revolutionaries could articulate claims of sovereignty and civilisational continuity. This revival was instrumental in naturalising the view that Orthodox Christian and Greek-speaking communities formed a legitimate, continuous polity that had been interrupted—not erased—by Ottoman conquest.

The dialectical relationship with the West shaped both the revolution's strategy and its normative aspirations. Western support—whether through philhellenism, material aid, or ideological alignment—was crucial to the movement's success. However, the resulting bond did not eliminate foundational differences in Just War conceptualisation. The Greek framework remained deeply communitarian, grounded in collective identity, moral duty to the group, and historical-religious obligation. This divergence persisted in later decades and would resurface in the formulation of foreign policy visions such as the Megali Idea.

To sum up, this chapter has shown that the Greek Just War tradition developed through a complex synthesis of factors, which can be summarised in four key findings:

1. Minimal reliance on proportionality and restraint: Violence was often unrestrained, particularly against non-combatants, and justified through existential reasoning rather than universal ethical frameworks.
2. Redefinition of 'last resort': War was not simply the final diplomatic option, but the moral imperative of total emancipation—spiritually, nationally, and territorially—of the Orthodox Greek 'self'.
3. Facilitating conditions in the Byzantine legacy: Especially through Orthodox Christianity, the Greek language, and the Palaiologan revival of Hellenism, Byzantine norms enabled the articulation of a distinctive war ethos that merged religious and national identity.
4. A communitarian and identity-based divergence from the West: Even amid Western alliances and ideological borrowings, the Greek tradition of Just War

remained focused on group belonging, cultural continuity, and moral obligation to protect the in-group—features that distinguish it from other Western models.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 A genealogy of the 'self': 'Us and them', war, and communitarian identities

This final concluding chapter aims to discuss the most important findings of the study by synthesising the structural pillars of the Greek Just war tradition. The study completed a journey of presenting ideas within different historical boundaries, but also reflecting on their impact on empirical evidence and cases. Each chapter comprised of a wide collection of primary and secondary evidence that show the way war was perceived and how these perceptions influenced actions and defined future norms, or how they were challenged, replaced or survived the continuous dialectic of ideas.

Each era possesses unique characteristics that differentiate it from others. Consequently, my analysis highlights how the examination of each period enables us to trace the influence of ideas in subsequent eras. This clarifies two essential points: firstly, the problematic nature of assuming (ahistorical) uniformity in the realm of IR, and secondly, the decisive role of ideas in providing meaning for actions in different communities. The Greek Just war mentality has been continuously developing but numerous repetitive themes can be identified through this journey. Every finding echoes the theoretical principle of Jack Snyder, who claimed that once a distinctive approach towards war and strategy is embraced, it tends to persist even as circumstances evolve, emphasising the significance of 'culture'.[148]

The thesis conducted a genealogy of ideas within the Greek Just war tradition, demonstrating the existence of a distinct Greek approach to Just war. This analysis reveals how the Greeks' unique self-understanding shaped their ideas and practices of war from ancient times onward. A core theoretical principle guiding this study is Antonis Liakos' concept that culture shapes communities' historical perceptions based on their self-identity.

The initial significant discovery pertains to the examination of the Ancient Greek Just war tradition. The genesis of the principles governing Just war can be traced back to the Greco-Roman period, during which Greek thought prepared the ground for Roman philosophical thought which in turn contributed to the formulation of a systematic framework distinguishing between Just and Unjust wars. While it is true that the Ancient Greeks did not formulate a systematic doctrine of Just war, elements of what would later construct the ontological foundation of the Western Just war tradition can be discerned within various aspects of Greek thought.

---

[148] Jack Snyder, 'The Concept of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor', in C.G. Jacobsen, ed., *Strategic Power: The United States of America and the USSR* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 4.

The ancient Greek *poleis* (city-states) viewed themselves as autonomous entities. Their wars were not wars of conquest but struggles for hegemony that did not translate into territorial expansion. This outlook persisted even after the Persian Wars, when the Greeks developed a stronger collective identity against the Persian 'other.' Despite this, the Greeks did not aim to export Hellenism abroad; they focused on their *poleis*, not the world. This introspective approach led to internal conflicts, such as the Peloponnesian War, over whether to centralise Greek identity or maintain autonomous city-states. Aside from Alexander the Great, Greek ideas remained communitarian and inward-looking.

This exceptionalism tied to identity, coupled with a strong emphasis on documenting events and ideas, underscores their perception of an unbridgeable gap between the 'self' and the 'other'. Consequently, they developed a normative framework grounded in a communitarian understanding of humanity and inter-polity relations. My genealogical study uncovered the impact of cultural exceptionalism in the ancient era which became a crucial ontological element of the evolving perceptions around identity-related constructions and ideas on Just war.

In contrast, Rome developed a Just war tradition based on offensive defence and expansion, viewing the romanisation of the world as a legitimate condition based on a universal understanding of the 'self'. This was fundamentally different from Greek norms but became integral to the Roman-Christian ideology of universality, later influencing the Byzantine state. The Romans also perceived themselves as politically superior and the Roman identity that accompanied the citizens of the East Roman state found fertile ground on the pre-Roman norms of the Greeks. Interestingly, the Byzantines synthesised Greek communitarianism and Roman-Christian universality, creating a distinct Just war tradition where the state, i.e., the territorial unit that was controlled by the imperial authority, was seen as the protector of Christians – they saw themselves as the responsible actor to protect the 'self', without expansion and slowly by rethinking themselves in Greek-Orthodox terms, distinguishing their self-perception from other Christians. Overall, they did not seek to export their civilisation but viewed their state as the world itself, combining Greek and Roman-Christian ideas.

On a pragmatic level, Byzantine engagement with 'others' yielded two significant outcomes: firstly, the development of a sophisticated foreign policy marked by diplomacy, interdependence, and strategic maneuvering to navigate conflicts without resorting to force; secondly, the acceptance of a diverse society wherein different entities could coexist as long as they did not pose a threat to the Byzantine 'self'. Examining the language of the most important military documents of the Byzantine period, I identified how these pillars mirror the superiority of the 'self' *vis a vis* 'others', but also the applicability of the Roman defence doctrines in a multicultural geopolitical neighbourhood.

Historical events, such as the Schism of 1054 and the Fourth Crusade (1204), alongside material factors like trade conflicts and the military might of the West, shaped Byzantine Just war theorising. The East Romans (*Rhomaioi*) saw themselves as the sole heirs of the Roman tradition, entrusted with upholding the Kingdom of God, safeguarding the faith, and aiding those in need. Despite a brief alignment with Crusader ideology after the devastating defeat at Manzikert, Byzantine reluctance to embrace a pan-Christian identity persisted, particularly heightened after the sacking of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204.

This period marked a significant identity reconstruction within Eastern Orthodox ideology, drawing on Ancient Greek heritage to define its stance *vis-a-vis* Western Christians and the diverse non-Christian entities in its geopolitical sphere. The Byzantine Just war tradition posited the 'self' as unique, necessitating a centralised system wherein imperial authority wielded the power to protect and ensure the perpetuity of the state.

This theme echoes the Greek communitarian ethos, portraying a solitary and unique culture that neither seeks universal dissemination nor relinquishes its sense of superiority compared to other Christians. Central to this narrative is the incorporation of a Roman legacy, manifested in the inclusive citizenship policy encompassing diverse ethnicities, even extending to multiethnic individuals and families holding positions within the imperial hierarchy. This ethos further reinforces Byzantine identity as a beacon of cultural distinctiveness and historical continuity.

Modern Greek ideas were deeply influenced by this Byzantine legacy. When fighting for independence, Greeks aimed to reclaim territories with Greek Orthodox populations, guided by the belief that they had a sacred duty to protect their community. The Byzantine Just war tradition and the concept of the East Roman Empire as the legitimate protector of Orthodox Christians shaped Modern Greek narratives, emphasising the need to reclaim lands in Asia Minor rather than the Ancient Greek territories of Sicily.

The Modern Greeks' perception of history, shaped by their present self-conceptualisation, led them to view reclaiming territories as part of a Just war mission. This perspective was influenced by the historical clash of civilisations, frequent wars against 'others', and the presence of Greek populations under Ottoman rule. These factors led to the establishment of the *Megali Idea* and a systematic understanding of their duty to expand and protect.

Genealogies do not imply an absence of change but rather uncover how change emerges as a synthesis of established ideas and external influences. The Greek Just war thought of the mid-19th to early 20th centuries, deeply rooted in the Megali Idea and nationalist ideology, underscores this process. This ideology, centred on the reclaiming of 'lost fatherlands' from the Ottoman Empire, was a driving force behind the foreign policy objectives of the Modern Greek state.

To fully grasp the defensive rhetoric, cultural identity divisions, and the narrative of an inherent obligation to protect Greek Orthodox populations, one must consider the long-term cultural dynamics of Just war. These dynamics were not recent inventions but were shaped by centuries of identity-based dialectics during the late East Roman period and the self-perception of Modern Greece after the War of Independence. The *Megali Idea* itself is a synthesis of multiple influences, but its core themes—the 'salvation of the self', the definition of 'the self,' and the ongoing conflict between 'self and other'—can only be deeply and concretely understood by examining their genealogical roots. This approach reveals how these ideas were legitimised in the past and how they were reinterpreted following the establishment of the Modern Greek state.

My study does not simply draw direct lines between pre-Modern history and the foreign policy objectives of Modern Greece; rather, it uncovers the intricate interdependence of actions and ideas. It shows that these actions and ideas are not solely the product of contemporary dynamics but are also deeply rooted in normative and idealistic foundations. These foundations were preserved and communicated through the continuity of the Greek language, the solidification of identity dichotomies that intensified under Ottoman rule, and the transformation of the past into a legacy that informed the security discourses of the Modern Period.

Overall, the Greek Just war tradition is distinct in its evolution across three historical phases—Ancient Greece, Byzantium, and Modern Greece—each shaping a unique normative framework for war. Unlike Western Just War traditions, which emphasize universal moral constraints on warfare, the Greek approach has been historically shaped by *autonomia*, *eudaimonia* for the self, and a selective responsibility to protect, creating a tradition that prioritizes kinship-based obligations over universal Just war norms.

With the rise of Byzantium, the Greek approach to Just War underwent a transformation—but without fully adopting the Roman expansionist mission. The Byzantines retained the Roman legal framework of war, which emphasized the defensive criterion, but modified it through a Christian-infused responsibility to protect Orthodox Christians. Unlike Rome, Byzantium did not seek to expand for the sake of empire-building, nor did it frame its wars as missions of civilization. Instead, Byzantine military campaigns were justified on the basis of reclaiming lost Christian territories and protecting Christian populations.

Another key distinction was the Byzantine preference for diplomacy over war, which was seen as a rational extension of statecraft rather than an existential necessity. While the Byzantines engaged in both defensive and offensive wars, they avoided total war and sought to preserve the balance of power rather than impose absolute dominance. This reinforced an introverted foreign policy, where war was seen not as a tool for reshaping the world, but rather as a way to preserve the Orthodox state against existential threats.

The most distinctive break from both Roman and Western Just War traditions occurs in the modern Greek period, where the Greek approach to war became explicitly irredentist under the influence of national continuity narratives. The Greek Just War tradition did not perceive war as a last resort—if Greek Orthodox populations remained under foreign rule, war was always justified as a necessary struggle for national justice. This created a fundamentally irredentist framework, where the continuation of Ottoman control over Asia Minor, Constantinople, or other historically Greek regions was seen as an intolerable status quo. This approach contrasted sharply with the Western Just War doctrine, which had developed into a system of legal constraints on war. In Western Europe, war was increasingly subject to proportionality, sovereignty, and last-resort criteria, whereas the Greek approach emphasized historical justice and national liberation as overriding principles.

A fundamental theme that shapes the broader landscape of the Greek Just War tradition is the connection between *eudaimonia* and *autonomia*. The Ancient Greeks regarded self-sufficiency as the defining characteristic of the perfected *polis*, and *eudaimonia*—flourishing or well-being—was central to this ideal. It was not merely an individual pursuit but a collective concern, embedded in the very autonomy of the *polis*.

This conceptual link persisted into the Byzantine tradition, where authority—both military and political—was tied to the *eudaimonia* of the Byzantine state. Justinian's *Novels*, Leo's *Taktika*, and the broader ideology surrounding the justified use of force reflect a worldview in which rulers bore responsibility for defending and securing the realm, not for expanding it or imposing divine will upon others. Unlike later European justifications for war, Byzantine legitimacy was not rooted in a duty to 'enlighten' or conquer, but in the preservation of the Byzantine *self*—a self-contained vision of *eudaimonia* restricted to defined borders.

This stands in stark contrast to the Megali Idea, where the notion of Greek *eudaimonia* shifted from a contained political reality to a Pan-Hellenic aspiration—the belief that true flourishing was only possible if all Greeks shared in it. This ideological transformation redefined *eudaimonia* as something incomplete unless it encompassed the entire Greek world, thus making reclamation and expansion a necessity.

Crucially, this genealogy suggests that Greek justifications for war have historically been self-referential, focused on securing the autonomy and well-being of the *self*, rather than engaging in cosmopolitan or multilateral approaches. Unlike modern security discourses of the 20th and 21st centuries, which increasingly justify interventionism on the basis of collective security and universal human rights, the historical Greek tradition—both in antiquity and Byzantium—did not prioritise the *eudaimonia* of others as a rationale for war. This distinction underscores a unique continuity in Greek thought: while *eudaimonia* has always been central to justifications of force, its scope has evolved from the self-contained *polis* to the broader, expansionist vision of the modern nation-state.

A final key distinction in the Greek Just War tradition is the Greek approach to proportionality. In many Western Just War traditions, proportionality serves as a fundamental constraint on warfare—even in wars of national liberation. However, in the Greek War of Independence, we observe a break from this norm. The existential nature of the conflict—a struggle between the survival or extinction of the Greek nation—resulted in an existential response. Primary sources from the revolution reveal that Greek forces often viewed the use of force as unrestricted, justified by the moral weight of centuries of oppression, but also by the responsibility to continue the nation's mission/Just struggle until the establishment of a status quo that aligns with the principles of Greek nationalism. The logic of proportionality was subordinated to the imperative of national survival and justice. This once again reflects the deep-rooted autonomy-based Greek logic of war, where justification is tied to historical identity and a communitarian sense of responsibility to fight or to interpret a condition as an existential threat, rather than universal ethical constraints.

This study identifies a crucial and unique aspect of the Greek Just War tradition: the distinct ontology of the criterion of 'last resort.' Unlike Western interpretations, which often emphasise universal responsibilities or the preservation of the status quo, the Greek understanding is rooted in exceptionalism, communitarianism, and the duty to protect and liberate the 'self,' rather than intervene in the security matters of others. This principle explains both Greece's reluctance to engage in international conflicts beyond its immediate interests and the persistent divisions over participation in collective defence initiatives, such as in Korea and Ukraine.

The Byzantine legacy plays a pivotal role in shaping this ontology for two key reasons. First, Byzantine ideas were transmitted to modern Greece through a shared linguistic and intellectual tradition, reinforced by the deliberate rediscovery of Byzantine and ancient sources as part of a broader identity construction process. Second, this process was not new—late Byzantines themselves had turned to the ancient Greek past to redefine their own identity, creating an ideological bridge that modern Greece inherited. The synthesis of ancient Greek exceptionalism with Byzantine communitarian ideals reinforced a Just War tradition centred on self-preservation and territorial reclamation, rather than cosmopolitan military obligations.

This understanding also sheds light on Greece's military posture in key historical moments. While interventions in foreign conflicts have sparked domestic divisions, the absence of military action in crises like Cyprus (1974) and Imia (1996) has fueled scepticism towards both Greek political elites and multilateral security organisations. The re-examination of Byzantine and ancient Greek sources not only facilitated the development of the Greek Just War tradition but also shaped the Megali Idea, demonstrating how historical narratives continue to influence security discourses today.

Remaining on the present-related areas, my study can serve as a valuable epistemological tool for future research into Modern Greek security discourses, the evolution of 20th-century Greek strategy, and its normative foundations. It also shows how the constructions revealed in my genealogy can enhance our understanding of Greek foreign policy and public opinion in the increasingly multilateral and interdependent world of the mid-20th and 21st centuries. The key elements of these discourses—such as Greece's stance on multilateralism, the debate over its NATO membership, European defence initiatives, and military developments—can be more comprehensively understood through the historical development of ideas that defined Just wars and have been continuously woven into the collective mentality of the Greek community.

What is the significance of discussing the existence of distinct Just war traditions within the broader field of IR? The primary importance lies in challenging positivist attitudes towards the causes of conflict and incorporating a deeper, culturally-informed set of variables when considering why communities choose war. This approach is empirical, as it examines how ideas and collective mentalities shape actions, revealing critical elements behind different communities' strategies, security, and defence logic. Tracing the evolution of Just war traditions provides a precise method for assessing the significance of modern or contemporary ideas and practices. My study can be applied to other communities, offering the broader field of war discourses within IR a more culturally-oriented perspective, especially as inter-polity relations grow increasingly intense and complex.

This study set out to uncover the question to which war is the answer within the Greek *Just War* tradition. Greek thought on war does not merely ask, *'When is war right?'*—it asks, *'When is war necessary to defend who we are?'* That deeper question—and its evolving answers—lie at the heart of the tradition, as the meaning of *'we'* was forged within a communitarian and inward-looking genealogy of identity. Given the development of Greek security discourses in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—particularly the *Megali Idea*, as well as the frequent warfare across multiple fronts—this study's findings offer a theoretical foundation for understanding how these discourses emerged and evolved.

Departing from the Realist logic of self-help and structural necessity, this research has sought to demonstrate that ideas give meaning to action, and that the *self* in Greek thought is not a fixed unit, but a constructed identity grounded in normative frameworks. These frameworks carry distinct values, priorities, and justifications—each shaping what it means to act, to defend, and ultimately, to go to war.

List of References

Select Bibliography of Primary Sources

Adamantios Korais, Mémoire sur l'état actuel de la civilisation dans la Grèce (Paris: F. Didot, 1803)

Aeschines, *Κατὰ Κτησιφῶντος (Against Ctesiphon)*, trans. A.I. Yagopoulos (Thessaloniki: KEG, 2012)

Aeschylus, *Πέρσαι (The Persians)*, trans. I.N. Gryparis, in *Οι Τραγωδίες του Αισχύλου* (Athens: Estia, 1930)

Aeschylus, *Προμηθεὺς δεσμώτης (Prometheus Bound)*, trans. I.N. Gryparis (Thessaloniki: KEG, 2015)

Agathias, *The Histories*, vol. 2A, trans. Joseph D. Frendo (New York; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1975)

Augustinus, Aurelius (St Augustine), *De Civitate Dei*, in *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, vols. 47–48, pars 14.1–2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), XIX.12

Andokides, Περί της προς Λακεδαιμονίους ειρήνης (On the Peace with Sparta), trans. A. Tyflopoulos, in Ανθολόγιο Αρχαίων Ελληνικών Κειμένων (Athens: Kentro Ellinikis Glossas, 2006)

Antisthenes, Αΐαντος λόγος (Speech of Ajax), trans. Nicholaos Skouteropoulos, in Οι Αρχαίοι Κυνικοί. Αποσπάσματα και Μαρτυρίες (Athens: Gnosi, 1998)

Aristotle, *Ηθικά Νικομάχεια (Nicomachean Ethics)*, trans. Dimitrios Lypourlis (Thessaloniki: Zitros, 2006)

Aristotle, *Πολιτικά (Politics)*, trans. S. Everson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Athanasius, *Epistula ad Amun (Letter to Amun)* (University of the Aegean Digital Archive, 2006)

Athanasius, *Letters*, trans. Philip Schaff, in *Select Works and Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library)

Basil, *The Letters*, trans. Roy J. Deterrari (London: William Heinemann, 1886)
Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, trans. Earnest Cary (London: William Heinemann, 2018)

Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *In Verrem*, in *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, trans. C.D. Yonge (London: George Bell & Sons, 1903)

Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *De Officiis (On Duties)*, trans. Margaret Atkins, ed. M.T. Griffin and E.M. Atkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *Philippics*, in *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, trans. C.D. Yonge (London: George Bell & Sons, 1903)

Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *De Re Publica (The Republic)*, trans. Niall Rudd, in *The Republic and the Laws* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)

Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *Pro Sulla*, trans. C.D. Yonge, in *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1856)

Constantine VII, *De Administrando Imperio*, trans. R.J.H. Jenkins (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1967)

Crusaders As Conquerors: The Chronicle of Morea, trans. Harold Lurier (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964)

Demosthenes, Φιλιππικοί (Philippics), trans. K. Tsatsos, Οι τρεις Ολυνθιακοί, τρεις Φιλιππικοί και ο λόγος Περί των εν Χερρονήσω. Μετάφραση, εισαγωγικά σημειώματα, σχόλια, 2nd edn ([1975] Athens: Βιβλιοπωλείον της Εστίας, 1983)

Diodoros Siculus, *The Library of History*, trans. C.H. Oldfather, Loeb Classical Library, 12 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933–1967)

Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, trans. Earnest Cary, based on Edward Spelman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937)

Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History*, trans. Arthur Cushman McGiffert (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890)

Fotakos, Fotios, Ἀπομνημονεύματα περί τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως (Athens, 1858)

Gaius, *The Institutes of Gaius*, trans. F. de Zulueta (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946)

Herodotus, *Ἱστορίαι (Histories)*, trans. Ilias Spyropoulos (Athens: Govosti, 1992)

Hesiod, *Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι (Works and Days)*, trans. Stabros Girgenis (Thessaloniki: Zitros, 2001)

Homer, *Ἰλιάς (Iliad)*, trans. Iakovos Polylas (Thessaloniki: KEG, 2015)

Homer, *Οδύσσεια (Odyssey)*, trans. D. Maronitis (Thessaloniki: Institute of Modern Greek Studies, 2006)

Isokrates, *Πανηγυρικός (Panegyricus)*, trans. St. Barakou-Maragkoudaki (Athens: OEDB, 1967)

John of Ephesus, *The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History*, trans. R. Payne-Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1860)

John Lydus, *On Powers or the Magistracies of the Roman State*, ed. Bandy (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1983)

Kallinikos Kritovoulidis, Απομνημονεύματα του περί αυτονομίας της Ελλάδος πολέμου των Κρητών (Athens: Αθηνάς, 1859)

Komnene Anna, *Alexiad (Ἀλεξιάδα)*, trans. R.A. Sewter (London: Penguin Books, 1969)

Antiochus Strategus, The Capture of Jerusalem by the Persians in the Year 614, trans. F.C. Conybeare, The English Historical Review, 25 (1910), 502–512

Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes*, trans. William Fletcher (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886)

Leo the Deacon, *History*, trans. Alice-Mary Talbot and Denis F. Sullivan, with introduction (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2005)

Leo VI the Wise, *Τακτικά (Taktika)*, trans. George Dennis, in *The Taktika of Leo VI* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010)

Lord Byron, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Project Gutenberg EBook (2004)

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, trans. J. Boulton and David Widger, *Project Gutenberg EBook* (2001)

Maurice, *Στρατηγικόν (Strategikon)*, trans. George T. Dennis (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984)

Mavrokordatos Alexandros, *Ιστορικόν Αρχείον Αλεξάνδρου Μαυροκορδάτου*, ed. Emmanuel Protopsaltis (Athens: Academy of Athens, 1978)

Menander Protector, in Blockley (ed.), *The History of Menander the Guardsman* (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1985)

Michael Psellus, *Chronographie*, ed. and trans. E. Renauld (Paris: Budé, 1926)

Michael Psellus, *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*, trans. E.R. Sewter (London: Harmondsworth, 1966)

Miller, David, and Peter Sarris. *The Novels of Justinian: A Complete Annotated English Translation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Nicholas I Mystikos, *Letters*, ed. and trans. R.J.H. Jenkins and L.G. Westerink (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1973)

Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Short History*, ed. and trans. by C. Mango (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1990)

Nikolaos Kasomoulis, *Ενθυμήματα Στρατιωτικά της Επαναστάσεως των Ελλήνων* (Athens: Αρχεία Νεώτερης Ελληνικής Ιστορίας, 1940)

Photios, *The Homilies of Photios, Patriarch of Constantinople*, ed. and trans. C. Mango (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958)

Plato, *Αλκιβιάδης (Alcibiades)*, trans. Nicholas Denyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

Plato, *Πολιτεία (Republic)*, trans. Ioannis Gryparis (Thessaloniki: KEG, 2015)

Plato, *Σοφιστής (Sophist)*, trans. Dimitris Glynos (Athens: Zacharopoulos, 1990)

Plato, *Νόμοι* (*Laws)*, trans. Trevor J. Saunders. London: Penguin Books, 1970.

Plutarch, Βίοι Παράλληλοι Αλέξανδρος - Καίσαρ (Parallel Lives: Alexander – Caesar), trans. Kaktos Translation Team (Athens: Kaktos, 1993)

Plutarch, *Marius*, in *Plutarch's Lives*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920)

Plutarch, *Σύλλας (Life of Sulla)*, trans. Alexandros Rizos Ragavis (Athens: Dionysiou Koromila, 1864)

Polybius, *Ἱστορίαι (Histories)*, trans. N.D. Triantafyllopoulos (Athens: Ministry of Education, 2002)

Polemis, Ioannis, Ο λόγιος Νικόλαος Λαμπηνός και το εγκώμιον αυτού εις τον αυτοκράτορα Ανδρόνικον Παλαιολόγον [The Scholar Nikolaos Lampenos and his encomium to the emperor Andronikos II] (Athens, 1992)

Procopius, *Buildings*, trans. Aubrey Stewart, *Project Gutenberg EBook* (2021)

Procopius, De Bello Gothico (The Gothic Wars), trans. H.B. Dewing, Project Gutenberg EBook (2007)

Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, trans. Robin Campbell (London: Penguin Group, 1969)

Spyridon Trikoupis, *Ιστορία της Ελληνικής Επαναστάσεως (History of the Greek Revolution)*, vol. 4, ch. Ξ (London: Taylor and Francis, 1860)

Tacitus, *Annales*, eds. Alfred J. Church, William J. Brodribb, and Sara Bryant (New York: Random House, 1942)

Theodoros Kolokotronis, Διήγησις Συμβάντων της Ελληνικής Φυλής (Narrative of Events of the Greek Nation) (Athens: Νικολαϊδου Φιλαδελφέως, 1846)

Theofanis the Confessor, *Chronographia* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1883

Thucydides, *Ιστορία (History of the Peloponnesian War)*, trans. Nicholaos Skouteropoulos (Athens: Polis, 2011)

Titus Livius (Livy), *The History of Rome*, trans. D. Spillan (London: John Child and Son, 1857)

Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 5.52, trans. B.O. Foster (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924)

Xenophon, *Αγησίλαος (Agesilaus)*, trans. Herbert Hailstone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1889)

Xenophon, Κύρου Ανάβασις (Anabasis), trans. Demetrios Anastasopoulos, Project Gutenberg EBook

Xenophon, *Κύρου Παιδεία (Cyropedia)*, trans. V. Kalampalikis (Athens: Papyros, 1975)

Xenophon, *Έλληνικά (Hellenica)*, trans. Loukas and Athanasios Roufos Kanakaris (Athens: Galaxias, 1966)

Yiannis Makrygiannis, Απομνημονεύματα Μακρυγιάννη (Memoirs of Makrygiannis) (Athens: Vagionakis, 1947)

Select Bibliography of Secondary sources

Adcock, Frank, *The Greek and Macedonian Art of War* (California: University of California Press, 1957)

Ahmad, Eqbal, 'Revolutionary War and Counter-Insurgency', *Journal of International Affairs* (1971)

Ahrweiler, Hélène, 'L'Asie Mineure et les Invasions Arabes (VIIe-IXe siècles)', *Revue Historique*, 227/1 (1962)

Alonso, Victor, 'War, Peace, and International Law in Ancient Greece', in Kurt Raaflaub and Nathan Rosenstein (eds.), *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Asia, The Mediterranean, Europe, and Mesoamerica* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 206–225

Anderson, Benedict, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1983)

Andriakaina, Eleni, 'The Promise of the 1821 Revolution and the Suffering Body. Some Thoughts on Modernisation and Anti-intellectualism', *Synthesis: An Anglophone Journal of Comparative Literary Studies*, 5 (2013)

Asdrachas, Spyros, Mechanismoi tis agrotikis oikonomias stin tourkokratia (Athens: Themelio, 1978)

Asdrachas, Spyros, Protogoni Epanastasi: Armatoloi kai Klephtes (18th–19th centuries) (Athens: EAP, 2019)

Athanassiadi, Polymnia, 'Byzantine Commentators on the Chaldaean Oracles: Psellos and Plethon', in Katerina Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Byzantine Philosophy and Its Ancient Sources* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Bederman, David J., *International Law in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

Bartelson, Jens, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

Barton, Carlin A., 'The Price of Peace in Ancient Rome', in Kurt Raaflaub and Nathan Rosenstein (eds.), *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Asia, The Mediterranean, Europe, and Mesoamerica* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1999)

Bauch, Bernd, and Ursula Jasper, 'Revisiting "Identity" in International Relations: From Identity as Substance to Identifications in Action', *European Journal of International Relations*, 23/2, 391–415

Bernard, André, *Guerre et violence dans la Grèce antique* (Paris: Hachette, 1999)
Berger, Peter, 'Identity as a Problem in the Sociology of Knowledge', *Archives Européennes de Sociologie / European Journal of Sociology*, 7/1 (1966)

Billows, Richard, 'International Relations', in Philip Sabin, Hans van Wees, and Michael Whitby (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Boskou, Stamatia, and Kjell Engelbrekt, 'Keeping a Low Profile: Greek Strategic Culture and International Military Operations', in *European Participation in International Operations: The Role of Strategic Culture* (2016), 77–99

Bourdieu, Pierre, La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement (Paris: Minuit, 1979)

Bouteneff, Peter, 'War and Peace: Providence and the Interim', in H. Hamalis and P. Karras (eds.), Orthodox Christian Perspectives on War (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2017), 251–75

Brubaker, Rogers, Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 3–14.

Buffet, Cyril, and Beatrice Heuser, 'Of Myths and Men', in Buffet and Heuser (eds.), *Haunted by History: Myths in International Relations* (Oxford: Berghahn, 1998)
Bury, John, *A History of the Late Roman Empire from Arcadius to Irene (395–800)* (London: Macmillan, 1889)

Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998)

Buzan, Barry, and Lene Hansen, *The Evolution of International Security Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Campbell, Brian, and Lawrence Tritle (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Warfare in the Classical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

Carey, Brian, Joshua Allfree, and John Cairns, *Road to Manzikert: Byzantine and Islamic Warfare, 527–1071* (Philadelphia: Casemate Publishers, 2012)

Castoriadis, Cornelius, Η αρχαία ελληνική δημοκρατία και η σημασία της για μας σήμερα (Athens: Ύψιλον, 1999)

Cawkwell, George, 'Aeschines and the Peace of Philocrates', *Revue des Études Grecques*, 73/347–348 (1960)

Cox, Rory, 'Approaches to Pre-modern War and Ethics: Some Comparative and Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives', *Global Intellectual History*, 6 (2021), 592–613

Cox, Rory, Origins of the Just War: Military Ethics and Culture in the Ancient Near East (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023)

Dahm, Murray, 'Learning from the Enemy', *Medieval Warfare*, 6/3 (2016)
DeRose Evans, Jane, *A Companion to the Archaeology of the Roman Republic* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013)

Dimakis, Jean, 'La "Société de la Morale Chrétienne" de Paris et son action en faveur des Grecs lors de l'insurrection de 1821', in *Philhelléniques*, 145–66

Dimaras, Konstantinos, *Konstantinos Paparigopoulos: I epochi tou, i zoi tou, to ergo tou* (Athens: Morfotiko Idrima Ethnikis Trapezis, 1986)

Dobson, Andrew, 'Thick Cosmopolitanism', *Political Studies*, 54 (2006), 165–184

Doty, Roxanne Lynn, 'Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of US Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines', *International Studies Quarterly*, 37/3 (1993), 297–320

Doyle, Michael W., *Empires* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986)
Duroselle, J.-B., 'Opinion, attitude, mentalité, mythe, idéologie: essai de clarification', *Relations internationales* (1974)

Dwyer, Paul-James, 'Schism: A History of the Latin Roman and Eastern Orthodox Churches', *Catholic Insight*, 22/5 (2014)

Easterling, Patricia, and Bernard Knox (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

Echinard, Pierre, Grecs et Philhellènes à Marseille de la Révolution française à l'Indépendance de la Grèce (Marseille: Institut Historique de Marseille/CNRS, 1973)

Efstathiadou, Anna, 'Representing Greekness: French and Greek Lithographs from the Greek War of Independence (1821–1827) and the Greek-Italian War (1940–1941)', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 29/2 (2011), 191–218

Egorov, Alexei B., 'The Notion of Justice in Roman Wars and the Fetial Law', *Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica*, 25/1 (2019), 49–62

Elton, Hugh, 'Military Forces in the Later Roman Empire', in Philip Sabin, Hans van Wees, and Michael Whitby (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 297–299

Epstein, Charlotte, The Power of Words in International Relations: Birth of an Anti-Whaling Discourse (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008)

Epstein, Charlotte, 'Constructivism or the Eternal Return of Universals in International Relations: Why Returning to Language is Vital to Prolonging the Owl's Flight', *European Journal of International Relations*, 19/3 (2013), 499–519

Fabre, Cécile, *Cosmopolitan War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)

Fantham, Elaine, 'Literature in the Roman Republic', in Harriet Flower (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)

Fauriel, Claude, *Ellinika Dimotika Tragoudia* (Iraklio: Crete University Press, 1999)
Filimon, Ioannis, *Peri tis Ellinikis Epanastasis* (Athens: Τύποις Π. Σούτσα και Α. Κτενά, 1859)

Filimon, Ioannis, *Peri tis Filikis Eterias* (Athens: Pelekanos, 2011)

Finnemore, Martha, *National Interests in International Society* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996)

Finnemore, Martha, and Kathryn Sikkink, 'Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 4/1 (2001), 391–416

Fisher, Nick, and Hans van Wees (eds.), *Archaic Greece: New Approaches and New Evidence* (Bristol: ISD LLC, 1998)

Forsythe, Gary, 'A Critical History of Early Rome: From Prehistory to the First Punic War', in John Connelly (ed.) (California: University of California Press, 2012)

Förster, Stig, and Jörg Nagler, 'Introduction', in Förster and Nagler (eds.), *On the Road to Total War: The American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification, 1861–1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

Freshfield, Edwin Hanson, *Roman Law in the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923)

Freud, Sigmund, 'The Uncanny', in *Romantic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2017)

Fryde, Edmund Boleslaw, The Early Palaeologan Renaissance (1261–c. 1360) (Leiden: Brill, 2000)

Gallant, Thomas W., ‘Greek Bandits: Lone Wolves or a Family Affair?’, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 6/2 (1988)

Garst, Daniel, ‘Thucydides and Neorealism’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 33 (March 1989)

Gatsias, Athanasios, *I Istoria tou Polemou* (Athens: Livani, 1997)

Geanakoplos, Deno, ‘Church and State in the Byzantine Empire: A Reconsideration of the Problem of Caesaropapism’, *Church History*, 34/4 (1965)

Gilmer, James, ‘Maurice’s Strategikon’, *Medieval Warfare*, 4/6 (2014)

Gilpin, Robert, ‘The Theory of Hegemonic War’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 18/4 (1988)

Goldsworthy, Adrian, ‘War’, in Philip Sabin, Hans van Wees, and Michael Whitby (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Goldewijk, Berma, ‘Why Still Critical? Critical Intelligence Studies Positioned in Scholarship on Security, War, and International Relations’, *Intelligence and National Security*, 36/4 (2021), 476–494

Graziosi, Barbara, *Homer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016)

Green, Philip James, *Sketches of the War in Greece* (London, 1827)

Grunbart, Michael, ‘The Enemies of the Empire: Portrayed Images’, in Yannis Stouraitis (ed.), *A Companion to the Byzantine Culture of War, c.300–1204* (Leiden: Brill, 2018)

Guzzini, Stefano, ‘A Reconstruction of Constructivism in International Relations’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 6/2 (2000), 147–182

Haldon, John, ‘Military Service, Military Lands, and the Status of Soldiers: Current Problems and Interpretations’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 47 (1993), 1–87z

Haldon, John, Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World, 565–1204 (London: UCL Press, 1999)

Haldon, John, *Byzantium at War, AD 600–1453* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003)
Haldon, John, *The Empire That Would Not Die: The Paradox of Eastern Roman Survival, 640–740* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016)

Hall, Edith, Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989)

Harris, William, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome, 327–70 BC* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985)

Hartmann, Anja, and Beatrice Heuser (eds.), *War, Peace and World Orders in European History* (London: Routledge, 2001)

Heckel, Waldemar, Edward Garvin, and John Vanderspoel, *A Companion to Greek Warfare* (NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2021)

Helgeland, John, Robert J. Daly, and J. Patout Burns, *Christians and the Military: The Early Experience* (London: Fortress Press, 1987)

Heuser, Beatrice, Nuclear Mentalities? Strategies and Belief Systems in Britain, France and the FRG (London: Macmillan, 1998)

Heuser, Beatrice, 'Misleading Paradigms of War: States and Non-State Actors, Combatants and Non-Combatants', *War & Society*, 27/2 (2008)

Heuser, Beatrice, The Evolution of Strategy: Thinking War from Antiquity to the Present (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

Heuser, Beatrice, 'The Neglected Trinity', *Joint Force Quarterly*, 69 (2013)

Heuser, Beatrice, *War: A Genealogy of Western Ideas and Practices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022)

Heuser, Beatrice, and Eitan Shamir (eds.), *Insurgencies and Counterinsurgencies: National Styles and Strategic Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016)

Hladký, Vojtech, The Philosophy of Gemistos Plethon: Platonism in Late Byzantium, Between Hellenism and Orthodoxy (London: Routledge, 2017)

Hobsbawm, Eric, Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971)

Hölscher, Tonio, 'The Transformation of Victory into Power: From Event to Structure', in Sheila Dillon and Katherine E. Welch (eds.), *Representations of War in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)

Hom, Andrew, Cian O'Driscoll, and Kurt Mills (eds.), *Moral Victories: The Ethics of Winning Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)

Ierodiakonou, Katerina (ed.), Byzantine Philosophy and Its Ancient Sources (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Intagliata, Emanuele, 'Rome and the Tzani in Late Antiquity: A Historical and Archaeological Review', *Anatolian Studies*, 68 (2018)

Iriye, Akira, 'Culture and International History', in Michael Hogan and Thomas Paterson (eds.), *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 215

Jarvis, Lee, ‘The Spaces and Faces of Critical Terrorism Studies’, *Security Dialogue*, 40/1 (2009), 5–27

Johnson, Alastair Iain, Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995)

Johnston, Bagby Laurie M., ‘The Use and Abuse of Thucydides in International Relations’, *International Organization*, 48/1 (1994)

Kagan, Donald, and Gregory Viggiano (eds.), *Men of Bronze: Hoplite Warfare in Ancient Greece* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013)

Kalyvas, Stathis, ‘Comparing Three Greek Unorthodox Wars’, in B. C. Gounaris et al. (eds.), *Unorthodox Wars: Macedonia, Civil War, Cyprus* (Athens: Patakis, 2010)

Karamanolakis, Vangelis, *1821 kai Apomnimoneumata: Istoriki chresi kai historiografiki gnosi* (Athens: Ίδρυμα της Βουλής των Ελλήνων, 2020)

Karakatsouli, Anna, ‘French Involvement in the Greek War of Independence’, *Historein*, 20/1 (2021)

Karpouchtsis, Charalampos, ‘Greek Strategic Culture: Education, Symbols and Experiences’, *Zeitschrift für Außen-und Sicherheitspolitik*, 2/11 (2018), 203–215

Katzenstein, Peter, The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996)

Kaegi, Emil Walter, and American Council of Learned Societies, *Byzantine Military Unrest, 471–843: An Interpretation* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1981)

Keegan, John, *I Istoria tou Polemou* (Athens: Livani, 1997)

Keohane, Robert, ‘Realism, Neorealism and the Study of World Politics’, in *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986)

Keohane, Robert, ‘International Institutions: Two Approaches’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 32 (December 1988), 379–96

Koliopoulos, John S., Brigands with a Cause: Brigandage and Irredentism in Modern Greece, 1821–1912 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987)

Konstantinos, Dimaras, *Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos: I epochi tou, i zoi tou, to ergo tou* (Athens: Morfotiko Idrima Ethnikis Trapezis, 1986)

Krentz, Peter, ‘Fighting by the Rules: The Invention of the Hoplite Agon’, *Hesperia*, 71/1 (2002), 23–39

Krings, Veronique, ‘La Destruction de Carthage. Problèmes d’Historiographie ancienne et moderne’, in H. Devijver and E. Lipinski (eds.), *Studia Phoenicia X: Punic Wars* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1989)

Kyriakidis, Savvas, *Warfare in Late Byzantium, 1204–1453*, vol. 67 (Leiden: Brill, 2011)

Kyriazis, Nicholas, and Xenophon Paparigopoulos, 'War and Democracy in Ancient Greece', *European Journal of Law and Economics*, 38/1 (2014)

Lango, John, *Ethics of Armed Conflict: A Cosmopolitan Just War Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 6–10

Lanni, Adriaan, 'The Laws of War in Ancient Greece', *Law and History Review*, 26/3 (2008), 469–489

LeMasters, Philip, 'Orthodox Perspectives on Peace, War and Violence', *The Ecumenical Review*, 63 (2011), 54–61

Lounghis, Tilemachos. 'Alternative Means of Conflict Resolution'. In *A Companion to the Byzantine Culture of War, c.300–1204*, edited by Yiannis Stouraitis, 202–220. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018.

Macrides, Ruth, 'Emperor and Church in the Last Centuries of Byzantium', *Studies in Church History*, 54 (2018), 123–143

Malešević, Siniša, *The Sociology of War and Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

Manuwald, Gesine, *Cicero* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2015)
Martin, Thomas, *Ancient Rome: From Romulus to Justinian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012)

Mazower, Mark, The Greek Revolution: 1821 and the Making of Modern Europe (London: Penguin, 2021)

McDonald, Matt, 'Emancipation and Critical Terrorism Studies', in *Critical Terrorism Studies* (2009), 123–137

Monten, Jonathan, 'Thucydides and Modern Realism', *International Studies Quarterly*, 50/1 (2006)

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Human, All-Too-Human*, trans. Marion Faber with Stephen Lohmann (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984)

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morality and Other Writings*, 3.23 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)

Nikolopoulou, Kalliopi, 'Tragically Speaking: On the Use and Abuse of Theory for Life', *Symploke: Studies in Contemporary Theory* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2013)

North, John, ‘The Development of Roman Imperialism’, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 71 (1981), 1–9

Ober, Josiah, ‘Classical Greek Times’, in M. Howard, G.J. Andreopoulos, and M.R. Shulman (eds.), *The Laws of War: Constraints on Warfare in the Western World* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 12–26

O’Driscoll, Cian, ‘Rewriting the Just War Tradition: Just War in Classical Greek Political Thought and Practice’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 59/1 (2015)

O’Driscoll, Cian, *Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Just War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019)

O’Driscoll, Cian, and Andrew R. Hom, ‘Introduction: Moral Victories – The Ethics of Winning Wars’, in Andrew Hom, Cian O’Driscoll, and Kurt Mills (eds.), *Moral Victories: The Ethics of Winning Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)

Osiander, Andreas, Before the State: Systemic Political Change in the West from the Greeks to the French Revolution (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)

Ostrogorsky, George, *History of the Byzantine State* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1969)

Paipais, Vassilios, ‘Between Pacifism and Just War: Oikonomia and Eastern Orthodox Political Theology’, *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 37/3 (2024), 657–668

Papageorgiou, Angeliki, Athina Kolia-Dermitzaki, and Nikolaos Chrissis, *Byzantium and the West* (London: Routledge, 2019)

Paparrigopoulos, Konstantinos, *Istoria tou ellinikou ethnous* (Athens: Estia, 1999)
Parsons, Graham, and Mark A. Wilson, *Walzer and War: Reading Just and Unjust Wars Today* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020)

Patoura, Sofia, Oi aichmalotoi os paragontes epikoinonias kai pliroforisis (4th – 10th century) (Thessaloniki: Centre of Byzantine Studies, 2008)

Penn, Virginia, ‘Philhellenism in Europe, 1821–1828’, *The Slavonic and East European Review* (1938)

Perraivos, Christoforos, *Istoria suntomos tou Souliou kai tis Pargas* (Paris, 1803)
Petropoulos, John, ‘Politiki kai sygkrotisi kratous sto elliniko vasileio (1833–1843)’ (Athens: Mordotiko Idrima Ethnikis Trapezas, 1997)

Phang, Sara, Iain Spence, Douglas Kelly, and Peter Londey, Conflict in Ancient Greece and Rome: The Definitive Political, Social, and Military Encyclopedia (New York: ABC-CLIO, 2016)

Price, Richard, ‘A Genealogy of the Chemical Weapons Taboo’, *International Organization*, 49/1 (1995), 73–103

Rawlings, Louis, *The Ancient Greeks at War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007)

Robinson, Paul, Military Honour and the Conduct of War: From Ancient Greece to Iraq (London: Routledge, 2006)

Rosenstein, Nathan, *Rome at War: Farms, Families, and Death in the Middle Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004)

Rosenstein, Nathan, 'War and Peace at Rome', in Kurt Raaflaub (ed.), *War and Peace in the Ancient World* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007)

Roth, Jonathan, 'War', in Philip Sabin, Hans van Wees, and Michael Whitby (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Ruggie, John Gerard, 'What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge', *International Organization*, 52/4 (1998), 855

Runciman, Walter, 'Greek Hoplites, Warrior Culture, and Indirect Bias', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (1998), 734

Runciman, William, That Greece Might Still Be Free: The Philhellenes in the War of Independence (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2008)

Sears, Matthew, Understanding Greek Warfare (London: Routledge, 2019)
Shapcott, Richard, 'Critical Theory', in Between Utopia and Reality: The Practical Discourses of International Relations, 3/18 (2008), 1–22

Sidebottom, Harry, *Ancient Warfare: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

Sidebottom, Harry, 'Roman Imperialism: The Changed Outward Trajectory of the Roman Empire', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, H/3 (2005)

Snyder, Jack, The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1977)

Snyder, Jack, 'The Concept of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor', in Jacobsen (ed.), *Strategic Power: The United States of America and the USSR* (London: Macmillan, 1990)

Snyder, Jack, Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991)

Snyder, Jack, 'Anarchy and Culture: Insights from the Anthropology of War', *International Organization*, 56/1 (2002), 7–45

Stathis, Panagiotis, *1821 kai Apomnimoneumata* (Athens: Institution of the Hellenic Parliament, 2020)

Stepper, Ruth, ‘Roman-Carthaginian Relations: From Co-Operation to Annihilation’, in Anja Hartmann and Beatrice Heuser (eds.), *War, Peace and World Orders in European History* (London: Routledge, 2001)

Stewart, Gavin, ‘Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BCE–43 BCE)’, in Andrew Hom, Cian O’Driscoll, and Kurt Mills (eds.), *Moral Victories: The Ethics of Winning Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)

Stivachtis, Yannis A., ‘“International Society” versus “World Society”: Europe and the Greek War of Independence’, *International Politics*, 55/1 (2018)

Stone Tatum, Dillon, ‘Discourse, Genealogy and Methods of Text Selection in International Relations’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 31/3–4 (2018)

Stouraitis, Yiannis, ‘Reinventing Roman Ethnicity in High and Late Medieval Byzantium’, *Medieval Worlds*, 5 (2017)

Stouraitis, Yiannis, ‘Trapped in the Imperial Narrative? Some Reflections on Warfare and the Provincial Masses in Byzantium (600–1204)’, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 44/1 (2020)

Stouraitis, Yiannis, ‘State War Ethics and Popular Views on Warfare’, in Yiannis Stouraitis (ed.), *A Companion to the Byzantine Culture of Warfare, c. 300–1204* (Leiden: Brill, 2018)

Stouraitis, Yiannis (ed.), War and Collective Identities in the Middle Ages: East, West, and Beyond (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2023)

Stouraitis, Yiannis, ‘Collective Identifications in Byzantine Civil Wars’, in Yiannis Stouraitis (ed.), *War and Collective Identities in the Middle Ages: East, West, and Beyond* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2023)

Straumann, Benjamin, Crisis and Constitutionalism: Roman Political Thought from the Fall of the Republic to the Age of Revolution (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016)

Swaine, Lucas, *Ethical Autonomy: The Rise of Self-Rule* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020)

Sylvester, Christine, War as Experience: Contributions from International Relations and Feminist Analysis (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013)

Tejada, José Vela, ‘Warfare, History and Literature in the Archaic and Classical Periods: The Development of Greek Military Treatises’, *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* (2004)

Theotokas, Nikos, ‘Paradosi kai Neoterikotita: Scholia gia to Eikosiena’, *Ta Istorika*, 17 (1992)

Thomas, Martin, *Ancient Rome: From Romulus to Justinian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012)

Tsakonas, Panayiotis, The Incomplete Breakthrough in Greek-Turkish Relations: Grasping Greece's Socialization Strategy (New York: Basingstoke, 2010)

Tsardanidis, Charalambos, and Stelios Stavridis, 'The Europeanization of Greece's Foreign Policy: A Critical Appraisal', *Journal of European Integration*, 27/2 (2005)

Treadgold, Warren, 'Byzantium, The Reluctant Warrior', in Niall Christie and Maya Yazigi (eds.), *Noble Ideals and Bloody Reality* (Leiden: Brill, 2006)

Vakalopoulos, Apostolos, Τά Ἑλληνικά Στρατεύματα τοῦ 1821. Ὀργάνωση, ἡγεσία, τακτική, ἤθη, ψυχολογία (Thessaloniki, 1948)

Vakalopoulos, Apostolos, *Νεα Ελληνική Ιστορία, 1204–1985* (Athens: Vanias, 1979)

Vasiliev, Alexander, *History of the Byzantine Empire, 324–1453*, vol. I (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952)

Vayenas, Thanos, Anagnostis Kontakis: Archegos tis Kynourias (Athens, 1938)

Walzer, Michael, Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality (New York: Basic Books, 1983)

Waltz, Kenneth, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001)

Waltz, Kenneth, 'Structural Realism After the Cold War', *International Security*, 25/1 (2000), 5–41

Wendt, Alexander, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization*, 46/2 (1992), 391–425

Wendt, Alexander, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

Watson, Alan, *International Law in Archaic Rome: War and Religion* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993)

van Wees, Hans, 'The Homeric Way of War: The "Iliad" and the Hoplite Phalanx (I)', *Greece & Rome*, 41/1 (1994), 1–18

van Wees, Hans (ed.), *War and Violence in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 2000)

van Wees, Hans, 'War, Peace and World Orders in Ancient Greece', in Anja Hartmann and Beatrice Heuser (eds.), *War, Peace and World Orders in European History* (London: Routledge, 2001), 33–34

van Wees, Hans, ‘Genocide in the Ancient World’, in Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 239–258

van Wees, Hans, Defeat and Destruction: The Ethics of Ancient Greek Warfare (Graz: Grazer Universitätsverlag, 2011)

Willmott, Paul H., When Men Lost Faith in Reason: Reflections on War and Society in the 20th Century (Westport CT: Praeger, 2002)

Zei, Eleftheria, ‘Η Κρητική Επανάσταση του 1821 και η διπλή ματιά του Καλλίνικου Κριτοβουλίδη’, in Dimitris Dimitropoulos, Vangelis Karamanolakis, Niki Maroniti, and Pantelis Mpoukalas (eds.), *1821 kai Apomnimoneumata: Istoriki chresi kai historiografiki gnosi* (Athens: Ίδρυμα της Βουλής των Ελλήνων, 2020)

Zürn, Michael, and Pieter de Wilde, ‘Debating Globalization: Cosmopolitanism and Communitarianism as Political Ideologies’, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 21/3 (2016)