

# ATHENIAN AMBITIONS & THE DELIAN LEAGUE

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DAVID A. SHEWEY

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The Delian League formed on the bases of defending Greek allied states against the threat of Persian Invasion and soon became a platform for Athenian dominance and empire. Yet the original League itself was based upon an alliance of which Athens was to be the leading member. How then did Athens seemingly take control and become an Empire in such a short period of time? Was the dominance and control of the Delian League a planned strategy from the start or did the nature of the confederacy, coupled with the imperial nature of Athens the reasoning behind her gaining complete control.

An aspect which must be looked at here is the revolts of such city-states as Naxos, Carystus, and Thasos and what that tells us of the nature of the League and if Athens was overstepping her authoritative boundaries. If it was understood that the League was of permanent nature why did revolts take place? Or in turn did Athens by becoming more and more of an empire break the original constitution of the alliance?

Thus the ultimate question is why Athens took control of the league and went so far as to devastate league members who attempts to secede from the alliance. Was this a planned policy of Athens from the beginning or did the Athenians come to be looked upon as an empire out of a snow ball effect? In order to delve into this the nature of the source material will need examining, many of these questions are derived from the problematic source material itself.

We know that the majority of members who had originally provided ships and manpower to Athens by this time had switched over to paying tribute in the form of money. This leads us to believe that the Athenians were deeply interested in whether or not tribute was being paid, and that there was some reason that League members needed to be kept track of by c. 450 BC. Was this the cause of a peace with Persia and the original purpose of the League being fulfilled and thus no longer was the leadership of the League under Athenian rule necessary? Most likely that is exactly what these late tribute lists lead to, a partial if not complete use of tribute for the good of Athens with the cover of the Delian League's guidelines.

The existence of a "permanent function, when the war was over"<sup>1</sup> should be addressed, was the organization one which upon the end of war with Persia to come to an end? The constitution of the League itself led for this to be a permanent confederacy of which Athens was the executive power. The original goals of the league were to make a unified defensive and offensive alliance against Persia, yet the members of the original League certainly knew that the war with Persia would at some point end leading to the next stage of the confederacy known as the Delian League. Or did they feel this way, for

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Meritt, H.T. Wade-Gery, Malcolm McGregor, The Athenian Tribute Lists Vol. III (The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Princeton, New Jersey, 1950) p. 226

their generation the Persian threat was constant, it had never been extinguished and it had never been so repressed as to make any worry of the Persian advancement into the Aegean disappear.

The Peace of Callias must be looked into with great detail, if it existed and Athens had indeed made a pact of peace with the Persians than what were the repercussions of allowing this to be brought to light, was the peace kept secret on purpose? The peace very well could have been a mutual agreement, which benefited Athens in particular. Would this have led to the keeping of tribute lists for the first time in order to keep allied city-states under Athenian rule? Sparta's reaction the Athenians must also be looked into, since it was the Spartan's who originally handed over the leadership role to the Athenians in 479 BC why did they come in conflict with Athens?

The Ambitions of Athens have been of great debate and discussion for generations, the questions which have plagued historians are those which deal with the nature of the sources themselves. The sources which are of both extreme importance and difficult at best to retrieve information from are the works of Thucydides, Aristotle, Aristotle, and the Athenian Tribute Lists. Discussions of these sources gives and has given historians the groundwork for not only a narrative of the Delian League, but the path to much debate on issues which I will cover. The questions of how the league was to last and what was its purpose must be drawn from the works of Thucydides, Aristotle, Diodorus, Plutarch, and Herodotus, along with archeological findings such as the Athenian Tribute Lists. The reliability of the sources is in itself the historiographical dilemma, which faces scholars today. A discussion of these sources must now be brought forth. Countless secondary sources are available in the form of research done by a great

many historians for generations which great discussion and debate arise from. I will use some of these to piece together the Athenian ambitions for the Delian League, which is the basis for this discussion outside of a narrative of the events during the first half of the fifth century BC.

In the *Athenian Politeia* Aristotle speaks of the permanency of the Delian league which is a basis for eventual Athenian dominance and the squelching of any attempts to secede from the alliance. He also writes about the first tributes which were assessed by Aristeides for the payments made to help advance the League's cause against Persia. These payments coincided with the split between the Ionians who now became allied with Athens into the Delian League and thus parted ways with Sparta. The important prospects of using Aristotle's work is not that he was not alive during the time of the Delian League and its foundation, the importance is based upon the fact that these are some of the very few early records of the time. Also it must be said that there is debate upon the authenticity of many of his works and this is an argument that one or more of his pupils may be authors of works attributed to him.<sup>2</sup> Either way it was written by those who had a working knowledge of a not too distant past and had access to the thoughts of the time as well as historical work which has long since been lost and forgotten. The *Athenian Politeia* gives us a look into the original constitution of the League and the arrangements made between the Aegean Greeks.

*Accordingly it was also Aristeides who assessed the first tribute contribution from the cities in the third year after the Naval Battle at Salamis, in the archonship of Tomosthenes (478/7), and he swore the oaths to the Ionians that they would have*

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<sup>2</sup> Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, The Oxford Classical Dictionary: The Ultimate reference Work On the Classical World (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). 203

*the same enemies and the same friends (as the Athenians), upon which they also threw the lumps of iron into the sea.*<sup>3</sup>

Aristotle

This idea of the same friends and enemies reaches to the extent of the alliance and possibly alludes to a permanency of the League. By the sinking of the metal lumps, Aristotle is referring to the ritual of sinking iron bars off the Aegean coast, and that until they resurface the oath was binding, thus making it a permanent alliance. The end of aggression with Persia is something which seemingly must have been seen as a distinct possibility after the victories in 478 BC, thus the original permanency of the league probably was left to two attractions from the allies of Athens towards her. One was that the blooming new democratic government of the Athenians was looked upon with grand affection by the other Ionian Greek city-states and two was the safety against others that came from the mighty naval power of Athens.

The major source which is the basis for any study of the time period are the works of Thucydides who's *History of the Peloponnesian War* gives valuable material time and time again. Yet though he covers many topics which need covering his work must be looked upon for what it was. Thucydides was not attempting to write a narrative on the Delian League, he was in fact attempting to come to terms with the causes of the war between Athens and Sparta. But Thucydides does manage to bring forth the most complete summary of the terms for the Constitution of the Delian League.

*“The Athenians then settled which cities were to provide money for the war against Persia and which were to supply ships; the announced intention was to compensate themselves for their losses, by ravaging the Persian King's territory.*

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<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, Athenian Politeia 23.5

*It was at this time that the Athenians first established the office of the Hellenotamiae (Treasurer of the Greeks), who received the tribute; for he tribute was the name given to the contributions in money. The amount of tribute first assessed was 460 talents. Their treasury was at Delos and their meetings took place at the temple there.*

*At first they were the leaders of autonomous allies, who reached their decisions in general meetings (synodoi).’’<sup>4</sup>*

### Thucydides

Thucydides does not mention the nature of the permanency of the league, as he is not writing to convey the history of the first fifty years of the Delian League. It is by the words of Aristotle that we come to the conclusion that the league was to be permanent; this brings forth a clearer picture on the problematic source material.

Thucydides brought forth reasoning for the Peloponnesian War which pitted Sparta against Athens and his reasoning was the use of the example of the Athenians subjecting their own allies to empirical rule and thus frightening the Spartans to war. He was not addressing whether or not the league was predetermined or not. Thus we must look at the problematic source material. Of the primary sources we have, Thucydides is of the most useful he alone wrote an account which highlighted the first fifty years or the “seisactheia” of the Delian League. Thucydides was not interested in the fine points of the alliance of the Greek city-states of the Aegean; he was writing a narrative on the Peloponnesian War and the reasons for which Athens instigated (in his view) the war with Sparta. Thucydides, not out of neglect, does not concern himself with “what had

little bearing on the future”.<sup>5</sup> In fact with Thucydides silence on the issue of other expeditions against Persia we must look to another significant source. That of Herodotus, who brings light upon the subject of expeditions against the Persians:

*Persian governors had held posts in Thrace and on the Hellespont before Xerxes' expedition, but in the years which succeeded it all of them except the governor of Doriscus were driven out by the Greeks.*<sup>6</sup>

Herodotus

As the Athenians ejected the Persian threat, and brought forth swift punishment on any ally who attempted to secede many city-states switched from building ships and sending men to paying tribute only. This action of allies turning from suppliers of war material and manpower to tribute paying had a two-fold consequence, which Thucydides addresses:

*Consequently the Athenian fleet grew stronger while the Athenian fleet grew strong with the money which the allies themselves contributed, while whenever the allies revolted they were ill-prepared and inexperienced for war.*

Thucydides 1.100.2

Thus while Athens grew stronger her allies naturally grew weaker and the point must be made that there is a case to say that this is no fault of Athens and the burden must be placed in the hands of the allies. As a consequence of only paying tribute it is clear that the voice of any such ally would be weak considering they were not placing their

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<sup>4</sup> Thucydides 1.96-7.1

<sup>5</sup> R. Meiggs, The Athenian Empire (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1972)



people in harm's way. Yet clearly the attack upon Thasos was different than that of Naxos. Under the shield of suppressing a revolt the Athenians were clearly at this point invading an ally to accumulate the spoils of victory, they wanted the mines and the timber region for their own and would accomplish this feat no matter what the allies felt. The Athenians in c.464 with their invasion of Thasos brought great oral wrath from the ancient historians as well:

*The Athenians' power was increasing considerably, and they no longer treated their allies fairly as they had done before but ruled them violently and overbearingly. Thus the majority of the allies, unable to endure their oppression, discussed among themselves revolt, and some scorned the general council and made private arrangements.*

Diodorus 11.70.3-4

The Fifth Century BC contains possibly the most important set of events for the Greeks and the Athenians in particular. A mighty battle was being waged with the Persian Empire, which would take the full attention and concentration of the whole of Greece for the better part of the first half of the century. By the year 478 BC, the Persians had been driven back by the Spartan led forces of Pausanias, at this point the Spartans, in an attempt to spare themselves of the responsibility of expending more soldiers coupled with the worry of even more of their commanders conspiring with the Persians withdrew their leadership. As it was, the Athenians were hurtled to the forefront of Greek leadership against the Persians. The Athenians were brought forth as the most

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<sup>6</sup> Herodotus. Vii. 106; p.450

capable naval power of the time and with worried maritime city-states scattered throughout the Greek homeland a naval power was needed to bring security.

After 480 BC and the Greek victory over the Persians led by Pausanias the Spartans left the Greeks in order to return to Sparta and spare themselves of further casualties. The Spartans also wanted to pull back their forces in order to be able to repel the constant Helot revolts, which could conceivably devastate Sparta. This threat made any “prolonged overseas operations difficult to maintain”.<sup>7</sup> The Spartans by moving back in essence gave control over the threat to the Athenians and controlled the ongoing Peloponnesian League, which was made up of mostly land-based city-states, which needed no defense against the Persian fleets. Pausanias also began to annoy the Ionian states with his arrogance and thus they came to the Athenians for protection.<sup>8</sup> The Athenians (with their grand new fleet, which was the greatest in Greece) were the natural choice for leadership in the battle of the Aegean as well. With the fleet they had the best chance to restore Greek control of the seas and defend the island city-states from Persian attack. These were also city-states, which were located mostly on the western front of Greece and had no contact with the Aegean Sea.

Athens led the Delian League from the beginning, though at its founding the treasury was located on the island of Delos, where the second greatest Temple to Apollo was located, and each state in the league had an equal vote. The assessment due from each state was assigned by Aristedes “The Just”, leader of the Athenians; some members were assessed ships, others money. The city-states leaders brought forth their assessment

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas R. Martin, Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times (Yale University Press, 1996) 106

<sup>8</sup> Thucydides 1.95.2-7; p. 91

of what was needed for the league to Delos. The league was centralized for its first twenty-five years on Delos but as we shall see with much critique its base was brought to Athens. The Delian League as it is known to historians today lasted from the end of the Persian Wars circa 478 BC until the end of the Peloponnesian War in the year 404 BC. Though the league lasted for some three-quarters of a century, it is the erosion of the balance of power within the league, which is the course of much debate.

By law of Aristedes, the larger and wealthier city-states, and especially those who were islands were to provide the warships and crews, while the smaller and in some cases less wealthy were responsible for the tribute we have already addressed. A quick definition of what is meant by tribute is needed here; it is simply the “name given to contributions in money”<sup>9</sup> instead of warships and men. These tributes were combined and used to pay for the building of the triremes and crews who manned them from Athens. For clarification, I will use the correct terminology of “trireme” more often; the warships which were the most common were called trireme. These were three tiered ships, which could accommodate many more rowers than the standard vessels, they also were crewed by a small regiment of hoplites (Greek soldiers), and officers. The treasury for the alliance was placed at Delos where the sacred temple to Apollo was located, and this was also where the general meeting took place amongst the alliance’s members, thus giving us the modern day terms for the alliance “the Delian League”.

Some 200 city-states were brought into the alliance by the mid fifth century BC and all for one common and very important reason, protection from the Athenians, who controlled the naval yards and thus were the only guard against the Persians. These city-states were all to provide naval warships known as trireme which were both swift and

heavily armed and for which the Persians had no answer for time and time again. Along with the trireme they were also to provide crews for them which numbered around 200 in all including oarsmen, officers, and hoplites. Those allies which could not afford to or would rather not take the time to build the ships and send the men to crew them were chosen to send an annual tribute paid in silver to pay for Athens to build them and pay Athenian crews' wages.

The league was originally considered a success (and should be thought of as a long term success) as the Persian threat was for the most part subdued, yet the league maintained its strength for the better part of the first half of the fifth century BC. The issue, which began to deteriorate the league and drive a wedge between Athens and some of the more prominent allies, was of the issue of control. Many historians have depicted Athens eventual control of the league and the way in which they maintained their superiority of it and its other members as one of an "increasing arrogance and authoritarianism towards its subject allies".<sup>10</sup> Though a greater and more detailed study of what happened to give Athens such a controlling grasp on the league and what would be looked upon as an imperial hold as well, is worth a look.

Now under Athenian leadership, the Greek alliance took on a permanent structure, where "member states swore a solemn oath never to desert the coalition"<sup>11</sup>. Members of the Delian League were supposed to make decisions in a democratic fashion but truly the Athenian leadership steered the decision making process from the outset. According to Thucydides the Athenians used control of the league to both defend against the Persians

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<sup>9</sup> Thucydides 1.96; p.92

<sup>10</sup> David Sacks, Oxford History of the Ancient Greek World (Oxford University Press, 1995) 77

<sup>11</sup> Thomas R. Martin, Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times (Yale University Press, 1996) 106

and against the Peloponnesian powers. “Some of these actions were against the Persians, some against their own allies when they revolted, some against the Peloponnesian on various occasions when they became involved.”<sup>12</sup>

The question now turns to whether or not the Delian League was efficient by both Athenian goals and the goals of the original alliance. Were the initial goals of the alliance met or were they not successful, this would rely on the point of view from the historical perspective yet we must look into each with great detail. Did the Athenians use the alliance to gain a stronghold both politically and militarily in the non-Peloponnesian Greek world? Two suppressed revolts give us prime examples of the nature of the Athenian control of the league as well as any agenda they may have had. We will further examine how the position of Athens changed and the causes for its change in two mindsets. These two mindsets revolve around a differing set of views towards Athens’ role in the league and eventual dominance. First, did they intend from the outset to gain the control of the alliance and thus gain through any means necessary the control of the region for the betterment of Athens alone or second, did the circumstances of their strength lead to their eventual dominance and imperial appearance?

The original purpose of the alliance will now be analyzed in order to bring about a background to Athenian and allied decision making during the fifth century BC. The Delian League was originated to take on the naval war against the Persians, barbarians, and any other anti-Greek states, which came in contact with the Hellenic world. This also included pirates who navigated the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas. Any future campaigns against enemies of the allies would require a leader “who could conduct a

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<sup>12</sup> Thucydides 1:97; p.92

vigorous, naval offensive and one who was sympathetic towards the Ionians”<sup>13</sup>. The

Athenians met all of these requirements and thus led the League.

The next issue that comes about which brings several questions as to the domination of the League and the transformation of Athens into the Athenian Empire, is what came after the massive allied victory at the Battle of Eurymedon c. 469 BC? This was a grand victory for the allies in Pamphylia, which knocked out the Persian threat from the Aegean in a single day. Two battles were waged, one on the river and one on land. Nearly the Athenian navy wiped out two hundred Persian ships and then led by Cimon, the allied forces stormed the Persians by land and destroyed the Persian army located in their camp.

Thucydides writes of the battle:

*After this there occurred two battles at the river Eurymedon in Pamphylia, fought on land and at sea by the Athenians and their allies against the Persians; and the Athenians, under the command of Cimon, son of Miltiados, won both battles on the same day. They captured and destroyed 200 Phoenician triremes in all.*

Thucydides 1.100.1

The significance of this battle is not in the victory itself but it is that essentially the Persian threat has been eliminated from the Aegean. This alludes to the original aims of the alliance being met, at least to a vast extent, yet the argument persists, because there was an element of permanency to the original constitution which cannot be overlooked. This would explain Athenian suppression of would be secessions from fellow allies. Yet

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<sup>13</sup>Terry Buckley, Aspects of Greek History 750-323 BC: A Source-based Approach 189-190

clearly the fellow allies viewed this differently as they wished to end their involvement with Athens as underlings for what would be viewed as suppression from autonomy.

First the revolt of Naxos must be examined for reasoning and the Athenian response. Was the Athenian response appropriate, and was it motivated by following through on the oath and if so why did Naxos fail to continue with the alliance?

The problem which was at the center of the revolt of Naxos was that of the right of secession, was there a matter of right for those no longer wishing to pay tribute for what they felt was an unnecessary cause to exit the Delian League? According to the original oath and laws set forth there was no course of action that would lead to an accepted exit from the alliance. So when the people of Naxos decided to no longer pay the tribute they were held as enemies to Athens and the alliance. The people of Naxos felt that they were in fact paying a tribute to a league, which was merely “Athens in disguise”<sup>14</sup> with no further threat coming from Persia. The Athenian reply to this was to consider it a secession and a revolt thereby crushing it and imposing new taxes on the Naxians. The Athenian stance on the matter of secession was sensible enough, if there was no alliance for the Aegean city-states and those prone to attack by sea the “Persian menace would very soon revive”<sup>15</sup> and thus have no problem succeeding in invading and conquering Greece. Also, in the view of the Athenians, why should allied states be able to reap the benefits of the alliance and not pay for them?

The Naxos revolt was dealt with by the Athenians conquering the people of the island and ended with the city walls being torn down and a major portion of the

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<sup>14</sup>H.D.F. Kitto, The Greeks: A study of the character and history of an ancient civilization and of the people who created it (Penguin Books, 1952) 118

<sup>15</sup>H.D.F. Kitto, The Greeks: A study of the character and history of an ancient civilization and of the people who created it (Penguin Books, 1952) 118

population being enslaved. Most important though was the sanction of the city-state's right to vote in the alliance's affairs being stripped and thus ending the democratic process for which the league was noted for from the beginning. The issue of the Naxian revolt was as it goes just one of many such revolts which were brought to restitution in the eyes of the Athenians who saw them as incomprehensible as well as an act of treachery. To turn away from the Delian League was in essence to turn towards the side of the Persians, and in fact some of these very city-states were the very places which abruptly took the side of the Persians in the early fifth century BC upon the Persian invasion. So it is conceivable that the Athenians took this as treachery and if the Persians were to enter the region again the Athenians and the rest of the loyal allies would not be able to allow their fellow Greeks the possibility of allying themselves with the Persians again.

The way in which Athens handled these revolts was harsh and in most cases ended the independence of the city-states, which had attempted secession. Though they in essence appeared to be the suppressers of city-states who longed to break away and spare themselves from sending men, money, or ships to Athens, the Athenians in their defense also could be deemed the protectors of these city-states and their well being. In many cases these city-states could be seen as reckless and not acting in the best interest of the future of the region. This sparked the Athenians to have to maintain a strict grip on the creed of the alliance and to enforce its laws. Athens herself had sacrificed the most manpower and equipment to the pursuit of the goals of the alliance and thus took the lead in dictating the terms of the league. Thucydides leads the discussion of the Athenian control developing out of necessity and the natural dominance of the people who had the



most at stake in such an alliance. Along with the problems which would become inevitable when one of these city-states would spend years giving the tribute and not preparing for battle themselves leaving them vulnerable to Athenian suppression if and when they attempted to leave the alliance.

“Of all the causes of defection, that connected with arrears of tribute and vessels, and with failure of service, was the chief; for the Athenians were very severe and exacting, and made themselves offensive by applying the screw of necessity to men who were not used to and in fact not disposed for any continuous labor. In some other respects the Athenians were not the old popular rulers they had been at first; and if they had more than their fair share of service, it was correspondingly easy for them to reduce any that tried to leave the confederacy. For this the allies had themselves to blame, the wish to get off service making most of them arrange to pay their share of the expense in money instead of in ships, and so to avoid having to leave their homes. Thus while Athens was increasing her navy with the funds they contributed, a revolt always found them without resources or experience for war.”<sup>16</sup>

About 465 BC another revolt from an allied city-state broke out, yet this was far different than the secession inspired revolts of other regions. The revolt of Thasos was primarily a land dispute between Athens and Thasos or it looked as such from the outside. After a dispute with Athens over the control of the gold mines on the adjacent mainland of Thrace, Thasos decided to secede from the Delian League altogether. This was an instance where the desire to pull out of the alliance was not caused by financial reasoning or the lack of a Persian threat but over territory. Thasos had long been a reluctant ally and for the most part had seen no need to continue to argue with Athens and

the league over control of the mines, instead they looked to separate themselves and thus find autonomy. Control over the mines had been a long-standing rite of Thasos, and along with a rich timber industry and a renowned school sculpture the Thasians had also formed a democracy after entering the Delian League.

The dispute not only centered around control of the mines but it also seems as though the Athenians had been interfering in the affairs of the mines and wanted to colonize the region around the foot of Mount Pangaeus for some time. Athens viewed the Thasians reluctance to give them the rights to the mines as a revolt and from 465 to 463 BC they besieged the capital city. Once again after the prolonged siege ended in favor of the Athenian might and the name of the alliance the people of Thasos were forced to tear down the city walls, give up power of their naval capacity, and “pay enormous tribute and fines”<sup>17</sup> for their revolt.

In the eyes of the Thasians this must have been a complete invasion and an act by the Athenians which went against the original intent of the alliance. They were being dictated to and invaded by a fellow member. But for the Athenians this was yet another situation which according to the rules of the oath, which was sworn, was seen as revolting against the alliance. According to Thucydides the Thasians went so far as to call on the Spartans for help against the Athenians and their allies. Sparta and their king had agreed to take up the venture of protecting Thasos but helot revolts by invading Attica and an earthquake kept them away. The Athenians also used allied support in this suppression and subsequent colonization of the region in dispute was seen as an assurance that the allies would control the region for the protection of the league.

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<sup>16</sup> Thucydides. *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1:99

On the exterior the revolt of Thasos appears to be a matter of two differing opinions. Was Thasos in control of the mines on the mainland adjacent from them and thus in the right, and being so affected by Athenian involvement did they have the right to separate themselves from the Athenian controlled alliance? Or, by contrast did the alliance under Athenian leadership have the right to the mines and as well the right, once again, to squash any revolt of dissatisfied members? The answer is mixed in interpretation, but for the members who became dissatisfied with the direction of the Delian League and how it steered from its original mission they still had managed to fall under the protection of Athens and the alliance for years.

Still the question of how much of this rivalry was in fact in existence because the Thasians had been used to a good economic grip on their region and were now competing with Athens themselves. Coinage reflects the growth in Athenian coins from the region during this period and the diminishment of Thasian coinage. Also just how much of a tribute was levied upon Thasos after the revolt was suppressed could be an indicator that either Athens did not want to thrust too much of its power into the region in order to stay within the boundaries of the league or that the revolt was that of a smaller group of peoples within Thasos.

The alliance did not always take action upon Persian controlled regions which sheds some light upon the fact that the league was not only intended to take action against the mighty Persian Empire but it was intended to take ventures that would benefit the Delian League members. The third recorded action of the Delian League under Athenian leadership was the conquering of Carystus. Located on the island of Euboea, the

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<sup>17</sup>Thomas R Martin. *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times* (Yale University Press, 1996) 107

Carystians were fellow Greeks who were reaping the benefits of the protection of the League without paying their dues.

*They fought a war against the Carystians, who were not supported by other Euboeans, and in time Carystus surrendered on terms.*<sup>18</sup>

Thucydides

This was not the first time the Delian League had campaigned against fellow Greeks, In order to rid the Aegean of a pirating outpost the campaign against Scyros occurred. This “notorious pirate base”<sup>19</sup> saw an end at the hands of the Athenian fleet and was then settled by the Athenians. This earlier campaign brought forth signs of an ever-growing Athenian naval presence in the region and under the guidelines of the Delian League she began to take on opportunistic campaigns for the betterment of not only the allies but for Athens herself. The removal of piracy helped the league members, many of whom were islands, in keeping safe and profitable trade lines open.<sup>20</sup> This policing action of the Athenians was probably well supported even though it had nothing to do with the Persians.

The question now stands as to the effectiveness of the alliance in meeting its original goals in of nominal importance. The obviousness of the effectiveness is in the fact that the Persians were no longer a threat until much later after the Peloponnesian War of the late fifth century BC. The Greeks not only took back the lands in the mainland

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<sup>18</sup> Thucydides 1.98.9; p. 93

<sup>19</sup> R. Meiggs, The Athenian Empire (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1972) 69

which were conquered by the Persians but they recovered the islands of the Aegean and went on campaign against the Persians elsewhere as well. The question here is not of the success which is easy to see but of the long-standing success of the alliance in Greek affairs, and the Athenian role in the alliance as its principal member. Also, is it fair to simply look upon Athens as the imperialistic and plotting power who grasped control of the unsuspecting city-states which relied upon her for support and protection.

For many of these city-states the idea of democracy only came about after they allied themselves with Athens and they were in fact used to some sort of oligarchic or tyrannical ruling party running the people's affairs. For someone to look upon them as poor and unsuspecting people, who were taken by the Athenians, undermines the intelligence of these ancient peoples. They must have had some inclinations that this type of alliance with one of the two superpowers of the region could lead to a dependency upon Athens and thus an empowerment of the Athenian polis over them. Any nation or city-state that enters into an alliance with a more powerful nation or city-state must understand and know the possibility that entering into such an alliance would, quite easily, lead to the stronger power gaining a stronger grasp upon the alliance as time moves by. To assume they had no pretensions or suspicions that the power their ally could gain over them would grow would be both irresponsible and quite puzzling by outside parties.

By the point of which Thasos revolted by Athens it should be understood that Athens was in full control of the Delian League and had the support of the city-states which provided manpower as well as trireme. Those who did not were seen as secondary participants within the alliance and thus had very little voice in matters of the alliance.

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<sup>20</sup> Terry Buckley, Aspects of Greek History 750-323 BC: A Source-based Approach 197

Robert Garland states that “only the islands of Lesbos, Chios, and Sasmos, situated off the western Anatolian coast, continued to do so (provide manpower and trireme instead of only tribute). In this way the majority of the membership derived itself both morally and politically of the ability to speak with a strong voice in the council.”<sup>21</sup> These city-states must have been fully aware that by not providing physical support to the alliance they would not be seen by other Greeks as truly in the top portions of the decision making democratic process.

Moving beyond this we look as to the question of whether or not the initial goals of the alliance were superseded by some sort of Athenian agenda? This question may be difficult to answer fully because it dictates that these go hand in hand, whether the alliance was set to only defend against the Persian attacks, and whether through a democratic process we can look upon the league as one in a constant state of natural transition. Also the question implies some sort of predetermined plot by those of Athens to gain control then dominate the Delian League in a fashion which led Athens to become an empire. For those who felt that by paying tribute they would still have fair end equal say in the alliance’s policy they were mistaken which could suggest either a forsaking of foresight or of a radical change in the democratic stance of the alliance from its earlier years. This shift from original policy was as we have seen brought forth by an idea of what was a fair voice for the amount of which a city-state benefiting from the league was giving to the league.

Yet there is no doubt that the free alliance did become an empire, this did occur, and it did have a lasting effect on the members of the alliance who decided to continue freely and a heavy consequence for those who felt they needed to vacate the league.

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<sup>21</sup> Belle Vivante, Events That Changed Greece (Greenwood Press, 2002) 103

“There is no evidence suggesting that the conversion of the Delian Confederacy into the Athenian empire was a deliberate act on Athens’s part, though there may well have been individuals who calculated early on that, since it was Athenian sailors who were repeatedly being put in harm’s way, the state deserved some material reward for its disproportionate commitment of manpower.”<sup>22</sup> This brings more thought to the process that brought Athenian prominence in the league to its highest extent but also provides an exemplary idea of the non-predetermined nature of the Athenian Empire.

Another set of circumstances which could have very well led to disgruntled allies who sought freedom from the ever growing Athenian Empire was the possibility of a peace with Persia which is of great debate by modern historians and ancient alike. This is the famed Peace of Callias, which if by chance it was truly an agreed upon truce between Persia and Athens meant that yet the finality of aggression between the two had commenced. The Peace of Callias which will bring up more issues of the problematic source material was either finalized or revisited by 450 or 449 B.C. This Peace accord did not end Persian involvement in Greek affairs but it did by all intents and purposes and the aggressive nature of the relationship between the two for a long period of time.

The name Callias comes from an Athenian politician by the name of Callias who was famous for his role in the short-lived Thirty-Year Peace between the Athenians and Spartans. He made himself famous for his role in the Battle of Marathon in 490 B.C., and he was also a three time chariot racing champion in the Olympic Games. In c. 450 Cimon sailed with some 200 ships against Cyprus and Egypt this could reflect the Athenian desire to be victorious and conquer territories which had been the sites of

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<sup>22</sup> Belle Vivante, Events That Changed Greece (Greenwood Press, 2002) 106

disaster ten years earlier. Besides the death of Cimon<sup>23</sup> another remarkable event occurred. The following year around 449 B.C. Callias traveled to Susa and made some sort of peace agreement with Artaxerxes I. the Persian King who was the son and successor of Xerxes.

This agreement brought about significant changes in the relationship between Persia and Greece. It also is the source of great debate from historians as mentioned earlier. This is because of the nature of the sources once again, so now the second discussion on the problematic source material is brought about. This is useful in that if there was in fact a peace it would explain a great many things, such as why tribute lists were being kept again, and why there was a year in which there were none found during this period. Also, there is a major inclination to see the building projects of Pericles during the 440's and beyond as a use of allied tribute for the benefit of Athens and not for the use of military support. All of this would effectively cause a great amount of Allies to question why they needed to pay for the aesthetic beauty of Athens. Also it may be true that Athens knowing full well that this would cause strife amongst the allies attempted to hide the peace from its original implementation.

It is worth mentioning that the finality of this issue in the minds of historians has not occurred. The Peace of Callias will be discussed at length here as well and what it meant for the continuance of the League. Thucydides mentions nothing of the peace but this is explainable in that he was writing for another purpose and rarely accredited the Athenians with anything of worth anyway. It is in the terms of the peace where we see possible proof, Thucydides mentions that there were restrictions on where the Greek

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<sup>23</sup> Matthew Dillon and Lynda Garland, Ancient Greece: Social and Historical Documents from Archaic Times to the Death of Socrates (London and New York: T.J. Press LTD, 1994) 230



(Athenian) fleet was able to sail.<sup>24</sup> Diodorus recorded the events of the Peace of occurring after the death of Cimon around 449/8 and that it caused a crisis within the empire in the 40's as it brought about a distraught nature amongst many of the allies.<sup>25</sup> The Athenian Tribute Lists note that there was one year in which there is no recording of incoming tribute.<sup>26</sup> That year was 447/6 where there was one of two events occurring, either the allies were dissatisfied with the defeat of the Athenians at Koroneia or there was a widespread protest by which the allies saw that the Persians were not a threat and that they should no longer pay for the Athenian Empire.

Once past the issue of the existence of the Peace the debate centers on the timeline. It has been placed during the time after the Battle of Eurymedon during the 460's where Lycurgus says that after the victory over the Persians:

*They were not content to have set up the trophy at Salamis, but they fixed the boundaries of the barbarians (which were required) for the liberty of Hellas and they prevented them from overstepping them. They made a treaty that the King was not to sail in a ship of war beyond the Kyaneai and Phaselis, and that the Hellenes, not only those in Europe but also dwelling in Asia, were to be autonomous.*<sup>27</sup>

Lycurgus

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<sup>24</sup> Thucydides 8.56.4-5

<sup>25</sup> Diodorus XII.4.4

<sup>26</sup> Athenian Tribute Lists I.133,175, II.13

<sup>27</sup> Matthew Dillon and Lynda Garland, Ancient Greece: 230

Though Diodorus clearly places the Peace of Callias after the victories in Egypt and Cyprus during the late 450's there is a possible explanation of the events. The possible scenario is this, during the 460's Cimon regime could have prepared a peace accord which was either broken later or simply never truly agreed upon until the military might of Cimon resurfaced again late in the next decade.

Isocrates places faith that the Peace occurred and he implied that it was well-known by 380 B.C. and further on, historians such as Demosthenes used the Peace treaty to compare it with another in 351 BC. The Peace did occur and its exact date is important but more important is the matter that it certainly brought an end to the Persian threat, thus it is also clear from the tribute lists and the actions of revolts by city-states that the allies of Athens had become her subjects and knew this. Thus wanting out, while there may have been original terms of permanency, it is clear that Athens overstepped them in order to benefit the Athenians.

Taking a look at the issue of the Athenian Tribute lists from the 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. we see that the first recorded payments from several cities were issued in c. 450 B.C. This could have occurred for a couple of reasons, either they were lost, made of wood or some material which did not stand the test of time, or more likely they were not recorded because there was no reason to record them. The allies paid and did not question the policy they were paying for, thus after the peace, as mentioned earlier, there was reason for them not to pay. Athens then decided to keep track and thus force the city-states to pay the tribute. Thus the initial need for documentation of tribute may not have been as important early on since there was indeed a threat of Persian invasion and the need to drive Persian from the region was extreme. This threat, which was the fundamental

cornerstone to the existence of the Delian League, meant that members would have no quarrels with paying either in tribute or supplying men and ships for the fleet. The Peace of Callias would have meant that many allies of Athens would begin to rethink the sacrifices they were making which were now generating the revenue for an empire and not funding a protective policy against Persia. For this reason the Athenian role in the Delian League had begun to change from a leading ally to an Empire which ruled over its subjects with a stern hand, it also meant that Athens deemed it necessary to document tribute and thus begin a major campaign of keeping a close eye on them.

We also know that the majority of members who had originally provided trireme and manpower to Athens by this time had switched over to paying tribute in the form of money. This was caused by the lack of manpower and the simple ease of paying and not needing to provide. This also played into the hands of the emerging Athenian Empire as they were able to have a greater income to their economy and use it for their civic programs.

Certainly by the time the Athenians had come to more than just leadership based upon the older Hellenic League of pre-478 BC, they came to think of themselves as the leaders of the Greek world. The words of Pericles himself attest to this, “We alone among mankind in doing men benefits, not on considerations of self-interest, but in the fearless confidence of freedom. In a Word I claim that our city as a whole is an education to Greece.”<sup>28</sup>

Thasos and Naxos as well as the other city-states, which were brought under rule of the Athenians in the name of the alliance of the Aegean, had commonalties. While

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<sup>28</sup> Nels Bailey, Readings in Ancient History: Thought and Experience from Gilgamesh to St. Augustine 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (DC Heath & Company, 1992) 191

there was a threat of Persian attack they seemed to have few problems with the controlling grip of Athens in the league post 478 BC. When the Athenians and the league were finished with their campaigns to drive out the remaining Persian strongholds thus ending the Persian threat they tended to want out. This left the Athenians in a position where not only were they being threatened by city-states who might want their independence and thus opening up the possibility of their joining the Peloponnesian League, but they threatened the Athenian might in the region itself.

When city-states decided they had no need to continue to funnel tribute towards what they began to consider Athenian expansion they responded with revolt. But was Athens wrong? The alliance did not falter as some will attest; it was initially set not only to be a defensive alliance but an offensive alliance as well. "The oaths ratifying the constitution of the league are said to have contained the pledge to have the same friends and enemies. This clause occurring in slightly different forms in a multitude of treaties, is the usual formula for an offensive and defensive alliance."<sup>29</sup> Athens by the point of the revolt of Thasos had come to dominate the league by the sheer willingness of her to take upon the most responsibility. Athenian crews manned Athenian triremes for the most part, which gave the Athenians the moral right to lead. They had also been given the right to lead with the absence of Sparta and thus know one else could have fended off the Persian threat.

Within the knowledge of this alliance being based upon the use of defensive as well as offensive military operations one must venture to understand the three elements of operations which were undertaken by the Athenian lead navy. These elements have

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<sup>29</sup> J.A.O. Larson, "The Constitution and the Original Purpose of the Delian League" Harvard Studies in Classical Philology (1940). pp. 187

been listed as the “three stages in the progress of Athenian imperialism”<sup>30</sup>, and were also mentioned to have been the examples of the “misuse of which she made her leadership in operations outside the initial guidelines of the programme”.<sup>31</sup> A full understanding of the constitution is needed to maintain reason for the Athenians to attack fellow league members. They were doing so only to keep them in the alliance for which they had solemnly sworn an oath to which secession from was forbidden. Thus the ceremony of the casting of stones into the sea for which only when the stones would resurface could the oath be broken. To say that the revolt of Thasos was that of a people completely innocent of the knowledge of why they would be sent down upon would be haphazard at best. There is also the inclination that Athens took control of the Delian League and upon their role as the leader created a powerbase, which in its fruition gained an empirical leverage on the other members of the alliance. Yet the goals were met by the league and by its leader Athens. There is a tendency to see the league’s original intentions as being superseded by Athens and her draw towards being an empire but the fact are that the Persian threat was thwarted and driven back to Persian territory. Whilst the natural order of progression saw that Athens evolved into the power it became by the late fifth century BC.

Yet as clearly as it can be said that the Ionian states should have seen how allying themselves with a power such as Athens and doing so under a nature of permanency could be devastating should the Persian threat end there is much to say of Athens involvement. They certainly through a matter of policy and regime changes came to a point where they placed themselves in power both militarily, which they already had, but

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<sup>30</sup> A. French, (1977). Athenian Ambitions and the Delian Alliance *Phoenix*, vol. 31, pp.136

<sup>31</sup> A. French, (1977). Athenian Ambitions and the Delian Alliance *Phoenix*, vol. 31, pp.136

economically. The moving of the allied treasury from Delos to Athens was a big step in becoming an empire, with the treasury firmly placed in Athenian hands the control of tribute and the use there of was based in Athens not allied hands. They thus completed there domination of the other league members very early in the process.

Not all Athenian rulers were quite so interested in the domination of the league as Pericles but by the time he came to power and had a firm grasp on it there was no Persian threat, there was a peace with Sparta (though short-lived) and the Athenians had virtually no one in the alliance who could stand up to them.

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