

Kallipolis in Motion: Grand Strategy in Plato's *Republic*

Introduction

Plato is not often considered a geopolitical strategist, and the *Republic* rarely is read as a book about international relations. One may read it as a utopian project or as an elaborate metaphor about the soul, but on either reading Plato hardly comes across as a practical thinker of much stature. To those who would attribute to Plato an undeveloped vision of the international realm, Malcolm Schofield concedes: ‘Certainly the dialogue [*Republic*] shows little interest in the military and political capabilities of cities in the international arena that so fascinated Thucydides[.]’¹ In this paper I attempt to controvert that reading. I argue that throughout the *Republic* Plato exhibits a discernible interest in what international relations scholars call ‘grand strategy’. Recent scholarship demonstrates Plato’s serious concern for concrete political realities in the internal, domestic sphere.² As a complement to this work I argue the *Republic* treats issues in the external realm of foreign policy with care, and that Plato’s explicit and implicit insights on geopolitics contribute substantially to debates in his own intellectual milieu.³

1 M. Schofield, *Plato: Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 266.

2 See M. Lane, *Of Rule and Office: Plato's Ideas of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023).

3 I restrict myself in this paper to *Republic*, with brief references to *Timaeus*, *Phaedo* and *Laws*. Examining Plato’s strategic insights across the rich Platonic corpus – e.g., in *Laws*, *Critias*, *Menexenus* and *Statesman* – constitutes a far more extensive project that I hope to continue in future work. I also am forced for reasons of space to bracket Plato’s discussion of international norms in *Republic* 5. This requires a special treatment that must await future work. *Republic* translations are borrowed from C.D.C. Reeve, *Republic* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004) with

This paper has four sections. In Sec. I, I explain why issues of geopolitical strategy are crucial to the main goal of the *Republic*: the intellectual defense of justice (*dikaiosunē*). I contend a proper interpretation should place due weight on Plato's views about the power of justice to contribute to the success of individuals and cities. I argue Plato holds to a 'Success Thesis' about justice: that a just city will, in general, be a 'winner' in the international struggle (*agōn*). Therefore, it will need a winning strategy.

In Sec. II, I clarify what it would mean for Plato to be a grand strategist. I show that Plato deals explicitly with the problem of balancing the tough realities of international power dynamics with political goals and limited means: Precisely what international relations scholars call 'grand strategy'. I specify what Plato thinks the international realm is like and what he thinks are the goals of geopolitical strategy. I also briefly compare Plato with contemporary realists.

With Kallipolis' goals and the features of the arena set, Secs. III - IV go on to discuss 'the means': The particulars of Kallipolis' strategy. Sec. III considers the internal aspects of that strategy: how the internal constitution of Kallipolis is delicately adapted for navigating the international system. It is well-known that Plato is concerned with a solution to *stasis* (civil strife). I explain how Plato has specifically attuned the political and educational institutions of Kallipolis to the problem of *stasis* in light of geopolitical concerns while simultaneously maximizing the city's tactical competence, making reasonable strategic trade-offs.

Sec. IV considers the external aspects of Kallipolis' strategy: How she will effectively manage her relations with foreign powers. Plato offers a sophisticated strategy of power-balancing, flexible diplomacy, and tactical asymmetry. This hard-nosed strategy of restraint is carefully calibrated to Plato's aim of preserving a well-ordered (*dikaia*) constitution. Plato's strategic vision also contextualizes the *Republic* as a fairly direct intervention in contemporaneous debates about the

alterations. Other translations are mine.

sustainability of imperialism. Overall, this paper aims to show that Plato's project in the *Republic* is, if possible, richer and more attuned to the realities of power than we may have thought.

I. Why Would Plato Care about Strategy?: Justice and the Success Thesis

In *Republic* 2, Plato sets for himself a daunting task. He has Socrates place justice or moral rectitude (*dikaiosunē*) in the 'finest' (*kallistē*) category of goods, 'the [kind] that one who is going to be blessed must love both because of itself and because of its consequences'.⁴ (*Resp.* 2.357d-358a) Demonstrating that justice is good in itself (*auto hautou heneka*) is clearly the first prize Plato hopes to take with the *Republic* (376d-e). In addition, Plato asserts that justice is good for its consequences (*ta gignomena ap'autou*).

I will argue that in placing justice in this 'noblest category' of goods, Plato also commits himself to a view about the efficacy of justice: That a choice in favor of justice will be a 'winning' strategy for both the individual and the city. This claim is highly ambitious: To defend it, Plato must essentially demonstrate the negation of Machiavellianism in both the personal and international realms. Plato's views on justice therefore are not only normative, but also partly empirical: Not only should we consider justice intrinsically worthwhile, we also should see just people 'winning' and just cities excelling in the international competition.

In this paper I focus on the city, arguing that Plato holds to the following *Success Thesis*: The possession of justice will make a city more likely to achieve survival, success in its goals, as well as a

4 N. White, 'The Classification of Goods in Plato's *Republic*', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 22 (1984) pp. 393-421 and G.R.F. Ferrari, *City and Soul in Plato's Republic* (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2003), pp. 15-20 discuss some subtleties of Plato's classification of goods.

good reputation.⁵ The city he has in mind, of course, is Kallipolis itself. That this city would be enabled to succeed so robustly is *prima facie* non-obvious, at worst unbelievable.

Nevertheless, there is no reason to doubt Plato holds the Success Thesis. First consider what he says about the parallel case of the individual. At the end of *Republic*, Socrates compares just and unjust agents to runners:

Socrates: Do not clever but unjust men fare precisely as do runners who run well at the first stretch but not the return? At first they leap off swiftly, but in the end they are laughed away, and run off the field uncrowned, with their ears on their shoulders. True runners, on the other hand, make it to the end, receive the prizes, and are crowned. Isn't this also generally what happens to just people: That toward the end of each course of action and association and of life as a whole, they receive honor, and collect the prizes that are brought by the people? (*Resp.* 10.613b-c)

The unjust man (*adikos*) may be successful in a given span of time. Socrates even describes him as 'clever' (*deinos*). Nevertheless, in the long run and in most cases his playbook is a losing one. From the

5 In a helpful article, M. Anderson, 'What Are the Wages of Justice? Rethinking the Republic's Division of Goods', *Phronesis* 65:1 (2020), pp. 1-26, argues Plato's 'good consequences' are specifically reputational goods. R. Heinaman, 'Plato's Division of Goods in the Republic', *Phronesis* 47 (2002), pp. 309-35 presents a related view. It is controversial whether Plato's 'good consequences' include *more* than reputational benefits, and I will not attempt to settle this intricate question of Platonic scholarship. I simply intend to argue that Plato holds the Success Thesis above.

perspective of practical rationality, injustice is not a prudent plan. And from the perspective of success, injustice does not pay.⁶

The claim being made can be understood in light of the results of *Republic* 1, where Socrates contrasts unjust rule with the craft-like activity (*technē*) of just rule. A practice's being craft-like has two components: one metaphysical, one practical-agential. The metaphysical component is that a craft must have some 'nomic stability': When applied properly, it will always or usually (in a 'law-like' manner) produce its proper effect.⁷ In virtue of this empirical-ontological fact, crafts also have a practical-agential implication: An agent aiming reliably to achieve a given effect rationally ought to practice the craft that produces it. These basic features of *technai* are summarized by Emily Hulme-Kozey: 'A *technē* is a rational process insofar as it reliably achieves success using a method that can be articulated and duplicated.'⁸ Rachel Barney's formulation of *technai* as a kind of knowledge is slightly stronger: 'a craft is a specialized kind of knowledge that leads to reliable practical success' and 'a definitive feature of craft' is being able 'to give a *logos*, an account, of what [its practitioners] do and why'.⁹ This *logos* or account enables the agent robustly succeed in achieving the effect.

6 Cp. *Leg.* 5.730a-730d.

7 In saying crafts produce their proper effects in a 'law-like' manner, I do not mean they must exceptionlessly produce their effects. The connection between a *technē* and its proper effect may be what Aristotle calls 'always or for the most part (*hōs epi to polu*)': a strong and reliable probabilistic connection which typically holds, but which may, due to the unavoidable imperfections of the material realm, have occasional exceptions. Cf. *Ar. Ph.* 2.8 199b24-26 and *Met.* 6.2 1026b26-30.

8 E. Hulme-Kozey, 'Philosophia and Philotechnia: The *Techne* Theme in the Platonic Dialogues', PhD dissertation (Princeton University, 2019), p. 61.

9 R. Barney, '*Techne* as a Model for Virtue in Plato', in T. Johansen (ed.), *Productive Knowledge in Ancient Philosophy: The Concept of Techne* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp.

In the Book 10 passage above, then, Plato is bringing out the *techne*-like relation between justice and success. He characterizes the unjust person's relation to his goals, as well as reputational goods, as like an overly-eager but under-trained, un-craftlike runner: The *adikos*' behavior is unlikely to achieve success reliably, and is also (therefore) instrumentally irrational. Justice, however, produces success in the race, as well as the 'good consequences', in reliable, craft-like fashion.

In that passage Plato is discussing a human life. But cities, too, will be rationally benefited by justice. In *Timaeus*, Socrates clearly signifies that his 'fine city' will do well in the harsh international struggle.¹⁰

Socrates: Now hear my feeling about the *politeia* we have described. I may compare my feeling to something like this: Consider a man gazing upon beautiful animals, whether ones made as paintings, or even ones actually alive but at rest, who then finds himself longing to see them in motion or engaged in some struggle to which their bodies seem suited. That is the very feeling I have about the *politeia* we have described. I would gladly listen to someone giving an account of our city struggling (*agonizomenēn*) with other cities in the contest which cities wage, describing how fittingly it enters into war, and how in war it exhibits qualities befitting its education and training in its dealings with each of the cities, both in its courses of action and its negotiations in words. (*Tim.* 19b-c)

Plato thinks his city will be a winner, despite its status as a numerical underdog:

62-85 at p. 63.

10 L. Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 140-141 draws a connection between Plato and Thucydides from this passage.

Socrates: And if your own city is wisely governed just as we arranged, it will be the greatest one, I do not mean in reputation, but the greatest in fact, even if it has only a thousand defenders. (*Resp.* 4.423a)¹¹

We might pause briefly to ask what motivates Plato to hold such a robust success claim. Arguably it is an implication of his broader metaphysics of goodness, which is not devoid of causal implications: The Form of the Good, for example, is the ‘cause’ (*aitia*) of all knowledge, truth, and understanding (508e). More generally, Plato is committed to the view that the Good is powerful, in particular that virtue is powerful.¹² A plausible line of reasoning, succinctly contained in *Resp.* 1.352d-54a, is that a virtue (*aretē*) is precisely an excellence which equips a thing of kind X with the power (*dunamis*) to be a good X. Therefore, we should expect virtue to equip the agent for successful action.¹³

Moreover, regarding justice specifically, we can note that Plato’s particular understanding of ‘justice’ implies it will at least *have* rich empirical consequences. For Plato, ‘justice’ (*dikaiosunē*) refers primarily to ‘moral uprightness’, which has to do with the proper internal ordering and harmony among a soul or city’s parts. ‘Justice’ does not primarily have the relational sense of ‘fair or honest dealings

11 I do not read Plato as denying his city *will* have a good reputation, only that its greatness *consists in* good reputation. The city’s greatness consists in deeds (*erga*) rather than the words (*logoi*) said about it – in its ‘being’ more than its ‘seeming’. Cp. *Resp.* 10.598d-601a, esp. 599b.

12 Cf. *Resp.* 1.351a ff., where Socrates asks whether justice or injustice is ‘more powerful and stronger’ (*dunatōteros kai ischuroteros*). For discussion of the profound causal implications of the Good for Plato’s vision of the universe, see G. Carone, *Plato’s Cosmology and its Ethical Dimensions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

13 See R. Barney, ‘*Technē* As a Model for Virtue in Plato’, p. 72 for a closer reconstruction of Plato’s reasoning in *Republic* 1 along these lines. Cp. *Leg.* 8.829a.

with others’, although Plato certainly assumes one who is ‘internally’ just will also be ‘externally’ just (442e-43b).

We should expect, therefore, that the justice existing in a city’s parts (or a person’s soul) will have major external consequences in the form of manifested behavior. Cities and persons can be thought of as machines with different internal structures. When put into motion their interactions with the world will vary depending on what’s going on ‘inside’. The just city (or person) and the unjust one have very different ‘insides’, and are like an internally functioning and internally defective machine respectively. Plato compares the tyrannical person, for instance, to a diseased fighter:

Socrates: It is as if someone with a body that is sick and cannot master itself were compelled ... to compete and fight with other bodies. (*Resp.* 9.579c-d)

The image is hardly of someone who is likely to be effective in action. His spiritual ‘insides’ do not enable it. On the other hand, a just person’s internal direction of his *thumos* by his reason enables him to excel in external combat against enemies:

Socrates: And wouldn’t these two elements [sc. reason and spirit] also do the finest job of guarding the whole soul and body against external enemies – the one by deliberating, the other by fighting, following the ruler, and using its courage to carry out the things on which the former had decided? (*Resp.* 4.442b)

The success Plato here expects for just individuals is paralleled by the success just cities will experience in their activity. That Success Thesis is more fully verified once we’ve seen the particular strategy Kallipolis’ justice enables her to pursue. To this I now turn.

II. Does Plato Have a Strategy?

If justice really pays, then a just city will tend to be a ‘winner’ in the international *agōn*. What Kallipolis’ ‘winning’ amounts to is successful navigation of that realm so as to reliably and indefinitely fulfill her ultimate goals or *telē*. To that end, Plato equips his city with a coherent grand strategy in light of a developed (if succinct) account of the international sphere.

In the parlance of contemporary international relations scholarship, a state’s ‘grand strategy’ is broadly defined as ‘the alignment of potentially unlimited aspirations with necessarily limited capabilities.’¹⁴ Peter Feaver elaborates:

[Grand strategy] refers to the collection of plans and policies that comprise the state’s deliberate effort to harness political, military, diplomatic, and economic tools together to advance that state’s national interest. Grand strategy is the art of reconciling ends and means. It involves purposive action — what leaders think and want. Such action is constrained by factors leaders explicitly recognize (for instance, budget constraints and the limitations inherent in the tools of statecraft) and by those they might only implicitly feel (cultural or cognitive screens that shape worldviews).¹⁵

As academic terms of art, where mere strategy is ‘more particularly concerned with the movement of armed masses’, grand strategy, while ‘including these movements, embraces the motive forces which

14 J. L. Gaddis, *On Grand Strategy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), p. 21.

15 P. Feaver, ‘What is grand strategy and why do we need it?’, *Foreign Policy* (April 8, 2009).

lie behind them’, whether they be ‘material’ or ‘psychological.’¹⁶ The successful grand strategist, therefore, will have a keen sense not only of narrowly military matters, but also of the cultural, economic, and psychological capabilities and limitations of his own polity and of his allies and adversaries.¹⁷

Before looking at Plato’s grand strategy I lay out the assumptions behind it. I first put forth his understanding of the character of the international realm. I then explain what he takes the goals of geopolitics to be.

In *Republic 2*, Plato starts constructing Kallipolis by describing a city that is not Kallipolis. In this first city, ‘the healthy city’, people lead a simple life. They will:

make food, wine, clothes, and shoes ... They will build themselves houses. In the summer, they will mostly work naked and barefoot ... For nourishment, they will provide themselves with barley meal and wheat flour, which they will knead and bake into noble cakes ... They will recline on couches strewn with yew and myrtles and feast with their children, drink their wine, and, crowned with wreaths, hymn the gods.

16 J. F. C. Fuller, *The Reformation of War* (London: Hutchinson, 1923), p. 219.

17 Scholarly reconstructions of historical polities’ grand strategies include E.N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) and *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), J.L. Lendon, *Song of Wrath* (New York: Basic Books, 2013), A.W. Mitchell, *The Grand Strategy of the Hapsburg Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), and P. Rahe, *Sparta’s Second Attic War: The Grand Strategy of Classical Sparta* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020). Donald Kagan’s monumental four-volume history arguably falls under the same genre, even if not explicitly self-identifying as such. I do not, however, know of a sustained treatment reconstructing the grand strategy of a ‘city in words’. (592b)

And for relishes, ‘they will roast myrtles and acorns before the fire’. (372a-d)

Glaucon objects that Socrates’ ‘healthy city’ is ‘a city of pigs’. (372d) While Socrates may not share the value judgment, he concedes the city is unlikely to stop growing at this point. So he describes the transition of his ‘healthy city’ into the ‘feverish city’, which through stages of verbal ‘purging’ will be transformed into Kallipolis. Plato characterizes the second city’s economic-cultural dynamism unflatteringly as ‘fever’ (*phlegmainousa*), but it is precisely due to that ‘fever’ that it will have all the amenities, professions, and cultural institutions of a fully developed *polis*.

Suddenly matters of international relations become salient. The feverish city will need land to feed its population. And so:

Socrates: Won’t we have to seize some of our neighbors’ land, then, if we are to have enough for pasture and plowing? And won’t our neighbors want to seize part of ours in turn, if they too have abandoned themselves to the endless acquisition of money and overstepped the limit of their necessary desires?

Glaucon: Yes, that is quite inevitable, Socrates.

Socrates: And the next step will be war, Glaucon, don’t you agree?

Glaucon: I do.

Socrates: [...] [W]e have now found the origin of war: It comes from those same factors, the occurrence of which is the source of the greatest evils for cities and the individuals in them. (373d-e)

This passage suggests three consequential assumptions about international relations. First, the assumption of *an anarchic international realm*: Between two cities in conflict, there is no higher jurisdiction to resolve that conflict authoritatively. Secondly, Socrates claims to have discovered the

origin of war (*ginesin polemou heurēskamen*), proposing a *Pleonexia Account* of war: It is an ‘unbounded’ desire to ‘do better’ or ‘have more,’ most typically constituted by a thirst for wealth, that explains why states go to war and ‘is the source of the greatest evils for cities and the individuals in them’. Indeed, *pleonexia* is the root cause of injustice (359c), and the feature in Plato’s story that differentiates an idyllic world of peace from a world of war is the introduction of *pleonexia*.¹⁸ Third and finally, Plato seems to assume this *pleonexia* is relatively ubiquitous in the world, being an apparent natural consequence of any city’s affliction by ‘fever’, itself an apparent concomitant of economic growth beyond a certain point, and that such *pleonectic* fever is common enough to necessitate the creation of a permanent self-defense force. Putting the components of Plato’s picture together – [1] a *structure* and [2] a set of *agents* with [3] a characterization of common *motivations* among those agents – we have a simple model of the international order with basic predictive power.

18 S. Diaco, ‘Socrates’ First City: *Pleonexia* and the Thought Experiment’, *Apeiron* 54:5 (2021), pp. 473-491 at p. 474 points out that ‘the first polis lacks *pleonexia*’ and that Plato ‘temporarily *brackets* this particular human tendency for greediness and excess’. But R. Barney, ‘Platonism, Moral Nostalgia, and the “City of Pigs”’, *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium of Ancient Philosophy* 17:1 (2001), pp. 207-227 at p. 218 notes that Socrates’ ‘healthy city’ is ‘a strictly impossible city ... for reasons ... made obvious by the moral psychology of the *Republic* itself’. The function of the ‘healthy city’ then is not necessarily to propose a historical stage of human development, but to show what consequences follow when we introduce the factor of *pleonexia* into the world. One consequence is war. Thus, *pleonexia* is plausibly inferred to be the cause of war.

This picture is supplemented by passages in *Republic* 5.¹⁹ Here Plato ruefully paints an image of ‘the way Greeks currently treat each other’ (471b). It is not a rosy one. In the world Glaucon inhabits, ‘Greek cities enslave other Greeks’ (469b), ‘despoil the dead’ (469c), and ‘strip their corpses’ (469e). They ravage each others’ land, burn each others’ houses (470a), and treat as enemies all persons of opposing cities – men, women, and children – guilty or innocent (471b). Even in Plato’s ideal world, where Greeks would treat each other as friends, all other peoples remain hostiles, enemies ‘by nature’ (*polemious phusei*), ‘strange and other’ (470c).

Plato’s brutal model of the real world should immediately conjure to any reader the annual devastations of Attica, the bloodbaths at Corcyra, the cruelties of Melos and Skione, and the countless other human miseries immortalized by Thucydides. The character of Plato’s international realm is strikingly similar to Thucydides’ universe: A world of cutthroat competition, where cities often are driven by greed and ambition (*philotimia*) to outdo one another at each other’s expense. Given its conflict-ridden nature, it is no wonder Plato frequently compares the geopolitical stage to a ‘competition’ and ‘struggle’, with winners, losers and prizes, and that he will describe his city’s warriors as ‘athletes in the greatest contest’. Such is the flavor of Plato’s international structure. Kallipolis must be built to thrive in this harsh world.

But what *is* thriving in this world? What is the goal of geopolitics? What are the ‘regime imperatives’ of Kallipolis? Certainly a looming one is to survive.²⁰ But beyond survival, Plato’s goal is also and far more critically the preservation of *a way of life*, of a single polis exemplifying wisdom,

19 On *pleonexia*, see also *Phd.* 66c, where Socrates traces ‘war, *stasis*, and battles’ to ‘nothing other’ than deeply rooted psychological tendencies in human nature, specifically ‘the body’, ‘its desires’, and its ‘needs’. On anarchy see Cleinias’ (unchallenged) claim in *Laws* (1.626a) that cities are perpetually in a state of undeclared war against all others. Cf. M. Zelcer, ‘Plato on International Relations’, *Philosophical Forum* 48:3 (2017), pp. 325-339 at p. 329.

temperance, courage, and justice. One might say it is precisely the preservation of this way of life that *defines what survival is*. As scholars have noted, *Republic (Politeia)* sits firmly in the *politeia*-genre of ancient political writing, for which the assumption that ‘the *politeia* is the city’s life [*bios*]’ is simply a ‘commonplace’.²¹ And in *Laws* 1, Plato firmly resists defining the *telos* of the city as success in war *per se*, but rather as peace, which is itself valuable as a condition for maintaining a pattern of life that makes the citizens blessed. These goals do, of course, presuppose success in war when it comes²² and, therefore, strategy.

Plato intelligently calibrates his city’s constitution to the considerable ‘limits on capabilities’ that the architectonic goal of maintaining his well-ordered *politeia* imposes. He must perform a delicate balancing-act: He must simultaneously increase his ideal city’s chances of survival without inducing an internal deterioration in its constitutional form. His strategy thus includes equally important internal and external components.

Before turning there, we may briefly compare Plato’s account of the international realm with a closely related school of thought in international relations: political realism. Kenneth Waltz is arguably the most prominent realist thinker of the last century, and his highly influential version of realism, ‘neo-realism’, provides a fruitful model for comparison. First the commonalities. Waltz holds that the international realm is an anarchical ‘self-help system’: There is no overarching authority to enforce peaceful cooperation among states. Those who fail to help themselves therefore do so at their own

20 Which is not to say Plato thinks survival is worthwhile *at all costs*, any more than living is for the sake of mere life.

21 S. Menn, ‘On Plato’s ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΑ’, *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 21 (2005) pp. 1–55 at p. 10. Menn’s article thoroughly contextualizes *Republic* in the *politeia* genre while making explicit Plato’s profound interest in Sparta.

22 Cf. *Leg.* 8.829a-c.

expense.²³ Waltz believes states in this situation will tend to act out of self-interest even to the point of using force, which they will use often:

In [domestic] politics force is said to be the *ultima ratio*. In international politics force serves, not only as the *ultima ratio*, but indeed as the first and constant one.²⁴

So far Plato and neo-realists agree on what tends to happen in the world. But subtle differences arise in their treatments of the agents. For Waltz, the only assumption about actors needed to get the model going is that they wish to survive:

Balance-of-power politics prevail wherever *two*, and *only two*, requirements are met: [1] that the order be anarchic and [2] that it be populated by units wishing to survive.²⁵

Waltz does not assume that states are inherently prone to power-hunger. In fact, when states are exceedingly power-hungry and ‘aim for universal domination’ this will be contrary to the default behavior. Their lust for power will exist in spite of, not because of the incentives they face. For Waltz, states by default try to maximize *security*, the likelihood of self-preservation, not power:

In anarchy, security is the highest end. Only if survival is assured can states safely seek such other goals as tranquility, profit, and power. ... [P]ower is a means and not an end ... [States]

23 K. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979), pp. 116, 123

24 K. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 113.

25 K. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 122, emphasis added.

cannot let power, a possibly useful means, become the end they pursue. The goal the system encourages them to seek is security. Increased power may or may not serve that end.²⁶

So power-maximizing agents are atypical in Waltz's panorama, while Plato seems to assume his city's neighbors are often enough naturally power-hungry and 'abandoned to the endless acquisition of money'. Moreover, when Socrates posits the origin of war, he does not identify it as some system of purely structural incentives, as Waltz does, but as 'those same factors, the occurrence of which is the source of the greatest evils for cities and the individuals in them'. It is abundantly clear Plato is referring to ubiquitous *psychological* drives like *pleonexia*, *philotimia*, and other vices to explain why cities are thrust into war and ruined. On the matter of states' motivations Plato is better identified with classical realists like Thucydides than with structural- or neo-realists.

There is a final interesting point of contact between Plato and Waltz. As we will see, Plato places heavy emphasis on the 'internal' aspect of strategy: on creating a robust internal constitution adapted to the international realm. One might think this emphasis differs from neo-realism, which evokes thoughts about the 'external' aspects of strategy: the perpetual diplomatic shifts in friends and enemies, the negotiation of coalitions and treaties, and the Machiavellian application of force or the threat of it on the basis of pure practicality.

In fact, Plato's emphasis on the 'internal' aspects of strategy is not an area where he and neo-realists diverge. Waltz makes the critical but easily overlooked point that 'balancing' behavior against other states involves both internal and external aspects:

States ... try ... to use the means available in order to achieve the ends in view. Those means fall into two categories: internal efforts (moves to increase economic capability, to increase military

26 K. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 126.

strength, to develop clever strategies) and external efforts (moves to strengthen and enlarge one's own alliance or to weaken and shrink an opposing one). The *external* game of alignment and realignment requires *three or more* players ... [I]n a *two-power* system the politics of balance continue, but the way to compensate for an incipient external disequilibrium is primarily by intensifying one's *internal* efforts.²⁷

Plato takes Waltz' thought and runs with it, anticipating the idea that internal strengths are at least as critical as external tricks for survival in the cruel anarchic jungle.

III. The Internal Strategy of Kallipolis: Politeia, Stasis and Strength

As commentators have noted, Plato identifies the primary internal cause of political decline as *stasis*.²⁸ The supreme horror of Greek political thought, *stasis* is variously translated as 'civil strife or conflict', 'internal faction', or 'revolution'. The most haunting illustrations of *stasis* come from Thucydides, who immortalized this disturbing human pattern in his grisly portraits of factional Corcyra and twilight Athens.

Strikingly, *stasis* and Plato's 'justice' (*dikaiosunē*) are nearly logical contraries. Justice is 'each part doing its own work'. A just soul is one where wisdom, spirit, and appetite are in harmony, each part performing its proper role under the gentle rule of reason. The soul in *stasis* is one where reason has lost control, and the soul's other parts, at war with it, usurp its function. Injustice is the civil war of the soul.

²⁷ K. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 118, emphasis added.

²⁸ Cf. M. Schofield, *Plato: Political Philosophy*, pp. 42, 184 and 247 n. 93.

The fundamental evil of civil *stasis*, where a city's parts turn into opposed factions, is that the city's 'reason' – the element possessing political wisdom – no longer rules:

Socrates: So, it is because of the smallest group or part of itself, and the knowledge that is in it – the part that governs and rules – that a city founded according to nature would be wise as a whole. (428e)

Plato's city will be wise, then, only if it is temperate: If the 'natural rulers' are firmly in control, and the 'masses', who most resemble the appetites, are not, and accept the arrangement.

Socrates: Don't you see, then, that this too is present in your city, that the appetites of the masses – the inferior people – are mastered there by the wisdom and appetites of the few – the best?

Glaucon: I do.

...

Socrates: So isn't it temperate because of this?

Glaucon: Yes, indeed.

Socrates: And if there is any city in which rulers and subjects share the same belief about who should rule, it is this one. (431c-e)

To achieve the minimization of *stasis* would be for a natural harmony to exist between the 'appetitive' and 'rational' parts of the city regarding the rule of the latter over the former:

Socrates: Hence we would be absolutely right to say that this unanimity is temperance – this concord between the naturally worse and the naturally better about which of the two should rule, both in the city and in each individual. (432a)

Kallipolis' rigid structure of Philosopher-Rulers >> Auxiliary Guardians >> Masses, with each citizen 'performing his own work' and 'not seeking to usurp the others', where rulers and subjects agree and are in concord about who should rule, almost definitionally ensures that *stasis* is minimized or eliminated. We can call this Plato's *anti-factional constitution*. The goal of politics, international and domestic, is to maintain it.

Platonic justice or *dikaiosunē* can therefore be understood precisely as the minimization of *stasis*. Setting this as the well-defined goal of the city, we can then start doing strategy: 'aligning capabilities and goals'. Straightaway we can specify upper and lower bounds on the city's wealth:

Socrates: It seems, then, that we have found other things which our guardians must guard in every way from slipping into the city unnoticed.

Adeimantus: What things?

Socrates: Wealth and poverty. For the former makes for luxury, idleness, *and radical change (neoterismos)*; and the latter for unfreedom, bad work, and radical change (*neoterismos*) as well. (421e-422a)

A similar procedure applies to territory:

Socrates: This would also provide our rulers with the best limit (*horos*) for determining the proper size of the city, how much land they should mark off for a city that size, letting the rest go.

Adeimantus: What limit is that?

Socrates: I think this: as long as it is willing to remain *one city, it may continue to grow, but not beyond that point.*

Adeimantus: And it's a good one.

Socrates: Then we will also give our guardians this further order: They are to guard in every possible way against the city's being either small in size or great in reputation, rather than *adequate in size and one in number.* (423b-d)

Kallipolis' territorial and economic strategy will be to maximize wealth and territory only to the extent consistent with the anti-factional constitution.

We can also view Plato's cultural policy, his system of moral, cultural, and physical education (*mousikē* and *phusikē*), as an additional functional adaptation designed to preserve the 'anti-factional' constitution. It is no news that Plato's educational regimen is overtly influenced by the ideal associated in classical antiquity with Sparta:²⁹ the Alcmanian dream of *eunomia* governing a closed and harmonious political '*kosmos*' (Plut. *Lyc.* 29.1) aiming at eternal equilibrium. In light of his anxiety about *stasis* Plato was right to look to Laconia for an educational paradigm: For all its challenges and limitations, Sparta was remarkably impervious to this civic ailment, at least as between full citizens, and the sources of its decline lie elsewhere.

²⁹ For a recent overview of Plato's engagement with Sparta, cf. N. Humble, 'Sparta in Plato and Xenophon', in G. Danzig, D. Johnson, and D. Morrison (eds.), *Plato and Xenophon: Comparative Studies* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), pp. 547-75.

Plato is convinced a Spartan-style civil pedagogy is absolutely required to cure *stasis*. It will form the citizens from beginning of life to end through myth, music, and immersion in the city's life, cultivating a perception of the order of things as good. No system of rules or incentives can replace the harmony between ruler and ruled directly infused through a proper, soul-forming catechesis.³⁰ On the other hand, if a proper scheme of 'musical and physical education' is implemented by the city's founders, the arrangement will exhibit a strong tendency toward self-perpetuation and stability (423e-427d). G.R.F. Ferrari summarizes the result: 'The city at its best is free from strife, stable, and harmonious; its productivity is kept so far as possible on a continuous cycle.'³¹

30 This is not to say codified rules are unimportant. Cf. M. Lane, 'Platonizing the Spartan *politeia* in Plutarch's *Lycurgus*', in V. Harte and M. Lane (eds.), *Politeia in Greek and Roman Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 57-77 at pp. 60-69.

31 G.R.F. Ferrari, *City and Soul in Plato's Republic*, p. 90. We may here compare Plato's project with Josiah Ober's functional analysis of the dynamic institutions of classical Athens. See J. Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology and the Power of the People* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 17 ff. For Ober, Athenian socio-political structures and practices can be viewed as adaptations which contributed to the longevity and stability of Athenian democracy (e.g., by channeling and mollifying potential inter-class conflict). In light of this, the projects of Plato's Kallipolis and Ober's Athens may seem related. Plato's Kallipolis and Ober's Athens both aim to neutralize *stasis*, for instance, and to ensure the city's survival. The differences are substantial, however, and turn on the question of what should be counted as 'political stability'. On Plato's *politeia*-account, any devolution away from the carefully constructed system of moral and physical education, class selection, and guardian control will count as a failure, likely even as the destruction of the *politeia*. On Ober's democratic account, the conditions of persistence and 'survival' are arguably looser; so long as an appropriate level of control on the part of the *dēmos* is

This self-sustaining system of enculturation will require a closed society, contingent on heavy censorship, limited cultural openness, strict adherence to tradition, and ‘noble lies’. (424b-c) The heavy enforcement and opportunity costs required to maintain this stationary state impose obvious strategic limitations and inflexibilities.

At the same time, the city’s inoculation against *stasis*, the characteristic disease of the *polis*, will be her first and greatest asset in the international sphere. Kallipolis can expect rarely if ever to record a case of civil war or internal revolution, which Thucydides so frequently exhibits as the final and fatal weakness of cities in situations of great power conflict. Kallipolis will dodge this shaft entirely.

Moreover, Kallipolis will possess tactical supremacy in virtue of its selection and training of life-tenured elite warrior and governing classes whose creation is enabled precisely and only through the polity’s anti-factional structure. (374a-e) This tactical superiority can be conceived along two variables, corresponding to the auxiliary and complete guardians respectively: spirit and reason.

Kallipolis’ *thumotic* strength lies in the auxiliary class for whom living is training in the art of war. This class of persons, selected on the basis of strict tests, lives communally in continuous military preparation. Their way of life will produce a motivational structure so bound up with martial spirit that private property will be verboten among them and the mere thought of a bribe repulsive. Kallipolis’s grunts will be few, but they will be spirited, swift, and incorruptible, possessing the disdain for wealth of Lycurgus’ ideal Spartiates not in myth but in fact.

Kallipolis’ tight harmony and system of ideology (e.g. the Myth of the Metals) lets Plato implement a cognitive meritocracy in the culling of the ruling class:³² the complete guardians

retained, the city may be said to survive.

32 A. Laks, *Plato’s Second Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022), p. 6 notes that although *Laws* advocates for *persuasion* as a means of creating harmony between ruler and ruled, in the *Republic* this harmony is achieved through education understood as *ideology*.

embodying the city's reason. Kallipolis' oligarchic/aristocratic political structure places into the hands of these brilliant statesmen comprehensive and direct executive control over matters of diplomacy, freeing them to take foreign policy action that is nimble, targeted, and rapidly responsive. In terms of pure tactical cleverness, insight, and flexibility, we can expect Kallipolis to do better than any other city in any particular situation. All of this can happen precisely because Plato puts 'internal' strategy first, designing a political edifice that can *select* for such clever tacticians.³³

Kallipolis's maximal rationality differentiates it from Sparta. However true may be E.N. Tigerstedt's words that 'Plato takes Sparta seriously, as he never does Athens',³⁴ his Laconism is not uncritical. Plato's most fundamental break with the Spartan *politeia* lies in the role that reason, knowledge, and the Good play for his ideal rulers. Let us consider three ways.

First, on the matter of ruler-education: The Spartan educational system at best manages to produce citizens with only a part of virtue, courage (*andreia*). But Kallipolis aims to produce in the politically crucial characters *complete* virtue.³⁵

33 Plato recognizes what Paul Rahe refers to as 'the primacy of domestic policy.' P. Rahe, *Sparta's Second Attic War*, p. xv.

34 E.N. Tigerstedt, *The Legend of Sparta in Classical Antiquity I*, (Stockholm and Uppsala: Almqvist and Wicksell, 1965), p. 274.

35 M. Schofield, 'Plato, Xenophon, and the Laws of Lycurgus', *Polis: The Journal for Ancient Greek and Roman Political Thought* 38 (2021), pp. 450-472 argues that Plato's charitable reconstruction at *Leg.* 1.630d-e of Lycurgus' original Spartan *politeia* as aiming to produce complete virtue (*pasan areten*) expresses a viable interpretation of Sparta in Plato's context. In this case, Plato's critique would be that Sparta's current *politeia* fails to live up to its ancestral ideals.

Second, on the matter of ruler-selection: Like Spartan citizens, philosopher-rulers are brought up in a tough system that selects for and develops their physical and emotive qualities.³⁶ But their athletic merits form only a part of the qualifications for rulership. The complete standard includes their overall moral suitability, their ‘musicality’, and their raw intellectual ability. Philosopher-rulers form a physical-cognitive-thumotic elite. The Spartan kings, by contrast, are selected based on lineage; the *gerousia* by voice-vote in a manner describe by Aristotle as ‘childish’; and the ephors either by voice-vote or lot, in a way Plato describes as ‘near’ being ‘conferred by lot’.³⁷ There is no specific selection for expertise or *technē* in the Spartan system.

Third and finally, Sparta’s rulers govern on the basis of, at best, true opinion or *doxa*. Their imperfectly musical education does not prepare them to understand the Good. Thus, their adherence to Spartan standards of virtue is inconstant when they find themselves beyond Laconia.³⁸ Philosopher-rulers, by contrast, act on the basis of knowledge, not habit or fear, with an account (*logos*) of their goals, and sharp calculating minds to boot.

To get a sense of the foreign policy behavior of our city, therefore, we might imagine her as ruled by strapping Peloponnesians who are also moral, mathematical, and dialectical demi-gods. Their first goal will be to preserve the city’s internal constitution and its external freedom from domination. Therefore, like the Spartans for much of their history, they will be security-maximizers, not power-

36 On the easily underappreciated physical evaluation of Plato’s Dorianic philosopher-hounds, see M.

Lane, *Of Rule and Office*, p. 91 fn. 14. See also J. Wilburn, *The Political Soul Plato on Thumos, Spirited Motivation, and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 161-165.

37 Cf. Ar. *Pol.* 2.9.1270b25 and Pl. *Leg.* 3.692a ff.

38 One of Sparta’s clearest failures to produce real virtue as opposed to external conformity, mentioned in Plato’s *Resp.* and Xenophon’s *Lac.*, is the Spartans’ simultaneously infamous and furtive greediness. Cf. N. Humble, ‘Sparta in Plato and Xenophon’, at pp. 562-63 and 566.

maximizers.³⁹ However, being directed by the Good itself, Kallipolis' rulers are guided in their foreign policy by a sharper, clearer understanding of what 'security' consists in. They will therefore be unlikely to succumb to the temptations of empire, which may have been part of Sparta's undoing. And when Kallipolitan warriors *are* inevitably involved in foreign lands, they will interact with friends gently and musically, not harshly. (375e) The philosopher-rulers will not be reactive; *understanding* what their goals are they will single-mindedly, reliably see them through to completion.⁴⁰ Finally, being a

39 On Kallipolis' defensive posture, see A. Hobbs, 'Plato on War', in Dominic Scott (ed.), *Maieusis: Essays in Ancient Philosophy in Honour of Myles Burnyeat* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

2007), p. 190.

40 M. Lane, *Of Rule and Office*, Ch. 7, carefully distinguishes two sub-classes of complete guardians: The officeholders (*archontes*, ages 35-50) who run the city's day-to-day affairs, and the life-tenured philosopher-rulers (>50) who spend the majority of their time contemplating the Good, but are compelled in rotation to 'reign' (*basilein*) and oversee the selection and performance of the *archontes*. We might designate this latter class the 'philosopher-gerontes', given the Spartan connotations evoked by a life-tenured class of wise elder-statesmen and women performing oversight functions. This raises the question of whether the philosopher-*archontes* or philosopher-*gerontes* would set the agenda for foreign policy. While no text provides a definitive answer, Plato describes the philosopher-*gerontes*' function as 'deliberative', and Lane (241) makes a comparison between the body of philosopher-*gerontes* and the *boulai* of contemporaneous Greek cities, which even in radical democracies were significantly involved in the management of foreign relations; cf. M. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes: Structure, Principles, and Ideology* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), pp. 264-65. It is reasonable to suppose the philosopher-*gerontes* would at least exert strong influence over broad questions of strategy, ensuring the *archontes* never lose sight of its ultimate goals (constitutional preservation), while

cognitive elite, they will enact the means with more *metis* than Sparta's more-or-less randomly-selected policymakers ever could muster, remarkable as certain of her citizens may have been.⁴¹

IV. The External Strategy of Kallipolis: Restraint, Balancing and Asymmetry

In the worldwide struggle of cities, Kallipolis will wield her unique strengths to offset her particular weaknesses through a shrewd diplomatic-military program. Kallipolis' strategy is fit to the bounds imposed by the overarching goal of maintaining her anti-factional *politeia*. It is what today we'd call one of 'restraint'.⁴²

Kallipolis' weaknesses result from its limited territory and wealth. Also, its system of cultural education requires a close-knit community for social enforcement, so we can expect Kallipolis' population to be limited. Moreover, the 'production costs' involved mean warrior training is not easily scalable. So Kallipolis will possess at least two significant tactical *disadvantages*: small manpower, and limited projection capabilities relative to larger states. Plato anticipates this reality when Socrates assures Adeimantus Kallipolis will be 'the greatest city in fact', even should it have 'only a thousand (*chilion*) defenders'. (423a-b)

preventing the gravest errors of purpose, such as imperial overextension or a corruption into *pleonectic* expansionism.

41 V.D. Hanson, *A War Like No Other: How the Athenians and Spartans Fought the Peloponnesian War* (New York: Random House, 2005) at p. 278 notes the paradox that it was precisely unusually clever Spartans like Brasidas and Lysander who were decisive in Sparta's victories.

42 See B. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014). Cp. P. Ahrens Dorf and T. Pangle, *Justice Among Nations: On the Moral Basis of Power and Peace* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999) p. 38.

If this claim seems unbelievable, flippant, or utopian to the modern reader, we should bear in mind this was the numerical reality for Kallipolis' closest earthly approximation: By the time of Sparta's defeat at Leuctra she was fielding just over 1,000 soldiers at full manpower. Her figures were not much greater during the Peloponnesian Wars in which Sparta, categorically and multiply outnumbered by the Athenians, decisively prevailed.⁴³ Herodotus depicts a relevant conversation between Xerxes and the Spartan ex-king Demaratus. Disgraced, exiled, and Medizing, he is questioned by the Great King on the march into Greece's confines. Asked whether there really is anything to fear in these few Lacedaemonians, Demaratus responds:

“[The Spartans] will never accept any proposals of yours ... they will meet you in battle even if all other Greeks should come to your side. Do not ask me how many they are who can do this: For they will fight against you *whether they happen to march out with a thousand men, or fewer, or more.*”

When he heard this Xerxes laughed and said: “Demaratus, what a strange thing to say, *that a thousand men* would fight such a great army!” (8.102-103)

Plato's chiliastic possibility was not far from reality for ancient commentators. But if small Sparta could be an upsetter in war, how much more should well-governed Kallipolis be. Let us picture how.

Imagine Kallipolis entering the arena. She enters as a lightweight among heavyweights: Practically any city faced will be wealthier, more numerous, 'bigger' by gross measures. Kallipolis can

⁴³ The reality and causes of Sparta's manpower-shortage, as well as the rationality of her risk-aversion to casualties, are discussed in P. Rahe, *The Spartan Regime: Its Character, Origins, and Grand Strategy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), pp. 129-134.

expect to find itself threatened by such cities. She must choose between two strategies to confront the problem, both of which Plato would have observed.

The first is a policy of *imperial hegemony*: establishing international security by expanding, subduing and ruling over others. One may count on the subdued cities nearer the metropolis to remain pacified, collect tribute from them, and expand one's military capabilities on the basis of that tribute for the purpose of balancing larger threats. This was Athens' policy after the Persian Wars. Her empire constituted the power-source for her anti-Persian rollback excursions and the eventual extraction of a Greco-Persian *detente*. But as Paul Rahe explains, what started off as an anti-Persian alliance among states in the Aegean quickly morphed into Athens' dominion:

[The Delian League] had become for all intents and purposes an empire, functioning as a gigantic protection racket – with a handful of cities retaining their autonomy and contributing ships, and the rest making financial contributions (*phoros*) determined by the Athenians so that Athens could herself deploy an immense fleet to do their fighting for them.⁴⁴

The alternative to this policy of empire is one of *balancing*: Playing other powers off each other so they are distracted by their mutual conflict, mostly leaving Kallipolis alone. The dichotomy between imperial and balancing approaches was spelled out by the (classical) realist diplomat George Kennan. Writing in the context of Soviet-American competition, Kennan felt any form of imperialism was doomed to failure, and that the United States should scrupulously avoid the temptation to fall into anything like it while encouraging its opponents to embrace it:

44 P. Rahe, *Sparta's Second Attic War*, p. 3.

[Kennan] liked to quote Edward Gibbon's proposition that 'there is nothing more contrary to nature than the attempt to hold in obedience distant provinces.' The very process of trying to maintain an empire would, sooner or later, generate resistance sufficient to undermine it.⁴⁵

For his own country Kennan preferred a 'particularist' approach:

[T]he national interest would best be served not by trying to restructure the international order ... but through the "particularist" approach of *trying to maintain equilibrium within it*.⁴⁶

The particularist approach to foreign policy 'considers that the thirst for power is still dominant among so many peoples that it cannot be assuaged or controlled by anything but *counterforce*.'⁴⁷ Kennan's 'particularist' strategy is one of military, diplomatic, and economic counterpoise, turning competitors into 'counterforces' against each other:

Our safety depends ... on our ability to establish a balance among the hostile or undependable forces of the world: To put them where necessary one against the other; to see that they spend [time] in conflict with each other ... that they are thus compelled to cancel each other out and exhaust themselves in internecine conflict.⁴⁸

45 J. L. Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War, Revised Edition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 30.

46 J. L. Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 28.

47 J. L. Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, pp. 26-27.

48 Kennan quoted in J. L. Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 28.

Kallipolis can choose between these two strategies.⁴⁹ *Prima facie*, the imperial strategy might seem better: Balancing seems appropriate for weak states with comparatively feeble war-making capabilities, who must ‘concede what they must’. But Kallipolis’ menacing military could easily pick off small- and medium-sized competitors one-by-one, rapidly establishing a rich and sizable empire. How could the increased wealth, territory, and manpower that would result make her *less* powerful? More importantly, how could she face off against larger powers that shamelessly *do* make use of this strategy? This is a fair challenge.

Nevertheless, an imperial strategy is off the table, and it is easy to see why: Pursuing it would violate the internally-determined limits on Kallipolis’ size and wealth noted above. Empire would be the death of Kallipolis, like a diseased animal that cannot stop growing, until its internal makeup is destroyed from being pulled apart. More is not always better when it comes to preserving a *politeia* and way of life.⁵⁰

Empire off the table, that leaves balance of power politics. This strategy will work especially well for Kallipolis, which will possess critical leverage in any negotiations, since it will be an immensely attractive ally and fearsome enemy. Greater powers will realize Kallipolis can provide

49 I leave out of discussion a kind of hegemony distinct from imperial domination: ‘informal hegemony’ or ‘leadership’ based on reputation. I believe Plato outside *Republic* envisions this type of hegemony as a possibility, but it is not available for Kallipolis at this point, since accruing the reputation that could sustain such ‘informal’ hegemony presupposes a successful strategy for survival in the meantime. I hope to address Plato on informal hegemony in future work.

50 Considerations of preserving a *politeia* and ‘way of life’ also help explain Plato’s strong anti-naval bias. See *Leg.* 4.706b-d and *Resp.* 3.396b. Aristotle at *Pol.* 5.1304a16-24 and 6.7.1321a13-14 and Pseudo-Xenophon in *Athenion Politeia* 1.2 plausibly associate navies with democracy, the antithesis of Plato’s constitution.

unrivaled tactical strength when supported by their own logistical frameworks. Small and limited in wealth, and so not a particularly attractive target, Kallipolis also has no special extra-territorial interests for additional land or lucre. On the contrary, it actively desires *not* to have these things which are, from the perspective of its internal constitution, *poisons*, and so it will leave these as spoils for any ally. Quite a bargain:

Socrates: Well, then, what if [Kallipolis] sent an envoy to another city with the following true message: “We use no gold or silver. It is against divine law for us to do so, but not for you. So join us in this war and you can have the property of our enemy.” Do you think anyone who heard this message would choose to fight hard, lean hounds, rather than join the hounds in fighting fat and tender sheep?

Adeimantus: No, I do not. (422d)

Furthermore, Kallipolis will be reliable and stable, and will acquire a reputation for honesty and justice in its dealings with allies, and loyalty in the face of bribes, since Plato has banished *pleonexia*, the cause of injustice, from the guardian class by construction.

In addition to its serious diplomatic leverage, when force *is* necessary Plato is optimistic Kallipolis will pack an outsized punch in virtue of its tactical supremacy:

Adeimantus: But consider this Socrates, how will our city be able to fight a war if it has acquired no wealth—especially if it has to fight a great and wealthy city?

Socrates: Obviously, it will be harder to fight one such city, but easier to fight two.

Adeimantus: How do you mean?

Socrates: First of all, if our city has to fight a city of the sort you mention, won't it be a case of warrior-athletes fighting rich men?

Adeimantus: Yes, it will.

Socrates: Well, then, Adeimantus, don't you think a single boxer who has had the best possible training could easily fight two non-boxers who are rich and fat?

Adeimantus: Maybe not at the same time.

Socrates: Not even if he could start to run away, then turn and hit the one who caught up with him first, and could do this often, out in the stifling heat of the sun? Couldn't a man like that overcome even more than two such enemies?

Adeimantus: It certainly would not be surprising if he could.

Socrates: Well, don't you think rich people have more knowledge and experience of boxing than of how to fight a war?

Adeimantus: I do.

Socrates: In all likelihood, then, our athletes will easily be able to fight two or three times their number. (422a-c)

Like Sparta, Kallipolis will aim to isolate each city and face it in decisive, one-off hoplite trials where her chances of victory are highest, wearing larger cities down through attrition. Undoubtedly its oligarchic, vertically-integrated structure will make possible the swift, adaptable diplomatic profile the strategy presupposes, increasing the likelihood Kallipolis can choose the time, place and order of its adversaries.

However, this assumes the existence of a multipolar world, where diplomatic balancing, clever alliance-formation, and divide-and-conquer tactics are possible. Fascinatingly, Plato considers the particularly difficult scenario where multipolarity does *not* obtain and Kallipolis is faced off against a

single massive superpower. In this case, in a feat of cunning strategic asymmetry, Kallipolis will leverage her greatest absolute advantage, unleashing on her enemies that most corrosive of diseases to which she was inoculated beforehand: *stasis*.

Adeimantus: But if the wealth of all other cities were amassed by a single one, don't you think that would endanger your non-wealthy city?

Socrates: You are happily innocent if you think that any city besides the one we are constructing deserves to be called *a* city.

Adeimantus: What should we call them, then?

Socrates: We will have to find a "greater" title for the others because each of them is a great many cities, but not *a* city, as they say in the game. They contain two, at any rate, which are at war with one another: the city of the poor and that of the rich. And within each of these, there are a great many more. So if you treat them as one city, you will be making a big mistake. But if you treat them as many – and offer one the money, power, and the very inhabitants of another, you will always find many allies and few enemies. (422d-423a)

Kallipolis, herself impervious to *stasis*, through internal subversion will stoke the flames of *stasis* in her foes. She will exacerbate and capitalize on the internal hatreds of her adversaries. In doing so, Kallipolis will functionally recreate the multipolar world that appears to be a precondition for her way of life.

This is the core of Plato's grand strategy. It is a strategy of restraint rather than expansion, designed for a multipolar environment where balance of power politics is possible, and where Kallipolis has a unique set of tactical, diplomatic, and domestic advantages. When that world does not

exist, Kallipolis creates it – if necessary, through chaos. Maybe, then, we will reaffirm Adeimantus’ words if Socrates asks again:

Socrates: Do you think anyone who heard this message would choose to fight hard, lean hounds, rather than join the hounds in fighting fat and tender sheep?

Adeimantus: No, I do not.

Conclusion

I have argued that Plato is committed to a ‘Success Thesis’ about justice: That justice enables agents, including cities, to be more likely to succeed in their endeavors, to survive, and to thrive. For Plato, these outcomes emanate from the soul. In the case of his city, Kallipolis, the justice in its ‘soul’ frees it from *stasis*, producing a durable inner strength and harmony (*homonoia*) which is itself the source of her graceful *exterior* performance. Beyond allowing her to survive, her motion will be nimble, clever, energetic – a truly ‘fitting’ display (cf. *Tim.* 19b-c). This outward manifestation in the form of excellent action is a reflection of the intrinsic beauty of the justice which causes it, rather like the relationship Plato sees between a beautiful body and its matching soul (402d).

By putting Kallipolis ‘in motion’ and revealing Plato’s grand strategy I have aimed to show that his contributions to politics extend beyond the inner life of the polity to the external realm of foreign affairs. To the extent polities past and present are more or less approximated to Kallipolis, Plato’s story is also potentially explanatory of those polities’ geopolitical successes and failures. Elaborating the implications of Plato’s rich analysis of international relations awaits future work.