

C: Peace and Conflict 446–431 BC

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Peace of 446 BC; the balance of power outlined in the Peace of 446 BC and the relations between Athens and Sparta 2. The role of Corinth and Sparta in the revolt of Samos 3. The events leading up to, and the causes of, the outbreak of war in 431 BC. 	<p>Aristophanes, <i>Acharnians</i> 61–71 (No. 58); 524–539 (No. 99) Plutarch, <i>Pericles</i> 23.1–2 (No. 71); 28.1–3; 30–31 Thucydides, <i>The History of the Peloponnesian War</i> 1.23; 1.33; 1.35; 1.40–41; 1.44; 1.55–58; 1.60–61; 1.66–69; 1.75–77; 1.86–1.88; 1.103; 1.115–1.118; 1.121–122; 1.139–140 5.14; 7.18</p> <p>Chalkis Decree (No. 78)</p>
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TIMELINE: 446-431BC

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446/5	Athenian defeat at Battle of Coronea and loss of Boeotia. Revolts of Megara and Euboea. Chalcis Decree <i>probable date</i> . Spartan invasion of Attica under Pleistoanax; Pericles' 'necessary expenses'. Winter: The Thirty Years Peace : Athens gives up Nisaea, Pegae, Troezen, and Achaea.	Thuc 1.113 p.1-2 Thuc. 1.115. Plut. Per.23.1-2
445	Psammetichus' gift of corn to Athens	
444	Foundation of Thurii.	
443	Ostracism of Thucydides, son of Melesias	Plut Per. 14
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441	Winter: Revolt of Samos ; involvement of Pissuthnes	Thuc 1.115
440	Spring: Surrender of Samos	Plut. Per.28.1-3
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438	Prosecution of Pericles and Pheidias Phormio in Acarnania	Plut. Per 31
437	Pericles' Pontic expedition Athenian colony at Amphipolis	
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435	Quarrel between Corinth and Corcyra over Epidamnus Battle of Leucimme (Corcyrean victory over Corinth)	Thuc 1.24ff
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433	Athenian alliance with Corcyra: Battle of Sybota (inconclusive, but Athenian ships present)	
432	Revolt and siege of Potidaea ?Megarian Decree(s) <i>dates uncertain</i> . End of building work on the acropolis Conference at Sparta	Thuc 1.56ff Aristophanes' <i>Acharnians</i> Plut Per. 30-31
431	Theban attack on Plataea : outbreak of war.	Thuc. II.2 + VII.18

Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War* (Penguin Classics)

(Translated by Rex Warner with notes by M.I. Finley. ISBN-13: 978-0140440393)

Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*

Book 1.23 (Penguin Classics p. 48-9) *Introduction*

Thuc. I 23 The greatest war in the past was the Persian War; yet in this war the decision was reached quickly as result of two naval battles and two battles on land. The Peloponnesian War, on the other hand, not only lasted for a long time, but throughout its course brought with it unprecedented suffering for Hellas. Never before had so many cities been captured and then devastated, whether by foreign armies or by the Hellenic powers themselves (some of these cities, after capture, were resettled with new inhabitants); never had there been so many exiles; never such loss of life – both in the actual warfare and in internal revolutions. Old stories of past prodigies, which had not found much confirmation in recent experience, now became credible. Wide areas, for instance, were affected by violent earth quakes; there were more frequent eclipses of the sun than had ever been recorded before; in various parts of the country there were extensive droughts followed by famine; and there was the plague which did more harm and destroyed more life than almost any other single factor. All these calamities fell together upon the Hellenes after the outbreak of war.

War began when the Athenians and the Peloponnesians broke the Thirty Years Truce¹ which had been made after the capture of Euboea.² As to the reasons why they broke the truce, I propose first to give an account of the causes of complaint which they had against each other and of the specific instances where their interests clashed: this is in order that there should be no doubt in anyone's mind about what led to this great war falling upon the Hellenes. **But the real reason for the war is, in my opinion, most likely to be disguised by such an argument. What made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta.** As for the reasons for breaking the truce and declaring war which were openly expressed by each side, they are as follows.



¹ See textbook p.34-5 for fuller details of this peace.

² 446-5BC

446BC: Spartan invasion of Attica under Pleistoanax

Plutarch, *Perikles* 23.1–2 (LACTOR 1, *The Athenian Empire* No. 71

Pericles' ten talents

Theophrastos of Eresos (c.371–287) succeeded Aristotle as head of the Lyceum in Athens. Some extracts from his work *On Laws* survive from later writers.

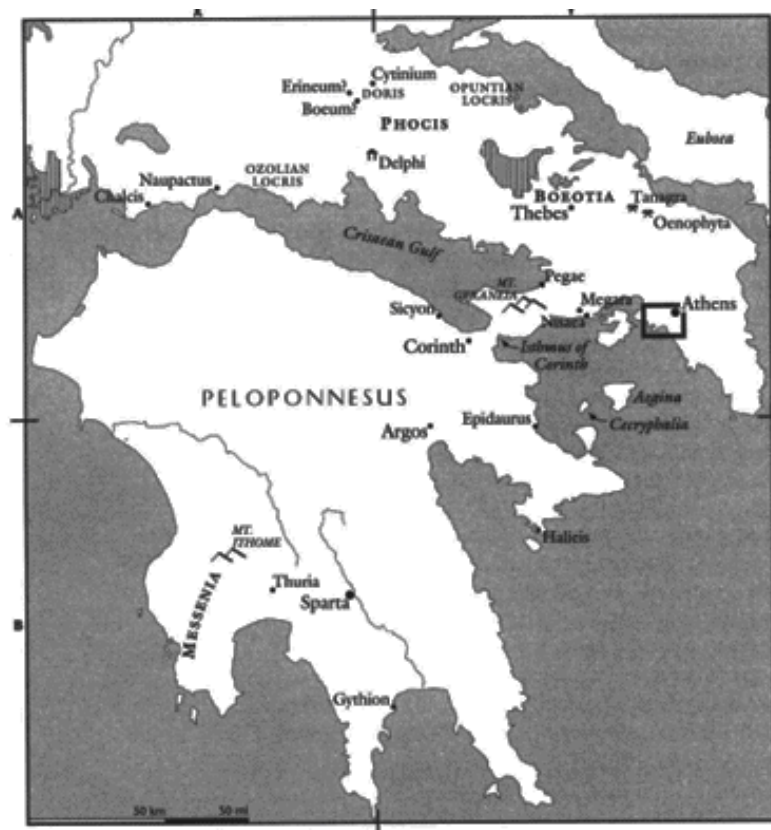
When Perikles included an entry of ten talents 'as was needed' in his account of expenditures from his generalship ^{446/5} the people did not quibble with this or look further into the secret. But some, including the philosopher Theophrastus ^(see above), have stated that Perikles had ten talents sent annually to Sparta and that by looking after the authorities in Sparta in this way he deferred the war, not purchasing peace but time during which he could make preparations quietly and ensure that the Athenians fought better.

Plutarch, *Perikles* 23.1–2 LACTOR 1 71

**Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*
Book 1.115–118 THE PENTECONTAETIA 479–435**

The 30 Years' Truce³

Thuc. I 115 Soon after they had returned from Euboea the Athenians made a thirty years' truce with Sparta and her allies: Athens gave up Nisaea, Pegae, Troezen, and Achaea - all places which they had seized from the Peloponnesians.



³ 'To say that Sparta thus recognised the Athenian empire is to make a point which appears in no ancient source (even Thuc. 1.69). ... Athens had renounced meddling on the mainland, and the freeing of the Megarid and Boeotia had made Attica much more vulnerable to invasion if there was future misbehaviour.' CAH Vol V p.137.

Chalkis Decree (LACTOR 1, *The Athenian Empire* No. 78)

There is no firm date provided by evidence internal to the decree, although Dracontides is quite likely to be the man known to be active in the 430s as an opponent of Pericles and as one of the Generals (stratēgoi) on the second Athenian expedition to Corcyra. The content of the decree presupposes a major disturbance in relations between the Athenians and Chalcis and Eretria and this can only be that of 446-58C.

Two features of the decree deserve special comment: that the oaths involve only the Athenian people, and not the allies; and that (compulsory?) reference to Athens is required in cases involving ex-magistrates. This provision was designed to prevent Athenians supporters being arraigned by enemies at home on trumped-up charges and then excluded from politics by the severity of the penalty imposed. The phrase used near the end '*in accordance with the people's decree*' (line 76) may imply that this rule was being enforced on all allies.

Part of the Athenian decree setting out the oath to be sworn at Eretria survives, and the surviving clauses are exactly parallel to those of the Chalcidian oath.

The Council ^{boulē} and People ^{dēmos} decided. The tribe Antiokhis were prytaneis ^(i.e. the presiding Tribe for the period). Drakontides was President ^{epistatēs}. ***Diognetos made the proposal.***

The Athenian Council and dikasts ^{dikasts} are to swear an oath on the following terms:

'I will not expel Khalkidians ^{= Chalcidians} from Khalkis ^{= Chalcis}, nor will I uproot their city; I will deprive no individual of civic rights nor punish any with exile nor take any prisoner, nor execute, nor confiscate the money of anyone not condemned in court unless that is the decision of the Athenian people;

Whenever I am prytanis, I will not put anything prejudicial to the interests of an individual or the community to the vote without due notice, and any embassy that is sent I will bring before the Council and People within ten days, as far as I can; I will maintain this while the Khalkidians obey the Athenian people.'

An embassy is to come from Khalkis with the commissioners for oaths and administer the oath to the Athenians and list the names of those who have sworn; the generals having responsibility to see that all take the oath.

The Khalkidians are to swear an oath on the following terms:

'I will not revolt from the people of Athens by any means or device whatsoever, neither in word or deed, nor will I obey anyone who does revolt, and if anyone revolts I will denounce him to the Athenians, and I will pay to the Athenians whatever tribute I persuade them to agree, and I will be the best and fairest ally I am able to be and will help and defend the Athenian people, in the event of anyone wronging the Athenian people, and I will obey the Athenian people.'

All the Khalkidians of military age and above are to swear. If anyone does not swear, he is to be deprived of his civic rights and his property is to be confiscated and a tithe ^{1/10th} of it is to be dedicated to Olympian Zeus. An embassy is to go from Athens to Khalkis with the commissioners for oaths and administer the oath in Khalkis and list those of the Khalkidians who have sworn.

Antikles made a proposal.

In the name of good fortune for the Athenians: the Athenians and Khalkidians should make the oath just as the Athenian People voted for the people of Eretria and the Generals ^{stratēgoi} should have responsibility to see that that happens as quickly as possible. The people as soon as possible should choose five men to go to Khalkis to exact the oaths.

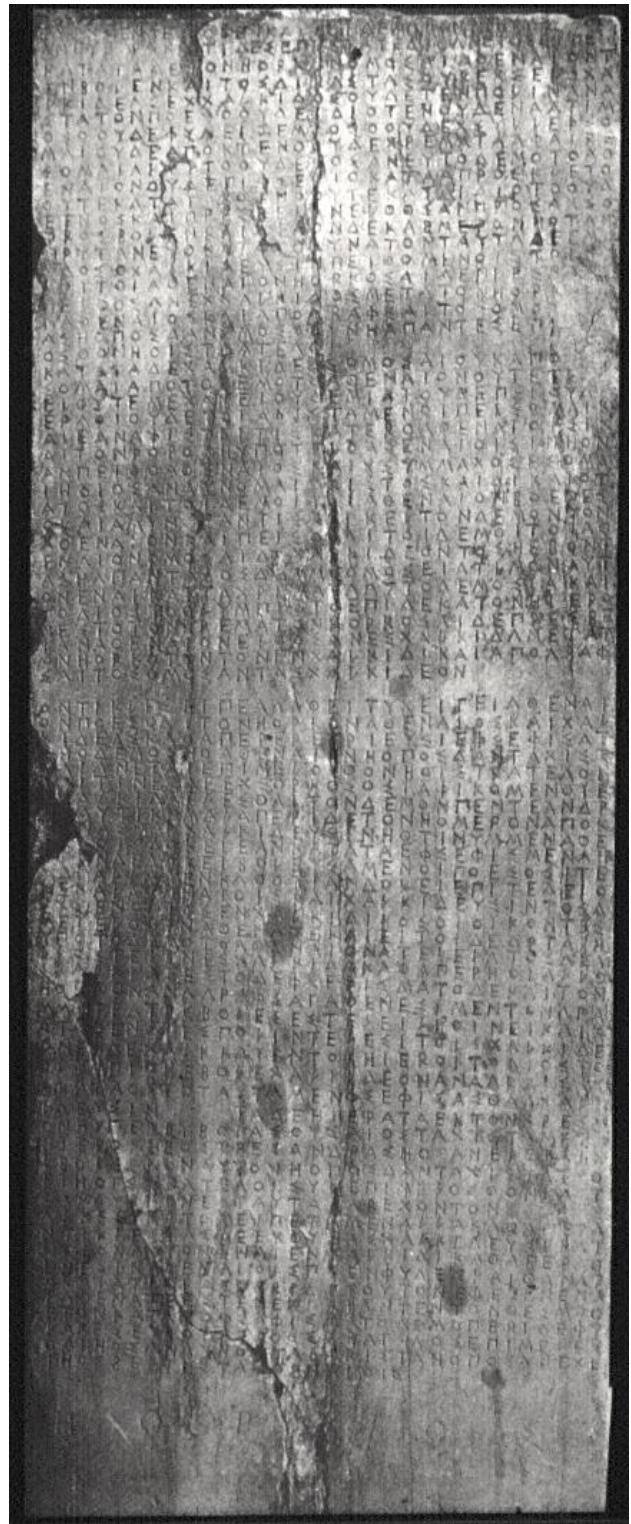
And on the matter of hostages, they should reply to the Khalkidians that for the moment the Athenians have decided to leave the matter as decreed. But whenever they decide, they will deliberate and draw up an agreement (or 'exchange') on conditions which seem suitable for the Athenians and Khalkidians.

The foreigners who live in Khalkis and do not pay taxes to Athens, even if they have been given tax exemption by the Athenian people, should pay taxes in Khalkis along with the rest, just like the other Khalkidians.

The Secretary of the Council is to write up this oath and decree at Athens on a stone stele and set it up on the Akropolis at the expense of the Khalkidians, and let the Council of the Khalkidians write it up and deposit it in the sanctuary of Zeus Olympios at Khalkis.

This is the decree about the Khalkidians.

Three men, chosen by the Council from among their own number, should go with Hierokles as quickly as possible to make the holy sacrifices demanded by the oracle about Euboia. So that this happens as quickly as possible, the Generals ^{stratēgoi} should take responsibility and provide money for it.



Arkhestratos made a proposal.

In other respects I agree with Antikles, but the Khalkidians should themselves subject their officials to scrutiny on Khalkis, just as the Athenians at Athens, except in cases involving exile, execution or loss of civic rights. On these matters there should be reference to Athens to the court of the Thesmothetae in accordance with the people's decree. As to guarding Euboia, the Generals ^{stratēgoi} are to take responsibility for doing that as best they can in the interests of the Athenians.

Oath.

440-439BC The Revolt of Samos

Thuc. 1. 115 In the sixth year of the truce ^{440BC} war broke out between Samos and Miletus over the question of Priene. After having had the worst of the fighting the Milesians came to Athens and lodged violent protests against the Samians. Their cause was supported by various private individuals from Samos itself who wished to set up there a different form of government. **So the Athenians sailed to Samos with forty ships and established a democracy there.** They took fifty boys and fifty men as hostages and kept them in Lemnos. Then, leaving a garrison behind in Samos, they returned home.

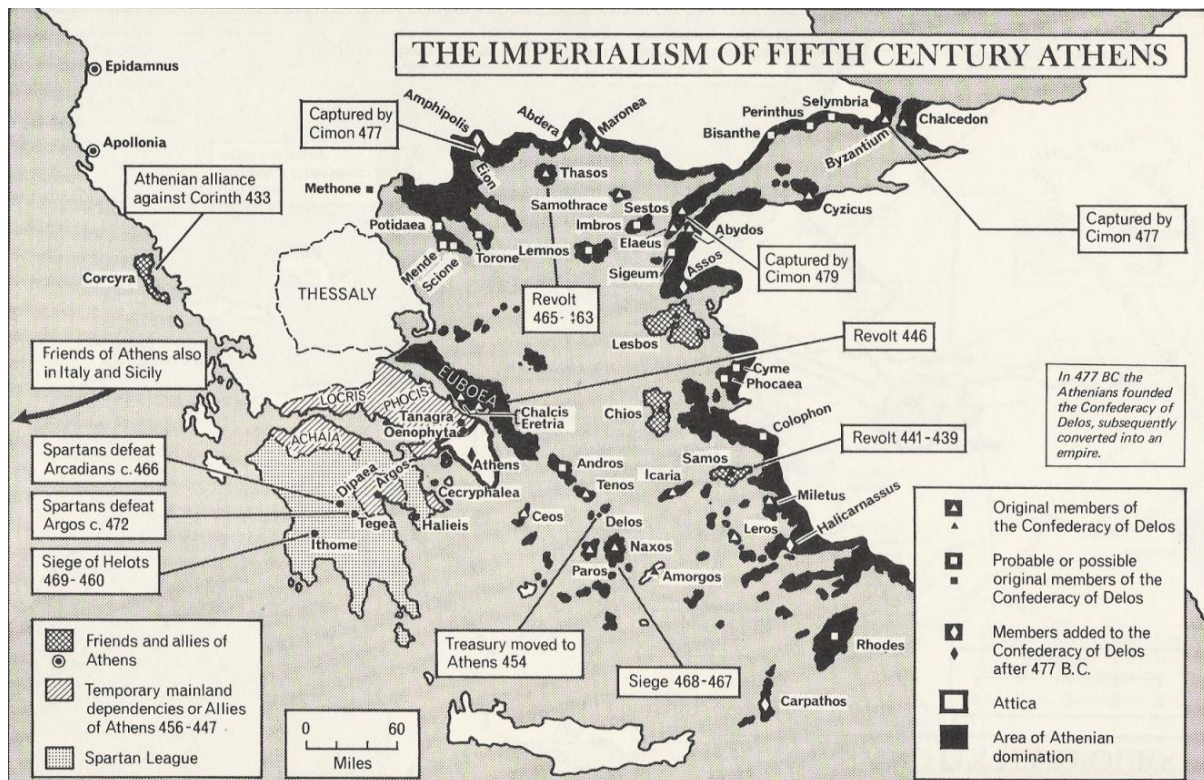
However, some of the Samians, instead of staying on the island, had fled to the mainland. These entered into communications with the leading oligarchs still in the city and also made an alliance with Pissuthnes, the son of Hystaspes, who at that time was the Persian Governor at Sardis. They raised a force of about 700 mercenaries, and passed over into Samos under cover of night. First they made an attack on the democratic party and imprisoned most of the leaders; then they rescued the hostages from Lemnos and declared themselves independent. They handed over to Pissuthnes the troops in the Athenian garrison and the Athenian officials who had been left in Santos, and at once made preparations for an attack on Miletus. At the same time Byzantium joined them in revolting from Athens.

Thuc. I 116 **When the Athenians heard of this they sailed against Samos with a fleet of sixty ships.** Sixteen of these were not brought into action: some had been sent to Caria to watch the movements of the Phoenician fleet; others had gone to Chios and Lesbos with orders to send reinforcements. The remaining forty-four, under the command of Pericles and nine other commanders, fought, off the island of Tragia, with a Samian fleet of seventy ships which was returning from Miletus and included twenty transports. The result was a victory for the Athenians.

Later they were reinforced by forty ships from Athens and twenty-five from Chios and Lesbos. Having landed on the island and established their superiority with their ground forces, they built three walls to blockade the city, which was already blockaded from the sea. Pericles then took sixty ships from the fleet anchored off Samos and sailed away at full speed for Caunus and Caria, since news had arrived that the Phoenician fleet was on its way against them. Stesagoras and others, with five ships, had actually left Samos and gone to enlist the aid of the Phoenicians.

Thuc. I 117 **During Pericles' absence the Samians put out to sea in a surprise attack; they fell upon the Athenian camp, which had not been fortified, destroyed the ships that were posted to keep a look-out, and defeated in battle the other ships that were launched to meet them. So for about fourteen days they controlled the sea round their island and were free to bring in or take out what they wanted.** But when Pericles returned they were once more under naval blockade.

Later the Athenian fleet was reinforced from Athens with forty ships under the command of Thucydides, Hagnon, and Phormio, and twenty more under the command of Tlepolemus and Anticles; also thirty ships from Chios and Lesbos. **The Samians made a brief effort at resistance by sea, but were unable to hold their own and were forced to accept terms of surrender after a nine months' siege: they pulled down their walls, gave hostages, handed over their fleet, and agreed to pay reparations in instalments at regular intervals.** Byzantium also agreed to return to its status of a subject city.



Plutarch, *Life of Pericles* 28.1-3 Lactor 1.89

In the ninth month ^{439BC} the Samians surrendered and Perikles pulled down the walls, took away the ships and inflicted a large fine, part of which the Samians paid immediately, part they were assessed to pay at a stated time, giving hostages as security.

Douris of Samos⁴ writes about this in tragic terms, accusing the Athenians and Perikles of much cruelty not recorded by Thucydides, Ephoros or Aristotle. But it seems unlikely to be true that Perikles brought the Samian trierarchs and marines to the market place in Miletos, tied them to boards for ten days and when they were already in a bad way ordered the Milesians to execute them by bludgeoning their heads and then throw out the bodies without burial. Even when he has no personal links, Douris does not usually control his narrative by reference to truth, and he is very likely here to magnify the misfortunes of his homeland to slander the Athenians.

Plutarch, *Perikles* 28.1-3 LACTOR 1.89

⁴ Douris was a tyrant of Samos who lived and wrote in the early 3rd century BC. He may have had access to some good local information, but Plutarch is not the only source who suggests that Douris was given to sensationalism.

PERICLES – a brief summary

<https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/pericles>

The so-called golden age of Athenian culture flourished under the leadership of Pericles (495-429 B.C.), a brilliant general, orator, patron of the arts and politician - "the first citizen" of democratic Athens, according to the historian Thucydides. Pericles transformed his city's alliances into an empire and graced its Acropolis with the famous Parthenon. His policies and strategies also set the stage for the devastating Peloponnesian War, which would embroil all Greece in the decades following his death.

Pericles: Rise to Power

Pericles was born into one of Athens' leading families. His father Xanthippus was a hero of the Persian War and his mother belonged to the culturally powerful Alcmaeonidae family. He grew up in the company of artists and philosophers—his friends included Protagoras, Zeno and the pioneering Athenian philosopher Anaxagoras. Pericles' earliest recorded act, the financial sponsorship of a play by Aeschylus in 472 B.C., foreshadowed the future leader's wealth, artistic taste and political awareness. The play expressed support for Athens' embattled populist leader Themistocles over Pericles' future arch-rival, the aristocrat Cimon.

Between 463 and 461 Pericles worked to prosecute and eventually ostracize Cimon for allegedly betraying Athens and emerged as the leader of Athens' democratic party. In 454 he led a successful military campaign in Corinth and sponsored the establishment of Athenian colonies in Thrace and on the Black Sea coast. In 443 he was elected strategos (one of Athens' leading generals), a position he held, with one short interruption, for the rest of his life.

The 'Golden Age' of Athens

During the 440s and 430s Pericles tapped the league's treasury to fund vast cultural projects in Athens, most notably a series of structures on the city's hilltop [Acropolis](#): the temple of Athena Nike, the Erechtheum and the towering [Parthenon](#). Built to the highest standards of aesthetics, engineering and mathematics, these white marble structures were decorated with intricate statues and friezes carved by the era's greatest sculptors. Pericles' social innovations were equally important to the era. He worked to democratize the fine arts by subsidizing theatre admission for poorer citizens and enabled civic participation by offering pay for jury duty and other civil service. Pericles maintained close friendships with the leading intellectuals of his time. The playwright Sophocles and the sculptor Phidias were among his friends. Pericles' consort Aspasia, one of the best-known women of ancient Greece, taught rhetoric to the young philosopher [Socrates](#). Pericles himself was a master orator. His speeches and elegies (as recorded and possibly interpreted by [Thucydides](#)) celebrate the greatness of a democratic Athens at its peak.

The Peloponnesian War and the Death of Pericles

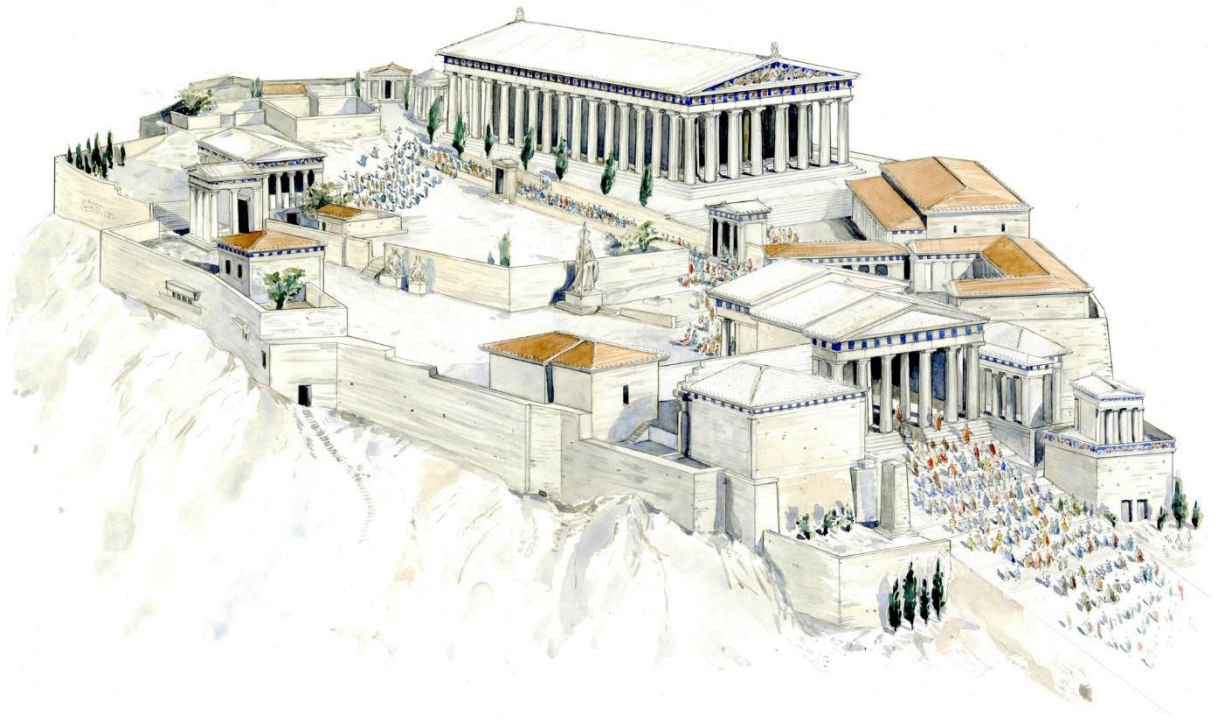
As Athens grew in power under Pericles, [Sparta](#) felt more and more threatened and began to demand concessions from the Athenians. Pericles refused, and in 431 B.C. conflict between Athens and Sparta's ally Corinth pushed the Spartan king Archidamus II to invade Attica near Athens. Pericles adopted a strategy that played to the Athenians' advantage as a naval force by evacuating the Attic countryside to deny the superior Spartan armies anyone to fight. With all his people collected within the walls of Athens, Pericles was free to make opportunistic seaborne attacks on Sparta's allies. This financially costly strategy worked well during the war's early years, but a plague hit the concentrated Athenian population, taking many lives and stirring discontent. Pericles was briefly deposed in 430, but after the Athenians' efforts to negotiate with Sparta failed, he was quickly reinstated.

In 429 Pericles' two legitimate sons died of the plague. A few months later, Pericles himself succumbed. His death was, according to Thucydides, disastrous for Athens. His strategies were quickly abandoned and the leaders who followed lacked Pericles' foresight and forbearance, instead "committing even the conduct of state affairs to the whims of the multitude."



Timeline:	c.495	Birth of Pericles
	484	Ostracism of Pericles' father, Xanthippus (recalled in 480)
	462	Democratic reforms of Ephialtes
	461	Ostracism of Cimon; murder of Ephialtes.
	454	Pericles commands a force in Corinthian gulf. Delian Treasury moved to Athens
	451-50	Return of Cimon, who dies shortly afterwards on expedition to Cyprus
	447	Acropolis Building Programme begins; Pericles fortifies Chersonese.
	446	P's 'necessary expenses' prevent Spartan invasion
	443	Pericles elected general (1 st of 15 times)
	442	Ostracism of Thucydides, son of Melesias
		Pericles as general leads campaigns against Samos (440-439) and in the Black Sea (430s)
	431	Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War
	429	Death of Pericles

All surviving statues and images of Pericles show him wearing a helmet—his rightful symbol as an Athenian general. It also covered his one known physical flaw—his outsize head. Contemporary poets nicknamed him Schinocephalos, "sea onion-head," after a bulbed plant found on the Mediterranean coast.



After winning at Eurymedon during 468 BC, Cimon and Themistocles ordered the reconstruction of the southern and northern walls of the Acropolis. Most of the major temples, including the Parthenon, were rebuilt by order of Pericles during the so-called Golden Age of Athens (460–430 BC). Phidias, an Athenian sculptor, and Ictinus and Callicrates, two famous architects, were responsible for the reconstruction.

During 437BC, Mnesicles started building the Propylaea, a monumental gate at the western end of the Acropolis with Doric columns of Pentelic marble, built partly upon the old propylaea of Peisistratos. These colonnades were almost finished during 432 BC and had two wings, the northern one decorated with paintings by Polygnotus. About the same time, south of the Propylaea, building started on the small Ionic Temple of Athena Nike in Pentelic marble with tetrastyle porches, preserving the essentials of Greek temple design.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acropolis_of_Athens

For more information on Pericles' career and Building Programme See The Depth Study Booklet

Evidence of some diplomatic contact between Athens and Persia in the mid 430s.

Aristophanes (LACTOR 1, *The Athenian Empire* Nos. 58)

Aristophanes (c.445–post-375BC) A comic dramatist who used contemporary politics for much of his material, particularly in his earlier play. His first recorded work is the *Babylonians* 427BC and the latest is *Wealth* 389BC. Eleven of his comedies survive.

The long absence of the Athenian ambassadors sent to Persia **c.437/436BC** to Persia is ridiculed.

Athenian Herald:	The ambassadors from the King!
Dikaiopolis:	What sort of king? I'm fed up with ambassadors and peacock and flattery.
Herald:	Silence.
Dikaiopolis:	Bless me! The shape of Ekbatana!
Ambassador:	You sent us to the Great King, paid at 2 drachmas a day, in the archonship of Euthymenes. <small>i.e. 437/6 BC</small>
Dikaiopolis:	Aaaagh! The cost!
Ambassador:	We were worn out with wandering through the plain of the Kayster, lying on soft cushions, done for.

Aristophanes, *Acharnians* (425BC) 61–71 LACTOR 1.58

Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*

Book 1.33 (Penguin Classics p.55-6) *The Dispute over Corcyra 433BC*

See Textbook p.38 and Thucydides 1.24-32 for the background to this dispute.



Corcyrean representatives are appealing to the Athenians to support them in their ongoing dispute with their mother city Corinth over Epidamnus, a Corcyrean colony.

Thuc. I 33 'If you grant our request, you will find that in many ways it was a good thing that we made it at this particular time. First of all, you will not be helping aggressors, but people who are the victims of aggression. Secondly, we are now in extreme peril, and if you welcome our alliance at this moment you will win our undying gratitude. And then, we are, after you, the greatest naval power in Hellas. You would have paid a lot of money and still have been very grateful to have us on your side. Is it not, then, an extraordinary stroke of good luck for you (and one which will cause heart-burning among your enemies) to have us coming over voluntarily into your camp, giving ourselves up to you without involving you in any dangers or any expense? It is a situation where we, whom you are helping, will be grateful to you, the world in general will admire you for your generosity, and you yourselves will be stronger than you were before. There is scarcely a case in history where all these advantages have been available at the same time, nor has it often happened before that a power looking for an alliance can say to those whose help it asks that it can give as much honour and as much security as it will receive.

'In case of war we should obviously be useful to you, but some of you may think that there is no immediate danger of war. Those who think along those lines are deceiving themselves; they do not see the facts that Sparta is frightened of you and wants war, that Corinth is your enemy and is also influential at Sparta. Corinth has attacked us first in order to attack you afterwards. She has no wish to make enemies of us both at once and find us standing together against her. What she wants is to get an initial advantage over you in one of two ways - either by destroying our power or by forcing us to use it in her interests. But it is our policy to be one move ahead, which is why we want you to accept the alliance which we offer. It is better to have the initiative in these matters – to take our own measures first, rather than be forced to counter the intrigues that are made against us by others.

Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*

Book 1.35 (Penguin Classics p.56-7) *The Dispute over Corcyra 433BC*

Thuc. I 35 'It is not a breach of your treaty with Sparta if you receive us into your alliance. We are neutrals, and it is expressly written down in your treaty that any Hellenic state which is in this condition is free to ally itself with whichever side it chooses. What is really monstrous is a situation where Corinth can find sailors for her ships both from her own allies and from the rest of Hellas, including in particular your own subjects, while we are shut off from a perfectly legitimate alliance, and indeed from getting help from anywhere: and then, on top of that, they will actually accuse you of behaving illegally if you grant our request. In fact it is we who shall have far greater reasons to complain of you if you are not willing to help us; you will be rejecting us, who are no enemies of yours, in the hour of our peril, and as for the others, who are enemies of yours and are also the aggressors, you will not only be doing nothing to stop them, but will actually be allowing them to build up their strength from the resources of your own empire. Is this right? Surely you ought either to stop them from engaging troops from your own subjects, or else to give us, too, whatever assistance you think proper. Best of all would be for you to receive us in open alliance and help us in that way.

'We have already suggested that such a course would be very much in your own interests. Perhaps the greatest advantage to you is that you can entirely depend on us because your enemies are the same as ours, and strong ones, too, quite capable of doing damage to those who revolt from them. And then it is quite a different matter for you if you reject alliance with a naval power than if you do the same thing with a land power. Your aim, no doubt, should be, if it were possible, to prevent anyone else having a navy at all: the next best thing is to have on your side the strongest navy that there is.

Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*

Book 1.40-41 (Penguin Classics p.59-61) *The Dispute over Corcyra 433*

Thuc. I 40 'We have shown, I think, that we have good reasons for complaint, and that the conduct of Corcyra has been both violent and grasping. Next we should like you to understand that it would not be right or just for you to receive them as allies. Though there may be a clause in the treaty stating that any city not included in the original agreement is free to join whichever side it likes, this cannot refer to cases where the object of joining an alliance is to injure other powers; it cannot refer to a case where a city is only looking for security because it is in revolt, and where the result of accepting its alliance, if one looks at the matter dispassionately, will be, not peace, but war. And this is what may well happen to you, if you will not take our advice. You would not only be helping them, but making war on us, who are bound to you by treaty. If you join them in attacking us, we shall be forced to defend ourselves against you as well as against them.

'The right course, surely, is either for you to preserve a strict neutrality or else to join us again them. At least you have treaty obligations towards Corinth, whereas you have never even had a peace treaty with Corcyra. What you ought not to do is to establish a precedent by which a power may receive into its alliance the revolted subjects of another power. At the time when Samos revolted from you and when the Peloponnesian states were divided on the question whether to help them or not, we were not one of those who voted against you; on the contrary, we openly opposed the others and said that every power should have the right to control its own allies. Now, if you are going to welcome and assist people who have done wrong to us, you will find just as many of our own people coming over to our side, and you will be establishing a precedent that is likely to harm you even more than us.

Thuc. I 41 All this we have a perfect right to claim from you by Hellenic law and custom. We should like also to give you some advice and to mention that we have some title to your gratitude. We are not enemies who are going to attack you, and we are not on such friendly terms that such services are quite normal. We say, therefore, that the time has come for you to repay us for what we did for you in the past.

'You were short of warships when you were fighting Aegina, just before the Persian invasion. Corinth then gave you twenty ships. As a result of this act of kindness you were able to conquer Aegina, and as a result of our other good turn to you, when we prevented the Peloponnesian states from helping Samos, you were able to punish that island. And these acts of ours were done at critical periods, periods when people are very apt to turn upon their enemies and disregard every other consideration except victory. At such times people regard even former enemies as their friends, so long as they are on their side, and even genuine friends as their enemies, if they stand in their way; in fact their overmastering desire for victory makes them neglect their own best interests.'

Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*

Book 1.44 (Penguin Classics p.62)

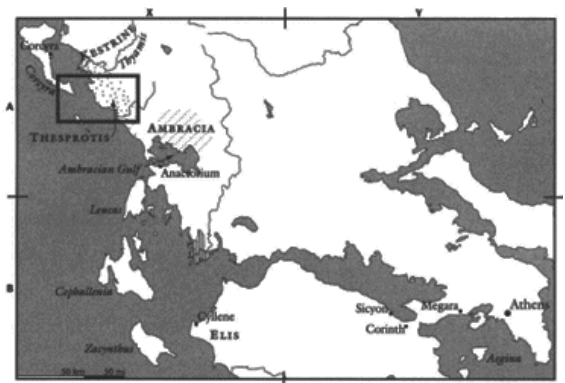
Thuc. I 44 This was the speech of the Corinthian delegation. The Athenians, after listening to both sides, discussed the matter at two assemblies. At the first of these, opinion seemed to incline in favour of the Corinthian arguments, but at the second there was a change, and they decided on entering into some kind of alliance with Corcyra. This was not to be a total alliance involving the two parties in any war which either of them might have on hand; for the Athenians realized that if Corcyra required them to join in an attack on Corinth, that would constitute a breach of their treaty with the Peloponnesians. Instead the alliance was to be of a defensive character and would only operate if Athens or Corcyra or any of their allies were attacked from outside.

The general belief was that, whatever happened, war with the Peloponnesians was bound to come. Athens had no wish to see the strong navy of Corcyra pass into the hands of Corinth. At the same time she was not averse from letting the two Powers weaken each other by fighting together; since in this way, if war did come, Athens herself would be stronger in relation to Corinth and to the other naval Powers. Then, too, it was a fact that Corcyra lay very conveniently on the coastal route to Italy and Sicily.

Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*

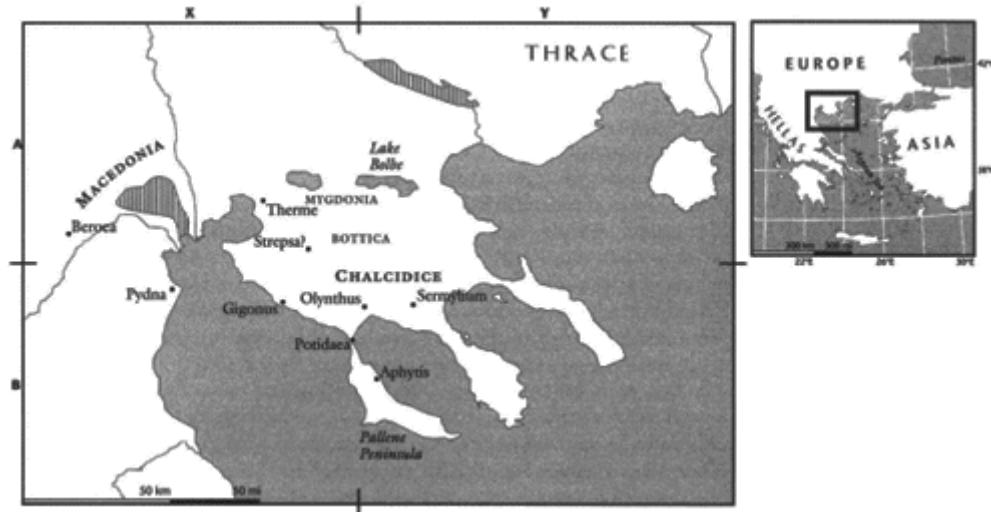
Book 1.55-58 (Penguin Classics p.67-69)

Thuc. I 55 On their voyage home the Corinthians took Anactorium, at the mouth of the Ambracian Gulf. It was a place in which both Corinth and Corcyra had rights and it was given up to the Corinthians by treachery. Before sailing home the Corinthians put settlers of their own into Anactorium. They sold 800 of the Corcyraean prisoners who were slaves, and they kept in captivity 250 whom they treated with great consideration, hoping that a time would come when they would return and win over the island to Corinth. Most of them were in fact people of great power and influence in Corcyra.



So Corcyra remained undefeated in her war with Corinth and the Athenian fleet left the island. **But this gave Corinth her first cause for war against Athens**, the reason being that Athens had fought against her with Corcyra although the peace treaty was still in force.

The Dispute over Potidaea



Thuc. I 56 Almost immediately afterwards it happened that there was another dispute between Athens and the Peloponnese. This also contributed to the breaking out of the war. It concerned the people of Potidaea who live on the isthmus of Pallene, and who, though colonists of Corinth, were allies of Athens in the tribute-paying class. Corinth was searching for means of retaliation against Athens, and Athens had no illusions about the hatred felt for her by Corinth. She therefore made the following demands of Potidaea: they were to pull down the fortifications looking towards Pallene, to send hostages to Athens, to banish their Corinthian magistrates, and in future not to receive those who were sent out annually from Corinth to replace them. These demands were made because Athens feared that, under the influence of Perdiccas and of the Corinthians, Potidaea might be induced to revolt and might draw into the revolt the other allied cities in the Thracian area.

Thuc. I 57 It was directly after the sea battle off Corcyra that the Athenians took these precautions with regard to Potidaea. Corinth was now quite openly hostile, and though Perdiccas, the son of Alexander and King of Macedonia, had in the past been a friend and an ally, he had now been made into an enemy. This had come about because the Athenians had entered into an alliance with his brother Philip and with Derdas, who had joined forces together against Perdiccas. Perdiccas was alarmed by these moves and not only sent his agents to Sparta in order to try to involve Athens in a war with the Peloponnese, but also was approaching Corinth in order to get support for a revolt in Potidaea. He was also in communication with the Chalcidians in Thrace and with the Bottiaeans, and was urging them to revolt at the same time. All these places bordered on his own country, and his idea was that if he had them as his allies, their support would make his own military position easier.

The Athenians knew what he was doing and wished to anticipate the revolt of these cities. They were just on the point of sending out to Macedonia a force of thirty ships and 1,000 hoplites under the command of Archestratus, the son of Lycomedes, with other commanders. Now, these officers were instructed to take hostages from the Potidaeans, to destroy the fortification, and to keep a close watch on the neighbouring cities so as to prevent any movement of revolt.

Thuc. I 58 Meanwhile the Potidaeans had sent representatives to Athens in the hope of persuading the Athenians not to make any alterations in the existing state of affairs. They also sent representatives with the Corinthians to Sparta in order to win support there in case it should be necessary. After long negotiations at Athens nothing valuable was achieved; in spite of all their efforts, the fleet for Macedonia was ordered to sail against them too. The Spartan authorities, however, promised to invade Attica if the Athenians attacked Potidaea. This, then, seemed to the Potidaeans to be the moment: they made common cause with the Chalcidians and the Bottiaeans and revolted from Athens.

Perdiccas, at this point, persuaded the Chalcidians to pull down and abandon their cities on the coast, and to settle inland at Olynthus, making that into one big city. To those who left their homes in this way he offered the use for the duration of the war with Athens of some of his own territory in Mygdonia round Lake Bolbe. The Chalcidians therefore, after destroying their cities, settled inland and prepared for war.



**Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*
Book 1.60-61 (Penguin Classics p.69-70)**

Thuc. I 60 Now that Potidaea had revolted and the thirty Athenian ships were off the coast of Macedonia, the Corinthians feared that the place might be lost and regarded its safety as their own responsibility. They therefore sent out a force of volunteers from Corinth itself and of mercenaries from the rest of the Peloponnese. Altogether this force amounted to 1,600 hoplites and 400 light troops. It was under the command of Aristeus, the son of Adeimantus, who had always been a staunch friend to the people of Potidaea. And it was largely because of his personal popularity that most of the Corinthian volunteers joined the expedition. This force reached Thrace forty days after the revolt of Potidaea.

Thuc. I 61 The Athenians also had received the news immediately after the revolt of the cities. They heard, too, of the reinforcements under Aristeus, and they sent out against the places in revolt an army of 2,000 citizen hoplites and a fleet of forty ships. This force was commanded by Callias, the son of Calliades, with four other commanders. First they arrived at Macedonia, where they found that the original force of 1,000 had just captured Therme and were now besieging Pydna. They therefore joined in the operations against Pydna. The siege lasted for a time, but finally they came to an agreement with Perdiccas and made an alliance with him. They were forced into doing this by the need to hurry on with the campaign at Potidaea and by the arrival there of Aristeus.

Leaving Macedonia, then, they came to Beroea and from there went on to Strepsa. After making an unsuccessful attempt at capturing the place, they marched on by land to Potidaea. They had 3,000 hoplites of their own, apart from a large force of allies and 600 Macedonian cavalry from the army of Philip and Pausanias. The seventy ships sailed with them along the coast. Proceeding by short marches, they reached Gignonus on the third day and camped there.

Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*

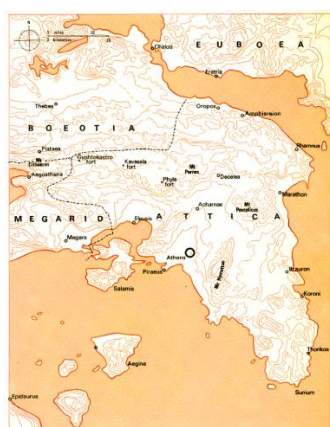
Book 1.66-69 (Penguin Classics p.72-75) *The Dispute over Potidaea 432 and complaints to Sparta.*

Thuc. I 66 Both the Athenians and the Peloponnesians had already grounds of complaint against each other. The grievance of Corinth was that the Athenians were besieging her own colony of Potidaea, with Corinthians and other Peloponnesians in the place: Athens, on the other hand, had her own grievances against the Peloponnesians; they had supported the revolt of a city which was in alliance with her and which paid her tribute, and they had openly joined the Potidaeans in fighting against her. In spite of this, the truce was still in force and war had not yet broken out. What had been done so far had been done on the private initiative of Corinth.

Thuc. I 67 Now, however, Corinth brought matters into the open. Potidaea was under blockade, some of her own citizens were inside, and she feared that the place might be lost. **She therefore immediately urged the allies to send delegates to Sparta.**⁵

There her own delegates violently attacked the Athenians for having broken the truce and committed acts of aggression against the Peloponnese. The people of Aegina were on her side. Out of fear of Athens they had not sent a formal delegation, but behind the scenes they played a considerable part in fomenting war, saying that they had not been given the independence promised to them by the treaty. **The Spartans also issued an invitation to their own allies and to anyone else who claimed to have suffered from Athenian aggression.**

They then held their usual assembly, and gave an opportunity there for delegates to express their views. Many came forward with various complaints. **In particular the delegates from Megara, after mentioning a number of other grievances, pointed out that, contrary to the terms of the treaty, they were excluded from all the ports in the Athenian empire and from the market of Athens itself.**



See Plutarch, Life of Pericles 30-1

⁵ On the procedure see Appendix 1.

The Corinthians were the last to come forward and speak, **having allowed the previous speakers to do their part in hardening Spartan opinion against Athens.** The Corinthian speech was as follows:

Thuc. I 68 'Spartans, what makes you somewhat reluctant to listen to us others, if we have ideas to put forward, is the great trust and confidence which you have in your own constitution and in your own way of life. This is a quality which certainly makes you moderate in your judgements; it is also, perhaps, responsible for a kind of ignorance which you show when you are dealing with foreign affairs. Many times before now we have told you what we were likely to suffer from Athens, and on each occasion, instead of taking to heart what we were telling you, you chose instead to suspect our motives and to consider that we were speaking only about our own grievances. The result has been that you did not call together this meeting of our allies before the damage was done; you waited until now, when we are actually suffering from it. And of all these allies, we have perhaps the best right to speak now, since we have the most serious complaints to make. We have to complain of Athens for her insolent aggression and of Sparta for her neglect of our advice.

'If there were anything doubtful or obscure about this aggression on the whole of Hellas, our task would have been to try to put the facts before you and show you something that you did not know. As it is, long speeches are unnecessary. You can see yourselves how Athens has deprived some states of their freedom and is scheming to do the same thing for others, especially among our own allies, and that she herself has for a long time been preparing for the eventuality of war. Why otherwise should she have forcibly taken over from us the control of Corcyra? Why is she besieging Potidaea? Potidaea is the best possible base for any campaign in Thrace, and Corcyra might have contributed a very large fleet to the Peloponnesian League.

Thuc. I 69 'And it is you who are responsible for all this. It was you who in the first place allowed the Athenians to fortify their city and build the Long Walls after the Persian War. Since then and up to the present day you have withheld freedom not only from those who have been enslaved by Athens but even from your own allies. When one is deprived of one's liberty one is right in blaming not so much the man who puts the fetters on as the one who had the power to prevent him, but did not use it - especially when such a one rejoices in the glorious reputation of having been the liberator of Hellas.

'Even at this stage it has not been easy to arrange this meeting, and even at this meeting there are no definite proposals. Why are we still considering whether aggression has taken place instead of how we can resist it? Men who are capable of real action first make their plans and then go forward without hesitation while their enemies have still not made up their minds. As for the Athenians, we know their methods and how they gradually encroach upon their neighbours. Now they are proceeding slowly because they think that your insensitiveness to the situation enables them to go on their way unnoticed; you will find that they will develop their full strength once they realize that you do see what is happening and are still doing nothing to prevent it.

'You Spartans are the only people in Hellas who wait calmly on events, relying for your defence not on action but on making people think that you will act. You alone do nothing in the early stages to prevent an enemy's expansion; you wait until your enemy has doubled his strength. Certainly you used to have the reputation of being safe and sure enough: now one wonders whether this reputation was deserved. **The Persians, as we know ourselves, came from the ends of the earth and got as far as the Peloponnese before you were able to put a proper force into the field to meet them.**

The Athenians, unlike the Persians, live close to you, yet still you do not appear to notice them; instead of going out to meet them, you prefer to stand still and wait till you are attacked, thus hazarding everything by fighting with opponents who have grown far stronger than they were originally.

'In fact you know that the chief reason for the failure of the Persian invasion was the mistaken policy of the Persians themselves; and you know, too, that there have been many occasions when, if we managed to stand up to Athenian aggression, it was more because of Athenian mistakes than because of any help we got from you. Indeed, we can think of instances already where those who have relied on you and remained unprepared have been ruined by the confidence they placed in you.

'We should not like any of you to think that we are speaking in an unfriendly spirit. We are only remonstrating with you, as is natural when one's friends are making mistakes. Real accusations must be kept for one's enemies who have actually done one harm.'

Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*

Book 1.75-77 (Penguin Classics p.79-81) *The Debate at Sparta and Declaration of War 432BC*

(1.72 There happened to be already in Sparta some Athenian representatives who had come there on other business. When they heard the speeches that had been made they decided that they, too, ought to claim a hearing ... they wanted to make clear how powerful their city was, to remind the elder members of the assembly of facts that were known to them, and to inform the younger ones of matters in which they were ignorant. In this way they hoped to divert the audience from the idea of war and make them incline to let matters rest.)

Speech of the Athenian representatives:

Thuc. I 75 'Surely, Spartans, the courage, the resolution, and the ability which we showed then ought not to be repaid by such immoderate hostility from the Hellenes - especially so far as our empire is concerned. We did not gain this empire by force. It came to us at a time when you were unwilling to fight on to the end against the Persians. At this time our allies came to us of their own accord and begged us to lead them. It was the actual course of events which first compelled us to increase our power to its present extent: fear of Persia was our chief motive, though afterwards we thought, too, of our own honour and our own interest. Finally there came a time when we were surrounded by enemies, when we had already crushed some revolts, when you had lost the friendly feelings that you used to have for us and had turned against us and begun to arouse our suspicion: at this point it was clearly no longer safe for us to risk letting our empire go, especially as any allies that left us would go over to you. And when tremendous dangers are involved no one can be blamed for looking to his own interest.

Thuc. I 76 ' Certainly you Spartans, in your leadership of the Peloponnese, have arranged the affairs of the various states so as to suit yourselves. And if, in the years of which we were speaking, you had gone on taking an active part in the war and had become unpopular , as we did, in the course of exercising your leadership, we have little doubt that you would have been just as hard upon your allies as we were, and that you would have been forced either to govern strongly or to endanger your own security.

'So it is with us. We have done nothing extraordinary, nothing contrary to human nature in accepting an empire when it was offered to us and then in refusing to give it up. Three very powerful motives prevent us from doing so — security, honour, and self-interest. And we

were not the first to act in this way. Far from it. It has always been a rule that the weak should be subject to the strong; and besides, we consider that we are worthy of our power. Up till the present moment you, too, used to think that we were; but now, after calculating your own interest, **you are beginning to talk in terms of right and wrong. Considerations of this kind have never yet turned people aside from the opportunities of aggrandizement offered by superior strength.** Those who really deserve praise are the people who, while human enough to enjoy power, nevertheless pay more attention to justice than they are compelled to do by their situation. Certainly we think that if anyone else was in our position it would soon be evident whether we act with moderation or not. Yet, unreasonably enough, our very consideration for others has brought us more blame than praise.

Thuc. I 77 'For example, in law-suits with our allies arising out of contracts we have put ourselves at a disadvantage, and when we arrange to have such cases tried by impartial courts in Athens, people merely say that we are over-fond of going to law. No one bothers to inquire why this reproach is not made against other imperial Powers, who treat their subjects much more harshly than we do: the fact being, of course, that where force can be used there is no need to bring in the law. Our subjects, on the other hand, are used to being treated as equals; consequently, when they are disappointed in what they think right and suffer even the smallest disadvantage because of a judgement in our courts or because of the power that our empire gives us, they cease to feel grateful to us for all the advantages which we have left to them: indeed, they feel more bitterly over this slight disparity than they would feel if we, from the first, had set the law aside and had openly enriched ourselves at their expense. Under those conditions they would certainly not have disputed the fact that the weak must give in to the strong. People, in fact, seem to feel more strongly about their legal wrongs than about the wrongs inflicted on them by violence. In the first case they think they are being outdone by an equal, in the second case that they are being compelled by a superior. Certainly they put up with much worse sufferings than these when they were under the Persians, but now they think that our government is oppressive. That is natural enough, perhaps, since subject peoples always find the present time most hard to bear. But on one point we are quite certain: if you were to destroy us and to take over our empire, you would soon lose all the goodwill which you have gained because of others being afraid of us — that is, if you are going to stick to those principles of behaviour which you showed before, in the short time when you led Hellas against the Persians. Your own regulated ways of life do not mix well with the ways of others. Also it is a fact that when one of you goes abroad he follows neither his own rules nor those of the rest of Hellas.'

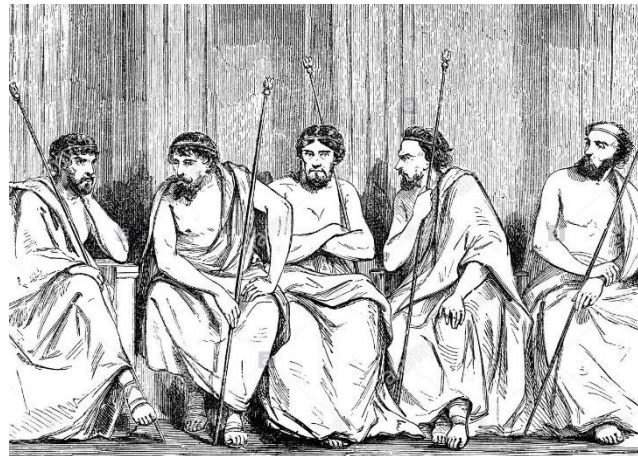
Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*

Book 1.86-88 (Penguin Classics p.86-87) *The Debate at Sparta and Declaration of War 432BC*

(1.85 Archidamus: 'Let us not be hurried, and in one short day's space come to a decision that will so profoundly affect the lives of men and their fortunes, the fates of cities and their national honour. We ought to take time over such a decision. And we, more than others, can afford to take time because we are strong. I advise sending a mission to the Athenians about Potidaea ... this is the right thing to do since the Athenians themselves are prepared to submit to arbitration.'



'After this speech of Archidamus, Sthenelaidas, one of the ephors of that year, came forward to make the final speech which was as follows:)



Thuc. I 86 'I do not understand these long speeches which the Athenians make. Though they said a great deal in praise of themselves, they made no attempt to contradict the fact that they are acting aggressively against our allies and against the Peloponnese. And surely, if it is the fact that they had a good record in the past against the Persians and now have a bad record as regards us, then they deserve to pay double for it, since, though they were once good, they have now turned out bad. We are the same then and now, and if we are sensible, we shall not allow any aggression against our allies and shall not wait before we come to their help. They are no longer waiting before being ill-treated. Others may have a lot of money and ships and horses, but we have good allies, and we ought not to betray them to the Athenians. And this is not a matter to be settled by law-suits and by words: it is not because of words that our own interests are suffering. Instead we should come to the help of our allies quickly and with all our might. And let no one try to tell us that when we are being attacked we should sit down and discuss matters; these long discussions are rather for those who are meditating aggression themselves. Therefore, Spartans, cast your votes for the honour of Sparta and for war! Do not allow the Athenians to grow still stronger! Do not entirely betray your allies! Instead let us, with the help of heaven, go forward to meet the aggressor!'

Thuc. I 87 After this speech he himself i.e. Sthenelaidas, in his capacity of ephor, put the question to the Spartan assembly. They make their decisions by acclamation not by voting, and Sthenelaidas said at first that he could not decide on which side the acclamations were the

louder. This was because **he wanted to make them show their opinions openly and so make them all the more enthusiastic for war.** He therefore said:

‘Spartans, those of you who think that the treaty has been broken and that the Athenians are aggressors, get up and stand on one side. Those who do not think so, stand on the other side,’ and he pointed out to them where they were to stand. They then rose to their feet and separated into two divisions. **The great majority were of the opinion that the treaty had been broken.**

They then summoned their allies to the assembly and told them that they had decided that Athens was acting aggressively, but that they wanted to have all their allies with them when they put the vote, so that, if they decided to make war, it should be done on the basis of a unanimous resolution. Afterwards the allied delegates, having got their own way, re-turned home. Later the Athenian representatives, when they had finished the business for which they had come, also returned. **This decision of the assembly that the treaty had been broken took place in the fourteenth year of the thirty years' truce which was made after the affair of Euboea.**

Thuc. I 88 The Spartans voted that the treaty had been broken and that war should be declared **not so much because they were influenced by the speeches of their allies as because they were afraid of the further growth of Athenian power,** seeing, as they did, that already the greater part of Hellas was under the control of Athens.

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<i>The Pentacontaetia 1.89-117</i>

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Thuc. I 118 It was only a few years later that there took place the events already described - the affair of Corcyra, the affair of Potidaea, and the other occurrences which served as causes for the war between Athens and Sparta. The actions of the Hellenes against each other and against foreign Powers which I have just related all took place in a period of about fifty years between the retreat of Xerxes and the beginning of this present war. **In these years the Athenians made their empire more and more strong, and greatly added to their own power at home. The Spartans, though they saw what was happening, did little or nothing to prevent it, and for most of the time remained inactive, being traditionally slow to go to war, unless they were forced into it,** and also being prevented from taking action by wars in their own territory.

So finally the point was reached when Athenian strength attained a peak plain for all to see and the Athenians began to encroach upon Sparta's allies. It was at this point that Sparta felt the position to be no longer tolerable and decided by starting this present war to employ all her energies in attacking and, if possible, destroying the power of Athens.

Though the Spartans had already decided that the truce had been broken by Athenian aggression, they also sent to Delphi to inquire from the god whether it would be wise for them to go to war. It is said that the god replied that if they fought with all their might, victory would be theirs, and that he himself would be on their side, whether they invoked him or not.

Meeting of the 'Peloponnesian League'

[The Corinthians ('who feared that any further delay might cost them Potidaea'119) are urging the Spartans to commit to war against Athens.]

Thuc. I 121 'Now, on this present occasion it is because we are the victims of aggression and because we have adequate reasons that we are going to war; and once we have made ourselves secure from the Athenians we shall at the proper time return to peace.

There are many reasons why victory should be ours. First, we are superior in numbers and in military experience; secondly, one and all and all together we obey the orders that we receive. As for sea-power, in which they are strong, we shall build ours up both from the existing resources of our alliance and also from the funds in Olympia and in Delphi. If we borrow money from there we shall be able to attract the foreign sailors in the Athenian navy by offering higher rates of pay.⁶ For the power of Athens rests on mercenaries rather than on her own citizens; we, on the other hand, are less likely to be affected in this way, since our strength is in men rather than in money. The chances are that, if they once lose a battle at sea, it will be all over with them. And supposing they do manage to hold out, then that will give us more time in which to improve our own naval tactics, and once our skill is on a level with theirs, there can be little doubt about our superiority so far as courage is concerned. They cannot acquire by education the good qualities that are ours by nature: we, on the other hand, by taking pains can abolish the advantage they hold over us in point of skill. It will require money to carry out these projects, and we will contribute money. What an appalling thing to imagine that, while their allies never stop bringing in contributions to maintain their own slavery, we, whose aims are vengeance and survival, should hesitate to incur expense in order to prevent this very money that we are saving from being taken from us by the Athenians and then used to make us suffer!

Thuc. I 122 'There are also other ways open to us for carrying on the war. We can foster revolts among their allies - and this is the best means of depriving them of the revenues on which their strength depends. Or we can build fortified positions in their country. And there will be other ways and means which no one can foresee at present, since war is certainly not one of those things which follow a fixed pattern; instead it usually makes its own conditions in which one has to adapt oneself to changing situations. So, when one enters upon a war, one will be all the safer for keeping one's self-possession: the side that gets over-excited about it is the most likely side to make mistakes.

'And here is another point to consider. If this was merely a question of boundary disputes between equals and affecting individual states separately, the situation would not be so serious; as it is, we have Athens to fight, and Athens is so much stronger than any single state in our alliance that she is capable of standing up to all of us together. So unless we go to war with her not only in full force but also with every city and every nationality inspired by the same purpose, she will find us divided and will easily subdue us. And let us be sure that defeat, terrible as it may sound, could mean nothing else but total slavery. To the Peloponnese the very mention of such a possibility is shameful, or that so many cities should suffer the oppression of one. If that were to happen, people would say either that we deserved our sufferings or that we were putting up with them through cowardice and showing ourselves much inferior to our fathers; for they brought freedom to the whole of Hellas, while we not

⁶ Pericles replies to this point in I.143 saying, 'Suppose they lay their hands on the money at Delphi or Olympia and try to attract the foreign sailors in our navy by offering higher rates of pay; that would be a serious thing if we were not still able to be a match for them by ourselves and with our resident aliens (metics) serving on board our ships.'

only failed to safeguard our own freedom, but also allowed a dictator state to be set up in Hellas, although in individual states we made it a principle to put down despots. Such a policy, in our view, cannot be held to be exempt from three of the greatest mistakes that can be made - lack of intelligence, lack of resolution, or lack of responsibility. Nor do we imagine that you can escape these imputations by claiming that you feel superior to your enemies. This feeling of superiority has done much harm before now; indeed, from the number of cases where it has proved disastrous it has come to be known as something quite different - not superiority, but plain stupidity.'

The Stories of Pausanias and Themistocles 1.126-138

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Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*

Book 1.139-140 (Penguin Classics p.118-119) *The Spartan Ultimatum and Pericles' reply*

Thuc. I 139 The first embassy of the Spartans was as I have described: they demanded that those under the curse should be driven out, and they received a counter demand from Athens in the same terms. Later they sent another embassy to demand that Athens should abandon the siege of Potidaea and should give Aegina her independence. But the chief point and the one that they made most clear was that war could be avoided if Athens would revoke the Megarian decree which excluded the Megarians from all ports in the Athenian Empire and from the market in Attica itself.

The Athenians would not give in on the first points, nor would they revoke the decree. They accused Megara of cultivating consecrated ground, of cultivating land that did not belong to them, and of giving shelter to slaves who had escaped from Athens.

Finally an embassy arrived with the Spartan ultimatum. The Spartan representatives were Ramphias, Melesippus, and Agesander. They made no reference to any of the usual subjects that had been spoken of before, but said simply: 'Sparta wants peace. Peace is still possible if you will give the Hellenes their freedom.'

The Athenians then held an assembly in order to debate the matter, and decided to look into the whole question once and for all and then to give Sparta her answer. Many speakers came forward and opinions were expressed on both sides, some maintaining that war was necessary and others saying that the Megarian decree should be revoked and should not be allowed to stand in the way of peace. Among the speakers was Pericles, the son of Xanthippus, the leading man of his time among the Athenians and the most powerful both in action and in debate. His advice was as follows:

Pericles' reply to the Spartan Ultimatum 1.140-144

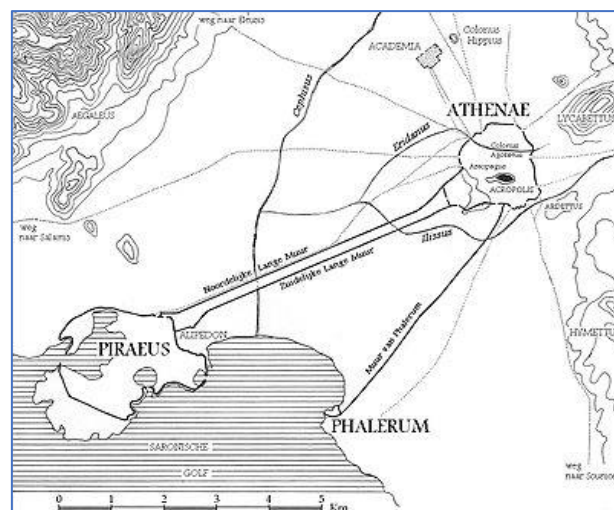
Thuc. I 140 'Athenians,' he said, 'my views are the same as ever: I am against making any concessions to the Peloponnesians, even though I am aware that the enthusiastic state of mind in which people are persuaded to enter upon a war is not retained when it comes to action, and that people's minds are altered by the course of events. Nevertheless I see that on this occasion I must give you exactly the same advice as I have given in the past, and I call upon those of you who are persuaded by my words to give your full support to these resolutions which we are making all together, and to abide by them even if in some respect or other we find ourselves in difficulty; for, unless you do so, you will be able to claim no credit for intelligence when things go well with us. There is often no more logic in the course of events than there is in the plans of men, and this is why we usually blame our luck when things happen in ways that we did not expect.'

'It was evident before that Sparta was plotting against us, and now it is even more evident. It is laid down in the treaty that differences between us should be settled by arbitration, and that, pending arbitration, each side should keep what it has. The Spartans have never once asked for arbitration, nor have they accepted our offers to submit to it. They prefer to settle their complaints by war rather than by peaceful negotiations, and now they come here not even making protests, but trying to give us orders. They tell us to abandon the siege of Potidaea, to give Aegina her independence, and to revoke the Megarian decree. And finally they come to us with a proclamation that we must give the Hellenes their freedom.

'Let none of you think that we should be going to war for a trifle if we refuse to revoke the Megarian decree. It is a point they make much of, and say that war need not take place if we revoke this decree; but, if we do go to war, let there be no kind of suspicion in your hearts that the war was over a small matter. For you this trifle is both the assurance and the proof of your determination. If you give in, you will immediately be confronted with some greater demand, since they will think that you only gave way on this point through fear. But if you take a firm stand you will make it clear to them that they have to treat you properly as equals.'

(1.143-144 See also Plutarch, *Life of Pericles* 32

143: 'Look at it this way. Suppose we were an island, would we not be absolutely secure from attack?'



144: 'For the present I recommend that we send back the Spartan ambassadors with the following answer: that we will give Megara access to our markets and our ports, if at the same time Sparta exempts us and our allies from the operation of her orders for the expulsion of aliens ... ; **that we will give their independence to our allies if they had it at the same time that we made the treaty** and when the Spartans allow their own allies to be independent and to have the kind of government each wants to have rather than the kind of government that suits Spartan interests. **Let us say, too, that we are willing, according to the terms of the treaty, to submit to arbitration, that we shall not start the war, but that we shall resist those who do start it. ...'**

145: This was Pericles' speech. When the Athenians considered that his advice was best and voted as he had asked them to vote. Their reply to the Spartans was the one that he had suggested ... that **they would do nothing under duress, but that they were willing, according to the terms of the treaty, to reach a settlement on the various complaints on a fair and equal basis.** The ambassadors returned to Sparta and no further ambassadors were sent.)

The Megarian Decree c.432BC

Plutarch, *Pericles* 30-31 (Penguin Classics))

29. A succession of embassies was sent to Athens, and Archidamus, the Spartan king, strove to placate his allies and bring about a peaceful settlement of most of their grievances. In fact, it seems likely that the Athenians might have avoided war on any of the other issues, if only they could have been persuaded to lift their embargo against the Megarians and come to terms with them. And since it was Pericles who opposed this solution more strongly than anyone else and urged the people to persist in their hostility towards the Megarians, it was he alone who was held responsible for the war.

It is said that a Spartan mission arrived in Athens to discuss this very subject and that Pericles took refuge in the pretext that there was a law which forbade the tablet on which the Megarian decree was inscribed to be taken down. 'Very well, then,' one of the envoys named Polyalces suggested, 'there is no need to take it down. Just turn its face to the wall!' This was neatly put, but it had no effect on Pericles, who seems to have harboured some private grudge against the Megarians.

However, the charge which he brought against them in public was that they had appropriated for their own profane use the territory of Eleusis, which was consecrated to Demeter and Persephone, and he proposed that a herald should be sent first to them and should then proceed to Sparta to complain of their conduct. Pericles was certainly responsible for this decree, which sets out to justify his action in humane and reasonable terms. But then the herald who was sent, Anthemocritus, met his death at the hands of the Megarians, so it was believed, and thereupon Charinus proposed a decree against them. This laid it down that henceforth Athens should be the irreconcilable and implacable enemy of Megara, that any Megarian setting foot in Attica should be put to death, and that the generals, whenever they took the traditional oath of office, should swear besides this that they would invade the Megarid twice each year, and that Anthemocritus should be buried with honours beside the Thriasian gates, which are now known as the Dipylon.

On their side the Megarians denied that they had murdered Anthemocritus, and threw the blame for the Athenians' actions upon Pericles and Aspasia, quoting those famous and hackneyed lines from Aristophanes' *Acharnians* ^{See LACTOR 1.99 above.}

Some young Athenians in a drunken frolic
Kidnapped Simaetha, the courtesan, from Megara.
The Megarians were furious, primed themselves with garlic
Just like their fighting cocks, then came and stole
Two of Aspasia's girls to get their own back.⁷

31. The real reasons which caused the decree to be passed are extremely hard to discover, but all writers agree in blaming Pericles for the fact that it was not revoked. Some of them, however, say that his firm stand on this point was based on the highest motives combined with a shrewd appreciation of where Athens' best interests lay, since he believed that the demand had been made to test his resistance, and that to have complied would have been regarded simply as an admission of weakness. But there are others who consider that he defied the Spartans out of an aggressive arrogance and a desire to demonstrate his own strength.

⁷ *Acharnians* 524ff.

Aristophanes (LACTOR 1, *The Athenian Empire* Nos. 99)

Aristophanes (c.445-post-375BC) A comic dramatist who used contemporary politics for much of his material, particularly in his earlier play. His first recorded work is the *Babylonians* 427BC and the latest is *Wealth* 389BC. Eleven of his comedies survive.

The causes of the Peloponnesian War are explained in simple terms by Dicaeopolis, an Athenian citizen who is fed up with war. He blames Pericles (and Pericles' lover Aspasia) for the Megarian Decree and its effects.

Dikaiopolis: Some drunken young men from a party went off to Megara and kidnapped a prostitute named Simaitha. Then the Megarians, their anger fuelled with garlic, came and kidnapped two prostitutes belonging to Aspasia in return. **It was as a result that the war broke out for the whole of Greece** – over three prostitutes. It was that that caused angry Olympian Pericles to thunder and lighten and stir Greece up: he made laws that were written like drinking songs and said that **the Megarians should be banned** from the earth, from the Agora, from the sea and from heaven. It was this that made the Megarians, who were dying by inches, ask the Spartans to get the decree repealed – the decree over the prostitutes. But we were not willing, even when they begged us. And it was that that brought about the din of shields.

Aristophanes, *Acharnians* (425BC) 524-539 LACTOR 1.99

The breaking of the 30 Year Treaty

See textbook p.34-5 for fuller details of this peace.

Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*

Book 7.18 (Penguin Classics p.487-488)

Thuc. VII 18 ^{414/3BC} In the first war the Spartans thought that the fault had been more on their side, **partly because the Thebans had entered Plataea in peace time and partly because**, in spite of the provision in the previous treaty that there should be no recourse to arms if arbitration were offered, **they themselves had not accepted the Athenian offer of arbitration**. They therefore thought that there was some justice in the misfortunes they had suffered and took to heart the disaster of Pylos and their other defeats.

Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*

Book 5.14

Thuc. V 14 ^{422BC} The Spartans on their side had found that the war had gone very differently from what they had imagined when **they believed that they could destroy the power of Athens in a few years simply by laying waste her land**.