

Procopius and Political Realism

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Submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Masters of Research

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October 2017

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Summary

This thesis examines the political philosophy of Procopius of Caesarea, a Late Antique historian who, in his *Wars of Justinian*, wrote of the wars conducted by the Roman emperor Justinian during the sixth century A.D. The concept of political realism may invoke a modern interpretation; however, this term will be defined by the parameters of power and morality based on the political philosophy of the classical Greek historian, Thucydides. It is well known that Thucydides influenced the literary style of Procopius as many passages from Procopius' *Wars* allude to Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*. Thucydides' concepts have arguably been utilised by modern realists, much in the same way Procopius used Thucydides' political philosophy as a basis for his own interpretation of politics. Like Thucydides, we will show that Procopius believed that morality and justice would restrain the excessive use of power. Passages that will help us understand Procopius' concepts will include the siege of Naples by Belisarius in which the moral restraint of power was debated and the siege of Rome by the Goths which revealed the amoral use of power. These passages will be compared to several of Thucydides passages such as the Melian Dialogue and the Mytilenean Debate.

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of Masters of Research
at the Macquarie University. It had not been submitted for a higher degree
to any other university or institution.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "P. C. Antonides". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and 'A'.

Acknowledgements.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Andrew Gillet for the help I received in the writing of this thesis. His help in refining my clumsy narrative and my occasional obtuse ideas were very welcomed. I would also like to thank Macquarie University for providing an environment that encourages learning for its own sake, an opportunity that is diminishing in our time of hard economics. Also, a debt of gratitude to the Ancient History Department of Macquarie and their lecturers who have inspired this research.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Procopius of Caesarea, a historian of the sixth century A.D., has been our main source of information on the wars conducted by the Roman emperor, Justinian. This study will examine the use of ‘political realism’ in Procopius’ *Wars of Justinian*, a term, that we contend questions the concepts of power and morality and forms the basis of Procopius’ political philosophy.¹ Procopius’ *Wars* explored Justinian’s campaigns against the Persians on the eastern border of the Roman empire and Justinian’s invasions of North Africa, Sicily and Italy in the west during the sixth century A.D. It is well known that Thucydides influenced Procopius’ literary style as Procopius’ narrative alludes to many of the passages in Thucydides’ *Peloponnesian War*. Thucydides, a Greek historian of the fifth century B.C., explored the tension between morality and power and his concepts arguably form the basis of many modern realist’s theories.² As Procopius conceivably based his political theories on Thucydides’ ideas, modern realists will recognise familiar themes in Procopius’ *Wars*. This article will highlight a different perspective of Procopius’ works and will enhance our understanding of his political beliefs, beliefs that we will argue, were against the excessive or amoral use of power. Our research will show that Procopius, like Thucydides, viewed power as a natural human desire and this desire could only be controlled or restrained by a belief in morality, a belief in the ethical standards of society.

Passages taken from Procopius’ *Wars*, such as the Roman siege of Naples and the Gothic siege of Rome, will form the basis of our understanding of his concepts on power and morality and will be discussed fully in chapter 4.³ As these were evidently modelled on

¹ Forde (1992a: 373); Keohane (1986: 9)

² Chiaruzzi (2012: 37); Lebow (2010: 70-71); Ahrens Dorf (1997: 232); for Thucydides see Forde (2000: 151)

³ Procopius *Wars* 5.8 & 6.6

passages from Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*, an examination of several of Thucydides' pieces, such

as the ‘Melian Dialogue’ and the ‘Mytilenean debate’ will be discussed as this will indicate whether Procopius had alluded to Thucydides’ political ideas.⁴ As we will be discussing Thucydides and his connection with Procopius, this research will also examine Thucydides’ political philosophy, firstly to establish what were Thucydides’ political concepts and secondly to establish whether these concepts were used by Procopius. While there has been criticism of Procopius being an imitator of Thucydides, we intend to show Procopius’ allusions to Thucydides were designed to conceal another level of meaning.⁵ The references to Thucydides’ passages were evidently a nuanced critique of events by Procopius and were intended to be understood by his readers, or at least by those who had studied Thucydides.

Procopius’ description of the siege of Naples begins with the Romans besieging the city following their arrival in Italy and then encountering resistance when the Neapolitans refuse to surrender. Procopius’ dialogue between the Roman commander, Belisarius, and the Neapolitan envoy conceivably used many realist themes that may be found in Thucydides’ passages. As well, Procopius’ moral views on power were possibly underlined when Procopius highlighted Belisarius’ intervention in the battle in which Belisarius saved the city’s inhabitants from being slaughtered. This, we will argue, was comparable with Thucydides’ Mytilenean debate in which Thucydides emphasised the moral restraint of the Athenians after they had reversed their decision to execute the people of Mytilene for their rebellion against Athens.⁶

However, in the speeches of Belisarius and the Gothic envoys during the siege of Rome, Procopius presents the case for a state’s right to use power for its self-interest, a similar argument that was presented by Thucydides in the Melian dialogue in which

⁴ Thuc. 5.85 & 3.36

⁵ Kaldellis (2004: 24); for Procopius’ imitation of Thucydides, see Cameron (1985: 37)

⁶ Korab-Karpowicz (2006: 240-241); Bagby (1995: 186); Orwin (1994: 204)

Thucydides documented the right of Athens to attack the weaker Melians.⁷ Belisarius had occupied Rome from the Goths who now had returned to retake the city. The dialogue that took place between the Gothic envoys and Belisarius was highlighted by the Goths' criticism of Justinian's invasion of Italy, a subtle reference by Procopius who could not directly criticise Justinian's immoderate use of power.⁸ The accumulation of power was a principal argument for realism while self-interest and survival were the prime motivators.⁹ For Thucydides and many modern realists, the need for power was inherent in human nature and while Thucydides understood this need he also argued that justice was inseparably bound with a state's interest.¹⁰

The definition of political realism is often a vexed question amongst many modern scholars. While we will examine this in further detail in chapter 2, modern definitions agree on several points, such as the relevancy of ethical norms in politics, human nature and its desire for power and the structure of international politics.¹¹ Modern realism has exploited many of these concepts from the political tradition of Thucydides, concepts that arguably form the basis of modern political realism. As these ideas were also utilized by Procopius, parallels with modern realism may be seen in several passages of Procopius' *Wars*, an argument we will examine further in Chapter 3.

Chapter 1 will review modern scholarship on Procopius and Thucydides, as we will examine articles that have analysed both historians' political thoughts and their influences. Procopius' background and life will then be reviewed as it is important to understand Procopius as a product of an education system that was based on the rhetoric and the language of classical Athens. Procopius came from a line of historians who based their works

⁷ Procopius *Wars* 6.6; Thuc. 5.85

⁸ Procopius *Wars* 6.6.15

⁹ Forde (1995: 142-143); Mearsheimer (2010: 78-80)

¹⁰ Korab-Karpowicz (2006: 233); Lebow (2010: 64)

¹¹ Forde (1992: 373), Lebow (2010: 59); Mearsheimer (2010: 78)

on the literary style of Thucydides' *Peloponnesian Wars* and, such as in the case of Procopius, was conceivably used as a methodology to convey their thoughts. Lastly, the overview of Thucydides will showcase his influence through the centuries culminating in Procopius and the classicizing historians of Late Antiquity.

Modern Realism and its long theoretical tradition will be examined Chapter 2 as we explore its meaning and study the major scholars who have shaped this subject. A study of several of Procopius' texts will question whether the theories of modern realism can be applied to his works.

Thucydides and his political philosophy on power, morality and human nature will be discussed in Chapter 3. Thucydides' apparent belief that morality should restrain the excessive use of power will be examined in several of his passages, such as the debate concerning the fate of Mytilene in which the moral restraint of the Athenians stopped the slaughter of the Mytileneans.¹² In contrast the Melian Dialogue, in which the Athenians destroyed Melos, arguably showed the amoral use of power by the Athenians and how their desire for power would eventually lead to their downfall.¹³

Procopius' views on morality and power will form the basis of Chapter 4. Did Procopius have comparable views to Thucydides? We will examine several passages of Procopius' *Wars* as we contend that Procopius did hold similar views on morality and power to Thucydides. Procopius' description of the siege of Naples and Rome will provide a comparison between restrained and unrestrained power and be compared to Thucydides' descriptions of the Mytilenean debate and the Melian dialogue.¹⁴

1.1 Modern Scholarship

¹² Thuc. 3.36

¹³ Thuc. 5.85

¹⁴ For the siege of Naples see Procopius *Wars* 5.8, for Rome see Procopius *Wars* 6.6

Our main version for Procopius' *Wars of Justinian*, will be Anthony Kaldellis' recent 2014 translation, revised from H.B Dewing's 1914 text, with an introduction and notes by Kaldellis. Kaldellis has included invaluable notes linking events from Procopius' *The Secret History* to the *Wars* enabling an examination of contemporary political attitudes. Dewing's translation, *Procopius and the History of the Wars*, will also be used as will translations by various authors, such as by J. B. Bury, who wrote a translation of the dialogue between Belisarius and the envoy of the Goths during the siege of Rome in his *History of the Later Roman Empire*.¹⁵ We will be using two translations of Procopius' *Secret History*, Anthony Kaldellis' 2010 translation in his *Procopius The Secret History with Related Texts* as well as the 1935 translation by H.B. Dewing in *Procopius Secret History*. Kaldellis' translation includes many notes with links to ancient authors as well as to Procopius' other works.

The following will represent a selection of some of the recent books and articles that have been published on Procopius. In 1985 an influential study on the life of Procopius was released by Averil Cameron, titled *Procopius and the Sixth Century* and marked a new perspective in the examination of Procopius.¹⁶ In her book she maintains his three works, *The Wars*, *The Secret History* and *The Buildings*, should be studied as one as it is important to view them in relation to each other.¹⁷ Another key point was her location of Procopius' views within their own period, as she compared his attitudes with his contemporaries such as John the Lydian. Cameron, however, is critical of Procopius' political analysis and judges him to be a poor imitator of classical historians, accusing him of using his allusions to historians, such as Thucydides, to hide his lack of critical thinking. Procopius has been labelled a classicizing historian by modern historians as his works were written in the style of fifth century B.C. Attic Greek and alluded to the imagery and structure of ancient historians

¹⁵ Bury (1958: 189)

¹⁶ Cameron (1985)

¹⁷ Cameron (1985: ix-x)

such as Thucydides.¹⁸ While Cameron's study will provide valuable information on the life of Procopius and the interconnection between his three works, Cameron's arguments on Procopius' inability to critically analyse events will be refuted as we will argue his use of a Thucydidean model did not hinder his interpretation of political power. We will show that by deliberately modelling his text on Thucydidean concepts, Procopius was able to covertly examine the rule of Justinian.

The 1997 dissertation by Charles Pazdernik, titled 'A Dangerous Liberty and a Servitude Free from Care: Political *Eleutheria* and *Douleia* in Procopius of Caesarea and Thucydides of Athens', examines Athenian and Roman power and imperialism by comparing the works of Thucydides and Procopius.¹⁹ Pazdernik discusses the parallels between the two writers as he maintains that Procopius deliberately uses the imagery of Thucydides to interpret the motivations of Procopius' own historical characters, differing from the view of Averil Cameron who regarded Procopius as being merely an imitator of Thucydides.²⁰ Pazdernik's analysis of Procopius' description of the campaign in Italy and his comparison with passages from Thucydides highlight the connection between the two ancient authors, a connection that will be used in this research to emphasize what are arguably Procopius and Thucydides' similar thoughts on power and morality.

In 2004, a study on Procopius was produced by Anthony Kaldellis, written as much as a defence of Procopius' classicism and as a rebuttal by Kaldellis against what he terms as the British Byzantine establishment, a group who conceivably viewed Procopius as an imitator of Thucydides.²¹ Kaldellis' book, *Procopius of Caesarea, Tyranny, History and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity*, argues that Procopius is a nuanced interpreter of events and is not

¹⁸ Cameron (1985: 17); Kaldellis (2004: 17)

¹⁹ Pazdernik (1997)

²⁰ Pazdernik (1997: 5)

²¹ Kaldellis (2004: 38); Cameron (1985: 205)

hindered by his classicizing style, a similar argument maintained by Pazdernik. In Chapter 1, Kaldellis concentrates on the question of classicism to support his view that Procopius' allusions to classical writers were intended to present to the reader a deeper understanding of events.²² In Procopius' era, according to Kaldellis, directly criticising the emperor's decisions was dangerous, however, by using allusions Procopius could convey veiled meanings to his reader. The research presented here adopts the argument that Procopius was an interpretive historian and a nuanced critic of Justinian's rule and will show that Procopius' allusions to Thucydides' ideas of morality and power will arguably lead to an understanding of Procopius' political philosophy.

A study of recent scholarship on Procopius was undertaken by Geoffrey Greatrex in an article published in 2014.²³ Aptly titled 'Perceptions of Procopius in Recent Scholarship', its purpose is to identify the various research paths that have emerged and to caution how some interpretations have not considered the research of other scholars, especially non-English articles.²⁴ Greatrex presents an overview of Procopius' early years combining archaeological evidence with modern scholarship and then proceeds to a discussion of recent articles published on Procopius. For Greatrex, a significant failure by modern historians was to assume that Procopius' ideas were uniform, as he argued that not every passage by Procopius contained a hidden meaning.²⁵ The most beneficial aspect of this article will be its survey of recent research for as Greatrex argued, an unawareness of research could compromise scholarship.

Turning now to Thucydides, there have been several translations of Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*. The main translation that we will use is the *Landmark Thucydides: A*

²² Kaldellis (2004: 35-37)

²³ Greatrex (2014)

²⁴ Greatrex (2014: 104-105)

²⁵ Greatrex (2014: 96)

Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War, translated by Richard Crawley and edited and modernised by Robert Strassler. Supplementing this will be Rex Warner's translation in *Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War* published by Penguin Books and Charles Forster Smith's translation, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, from the Loeb Classical Library series.

Modern scholarship on Thucydides will include Jacqueline De Romilly's text, *The Mind of Thucydides* which, when first published in 1956, departed from the accepted view of Thucydidean scholarship that focussed on the historical aspect of Thucydides' writing.²⁶ Romilly's approach was to interpret Thucydides' passages as interpretive and not merely as a presentation of facts. She reveals Thucydides' narrative structure is constructed to emphasize the ideas that he wished to express. This concept by Romilly has now been widely accepted and will form our fundamental interpretation of Thucydides as we examine several of Thucydides' passages. This concept will also be applied to Procopius' narrative as we will interpret his views in a comparable manner.

The view of Thucydides as a political realist has been supported by numerous scholars including Steven Forde, who has written several articles and chapters on Thucydides' political philosophy including 'Power and Morality in Thucydides.'²⁷ The importance of this article is Forde's premise that Thucydides admired moral excellence and regarded its loss as tragic. According to Forde, the tension between morality and power was a constant theme for Thucydides, as Thucydides pondered on the contradiction of a civilisation's need to acquire power and a civilisation's moral aims. This contradiction of power and morality was arguably presented by Procopius in his *Wars* as passages such as the

²⁶ De Romilly (2012); Baron (2013)

²⁷ Forde (2000)

siege of Naples demonstrated the moral restraint on power while later passages demonstrated the excessive use of power.

Recent works on Thucydides include *The Oxford Handbook of Thucydides* published in 2017 and *Brill's Companion to Thucydides* published in 2006.²⁸ Both are edited books containing many essays concerning Thucydides' life and influence. The Oxford handbook contains several useful chapters such as Conor Whately's, 'Thucydides, Procopius & the Historians of the Later Roman Empire', which compared Procopius' intertextuality with Thucydides. Whately presents many examples of Thucydides' influence on Procopius such as their descriptions of the plague and their accounts of sieges.²⁹ Procopius is not accused of being a mere imitator by Whately as he notes, "what is most striking about Procopius' intertextual relationship to Thucydides is his ability to make the evidence work for himself."³⁰ The premise that Procopius' allusions were not simply imitating Thucydides but were used as a covert means of criticism, similar arguments that are maintained by Kaldellis and Pazdernik, will be an approach that will be followed in this research thesis.

In *Brill's Companion to Thucydides*, Josiah Ober's chapter, 'Thucydides and the Invention of Political Science', argues Thucydides' approach was not merely descriptive but was intended to be a discussion of the political and social structure of Greek society, perhaps reflecting Romilly's earlier ideas.³¹ We will suggest in this study that Procopius held comparable ideas in his *Wars*, a covert critique of power and morality.

1.2 Procopius of Caesarea

²⁸ For *The Oxford Handbook of Thucydides* see Balot & Forsdyke (2017); for *Brill's Companion to Thucydides* see Rengakos & Tsakmakis (2006)

²⁹ Whately (2017: 701-702); for the plague see Thuc. 2.48 & Procopius *Wars* 2.22

³⁰ Whately (2017: 703)

³¹ Ober (2006: 132)

“Procopius of Caesarea has written the history of the wars which Justinian, the emperor of the Romans, waged against the barbarians of the East and of the West.”³² This simple statement, echoing the introductions of Thucydides and Herodotus, introduced his history and observations on the wars of Justinian, waged against the Sassanid Persians in the east, the Vandals in North Africa and the Goths in Italy during the Sixth century A.D.³³

As a witness and a participant to the events that were described in his *Wars*, Procopius has been our main source of information for Justinian’s reign.³⁴ Recent scholarship has not greatly changed our knowledge of Procopius’ life and, as he wrote himself, he was born in the Palestinian city of Caesarea Maritima and is generally believed to have born into a wealthy family in approximately 500 A.D.³⁵ Recent excavations have revealed Caesarea as a thriving port city with a population estimated to have been between thirty five thousand and one hundred thousand during the fifth and sixth centuries A.D.³⁶ Epigraphical evidence from a number of tombs has shown that the name Procopius was typical of the city.³⁷ Inscriptions, literary sources and archaeological evidence has suggested that Caesarea was a prosperous city in the fifth century and well into the mid sixth century A.D.³⁸ Epigraphical evidence has also pointed to the religious diversity of the city with evidence of Christian, Samaritan and Jewish groups living there as well as those who were still worshipping the pagan gods.³⁹ The Samaritans may have been up to one third of the population of Caesarea and in the fifth and sixth centuries were involved in revolts that were brutally suppressed, while under Justinian the Samaritans were forced to convert to Christianity. Procopius’ civic pride with the city was

³² Procopius *Wars* 1.1.1

³³ Hdt. 1.1; Thuc. 1.1; for the wars see Bury (1958b: 75-120, 124-139, 151-209)

³⁴ Cataudella (2003: 392); see also Cameron (1985: 6); Kaldellis (2004: 3); Treadgold (2007: 176)

³⁵ Procopius *Wars*. 1.1.1; Greatrex (2014: 77); Treadgold (2007: 176); *PLRE* IIIB: 1060 see Martindale (1992: 1060)

³⁶ Greatrex (2014: 77)

³⁷ Ameling *et al* (2011: 467); Greatrex (2014: 78)

³⁸ Holum (2005: 90-91); Greatrex (2014: 77-78)

³⁹ Greatrex (2014: 78-79); Cameron (1985: 5)

evident in his narrative of the *Wars*, such as the description of his meeting in Sicily with a fellow citizen of Caesarea who was later used for a special mission, and in the *Secret History* when he remarked on the good sense of the people of Caesarea.⁴⁰

It has been assumed that Procopius had come from a prosperous family due to his subsequent career and his knowledge of classical Greek literature, as these were indications of an expensive education.⁴¹ It has also been implied that, as well as coming from a wealthy family, his family were politically prominent and it has been suggested that the Governor of Palaestina Prima, mentioned in Procopius' *Buildings*, was a relative.⁴² Caesarea may have been the civil capital of the area but for higher education the city yielded to its neighbour, Gaza. Gaza was a centre for literary production and it has been suggested that Procopius received part of his education at the famous Gaza school.⁴³ This school had produced scholars such as Procopius of Gaza (no relation) and Choricus, and was dedicated to the teaching of classical Greek literature, such as the texts of Herodotus, Xenophon and especially the works of Thucydides. If Procopius of Caesarea had attended this school, with its emphasis on the classics, then the basis of his later scholarship would have been formed. Procopius studied law although it is not known whether this was in Constantinople, in Caesarea or in the east at Berytus.⁴⁴ Procopius, with a good working knowledge of Latin, was known to be in Constantinople in 518 A.D. where he continued his studies and may have practised law.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Procopius *Wars* 3.14; *Secret History* 11.25; Holum (2005: 87)

⁴¹ Greatrex (2014: 79-80); Treadgold (2007: 176-177); Cameron (1985: 6)

⁴² *Buildings* V.7.14; Evans (1972: 30); Treadgold (2007: 176) for an opposing view see Greatrex (2014: 80)

⁴³ Greatrex (2014: 81); Evans (1972: 31); for an opposing view see Cameron (1985: 6)

⁴⁴ Treadgold (2007: 177-178); Greatrex (2014: 81)

⁴⁵ Treadgold (2007: 178)

Procopius is thought to have become an assessor, a legal advisor and secretary, to a young officer called Belisarius in 527 A.D. who, like Procopius, was in his late twenties.⁴⁶ What is not known is how these two were introduced and why Belisarius, as Duke of Mesopotamia, chose Procopius. When Belisarius was promoted to command the army in the East in 529 A.D. Procopius accompanied him on these campaigns and on the later campaigns in North Africa and Italy. Procopius appeared to be an eyewitness to many of the events described in his works, such as Belisarius' victory over the Persians near Daras in 530 A.D. and the Nika Riots that occurred when Belisarius was recalled back to Constantinople in January 532 A.D.⁴⁷ The expedition to North Africa in 533 A.D. contained detailed descriptions of Belisarius' campaigns such as the defeat of the Vandal king, Gelimer, at Decimum and then the final defeat of the Vandals at Tricamarum.⁴⁸ After these victories in 534 A.D., Belisarius returned to Constantinople to celebrate his triumph and it has been assumed Procopius was with the general when he recorded the victory celebrations.⁴⁹ In 535 A.D. Procopius accompanied Belisarius in the campaign against the Goths in Sicily, which was conquered quickly, and then faced danger when he was sent on a mission by Belisarius back to North Africa and was subsequently caught up in a mutiny.⁵⁰ This caused Belisarius' return to Libya in order to quell the mutiny after which Procopius sailed with Belisarius to Italy and remained with him until the Goths had been defeated at Ravenna in 540 A.D. which at that time, had appeared to be the end of the Gothic war.⁵¹ It seems at this point Procopius

⁴⁶ Evans (1972: 32-33); Cataudella (2003: 392-393); Treadgold (2007: 179-180); Cameron (1985: 8-9); PLRE IIIB 181 see Martindale (1992: 181)

⁴⁷ Procopius *Wars* 1.13-29, 1.24; Treadgold (2007: 179); Evans (1972: 33); Evans (1996a: 25)

⁴⁸ Procopius *Wars* 3.18.2-5, 4.2-3; Treadgold (2007: 181); Evans (1972: 35); Evans (1996a: 129-130)

⁴⁹ Procopius *Wars* 4.9.1-16; Treadgold (2007: 181); However, Evans (1972: 35) suggested that Procopius had stayed in North Africa

⁵⁰ Procopius *Wars* 5.5.1-19, 4.15, 5.9-10; Treadgold (2007: 181)

⁵¹ Procopius *Wars* 6.29.32-33, Evans (1972: 36); Treadgold (2007: 184)

left the service of Belisarius and returned to Constantinople where he started his literary career writing *The Wars*, *The Secret History* and the *Buildings* in the following decades.⁵²

The Wars, a contemporary history of the Justinian's wars, was organised into eight books and it is generally thought the first seven books were written in 550-551 A.D., with events arranged geographically, while book eight was completed a little later in 552-553 A.D.⁵³ The first two volumes described the wars between the Romans and the Sassanian Persians from 502-549 A.D. Books two and three concentrated on the wars against the Vandals in North Africa while the remaining volumes, five, six and seven, were a narrative of the Gothic wars in Italy.⁵⁴ Book 8 was written later to summarise the conflicts that had arisen after the completion of book seven.⁵⁵

The Secret History is generally believed to have been written during the same period as the first seven books of the *Wars* and is thought to have been completed by 550 A.D.⁵⁶ *The Secret History* was an unpublished critique of Justinian and his wife, the empress Theodora, and included chapters on Belisarius and his wife, Antonina. When it was rediscovered and published in 1623 A.D. by the Vatican archivist, Nicolo Alemanni, the subject matter and the resultant controversy caused Procopius' authorship to be questioned.⁵⁷ It is now generally accepted that this work was written to be integrated in to the *Wars* at a later stage, presumably when Justinian and Theodora had died.⁵⁸ Due to its controversial content, such as the demonic description of Justinian and Theodora, as well as the lewd

⁵² Treadgold (2007: 184)

⁵³ For books 1-7 see Greatrex (2014: 97); Treadgold (2007 :3) Kaldellis (2004: 3), however, Evans (1996b: 312) suggests the date of 557 for book 8, while Kaldellis (2010a: 253) and Greatrex (1994: 106) argue for 554

⁵⁴ Evans (1972: 47,61,68)

⁵⁵ Cameron (1985: 8); Kaldellis (2004: 3)

⁵⁶ Cameron (1985: 9); Kaldellis (2009: 585-586); Greatrex (1994: 102-103), arguments for a later date (559) see Cataudella (2003: 401-402) and Evans (1996b: 311-312), Croke (2005: 431)

⁵⁷ Cameron (1985: 16); Kaldellis (2010b: IX)

⁵⁸ Treadgold (2007: 205-206); Greatrex (2003: 62); Kaldellis (2017: 49); Evans (1970: 222); Cameron (1985: 50); Cataudella (2003: 62)

sexual history of Theodora, the text had not initially enjoyed a reputation as a serious critique of Justinian and, although many of its arguments have been supported by other contemporary sources, opinions are still divided on its worth.⁵⁹ Scholars such as Kaldellis and Cameron have argued this work should not be taken literally as it should be interpreted in conjunction with the *Wars*.⁶⁰ While the *Secret History* was classified as an invective, Procopius also wrote the *Buildings*, a panegyric on Justinian's construction programme which is generally thought to have been written in either 554 or 559 A.D.⁶¹ While this has been presented as a favourable text to Justinian some scholars, such as Kaldellis, have argued that Procopius' words contained a covert criticism of Justinian.⁶²

These three texts were written in a classicizing style, that is Procopius not only used the Attic Greek of fifth century B.C. Athens, but also used the imagery from writers such as Thucydides and Herodotus to interpret contemporary history.⁶³ The classicizing aspect of Procopius' scholarship has created a debate on the merits of Procopius amongst modern historians. Historians, such as Averil Cameron, have argued that this style was restrictive as it had led to a poor analysis of events while others, such as Anthony Kaldellis, viewed Procopius as a nuanced historian who must be interpreted through classical allusions.⁶⁴

Averil Cameron maintains that we cannot determine the 'real' view of Procopius due to the artificial nature of his style, as this style restricted the type of content that could be written in his *Wars*.⁶⁵ She argues that generally, the majority of Byzantine literature had been

⁵⁹ Kaldellis (2010b: xlix-l); Kaldellis (2009: 593); Cameron (1985: 49-50); Greatrex (2014: 100-101)

⁶⁰ Kaldellis (2004: 45-50); Cameron (1985: 54-55)

⁶¹ Cameron (1985: 10) argued for the earlier date, Cataudella (2003: 403-404) for the later date while Kaldellis (2004: 3) argued for somewhere in the 550's. Whitby (1985: 146) argued for 560/561, for a general overview and recent scholarship on these arguments see Greatrex (2014: 101-103)

⁶² Kaldellis (2004: 51-56); Cameron (1985: 93-98); Bell (2013: 11-12); for an overall view of current scholarship see Greatrex (2014: 103-104)

⁶³ Kaldellis (2004: 17); Greatrex (2014: 90-91); Treadgold (2007: 192); Hunger (1969/1970: 15-38)

⁶⁴ Treadgold (2007: 216-217); Kaldellis (2004: 11,19,28-29,33-34); Cameron (1985: 7-8,25-26,31-37)

⁶⁵ Cameron (1985: 25)

affected by its imitation of the classics and its backward-looking emphasis had restricted its originality.⁶⁶ Cameron asserts that this limitation prevented Procopius from understanding important events, such as the impact of Christianity on society.⁶⁷ Procopius' classicizing history, Cameron maintained, concentrated on battles and sieges and his disregard for the effect of religion showed his interpretations "were not conducive to a high level of political and historical analysis."⁶⁸

Opposing this view, Anthony Kaldellis argues that Procopius' used historical allusions to subtly convey his thoughts. In one example, Kaldellis maintains Procopius' account of the Nika riots parallels in many respects Diodorus' account of the Syracusan revolt against the tyrant Dionysius in the fourth century B.C.⁶⁹ During the Nika riots, Justinian had contemplated fleeing the city but was stopped by a defiant Theodora, maintaining that she would rather die wearing the purple than flee, as "kingship is a good burial shroud."⁷⁰ As Kaldellis notes, this was a play on words by Procopius as this well-known line came from Diodorus who, when Dionysius was in mortal danger during the Syracusan revolt, wrote in the *Library* that Dionysius had declared that tyranny was a good burial shroud.⁷¹ According to Kaldellis, this was a subtle reference as the substitution of the word tyrant implied that Procopius viewed Justinian and Theodora as tyrants, an illustration where his classicizing style was able to convey subtly his true thoughts.⁷²

The view that Procopius' classical allusions were used to convey his own thoughts will form our main strategy in this research study. Procopius' references to Thucydides, we

⁶⁶ Cameron (1985: 33)

⁶⁷ Cameron (1985: 7-8); Kaldellis (2004: 41)

⁶⁸ Cameron (1985: 8)

⁶⁹ Kaldellis (2004: 37); Procopius *Wars* 1.24.37; Diod. 14.8.5

⁷⁰ Procopius *Wars* 1.24.37

⁷¹ Diod. 14.8.5

⁷² Kaldellis (2014: 64n)

will argue, were intended to covertly show Procopius' political values, values that also reflected Thucydides' political philosophy.

1.3 Thucydides

A writer of history, a creator of style and expression, Thucydides developed a unique discourse on political thought and its use in international relations. A self-described manual for future generations, his work also became a template for later generations of historians, such as Procopius, who, we contend, used Thucydidean allusions to critique contemporary events.⁷³

Details of the life of Thucydides may be found from within his own text, as well as from ancient biographical sources. In *The Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides informs us that he was an Athenian and began writing his history at the beginning of the war in 431 B.C.⁷⁴ We are also told that he was a wealthy citizen due to having a mining concession in Thrace and his father's name was Olorus while his mother's name was thought to have been Hegesipyle.⁷⁵ The *Souda*, a tenth century Byzantine encyclopaedia, apart from stating his Athenian citizenship, noted Thucydides was descendant on his father's side from Miltiades of Marathon fame, and from the Thracian king Olorus on his mother's side.⁷⁶ The *Souda* also recorded that Thucydides had been a student of Antiphon. Antiphon of Rhamnus was a sophist, orator and author from the fifth century B.C although his identity has caused confusion as some have questioned whether Antiphon the Sophist was the same person as Antiphon the orator.⁷⁷ Thucydides is thought to have been born between 460 and 455 B.C.,

⁷³ Thuc. 1.22.4; Lisle (1977: 342-344); Romilly (2012: 3-4)

⁷⁴ Thuc. 1.1

⁷⁵ Thuc. 4.104.4 & 4.105; on the family tree of Thuc. and discussion on Olorus see Marcellinus *Life of Thuc.* 2-16; Hornblower (1994: 1-2)

⁷⁶ *Souda* (Adler no: theta 414), see Canfora (2006a: 3-6) for discussion on Thucydides father's name.

⁷⁷ Pendrick (1987: 47-60); Avery (1982: 145-148); Edwards (2000: 227-242); for an overall discussion see Hornblower & Spawforth (2003: 111-112)

indicating he was in his thirties during the war in which he served as a *strategos*, a senior military commander in 424 B.C., one of the ten annually elected officers of Athens.⁷⁸ During the war, when Athenian interests in Thrace were threatened by the Spartan military commander Brasidas, Thucydides, as the Athenian commander, was ordered to counter the Spartan aggression.⁷⁹ Unfortunately for Thucydides, he met in Brasidas an unusually enterprising Spartan leader causing his mission to fail and as punishment, he was exiled for twenty years from Athens.⁸⁰ Thucydides date and place of death are unclear due to the differing accounts we have from our ancient sources but it is thought he had died either at the end of the fifth century or at the beginning of the fourth century B.C., with his narrative of the Peloponnesian war ending before the war's closure in 411 B.C.⁸¹ The final missing events of the Peloponnesian war were added in the fourth century by the Athenian writer Xenophon in his *Hellenica*.⁸²

The modern approach of dividing his work into eight books seems to have occurred during the Hellenistic period and according to a Marcellinus, who is thought to have been a writer from the fourth or fifth centuries A.D, was re-enforced during Late Antiquity.⁸³ Dionysius of Halicarnassus noted this arrangement was used during the Augustan and later Roman periods.⁸⁴ Books 1 to 5.24 of *The Peloponnesian War* begin with Thucydides' explanation of power and the growth of civilisations and are then followed by his account of the ten year war between Athens, Sparta and their allies during the years between 431 to 421 B.C. The cold war that ensued, after the Peace of Nicias, between the two great powers of Athens and Sparta are discussed in chapters 5.25 to 5.116 and, importantly for this research,

⁷⁸ Hornblower (1994: 2-3); Canfora (2006: 11); for description of *strategos* see Azoulay (2014: 28-39); for Thuc. age see Canfora (2006a: 3-4); Cawkwell (1997: 1-2); Gellius *Attic Nights* 15.23

⁷⁹ Thuc. 4.104; Marcellinus *Life of Thuc.* 23-25; Hornblower (1994: 3); Canfora (2006: 11-13)

⁸⁰ Canfora (2006: 16-17); Hornblower (1994: 3)

⁸¹ Hornblower (1994: 4, 151-152); Canfora (2006: 17-18); Marcellinus *Life of Thuc.* 28-34

⁸² Xen. *Hell.* 1.1.

⁸³ Rubincam (1998: 230); Canfora (2006: 20); Burns (2010: 3-5)

⁸⁴ Bonner (1920: 73-82); Marcellinus *Life of Thuc.* 58; Canfora (2006: 20-22); Dio. of Halicarnassus *Thuc.* 16.

contained the Melian dialogue. In the Melian dialogue, the tension between power and morality was explored by Thucydides as the Athenians used their overwhelming force to subdue the neutral state of Melos.⁸⁵ The Thucydidean notion described in this passage of, “the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must,”⁸⁶ arguably forms one of the concepts of political realism.⁸⁷ Books six and seven discuss the Athenian invasion of Sicily while book 8 examines the continuation of the war between Athens and Sparta. It has been suggested that Thucydides used Herodotus’ narrative of the Persian Wars as the basis for his early history but unlike Herodotus, Thucydides disregarded the use of geographical or ethnographical descriptions.⁸⁸

The reception of Thucydides from the fifth and fourth centuries B.C till the time of Procopius in the sixth century A.D. contains an impressive list of historians who were influenced by his thoughts and methodology. As we have noted, his script on the wars was left unfinished but was continued by the Athenian, Xenophon, and by the unknown Oxyrhynchus historian. The Oxyrhynchus historian, possibly writing between the periods of Thucydides and Xenophon, has been examined through two sets of papyrus fragments found at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt, in which one fragment detailed the final phases of the Peloponnesian War.⁸⁹ In an examination of Xenophon, his debt to Thucydides is apparent as he arranged his *Hellenica* by the Thucydidean practise of campaign seasons and, as Hornblower noted, Xenophon’s methodology followed Thucydides’ practice of “a military conception of history.”⁹⁰ Others who have been influenced by Thucydides include the Athenian orator, Isocrates (436-338 B.C.), who provided a valuable summary of the political issues of the 4th century and the Athenian orator, Demosthenes (384-322 B.C.), in his

⁸⁵ Thuc. 5.85

⁸⁶ Thuc. 5.89

⁸⁷ Edmunds (1975: 90); Korab-Karpowicz (2006: 234); Forde (1995: 147)

⁸⁸ Stadter (2012: 39-40, 48-52); Hornblower (1995: 49-50)

⁸⁹ McKechnie & Kern (1988: 124); Hornblower (1995: 50-51); Hornblower & Spawforth (2003: 1088)

⁹⁰ Hornblower (1995: 51)

Philippic.⁹¹ Aeneas Tacticus, a Greek fourth-century writer on military matters, used allusions to Thucydides such as the speech of Brasidas before the conflict at Amphipolis, to characterise his narrative.⁹² It has also been suggested by Hornblower that Callisthenes, the fourth-century writer and nephew of Aristotle, imitated Thucydides in his fragmentary *Hellenica*. Aristotle, (384-322 B.C.), showed a familiarity with the texts of Thucydides especially in his *Politics*, in which his argument of the evolution of oligarchic power emulated Thucydidean thought.⁹³ It has also been suggested that Plato and his discussion on conflict, in which he described disputes that occurred within or outside of the state, showed a knowledge of Thucydides' concepts. Hornblower has suggested that during the Hellenistic period and early Roman periods Thucydides had fallen out of favour compared to Herodotus.⁹⁴ This may have been due to Thucydides central theme of a destructive war between two city states compared to Herodotus' description of the war against the barbarian Persians, a theme that would find favour with the Romans in their wars against non-Romans. This was not to say Thucydides was altogether forgotten during the Roman period. Canfora argued Plutarch, writing in the first and second centuries A.D., noted a connection between Thucydides and Cato the Elder (234-149 B.C.). Canfora suggested that Cato had possibly received various Greek books as a result of the Roman victory against the Macedonians in 168 B.C. and these books, which may have included Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*, later inspired Cato in his own writing.⁹⁵ Another consequence of the Roman victory over the Greeks was the appearance of Polybius, one of the thousand prominent Achaeans who were

⁹¹ For Isocrates see, Hudson-Williams (1948); Hornblower (1995: 52-53); Wilson (1966: 54-63); for Demosthenes see, Dem. 9.30 & Hornblower (1995: 52) for discussion of similarity with Melian Dialogue.

⁹² Aeneas Tacitus. 35.2 (Ch 2); Hornblower (1995: 53); see also Hornblower (1996: 444) for additional comparisons.

⁹³ Hornblower (1994: 121); Hornblower (1995: 55-56); Lintott (1992: 126-127)

⁹⁴ Hornblower (1995: 56)

⁹⁵ Canfora (2006b: 721); Plut. *Cato Major*. 2.4

taken to Rome as hostages.⁹⁶ Polybius garnered a relationship with the cultural and political elite of Rome which enabled him to document the rise of Rome. His composition, *The Histories*, apparently showed the influence of Thucydides in its use of speeches and methodology.⁹⁷ Other Roman writers who were conceivably influenced by Thucydides include Coelius Antipater, born between 170 and 150 B.C., who wrote seven books on the second Punic War, the *Bellum Punicum*, which was completed by 121 B.C.⁹⁸ After Sulla had conquered Athens in 83 B.C. it has been suggested that various older copies of Thucydides found their way to Rome and possibly into the hands of men such as Cicero.⁹⁹ Sallust, (86-35 B.C.), a Roman historian whose works included texts on the Catiline conspiracy and the Jugurthian war, was noted for his imitation of Thucydides.¹⁰⁰ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a Greek historian of the first century B.C., wrote a review on Thucydides' style of writing as well as imitating his classical attic style.¹⁰¹ This Atticizing style was a part of a revival that had grown into an influential movement called Atticism and was later called the "Second Sophistic", a cultural movement that revived the style of the sophistic orators of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. and was perceived to be the mark of an educated writer.¹⁰² As we have noted with Procopius, this style was assumed to be an indication of an educated person, an assumption that was still prevalent in Late Antiquity. A major historian that belonged to the atticizing style was Arrian of Nicomedia, 86-160 A.D., who wrote the so-called *Anabasis of Alexander*, a history of Alexander the Great in seven books.¹⁰³ Arrian's history of Alexander the Great was written in the stylistic manner of Thucydides, Herodotus and Xenophon and is

⁹⁶ Hornblower & Spawforth (2003: 1209-1210)

⁹⁷ Canfora (2006b: 724-727); Campbell (2010: 393-397); Rood (2012: 50-67); for description of Polybius' methodology see Plb.9.1-2

⁹⁸ Canfora (2006b: 727-728); Hornblower & Spawforth (2003: 355)

⁹⁹ Fromentin & Gotteland (2014: 14-17); Canfora (2006b: 729-730); Cicero *Atticus* 10.8.7

¹⁰⁰ Keital (1987: 293-300); Canfora (2006b: 735-740); Wiater (2017: 666- 676)

¹⁰¹ Grube (1950: 96); Weaire (2005: 246); Canfora (2006b: 740-745); Treadgold (2007: 13)

¹⁰² Treadgold (2007: 15); Adams (2010: 595-597); Schmitz (2011: 304-317)

¹⁰³ Bosworth (1988: 76-77); Treadgold (2007: 15); Hornblower & Spawforth (2003: 175)

perceived to be a literary tribute to Alexander's achievements. Also in the first century Josephus, a Jewish historian who wrote in Greek and became a Roman citizen, wrote, amongst other texts, the *Jewish Antiquities*, a history of the Jews intended for mainly Greek readers.¹⁰⁴ Passages of his text showed his debt to Thucydides although some of his work may have been critical of the Greeks and their history.¹⁰⁵ Plutarch, who lived in the first and second centuries A.D., criticised Herodotus' approach to writing history and argued Thucydides should be seen as the model for all historians.¹⁰⁶ Lucian, from the second century A.D., was a scholar whose texts were difficult to categorise. His *How to write a History*, was intended to instruct potential historians to write in the manner of Thucydides.¹⁰⁷ Though some may view him as a satirist, Lucian argued for the historian to be fearless and truthful when writing history and not be servile, as some writers of his period had become under the Romans. In the early third century, Cassius Dio of Nicae, in his *Roman History*, was another influenced by Thucydides while in the fourth century we have Ammianus Marcellinus, who wrote one of the major historical texts of Late Antiquity, the *Res Gestae*.¹⁰⁸

With the influence of ecclesiastical writing on the rise in the third and fourth centuries secular Greek historiography slowed dramatically but did not disappear completely.¹⁰⁹ The ecclesiastical writer, Eusebius, showed occasional allusions to classical works, though perhaps not directly linked with Thucydides.¹¹⁰ In the fifth century Olympiodorus of Thebes, who was born before 380 and died after 425 A.D., wrote, in the style of the classics, a

¹⁰⁴ Hornblower & Spawforth (2003: 798-799); Treadgold (2007: 14); Hammond (1999: 252)

¹⁰⁵ Canfora (2006b: 749-751); see Inowlocki (2006: 180-181) and Josephus *Antiquities* 1.115-120, for the use of stasis and the influence of Thuc.

¹⁰⁶ Romilly (1988: 23); Tichener (1995: 189-200) see Plutarch's Pericles, Plu. Per. 9.1, for a discussion on Thucydides and Pericles.

¹⁰⁷ Canfora (2006b: 752-753); Lucian *History* Ch. 41-42

¹⁰⁸ For Cassius Dio see Aalders (1986: 291-294) & Reinhold (1986: 213), for A. Marcellinus see Kelso 9 (2003: 124); Barnes (1998: 32,63,66); Fonara (1992: 423-424) argues against A. Marcellinus allusions to Thuc.

¹⁰⁹ Treadgold (2007: 47)

¹¹⁰ Cameron & Hall (1999: 22); Treadgold (2007: 44); Chestnut (1973: 178, 181-182)

twenty-two-book history covering the years from 407 to 425 A.D.¹¹¹ This work is now lost but is known from fragments from Photius' *Bibliotheca* and its use as a reference by other historians such as Sozomen and Zosimus. Priscus of Panium, born around 410 A.D., was another classicizing historian who wrote an eight-book history covering events from 433/4 to 472 A.D. The history is now lost but excerpts are preserved in other Byzantine sources.¹¹² In the sixth century, classicizing historian, Agathias, wrote the *Histories* which was then continued by Menander Protector.¹¹³

Many of these historians who used allusions to Thucydides for their narratives would have been educated in the use of rhetoric, a study that emphasised authors such as Homer and Thucydides.¹¹⁴ Students would be required to compose and present their own speeches in the Attic Greek of the fifth century B.C. The works of Thucydides, Herodotus and Xenophon had survived during the Hellenistic and Roman periods as these three were considered to be 'classical' authors, or in Kaldellis' words these authors "had attained canonical status."¹¹⁵ The *progymnasmata* were the elementary stages of the schools of rhetoric as students would use Thucydides' history as a model for their speeches and for their descriptions of sieges, battles and plagues.¹¹⁶ During Late Antiquity, due to the use of classical Attic Greek as a literary form, a number of lexicographical guides were produced for the budding historian.¹¹⁷ These guides have caused difficulties for later historians as they struggle to determine whether passages written in Late Antiquity reflect actual events or were inserted for stylistic purposes.¹¹⁸ For example, Thucydides' account of the siege of Plataea was used by a number

¹¹¹ Whately (2017: 693-694); Treadgold (2007: 91-92); Hornblower & Spawforth (2003: 1066-1067)

¹¹² Treadgold (2007: 96-102); Hornblower & Spawforth (2003: 1248)

¹¹³ Hornblower & Spawforth (2003: 36); Treadgold (2007: 279 & 293)

¹¹⁴ Webb (2001: 289); Whately (2017: 695); Gibson (2008: xx-xxii)

¹¹⁵ Kaldellis (2012: 78)

¹¹⁶ Penella (2011: 77); Kaldellis (2012: 80); Webb (2001: 289); Hornblower & Spawforth (2003: 1253)

¹¹⁷ Wilson (1996: 5)

¹¹⁸ Whately (2017: 695)

of Late Antique authors such as Priscus' siege of Naissus, Procopius' siege of Naples and Agathias' siege of Onoguris.¹¹⁹

While on one level these allusions to classical authors seemingly portray a simplistic imitation of events, on another level, they allow room for subtle interpretations of the author's intentions. They also showcase the legacy of Thucydides and his influence on many ancient historians, some of whom are our only source of information for these periods.

Chapter 2

Political Realism

The development of modern political realism, beginning with a discussion on its meaning and then proceeding to an overview of some of the major theorists that have shaped this discipline will be examined in this chapter. Following this, several texts of Procopius' *Wars* will be studied to show whether these passages may relate to modern interpretations of realism.

Realism, for some scholars, has been defined as the relationship between power and morality. Steven Forde explained, "for realism, which may be broadly defined as scepticism regarding the applicability of ethical norms to international politics, is in part a moral theory."¹²⁰ American academic Robert Keohane described realism as, "the language of

¹¹⁹ Whately (2017: 696-697); for the use of Thucydidean plague see Kaldellis (2007b: 1-22); Cameron (1985: 40)

¹²⁰ Forde (1992a: 373)

power and interests rather than of ideals or norms.”¹²¹ Realists viewed changes in international relations through the prism of wars, the politics of power and the instability of external and internal environments.¹²² States sought power as a means of protection and were driven by their self-interest to secure their safety and security.

Studies in modern realism can be divided into two areas, classical realism and neorealism or structural realism. The term neo-realism or structural realism was used by political scholars to distinguish their theory from the perceived older tradition of realism as Kenneth Waltz, the father of neo-realism, attempted to transform his new theory of realism into a scientific theory.¹²³ The traditional realists, now called classical realists, included major twentieth century scholars such as E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau while Thucydides, writing in the fifth century B.C., has been called the first writer who examined politics from a realist perspective.¹²⁴

The fundamental differences between classical and neo-realists are their interpretations of power, the reasons why states want power, whether power is acquired for its own sake or only sought when state security was in question and their differing definitions of anarchy.¹²⁵ Classical realists, unlike neo-realists, maintain that domestic policies influence international politics while some classical realists believe that justice and morality shape political outcomes.¹²⁶ Neo-realists, sceptical of any moral restraints on power, claim that international politics is characterised by conflict.¹²⁷

¹²¹ Keohane (1986: 9)

¹²² Chiaruzzi (2012: 37); Lebow (2010: 70-71); Ahrens Dorf (1997: 232); Korab-Karpowicz (2017)

¹²³ Lebow (2010: 59)

¹²⁴ Bagby (1994: 131-133); Chiaruzzi (2012: 37); Rahe (1995: 105); for a discussion on the merits of Thucydides as a realist see Welch (2003: 301); Bedford and Workman (2001: 51-67) & Doyle (1990: 223)

¹²⁵ Mearsheimer (2010: 78)

¹²⁶ Lebow (2010: 59); Mearsheimer (2010: 79)

¹²⁷ Korab-Karpowicz (2017)

For classical realists, the desire for power and the need to dominate is part of human nature, inherent in all people and as John Mearsheimer noted, “effectively means that great powers are led by individuals who are bent on having their state dominate its rivals.”¹²⁸ For classical realists, not only did a state’s domestic policy effect their international capabilities, both domestic and international politics were expressions of the same human drive.¹²⁹

The question of morality is a principal factor for some classical realists as, although they acknowledge the demands of power, they believe that power should be restrained by a moral viewpoint. Hans Morgenthau maintains that, “the actions of states are subject to universal moral principles,”¹³⁰ and Richard Lebow argued that justice was important for two reasons, firstly,

“It is the key to influence because it determines how others understand and respond to you. Policy that is constrained by accepted ethical principles and generally supportive of them provides a powerful aura of legitimacy and helps to reconcile less powerful actors to their subordinate status. Influence can also be bought through bribes or compelled by force, but influence obtained this way is expensive to maintain, tenuous in effect and usually short-lived. By contrast, a demonstrable commitment to justice, can create and maintain the kind of community that allows actors to translate power into influence in efficient ways.”¹³¹

Secondly, both Lebow and Morgenthau maintain that a commitment to justice is a source of self-restraint and would prevent leaders from excesses. Morgenthau contends that a lack of justice threatens the stability of political life leading to the rise of totalitarianism on both the

¹²⁸ Mearsheimer (2010: 78); see also Mastanduno (1989: 460); Morgenthau (2006: 4); for human nature in Thucydides see Reeve (1999: 435-446) & Thuc. 3.84.2

¹²⁹ Morgenthau (2006: 158); Carr (2001: 97-106)

¹³⁰ Morgenthau (1956: 106)

¹³¹ Lebow (2010: 66);

domestic and international scenes.¹³² Lebow maintains that weak states would generally behave cautiously due to their lack of power, however, powerful states were not similarly constrained as past successes would encourage their leaders to over extend themselves and potentially set them on a path to disaster.¹³³

The definition of anarchy for classical realists occurred when international laws or norms were either ignored or were unenforceable, producing a situation that encouraged uncertainty and chaos.¹³⁴ Domestic chaos, for classical realists, affected a state's international politics as once the institutions of community and domestic politics were damaged, these organisations could no longer be used to subdue excesses in the struggle for international power.

However, neo-realists maintain that power has little to do with human nature as it is the structure of the international system that forces states to seek power.¹³⁵ The neo-realist Robert Keohane maintains that states are the main unit in realism, and not human nature, as states sought power, "as a means to other ends."¹³⁶ While other organisations may have existed, they were always subordinate to the most powerful states.¹³⁷ For neo-realists, their explanation of why states need power and compete amongst themselves for power is due to their ceaseless competition for security.¹³⁸

Neo-realists believe that states are the main actors in world politics and operate in an anarchic system. Anarchy for neo-realists is not characterised by chaos, but is defined as an absence of a centralised arbiter that has authority above the other states, or, as some neo-

¹³² Morgenthau (1956: 46); Forde (1986: 433); Lebow (2010: 66)

¹³³ Lebow (2010: 66)

¹³⁴ Eckstein (2003: 757-758); Gilpin (1984: 290); Lebow (2010: 61)

¹³⁵ Mearsheimer (2010: 78); Ahrens Dorf (1997: 234), Waltz (1988: 42-43)

¹³⁶ Keohane (1986: 7);

¹³⁷ Chiaruzzi (2012: 43); Mearsheimer (2010: 92)

Keohane (1986: 7);

¹³⁸ Mearsheimer (2010: 79)

realists believe, a lack of a world leadership.¹³⁹ Addison-Wesley describes anarchy as “In the absence of a higher authority that states can turn to in a crises, coupled with their interest in survival, leaves states little choice but to compete with each other for survival.”¹⁴⁰ Uncertainty of other state’s intentions and the goals of survival are the other factors that contribute to anarchy. Lastly, neo-realists maintain that states are rational actors as they can form strategies that maximise their expectations of survival. When all these factors are combined, a neo-realist will argue that a reason now exists for states to gain power at the expense of other states.¹⁴¹

The question of how much power is enough has divided neo-realists as some argue, like Waltz, that states should not maximise their power as this would lead to confrontations within the international system while others, such as John Mearsheimer, argue that the maximisation of power and even hegemony makes good strategic sense to ensure one’s own survival.¹⁴² As Mearsheimer wrote of the differences between classical and neo-realists, “For classical realists, power is an end in itself; for structural realists, power is a means to an end and the ultimate end is survival.”¹⁴³

2.1 Niccolo Machiavelli

Some modern realists that have significantly contributed to the development of this discipline include well known scholars such as Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, E.H. Carr, Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz. In the following sections we will present a brief overview of their backgrounds and achievements.

¹³⁹ Waltz (1979: 107); Mearsheimer (2010: 79); Keohane (1986: 167); for arguments on “world leadership” see Modelski (1978: 216) and Ashley (1984: 232n)

¹⁴⁰ Part of reading by Addison-Wesley in Mearsheimer (2010: 82); see also Waltz (1979: 109)

¹⁴¹ Mearsheimer (2010: 79-80)

¹⁴² Mearsheimer (2010: 78); see also Waltz (1979: 127) & Mearsheimer (2003: 33)

¹⁴³ Mearsheimer (2010: 78)

The first realist we shall examine will be Niccolo Machiavelli, a political innovator who has been credited as writing the first major treatise that separated politics from ethics.¹⁴⁴ This unique approach departed from the traditions of earlier scholars who had studied politics as a discipline of ethics, and Machiavelli's work has been interpreted as forming a foundation for modern politics.¹⁴⁵ Another distinctive aspect was the encouragement of using amoral power as, while its use had been previously acknowledged by ancient writers, Machiavelli was the first writer to express these opinions as his own.¹⁴⁶

Machiavelli was born on the 3rd of May, 1469 into an old Florentine family and was taught to read Latin and the classics from an early age.¹⁴⁷ In his well-known text, *The Prince*, he argued that the lawful or unlawful use of power to preserve the state should not be constrained by utopian moral judgements and maintained his treatise was written to illustrate the effectual truth of politics.¹⁴⁸ Machiavelli replaced the ancient concept of virtue, a belief that was based on justice and self-restraint with the argument that immoral actions were justified to achieve a person's political end.¹⁴⁹

Machiavelli acknowledged the human impulse to conquer and normalised the actions of imperialism when he noted, "and truly it is a very natural and ordinary thing to desire to acquire, and always, when men do it who can, they will be praised or not blamed."¹⁵⁰ Ambition, fear or security were justifiable causes to go to war as one of his general principles was, "there is no avoiding war; it can only be postponed to the advantage of others."¹⁵¹ Machiavelli used the example of the ancient Romans, who perceived that threats were always

¹⁴⁴ Korab-Karpowicz (2017); Strauss (1958: 10)

¹⁴⁵ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Ch. 15;

¹⁴⁶ Strauss (1958: 9-10)

¹⁴⁷ Kaldellis (2005: 5-7); for a background on Machiavelli see Atkinson (2010: 14-30)

¹⁴⁸ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Ch. 15; Chiaruzzi (2012: 37); for an interpretation of Machiavelli see Strauss (1958: 9-14) & Newell (2013: 271-274)

¹⁴⁹ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Ch. 15; Korab-Karpowicz (2017)

¹⁵⁰ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Ch. 3; Forde (1992: 377); Benner (2009: 451)

¹⁵¹ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Ch. 3

imminent or were potentially looming. Therefore, the use of pre-emptive strikes, taken when opportune, would forestall threats from other states before they had become too powerful.¹⁵² Machiavelli, as Steven Forde noted, “eliminates the distinction between just and unjust war, inasmuch as that distinction is based upon the difference between aggression and defence.”¹⁵³

As noted previously, Machiavelli separated the political world from morality as he was a realist who maintained a state’s main purpose was its survival.¹⁵⁴ Machiavelli argued the tension between morality and the necessity of survival should always be in favour of necessity. In describing a good ruler, Machiavelli argued that a ruler should appear to have good qualities such as compassion, be devout and faithful to his word, however, he added that if the circumstances demanded it, then a ruler should be ruthless as he noted, “he should not deviate from what is good, if that is possible, but he should know how to do evil, if that is necessary.”¹⁵⁵

While Machiavelli has been called a “teacher of evil” by the political philosopher Leo Strauss, many modern realists view him as a realist or a pragmatist and claim Machiavelli as the founder of modern political science.¹⁵⁶

2.2 Thomas Hobbes

Thomas Hobbes theories contributed to many of the fundamental concepts of the realist tradition as he examined the significance of human nature in politics, introduced the important concept of international anarchy, a later neo-realist theory and the idea that politics could be studied scientifically.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² Forde (1992: 377); Benner (2009: 456)

¹⁵³ Forde (1992: 377)

¹⁵⁴ Forde (1992: 384); Nederman (2014)

¹⁵⁵ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Ch. 18

¹⁵⁶ Strauss (1958: 9-10); Nederman (2014)

¹⁵⁷ Korab-Karpowicz (2017)

Born in England in 1588, it has been argued that his views on politics were influenced by his involvement in the political and religious controversies of his time, as his unsympathetic opinions on politics may have been swayed by his experience in the English civil war.¹⁵⁸ A fundamental Hobbesian concept was his “state of nature”, the idea that humans were in a state of war, as “such a war as is of every man, against every man.”¹⁵⁹ Anticipating the neo-realism definition of anarchy, his theory of the state of nature maintained that everyone had equal status in an environment that lacked a central government. Therefore, since an individual may attack another at any time, they must be ready to respond in a similar matter.

Hobbes, like Machiavelli, saw human nature as a basis for his theory on the state of nature. Hobbes attacked the belief that human beings could control their desires and be rational even when it was not in their best interests.¹⁶⁰ He believed humanity was driven by “a perpetual and restless desire of power after power that ceases only in death.”¹⁶¹ Hobbes contributed to later realist theories with his arguments on the selfish nature of humans and his concepts on international anarchy.¹⁶²

Hobbes advocated for rule by an absolute sovereign, as he believed the only way of averting the anarchical state of nature was to have a strong central government.¹⁶³ While his concept of rule by an absolute monarch was intended to pacify individuals within a state, he acknowledged that wars between states could still exist. His solution was to argue that domestic peace would eventually lead to interstate peace but unlike twentieth century neo-

¹⁵⁸ Gert (2010: 1-2)

¹⁵⁹ Hobbes *Leviathan* ch.13; Bull (1981: 720); Chiaruzzi (2012: 38); Stringham (2005: 1-9)

¹⁶⁰ Heilke (2004: 123)

¹⁶¹ Hobbes *Leviathan* ch.11

¹⁶² Korab-Karpowicz (2017)

¹⁶³ Hobbes *Leviathan* ch.18; Bull (1981: 719); Korab-Karpowicz (2017)

realists, he did not advocate for a world sovereign or a supreme authority that could keep the peace.¹⁶⁴

Like Machiavelli, Hobbes believed that relations between states were selfish and lacked moral limitations.¹⁶⁵ This was especially true when the self-preservation of a state was at risk, as Hobbes argued that a state should be allowed to take whatever measures were necessary to achieve their protection. However, unlike Machiavelli, Hobbes believed that a state's foreign policy must be defensive in character and denied the use and pursuit of power for its own sake."¹⁶⁶

2.3 E.H. Carr

In the twentieth century, realism emerged as a counter to the idealist views that had overshadowed international relations after the First World War.¹⁶⁷ Two scholars who were conceivably the most influential in the development of classical realism during that century were E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau.¹⁶⁸

E.H Carr, born in England in 1892, joined the British Foreign Office in 1916 and resigned twenty years later to pursue an academic career. In 1939, he published his book, *The Twenty Years Crises*, in which he attacked the idealist position of that period as utopian. He argued that utopians had set up an ethical standard which claimed to be independent of politics, and had then sought to make politics conform to this standard.¹⁶⁹ Carr maintained that morality was a function of politics, a standard which was determined by the political

¹⁶⁴ Hobbes *Leviathan* ch.13; Bull (1981: 726)

¹⁶⁵ Hobbes *Leviathan* ch.21; Bull (1981: 724)

¹⁶⁶ Bull (1981: 723-725); Korab-Karpowicz (2017)

¹⁶⁷ Korab-Karpowicz (2017)

¹⁶⁸ Kaufman (1995: 318); Korab-Karpowicz (2017)

¹⁶⁹ Cox (2001: xxi)

power of the day as he declared, “morality can only be relative, not universal.”¹⁷⁰ . Carr opposed the idealist concept of the *harmony of interests*, a view that humans were rational and their self-interests would lead to co-operation.¹⁷¹ He argued that in fact a *conflict of interests* existed, where order was based on power and not on morality, as contemporary morality only reflected the moral standards of the most powerful¹⁷² Carr maintained that the leaders of the most powerful countries rationalised their motives for dominating other countries under the guise of national security, though in reality they wished to increase their power and wealth.

Carr, however, recognised that there must be a limitation placed on realism as, “pure realism can offer nothing but a naked struggle for power which makes any kind of international society impossible.”¹⁷³ He argued that “pure realism” did not consider the force of human nature, as the motivation of people was important as, “human affairs can be directed and modified by human action and human thought is a postulate so fundamental that its rejection seems scarcely compatible with existence as a human being.”¹⁷⁴ The conflict for Carr was to unite the moral views of the idealists with the reality of power as pure realism only defined power and self-interests.¹⁷⁵ As Carr maintained, politics consisted of two parts, realism and utopia, and this complexity presented a barrier to the understanding of a workable political system.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁰ Carr (2001: 19)

¹⁷¹ For description of *harmony of interest* see McQueen (2016: 9); Carr (2001: 42) Gerde, Goldsby & Shepherd (2007: 7-20)

¹⁷² Carr (2001: 57); McQueen (2016: 10); Kaufman (1995: 319)

¹⁷³ Carr (2001: 87)

¹⁷⁴ Carr (2001: 87)

¹⁷⁵ Cox (2001: xxiii); Korab-Karpowicz (2017)

¹⁷⁶ Carr (2001: 87)

Criticism of his work, including from Hans Morgenthau, was centred on Carr's perceived failure to offer a solution to the tension of morality and power.¹⁷⁷ Even though he had argued that morality could be used to restrain realism he was seen by his critics to have rationalised power, as he had accepted that those in power could shape the moral argument.¹⁷⁸

2.4 Hans Morgenthau

Hans Morgenthau was born in Germany in 1904 and practised and taught law there until emigrating, due to the rise of the Nazi party, to the United States in 1937.¹⁷⁹ He initially taught at the University of Chicago before moving to lecture at the university of New York in the 1970's. He is credited with developing realism into a comprehensive relations theory and believed that human nature was the main cause of conflict.¹⁸⁰

In his most well-known work, *Politics among Nations*, Morgenthau argued that “international politics like all politics is a struggle for power.”¹⁸¹ Morgenthau formed his theory on six principles with two fundamental principles being, the *concept of power* in which the laws of politics were based on human nature and the *concept of interests*, in which interest was defined as power.¹⁸² Like Carr, Morgenthau believed that human nature was behind the compulsion for power, however, he differed on his interpretation of power as he maintained that power was not only used to dominate others but was used to further a state's interest. Once interest was defined as power, according to Morgenthau, then the theoretical understanding of all politics was possible. Human nature, for Morgenthau, consisted of two

¹⁷⁷ Cox (2001: xiv)

¹⁷⁸ McQueen (2016: 10)

¹⁷⁹ Fromkin (1993: 81)

¹⁸⁰ McQueen (2016: 10); Williams (2004: 639)

¹⁸¹ Morgenthau (2006: 29); Korab-Karpowicz (2017)

¹⁸² Morgenthau (2006: 4-16); Williams (2004: 639)

key factors, self-preservation and self-assertion.¹⁸³ Self-preservation was a rational response and was self-limiting as once self-preservation had been achieved then the human drive would be satisfied. However, Morgenthau believed self-assertion, a human desire that was difficult to control, was behind a person's need to dominate others.

Morgenthau interpreted power as "man's control over the minds and actions of other men," and political power as "the mutual relations of control among the holders of public authority and between the latter and the people at large."¹⁸⁴ Morgenthau viewed political power as a psychological relationship between those who had power and those who did not. Those who have power then have control over others through the expectations of benefits or the fear of being disadvantaged.

For Morgenthau military capabilities and alliances, factors that effected the balance of power, were critical for security in unstable environments.¹⁸⁵ The balance of power among states would remain stable if their capabilities were evenly distributed, however, once states combined their military resources into an alliance then the balance of power could be adversely affected.

Where Morgenthau differed from Machiavelli and Hobbes was in the relationship between realism and ethics as he maintained that morality had a part to play in the use of power. However, he acknowledged the tension between morality and power and stressed that political entities must pursue their own interests.¹⁸⁶ He also maintained that prudence and not one's own morality should be the guiding principle in political action. Even though he argued that politics could not be sub-ordinate to ethics he recognised a flaw in this argument as he noted, "a man who was nothing but 'political man' would be a beast, for he would be

¹⁸³ McQueen (2016: 10)

¹⁸⁴ Morgenthau (2006: 30-31); Gillman (1988: 251)

¹⁸⁵ Morgenthau (2006: 200-214); Lebow (2010: 62-63)

¹⁸⁶ Morgenthau (2006: 12); Korab-Karpowicz (2017)

completely lacking in moral restraints. A man who was nothing but a ‘moral man’ would be a fool, for he would be completely lacking in prudence.”¹⁸⁷ This apparent contradiction highlighted the difficulties faced when trying to reconcile the conflict of power and morality. Morgenthau has been criticised for his view that, like Hobbes, individuals were driven by human nature to continually lust for power and that this need for power does not consider wider historical and cultural issues.¹⁸⁸

2.5 Kenneth Waltz

Kenneth Waltz, whose *Theory of International Politics* was written in the late 1970’s to counter the perceived shortcomings of Morgenthau’s classical realism, was a prominent proponent and creator of Neo-realism.¹⁸⁹ Born in the United States in 1924, he became an academic after obtaining his Ph.D. in 1954 and published a number of significant books on the subject of international relations.¹⁹⁰

Waltz rejected Morgenthau’s theory that human nature was a factor in the demand for power as he formulated his theories, based on economics, that a state’s needs were caused by the structure of international relations.¹⁹¹ He believed that states in an international system behaved like businesses in a domestic economy where their fundamental purpose was to survive.¹⁹² He maintained that classical realists had erred in their attention to ideological and moral issues as, by looking at the structure of international realism, one could explain why states behave in the same way despite their diverse political systems.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁷ Morgenthau (2006: 15)

¹⁸⁸ Korab-Karpowicz (2017)

¹⁸⁹ Korab-Karpowicz (2017)

¹⁹⁰ Griffiths (1999: 47)

¹⁹¹ Waltz (1979: 107)

¹⁹² Waltz (1979: 93); Korab-Karpowicz (2017)

¹⁹³ Mearsheimer (2010: 78)

Waltz's theory maintained that the structure of the international system forced states to pursue power.¹⁹⁴ As the neo-realist John Mearsheimer explained,

“In a system where there is no higher authority that sits above the great powers, and where there is no guarantee that one will not attack another, it makes eminently good sense for each state to be powerful enough to protect itself in the event it is attacked.”¹⁹⁵

As Mearsheimer noted states had little choice but to compete with each other if they hoped to survive, a principle of neo-realism that came to be described as international anarchy.¹⁹⁶ This differed from classical realism as the acquisition of power, driven by human compulsion, could be viewed as a means and an end while neo-realists argued that security was the fundamental interest of each state, forcing a distribution of power throughout the international structure.¹⁹⁷

While the acquisition of power for security was believed to be a justifiable action by neo-realists, Waltz cautioned against the maximisation of power as this could rebound, leading to wars involving all the great powers. Their main goal should be the security of their state and the ability to maintain their position in the system.¹⁹⁸ Waltz argued that going to war just to gain power did not make good strategic sense as other states would then attempt to counter this imbalance by increasing their own power either by internal or external methods.¹⁹⁹ Waltz labelled the differing types of alliances as balancing and bandwagoning.²⁰⁰ Balancing could be internal as well as external, as internal balancing occurred when states

¹⁹⁴ Waltz (1979: 107); Mearsheimer (2010: 78)

¹⁹⁵ Mearsheimer (2010: 78)

¹⁹⁶ Mearsheimer (2010: 78-79)

¹⁹⁷ Korab-Karpowicz (2017)

¹⁹⁸ Waltz (1979: 126)

¹⁹⁹ Waltz (1979: 127)

²⁰⁰ Waltz (1979: 124-128); Mearsheimer (2010: 82-83); for a discussion on balancing and bandwagoning see Schweller (1994: 72-107) & Walt (2013: 110-117)

increased their own capabilities while external balancing occurred when states joined together to form a balancing coalition against another powerful state. Bandwagoning occurred when a weaker state joined forces with a rising adversarial state, as the option of a balancing coalition with another state was not available. The downside to this option was it allowed the rising state to gain power and dominate the weaker state but was used when the cost of opposing the rising state exceeded the benefits of joining them.

Criticism of neo-realism by classical realists has centred on the neo-realist's lack of acknowledgment of the part that human decisions have played in the use of power while realists in general have been criticised that they do little more than rationalise the status quo. Many realist's theories are criticised as they elevate power to be the goal of international politics and do little more than rationalise the status quo. Other criticisms include its negativity on interstate relations and its justification of aggression in the cause of national interest.

2.6 Procopius and Modern Realism.

In this section, passages of Procopius' works will be linked to the concepts of modern realism. Several of these passages will show how Procopius used arguments that could be understood by a modern realist as they illustrated both classical and neo-realist's viewpoints. The first passage to be examined will be the meeting of the Gothic envoys with the Persian leader, Chosroes.²⁰¹ While we will examine this passage in more detail in Chapter 4, where we will discuss Procopius' use of human nature and its allusions to Thucydides, the use of human nature was also a principal element of modern classical realism. In this passage, we will compare classical realists' definitions with Procopius' descriptions of Justinian' human nature.

²⁰¹ Procopius *Wars* 2.2

Next, we will examine how this passage may be seen through a neo-realist viewpoint. The speeches of the Gothic envoys and the Persian king have been compared to Thucydides' 'Corinthian debate' in which many of the Greek states urged Sparta to attack Athens due to her growing power. This passage in the *Peloponnesian War* has been interpreted by neo-realists as an example of international anarchy, an interpretation that can similarly be applied to the meeting of the Gothic envoys.

Then we will look at the concept of anarchy, in which anarchy is defined as chaos or revolution by modern classical realists, and its effect on governments. These ideas will be explored in Procopius' description of the Nika Riots in which civil disobedience by the green and blue factions in Constantinople came close to toppling the regime of Justinian.

Lastly, we will examine the neo-realist concept of bandwagoning and balancing in which countries partnered with each other for security. This will be examined in Procopius' description of the dispute between the Lombards and the Gepids and the intervention of the Romans into their affairs. We will see how these states combined with each other to maintain their security in their fear of Roman intervention.

Human nature and the desire for power is an important principle for many classical realists as people such as Machiavelli, Hobbes and Morgenthau argue that the desire for power is driven by human nature and as such is inherent in every person. Machiavelli, in the *Prince*, praised the human need to gain more power as he wrote, "the wish to acquire more is admittedly a very natural and common thing".²⁰² Thomas Hobbes held similar views when he wrote the *Leviathan* as he described how the need for power was an intrinsic part of human nature. He described this as, "a perpetual and restless desire of power after power that ceases

²⁰² Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Ch. 3 (Bull (1975: 43)); Forde (1992a: 377)

only in death.”²⁰³ The Twentieth century realist, Hans Morgenthau, saw power as an infatuation and as such was difficult to resist as he described human nature as, “rooted in the lust for power which is common to all men.”²⁰⁴

Human nature and the desire for power were themes explored by Procopius in the meeting of the Gothic envoys with the Persian leader, Chosroes.²⁰⁵ The Goths purpose was to try and persuade Chosroes to attack the Romans on the eastern borders and divert the Roman military from its war with the Goths in Italy. Procopius, by placing his ideas into the speech of the Gothic envoy, secretly criticised Justinian and his desire for power. Like modern realists, Procopius showed how power and human nature were inherently bound as he described Justinian as “by nature a troublemaker, he covets things that in no way belong to him”²⁰⁶ Procopius further added that Justinian, “has conceived the desire of seizing the entire earth”.²⁰⁷ As we can see, Procopius’ description of Justinian’s human nature has many parallels with modern definitions as he points to Justinian’s use of power and his desire for more power. Perhaps this also implies, for Procopius and realists in general, that rulers such as Justinian only understand the currency of power and that power must be used to defeat them.

Neo-realists also view this passage through their interpretation of structural anarchy, and as we have noted previously, international anarchy for neo-realists was due to the lack of a centralised authority not a state of chaos as defined by classical realists. As we have also mentioned, this passage alludes to Thucydides’ Corinthian debate which many neo-realists have interpreted as an example of structural anarchy.²⁰⁸ Neo-Realists have cited Thucydides’

²⁰³ Hobbes *Leviathan* 11.2

²⁰⁴ Morgenthau (1974: 14); McQueen (2016: 11); Korab-Karpowicz (2017)

²⁰⁵ Procopius *Wars* 2.2

²⁰⁶ Procopius *Wars* 2.2.6; Pazdernik (2005: 185); for other texts on Justinian see Simplicios *Commentary on Epiktetos* 14.19-32 & John the Lydian, *On the Magistracies* 2.1.1

²⁰⁷ Procopius *Wars* 2.2.6

²⁰⁸ Montan (2006: 12); Waltz (1986: 112-115); Forde (1995: 145)

argument that the Peloponnesian war was caused by Sparta's fear of an increasingly powerful Athens, a confirmation for neo-realists that the war was due to the structure of international power, as no one state could control the other states.²⁰⁹

This structure was mirrored by Procopius as the Goths and the Persians were fearful of the growing power of the Romans.²¹⁰ The Goths had argued that before the peace treaty between the Romans and the Persians, Justinian's ambitions were contained as his power did not exceed those of the other countries.²¹¹ However due to the peace treaty Justinian was now able to increase his power by subjugating the Vandals in North Africa and by attacking the Goths in Italy. The Goths warned the Persians that Justinian would then invade Persia unless the Persians attacked Justinian first.²¹² Heeding the message of the Goths, the Persians did eventually attack the Romans. For neo-realists, state behaviour was governed by security and not the acquisition of power for its own end, consequently the Goths were not seeking to extend their own empire but were seeking to secure their own survival.²¹³

In our examination of the Nika Riots that occurred in 531 A.D., we can view the classical realist concept of anarchy or chaos and its consequences on the stability of Justinian's rule.²¹⁴ In the *Secret History*, Procopius had described the exploitation by Justinian and Theodora of the two major sporting blocs, the Blues and Greens who were the main supporters of the chariot races in Constantinople.²¹⁵ By manipulating these groups against each other, Procopius showed the emperor and empress were able to manipulate the factions' violent gangs for their own benefit.²¹⁶ However, control over these groups could be

²⁰⁹ Monten (2006: 12-13); see also Forde (1995: 141-160)

²¹⁰ Procopius *Wars* 2.2.11

²¹¹ Procopius *Wars* 2.2.7

²¹² Procopius *Wars* 2.2.10-11

²¹³ Procopius *Wars* 2.2.11; Ruggie (1986: 136-137); The apparent contradiction of this passage being interpreted differently by classical and neo-realists can be examined in Monten (2006: 12-13); Forde (1995: 141-160) and in Bagby (1995: 174)

²¹⁴ Procopius *Wars* 1.24.17; Eckstein (2003: 757-758); Gilpin (1984: 290); Lebow (2010: 61)

²¹⁵ Procopius *Secret History* 10.16-23; Procopius *Wars* 1.24; Kaldellis (2004: 36-37)

²¹⁶ Procopius *Secret History* 10.5-23

tenuous as was exposed by the Nika riots when the factions united against Justinian.²¹⁷ During the ensuing chaos the army, arguably the real power for a stable government, restored order and Justinian's rule.

The passages describing the Nika riot in the *Wars* used several themes that would be familiar to modern realists. The uncertainty and chaos that was caused by the riots resulted in the factions forming partnerships to increase the power and enhance their chances of survival, reflecting Morgenthau's arguments on the necessity of power and the use of alliances.²¹⁸ Procopius showed the factions failed in their attempt to balance their power against the emperor due to several reasons. The power of the combined factions could not match the force of the imperial army, instead of seeking power for their security they sought power to topple the regime of Justinian and their inability to compromise their desire for more power, a human compulsion, had led to their destruction.²¹⁹

While this passage showed the effects of chaos, it also permitted Procopius to reveal the chaotic and corrupt rule of Justinian. Justinian's power was saved by the army's intervention, which perhaps highlighted for Procopius, Justinian's type of rule.

The dispute between the Lombards and the Gepids that occurred during the years of 548 and 549 A.D. showed various neo-realist viewpoints.²²⁰ The Gepids had occupied an area of Dacia near the Danube river while the Lombards, due to inducements offered by Justinian, settled near the Gepids in Pannonia, which created tension between the two.²²¹ Procopius wrote that both states sought help from Justinian, as Justinian had used them as mercenaries in his army.²²² After listening to both sides Justinian chose to make an alliance with the

²¹⁷ Procopius *Wars* 1.24.7

²¹⁸ Procopius *Wars* 1.24.7; Morgenthau (2006: 181-182)

²¹⁹ Procopius *Wars* 1.24.10, 22, 48-54; Carr (2001: 57)

²²⁰ Procopius *Wars* 7.33.7-12

²²¹ Bury (1958b: 303); Procopius *Wars* 7.34

²²² Procopius *Wars* 7.34.8

Lombards and supplied them with a number of horsemen, however, before the Romans could reach their new allies they encountered a detachment of Heruls who were allied to the Gepids.²²³ The Romans decisively defeated the Heruls in battle which had an immediate effect on the Gepids who, recognising the overwhelming superiority of the Roman army, settled their differences with the Lombards by signing a treaty.

The actions of the Gepids and Lombards reflected the neo-realist concepts of balancing and bandwagoning, actions that occurred when the primary goal of states was their security and not the maximisation of power.²²⁴ Bandwagoning occurred when the Lombards joined with the Romans, due to the lack of any other suitable allies for the Lombards, and acknowledged the Romans as the superior and dominant partner. However, after the defeat of the Heruls, the Gepids realised they would be no match against the power of the Romans and sought an alliance with the Lombards. Kenneth Waltz characterised actions such as these as balancing, as the Gepids and the Lombards realised the power of the Romans was a greater threat to their survival.²²⁵ Procopius' inclusion of this passage perhaps highlighted the fear the other states felt of the Romans and implied the Romans, or more probably Justinian, could not be trusted.

The use and attainment of power is a common link between Procopius and modern realists. The danger that may come from these interpretations, and a common criticism of realism in general, is its normalisation of power and the acceptance of the status quo. We are led to believe that change can only occur by power. As we have shown, modern realists may see familiar themes in Procopius' narrative as many of these ideas were arguably based on Thucydides' interpretation of politics.

²²³ Procopius *Wars* 7.34.44-45

²²⁴ Waltz (1979:126- 127); Mearsheimer (2010: 82-83); for a discussion on balancing and bandwagoning see Schweller (1994: 72-107) & Walt (2013: 110-117)

²²⁵ Mearsheimer (2010: 83)

Chapter 3

Thucydides and Political Realism

This chapter will examine Thucydides' interpretation of power, morality and human nature in politics.²²⁶ Thucydides, we will maintain, believed morality should play an important part in the political process, while at the same time understood that power would be used to expand a state's influence and wealth.²²⁷ Thucydides' political philosophy was expressed in his narrative as *The Peloponnesian War* subtly expresses Thucydides' thoughts, requiring the reader to interpret many of Thucydides' conclusions. Chapter 4 will then use this analysis to show how Procopius' allusions to Thucydides' ideas reflected Procopius' own political thoughts.

²²⁶ Balot, *et al* (2017: 3)

²²⁷ Riley (2000: 119); de Romilly (1968: 357); Orwin (2015: 57-59)

We will examine Thucydides' interpretation of power in several passages such as the "Corinthian debate" which explored the motivations and failings of both Sparta and Athens and highlighted Thucydides' belief, and a principle of classical realists, that human nature was responsible for the desire of power.²²⁸

The purpose of power was explored by Thucydides in the first section of his works, labelled the "archaeology" by modern scholars, in which he explained how the accumulation of power had enabled civilisations to emerge.²²⁹ This concept of power will then be contrasted to later passages, such as the Melian dialogue, the Mytilenean debate and the civil revolts in Corcyra, which highlighted Thucydides' moral arguments against unrestrained power.

Two passages that describe the amoral use of power are the revolts at Corcyra and the plague in Athens. The civil uprising in Corcyra was an example of a society destroyed as any pretence of morality was ruined by the fighting of the pro-democratic and oligarchic factions.²³⁰ In the description of the Athenian plague, Thucydides showed how the fear of death had caused self-interest and selfishness to affect the moral structure of Athenian society as it gave way to opportunistic power.²³¹

In the Melian Dialogue and the Mytilenean debate, while Thucydides does not expressly state his views on the moral outcomes of these passages, we will argue that he believed that unrestrained power had led to unacceptable excesses, such as the massacre and enslavement of the Melian population. The prominence given to the Mytilenean debate and the detailed account of the speeches, in which the initial judgement was to destroy the population but was later overturned, suggested its outcome was more in line with Thucydides' views.

²²⁸ Thuc. 1.68-70; Reeve (1999: 435-446); Morgenthau (2006: 4); Korab-Karpowicz (2017)

²²⁹ Thuc. 1.1-19

²³⁰ Thuc. 3.81-83

²³¹ Thuc. 2.51-53

3.1 The Corinthian Debate

The first passage to be examined will be the Corinthian debate, held in Sparta before the war in 432/1 B.C.²³² The rise of Athenian power and its expansion had caused consternation amongst the other Greek states, which culminated in a meeting in Sparta to discuss these problems. Here, the Corinthians, allies of the Spartans, argued that the rise of Athenian power had changed the balance of power between the Greek states, leading to tensions that would eventually result in war.²³³ Through the speeches of the Corinthians, Thucydides showed that human nature was a key concept of state relations as the Spartans were criticised for being inactive and conservative in countering the rise of Athenian power while the Athenians use of innovation, a human compulsion, had created an empire for themselves.²³⁴ A group of Athenians, who were present during this debate, argued that human nature was a force that could not be resisted and had compelled them to take control after the Spartans had stepped down from leading the Greeks after the Persian wars.²³⁵

“It follows that it was not a very remarkable action, or contrary to the practise of mankind, if we did not accept an empire that was offered to us, and refused to give it up under the pressure of three of the strongest motives, fear, honour, and interest. And it was not we who set the example, for it has always been the law that the weaker should be subject to the stronger.”²³⁶

Their speech signified key aspects of classical realism, such as human nature, compulsion and the acquisition of power, power according to the Athenians, that was motivated by

²³² Bury & Meiggs (1975: 247)

²³³ Thuc. 1.68-69; Riley (2000: 125-127)

²³⁴ Thuc. 1.70

²³⁵ Thuc. 1.75

²³⁶ Thuc. 1.76.2

honour, fear and profit.²³⁷ Thucydides regarded the need for power and the creation of an empire as a natural human desire but as we shall see later in this chapter, he was opposed to the unrestrained use of power.

The arguments of morality and restraint were also discussed as these concepts, and arguably they were also Thucydides' concepts, were highlighted by the Athenians as they spoke at the debate in Sparta. The Athenians defined human nature and honour, as they maintained "and praise is due to all who, if not so superior to human nature as to refuse dominion, yet respect justice more than their position compels them to do," and also "We imagine our moderation would be best demonstrated by the conduct of who should be placed in our position."²³⁸ The Athenians argued that their wish to rule was natural and, because of their high ethical standards, they have done a better job than others would have done in the same position.

Thucydides' explanation of power was explored in the opening sections of the *Peloponnesian War*, labelled as the "archaeology" by modern historians, in which he gave a detailed explanation on the formation of empires and the accumulation of power.²³⁹ Power was firstly used to enhance the city-states and build large fortifications for protection and once this was achieved, power was then used to extend the city's influence past their immediate neighbours. Thucydides believed sea power was essential as a city could then extend its military and economic power over long distances, enabling them to transform from a local power into an international power. Thucydides further explained, in the funeral speech of Pericles, that power was a compulsion of human nature that featured daring and innovation as shown in the deeds of the Athenians.²⁴⁰ The common theme we have in these passages is

²³⁷ Forde (1992a: 376)

²³⁸ Thuc. 1.76.3-4

²³⁹ Thuc. 1.1-19; Ober (2006: 146)

²⁴⁰ Thuc.2.35-2.46; Rahe (1995: 129, 132)

that power and human nature were mutually attractive to each other, a natural occurrence according to Thucydides.

3.2 The Civil War of Corcyra and the Plague in Athens.

In 427 B.C, the civil war and the resultant destruction of society in Corcyra was caused by the rise of rival democratic and oligarchic factions trying to take advantage of the instability caused by the Peloponnesian war.²⁴¹ Due to the collapse of the state's social and legal structures, these factions fought for power by disregarding the moral norms that were followed during peacetime.²⁴² Thucydides criticised the breakdown of the factions' ethical behaviour and blamed its failure on the "nature of mankind"²⁴³, as man's nature could not resist power. The war between Athens and Sparta, Thucydides maintained, had been the catalyst of Corcyra's internal struggles as the pro-democratic factions could call on Athenian help while the pro-oligarchic faction would seek Spartan help.²⁴⁴ Thucydides had shown that the inter-state politics between Sparta and Athens had affected other state's internal politics as he wrote,

“In peace and prosperity states and individuals have better sentiments, because they do not find themselves suddenly confronted with imperious necessities; but war takes away the easy supply of daily wants and so proves a tough master that brings most men's character to a level with their fortunes.”²⁴⁵

²⁴¹ Thuc. 3.81-83; Bagby (1984: 194); Orwin (1994: 175-176)

²⁴² Thuc. 3.82.8; Rahe (1995: 122)

²⁴³ Thuc. 3.82.2

²⁴⁴ Thuc. 3.82.1

²⁴⁵ Thuc. 3.82.2

Critically for Greece and Thucydides, civil war and anarchy had spread throughout many of the Greek states in 427 B.C., mirroring the same destructive outcome of Corcyra. Thucydides criticised the debasement of the Greek language, as men changed the understanding of words to justify their actions, as well as the disappearance of honour as moral boundaries were changed according to one's power.²⁴⁶

“The ancient simplicity into which honour so largely entered was laughed down and disappeared; and society became divided into two camps in which no man trusted his fellow”.²⁴⁷

These passages, highlighting the amoral and unrestrained use of power, arguably indicate Thucydides' beliefs that pure power would be destructive and must be constrained by the conventions of morality.

Another example of anarchy or chaos from Thucydides was the plague that affected Athens in 430 B.C. which, according to Thucydides, caused the breakdown of moral norms as men were driven by self-interest to survive.²⁴⁸ The plague, which lasted approximately two years, affected social structures as familial ties to each other and to the city were disregarded.²⁴⁹ Selfishness and self-interest became society's main drivers as the Athenians disregarded the sacred burial laws as those who had first offered comfort to the dying, the most virtuous of the Athenians according to Thucydides, were themselves afflicted with the disease.²⁵⁰ Individual pleasure became the central theme for citizens as their previously held ideals of the law and morality were ignored. This example, like the factional killings in Corcyra, highlights for Thucydides the destructive nature of unrestrained power.

3.3 The Mytilenean Debate.

²⁴⁶Thuc. 3.82.4; Crane (1998: 44-45); Montan (2006: 6); Forde (1992a: 381); Korab-Karpowicz (2006: 240)

²⁴⁷ Thuc. 3.83.1

²⁴⁸ Rahe (1995: 120); Ober (2006:144)

²⁴⁹ Orwin (1988: 841); Forde (1992a: 381)

²⁵⁰ Thuc. 2.51-53; Orwin (1988: 841); Forde (1992a: 383); Ober (2006: 145); Rahe (1995: 120)

The following passages concerning the fate of the Mytileneans and the Melians indicate the tension that Thucydides believed existed between morality and power as he explored the differing outcomes of human decisions. In the Mytilenean debate the island of Mytilene, an Athenian ally, had rebelled against Athenian influence and had sought an alliance with the Spartans. In his speeches, Thucydides presented two realist arguments but with very different outcomes as one side sought the destruction of the Mytilenean people while the other side sought punishment only for those who were responsible for the rebellion.²⁵¹ Thucydides opened this passage with the fate of the Mytileneans having already been decided, as a ship had been dispatched to land on the island with the intention of killing all the adult males and enslaving the women and children.²⁵² The next day the Athenian people, having reflected on their decision during the night, decided to recall the assembly to reconsider the punishment which many thought was cruel and harsh.²⁵³ Thucydides focussed the debate on two figures Kleon who argued for the original harsh decision and saw no reason why it should be changed and Diodotus who argued for a punishment targeted against those who were guilty and not against the entire population. As we have noted, both speakers presented a realist argument in that they were both concerned with Athenian self-interest and advantage though they differed on their methodology, a debate that fought for the minds of the Athenians as much as for the lives of the Mytileneans.²⁵⁴ The speech given by Kleon initially presented an amoral view of realism and later veered towards vengeance and retribution.²⁵⁵ His rhetoric relied on a black and white assessment of the conflict and challenged the Athenians on whether they deserved their empire, “For if they were right in

²⁵¹ Bagby (1995: 184-185); Rahe (1995: 114-115)

²⁵² Thuc. 3.36; Chance (2013: 266)

²⁵³ Andrewes (1962: 71)

²⁵⁴ Hornblower (1991: 420-421), Crittle (2006: 483)

²⁵⁵ Cohen (1984: 48); Thuc.3.37-3.41

rebellious, you must be wrong in ruling.”²⁵⁶ Justice for Kleon was not aimed at the Mytileneans but for the Athenians who had been betrayed as Kleon argued that only the death penalty would deter others from following their example.²⁵⁷ In his populist speech, Kleon blamed the elite of Athenian society for their failure to guide the people and accused those who wished to be lenient as enemies of the people.²⁵⁸ For Kleon, the empire only existed due to brute force and its true nature was tyrannical a fact, he argued, that should be acknowledged by the people.²⁵⁹

Diodotus, in his reply, used Kleon’s realist argument that Athenian interests were more important than the idea of justice. However, for Diodotus, the wholesale slaughter of the Mytilenean population was not in the best interests of Athens as the repercussions from the other Greek states would seriously affect their standing, not only with their enemies but also with their allies.²⁶⁰ Diodotus argued that the death penalty did not deter people from rebellion as human nature dictated their motives therefore, Diodotus maintained, the threat of an overwhelming force before a rebellion had a greater effect than punishment that was carried out afterwards. Here we see some of Thucydides’ themes, that man’s actions were driven by human nature and that a reasoned debate would lead to a moderate outcome, although as we shall see in the episode with Melos, when reason was ignored then the moral use of force would also be rejected. For Laurie Bagby and Clifford Orwin the arguments by Diodotus represented Thucydides’ acknowledgement that human weakness was a defence against their actions as people were prone to irrational acts.²⁶¹

Principles that the Athenians had spoken of in Corinth, such as their respect for justice and their moderation in using power, were now advanced in Diodotus’ speech as Diodotus

²⁵⁶ Thuc. 3.40.5; Bagby (1995: 185)

²⁵⁷ Thuc. 3.39; Doyle (1990: 228); Orwin (1994: 144); Tritle (2006: 483)

²⁵⁸ Thuc. 3.37-38, Orwin (1984: 486); Wassermann (1956: 31)

²⁵⁹ Thuc. 3.37.1-2

²⁶⁰ Thuc. 3.46; Bagby (1995: 186)

²⁶¹ Bagby (1995: 186); Orwin (1994: 204)

successfully convinced the assembly in reversing their decision. The argument that moderation was in the Athenian's self-interest carried the day and hence a trireme was sent to stop the attack against the Mytilenians but not against the leaders of the rebellion who would be executed for defying Athens.²⁶²

The restraint of power was a re-occurring and important theme for Thucydides as he repeated these arguments in his description of Pericles. Thucydides praised Pericles in restricting Athenian ambition during their conflicts with Sparta as this restraint, according to Thucydides, had been the main factor in keeping Athens safe.²⁶³ However, once Pericles had died and his policies were overturned, the Athenian ambition to conquer other lands returned and caused the downfall of Athens.

3.4 The Melian Dialogue

We now come to the events at Melos as Thucydides has taken us to the dialogue between the Melians and the Athenians as, unlike the Mytilenean passage, we are not privy to the prior debate at Athens. In this situation, restraint and moderation have been ignored by the Athenian people as only vengeance was sought.²⁶⁴ The Melian dialogue presented two sides and two perspectives as the Athenians offered a realistic appraisal of justice and self-interest while the Melians put their trust and hope in the moral virtue of the Athenians.²⁶⁵ The rules of the dialogue were set by the Athenians at the outset, as they argued that this was not a debate on the merits of the Athenian action but a question of survival for the Melians if they did not surrender.²⁶⁶ As in the case of the Mytileneans, this was a confrontation between two states of unequal power, a relationship where the right of the stronger would prevail over the

²⁶² Thuc. 3.49; Wassermann (1956: 34)

²⁶³ Thuc. 2.65.5

²⁶⁴ Bosworth (1993: 31-32)

²⁶⁵ Rahe (1995: 125)

²⁶⁶ Thuc. 5.87; Tritle (2006: 485-486); Macleod (1974: 387)

weaker state.²⁶⁷ The Athenians rejected the use of rhetorical arguments by the Melians as the Athenians claimed that rhetoric was used to sway opinions, as Thucydides had shown in the Mytilenean debate. When the Melians argued, the Athenians replied,

“since you know as well as we do that right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.”²⁶⁸

This reply has often been used as an example of realism, as it showed that the strong could dominate the weak, however, while power was at the basis of the Athenian argument the question of self-interest for both parties was also present. These dialogues show it was in interest of the Athenians for the Melians to submit without a fight and it was in the interest of the Melians to survive.²⁶⁹ Some scholars have maintained that the Sophistic teaching of the fifth century B.C interpreted justice and self-interest as a prerogative of strength.²⁷⁰ The Athenians made it very clear to the Melians that the Athenians possessed a superior military power, an unequal power that the Melians could not hope to match.²⁷¹ Unlike the Mytilenean debate, arguments of fairness and morality did not sway the Athenians as they acknowledged their empire was a form of tyranny. Their real enemy were the subjugated people within their empire, the main reason why a neutral state like Melos, a probable future enemy, had to be under their control.²⁷² Thucydides’ contemporary Greek world, dominated by the Athenians, was not a humane world where justice or moderation was exercised, for as the Athenians proclaimed,

²⁶⁷ Thuc. 5.89; Coby (1991: 76)

²⁶⁸ Thuc. 5.89; Chance (2013: 265); Bagby (1994: 146); for speech of Diodotus see Thuc. 3.41-3.48; Cohen (1984: 50-53)

²⁶⁹ Crane (1998: 248)

²⁷⁰ Tritle (2006: 485); Rahe (1995: 133); also see Jarratt (1987: 67-78); Johnson (1995: 194-247)

²⁷¹ Coby (1991: 77-78); Tritle (2006: 486)

²⁷² Thuc. 5.91; for Athenian tyranny see speech of Kleon, Thuc. 3.37 and the speech of Pericles, Thuc. 2.63

“Of the gods we believe, and of men we know, that by a necessary law of their nature they rule wherever they can. And it is not as if we were the first to make this law, or to act upon it when made: we found it existing before us, and we shall leave it to exist forever after us; all we do is to make use of it, knowing that you and everybody else, having the same power as we have, would do the same as we do.”²⁷³

The Athenians had now rejected their previously stated aims of honour and justice, aims that were discussed in the Mytilenean debate, as these were now only reasonable when they were debated amongst equals.²⁷⁴ The Melians, who placed their hopes in the protection of the gods and the rightness of their cause, were eventually defeated by the Athenians who executed all the adult males and sold the women and children into slavery.²⁷⁵

Though Thucydides did not explicitly express his views on the actions of the Athenians against the Melians, it has been argued by many scholars that Thucydides' placement of this narrative before the Athenian disaster in Sicily implied a criticism of the Athenian decision.²⁷⁶ The Athenian military expedition to Sicily lasted from 415 B.C. till 413 B.C and was a major military disaster for the Athenians.²⁷⁷ Thucydides criticised the excessive pride and self-confidence of the Athenians as this had led them to attack Sicily, a country that eventually united to defeat the Athenians.²⁷⁸ The Melians had warned the Athenians that fairness and justice were valuable considerations for even the most powerful state, an argument that the Athenians ignored in their campaign against Sicily.²⁷⁹ Thucydides

²⁷³ Thuc. 5.102.2; Bagby (1995: 180)

²⁷⁴ Thuc. 5.101; Bagby (1994: 147)

²⁷⁵ Thuc. 5.116

²⁷⁶ Forde (1986: 440); Macleod (1974: 395); Cohen (1984: 49-50); Hawthorn (2012: 225)

²⁷⁷ Thuc. 6.26 & 7.85

²⁷⁸ Thuc. 6.32 & 7.43-44; Bedford & Workman (2001: 66)

²⁷⁹ Thuc. 5.90

had shown the Athenian's uncontrolled desire for power after Melos had caused them to pursue self-interest over restraint.²⁸⁰

Thucydides believed that to ignore power was naive but to rely on the cynical use of power was equally wrong. Thucydides' version of ethics and power was one of moderation and restraint, as power was used to enhance Greek civilisation and establish influence over others but not to create a tyranny. Thucydides' opposition to uncontrolled power and its failure of moral restraint was shown by his description of the revolts in Corcyra and the breakdown of civilised norms during the plague in Athens. Thucydides criticised individuals and factions in Corcyra and Athens as their selfishness, their desire for wealth and their personal ambition to rule triumphed over virtue and caused the breakdown of their societies.

The contrasting outcomes of the Melian and Mytilenean confrontations highlighted the effects of power and the issues of moderation and justice. The affair at Mytilene emphasized the moral restraint of the Athenians who only punished those who were responsible and not the general population. However, by the time of Melian dialogue the Athenian's increased desire of power and its corresponding lack of justice had removed all restraint and as Thucydides showed, these excesses had led them to a disastrous invasion of Sicily.

Human nature, Thucydides argued, had been the cause of these excesses, a principle that has been adopted by many modern realists, leading us to ask was Thucydides a realist? The modern realist, Steven Forde answered this question by stating that he thought Thucydides was a realist of some kind as he had explored the compatibility of morality and politics.²⁸¹ Thucydides had shown morality was an important human principle and had also

²⁸⁰ Thuc. 6.18; Korab-Karpowicz (2006: 238-239)

²⁸¹ Forde (2000: 151-152)

shown the vulnerability of morality against power, as an excessive use of force would lead to a growing desire for more power.²⁸²

Chapter 4

Procopius and Realism

Procopius' interpretation of power and morality will be examined in this chapter as we intend to show that Procopius had expressed, through his allusions to Thucydides' narrative, his own political thoughts. The main passages that will be studied include the Gothic and Armenian envoy's mission to the Persian king Chosroes, the siege of Naples by Belisarius' Roman army, the Gothic siege of Rome against Belisarius' forces and the dialogue between Peter the Patrician and the Gothic leader, Theodahad. The passages of the Gothic and Armenian envoys illustrate the compulsion and desires of human nature while the siege of Naples arguably introduces Procopius' moral view on the use of power. In the siege of Rome and in the dialogue of Peter the Patrician and Theodahad, we will examine the concepts of justice when opposed to the inevitability of power.

The passages of the Armenian and Gothic envoys to the Persian king, Chosroes, will demonstrate that Procopius explored human nature and its compulsion for power, showing this compulsion was unavoidable and perhaps also showing that for a state to guarantee its

²⁸² Morgenthau (2006: 15)

own security, war was sometimes unavoidable.²⁸³ As Procopius alluded to Thucydides' speeches of the Corinthians, held in Sparta before the start of the Peloponnesian War, we will compare Thucydides' concept of state security with Procopius' narrative. We will show that, although Procopius did not explicitly state his view on the merits of using force to counter the excessive power of another state, Procopius implied that the use of force was warranted when a state's security was under threat.

In our study of the siege of Naples, that occurred in 536 A.D., we contend that Procopius, in the speeches of the Neapolitan envoy Stephanos and the Roman general Belisarius, reflected the realist concepts that were represented in Thucydides' passages of the Melian Dialogue and in the campaigns of the Spartan general, Brasidas.²⁸⁴ Also, Procopius arguably represents his view on morality and power in his description of the actions of Belisarius in halting the slaughter of the inhabitants of Naples, conceivably alluding to the decision taken by the Athenians to stop the massacre of the Mytileneans.²⁸⁵ Like Thucydides, Procopius believed that power should be restrained and not used excessively otherwise 'pure power' would become destructive for both sides.

The next passage to be examined will be the Gothic siege of Rome that occurred between the years of 537 and 538 A.D.²⁸⁶ In this passage we will contend that Procopius covertly criticised Justinian's invasion of Italy, viewing it as unjust and part of Justinian's expansionist policies. Procopius' description of this siege incorporates several allusions to the Melian Dialogue as Procopius highlights the use of force and the arguments of justice.²⁸⁷ As in Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*, in which the moral concepts of the Mytilenean debate

²⁸³ For Gothic envoys see Procopius *Wars* 2.2, Bury (1958b: 205-206); for Armenian envoys see Procopius *Wars* 2.3.31-57

²⁸⁴ Procopius *Wars* 5.8; for Melian Dialogue see Thuc. 5.84, for Brasidas see 4.86.1

²⁸⁵ Thuc. 3.35; Bagby (1995: 184); Doyle (1990: 227)

²⁸⁶ Bury (1958b: 183); Procopius *Wars* 2.3.31

²⁸⁷ For their similarities see Kaldellis (2014: 331n) & Pazdernik (1997: 274-275)

can be contrasted with the events in Melos, Procopius' description of the siege of Rome and its justification of power and invasion, will be compared with the siege of Naples and its moral concepts.

Also exploring similar concepts with the Melian Dialogue, Procopius' description of the dialogue between Peter the Patrician and Theodahad illustrates the concepts of necessity and self-interest.²⁸⁸ The necessity of power and the necessity to survive and dominate others was an argument that Thucydides had examined in the dialogue between the Athenians and the Melians. as he viewed the desire for the strong to rule over the weak was part of human nature.²⁸⁹ Arguably, Procopius alluded to similar concepts in this dialogue as Theodahad questioned the right of Justinian to invade Italy while Peter spoke of the right of power.

In several passages of Procopius, modern realists may recognise familiar political concepts. Modern realists have exploited the political concepts of Thucydides for their own scholarship, much in the same way Procopius has used Thucydides as a basis for his own political narrative. As Laurie Johnson Bagby noted, "Both classical Realists, who begin with an understanding of human nature, and neo-realists, who emphasize the international structure, can find support for their theoretical viewpoint in Thucydides,"²⁹⁰ Though we will examine Procopius through a classical realist viewpoint, neo-realists may arguably isolate certain passages that support their viewpoint.

4.1 The Gothic Envoys and the Persian King

In this section, we will examine the mission of the Gothic envoys who were sent to the Persian king Chosroes in 538 A.D., to warn him of the dangers of an increasingly powerful Justinian. Their mission was to try and convince the Persian king to attack the Romans in the

²⁸⁸ Procopius *Wars* 5.6.1-7

²⁸⁹ Forde (1992: 373-374)

²⁹⁰ Bagby (1994: 131)

hope of easing the pressure on the Goths who, at that time, were fighting the Romans in Italy.²⁹¹

“Consider that the Romans could never be well disposed to your kingdom; when they become more powerful they will not hesitate at all to display their enmity toward the Persians. Use this option while it presents itself now, so that you not regret it after it has passed. For when the moment of opportunity passes, it is not in its nature to return again. It is better by anticipating to be in security, than to miss your chance and suffer the most miserable fate at the hands of the enemy.”²⁹²

These speeches presented by the envoys of the Gothic king, Vittigis, to the Persian king, Chosroes, in Procopius’ *Wars* echoed the arguments that Thucydides had raised in the Corinthian’s speech against the Athenians in Sparta.²⁹³ The background of the two speeches were similar as Athens and Sparta had experienced a thirty years peace between 446 to 431 B.C., while the Persians and Romans had signed the Eternal Peace that had lasted from 532 till 540 A.D.²⁹⁴ Both the Persians and the Spartans were accused of being passive bystanders as they had watched their potential enemy increase its power and influence. Thucydides had highlighted, in the Corinthian speech, concepts of realism as the Corinthians had argued it was in Sparta’s self-interest to oppose the growth of the Athenian empire.²⁹⁵ Like the Corinthians, the Goths had argued it was in the self-interest of the Persians to be daring and take the initiative to attack the Romans. For some realists, intelligence and self-interest were

²⁹¹ Procopius *Wars* 2.2; Bury (1958b: 205-206);

²⁹² Procopius *Wars* 2.2.10-11

²⁹³ Thuc. 1.67-71; Pazdernik (1997: 14)

²⁹⁴ For general background see Pazdernik (1997: 15-16); for eternal peace see Greatrex (488) & Bury (1958b: 92-93); for the thirty-year peace see Lewis (1992: 121-146)

²⁹⁵ Cohen (1984: 40); Doyle (1990: 228); For neo-realist debate see Monten (2006: 14); Ober (2006: 141) viewed Thucydides as one who saw both structural realism and human nature in politics; for classical realism see Bagby (1994: 138-139) & Orwin (1994: 43)

part of an individual's character, a characteristic that was credited to the Athenians who were regarded as daring, innovative and opportunistic by the Corinthians.²⁹⁶ As we have discussed in the previous chapter, Thucydides viewed human nature as the cause for political change as it was human compulsion that had led to the Athenian acquisition of power.²⁹⁷ This same human compulsion for power was now ascribed to Justinian by the Goths as they warned the Persians that once Justinian had defeated the Goths, he would then be compelled to attack the Persians.²⁹⁸ The fear of Roman power was shown by Procopius to be a factor in the security of these states, comparable to Thucydides' argument that the Peloponnesian war was caused by Sparta's fear of an increasingly powerful Athens.²⁹⁹ However, Procopius had also shown that self-interest had affected the course of politics as certain decisions previously taken had given Justinian an opportunity to interfere in the affairs of the Goths after the death of the Gothic leader, Theodoric.³⁰⁰ Amalasuntha, the daughter of Theodoric, had become the administrator of the Gothic government as her son Athalaric, who had been appointed by Theodoric as his successor, was still a minor being only eight years old.³⁰¹ Amalasuntha, however, was seen as too sympathetic to the Romans by many of the Gothic leaders who plotted against her rule, causing her to turn to Justinian for help.³⁰² The actions of the Goths against Amalasuntha and Amalasuntha's desire for self-preservation had instigated Justinian's involvement in the affairs of the Gothic kingdom and enabled Justinian to interfere in their politics. The murder of Amalasuntha, who had been granted protection by Justinian, by the new leader of the Goths gave the pretext for Justinian to invade Italy.³⁰³

²⁹⁶ Thuc. 1.70; Bagby (1994: 138)

²⁹⁷ Forde (1986: 435); Thuc. 1.76

²⁹⁸ Procopius *Wars* 2.2.6-7

²⁹⁹ Thuc. 1.23

³⁰⁰ For political life during the end of Theodoric's reign see Bury (1958b: 151-158) & Evans (1996a: 137)

³⁰¹ Procopius *Wars* 5.3.2-4; Bury (1958b: 159)

³⁰² Procopius *Wars* 5.3.12& 5.3.28-30; Evans (1996a: 136-137); Bury (1958b: 160)

³⁰³ Procopius *Wars* 5.5.1; Evans (1996a: 138); Bury (1958b: 168)

In this passage Procopius highlighted human nature and its compulsion to satisfy one's self-interest. The Goths were driven by their self-interests in their conspiracy against Amalasuntha and their request for help from the Persians while for Amalasuntha her self-interest, that is her desire to survive, compelled her to ask for Justinian's help and gave Justinian the opportunity or excuse to enter Italy.

4.2 The Armenian Envoys

In a similar vein to the speeches of the Goths and Thucydides' Corinthians, the Armenian envoys present their fear of Roman power to Chosroes, the Persian king.³⁰⁴ The Armenians speech, echoing the arguments of the Goths and Thucydides' Corinthians, warn the Persians of Justinian's desire to rule over the other states, as the Romans would eventually invade the Persian empire due to the inaction of the Persians.³⁰⁵ The Armenians accused Justinian of deliberately creating anarchy or chaos within the region as this would enable Justinian to expand his power and influence.³⁰⁶ Thucydides had shown how human nature had driven the growth of Athenian power and was then aided by Spartan inaction and Athenian boldness.³⁰⁷ Thucydides' interpretation of human self-interest, such as the impulses of power, profit and fear had showed the dynamic aspects of human nature and politics.³⁰⁸ Procopius, through the speeches of the Goths and Armenians, had covertly criticised the Persians for their apathy and inaction in not recognising Justinian's motives and for their indecision in not forcibly combating his aggressive policies.³⁰⁹ This suggests that Procopius viewed the increasing power of Justinian and his desire to dominate other countries as a threat to not only the Roman empire but as a threat to the stability of the region.

³⁰⁴ Procopius *Wars* 2.3.31-57; Pazdernik (1997: 14); Evans (1996a: 92)

³⁰⁵ 2.3.38; Kruse (2013: 866-867)

³⁰⁶ Procopius *Wars* 2.3.39-42

³⁰⁷ Thuc. 1.75

³⁰⁸ Forde (1995: 148)

³⁰⁹ Procopius *Wars* 2.3.34

Like Thucydides, Procopius showed how human nature was a driving factor in international relations as, while the eventual decision by the Persians to attack the eastern borders of the Roman empire was a rational response to Justinian's growing power, the Persians' decision to invade deep into Roman territory was used as an opportunistic act to acquire more wealth. Procopius' Persians, like Thucydides' Athenians who were motivated by the human desires of honour, power and profit, were driven by the human compulsion of power and wealth.³¹⁰ The Persians' invasion of Syria, highlighting these human desires, did not attempt to conquer cities such as Circesium, as this would have involved a lengthy siege, but attacked less well defended cities that could pay them a ransom.³¹¹ Chosroes eventually sacked Antioch, the great Roman city of the east, after it had refused to pay a ransom and then, after plundering Apamea and receiving a ransom from Dara, returned to Ctisophon.³¹² Clearly, Chosroes' intentions were not only meant to secure his empire from the threat of the Romans, he was also driven by self-interest, a human motive that was understood by Thucydides and alluded to by Procopius.

4.3 The Siege of Naples

In this passage we will examine the siege of Naples that occurred in 536 A.D., when Belisarius, after defeating the Vandals in North Africa and subduing the Goths in Sicily, had crossed into mainland Italy.³¹³ Naples was the first city to be encountered that possessed a sizeable Gothic garrison in a well defended position. When Belisarius and his army had made their camp outside the city, Naples sent a delegation headed by one of their leading citizens, Stephanos, to present a speech to Belisarius urging him and his army to bypass their city and instead march onto Rome. These speeches echoed the realist principles of power and self-

³¹⁰ For description of Athenian compulsion see Thuc. 1.70-75; Forde (1992a: 375); Coby (1991: 83)

³¹¹ Procopius *Wars* 2.5; Bury (1958b: 93)

³¹² Procopius *Wars* 2.8; Evans (1996a: 157); Bury (1958b: 97)

³¹³ Procopius *Wars* 5.8.1-7; Bury (1958b: 175); Evans (1996a: 140)

interest that Thucydides had described in passages such as the Mytilenean debate, the Melian dialogue and were also modelled on Thucydides' description of the Spartan general, Brasidas, during his exploits in Thrace.³¹⁴ Stephanos opened his speech by referring to honour, virtue and self-interest to dissuade Belisarius from attacking Naples,

“You are not acting justly, O general, in marching against men who are Romans and have done no wrong, who inhabit a small city and have a garrison of barbarian masters, so that it is not even in our power, if we desire to do so, to oppose them.”³¹⁵

If we first review the Mytilenean debate, Diodotus had argued that only a state's self-interest should determine the outcome of a conflict.³¹⁶ He claimed that since the majority of Mytileneans were under the control of their pro-Spartan oligarchic government it was not in the Athenian's self-interest to punish those who were unable to determine their own fate.³¹⁷ Defining Athenian self-interest, Diodotus argued that even if the punishment was deserved, their clemency was a rational choice as this would turn the Mytilenean people favourably towards the Athenians.³¹⁸ The Athenians had initially regarded the Mytileneans as being disloyal and as an ally that had to be reconquered, which perhaps mirrored the view held by the Romans as Stephanos, like Diodotus who reminded the Athenians that the majority of the Mytileneans were subjected to a pro-Spartan government, had to caution Belisarius that most people in Naples were Roman citizens and were under the subjugation of the Goths.³¹⁹ While Diodotus had asked for clemency for the people of Mytilene, Stephanos' version of clemency was to offer Belisarius a solution that would benefit the self-interests of both the Neapolitans

³¹⁴ Pazdernik (2000: 173-174); see also Kaldellis (2014: 269n)

³¹⁵ Procopius *Wars* 5.8.7-11

³¹⁶ Thuc. 3.46; Bagby (1995: 184); Doyle (1990:227)

³¹⁷ Thuc. 3.47; Wasserman (1956: 38)

³¹⁸ Wasserman (1956: 39); Doyle (1990:227)

³¹⁹ Wasserman (1956: 40); Procopius *Wars* 5.8.7

and the invading Romans. Stephanos showed that bypassing Naples and proceeding to Rome was a more realistic option and one that was in the self-interest of the Romans.³²⁰ If Belisarius could conquer the city of Rome and defeat the Goths then Naples, according to Stephanos, would come over to the Roman side, although this may have implied their allegiance would be dependent on which side held power. The Neapolitan's dilemma alluded to another of Thucydides' passages, that of the Spartan's confrontation with the Akanthians who were asked to ally themselves with Sparta or be forced to submit to the Spartan's liberation of Greece.³²¹ In this case, the Akanthians agreed to join the Spartan's cause and were promised freedom from Athenian oppression, although in reality they were to be under Spartan control as rationality, uncertainty and self-interest motivated both sides in their decisions.³²² In the case of the Neapolitans, they were uncertain of Belisarius intentions as many did not view him as a liberator but as a conqueror. The arrival of Belisarius' army had changed the balance of power in the region and had created political instability for the Neapolitans.³²³ The Neapolitans, though subjugated by the Goths, now had a choice of whether or not to assist the Romans, however the danger for the Neapolitans if they were to partner with the Romans, was whether they were just swapping one master for another. For the Neapolitans, their decision depended on choosing an ally that would be strong enough to protect them, a question of security and self-interest and a problem for the Neapolitans as they were unsure of who could be their most reliable ally.³²⁴

Stephanos' speech to Belisarius had also tried to appeal to a shared Roman identity and inferred a moral obligation on Belisarius. Kinship was a theme that had been explored by a number of ancient authors such as Thucydides, who explored kinship in the Melian dialogue,

³²⁰ Procopius *Wars* 5.8.10

³²¹ Thuc. 4.85-87; Burns (2011: 516); Heilke (2004: 131-132)

³²² See modern realist perspectives in Keohane (1986: 7) & Forde (1995: 147)

³²³ For a discussion on the balance of power and modern realism see Morgenthau (2006: 193)

³²⁴ Waltz (1979: 127)

and Herodotus, who examined the ties of language, kinship and religion amongst the Greeks in *The Histories*.³²⁵ The moral choices of the Gothic guards were also called into play as Stephanus argued they were virtual prisoners of the Gothic leader, Theodahad, due to their families living under his protection.³²⁶ Stephanos, like Diodotus, had tried to introduce certain moral themes into the discussion to influence the thinking of the Romans.

Belisarius' reply, however, was a pragmatic assessment of the situation. He advised the Neapolitans that this was not a debate on the justice of the Roman cause, as a Roman army was already encamped on their doorstep.³²⁷ With a realist critique, Belisarius advised them that their best course of action was to act in their own self-interest as the fate of the city was entirely in their hands.³²⁸ Thucydides had shown, in the Melian dialogue, that a discussion on justice or morality could only be debated amongst equals, hence Belisarius, who believed himself to be in a position of power, disregarded the moral claims of Stephanos.³²⁹ Belisarius' ultimatum of submission or destruction was given under the guise of offering the Neapolitans their freedom:

“Receive the emperor’s army into your city, which has come to secure your freedom and that of the other Italians, and do not choose what will bring upon you the most grievous fortunes.”³³⁰

These themes of submission or destruction were familiar ideas in classicizing history as Procopius had used similar arguments during the start of Belisarius' campaign against the vandals in North Africa. After landing in Libya, Procopius had written a letter that was intended to be read by the Vandal magistrates in which he maintained that his mission was to

³²⁵ Hdt. 8.144.2; Crane (1998: 249); see kinship of Melians to Spartans, Thuc. 5.104

³²⁶ Procopius *Wars* 5.8.8-9

³²⁷ Procopius *Wars* 5.8.12

³²⁸ Athenians argument for self-interest Thuc. 1.75.5

³²⁹ Thuc. 5.89, Procopius *Wars* 5.8.12; for Melian choices and survival see Macleod (1974: 387)

³³⁰ Procopius *Wars* 5.8.13

dethrone the tyrant that was ruling and bring freedom and peace to the people.³³¹ Alluding to Thucydides' description of the offer made by the Spartan king Archidamos to the Plataeans, which ended in the Plataeans destruction, these passages highlight the notions of power and self-interest.³³² The concept of power, in which the strong could intimidate and attack the weaker states, and self-interest, which meant survival for the weaker states, were constant themes in Thucydides and Procopius.

The dialogues between Belisarius and Stephanos also echoed the dialogue between Brasidas and the people of Akanthos in Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*.³³³ Thucydides showed the difficulty of a small and relatively powerless state trying to survive against a major power as "smaller cities must rely on the larger for protection, and the power to protect is the power to oppress."³³⁴ The Akanthians, like the Neapolitans, were also offered their freedom, freedom from Athenian control though perhaps not freedom from Spartan influence as Brasidas' promise of liberation was backed up with a show of force to ensure the Akanthians accepted the offer of Spartan freedom.³³⁵ Like the Neapolitans, the Akanthians are led to believe that their self-interest formed the basis of the Spartan argument although in reality they had placed their faith in hope over reason.³³⁶ The Akanthians' hope was for Spartan protection in the event of Athenian retaliation and hope against eventual Spartan subjugation, an emotion that was criticised by Thucydides.³³⁷ The Akanthians had neglected their responsibility of self-interest by not understanding the real political and military situation of their region, the necessity of power.

³³¹ Procopius *Wars* 3.16.12

³³² Thuc. 2.72.1; Kaldellis (2014: 179n)

³³³ Thuc. 4.86

³³⁴ Burns (2011: 515); Thuc. 4.86.1

³³⁵ Pazdernik (1997: 172); Bosworth (1993: 36); Burns (2011: 515-516)

³³⁶ Burns (2011: 518)

³³⁷ Thuc. 4.108.4-6

The hope that Belisarius had offered was one of freedom from oppression and the hope of Roman protection from any future retaliation from the Goths.³³⁸ However, like the Spartan offer to the Akanthians, Belisarius cloaked his offer of freedom with the threat of destruction if his offer was not met. Thucydides' views on the futility of hope and its ignorance of realism was best portrayed by Hermocrates and his speeches concerning Athenian interference in Sicily.³³⁹ Hermocrates maintained that the Athenian involvement in the affairs of Sicily would eventually result in the Athenian's conquest of Sicily if the Sicilian cities placed their safety in hope. Hope, as described by Hermocrates, was to rely on the arguments of right and wrong, a moral defence for the weak and one that would be dismissed by the strong.³⁴⁰ He argued that the cities of Sicily must take a realist approach to their problem and not believe that the rightness of their cause, that is their hope of fairness, would guarantee them success.³⁴¹ For the Neapolitan envoys hope, with the help of a bribe from Belisarius, was the message they brought back to the people inside the city.³⁴² The people, warily at first, accepted the offer after a number of their demands were accepted by Belisarius. The Neapolitans, by agreeing to Belisarius' demands, had failed to appreciate the power of the Goths. This decision mirrored the Akanthian response to the Spartans and the Akanthian dismissal of Athenian power.³⁴³

Against this argument was the realist position presented by Pastor and Asclepiodotus, two men who favoured the Goths and were suspicious of the Romans. Pastor and Asclepiodotus argued that Belisarius, like Thucydides' Brasidas, had made promises that would be difficult to keep.³⁴⁴ Pastor and Asclepiodotus maintained that if Belisarius could

³³⁸ Procopius *Wars* 5.8.14

³³⁹ Thuc. 4.59; Burns (2011: 519)

³⁴⁰ Thuc. 4.59-60

³⁴¹ Thuc. 4.62

³⁴² Procopius *Wars* 5.8.19-22

³⁴³ Procopius *Wars* 5.8.23-28; Thuc. 4.86

³⁴⁴ Procopius *Wars* 5.8.32, for Brasidas see Heilke (2004: 131); Burns (2011: 509) & Thuc. 4.85.7, 4.108.5

guarantee victory against the Goths then following him would be in the self-interest of the Neapolitans. However, as they pointed out “no man in the world is in a position to guarantee the decision of fortune.”³⁴⁵ Procopius’ passage alludes to the actions of Brasidas who promised the Akanthians safety and liberation from the Athenian empire knowing he was not in a position to deliver all of his promises in the event of an Athenian attack.³⁴⁶ This cynical position of using deliberate lies or at the very least the ability to manipulate the truth reflected, to a certain extent, a realistic concept of a ruler, a ruler who must sometimes be deceptive when it was necessary for them to gain an advantage.³⁴⁷ As with the Akanthians, the main concern for the Neapolitans was their self-interest and their security as these were the basic necessities to survive when smaller states were involved in a struggle between two great powers.³⁴⁸

As well as self-interest, Pastor and Asclepiodotus presented a moral element in the debate, two features that Thucydides frequently inserted in his speeches.³⁴⁹ They argued the facts as they were, and not as some would hope for, as they maintained the Neapolitans were under the sovereignty of the Goths and to aid the Romans would be seen as treachery, “for you are committing treason not under constraint of necessity, but out of deliberate cowardice.”³⁵⁰ The two argued that it was not necessary to abandon their moral obligations to the Goths, as the fortifications of the Neapolitans were strong enough to withstand the Roman siege.³⁵¹ As the speakers pointed out, once they had betrayed the Goths the Romans would perceive the Neapolitans as untrustworthy and if the Romans were unable to defeat the Goths

³⁴⁵ Procopius *Wars* 5.8.33

³⁴⁶ See Thuc. 4.56-57 for Brasidas’ promises; Burns (2011: 515-516) for assessment of Brasidas promises.

³⁴⁷ See Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Ch. 18

³⁴⁸ Doyle (1990: 228); see also Morgenthau (2006: 5)

³⁴⁹ Wasserman (1956: 34); Bagby (1994: 144); Doyle (1990: 228)

³⁵⁰ Procopius *Wars* 5.8.35

³⁵¹ For a description on necessity see Forde (1992:373)

then both sides would view the Neapolitans with hostility.³⁵² The speech of Pastor and Asclepiodotus persuaded the Neapolitans to reject the demands of Belisarius though perhaps not due to notions of morality and justice. The concepts of power and security ultimately swayed the Neapolitans as the Jewish population guaranteed the city's supply of provisions while the Goths confirmed their protection of Naples.³⁵³ Unlike the sieges of Akanthos and Plataea by the Spartan Brasidas and the Athenian use of power at Mytilene and Melos, the balance of power between Belisarius' Romans and the Neapolitans under the Goths was virtually equal, discouraging any advantage that might be gained by the Neapolitans uniting with the Romans. The Neapolitans desire for survival and security saw them combine with the Goths as they viewed the Romans as a greater threat than the Goths.³⁵⁴

The rejection of the Roman offer led to the siege of the city by Belisarius who was initially unsuccessful due to the city's great walls.³⁵⁵ However, a chance discovery by one of his soldiers that a pathway existed through the aqueduct supplying the city, enabled his army to enter the city undetected.³⁵⁶ In spite of this good fortune Belisarius hesitated as he offered the Neapolitans another chance to reconsider their choices as the sack of the city would be inevitably followed by the massacre of all the males and the enslavement of the women and children.³⁵⁷ Perhaps this mirrored Procopius' true thoughts when Belisarius spoke of the shared identity of the Neapolitans and Romans and the moral ambiguity of the barbarians in Belisarius' army being used as the force behind their destruction,

“But I pray that an ancient city which for ages has been inhabited by
Christian Romans, may not meet with such a fortune, especially at my

³⁵² Procopius *Wars* 5.8.36

³⁵³ Procopius *Wars* 5.8.41-42

³⁵⁴ Waltz (1979: 127); Walt (2013: 110-117)

³⁵⁵ Procopius *Wars* 5.8.43-45

³⁵⁶ Procopius *Wars* 5.9.12-21

³⁵⁷ Procopius *Wars* 5.9.23-27; Pazdernik (1997: 266)

hands as commander of Roman soldiers, not least because in my army are a multitude of barbarians who have lost brothers or relatives before the wall of this town.”³⁵⁸

Unfortunately, the Neapolitans could not be persuaded to change their minds which forced Belisarius to launch his troops into the city via the aqueduct.³⁵⁹ The city of Naples soon fell under the combined attack on its walls and through its aqueduct and resulted in a large-scale slaughter of many of the inhabitants of the city.³⁶⁰

However, as this tragedy unfolded Procopius introduced the arguments of morality, justice and self-interest as Belisarius was able to re-establish order through the power of his words, “By killing them you will not be ridding yourselves of enemies for the future, but you will be suffering a loss: the death of your own subjects.”³⁶¹ Arguably, Procopius here alluded to Thucydidean interpretations of power and morality, concepts that were examined in the Mytilenean debate and the Melian Dialogue. As Charles Pazdernik noted, Belisarius’ speech reappropriated the words used by Kleon in the Mytilenean debate in which he argued for the death penalty against those who had rebelled against Athens.³⁶² Instead of killing the population as a way of forcing them to be obedient, Belisarius argued that showing mercy would have a greater effect in uniting the Neapolitans to the Roman cause. The actions of Belisarius highlighted the moral contradictions that were part of an imperialist power. Here Procopius used the Thucydidean motives of justice and morality and combined them with the use of restraint and self-interest. As we saw in the Mytilenean debate, while the use of self-interest was the determining factor for Diodotus in his argument against Kleon, the

³⁵⁸ Procopius *Wars* 5.9.27

³⁵⁹ Procopius *Wars* 5.10.13-29

³⁶⁰ Evans (1996a: 140); Bury (1958b: 176); *Liber Pontificalis Silverius*

³⁶¹ Procopius *Wars* 5.10.32

³⁶² Pazdernik (1997: 267); Thuc. 3.40.7

underlying factors of morality and restraint were also powerful elements in his narrative.³⁶³ As Diodotus had argued that it was not in the Athenian's interest to punish the Mytileneans severely, so it was not in the interest of Belisarius to slaughter the entire population as the death penalty did not have a truly deterrent effect.³⁶⁴ Procopius had shown that man's nature was often driven by human weaknesses, much the same way as Thucydides' Diodotus had argued that men were strongly influenced by their passions.³⁶⁵ Perhaps Belisarius had decided that the Neapolitans decision to support the Goths was an understandable act of human nature and to punish a person's human nature was futile as, similar to Diodotus' Mytileneans, human nature followed one's self-interest and in the future ,the Neapolitans may become Roman allies.

4.4 The Siege of Rome

This section will examine the dialogue between the Goths and Belisarius during the Gothic siege of Rome, in 537 A.D., which was defended by Belisarius' Roman army.³⁶⁶ In this passage Procopius explored the human motives of self-interest and the issue of justice and power. After the fall of Naples, events had overtaken the Gothic leadership as Theodahad was murdered on the orders of Vittigis, who then became the new leader of the Goths.³⁶⁷ The new Gothic king decided that, due to the presence of a hostile army of Franks to the north, it would be prudent to leave Rome with a token force and move the major part of his army north to counter the Frankish menace. After Naples, Belisarius had marched his army north to Rome and was able to enter the city unhindered as the small Gothic garrison quietly departed the city when the people of Rome decided to change their allegiance to Belisarius and his Roman army. This situation did not last long as Vittigis, who had cleared up his affairs with

³⁶³ Thuc. 3.46-48; Bagby (1995: 185-186);

³⁶⁴ Bagby (1995: 186); Thuc. 3.47.3

³⁶⁵ Thuc. 3.45.7; Bagby (1995: 186)

³⁶⁶ Procopius *Wars* 6.6; Bury (1958b: 189)

³⁶⁷ Procopius *Wars* 5.11.1-9; Bury (1958b: 178); Evans (1996a: 140)

the Franks, returned to retake Rome at the head of a large army.³⁶⁸ The siege lasted for a little over a year and during this time both the besieged and the attackers suffered, as the effects of war, famine and disease negated any advantage that each side may have gained. With the Gothic army deteriorating due to these effects and then suffering a major military defeat the Gothic leader, Vitigis, sent his envoys to Belisarius to negotiate a settlement to the conflict.³⁶⁹

The dialogue of the Goths and Belisarius, reflecting the realist concepts and structure of the Melian dialogue, gave Procopius the opportunity to examine justice and moderation or more precisely the lack of these elements as both powers clashed over their perceived rights of rule.³⁷⁰ Unlike the dialogue between the Melians and the Athenians that was based on the unequal power of one state over another, Procopius explores the justification of the Roman invasion as both the Romans and the Goths were comparatively equal in power.³⁷¹ Procopius' structure of these speeches, mirroring Thucydides' dialogue, has two speakers presenting two points of view as they argue on the merits of their position.³⁷² The Gothic envoy, who happened to be Roman, opens his address with a realistic assessment of the situation that faced the Goths and the Romans.³⁷³ He addresses the concepts of self-interest, as it was not in the interest of both powers to suffer indefinitely when neither side could achieve an advantage, and human nature, the urge to fight in order to increase one's power, arguments that were debated in the Melian Dialogue.³⁷⁴ He acknowledges that the war has not gone

³⁶⁸ Procopius *Wars* 5.16.12; Bury (1958b: 180); Evans (1996a: 141)

³⁶⁹ Procopius *Wars* 6.6; Pazdernik (1997: 274); Bury (1958b: 188-189)

³⁷⁰ For their similarities see Kaldellis (2014: 331n) & Pazdernik (1997: 274-275)

³⁷¹ Procopius *Wars* 6.6.13; Pazdernik (274-275); for Melian dialogue see Coby (1991: 76) & Thuc. 5.89

³⁷² For the Melian dialogue see Bosworth (1993: 31)

³⁷³ Procopius *Wars* 6.6.4-5

³⁷⁴ Procopius *Wars* 6.6.7; for Thucydides see Thuc.5.87 & Diodotus explanation in Thuc.3.44; Bagby (1995: 180); Coby (1991: 79)

well, as both sides had suffered hardships a fact, he argues, that would be foolish to deny.³⁷⁵

Perhaps Procopius' true thoughts were revealed when he wrote,

“No one, I think, could deny, at least no one who is not a fool, that it is only unwise men who choose to go on suffering indefinitely merely to satisfy a momentary urge to fight and refuse to find a solution for the troubles that afflict them.”³⁷⁶

This appears to be a critical view of Justinian's actions in Italy as the security of the empire should have been greater than the interests of the emperor. When this passage was published the war in Italy had dragged on for over twenty years and had resulted in the devastation of the country and its population.³⁷⁷ Patrick Coby argued that many of Thucydides' speeches offered an enlightened view of self-interest, that is a solution to arguments based on “intelligent” self-interest, a concept, we argue, that Procopius had applied in this passage.³⁷⁸ In this speech, the envoy is attempting to present a rational point of view to Belisarius, a view that was in the self-interest of both parties. Arguably echoing Procopius's thoughts, the envoy maintained that a leader's focus should be on the safety and security of the state and not on their own personal glory.³⁷⁹

The concept of moderation, a principle of Thucydidean political thought, was used by Procopius as the Gothic envoy claimed that moderation could achieve a consensus between the two sides.³⁸⁰ We have seen in the Mytilenean debate that Thucydides had the Athenians reject Kleon's call for justice, which was in reality a call for vengeance, and accept the

³⁷⁵ Procopius *Wars* 6.6.4-5

³⁷⁶ Procopius *Wars* 6.6.6

³⁷⁷ For dates see Cameron (1985: 10); Cataudella (2003: 403-404); Greatrex (2014: 101-103)

³⁷⁸ For an explanation of intelligent self-interest see Coby (1991: 69)

³⁷⁹ Procopius *Wars* 6.6.7; for a modern realist interpretation of self-interest and rationalisation see Morgenthau (2006: 235); McQueen (2016: 6); Lebow (2008: 29)

³⁸⁰ Procopius *Wars* 6.6.8; for Thucydides see Korab-Karpowicz (2006: 234); Edmunds (1975: 76) & Palmer (1989: 373)

arguments of Diodotus. Diodotus' arguments were based on the on the principles of moderation and wise government, as this was a rational solution and in the self-interest of the Athenians.³⁸¹ Moderation was also a theme used by Thucydides in his assessment of Pericles, as Pericles maintained that an excessive expansion of the Athenian empire may have resulted in its downfall.³⁸² Therefore, can we argue that Procopius saw much of the Italian campaign as immoderate and a threat to the sustainability of the Roman empire. The envoy's offer was a realistic proposal to end the war and produce an outcome that would be advantageous to both parties. Their statement, "do not give in to a spirit of contentiousness towards us and thus destroy yourselves as well as us"³⁸³ perhaps gives us a clue to Procopius' thoughts. As we have noted, Procopius was writing with hindsight and had experienced the long destructive war in Italy. This offer from the Goths would have created peace or at least a period of security and stability between the two empires and perhaps for Procopius, may have stopped the foreseen instability that had later affected the empire.

The envoys and Belisarius then affirm the rules of their dialogue as Belisarius establishes the agenda.³⁸⁴ Like the Melians, the envoys base their arguments on justice and the moral actions of both parties. Procopius then has the envoys present their case which is in fact a denunciation of the emperor's actions, a veiled criticism that may represent the thoughts of Procopius and others in Constantinople as the envoys state, " You have done us an injustice, Romans, in taking up arms wrongfully against us, your friends and allies."³⁸⁵ The envoys maintain the Goths were persuaded to enter Italy by Zeno, the emperor of the East, and to attack Odoacer, who had deposed the previous western emperor Romulus

³⁸¹ Cohen (1984: 51); Thuc.3.40 & 3.47-48

³⁸² Thuc.2.65.7; Macleod (1974: 395); Cohen (1984: 42)

³⁸³ Procopius *Wars* 6.6.10

³⁸⁴ Procopius *Wars* 6.6.11-13 & Thuc.5.85; see also Kaldellis (2014: 331n)

³⁸⁵ Procopius *Wars* 6.6.14; for Procopius' criticism of Justinian see Kaldellis (2004: 112), here Kaldellis argues on Procopius' methods of criticising the emperor, also see Procopius *Secret History* 6.20 & 8.20 for Procopius' direct criticisms of the emperor.

Augustulus in 476 A.D.³⁸⁶ Unlike Zeno, who was unable to defeat Odoacer, the Goths were successful in defeating him and established a kingdom under Theodoric.³⁸⁷ Through the envoy's speech, Procopius argues for the legitimacy of Gothic rule well as highlighting their moral standards, as the Goths,

“scrupulously guarded for the Romans their practises pertaining to the worship of God, and faith in him, that to this day not one of the Italians has changed his belief, either willingly or unwillingly, and when Goths have changed it, we paid no attention.”³⁸⁸

Procopius' purpose of including this criticism of Justinian and highlighting the acceptance of religious diversity by the Goths, may be taken as a disapproval of Justinian's attitude to religious tolerance and perhaps reflects the Melian's arguments that stressed the moral hypocrisy of the Athenians who had previously advocated the cause of justice.³⁸⁹ The criticism of Justinian becomes apparent in the *Secret History* as Procopius goes into some length describing the religious intolerance and suppression of Christian and non-Christian groups by Justinian.³⁹⁰

The desires of the Romans and the Athenians for more power were not caused by concerns for security as they both viewed power as an end in itself and as a way of increasing their wealth and influence. As the Athenians had reminded the Melians, the Athenians had come to conquer them, not for any wrongs they might have done but only because the Athenians had wished to absorb them into their empire.³⁹¹ Belisarius presented a similar view

³⁸⁶ Procopius *Wars* 6.6.14-16; Bury (1958a: 406)

³⁸⁷ Bury (1958a: 422)

³⁸⁸ Procopius *Wars* 6.6.18

³⁸⁹ Thuc. 5.89; Bagby (1995: 179); Forde (1992:384)

³⁹⁰ Procopius *Secret History* 13.4-9

³⁹¹ Thuc. 5.89; Coby (1991:73); Macleod (1974:394)

on power as he disregarded the envoy's speech and reminded the Goths that they had only governed Italy by the grace of Justinian and now Justinian was ready to reclaim his lands.³⁹²

Procopius has given the envoy's speeches a predominant part in these passages which points to their importance and to Procopius' views. The detailed explanation of the Goth's occupation of Italy enabled Procopius to criticise the motives of Justinian, showcase Justinian's injustice in attacking the Goths who were not a threat to the Roman empire and perhaps show the futility of the war in Italy.

4.5 Peter the Patrician and Theodahad

Another passage that mirrors the underlying sentiments of the Melian dialogue and perhaps demonstrates Procopius' view of Justinian can be found in the dialogue between the Gothic leader, Theodahad, and Justinian's envoy, Peter the Patrician.³⁹³ This meeting followed the Roman conquest of Sicily and occurred because the Gothic leader Theodahad, an ineffectual leader according to Procopius, was concerned by the military power of the Romans.³⁹⁴ The conflict between justice and power on the eve of war reflected the situation of the Melians as Theodahad, like the Melians, countered the use of force with arguments of justice.³⁹⁵

Like the Athenians, the Roman's intention was clear as unless Theodahad would submit then a war would be inevitable.³⁹⁶ The onus of agreeing to these conditions fell solely on Theodahad as the Romans, being in a position of power, set the agenda.³⁹⁷ Theodahad attempted to introduce the concept of justice into the dialogue when he questioned Peter on whether it was fair that the emperor would go to war against him due to the failure of their

³⁹² Procopius *Wars* 6.6.23-24

³⁹³ Procopius *Wars* 5.6.1-7

³⁹⁴ Procopius *Wars* 5.3.1-2 & 5.9.1; Kaldellis (2004: 109)

³⁹⁵ Doyle (1990: 234); Procopius *Wars* 5.6.9

³⁹⁶ Procopius *Wars* 5.6.6; for Melian dialogue see Bagby (1995: 178)

³⁹⁷ Procopius *Wars* 5.6.1-8-9

agreement.³⁹⁸ As Michael Doyle said of the Melians, “[they] suffered the fate of the weak in interstate politics and their appeals to law and justice fell on deaf ears.”³⁹⁹ As with the Melians whose appeal for justice were dismissed by the Athenians, the plea of justice from Theodahad fell on deaf ears as Peter merely replied that the Goths would have to go to war, as was their right, if they could not come to an agreement.⁴⁰⁰ Reflecting the intent of Thucydides, in which the Athenians had told the Melians that justice could not be part of human reasoning unless both sides had held equal power, Procopius establishes that the use of power and the realisation of justice can only be obtained by force.⁴⁰¹

Peter suggests that Theodahad would be responsible for the deaths of his subjects if he did not submit to the Romans, “it would never be fitting to bring about the death of men, especially in great numbers.”⁴⁰² Its purpose was similar to the Athenian reply to the Melians, “for your country that you are consulting, that you have not more than one, and that upon this deliberation depends on its prosperity or ruin.”⁴⁰³ Procopius, like Thucydides, has reversed the onus of responsibility from the aggressor to the besieged which further emphasized the power and control that Justinian and the Athenians possessed over the weaker states. Peter concludes his speech by declaring that Italy had been part of the Roman empire since ancient times and it would be appropriate for Justinian to reclaim it.

Peter is there to convince Theodahad that submission was in his self-interest and to acknowledge the futility of expecting justice. Peter is also implying that Justinian’s actions

³⁹⁸ Procopius Wars 5.6.9

³⁹⁹ Doyle (1990: 234)

⁴⁰⁰ Thuc. 5.90-91; Procopius Wars 5.6.9

⁴⁰¹ Thuc. 5.89; Ahrens Dorf (1997: 237); Tritle (2006: 486); Rahe (1995: 125)

⁴⁰² Procopius Wars

⁴⁰³ Thuc. 5.111.5

are part of human nature and so cannot be stopped, much like Thucydides' Athenians who excused their use of power with a similar defence.⁴⁰⁴

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates the 'good' and the 'bad' uses of power for Procopius. Procopius recognised that power had to be used to protect the Roman empire as he also acknowledged the same right for other rulers and empires as in the case of the Persians and their leader, Chosroes. The passages of the Gothic and Armenian envoys illustrate Procopius' acceptance of the use of power as the Persians had a right, in terms of countering Justinian's growing power and threat to the region, to attack the Romans and secure themselves from the Romans. In these passages, Procopius highlights Justinian's human nature and criticizes Justinian's need for power as this had arguably led to the neglect of the Roman empire's eastern borders and its subsequent invasion by Chosroes. Procopius indicated that Justinian's desire for power would not be satisfied with his taking of Italy and, like the Athenians who overreached their power after Melos and suffered a disaster in Sicily, by continuing his campaigns Justinian would lead the Roman empire to a disaster.

The sieges of Naples and Rome contrasts the concepts of amoral power with restrained power as Justinian is criticised for his unjust invasion of Italy while Belisarius is noted for his moral restraint in ending the slaughter of the Neapolitans. Procopius, in the dialogue between Peter the Patrician and Theodahad, presented to his readers a 'true' picture of unrestrained power as any notions of justice or morality were ignored. This chapter has showed that power, for Procopius, could be used in many ways. When power was in the hands of those who desired power and were free of moral constraint, then only force could stop its use as words only delayed the inevitable. For Procopius, the uncontrolled desire for

⁴⁰⁴ Thuc 105.2; Procopius *Wars* 5.6.10; Chance (2013: 265)

more power would arguably lead countries to their own ruin. Power that was constrained by justice still enabled the strongest powers to exert their influence, however their outcomes, such as in Naples and Mytilene, did not destroy civilisations and helped restrict the desire for more power that Procopius, and Thucydides, thought was inherent in human nature.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Procopius and political realism, or perhaps more precisely Procopius and his political philosophy is the question that has been examined in this research thesis. Influenced by the literary style of Thucydides, Procopius used classical allusions to shroud his true thoughts in his narrative. This thesis has attempted to show that Procopius viewed morality as a vital component of power, a restraint on its excessive use while acknowledging that power was necessary for a state's survival.

Secular historians of Late Antiquity were influenced by the writers of the classical period, especially by the Athenian Thucydides who created, in his account of the wars between Sparta and Athens, a template for future generations of historians. This structure may have been used by some historians to highlight their literary skills, however for others, such as Procopius, we have tried to show this template was used to convey allusions that presented the author's true thoughts.

The ability to understand Procopius requires a knowledge of Thucydides and his political philosophy, as Thucydides' interpretation of power and morality forms the basis of Procopius' own philosophy. The passages from Thucydides that we have chosen to examine are examples which highlight Thucydides' conflict with morality and power. Thucydides does not openly state his views as his interpretations were left for later historians. However, certain passages that indicate his intentions, such as the civil revolts in Corcyra, the Athenian plague, the Mytilenean debate and the Melian Dialogue, have been examined in this research.

Procopius' examination of the threat or the use of power was shown in several passages such as the dialogue between Peter the Patrician and Theodahad, and in the siege of Rome. Like Thucydides had shown in the Melian Dialogue, Procopius revealed that justice was dependant on power. These passages highlighted the fragility of society as power was likened to a tyrant that ruled over morality and justice, an allusion that Procopius linked with the rule and character of Justinian. As we have noted, Procopius examined Justinian's character, his human nature, in *The Secret History* and viewed him as a man whose desire for power was endless as was his desire to conquer other lands. Procopius, through the dialogue of Peter the Patrician, described Justinian's use of power as a privilege of the strong as justice or morality was a defence used only by the weak,

Perhaps Procopius' views on power and morality were best viewed in his description of the siege of Naples. Here we are presented with two moral actions by Belisarius as he endeavoured to spare the city of Naples. Firstly, after Belisarius had found a secret path into the city, he did not attack at once but offered another chance for the city to surrender and secondly, after Naples had been overrun, he commanded his troops to stop the massacre of its inhabitants. Procopius had shown that power could be restrained of its excesses by moral conventions, as Thucydides had shown in the Mytilenean debate.

Procopius' descriptions of the siege of Rome and the dialogue between Peter the Patrician, both reflecting the principles of the Melian dialogue, considered the implication of power that was free of moral restraint. Like Thucydides, Procopius saw this as self-defeating in the long run as Justinian's invasion of Italy, viewed as unjust by the Goths, turned into a twenty-year-old war that had left Italy in ruins and had cost the Roman empire dearly in men and money.

Moderation, a moral restraint on the excessive use of power was the key to Procopius' realism as it was for Thucydides. This theme, familiar to modern realists, was adopted by political scientists, such as Hans Morgenthau and Richard Lebow, who maintained that a commitment to justice created self-restraint. Can we then call Procopius a realist? As we have noted many modern realists exploited Thucydides' concepts of human nature, morality and power to form the basis of their own theories. We have shown that Procopius also based his political philosophy on Thucydides as the concepts of power and morality were major themes for Procopius in the *Wars* and in *The Secret History*. Procopius, like Thucydides, understood the tension between morality and power and criticised the actions of Justinian as the emperor had failed to recognise the danger of power. The temptation of power could not always be resisted but as was shown by Procopius' Belisarius and Thucydides' Diodotus, morality and justice were able to restrain the excesses of power. Procopius, like Thucydides, was a realist who positioned power with human nature. Modern classical realists would concur with Procopius' views that Justinian's self-interest, unrestrained by moral principles, had led to an uncontrolled desire for power.

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