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THE CONCEPT OF SECURITY IN ANCIENT GREECE: AN ANALYSIS THROUGH ANCIENT GREEK INTELLECTUALS

Abstract: *An early stage of a specific custom linked to the Ancient Olympic Games can be considered as one of the most powerful messages of the Greeks regarding their general views on security matters. For ancient Greeks, security was closely linked to war. Back then, the war went beyond protection from enemy invasion, something we would by definition call security nowadays. The article reviews the concept of security (“ἀσφάλεια,” asfalia) and its meaning as stability against and prevention of possible falls, and to be protected from danger.*

Keywords: *Security, Ancient Greece, protection, invasion, enemy*

Introduction

Since the beginning of time, human beings have always required a constant stream of information to secure their livelihood and their safety – the location of the best fishing stream, the site where firewood might be gathered, when deer herds were likely to appear.

The geographical location of the very first Greek settlements earned them the privilege of sea routes that could provide them with access to a variety of territories to profit from, as it constitutes till nowadays a natural crossroad of a plethora of different states (then Greek cities, called “πόλις,” polis). However, this is but one side of the coin. Such location also put them in a state of permanent vulnerability against these aforementioned cities, forcing them to live under a perpetual sense of threat of sudden invasions. To protect themselves from potential danger, they were from the start forced to live fortified behind the protection of walls. (1)

An early stage of a specific custom linked to the Ancient Olympic Games can be considered as one of the most powerful messages of the Greeks regarding their general views on security matters. Once the champion would arrive in his city, his fellow compatriots would tear down a part of said city's walls for him to traverse, mounted on a majestic three-wheeled chariot. It was believed that a city that gave birth to such a man did not need walls for protection. (2) It is also worth mentioning that, while the games would take place, all conflicts among the participating city-states were postponed until the end would come to an end, a cessation titled the Olympic truce. (3)

Taking this into account, can we condense the concept of security (“ἀσφάλεια,” *asfalia*) into this aspect alone? To fully grasp the length of such a question, we ought to define what security means in the first place; it is both the stability against and prevention of possible falls, and to be protected from danger. (4) Whether it's about the Serbian word *bezbednost*, the Latin *securitas*, English, *security*, the ancient Greek *asphalei*, or the Hebrew word *bitachon*, the meaning is the same. It describes the condition of the state as an ordered society. It describes processes and phenomena which affect the above-mentioned condition. (5)

For ancient Greeks, security was closely linked to war. Back then, the war went beyond protection from enemy invasion, something we would by definition call security nowadays. It was more about imposing their political supremacy in neighboring cities, than anything else. Conquering them implied the recognition of one's strategic leadership, and secured honor and respect from those around. It often got as far as a city attacking its neighbors, if it deemed their mere existence consisted hubris to their sovereignty. (6)

Such a case was the Sicilian Expedition that took place in 415 BC, which is narrated by the Athenian historian and general Thucydides, in the 6th and 7th books of his History of the Peloponnesian War. While the older of the two generals who had been voted leaders of the campaign, Nicias, was trying to persuade the Athenians not to invade Sicily, under the pretext of the substantial size of the required army to do so, they preferred to align with Alcibiades. The younger general inspired his fellow citizens with a strong desire to expand their hegemony. The result was disastrous, as that last ended up betraying the Athenians, by informing their enemies, the Spartans, about the campaign. (7)

On the contrary, Themistocles, an Athenian politician and general, managed with cunning efficiency information that aimed at the security of his city, after the defeat of the Athenian army at Thermopylae. Following their usual practice in such cases, the Athenians sent a mission to the Oracle of Delphi, hoping to obtain appropriate intelligence to protect themselves from the Persian invasion. According to the prophecy, the salvation of the city and its inhabitants would be ensured by a “wooden wall” that would remain impregnable. (8) The interpretation of the aforementioned prophecy divided the Athenians, as in its literal version, the wooden wall meant wooden walls around the Acropolis, while, according to the version supported by Themistocles - and strengthened by the consent of the priests of the city - the interpretation had to be figurative: the wooden walls were the Athenian fleet.

Demosthenes, a Greek statesman, and orator of ancient Athens would be very persistent in his opinions regarding King Philip II of Macedon, warning the Athenians, who were at war with Macedonia at the time (357 BC) that they should avoid a frontal fight with him since he was better trained than them. Instead, they should use their territory’s natural advantages against him. At the same time, he also speaks of their internal enemies, those within the city itself, referring to all who are in favor of King Philip. He argues that if Athenians do not eliminate this particular threat, they will never be able to face the city's external enemies. (9)

In classical Greece, covert action and clandestine operations were among the most common, and yet most vilified methods of statecraft all states used (among them Athens and Sparta), but no state ever admitted the fact since, if such operations became public, the world would severely disapprove. Greeks, following the example Athenians set, used local citizens who served as “proxenos.” (10) The “proxenos” had to be a citizen of the state in which he served, not of the state he represented. These men (“proxenos”) became the equivalent of modern spies or agents as a conduit for information and clandestine activities in the course of normal duties during the Peloponnesian Wars. (11)

Furthermore, the historical record suggests that very few societies (especially not Empires) could pass up the opportunity of using such useful and flexible tools when overt military operations were either impractical or impossible. Nowhere is this clearer than in the case of the ancient Romans. (12) In their public propaganda, they prided themselves on being open, aboveboard, and honest. In reality, they were experts at political manipulation, spying, and dirty tricks. For five centuries they ruled

over the Mediterranean world with an iron fist, yet much of that control was not the result of using direct military force.

Today, in the current “information age” we are constantly bombarded by facts, opinions, speculations, rumors, and gossip from every direction. Television carries into our homes each night unsettling images of squalor and death from around the world (not to mention our backyard). Computers draw us into an interactive milieu where e-mail gives and expects in return, ever more rapid exchanges of information.

The cellular telephone assures that a flow of information will follow us everywhere: into a car, the mall, and any meeting place. What effect has this rising tide of information – and its secret undercurrents we call intelligence – had on decisions made in the high councils of government? (13) Foreign policy decisions are preceded in most cases by the gathering and interpretation of information by government officials about the costs and benefits that may accrue to their nation from various options.

As the Intelligence Community inexorably works its way into the 21st century, it faces an unprecedented array of challenges. The chaotic environment of the post-Cold War era offers a wide array of different issues that need understanding and a variety of new threats that require anticipation. The rapidly developing information age presents advanced and complex information technology and methodologies to be mastered and integrated into the intelligence process. (14)

Greece, as an industrialized nation and active member of the European Union, as well as NATO, calls for a higher level of management efficiency, effectiveness, economy, and employment criteria. Hence, the paramount need for the creation of a Greek Intelligence Community that can master those challenges and successfully continue to perform its pivotal role of supporting national, political, diplomatic, economic, and military decision-makers, plus operational and tactical military commanders.

Conclusion

History always has a way to teach us and show us in which direction we should move. Unfortunately, today there are many academic and curricula in the field of security but what can be noticed is the lack of defining terms such as security science, security analytics, or understanding security as a science with all the theories in which it is based. Rarely can it be found that experts or academics speak or

understand the methods of security science? From those general methods that come from the social sciences to special methods that come from the natural sciences. Therefore, perhaps one of the possible definitions is exactly as following: Security is Science about the condition of state and processes within the state, specifically, condition and processes which enable normal functioning of state and development. That condition is depending on internal and external risk/s. Security Science is based on theories of State and Law, the theory of Conflicts, the theory of Complex Systems as well as the theories of Catastrophe. Starting from Plato Ideal Society within the Ideal States to Tomas Hobs and his description of the Natural condition of Mankind and Natural Laws and contracts. Security Science uses all social scientific methods and besides that, a special scientific methodology that is different from all other social sciences. It is a methodology used in the collection, processing, and analysis of data as well as the methodology of predictions. All of these specific methods coming from Natural Science. Security Science is indivisible but it can be viewed from several aspects such as environmental security, nuclear, energy, economic, legal security, and so on. In all these aspects of security, it is a case about a variety of conditions of the state as an ordered society. In all of those aspects, the fact remains that it is a case of basic or fundamental conditions that determine the normal function and development of society as a whole. (15)

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KONCEPT BEZBEDNOSTI U DREVNOJ GRČKOJ: ANALIZA RADOVA ANTIČKIH GRČKIH INTELEKTUALACA

Rezime:

Rani stadijum specifičnog običaja vezanog za Drevne olimpijske igre može se smatrati jednom od najmoćnijih poruka Grka u pogledu njihovih opštih stavova o bezbednosnim pitanjima. Za stare Grke sigurnost je bila usko povezana sa ratom. Tada je rat prevazišao zaštitu od neprijateljske invazije, nešto što bismo danas po definiciji nazvali bezbednošću. U članku se daje pregled koncepta bezbednosti („ασφαλεια“, asfalia) i njegovog značenja kao stabilnosti i sprečavanja mogućih padova i zaštite od opasnosti.

Ključne reči: Bezbednost, antička Grčka, zaštita, invazija, neprijatelj