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Corcyra and Ukraine: Empowering Students Critical Thinking and Metacognitive Awareness Using Thucydides Political and Historical Thinking

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Abstract
A teaching intervention took place in the 4th Lyceum of Veria, GR in 2014. The purpose of the intervention was to empower (a) students' historical awareness, (b) students' ability to identify, correlate and critically comment raw historical material from the internet, (c) students' metacognitive abilities to reflect upon their research findings and articulate their personal view on recent events in Ukraine. Students (boys and girls, 15yrs) critically examined Thucydides account of the Corcyra civil war events in 427 BC, carried out their own research and encouraged to find correlations between Corcyra and Ukrainian events in 2014, identifying differences and similarities between them, while attempting to express critical discourse by reflecting upon the question whether civil war was inevitable or not in both cases. The educational method of this intervention used blended learning techniques. Students' responses were semiotically analysed. The results showed that students argued that in both cases civil war is/was inevitable, where there is a conflict of interests. In addition, students in 2014 expressed the opinion that the events in Ukraine in 2014 may escalate to a war, which eventually happened in 2022.

1. Introduction
1.1. The Events in Ukraine in 2014 and the Pedagogical Intervention

In the spring of 2014, civil war broke out in Ukraine. At the same time, in Greece, according to the instructions of the Greek national curriculum, students at the 1st grade of Lyceum (high school, age 14-15) were taught, from the ancient Greek text and its modern Greek translation, *"The Events in Corcyra"* by Thucydides, i.e., the events that led to the civil war in Corcyra in 427 BC. This coincidence of events was pressing towards the identification of correlations and analogies that these two civil wars may have. Greek media presented the events in Ukraine as a civil war between two sides: one in favour of Ukraine's orientation towards Europe and U.S.A. and the other towards Russia. For this reason, at the 4th General High School of Veria, GR, and within the framework of the *Humanities Ancient Greek Historiography Course* of the 1st Grade, a brief teaching intervention was carried out in which the students worked either individually or in groups, trying to identify differences and similarities in these two historical events, using as a methodological tool the historical laws that underlie the work of Thucydides. The results of the intervention and the research that students carried out highlighted the correlations between these two historical events and the importance of Thucydides' historical thought. The semiotic analysis of students' responses

showed that in some cases they were able to predict that, where there is a conflict of interests, civil strife may lead to an escalation of war, as it did eight years later.

The teaching intervention was carried out in the second semester of the 2013-2014 academic year, lasted six teaching hours (of 45 minutes duration) covering the period of one and a half week. At the same time, an approximately 2-3 hours research activities were given as homework. All students of the 1st grade participated (25 boys and girls, 14-15 yrs.). Blended learning was used in a variety of methods such as: traditional teaching (f2f teaching), synchronous and asynchronous learning by sending e-mails and audio-visual material to the students' e-mail addresses, under the signed consent of their parents. At the same time participants were encouraged to do their own internet research by finding sources (news coverage from the Ukrainian crisis, history blogs, documentaries etc.) and composing them into a timeline of events. It should be noted that the whole class had already been familiar with ancient Greek text of Thucydides, its translation in modern Greek and its commentary, a material provided by the Ministry of Education, which is the nationally approved curriculum. The theoretical framework of the educational intervention was based on the work of Susan Lyle and specifically on the "Community of Inquiry" technique (C.O.I.). The distribution of activities per teaching hour is presented in Table 1 [1-3].

Stage 1	f2f teaching. Short introduction to the causes of the Peloponnesian war (431 – 404 BC). Historical events of 427 BC. E-mailing audio-visual material about the Ukrainian civil war to students' e-mails.
Stage 2	Commentary on chapters 70 – 73 of Book III of Thucydides (text and translation provided at the same time). Activity handout (45' to answer one question about the civil war in Corfu)
Stage 3	Students create a timeline of the events leading up to the Ukraine crisis.
Stage 4	Discourse Analysis. Activity handout (45' to answer one question about the civil war in Corfu). Watch audio-visual material
Stages 5 & 6	Lycia's Text. Davies Text. Student feedback. C.O.I. discussion.

Table 1: Distribution of Activities Per Teaching Hour

According to C.O.I. teachers and students discuss over stories, exploring values that stimulate student's thinking. Lyle suggests that C.O.I. supports the Vygotskyan notion that *"thinking occurs first intermentally and then intramentally"* [1]. By actively listening to the narration of a story and discussing about it, students create thoughts and ideas. She argues that C.O.I. is not simply an opportunity for a classroom discussion, but it creates a context in which serious thinking, aided by serious discussion, serves as an important developmental and cognitive factor. This is because learning is a shared experience that depends on the dialogue and the quality of the relationships in which a child participates [1, 4]. To be able to implement such a dialogical framework, Lyle uses the narration of stories specially designed to help children think about the ideas behind them.

The following educational intervention utilized the framework and methodology of C.O.I. but it is not based on a fictional story. Instead, it was mainly focused on the Thucydedian account of the events that lead to the civil war in Corcyra and used this historical narration as an invitation to students to research and articulate their own narrative about the events that led to the Ukrainian crisis in 2014. Narration of historical events serve as a motivation for students to think and to produce their own meaning, while arguing and critically reflecting upon their arguments through dialogue in classroom. Particularly in the case of Ukraine, the civil unrest in 2014 intrigued students to learn more about it, while they were studying about the civil unrest in Corcyra, almost two and a half thousand years ago. During C.O.I., students identified the analogies between the two historical events and reflected upon the historical laws that lead to a civil conflict. At the same time, by examining the economic/ social motivations and geostrategic interests of the warring parties, they thought about what is really happening "behind the scenes" of the civil war, trying to make sense of the world and exploring their own emotional and cognitive state in relation to the events, which is the essence of both critical thinking and transformational pedagogy [5].

In a very general context, transformative pedagogy uses collaborative critical inquiry to enable students to connect their course content to their individual and collective experience and analyse the wider social, political, or economic issues that matter to their lives [5-11]. Transformative pedagogy, (a) aims to go beyond the classical - conventional curriculum and, for this reason, uses educational interventions of this type, (b) attempts to cultivate the ability of students to analyse and understand the social reality of their own lives and community, (c) tries to develop their critical thinking and (d) introduces them to scientific

thinking and research. In this way, the teaching practice based on transformative pedagogy, leads them to argue and provide sufficient proof for their arguments, while enhancing their ability to constantly put their own beliefs in critical renegotiation.

In the following sections, the methodology and content of the teaching intervention and the activities per teaching hour are presented in more detail, as well as the results of the research and students' comments.

Stage 1. Removing the Stereotypes
The prevailing stereotype amongst students in Greece about the Peloponnesian War is that it was a conflict between Athens and Sparta. Thucydides states that the war was a result of the growing power of Athens and its on-going conflict with Corinth. According to Thucydides, the "pathology" of the war can be found on the constant controversy between Athens and Corinth for the conquest of the Mediterranean markets at that time. Corinth, unable to compete with Athens, requested the assistance of Sparta. As a member of the Peloponnesian Alliance, Sparta was "dragged" into the war on the side of Corinth, and eventually won the war in 404 BC, with the help of the Persian gold. The first hour of this intervention was dedicated to removing this stereotype by presenting the initial conflict of interests between Athens and Corinth.

Shortly before the start of the Peloponnesian War, the two great powers of the time, Corinth, and Athens, were rivalling over their dominance in the Mediterranean Sea. One city-state tries to defeat the other by displacing them from its strategic positions. Corinth controlled all Western Greece, Southern Italy, and Sicily. Corinth also had the advantage of controlling the Isthmus Channel, a narrow sea passage that opens the naval way to the west. Athens was a naval superpower and wanted to promote its products in the west by conquering all the western markets as well.

Before the events in Corcyra, the two thriving city-states of Corinth and Athens had divided the world into spheres of influence: the Athenians were selling their products mainly in the Aegean islands and the eastern coasts of Asia Minor while the Corinthians held the western markets, which included the Ionian islands, Southern Italy and Sicily, regions in which Corinth had many and flourishing colonies. When at the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 5th century BC. the coastal cities-states of Asia Minor revolt and gain their autonomy or independence, Athens lost important markets in the East which means a drop in profits. This new reality forced Athens to re-arrange its foreign

policy by trying to acquire western markets. This new "western policy" brought Athens into a rift with Corinth and this policy was also the most important cause of the war.

Geography is important for understanding the events that will follow. For this reason, the students were given a map from the commentary of Angelos Vlachos [12]. Corinth owned the Isthmus passage from which the Corinthians could control the passage of every ship. For Athens, whose strategic goal was always the conquest of Sicily and the control of the western markets, the Isthmus of Corinth was a hostile territory. According to Vlachos,

the distance from Piraeus (Athenian port) to Syracuse (Sicilian port) was 680 nautical miles and it would take for an Athenian ship about 23 days to cover the distance under ideal conditions [12]. This route could be significantly reduced if the Athenians had their own naval base halfway, for example at Corcyra. Taking into consideration this calculation, it was clear that the island of Corcyra was a strategic target for the Athenians, and it would be a great asset to them, if served as their naval base. The island, however, was a Corinthian colony, had friendly ties with motherland and shared the same oligarchic state.
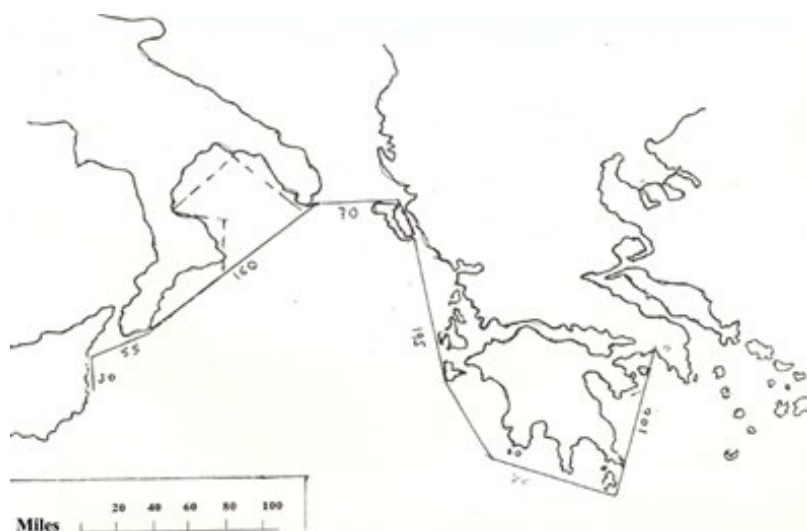

Figure 1: Distance from Piraeus to Syracuse, 5th Century BC. Source, Vlachos [12]

For the Athenians to be able to take the island, they will have to either occupy it with a military invasion or forging an alliance by changing their government state from oligarchic to democratic. Initially, the Athenians followed the second strategy by sending as an "ἐθελοπρόξενος" (pron, *etheloproksenos*), a self-volunteered ambassador called Peithias who establishes a democratic party in Corfu and constantly tries to convert the citizens of Corcyra to the Athenian side.

At this stage, students were informed about basic geostrategic issues that synthesize the puzzle of the civil war in Corcyra. By studying the map and identifying the geostrategic position of the two rivals, Corfu is presented: (a) as a field of conflict between the conflicting interests of Athens and Corinth, (b) as a Corinthian colony but also a strategic goal of the Athenians for the final occupation of Sicily, (c) as a field of state-ideological confrontations with the Athenians having a democratic and the Corinthians having an oligarchic government (as well as the people of Corcyra being colonials). Under this scope, students begin to form a perception of the world that different political parties (democratic vs oligarchic) serve mainly as regimes that hide different economic interests. The introduction of democracy in Corfu was not an attempt to improve the lives of its citizens, but rather a "trojan horse" to serve the financial interests of Athens. This is precisely where the essence of critical education lies, where students can read "behind the lines", i.e., behind the civil states of democracy/oligarchy there are hidden economic interests. Finally, at this first stage of the intervention audio-

visual material related to the Ukrainian civil war was sent to the students' e-mail addresses with the instruction to study it and record any comments or observations they might have.

Stage 2. Locating the Paradox
Thucydides mentions that Peithias (pron. *Pithias*) was the leader of the democratic party in Corcyra and "ἐθελοπρόξενος", a *"self-volunteered ambassador"*, that is, he went to Corcyra in his own free will, and founded the democratic party. We should be sceptical about the possibility that Peithias acted on his own, without the approval of Athens, which is known for the massiveness of popular assemblies and the collectiveness of decisions in the agora. It seems difficult and extremely unusual, in the era of city-states, where the citizens maintained a political identity and status only within the geographical framework of their locality, for someone to leave the city, alone, without a plan, traversing a huge, by the standards of that time, distance and go into enemy territory to establish a rival political party.

The very term *"self-volunteer ambassador"* seems problematic. The Liddel-Scott dictionary defines that a self-volunteer ambassador is a self-born consul, not appointed from the city. Nowhere else "ἐθελοπρόξενος" mentioned as a common procedure, while Suida's dictionary only mentions the case of Peithias as a voluntary ambassador, citing the text of Thucydides. Thucydides' commentator Hornblower (2003) mentions his reservations about whether Peithias was really an ambassador of his own free will without being asked to do so by Athens,

whose interests he represents. Most likely Peithias was on an orderly service, a secret mission from the Athenians, an agent, whose goal was to overthrow the oligarchic government on the island through the creation of a democratic party. According to Athenian strategy, changing the political state in Corcyra would bring the island closer to the Athenian sphere of influence. Needless to say, that the oligarchic Corcyraeans, who were closer to their metropolitan Corinth, would not look kindly on Peithia's plans.

At this point begins the confrontation between the oligarchic Corcyraeans (a pro- Corinth political party) and the democratic Corcyraeans (a pro-Athens political party). According to Thucydides, this confrontation will escalate in a civil war through three stages, the judicial stage (accusations), the stage of violence (assassination of Peithias and 60 other democrats) and the diplomatic stage (Table 2).

1. The Judicial Stage: struggle under the form of political – religious accusations.	1ˢᵗ action: The oligarchic Corcyreans sue Peithias for enslaving the island to Athens. Political accusation. 2ⁿᵈ action: A court is held, Peithias is acquitted, and he sues back the five richest Corcyreans for sacrilege. Religious accusation.
2. The Stage of Violence. Physical extermination of the opponent.	1ˢᵗ action: The oligarchic Corcyreans kill Peithias and 60 other democrats. 2ⁿᵈ action: The oligarchic Corcyreans are taking the political power and declare the neutrality of the island. During a public formal gathering at the Agora, they announce that what has been done was for the best for the island and from now on they will accept only one ship from each city-state (Corinth - Athens) and if more to come they will consider it a hostile move. They force the people to accept the situation by voting for it.
3. The Diplomatic Stage. Formal Declaration of Neutrality.	The people of Corcyra send ambassadors to the Athenians to announce them the neutrality of Corcyra. The Athenians imprison the ambassadors.

Table 2: Escalation of Actions Leading to the Civil Conflict in Corfu in 427 BC

At this point of the intervention, the students were asked to identify the paradox of the diplomatic mission and to take a critical stance towards it. Specifically, by studying Figure 2 and the ancient text with its translation quoted, they were asked to answer the question whether, after these events, and according to the geostrategic situation, neutrality was possible. Apart from quoting the historical facts and commenting on them from the textbook, no other clarification was given.

Figure 2: Extract from the Student's Worksheet

The students' answers (see appendix) showed that they were able to identify the paradox, according to which it is not logical for one faction to assassinate the leader of their rivals and then send a diplomatic mission to them to announce the neutrality. Assassination – the physical extermination of an opponent – is not a neutral act. It is a "virtual" neutrality as the entrenched status quo of Corcyra neutralizes the threat of Peithias and returns the island to the Corinthian sphere of influence. Nevertheless, this act does not invalidate the strategic goal of the Athenians to reach the Sicilian markets by making a naval base in Corcyra,

it merely stalls them, while the assassination of their own man, Peithias, gives them the basis to intervene militarily on the island, as they did, after first they imprisoned the Corcyrean ambassadors.

After collecting students' answers, students worked collectively to visualise the geostrategic and political situation that was formed in Corcyra by the time Peithias was assassinated (figure 3).
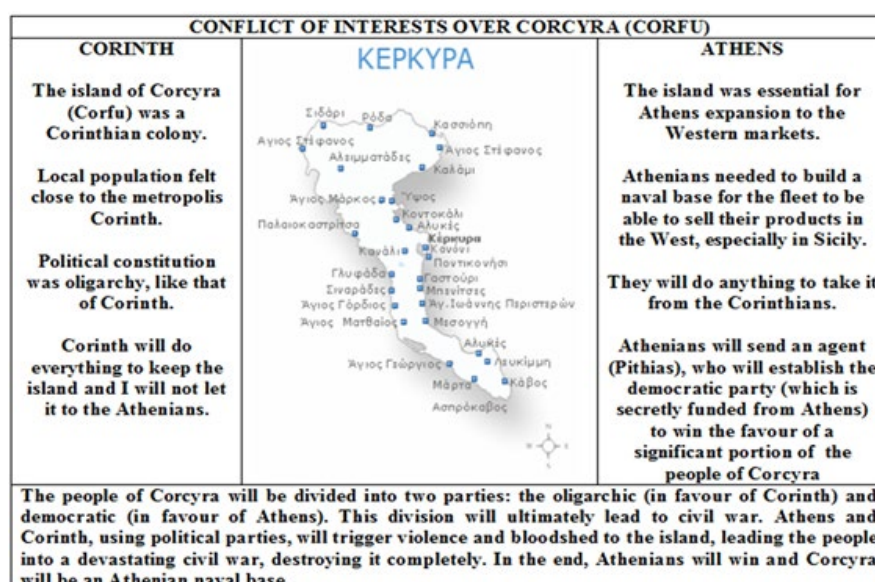
Figure 3: The Visualisation the Conflict Interests Over Corcyra

The visualisation of the geostrategic and historical data that derives from the ancient text served as an important metacognitive tool because it helped students to control their variables and to conceptualize their data by mapping them down in a simple image by displaying all the given information into a conceptual chart that illustrates the political parties that will lead the Corcyrean people into a civil war [13]. In addition, students were instructed that, for the next stage of the intervention, the Ukrainian civil war would be studied and at the same time they were encouraged to form groups and search for information and audio-visual material about the uprising in Ukraine on the internet and try – at their own discretion – to identify the events that led to the civil war by putting them in a chronological order making a timeline. Finally, to ensure the credibility of the online sources, they were asked to draw the facts only from official news agencies that quote signed and cross-referenced news (e.g. Athens News Agency, Reuters, Allsides, BBC etc.) trying to separate the news from the comments.

Stage 3. "Here and Now"
At this point, students brought their raw research material and, while working in groups, they made a timeline of the events (Table 3) that led to the Ukrainian crisis. According to the principles of C.O.I., the students formed groups of four or five using computers or printed material [1]. If there was a question, it was written on the board with the team's name in parentheses below. The groups sat in a circle, changing the arrangement of the desks in classroom, and keeping some distance as much as possible. Each group chose a representative, who wrote the events on the board chronologically. If any group wanted to fill in some interesting fact or information, they did so through a representative in turns. Scattered data and raw student material were filed by the formed teams and then organized chronologically based on current research and evidence gathered on the class board.

March 2010	Viktor Yanukovych wins the Presidential Election of Ukraine (with 48.95%) over Yuliya Timoshenko (with 45.47%) and is elected President of Ukraine. Yanukovych's party is pro-Russian and closes with Russian President Putin an agreement to transfer Russian funds to Ukraine amounting to 15 billion.
April 2010	Former boxer Vitali Klitschko becomes leader of the Ukrainian UDAR party, which is under the influence of Germany, which wishes to wrest the country from Russian influence. Klitschko lived many years in Germany as a fellow of the German Konrad Adenauer Foundation and his party is twinning with the Christian Democratic Party of Germany in November 2011.
Νοέμβριος 2013	President Yanukovych is rejecting Ukraine's association agreement with the European Union in favour of a new loan deal with Russia and closer relations between the two countries. His decision led to protests by pro-European Ukrainians. Demonstrations broke out in Kiev known as *Euromaidan*. In the following weeks, there were continuous attempts to suppress the protesters by the country's Police and the demonstrations turned into deadly clashes with dozens of dead Ukrainians.
19th February 2014	Two of Ukraine's top oligarchs, Rinat Akhmetov, who according to *Spiegel* controls 60 deputies of Yanukovych's party, and Dmitry Firtas, who controls another 30, decided to abandon Yanukovych despite both having close ties to Russia.

21st February 2014	The governing parliamentary majority changes and deposes Yanukovych the next day from the presidential office. Center-right Alexander Turchynov, former head of the national security services, is taking over as interim president. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Public Order of Ukraine is taken over by Arshen Avakov, a member of Nazi and far-right organizations. The equally far-right pro-Nazi Arseniy Yatsenyuk, who has close relations with the Americans, was appointed Prime Minister. The Americans are "besieging" Timoshenko, whom they support for president of Ukraine in the elections to be held on May 25. Vitali Klitschko announced that he will run for mayor of the capital, Kiev.
27th February 2014	The Russians, having lost their own man, Yanukovych, and realizing that they have also lost the political situation in the country, are trying to occupy strategic areas for them, such as Crimea, where their fleet is stationed.
6th March 2014	In the eastern regions of Ukraine live populations of Russian origin who have friendly relations with Russia. These populations organized themselves in Crimea by establishing the Supreme Council of Crimea which demanded its union with Russia.
16th March 2014	Russia accepts the Supreme Council's proposal, and on March 17, 2014, President Putin announces on television that Crimea is now part of Russian territory after sending Russian troops to occupy the region.

Table 3: Timeline of Events that Led to the Ukrainian Crisis in 2014

After the timeline was formed, students studied the maps they found on the internet (Figure 4) and through the combination of facts proceed to a new visualisation of the data found on the shape of form of figure 3. To do so, they were asked to identify analogies between the two historical narratives of the Corcyra and the Ukraine. The result of these comparisons is the creation of a new map with commentary from the whole class (Figures 5 and 6).
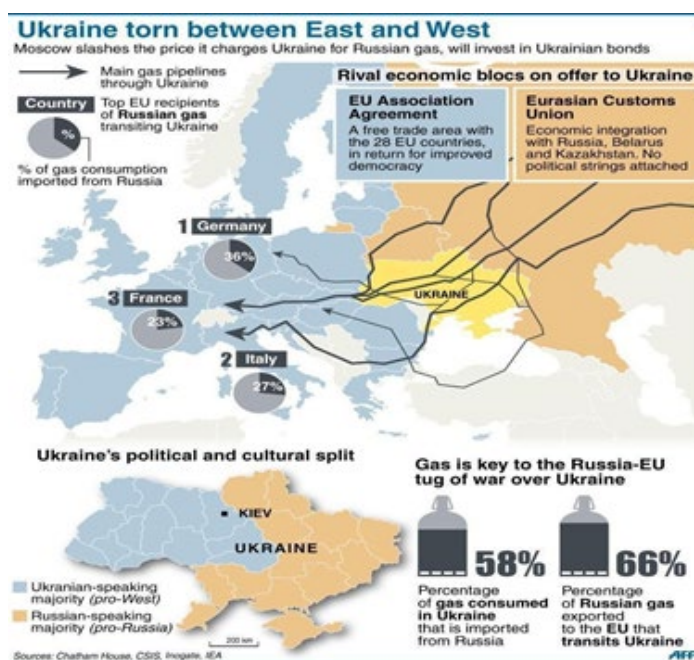

Figure 4: Map of Geostrategic Interests over Ukraine Country. Source AFP News Agency, Chatham House, CSIS, Inogate, IEA
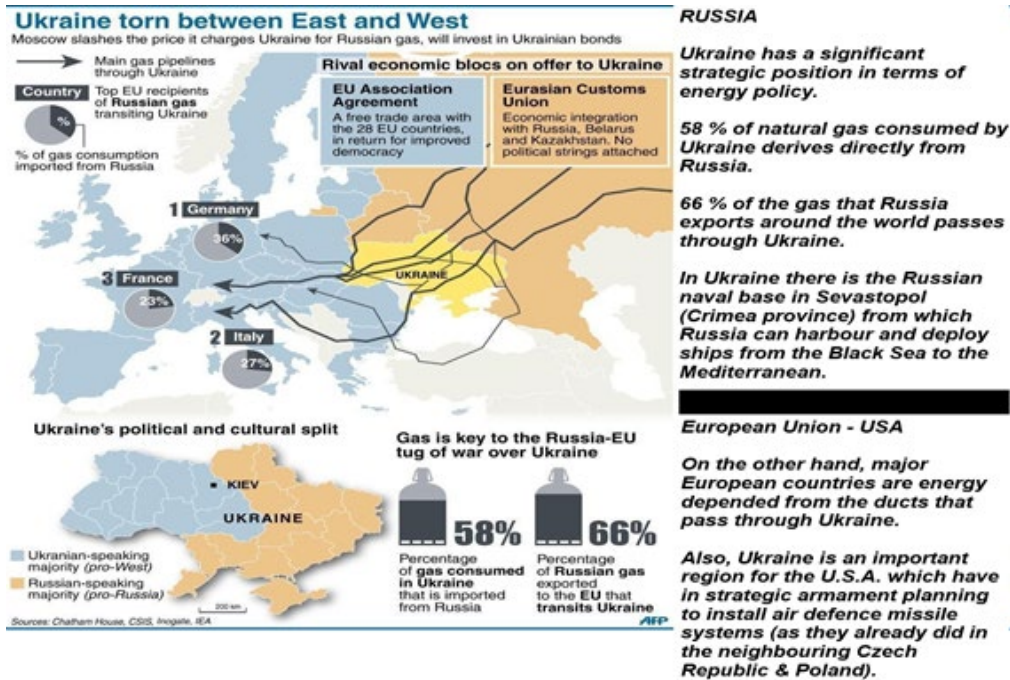
Figure 5: Students Commentary of the Geostrategic Interests Over Ukraine

Figure 6: Students Commentary of the Political Parties in Ukraine

At the end of this stage, students were able to identify the parallels between the two historical events. Emphasis was placed on the use of the term "analogy" rather than "resemblance" as the latter term suggests an identification of the two events, which is disorienting, while the term "analogy" suggests that there are some common historical forces that cause the civil wars. This discretion in terms help students to focus on the underlying historical forces that are timeless and transfer the aftermath of the Thucydidean historical text in "here and now". These forces were identified by the teams as (a) conflicting interests, (b) different policies and political parties serving the conflicting interests, (c) greed and the drive for control and power by all political parties, and (d) the division of the people to go with either one faction or the other. At the end of the third hour, the students were instructed to study the audio-visual material that was sent to them in their e-mails.

Stage 4. Discourse Analysis
At this stage, the students saw the relevant audio-visual material and critically studied the statements of the transitional president of Ukraine, Alexander Turchynov, as shown by the Euronews news agency. At the same time, teams were asked to analyse the meaning of Turchinov's statements and try to relate them to the historical narrative of Thucydides (Figure 7). Students' answers showed that they understood the principle that, to the extent that interests are conflicting, neutrality is impossible (see appendix). They also identified the analogies between the historical narrative of Thucydides and the events in Ukraine: just as Corcyra was the conflicting field between Athens and Sparta, so Ukraine is the field where the opposing interests of Russia, the European Union and the United States collide. In addition, their answers (see Appendix) showed a basic comprehension of the historical circumstances leading to the civil conflict. These issues as well as the students' impressions, metacognitive self-

assesments and emotional reactions will be discussed further. In the following stages, topics related to the nature and essence of

states and political parties in antiquity as well as contemporary state concerns were discussed.

Figure 7: Student Activity. Discourse Analysis of Turchynov Statements

Stage 5 and 6. The Essence of Democracy
Teams were given for commenting and reflecting upon the text of Lysias from his speech "Defence against a charge of subverting the Democracy ", §7-9:

"[7] Πειράσομαι δ᾿ ὑμᾶς διδάξαι, οὓς ἡγοῦμαι τῶν πολιτῶν προσήκειν ὀλιγαρχίας ἐπιθυμεῖν καὶ ⟨οὓς⟩ δημοκρατίας. [...] [8] Πρῶτον μὲν οὖν ἐνθυμηθῆναι χρὴ ὅτι οὐδείς ἐστιν ἀνθρώπων φύσει οὔτε ὀλιγαρχικὸς οὔτε δημοκρατικός, ἀλλ᾿ ἥτις ἂν ἑκάστῳ πολιτεία συμφέρῃ, ταύτην προθυμεῖται καθεστάναι· [...] [10] Οὔκουν χαλεπὸν γνῶναι, ὦ ἄνδρες δικασταί, ὅτι οὐ περὶ πολιτείας εἰσὶν αἱ πρὸς ἀλλήλους διαφοραί, ἀλλὰ περὶ τῶν ἰδίᾳ συμφερόντων ἑκάστῳ).

"[7] I will now try to explain to you who of the citizens are inclined, in my view, to court oligarchy, and who democracy. [...] [8] Now, first of all, you should reflect that no human being is naturally either an oligarch or a democrat: whatever constitution a man finds advantageous to himself, he is eager to see that one established; [...] There is thus no difficulty in concluding, gentlemen, that the questions dividing men are concerned, not with politics, but with their personal advantage."

The text of Lysias was discussed in classroom hermeneutically. During this stage students were asked to comment on it focusing on "key" words and phrases, such as "advantage", "no human being is naturally either an oligarch or a democrat… " and so on. At the same time a passage from Davies' text was discussed, as quoted by Finley [14, 15]:
"Contemporary democracy is less a guide to future action than a codification of past accomplishments. By translating the descriptive principles of present democratic reality into prescriptive terms, it vindicates the main features of the status quo and provides a model for tidying up loose ends. Democracy becomes a system to be preserved not an end to be sought. Those who wish a guide to the future must look elsewhere."

All the teams argued on the topics discussed. Students' metacognitive self-assessments and their affective attitudes

towards the intervention are presented in the next section.

1.2. Students' Metacognitive Self-Evaluations and Emotional States

During the educational intervention the participants' emotions were highly activated due to the extremity of the current events in Ukraine, while a range of metacognitive self-evaluation and emotional expressions were recorded. Regarding the metacognitive aspects of this interventions, students: (a) found interesting to revisit the classical stereotype of the traditional conflict between Athens and Sparta and that the initial conflict between Athens and Corinth led to a generalized war, (b) expressed that they did not know the fact that conflict interests were hidden behind political parties policies as they had an oversimplified, ideological and moral view into "good" and "bad" civic states (democracy vs oligarchy respectively), (c) expressed the belief that the historical narrative of the past is useful and can serve as a guide to interpret current events and (d) perceived the importance of research in making reasoned judgments about a past or present historical events.

In terms of their emotional state, the transcript of the dialogue in class showed that the students expressed empathy, sadness and worry over the drama of the Ukrainian people. The dominant feeling, however, was expressed through the anguish embedded in the question "what if things could have been done differently". The presentation of Thucydides' historical account combined with their own research and identification of the parallels between the two events left them with a sense of despair, a sense of a pessimistic determinism according to which people can do nothing to avoid civil war when interests conflict and that civil war is inevitable. Notably, the students, in 2014, were able to express the judgment that if these events escalate more, they could lead to a generalized war conflict, as it finally happened in 2022. In the dialogue developed within the C.O.I. this "what if…" question was constant and imperative.

On a cognitive level, this question, is not unrelated to the

creation and cultivation of their historical consciousness in terms of cognitive development. The expression of the "what if…" question itself indicates the activation of the cognitive mechanisms of reasoning (finding parallels in the two historical events), the formulation of a valid conclusion (every diverse interest will lead to conflict), the attempt to reduce and transform these conclusions to general principles (every conflict hides conflicting interests) but also an attempt to articulate and implement different strategies that would have opposite results (what could / should be done differently to avoid the conflict?). This question is metacognitively important because, according to Kuhn, the development of metacognition is a dynamic process as the individual tries to acquire new and more effective cognitive strategies to replace older ineffective ones [16, 17]. Kuhn and Dean emphasize that the key to developing metacognition is the acquisition of epistemological understanding [18]. According to their view, children are going through a spectrum of developmental – cognitive stages: (a) *the realistic stage,* where pres-schoolers treat belief with knowledge as equals, everyone perceives the same thing, and all perceptions match external reality, (b) *the absolute stage*, where children (4-5yrs) learn that some beliefs may be wrong and that people's beliefs can differ, (d) *the stage of relativism* (adolescence) where most people recognize that even experts can disagree on some issues, everything is subjective, beliefs are not judged, and all opinions are equally valid, and (d) *the stage of evaluative epistemology,* (adulthood) where many people they have learned to tolerate some degree of uncertainty in their personal beliefs, while maintaining the idea that there can be better or worse views, supported by reasons and evidence. Kuhn and Dean argue that little (educational or guiding) intervention can be done to encourage children to progress through the first three stages, but the transition to the fourth stage requires some educational or guiding effort [18]. The specific educational intervention attempted to strengthen the students' transition to the stage of evaluate epistemology through their own research by giving them the historical thought of Thucydides as a methodological tool and inviting them to identify analogies between historical events.

On an epistemological level, this question is also not unrelated to the purpose of (teaching) history as it activates thought by raising the question that history should teach us "something" so that we can avoid extremities and wars by refuting the Hegel's quote that the only thing that we learn from history is that we learn nothing from history (history repeats itself). that is, history teaches us that it teaches us nothing. In terms of epistemology, the "what if…" question indicate that the individual can reflect upon the history, draw a conclusion, and argue about it by trying to find a different strategy, in this case, to avoid civil war. During the C.O.I. students argue that the notion of "history teaches us nothing", expresses a pessimism about the human condition which goes hand in hand with the pessimism expressed by Thucydides (Thucydides, Book of Histories 3.82.2,):

«καὶ ἐπέπεσε πολλὰ καὶ χαλεπὰ κατὰ στάσιν ταῖς πόλεσι, γιγνόμενα μὲν καὶ αἰεὶ ἐσόμενα, ἕως ἂν ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις ἀνθρώπων ᾖ, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἡσυχαίτερα καὶ τοῖς εἴδεσι διηλλαγμένα, ὡς ἂν ἕκασται αἱ μεταβολαὶ τῶν ξυντυχιῶν ἐφιστῶνται».

"And revolution brought upon the cities of Hellas many terrible calamities, such as have been and always will be while human nature remains the same, but which are more or less aggravated and differ in character with every new combination of circumstances".

The class during C.O.I. argued that this view is basically a pessimistic view. It is as if we a priori accept that the human mind has limited possibilities, that it cannot shape and transform its reality, and that, ultimately, there will always be a barrage of opposing interests that will inevitably lead it to a civil conflict or generalised war. Although the events in Ukraine and their correlation with Corcyra indicates the exact opposite, that somehow history repeat itself, the class tried to formulate a different approach by trying to answer the "what if…" question. Under this scope, we stand aside to the framework of critical education which aims at this very activation of the cognitive abilities and reasoning processes that transform the individual from a passive subject to a conscious personality.

2. Conclusion
2.1. The "what if…" Question. Could Civil War Have Been Avoided?
As mentioned earlier, according to Kuhn Dean, few educational interventions can be made to encourage children's transition from the third to the fourth stage (a transition that may considered as an indicator of children's metacognitive development), but the transition to fourth stage requires some educational or guiding effort [18]. Within the framework of C.O.I. we tried to answer this question by playing a game. We treated the textbook as a "time machine" that can take us back in time and asked the students to time-travel themselves to 427 BC. and imagine that they are the Corcyrean people. The question changes form: what should we, the citizens of Corcyra, do now that the oligarchs have killed Peithia?

Every action serves as an agent that triggers a specific reaction. This chain of actions-reactions limits the seemingly large number of strategies that can be implemented at a particular historical moment. For the people in Corcura, the historical stake of the time was to reflect on whether it is possible to remain neutral when their homeland is a field of conflicting interests, something they did not do. Having killed Peithia, for a society that regulates its own foreign policy and really care to participate in it, the only logical solutions were: (a) to the extent that they agree with the assassination of Peithias, to declare war on Athens, (b) to the extent that they disagree with the murder of Peithias, to deliver his perpetrators to justice or to Athens. None of that happened. On the contrary, Thucydides mentions that the Athenians imprisoned the ambassadors from Corcyra who announced their neutrality. Therefore, the escalation of actions, as presented in Table 2 and described in Thucydides' narrative, would inevitably lead to civil war, as neither Athens, nor Corinth would leave the island alone, nor Russia and or the U.S. / EU. they would leave Ukraine alone. We should visualise Corfu and Ukraine as a square on the global geostrategic chessboard, where each player strives to leave his own pawn on it. But what if we are living in a country where the "square" of the chessboard is our own homeland? What happens if others fight over for our country?

What can we do to avoid the disaster of our people?

To answer this questions, it is worth recalling that the present teaching intervention presented to the students (a) the role of political parties in Corfu and Ukraine, (b) the conflict of strategic interests in these two areas in relation to their geography, (c) Davies' reflection on whether democracy is a polity to be preserved or an end to be pursued (in the former case it is no different from other totalitarian regimes while in the latter it is a constant demand, a perpetual claim to a better world) and (d) the text of Lysias according to which there are no "good" or "bad" political parties and that no one is born by nature to support one or the other but the everyone chooses it based on their personal interest. So, within this context and by trying to give a way out to the students to answer themselves the question, we presented a text by Voros which examines the reasons why the invasion of the Greek army in Asia Minor in 1922 led to its catastrophe [19]. This text presents the same question in other historical contexts. The answer given by Voros to the question "could the Asia Minor disaster have been avoided?" is as follows [19]:

"Greece had the advantage of linking its fortunes at that particular time with the victorious Entente forces of the war. However, by asserting its legitimate claims through its alliance with the victors, it simultaneously supported the policy of those great powers who promoted their own interests. All Hellenism is responsible for this synergy. We gave the Allies the ability to cynically "exploit" us and leave us to tragedy. We are victims of our geography and the crisis of colonialism but also of our politics. The crisis of 1918-23 in our region appears historically inevitable. However, the destruction or some other outcome was a matter of decisions. For decisions, the responsibilities belong to the people."

We could expand this thought by formulating the phrase that within the framework of the conflict of interests and competition on the energy markets between USA. E.U and Russia, the crisis of 2014-2022 in Ukraine is historically inevitable. However, the extermination of the Ukrainian people, the destruction of the country's infrastructure and the violent displacement of civilians is a matter of manipulations, and the responsibility for the decision belongs to the people, specifically the Ukrainian leadership and the Ukrainian people, Russian and non-Russian-speaking. This means that the crises in Corfu and Ukraine were historically inevitable. Nevertheless, civil wars are the result of specific political choices, which means that they can be avoided in the following way: people should always keep in mind that the representatives of opposing interests will use political parties (democratic - oligarchic ideologies) to divide it and impose their own anti-people agenda which will lead to civil war. In both events, in Corcyra and Ukraine, people urged to follow the one or the other party, there was no voice of reason to unite a divided society. Critical education and the teaching of history will help the people to understand (a) historical laws and their dynamics through corresponding historical events, (b) that, since interests are conflicting, the only sustainable interest is the common interest in which is a product of consensus and debate, (c) that historically bourgeois political parties divide rather than unite the people, (d) the need for new anti-war collective activism and, finally, that civil wars can be avoided through different political choices and decisions, when the people push for them.

For this reason, it is of no use to the "anti-war" citizen without understanding the historical laws involved. Understanding the causes of war is the path for implementing peace [20].

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Appendix
Students' Answers

Student 1: *It is impossible to kill someone and then say you are neutral. If the oligarchs in Corcyra kill the leader of the rival party they should have known better because the Athenians might consider this an act of war. This is no neutrality this is an act of war.*

Student 2: *No, neutrality is not possible because Corcyra was a Corinthian colony, its first inhabitants were Corinthians and the island was friendly adjacent to Corinth, that is, enemy with the Athenians. Because the people of Corcyra controlled Isthmus passage and had all of Western Greece, southern Italy and Sicily in command and because Athens was a trading power it wanted to be able to move freely by sea war was about to break.*

Student 3: *I believe that such a thing was of course not possible. Since two cities claimed Corcyra and would do everything to take it to their side, it could not remain neutral under any circumstances. Since they managed to divide the people of Corcyra in two and lead them into a civil war, the people of Corcyra should have understood how serious things were and decide all together to team with the city-state that would favor them the most.*

Student 4: *I believe that what the people of Corcyra did was not possible because it was not possible to have good relations with both cities because the two cities had their own interests from the people of Corcyra and they could not cope with conflicting interests, that is to become allies with both cities-states.*

Student 5: *I believe that such a thing is not possible because there is an interest that cannot be shared by all three, i.e., USA, EU and Russia, therefore what Mr. Turchinov says cannot be done. It must go to one of the three or none.*

Student 6: *The people of Corcyra found themselves trapped between the threats of Athens and Corinth. Athens, wanting to exploit the island and use it as a station to reach the south Italy to sell its products, tries to conquer the island although it belonged to the Corinthians, Athens' great rival. The people of Corcyra, coming to an unfavorable position, voted to be allies with the Athenians and friends with the Corinthians. However, the neutrality they want to ensure is not feasible because one or both big cities-sates will seek to bring the island to their side using violence, which will put the people of Corcyra in a more difficult position since they will be forced to line up with a side without their will and eventually lead them to civil war.*

Student 7: *In my opinion it is not possible for Corcyra to be friends and allies with the Athenians and the Peloponnesians because there is great rivalry between Athens and Corinth. Moreover, this can be seen even from the fact that the two cities are selling the same product (pottery) but at a different pace - technique to the fact that both cities are trying to conquer the same area (Corcyra). Therefore, Corcyra cannot vote for neutrality since there is great competition between Athens and Corinth and these two competitive cities are not going to accept such a thing. Next is to create a civil war.*

Student 8: *Ukraine, like Corcyra in Thucydides, is besieged by many great powers such as Russia, the EU and the USA. These three great powers wish to impose their authority on Ukraine to serve their own interests by using this country. The Ukrainians, being in a difficult position, try to maintain a neutral attitude towards them. However, this is not possible because the forces will try to conquer the country against its will using unfair means. Consequently, Ukraine will be divided resulting in internal conflicts that may lead its people even to civil war.*

Student 9: *I believe that it is not possible for Ukraine to maintain neutrality vis-à-vis Russia and the USA as well as the EU. Moreover, it is known from past situations such as the one in Corcyra that such a thing is not possible. Relations between USA EU and Russia are competitive since they want to conquer the same region (Ukraine). Only one of the two will be able to conquer it and this depends on the decision of the Ukrainians who will have to choose which of the two countries they will ally with. From this situation between Ukraine, Russia and the USA, the EU proves to us that history repeats itself.*