

# POLYTROPOS STRATEGY

Odysseus, Xenophon and the  
Hexarchic Art of Decision Making



Dimitrios Thomakos and  
Konstantinos Papadimitriou

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and  
Konstantinos Papadimitriou

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*To those who still listen to the distant surf of Homeric seas  
when making decisions in fluorescent-lit rooms.*

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# Preface

This monograph weaves together a set of strategic voices rarely placed in the same conversation: Bismarck, Zhou Enlai, Charles de Gaulle, Themistocles, Epaminondas, Heraclius of Byzantium, Odysseus, and Xenophon with the Ten Thousand. Each of these figures faced situations in which failure of judgment threatened not just personal careers but the survival of polities, armies, and entire cultural trajectories.

The guiding hypothesis is that their decisions are not isolated anecdotes but surface expressions of a deeper, repeatable structure of reasoning under extreme constraint. The task here is to extract that structure, articulate it as a *Hexarchic Framework* of six strategic axes, and then show how this framework is incarnated in the Odyssean journey and institutionalized in Xenophon's Ἀνάβασις and the Κάθοδος τῶν Μυρίων.

In contrast to treatises that treat ancient exempla as ornament, the present work treats Homer and Xenophon as rigorous laboratories of decision-making, where hypotheses about strategy are tested against hostile terrain, treacherous allies, and implacable time. Odysseus represents the fully integrated *individual* practitioner of μῆτις, the “many-angled” intelligence; Xenophon represents the emergence of strategic *institutions* capable of distributing this intelligence across assemblies, councils, and marching columns.

The intended audience consists of readers who are

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simultaneously at home with Greek texts and with the dilemmas of modern governance, finance, and organizational life. The hope is that this synthesis offers not nostalgia but a practical grammar for high-stakes choices in the twenty-first century, where Odyssean cunning, Xenophontian pedagogy, and modern Realpolitik collide in increasingly non-linear theaters.

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**Part I**

**The Hexarchic Framework  
of Strategy**

# 1 Six Axes of Strategic Judgment

## 1.1 Overview of the Hexarchic Geometry

The core claim of this work is that a wide variety of strategic situations can be projected onto six recurrent axes of judgment, each exemplified in the practice of a major historical figure. These axes are not mutually exclusive doctrines but complementary orientations that can be activated, combined, and sequenced as circumstances demand.

The six axes are labeled after paradigmatic practitioners: the Bismarckian axis of instrumental rationality; the Zhou Enlai axis of humanistic pragmatism; the de Gaulle axis of autonomous grandeur; the Themistoclean axis of informational asymmetry; the Epaminondan axis of tactical innovation; and the Heraclian axis of strategic depth. Each axis captures a distinct way of answering three questions under pressure:

- what is *vital*,
- what is *possible*,
- and what is *tolerable*.

## 1.2 The Bismarckian Axis: Instrumental Rationality

Bismarck exemplifies the deliberate subordination of means to ends through rational, often cold, assessment of power and interest [1]. His practice of Realpolitik prioritized structural stability over ideological consistency [2]. He repeatedly adjusted Prussian (and later German) objectives to the constraints of the European balance of power, resisting both nationalist maximalism and dynastic sentiment when these conflicted with long-run security. At this axis, the strategist foregrounds:

- Structural constraints: the distribution of military, economic, and diplomatic power.
- Cost–benefit analysis: willingness to accept limited evils to prevent larger catastrophes.
- Strategic restraint: refusal to exploit tactical advantages when escalation threatens the core position.

This orientation privileges clarity of diagnosis over moral comfort, and stability of the system over spectacle of victory.

### **Bismarckian Decision Heuristic**

Clarify vital interests; map the constraint structure; identify the least costly coalition or sequence of moves that secures those interests without overextension. Accept reputational noise and short-term criticism as the price of structural safety.

## 1.3 The Zhou Enlai Axis: Humanistic Pragmatism

Zhou Enlai’s practice of diplomacy illustrates a blend of strategic firmness with empathetic understanding of

adversaries [3]. His triangulation between the Soviet Union and the United States exemplified pragmatic flexibility within a framework of core national interests [4]. He accepted that China needed Soviet support while simultaneously working to avoid dependency, later engineering a triangular balance involving the United States to expand room for maneuver. At this axis, the strategist foregrounds:

- Triangulation: structuring relationships so that no single partner can dominate.
- Empathetic diplomacy: seeing the situation through the adversary's eyes to locate face-saving outcomes.
- Practical solutions: prioritizing workable arrangements over ideological purity.

The emphasis lies on preserving most future options by ensuring that all parties can live with the settlement.

### **Zhou-Enlai Decision Heuristic**

Identify the minimum set of interests that must be preserved on each side; search for institutional or rhetorical formats that allow these to coexist; embed agreements in wider triangular structures that prevent renewed dependency.

## **1.4 The de Gaulle Axis: Autonomous Grandeur**

Charles de Gaulle articulated a vision of national grandeur in which France could not accept a role as mere auxiliary to any superpower, even friendly ones [5]. This politics of grandeur treated psychological factors—rank, prestige, historical destiny—as strategic variables rather than decorative afterthoughts [6]. He insisted on independent

nuclear capability and on freedom of decision vis-à-vis NATO and the European Community, arguing that rank and prestige have strategic weight in international politics. At this axis, the strategist foregrounds:

- Strategic independence: preserving the capacity for unilateral decision in matters deemed existential.
- Identity assertion: cultivating a distinctive role and narrative that justify claims to influence.
- Distinctive capability: developing tools or competencies that make the polity irreplaceable.

Here, psychological factors—honor, status, and symbolic leadership—are treated as hard variables, not decorative afterthoughts.

### **Gaullist Decision Heuristic**

Identify the domains in which subordination is intolerable; create or preserve capabilities that guarantee freedom of action in those domains; openly articulate a narrative of identity that legitimizes this stance.

## **1.5 The Themistoclean Axis: Informational Asymmetry**

Themistocles' orchestration of the Battle of Salamis turned numerical inferiority into advantage through control of information and perception [7]. By manipulating Xerxes' beliefs about Greek intentions and capabilities, he transformed the Persian numerical advantage into a tactical liability in narrow waters [8]. By misleading Xerxes about Greek intentions and luring the Persian fleet into narrow waters, he ensured that the environment neutralized the enemy's mass and favored Greek seamanship. At this axis, the strategist foregrounds:

- Perception control: shaping what adversaries believe about capabilities, intentions, and constraints.
- Strategic deception: feeding information that leads the other side to choose self-damaging options.
- Environmental design: altering the setting so that opponent strengths become liabilities.

The focus shifts from direct confrontation to manipulation of the decision environment itself.

### **Themistoclean Decision Heuristic**

Map the conditions under which adversary advantages manifest; design moves and narratives that drive them into settings where those conditions fail; anticipate second-order effects on alliances and reputation.

## **1.6 The Epaminondan Axis: Tactical Innovation**

Epaminondas destabilized Spartan hegemony not by matching Sparta's existing strengths, but by altering the grammar of hoplite warfare [9]. His innovations at Leuctra and the strategic liberation of Messenia represent doctrinal disruption at both tactical and systemic levels [10]. At Leuctra he massed depth on his left wing and refused the right, producing a shock concentration against the Spartan line while minimizing exposure of weaker troops; at the strategic level he liberated Messenia, attacking the economic base of Spartan military power. At this axis, the strategist foregrounds:

- Doctrinal disruption: questioning and reconfiguring established methods rather than optimizing within them.

- Oblique attack: striking at structural vulnerabilities instead of visible strengths.
- Systemic transformation: altering the conditions under which future contests will be fought.

The goal is not a more efficient version of the old game, but a different game.

### **Epaminondan Decision Heuristic**

Identify systemic dependencies that sustain the opponent; design innovations that render those dependencies untenable; be willing to reorganize one's own forces and culture to exploit the new design.

## **1.7 The Heraclian Axis: Strategic Depth**

Heraclius faced an empire apparently broken by Persian advances that had consumed almost all territory except Constantinople [12]. His campaigns exemplified Byzantine grand strategy: trading space for time, avoiding premature decisive battles, and extending conflicts into temporal horizons where Roman organizational depth could prevail [11]. Instead of dying at the frontier, he reorganized finances, mobilized religious fervor, and executed campaigns that avoided early decisive battles while striking at Persian logistics and morale, eventually restoring the provinces. At this axis, the strategist foregrounds:

- Defense-in-depth: accepting territorial and tactical reverses to preserve core capacities.
- Temporal extension: stretching conflict into time frames where one's structural advantages can accumulate.

- Moral endurance: sustaining cohesion through ideological, religious, or cultural commitments.

The focus is survival and eventual recovery, not short-term glory.

### **Heraclian Decision Heuristic**

Distinguish vital from peripheral assets; construct layers of resilience so that initial defeats do not trigger systemic collapse; cultivate narratives that justify endurance and delayed gratification.

## **1.8 Synthesis: The Hexarchic Matrix**

These six axes define a space of possible strategic responses within which concrete decisions can be located. Bismarck and Heraclius anchor rational calibration and temporal depth; Zhou and de Gaulle articulate relational pragmatism and autonomy; Themistocles and Epaminondas represent informational and doctrinal asymmetry.

In subsequent parts, the *Odyssey* and Xenophon's *Anabasis* will be read as extended case studies in moving through this space: Odysseus as the individual *polytropos* who can adopt any axis as needed, and Xenophon as the architect of collective procedures that allow an army to reason hexarchically.

## **1.9 The STRIDE Protocol: Operational Synthesis**

The six axes form a coherent decision procedure when arranged in a deliberate sequence that mirrors how strategic problems naturally unfold. This sequence, formalized here as the **STRIDE Protocol**, provides practitioners with a step-by-step method for navigating complex, high-stakes situations where multiple dimensions must

## CHAPTER 1. SIX AXES OF STRATEGIC JUDGMENT

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be coordinated. STRIDE is an acronym encoding the hexarchic axes in functional order:

**Structural Analysis** (Bismarckian): Begin with ruthless assessment of power distribution, constraints, and vital interests. What is the actual situation, stripped of wishful thinking?

**Triangulation Design** (Zhou Enlai): Construct relationship architectures that prevent dependency while enabling cooperation. How can partnerships be arranged to preserve maneuver space?

**Resilience Architecture** (Heraclian): Establish buffers, narratives, and depth that allow survival of shocks. What systems ensure tactical setbacks don't cascade into strategic collapse?

**Information Shaping** (Themistoclean): Control or influence how adversaries perceive capabilities, intentions, and options. What beliefs serve your strategy, and how can the information environment be ethically shaped?

**Doctrinal Innovation** (Epaminondean): Question orthodoxies and, where necessary, redesign methods or systems. Which taken-for-granted approaches should be disrupted?

**Existential Autonomy** (Gaullist): Identify domains where subordination would compromise identity. What freedoms are non-negotiable, and what capabilities guarantee them?

STRIDE is not rigidly linear: new information or changing conditions may require revisiting earlier steps. Yet the sequence captures a natural logic—first understand the terrain (S), then position oneself relationally (T), build staying power (R), shape perceptions (I), innovate where

## CHAPTER 1. SIX AXES OF STRATEGIC JUDGMENT

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stuck (D), and finally secure the capacity for autonomous choice (E). The subsequent parts will demonstrate how Odysseus in the *Odyssey* intuitively executes STRIDE across his journey, how Xenophon successfully institutionalizes STRIDE for the Ten Thousand in the *Anabasis*, and how modern practitioners can embed it into their organizational decision-making.

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## **Part II**

# **Odysseus: *Polytropos* and the Individual Mode**

## 2 Odysseus as Hexarchic Practitioner

### 2.1 Polytropos and Metis

Homer introduces Odysseus as πολύτροπον and πολύμητιν—a man of many turns and of many counsels—signaling from the outset that his defining trait is adaptive intelligence rather than brute force. Homer introduces Odysseus as πολύτροπον and πολύμητιν—a man of many turns and of many counsels [13]. Modern interpreters have emphasized that μῆτις denotes not simple cunning but a flexible, context-sensitive capacity to combine patience, deception, and technical skill in novel ways [15]. In the hexarchic vocabulary, Odysseus is the paradigmatic agent who can move across all six axes without being trapped in any single one. His journey is thus read here not as a random sequence of misadventures, but as a didactic progression through distinct strategic challenges that each foreground a different axis of judgment.

### 2.2 The Themistoclean Cyclops: Informational Asymmetry

The episode with Polyphemus in *Odyssey* IX dramatizes the Themistoclean axis in its purest form. Confronted with an overwhelmingly stronger opponent in a closed

environment, Odysseus abandons the option of direct combat and instead constructs an informational trap: the false name “Nobody”, the intoxicating wine, the blinding stake, and the carefully timed escape beneath the sheep. The crucial move lies not merely in deceiving Polyphemus, but in exploiting social signaling: when the Cyclops cries that “Nobody” is hurting him, his peers infer there is no external attacker and refuse assistance. Odysseus thus manipulates the wider information network, turning the enemy’s social context into an additional constraint on his ability to respond—exactly as Themistocles manipulated Persian perceptions at Salamis. This informational warfare, where linguistic ambiguity becomes tactical weapon, exemplifies the Greek understanding of *μητις* as intelligence operating through indirection rather than force [15].

### **2.3 The Epaminondan Trojan Horse: Doctrinal Disruption**

Tradition attributes to Odysseus the conception of the Trojan Horse, recounted retrospectively in the *Odyssey* and other epic cycles. After a decade of stalemated siege warfare, the Horse proposed a radically different grammar of attack: apparent withdrawal, feigned gift, infiltration, and nocturnal opening of the gates from within. This operation exemplifies the Epaminondan axis on two levels. Doctrinally, it rejects heroic frontal combat in favor of collective submergence of individual glory; structurally, it attacks Troy’s walls and morale rather than its army, collapsing the entire system in a single stroke.

## 2.4 The Heraclian Journey: Strategic Depth and Endurance

The long νόστος from Troy to Ithaca functions as a Heraclian laboratory of time and resilience. Shipwrecks, divine hostility, and the loss of companions accumulate, yet Odysseus preserves the continuity of his identity and mission through an extended sequence of tactical defeats. The stays with Calypso and Circe are particularly instructive: in both cases Odysseus accepts prolonged delay, extracting benefits (safe harbor, information, equipment) without surrendering the ultimate aim of return. This mirrors Heraclius' willingness to trade space and short-term prestige for the preservation of core strategic potential in a protracted campaign.

## 2.5 The Zhou-Enlai Encounters: Pragmatic Diplomacy

Odysseus' dealings with powerful female figures—Circe, Calypso, Nausicaa, and Arete—teach the Zhou-Enlai axis of empathetic pragmatism. Rather than destroying Circe after besting her with Hermes' aid, he converts her from threat into ally, securing oaths, hospitality, and crucial navigational advice for the stages ahead. In each encounter, Odysseus reads the other's needs and constraints, offers recognition or flattery, and crafts arrangements that preserve his own autonomy while allowing the other to save face. This anticipates Zhou's method of constructing durable relationships with stronger powers by accommodating their core concerns without relinquishing long-run national goals.

## **2.6 The Bismarckian Ithaca: Instrumental Rationality and Disguise**

Upon finally reaching Ithaca in Book XIII, Odysseus does not immediately reveal himself and assault the suitors, despite strong emotional incentives to do so. Instead, with Athena's support, he adopts the disguise of a beggar, conducting reconnaissance, testing loyalties, and carefully assembling a coalition of Telemachus and loyal servants. This phase is paradigmatically Bismarckian: anger is subordinated to calculation, humiliation is accepted as a necessary price of information, and timing is chosen to minimize risk while maximizing decisive impact. The massacre in the hall is thus the endpoint of a rational sequence rather than a spontaneous outburst.

## **2.7 The Gaullist Bow and Bed: Autonomous Grandeur**

The bow contest and the recognition scene with Penelope crystallize the de Gaulle axis in mythic form. The weapon only Odysseus can string functions as a symbol of distinctive capability, while the test of the immovable bed fixed around a living olive tree proves an identity that cannot be imitated. Odysseus reclaims not only physical control of the palace but the normative status of king and husband, asserting that Ithaca's order rests on his unique fusion of skill, memory, and history. This resonates with de Gaulle's insistence that France's claim to grandeur derived from a particular historical vocation that could not be outsourced or delegated to alliances.

## 3 The STRIDE Protocol in Odyssean Form

### 3.1 From Narrative Episodes to Decision Procedure

The STRIDE protocol proposed earlier can be read directly off the narrative surface of the *Odyssey*. Each step corresponds to one or more key episodes and to a dominant axis in the hexarchic framework.

**Structural Analysis (S)** Recognition of constraints at Troy and in Ithaca: stalemated siege, overwhelming suitor numbers, dependence on divine favor.

**Triangulation Design (T)** Management of relationships with gods and mortals: Athena, Circe, the Phaeacians, Penelope's suitors.

**Resilience Architecture (R)** Acceptance of detours, losses, and delays while preserving the goal of νόστος.

**Information Shaping (I)** The "Nobody" ruse, disguises, false narratives told to strangers about his identity.

**Doctrinal Innovation (D)** The Trojan Horse and the Achaeans willingness to subordinate heroic convention to systemic victory.

**Existential Autonomy (E)** Final refusal to share rule with the suitors, affirmation of the unique marital bed, and insistence on an order anchored in his person.

Seen this way, the *Odyssey* is not only a story about a return, but a paradigmatic map of how a single agent can traverse the hexarchic space in response to shifting constraints. The subsequent part will examine how Xenophon takes these individual capacities and distributes them across an army of ten thousand thus transforming Odyssean μῆτις into Xenophontian institutional *logos*.

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## **Part III**

# **Xenophon: The Ten Thousand and the Institutional Mode**

## 4 From Heroic Metis to Collective Logos

### 4.1 The Anabasis as Institutional Nostos

Xenophon's *Anabasis* recounts the march of roughly ten thousand Greek mercenaries into the heart of the Persian Empire in support of Cyrus the Younger, [14], their tactical victory at Cunaxa, the sudden loss of employer and generals, and the arduous return to the Black Sea and beyond. Unlike the solitary Odysseus, Xenophon must orchestrate the survival and decision-making of a large, heterogeneous army through councils, assemblies, and evolving norms of leadership.

The text thus functions as a bridge between Homeric heroic narrative and later strategic thought: it shows what happens when Odyssean capacities must be distributed across many agents and embedded in procedures. In contemporary terms, the *Anabasis* is a field manual for institutionalizing the hexarchic framework under extreme duress.

## 4.2 Cunaxa and the Bismarckian Lesson

At Cunaxa, the Greek phalanx achieves a near-perfect tactical outcome: it routes the Persian troops in front of it, suffering almost no losses. Strategically, however, the battle is a disaster, as Cyrus is killed and the entire expedition loses its purpose, income, and political cover in a single stroke. This contrast illustrates in negative form the Bismarckian axis: tactical success without alignment to a viable strategic objective is worthless. Xenophon's later reflections emphasize the need to understand employer motives, coalition structure, and worst-case scenarios before committing forces—a proto-Realpolitik sensitivity to deeper constraints. This disconnect between tactical excellence and strategic coherence illustrates a recurring problem in military history: the subordination of operational success to political purpose [16].

# 5 Hexarchic Axes in the March of the Ten Thousand

## 5.1 Themistoclean Shock: Deception and Reconstitution

Soon after Cunaxa, the Persian satrap Tissaphernes invites the Greek generals to a parley and has them treacherously seized and executed. The army wakes up to find itself leaderless, deep inside hostile territory, deprived of trusted decision-makers by an act of pure strategic deception. Xenophon's response in Book III reverses the Themistoclean pattern: facing an enemy who has weaponized deceit, he advocates radical internal transparency, collective deliberation, and the rapid election of new generals. The same axis that in Odysseus produced offensive deception here generates its defensive complement: controls, open communication, and distributed responsibility to immunize the army against further informational ambush.

## 5.2 Epaminondan Innovation: The Hollow Square

As the army retreats through mountainous terrain, mostly inhabited by the Carduchians, it confronts a form of warfare for which the traditional phalanx is ill-suited: ambushes from above, attacks on baggage, and constant harassment on narrow paths. Xenophon and his colleagues devise flexible formations, most notably the marching hollow square that encloses non-combatants and supplies while presenting fronts on all sides. This is Epaminondan innovation before Epaminondas: doctrine is adapted to landscape and enemy, and the army reorganizes itself structurally rather than merely fighting harder in old configurations. The Ten Thousand become a mobile system that can survive in conditions for which they were not originally trained, illustrating the general principle of doctrinal disruption under pressure.

## 5.3 Heraclian Depth: The Long Descent and “Thalatta! Thalatta!”

The *κάθοδος* through Armenia and hostile satrapies is a study in Heraclian depth: winter marches, hunger, and constant attacks are endured in order to preserve the core—the army as an organized, decision-capable body. Xenophon often commands the rearguard, accepting greater tactical risk to prevent fragmentation and panic. The climactic cry “Θάλαττα! Θάλαττα!” upon sighting the Black Sea signals not just geographic relief but strategic validation: the army has outlasted superior forces by refusing to collapse morally and organizationally. As in Heraclius’ campaigns, survival is achieved by trading

immediate advantage for long-horizon resilience and by sustaining a narrative of eventual homecoming.

## **5.4 Zhou-Enlai Assemblies: Consensus and Persuasion**

The *Anabasis* is filled with assemblies in which Xenophon must persuade skeptical soldiers to accept his proposals, from route choices to engagement rules. Authority is not inherited but continually renegotiated; soldiers can depose generals, and leaders must justify their actions in terms of shared interest and fairness. This practice anticipates Zhou's humanistic pragmatism: multiple perspectives are acknowledged, grievances heard, and decisions framed as mutually beneficial rather than imposed. The result is a form of strategic legitimacy that makes even painful measures (forced marches, strict discipline) sustainable over time.

## **5.5 Gaullist Identity: Greeks in Persia**

The Ten Thousand refuse offers that would integrate them into Persian service as subordinates, insisting on maintaining their Hellenic identity and ultimately seeking employment under Greek commanders instead. Despite hunger and isolation, they do not dissolve into the imperial system they traverse. This stance mirrors de Gaulle's insistence on French autonomy amid superpowers: rank and identity are treated as non-negotiable even when pragmatism would suggest accommodation. The very existence of an intact Greek force returning from the interior of the Persian Empire becomes a demonstration

## CHAPTER 5. HEXARCHIC AXES & THE 10,000

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effect, altering perceptions of Greek and Persian power for decades.

# 6 Xenophontian Paideia: The Seventh Dimension

## 6.1 Leadership as Pedagogy

Modern analyses of the *Anabasis* emphasize that Xenophon presents himself not just as a commander, but as a teacher of leadership and decision-making. He narrates his own doubts, defends contested actions in public speeches, and turns episodes into lessons about courage, discipline, and deliberation. This introduces a seventh dimension to the framework: *institutional paideia*, the capacity to codify, transmit, and refine strategic practices within a group. Where Odysseus's μῆτις is embodied in a single hero, Xenophon's *logos* is diffused through procedures, norms, and shared narratives.

## 6.2 Core Elements of Xenophontic Paideia

The Xenophontic contribution can be summarized in several recurring moves:

- **Information maximization:** convening councils, seeking local guides, and encouraging open speech before decisions.

- **Visible self-sacrifice:** leaders sharing hardship and danger, especially in the vanguard or rearguard.
- **Consensus legitimacy:** binding decisions to the expressed will of the collective.
- **Utilitarian ethics:** justifying coercive measures in terms of overall army welfare.
- **Shame and honor:** using praise and blame strategically to reinforce norms.
- **Adaptive doctrine:** willingness to revise tactics, formations, and alliances as circumstances evolve.

These elements provide the mechanism by which the hexarchic axes become more than a personal style: they become a repertoire that a community can learn, debate, and deploy. The final part of the monograph will integrate Odyssean and Xenophontian modes into a unified schema for modern strategic practice and sketch the mindmap that visually encodes this synthesis.

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**Part IV**

**Integration: From Epic  
Narrative to Modern  
Practice**

# 7 Dual Modes: Individual and Institutional Strategy

## 7.1 Odyssean Metis and Xenophontic Logos

The Odyssean and Xenophontian corpora offer two complementary realizations of the hexarchic framework as presented so far. Odysseus embodies the individual mode of strategy, where  $\mu\eta\tilde{\iota}\varsigma$  allows a single agent to traverse all six axes as circumstances change; Xenophon articulates the institutional mode, where procedures, assemblies, and norms distribute strategic reasoning across many agents.

In the individual mode, decision cycles are compressed: perception, deliberation, and action often occur within a single consciousness and a narrow time window, as in the “Nobody” ruse or the bow contest. In the institutional mode, these stages are expanded and made explicit through councils, speeches, and votes, as in the election of new generals after Tissaphernes’ treachery or the debates over route and winter quarters.

## 7.2 A Comparative Table of Axes and Exemplars

Axis	Modern/Late Antique Exemplar	Odyssean Episode	Xenophontian Episode
Bismarckian: Instrumental Rationality	Bismarck and Heracles calibrating aims to constraints.	Disguise as beggar, patient preparation for assault on suitors.	Post-Cunaxa reassessment of aims, refusal to continue Persian civil war.
Zhou-Enlai: Pragmatism	Zhou Enlai's triangulating diplomacy.	Negotiations with Circe, Calypso, and the Phaeacians.	Army assemblies, persuasion of soldiers and allies.
De Gaulle: Autonomous Grandeur	De Gaulle's insistence on French strategic independence.	Bow contest and recognition via the olive-tree bed.	Refusal to dissolve into Persian service; insistence on Greek identity.
Themistoclean: Informational Asymmetry	Themistocles at Salamis.	"Nobody" before Polyphemus, multiple disguises and false tales.	Persian treachery against generals; subsequent emphasis on transparency and vigilance.
Epaminondean: Tactical Innovation	Epaminondas at Leuctra and the liberation of Messenia.	Trojan Horse and non-heroic modes of victory.	Hollow square, mixed formations, and adaptive tactics in mountain warfare.
Heraclian: Strategic Depth	Heraclius' defense-in-depth and long campaigns.	Decade-long acceptance of detours and losses.	Winter marches, rear-guard actions, and "Θάλαττα! Θάλαττα!" at the Black Sea.

Table 7.1: Axes of the Hexarchic Framework across historical and literary exemplars.

This table makes explicit what the narratives suggest implicitly: the same structural problems recur across epochs, and the same families of response organize successful action. The difference lies not in the logic of strategy but in its medium: heroic, institutional, or state-centric.

# 8 The STRIDE Protocol as Operational Core

## 8.1 From Heuristics to Procedure

The STRIDE protocol—Structural analysis, Triangulation design, Resilience architecture, Information shaping, Doctrinal innovation, Existential autonomy—condenses the six axes into a sequence that can guide contemporary decision-making. Each step corresponds to a question whose neglect historically led to disaster or squandered advantage. The protocol synthesizes insights from classical strategic thought [16] with patterns observed across ancient and modern practitioners, offering a systematic approach to complex decision environments.

1. **Structural Analysis (S):** What is the underlying distribution of power, resources, and constraints? (Bismarck, Heraclius, and the post-Cunaxa Greeks.)
2. **Triangulation Design (T):** How can relationships be arranged to avoid dependency and create room for maneuver? (Zhou’s diplomacy, Odysseus with Circe and the Phaeacians, Xenophon with allies.)
3. **Resilience Architecture (R):** What buffers and narratives allow endurance of shocks? (Heraclius’ campaigns, Odysseus’ detours, Xenophon’s winter marches.)

4. **Information Shaping (I):** What do others believe, and how can those beliefs be ethically or tactically shaped? (Themistocles at Salamis, Polyphemus episode, Persian treachery and Greek countermeasures.)
5. **Doctrinal Innovation (D):** Which taken-for-granted methods should be altered or abandoned? (Epaminondas' tactics, Trojan Horse, Xenophon's hollow square.)
6. **Existential Autonomy (E):** Which domains admit no subordination without loss of identity? (De Gaulle's France, Odysseus' kingship, the Ten Thousand's Hellenic status.)

In practice, STRIDE is not linear but cyclical: new information or shocks may require revisiting structural assumptions or renegotiating triangulations. Odysseus and Xenophon offer concrete demonstrations of such iterative adjustment under pressure.

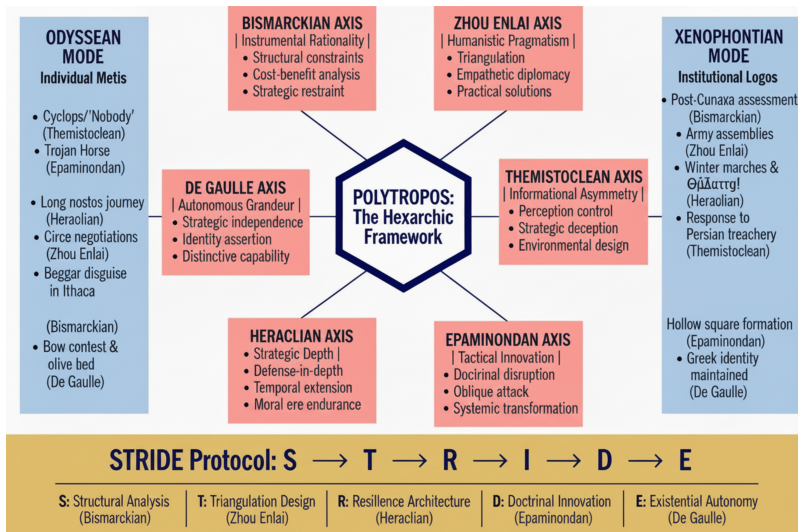
## 8.2 Embedding STRIDE in Organizations

To embed STRIDE into institutional life, Xenophontian *paideia* becomes essential: without shared norms, information flows, and mechanisms of persuasion, the protocol remains a private art rather than a collective capacity. Council structures, transparent justification of decisions, and visible assumption of risk by leaders are not embellishments but the infrastructure that allows STRIDE to function at scale.

The resulting organization behaves, in an abstract sense, like a "polytropos agent": different units or roles may specialize in particular axes, but the whole retains

the ability to pivot as circumstances change. In this way, Odyssean adaptability and Xenophontian pedagogy converge in a single operational doctrine.

# 9 The Mindmap as a Cognitive Instrument



## 9.1 Narrative to Diagram: The Hexarchic Mindmap

The mindmap design associated with this monograph translates a complex narrative synthesis into a single visual schema. At its center lies a hexagon labeled “Polytropos: The Hexarchic Framework,” from which six axes radiate, each corresponding to one strategic dimension and its

associated exemplars.

On one side, an “Odyssean Mode”, the individual  $\mu\tilde{\eta}\tau\iota\varsigma$  cluster anchors the heroic episodes—Cyclops, Trojan Horse, Circe, Ithaca, the bow—showing how a single consciousness can traverse the space. On the other side, a “Xenophontian Mode”, the institutional *logos* cluster groups the Ten Thousand, Cunaxa, the hollow square, assemblies, and “ $\Theta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\alpha\tau\tau\alpha!$ ” as examples of collective reasoning under the same geometric constraints.

## 9.2 Using the Mindmap in Practice

For the practitioner, the mindmap is not merely decorative but diagnostic. Faced with a concrete problem, one can locate the dominant axis or axes (for example, informational asymmetry and doctrinal innovation in a technological disruption), then consult the corresponding historical and literary episodes as analogical reservoirs.

By tracing paths across the diagram—from Structural Analysis through Triangulation to Doctrinal Innovation and Existential Autonomy—leaders can rehearse possible sequences, anticipate failure modes, and ensure that no critical dimension has been neglected. In this way, the monograph and its visual schema aim to restore to contemporary decision-making a lineage that runs from Homer’s halls and Persian battlefields to modern cabinets, boardrooms, and crisis cells.

## Postscript

The figures assembled here—Bismarck [1], Zhou Enlai [3], de Gaulle [5], Themistocles [7], Epaminondas [9], Heraclius [12], Odysseus [13], and Xenophon [14]—did not know they were participating in a shared experiment in strategic reasoning. Yet their stories converge on a small set of questions about power, time, identity, and perception whose answers remain urgently relevant.

If this work succeeds, it will not be because it has discovered a new theory, but because it has made old wisdom operational again: a *manual of style* for decision under pressure, written in the intertwined languages of epic, campaign narrative, and modern analysis.

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**Xenophon** institutionalizes these capacities, transforming solitary *metis* into collective *logos* for the Ten Thousand.

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