

Athenian Interstate Alliances after the Peloponnesian War: The Empire Strikes Back or a New Hope?

This paper offers a reassessment of the Athenian objectives for restoring their interstate alliances in the first decade of the fourth century BCE. As a result of their defeat to the Spartans in the Peloponnesian War in 404 BCE, the Athenians were forced to dismantle their vast network of interstate alliances, which had supported their hegemony in Greece. Nearly a decade would pass before they concluded new alliances: at least eight in central Greece (395-394 BCE) and another six in the Aegean (390-389 BCE). It has been the assumption of modern scholarship (Seager 1967; Cawkwell 1976; Buck 1998; Asmonti 2015; Harding 2015), under the influence of twentieth-century political science theories, that these new alliances were tools of realpolitik, as irredentist attempts to revive Athenian imperialism. This paper, in contrast, examines the non-political aspects of the new Athenian alliances to propose that imperial recrudescence was not as strong a motivation at this time as currently supposed (a point Griffith 1978 and Cargill 1981 argue for the Athenians in the second quarter of the fourth century BCE). It will be suggested rather that the alliances were constructed through interactions based on common social and economic interests.

The first half explores the literary (Xen. *Hell.* 3.5.8-16, 4.8.25-31) and epigraphic (*IG II*² 14) evidence for social relationships between the Athenians and the Thebans. This supports the thesis that the first alliances in 395-394 BCE were more than isolated politico-military contracts; on the contrary, they were manifestations of the personal interactions between prominent leaders of each state. The second half examines similar evidence (Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.25-31; Diod. Sic. 14.94.2-4, 99.4-5; *IG II*² 21, 22, 24) for the alliances in the Aegean in 390-389 BCE. In this phase, when the Athenians arranged the economic aspects of the new alliances, they reached

back to their economic practices in the fifth century, but deliberately avoided measures associated with the empire – e.g., they substituted *eikoste* (five-percent tax) and *dekate* (ten-percent tax), more flexible revenue collection methods, for the odious *phoros* (tribute) of the past. This was a practical and symbolic repudiation of imperialism. These examples of renewed alliances clearly demonstrate that in the first decade of the fourth century BCE the Athenians succeeded in reviving their alliance organization by placing the political and military objectives of the new alliances into a socio-economic framework. In short, this paper provides a case study that rejects the notion of the Athenian Empire striking back in the aftermath of the Peloponnesian War and supports the existence of a new hope of collaboration among the Athenians and their allies in the fourth century BCE.

Bibliography

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