



The Real Thucydides Trap: How Today's 'Statesmen' See What They Want (and Expect) to See in Their Favorite Ancient Historian

Lecture by Dr. **Peter Stuart Robinson** (Assoc. Professor of Political Science, Department of Social Sciences, The Arctic University of Norway)



Illustration by Henry Wong

The lecture will take place on **Wednesday, 31 January 2024, at 7:00 p.m.** (Athens) at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, Tsami Karatasou 5, 11742 (the lecture will also be streamed online via Zoom)

Registration is required for both in-person and virtual attendance.

To attend in-person, please register at norwinst@uib.no

To attend via Zoom, please register via the following link:

<https://uib.zoom.us/meeting/register/u5crcOGspzMjH910zjCRcHewT7w4IC8YbzqD>



Abstract

Since the Second World War International Relations (IR) has become a field largely made in America for Americans. It is dominated by American academics to this day. IR's practical-political, 'problem-solving' orientation grants it extraordinary access to and influence over policymakers, not least those shaping the decisions of the world's most powerful state. The field, in turn, has been shaped decisively by self-styled 'realist' interlocutors of 'politics among nations.' An important source of inspiration and assumed authority for such realist theorists has been Thucydides's history of the Peloponnesian War and the insights into Ancient Greek 'IR' it is thought to provide.

Peculiarly modern anxieties engender facile comparisons between Athenian-Spartan relations of the 5th century BCE and Sino-American relations today, exemplified by warnings of the recurring peril of the so-called 'Thucydides Trap.' This invocation of simplistic timeless lessons of the Peloponnesian War breeds a dangerous kind of insecurity, bordering on paranoia. It is hoped that an alternative, less presentist reading of Thucydides can offer a welcome and timely antidote.

Biography

Peter Stuart Robinson is Associate Professor of Political Science at UiT The Arctic University of Norway. He holds a PhD in Political Science (International Relations) from the University of British Columbia. His recent research has focused on the social dynamics of political continuity and change as expressed in cultural fields and urban environments. He is currently working on a project on crisis management – and representation – as political agency, focusing on diverse responses to Greek economic and migratory pressures. This builds on his earlier theoretical work on political crisis. Robinson also writes regularly about film for a more general audience, for Montages.no.