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ARGIVE FOREIGN POLICY IN THE FIFTH CENTURY B.C.

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MODERN scholars are unanimous in their opinion that after 462 B.C. there were two overriding considerations that determined the nature and course of Argive foreign policy. They assume, in the first place, that Argos was always bitterly hostile toward Sparta, and in the second place, that, as a result of this hostility, the Argives must have enjoyed friendly relations with states, such as Athens, whose relations with Sparta were also strained. This twofold assumption requires more careful scrutiny than it has received, for interstate relations in the fifth century B.C. would appear to be much more complex than its proponents would care to admit. As a minor state in a world dominated by two major powers, Athens and Sparta, Argos was not always in a position to determine unilaterally the nature of its foreign policy. To a large extent, policy was shaped by events over which the Argives had little or no control.

I have argued elsewhere¹ that Argos and Sparta were not traditionally hostile toward one another throughout the long centuries of Greek history; they could hardly have had serious differences of opinion on a sustained basis much, if any, before the Spartan conquest of Tegea shortly before the middle of the sixth century B.C. While it is patently true that rela-

tions between the two states were not always cordial after that time, their mutual hostility has been easily exaggerated, and one exaggeration has led inevitably to another. A careful examination of the evidence suggests that the Argives were not irrevocably committed to a foreign policy that revolved around the dual poles of hostility toward Sparta and friendship toward Athens; the simple truth of the matter is that these poles exist more in the imagination of modern historians than in the actual interstate relations of fifth-century Greece. The key to a proper appreciation and understanding of Argive foreign policy in the fifth century, and especially after 462, lies in the realization that for much of this period Athens and Argos had little in common, and that the Athenians were, consequently, often less than enthusiastic about maintaining friendly relations with Argos. It was this consideration rather than any traditional enmity between Argos and Sparta that determined the nature and course of Argive foreign policy.

In the early decades of the fifth century, relations between Athens and Argos were not particularly amicable, and one need not look far for the reason. The Argives took no part in the Persian Wars; they remained neutral, and it was even rumored that they had made a secret agreement with

1. See my article, "The Traditional Enmity between Sparta and Argos: The Birth and Development of a Myth," *AHR*, XXV (1970), 971-1003.

the Persians. To justify their neutrality, the Argives reminded their fellow Greeks that they had just suffered a severe defeat at Sepeia in 494 B.C. at the hands of the Spartans and their audacious king, Cleomenes. The defeat may not have been so devastating as the Argives professed. Although it was apparently serious enough to lead directly to some sort of political revolution within the city, it is not likely that, as Herodotus reports, the government of Argos fell to the Argive slaves as a result of the losses suffered at Sepeia.² There were sufficient Argive men of fighting age a few years later when a thousand Argives volunteered to help Aegina in a war against Athens, and the Argives seem to have waged a successful war against the Corinthians at some time in the early decades of the fifth century.³

The Argive refusal to aid the Greeks against the Persians did not gain them many friends in Greece, and least of all at Athens, where the ravages of the Persian onslaught fell most heavily. Even within the Argive plain, Tiryns and Mycenae had refused to join the Argives in their neutrality; the Mycenaeans sent a small force to aid the Greeks at Thermopylae, and both states participated in the final campaign of the war at Plataea. After the war they continued to pursue an independent policy,⁴ and it took the Argives more than a decade to regain full control over them. By this time, too, many of the states of the Peloponnesus were members of the Peloponnesian League and thus allied with

Sparta. The Spartans were at least nominal allies of Athens, and the Athenians were soon busily engaged in the operations of the Delian League. If Themistocles had been able to maintain his political position at Athens, relations between the Argives and Athenians might well have improved; but Themistocles slowly lost influence there with the rise of Cimon. It was Cimon's avowed policy to co-operate with Sparta so that the war against Persia might be carried on as effectively as possible. So long as Cimon remained a prominent figure in Athenian politics, there was little possibility of Argos and Athens actively co-operating with each other. In the decades immediately following the Persian Wars, the Argives continued to enjoy friendly relations with Persia, but found themselves isolated and with few friends in Greece. Only with the inhabitants of the nearby town of Cleonae did the Argives enjoy friendly relations.⁵

Argive-Spartan relations were not particularly amicable in this period. The defeat at Sepeia was probably still fresh in the Argive mind; but without allies in Greece and with the Argive plain still not firmly under their control, the Argives were clearly no match for the overwhelming military superiority of the Spartans. It was fortunate for them that trouble soon developed within the Peloponnesian League. While the chronology of events in this period is far from certain and only few of the details are known to us, we do know that Tegea and a number of other Arcadian cities

2. On Argive neutrality in the Persian Wars, see Hdt. 7. 148–52, 9. 12, and cf. E. Meyer, *Forschungen zur alten Geschichte*, II (Halle, 1899), 213–17; on Cleomenes' invasion of the Argive plain and the battle of Sepeia, Hdt. 6. 75–84. Much has been written on this battle and its consequences for Argos: see F. Kiechle, "Argos und Tiryns nach der Schlacht bei Sepeia," *Philologus*, CIV (1960), 181–200; R. F. Willetts, "The Servile Interregnum at Argos," *Hermes*, LXXXVII (1959), 495–506; and W. G. Forrest, "Themistokles and Argos," *CQ*, N.S. X (1960), 221–41, esp. 221–29.

3. Hdt. 6. 92 tells us about the Argive volunteers who helped Aegina. The war between Corinth and Argos is known only from inscribed spoils of the war that were dedicated at

Olympia, and are dated between ca. 500 and 480 B.C.; see L. H. Jeffrey, *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece* (Oxford, 1961), p. 162, and, more recently, E. Kunze, *Berichte über die Ausgrabungen in Olympia*, VIII (Berlin, 1967), 91–95.

4. Hdt. 7. 202, 9. 28; Diod. 11. 65. 2; and see also F. Gschnitzer, *Abhängige Orte im griechischen Altertum* (Munich, 1958), pp. 68–72. K. Wickert, *Der peloponnesische Bund von seiner Entstehung bis zum Ende des archidamischen Krieges* (Erlangen, 1961), pp. 56–59, has even argued that both cities were members of the Peloponnesian League during this period.

5. On Argive-Persian relations, see Hdt. 7. 151–52. On Argive relations with Cleonae, see Strabo 8. 6. 19 (377), and *IG* 12. 931–32.

attempted to withdraw from the League.⁶ We do not know whether Argos or Tegea took the initiative, but the two states did conclude an alliance. It proved to be less than a resounding success, and Argive behavior was at least partly responsible for its failure. The Argives were able to reassert their control over Tiryns, and, with the aid of the Tegeans, to destroy the settlement at Mycenae,⁷ but the allies could gain no permanent advantage over Sparta. They did defeat the Spartans at Tegea on one occasion, but several years later the Argives were conspicuously absent when a force of Tegean and other Arcadians met the Lacedaemonians at Dipaea.⁸ Here the Spartans were victorious, and thereafter the Tegeans remained solidly in the Spartan fold. The failure of the Argives to aid the Tegeans at Dipaea has never been satisfactorily explained,⁹ but by doing so, the Argives had obviously failed to take full advantage of the unfavorable position in which the Spartans had momentarily found themselves. Nor was this the only oppor-

tunity the Argives let pass by. They made no immediate attempt to capitalize on the Messenian revolt, and they took no immediate action when the helots revolted following the earthquake of 465.¹⁰

What little we know about Argive foreign policy in the decades between the end of the Persian Wars and the ostracism of Cimon in 462 suggests that its prime consideration was to bring the dissident communities within the Argive plain, Tiryns and Mycenae, firmly under Argive control. Argos may well have been interested in extending its influence within the Peloponnesus at the expense of Sparta; but there is little positive evidence for such an assertion, and it is easy to exaggerate such evidence as we do possess.¹¹ We have already seen that the Argives had failed to co-operate fully with the Tegeans and other Peloponnesian states that were attempting to assert their independence from Sparta; and Pindar's Tenth Nemean, which in all probability was written during this period,¹² shows no hint of hostility between

6. The ancient evidence is cited in G. F. Hill, *Sources for Greek History between the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars*² (Oxford, 1951), pp. 358–59. The chronological problems are discussed by Forrest, *CQ*, N.S. X (1960), 229–32; A. Andrewes, "Sparta and Arcadia in the Early Fifth Century," *Phoenix*, VI (1952), 1–5; and R. T. Williams, *The Confederate Coinage of the Arcadians in the Early Fifth Century* (New York, 1965), pp. 1–7, 20–26.

7. Hdt. (6. 83 and 7. 137) is our chief source. See also Diod. 11. 64–65; Strabo 8. 6. 10 (372), 8. 6. 11 (373), 8. 6. 19 (377); and several references in Pausanias. The evidence does not permit us to say which campaign took place first. Diod. 11. 65. 4. dates the campaign against Mycenae to 468/67, but he also says that it took place shortly after the earthquake at Sparta, which is generally dated 465/64 on the basis of Thuc. 1. 101. 2.

8. Hdt. 9. 35, and several later writers cited by Hill, *Sources*, p. 358.

9. Numerous attempts have been made to do so, but the evidence does not permit a definitive conclusion. G. Busolt, *Griechische Geschichte*, III (Gotha, 1897), 122–23, believes, for example, that the Argives were absent from Dipaea because they were busy subduing the Tirynthians at the time; A. Andrewes, *Phoenix*, VI (1952), 5, has argued that they were busy trying to subdue the Mycenaeans; Forrest, *CQ*, N.S. X (1960), 230–32, has argued that a sharp change in internal politics caused the Argives to withdraw from the alliance with Tegea before the battle occurred.

10. On the earthquake, see Thuc. 1. 101. 2, 1. 128. 1; numerous later references are assembled by Hill, *Sources*, p. 358. Diod. 11. 65. 4 does say that the Argives attacked

Mycenae only after they saw the Spartans in difficulty as a result of the earthquake, but the chronological problems in his account (see n. 7) render it suspect.

11. A good case in point is the information contained in an Argive inscription (*SEG* XIII. 239), which Jeffrey, *LSAG*, p. 162, dates to the 470's. The inscription concerns the grant of *proxenia* to a certain Gnosstas of Oeonoë. Forrest, *CQ*, N.S. X (1960), 226, has suggested that "the gift of *proxenia* to a Spartan *perioikos* without the inclusion of the ethnic . . . might be a deliberate affront to Sparta . . ." But this seems less than likely. The position of *proxenos* was a sensitive one; Gnosstas was expected, after all, to look after Argive interests at Sparta, and he would have been in a poor position to do so if his appointment was considered "a deliberate affront to Sparta" in the first place. Mention must also be made here of the statues of the Epigoni dedicated by the Argives at Delphi in this general period. Pausanias (10. 10. 4) believed that the dedication was made in commemoration of the victory of Argos and Athens over Sparta at Oeonoë in the 450's, and he has been followed by many scholars; see, e.g., G. Daux, *Pausanias à Delphes* (Paris, 1936), pp. 89–92. Jeffrey, *LSAG*, pp. 162–64, however, would date the dedication to the period between 480 and 465, and suggests that it was a monument commemorating the Argive victory over either the Tirynthians or the Mycenaeans and that it had nothing to do with a victory over Sparta.

12. Forrest, *CQ*, N.S. X (1960), 228, would date the Ode to the 460's, though it is sometimes dated to the period after 451; see G. Méautis, *Pindare le dorien* (Neuchâtel, 1962), pp. 275–86.

Argos and Sparta. Of even greater importance, moreover, is the fact that at no time during this period did the Argives make any attempt to seek closer ties with Athens. Indeed, when Themistocles was ostracized about 470,¹³ they willingly antagonized both Athens and Sparta by allowing him to take up residence in their city.¹⁴

By 461, however, Athens, Argos, and Thessaly had concluded an alliance. The events that led up to this alliance are generally well known and need only brief mention here. In 462 the Spartans appealed to their Athenian allies for aid in suppressing the revolution of the helots, and Cimon responded by sending a force of four thousand hoplites to assist them. Spartan distrust soon resulted in his being asked to leave Lacedaemonia; and his political opponents, proclaiming that Athens had suffered a serious affront, used this as an excuse to secure his ostracism. Cimon's removal from Athens prepared the way for the emergence of a new group of political leaders who immediately instituted a much more aggressive policy, not only in the Peloponnesus, but in northern and central Greece as well. Part and parcel of this new policy was the establishment of closer relations with Argos, and in 461 the two states concluded an alliance. The moment must have seemed most opportune for both

parties. The Athenians, now that their relations with Sparta were strained, must have welcomed the opportunity to secure an alliance with an important state in the Peloponnesus, which for some time now had been the almost exclusive preserve of Sparta. The Argives, without allies and with the Spartans hard pressed by the Messenians and helots, undoubtedly believed that alliance with Athens would provide them with an opportunity to curb Spartan influence in the Peloponnesus and to escape the diplomatic isolation thrust upon them as a result of their neutrality in the Persian Wars.¹⁵

Yet, if this alliance was greeted enthusiastically, it lasted only a short time and quickly proved to be a failure and disappointment for both major participants. The decade following the conclusion of the Argive-Athenian-Thessalian alliance of 461 was in some ways the most successful ten-year period in Athenian history. In addition to sending sizable forces against the Persians from time to time, the Athenians fought and defeated the Corinthians, succeeded in gaining control over Megara and Aegina, won over the Achaeans as allies and settled the Messenians in Naupactus, added Boeotia and Phocis to their alliance, and raided a number of cities on the coast of the Peloponnesus.¹⁶ In all

13. The evidence for Themistocles' ostracism and residence at Argos has been assembled by Forrest, *CQ*, N.S. X (1960), 221-41; on the chronology, see also R. J. Lenardon, "The Chronology of Themistocles' Ostracism and Exile," *Historia*, VIII (1959), 23-48. It is commonly held that it was under the influence of Themistocles that Argos supported *sunokismos* and the establishment of democracy at Mantinea. This may well be the case, but Strabo 8. 3. 2 (337) is the only ancient author who says that Mantinean *sunokismos* was supported by Argos, and neither he nor any other ancient author connects Themistocles with it in any way.

14. The Argive predicament is well illustrated in the *Suppliants* of Aeschylus, which we now know was performed sometime in the 460's and most likely in 463; cf. POxy. 2265. I agree with H. Lloyd-Jones, "The 'Suppliants' of Aeschylus: The New Date and Old Problems," *AC*, XXXIII (1964), 256-70, and M. Wörle, *Untersuchungen zur Verfassungsgeschichte von Argos im 5. Jahrhundert vor Christus* (Munich, 1964), pp. 120-22, that the play does not tell us much about the nature of the government of Argos at this time.

15. The Argive-Athenian-Thessalian alliance is mentioned at Thuc. 1. 102. 4, where it seems clear that the Argives were genuinely afraid of a war with Sparta. The alliance is also referred to by Aeschylus in the *Eumenides*: cf. J. H. Quincey, "Orestes and the Argive Alliance," *CQ*, N.S. XIV (1964), 190-206, who argues that it was the Argives who offered the alliance to Athens. The Argives may also have been concerned about Corinthian aggressiveness; Plut. *Cim.* 17 mentions a Corinthian attack on Cleonae which probably, though not certainly, occurred late in the 460's.

16. These events are fully discussed by P. Cloché, "La politique extérieure d'Athènes de 462 à 454 avant J. C.," *AC*, XI (1942), 25-39, 213-33, and "L'activité militaire et politique d'Athènes en Grèce de 457 à 454 et en Égypte de 459 à 454 avant J.C.," *RBPh*, XXV (1946-47), 39-86; E. M. Walker, *CAH*, V, 75-85; and see now D. Kagan, *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War* (Ithaca, 1969), pp. 77-97.

these ventures, however, the Argives were conspicuously absent. Only at Oeonoe, if a battle was actually fought there, and at Tanagra in 457, did they actively co-operate with their Athenian allies, and even at Tanagra they supplied only a token force of one thousand hoplites.¹⁷ The Athenians, in short, received little aid from the Argives, and they can hardly have considered the alliance an overwhelming success. The Argives, too, were soon to find out that alliance with Athens carried with it at least as many drawbacks as advantages. Although the alliance might have provided them with an opportunity to act more forcefully within the Argolid,¹⁸ and might have perhaps elevated their prestige among certain Cretan cities,¹⁹ it must have quickly become apparent that the Athenians were too busy attempting to extend their influence in northern and central Greece, carrying on the war against the Persians, and transforming the Delian League into an empire to devote themselves to Argive interests in the Peloponnesus. It is possible, moreover, that the Argive alliance with Athens frightened some Peloponnesian states which, until now, had remained at least passive toward Spartan overtures to

enlist them in the Peloponnesian League;²⁰ and, equally important, the alliance endangered Argive friendship with Persia.²¹

The Argive-Athenian alliance, in short, left both participants dissatisfied; and, while we do not know when it formally came to an end, there is no evidence of joint action by the two states after 457. From that time onward Athens and Argos apparently began to drift apart, and by 451 each state had concluded a separate treaty with Sparta.²² If we are to be perfectly honest with ourselves, we must admit that we do not know why the Argives gave up their alliance with Athens and sought closer ties with Sparta in 451. There are, to be sure, many possible reasons, but none can be completely verified. The Spartan victory over the combined Athenian-Argive armies at Tanagra must have emphasized the superior military might of Sparta. By 451, moreover, it must have been obvious to the Argives that Athenian interests all over the eastern Aegean did not materially strengthen the Argive position in the Peloponnesus, and under no circumstances would the Athenian navy have been able to prevent a Spartan invasion of Argive territory. Additionally, the suppression of the Messenian

17. The battle of Oeonoe, supposedly won by the Athenians and Argives, is known only from Paus. 1. 15. 1 and 10. 10. 3-5, and many scholars have doubted its occurrence. Those who accept it as historical usually date it just prior to the battle of Tanagra; see A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, I² (Oxford, 1959), 370, n. 1. L. H. Jeffrey, "The Battle of Oionoe in the Stoa Poikile: A Problem in Greek Art and History," *BSA*, LX (1965), 41-57, has recently argued that it took place shortly after the battle of Tanagra. On the battle of Tanagra, see Hdt. 9. 35 and Thuc. 1. 107. 5; both historians say the Spartans were victorious. Diod. 11. 80. 1-2, 6, says the battle ended in a draw. See also D. W. Reece, "The Battle of Tanagra," *JHS*, LXX (1950), 75-76; and B. D. Meritt, "The Argives at Tanagra," *Hesperia*, XIV (1945), 134-47.

18. It is usually assumed (see, e.g., E. N. Gardiner, *Greek Athletic Sports and Festivals* [London, 1910], p. 223, and K. Hanell, s.v. "Nemea [Spiele]," *RE*, XVI [1935], 2324), that the Nemean games were moved from Cleonae to Argos about 460, but the evidence may not warrant this assumption. The games were still being celebrated at Cleonae when Pindar wrote *Nem.* 4 and 10 (see *Nem.* 4. 17 and 10. 77); and from *IG* I² 931-32 we know that some men of Cleonae fought with the Argives and Athenians at Tanagra.

19. It is possible that the Argives acted as arbitrators in a

dispute between Cnossus and Tyllissus in this period, but the date of the inscription (*SEG* XI. 316) which records this event is far from certain. Jeffrey, *LSAG*, pp. 165, 170, dates it roughly 460-50(?).

20. As K. Wickert, *Der peloponnesische Bund von seiner Entstehung bis zum Ende des archidamischen Krieges*, pp. 19, 25, 60-61, points out, we do not really know when states such as Philus and Epidaurus joined the Peloponnesian League; Wickert believes it was earlier than the 460's, but the evidence is far from conclusive.

21. This seems a safe inference from Thuc. 1. 109. 2-3, where it is reported that the Persians supplied money to the Spartans to finance an invasion of Attica, and from Hdt. 7. 151, where it is reported that the Argives sent an embassy to Persia several years later to find out whether Artaxerxes considered them a friend or an enemy.

22. On the Five Years' Truce between Athens and Sparta, see Thuc. 1. 112. 1 and Diod. 11. 86. 1. On the Argive-Spartan treaty, see Thuc. 5. 14. 4 and 5. 28. 2, and cf. Bengtson, *Staatsverträge*, Nr. 144. The generally accepted date for this treaty is 451, but P. A. Brunt, "Spartan Policy and Strategy in the Archidamian War," *Phoenix*, XIX (1965), 277, n. 77, would date it to 450. Unfortunately, Thuc. is inconclusive; see Gomme, *Commentary*, IV, on 5. 28. 2.

revolt with the settlement of the dissidents at Naupactus in 455 left the Spartans in a much more favorable position than they had been in when the alliance was originally concluded in 461. The recall of Cimon in 461 led immediately to the resumption of closer relations between Athens and Sparta and may have convinced the Argives that the democratic government of Athens was indeed a fickle institution; it has, in fact, often been suggested that it was the conclusion of a treaty between Athens and Sparta in 451 that forced the Argives to arrange their own treaty with Sparta a short time later.²³ Finally, we must note that there is evidence of substantial political change at Argos sometime in the period between 461 and 451,²⁴ and it may well be the case that their treaty with Sparta resulted either directly or indirectly from some change in the government of the city.

While we cannot be sure why Argos and Sparta reconciled their differences and concluded a treaty in 451, it is nonetheless clear that the ratification of this treaty was an open admission by the Argives that their policy of co-operation with Athens was a failure. It would be more than thirty years before the two states would once again attempt to act in concert. There is not a shred of evidence to suggest that either Argos or Athens was the least bit interested in resuming friendly relations at any time from the conclusion of the treaty between Sparta and Argos in 451 to the summer of 420. As we shall see, this is not surprising

so far as the Athenians are concerned, but it is surprising from the Argive point of view, especially when one considers the expensive price the Argives had to pay for their treaty with Sparta. Nowhere are we told what the provisions of this treaty were, but it is certain that the Argives had to acknowledge Spartan control over the area of Cynouria; given their later concern for the recovery of this territory,²⁵ they must have agreed to this provision only reluctantly. Once the treaty was concluded, however, the Argives scrupulously lived up to its terms for the full thirty-year period of its intended existence.

Unfortunately, we know very little about Argive history in this period. In fact, for the two decades between 451 and the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War in 431, there is no contemporary literary evidence about what was going on in the city. We do know, however, that in 446 Athens and Sparta arranged a thirty years' truce. Pausanias saw a copy of this truce inscribed on a bronze plaque many years later when he visited Olympia, and he paraphrases one of its provisions. According to Pausanias, it was stipulated in the truce that "Argos should be no party to the peace between Athens and Lacedaemon, but that privately the Athenians and Argives might, if they pleased, be friends with each other." It has usually been assumed that this provision must have been inserted into the treaty at the insistence of the Argives, who were alarmed by their isolation.²⁶ This assump-

23. Many scholars have held this view; most recently see Kagan, *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War*, pp. 104–105. As Gomme, *Commentary*, I, 328 points out, however, we do not know which state first arranged a treaty with Sparta.

24. The evidence for domestic politics at Argos has been assembled and analyzed by M. Wörle, *Untersuchungen zur Verfassungsgeschichte von Argos*, esp. pp. 101 ff.

25. Thuc. 5. 14. 4 and 5. 41. 1–3 notes Argive concern over Cynouria in the fifth century; Polyb. (9. 28. 7, 18. 14. 7) and Paus. (2. 20. 1, 7. 11. 2) refer to territorial disputes in this area which Philip of Macedon settled in favor of the Argives; cf. M. T. Mitsos *Πολιτική Ιστορία του 'Αργους από του τέλους του*

Πελοποννησιακού πολέμου μέχρι του έτους 146 π.Χ. (Athens, 1945), p. 53.

26. Paus. 5. 23. 3; the translation is that of J. G. Frazer (London, 1913). Additional ancient references and the modern bibliography are cited by Bengtson, *Staatsverträge*, Nr. 156. B. D. Meritt, H. T. Wade-Gery, and M. F. McGregor, *The Athenian Tribute Lists*, III (Princeton, 1950), 304, suggest that the Argives' fear of being isolated led them to insist on this provision being inserted into the Spartan-Athenian treaty. The editors of *ATL* base their case for Argive isolation on Thuc. 5. 40. 1, which pertains to the year 420 B.C.; the situation was much different in 446, however, when Argos had a treaty with Sparta.

tion ignores the fact that the Argives were not isolated; they already had a treaty with the Spartans. Moreover, why Athens and Sparta should agree to accommodate Argos in this manner has never been made entirely clear. It seems much more likely that the provision was inserted into the truce at the insistence of the Athenians; if so, their motives are not clear either. It is possible that Pericles had some interest in maintaining friendly relations with Argos, but it is also possible that this provision was largely intended to placate his political opponents at home, who must have viewed the conclusion of a truce with Sparta with alarm. Athens and Argos did not conclude a formal treaty, however, and this may well indicate that neither state was very enthusiastic about resuming closer relations with the other.²⁷

We have no other evidence for Argive history or Argive foreign policy in these decades, but there is some archaeological evidence worth noting. Archaeological remains suggest that the third quarter of the fifth century was a period of considerable building activity at Argos. It is difficult to date even approximately the construction of buildings in the city proper, but two large buildings and an impressive retaining wall were erected at the site of the Argive Heraeum in these decades.²⁸ Construction

at the Heraeum was a supreme display of self-confidence, for the site was completely undefended and located some five miles from the city of Argos. It is not likely that the Argives would have borne the expense of such construction if they were not reasonably sure that their territory was safe from foreign invasion. So far as we know, moreover, they made no attempt to strengthen the defenses of their city; and, if they made any effort to increase its offensive potential by building up its naval or land forces, we do not hear of it.²⁹ The impression one gets is that the Argives were relying upon their treaty with Sparta as their first line of defense, and there is no indication that they considered retreating from the policy of accommodation with Sparta that they had adopted in 451. This is at least partially borne out by Thucydides' statement that, when the Peloponnesian War broke out in 431, the Argives were not only officially neutral, but friendly toward both Athens and Sparta.³⁰

The Argives remained neutral throughout the entire Archidamian War. Thucydides implies that the sole reason for this neutrality was the thirty years' truce they had concluded with Sparta in 451. Although this view is widely accepted today,³¹ there is good reason to believe that the position of Argos was considerably more

27. On the complexities of the internal political situation in Athens in this period, see Kagan, *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War*, pp. 120–30. It may also be worth noting that, so far as we know, no Argives took part in the foundation of Thurii a few years later; see V. Ehrenberg, "The Foundation of Thurii," *AJP*, LXIX (1948), 149–70, where the ancient evidence is cited in full.

28. On construction at the Argive Heraeum, see P. Amandry, "Observations sur les monuments de l'Héraion d'Argos," *Hesperia*, XXI (1952), 222–74, esp. 239–70. It is possible that a bouleuterion may have been constructed in the agora about this time, but its date is not firmly fixed; see "Chronique des fouilles," *BCH*, LXXVII (1953), 244–48, where it is dated to "la première moitié du V^e s. au plus tard."

29. It was only much later, during the Peloponnesian War, that the Argives extended long walls to the sea; see Thuc. 5. 82. 5–6. On the lack of Argive naval forces during the war, see Thuc. 5. 56. 1–5, where the Argives rely upon Athenian ships to prevent the Spartans from sending reinforcements to

Epidaurus. At Thuc. 7. 20. 1–3 and 8. 86. 8–9 Argive troops are found being transported aboard Athenian ships, although 8. 27. 5 seems to imply that the Argives had at least some ships of their own. According to Diod. 12. 75. 1, the Argives did attempt to strengthen their ground forces by creating an elite force of a thousand, but he dates this attempt only to the year 421.

30. Thuc. 2. 9. 1.

31. See, e.g., E. Delebecque, *Euripide et la guerre du Péloponnèse* (Paris, 1951), p. 77; J. de Romilly, *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism* (New York, 1963), p. 198; L. E. Lord, *Thucydides and the World War* (Cambridge, Mass., 1945), p. 60; B. W. Henderson, *The Great War between Athens and Sparta* (London, 1927), p. 22. V. Martin, *La vie internationale dans la Grèce des cités* (Paris, 1940), pp. 417–20, calls attention to the fact that treaties between Greek states in this period were invariably broken by one side or the other before the date of expiration. In this respect, Martin considers the treaty between Argos and Sparta as "exceptionnel."

complex than most modern scholars are willing to admit. Most of the uncommitted states of Greece found themselves in a favorable position as hostilities were about to begin; their friendship was actively courted by both major powers. But the Argives were not so fortunate. It is possible that the Spartans did attempt to gain some sort of alliance with them, but, if so, no agreement was ever reached.³² The important consideration for the Argives, however, was that the Athenians were not interested in an alliance with them.³³ Before the war actually broke out, Pericles had decided that when it did come it would have to be fought on the sea, and an open confrontation with the Spartans on land would have to be avoided at all costs. Once this plan was firmly resolved upon, there was no further possibility of an alliance between Athens and Argos, for such an alliance would have been more a liability than an asset to the Athenians.

At the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, accordingly, the position of Argos in a world dominated by Athens and Sparta was precarious, and it was rendered even more so by the fact that both major powers fully understood this. It is perhaps an overstatement to say that Argive differences with Sparta were fundamentally irreconcilable; it is apparent, nonetheless, that, so long as the Spartans refused to give up

Cynouria, the two states might remain at peace, but they were not likely to act in concert. This meant that the Athenians could, by and large, ignore the Argives, for there was virtually nothing Athens might do that would drive Argos into an offensive alliance with Sparta. At the same time the Spartans fully realized that Athens had no interest in an alliance with Argos, and that the Argives were therefore diplomatically isolated. Indeed, one of the first acts of the war clearly emphasizes the Argive dilemma and Sparta's comprehension of Argos' plight. Hardly had hostilities begun when the Aeginetans were driven from their native island by the Athenians. The Spartans promptly settled them in Thyrea in Cynouria.³⁴ This was an area which the Argives still claimed was rightfully theirs, and they could hardly have greeted with joy the sight of Aeginetans being settled there. Yet they took no action to prevent it, and it is clear that the Spartans had rightly anticipated that they would not. No effort was made to fortify the settlement at this time; not until 424 did the Spartans undertake to do so, and then only to protect it from Athenian, not Argive, harassment.³⁵

In short, the policy of neutrality and friendship toward both major powers which the Argives adopted at the outset of the Peloponnesian War was one of neces-

32. Thuc. 2. 7. 1 on the favorable position of neutrals; cf. P. J. Fliess, *Thucydides and the Politics of Bipolarity* (Baton Rouge, 1966), pp. 115–20. It is not certain that the Spartans attempted to draw Argos into an alliance, but Thuc. 1. 82. 1 has Archidamus suggest in a speech that the Spartans should devote their attention "to winning over new allies both among the Hellenes and among foreigners—from any quarter, in fact, where we can increase our naval and financial resources." For this and other passages of Thucydides quoted directly I have used the translation of Rex Warner (Harmondsworth, 1962).

33. That Athens had no interest in alliance with Argos at the outbreak of hostilities has not been generally recognized, but it seems clear from Thuc. 2. 7. 3, where it is related that the Athenians "sent embassies to places in the neighbourhood of the Peloponnesus—to Corcyra, Cephallenia, Acarnania, and Zacynthus—realizing that they could carry on the war all around the Peloponnesus if they could establish firm and friendly relations with these places."

34. Thuc. 2. 27. 1–2. This incident provides a good illustration of how modern scholars sometimes ignore ancient evidence in their attempt to show that events can be explained solely in the light of the enmity that supposedly existed between Sparta and Argos. E.g., E. Delebecque, *Euripide et la guerre du Péloponnèse*, p. 77, states that Sparta settled the Aeginetans in Thyrea so that they might act as a buffer against Argos. There is no evidence to support this view and good reason to believe it is erroneous. *Ar. Ach.* 653 clearly implies that one of the conditions that the Spartans insisted upon for peace with Athens was the return of Aegina to its rightful inhabitants. Accordingly, the Spartans were insisting that the Aeginetans be removed from Thyrea, and they would hardly have done so if they were relying upon the Aeginetans to act as a buffer against Argos.

35. Thuc. 4. 57. 1.

sity; they had no other choice. It could not have taken them long to realize that they had indeed adopted a wise course. Although the Athenians had some limited success with their navy, they were powerless to prevent Spartan land forces from waging successful annual campaigns first in Attica and later in far-off Thrace. If Argos had had an alliance with Athens, the Argive plain would have been subject to similar annual invasions. Without elaborate fortifications the city would have suffered a fate far worse than Athens and Attica had suffered. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the Argives continued to maintain friendly relations with both major powers, as Thucydides and the comic poets Pherecrates and Aristophanes testify.³⁶ Indeed, what little we do know about Argive actions during the Archidamian War suggests that they were, if anything, more partial toward the Spartans than toward the Athenians. In 430 a certain Pollis accompanied a Spartan embassy to Persia seeking aid in the war against Athens, albeit he did so in a private capacity. After the death of Pericles, his successor Cleon offered to enter an alliance with Argos, but this offer was promptly rejected. As late as 425, moreover, the Corinthians were saved from a sure defeat at the hands of the Athenians by information "from Argos" of an impending attack on their city.³⁷

Neutrality provided Argos with a measure of material prosperity during the Archidamian War,³⁸ and, while prosperity may have reaffirmed the wisdom of the Argive decision to remain neutral, one must not suppose that this policy was approved by the entire citizen body of the

city. Throughout the long course of Greek history, the natural state of affairs in the polis was a state of war, not peace, and many Argives no doubt felt that events and opportunities were rapidly passing them by. Other than material prosperity, neutrality provided few if any positive benefits. Cynouria remained in Spartan hands and the Aeginetans continued to reside there. As the war progressed and it became more and more obvious that the Spartans were unable to gain a clear-cut victory over the Athenians, the Argives must have realized that unless the Spartans were victorious, the Aeginetans were not likely to be returned to their native island. So long as they remained in Cynouria, moreover, the Spartans would have to serve as their protectors. In such circumstances one can easily imagine a clamor at Argos for the adoption of a much more dynamic foreign policy all throughout this period, and especially as the Archidamian War evolved into a stalemate. Not until the winter of 422/21, however, is there any indication that the foreign policy which Argos had been following since 451 was about to be abandoned. By then the thirty years' truce with Sparta was about to expire, and the Argives announced that they would not renew it unless Cynouria was returned³⁹ to them. This must be considered a deliberately provocative act against the Spartans; the Argives knew that, so long as the Aeginetans were living in Cynouria, the Spartans could not turn this territory over to them even if they wanted to.

The Argive decision to press for the return of Cynouria in the winter of 422/21, knowing that this demand placed the Spar-

36. Thuc. 2. 9. 1; Pherecrates Frag. 19 (Edmonds); Ar. *Pax* 475-77.

37. Pollis: Thuc. 2. 67. 1. Cleon's offer of alliance is inferred from Ar. *Eq.* 465. Corinth: Thuc. 4. 42. 3. Ehrenberg, *From Solon to Socrates* (London, 1968), p. 452, n. 56, notes that Eur. *Supp.* 1191 ff. "seems to speak of the possibility of an Argive invasion into Attica," but, as Ehrenberg also notes, this does not correspond with anything we know about the

Archidamian War. Attempts such as that of Delebecque, *Euripide et la guerre du Péloponnèse*, to derive extensive information about interstate relations in this period from Euripidean drama seem to me to be far too subjective.

38. Thuc. 5. 28. 2; Diod. 12. 75. 6. V. Martin, *La vie internationale dans la Grèce des cités*, p. 420, cites this prosperity as probably the main reason for Argive neutrality after 431.

39. Thuc. 5. 14. 4.

tans in an impossible position, clearly indicates that Argos had decided to retreat from the policy of neutrality which had insured a generation of peace while most of the Greek world had been embroiled in warfare. It heralds, accordingly, a substantial shift in Argive foreign policy. We must be careful, however, not to interpret Argos' refusal to renew the treaty with Sparta as an attempt to secure closer relations with Athens. It is clear that the Argives were interested in enhancing their own fortunes and that this would have to be done at the expense of Sparta, but contrary to what Thucydides would have us believe, they had no plans to seek assistance from Athens.

It is important to realize also that the timing of this decision is absolutely inexplicable in military terms. By this time, the war had been in progress for nearly ten years, but at no time during that period had the Argives sought to take advantage of Spartan misfortunes. Moreover, at this very moment, talk of peace was in the air. While neither major power had been able to gain a clear-cut victory over the other, the Argives were well aware that the stalemate did not mean that Athens and Sparta were a pair of paper tigers; it meant only that they were more or less evenly matched. Although Spartan territory was subject to periodic raids from Athenian-occupied Cythera and Pylos, the Spartans had only recently won two significant victories on land, at Delium and again at Amphipolis.⁴⁰ Clearly, if the Argives had been waiting for a militarily opportune time to abandon their neutrality, they had passed over more favorable moments.

If the moment was not militarily opportune, it was diplomatically opportune. The

Argives had full knowledge that the peace negotiations which were being conducted between Athens and Sparta at this very moment did not have the backing of all Sparta's allies. The Corinthians, particularly, were less than enthusiastic about a treaty of peace that would leave them losers in the war, and Boeotian and Megarian differences with Athens were far from being resolved.⁴¹ The Argives obviously realized that, by refusing to renew their treaty with Sparta at this time, they were providing the Lacedaemonians with an additional reason for concluding a peace with Athens. Indeed, Thucydides expressly tells us that one of the things which prompted the Spartans to seek a treaty of peace in 421 was the poor state of their relations with Argos, and the Spartans especially claimed to be afraid that they would have to fight a war against both Athens and Argos at the same time.⁴² Yet there is no reason to believe that the Argives, even though they now refused to renew their treaty with Sparta, were contemplating an immediate war. They had no allies; and, with Nicias the dominant political figure at Athens, the mood there was decidedly in favor of peace. Even if the prospect of an Athenian-Argive alliance had been present, the Argives must surely have known that the Spartan army was still the dominant military force in the Peloponnesus and that, if the Athenian navy could not prevent the Spartans from sending land forces to far-off Thrace, it would have been equally powerless to prevent a Spartan invasion of the Argive plain. The Spartans obviously feared Argive-Athenian co-operation far less than they professed to,⁴³ and they can only have hoped that this specious argu-

40. Thuc. 5. 14. 1.

41. On the peace negotiations, see Thuc. 5. 14–5. 17. At 5. 14. 4 Thuc. states expressly that the Spartans suspected, even before the Peace of Nicias was concluded, that certain Peloponnesian states might go over to Argos.

42. 5. 14. 4.

43. I do not wish to imply that the Spartans had no fear of an aggressive Argos; the point I am stressing is that the Spartans must have known that there was little likelihood of Argos and Athens co-operating at this time. It has often been suggested, e.g., by P. A. Brunt, *Phoenix*, XIX (1965), 277, that the Argives were counting on closer relations with Athens

ment would help convince their allies that a treaty of peace with Athens was not only desirable, but necessary. When Sparta concluded the Peace of Nicias with Athens in March of 421, while Corinthian, Megarian, and Boeotian war aims remained unfulfilled, they had in fact deserted their allies; and one can hardly doubt that this is precisely what Argos had anticipated and hoped the Spartans would do when the Argives refused to renew their treaty in the previous winter.

The Peace of Nicias, as everyone knows, created more problems than it solved for the Spartans. Several of their chief allies, the Corinthians, Megarians, and Boeotians, refused to accept its terms, and unless they did so, there was little likelihood that the peace would be permanent. To counteract the opposition from her allies, Sparta began to seek closer relations with Athens, and in the summer of 421 the two states agreed to become allies for a fifty-year period. The series of events which led up to the conclusion of this alliance is instructive, for it shows how both Sparta and Argos were using their strained relations with one another for their own purposes. Shortly after the Peace of Nicias was concluded, the Spartans sent an embassy to Argos to attempt to reach some accord with their Peloponnesian neighbor. On this occasion, as a few months earlier, the Argives flatly refused to renew the treaty of 451.⁴⁴ The refusal came as no surprise at Sparta; indeed, the haste with which this embassy had been dispatched to Argos suggests that the Spartans fully anticipated that the Argives would not come to terms with them. They could then claim, as they certainly did, that the poor state of their

relations with Argos forced them to seek closer ties with Athens, and that a Spartan-Athenian alliance was necessary to prevent an Argive-Athenian alliance. The Spartans must have been well aware, however, that there was little possibility of such an alliance being concluded at this time. They were merely using this argument to justify their own alliance with Athens, which they hoped would coerce the disaffected members of the Peloponnesian League into agreeing to the terms of the Peace of Nicias. The Argives could only rejoice; the more the Spartans sought to reconcile their differences with Athens, the wider the gap separating them from their allies became, and nothing could have pleased the Argives more.

The alliance between Sparta and Athens so alienated the Corinthians that, immediately after the treaty was signed, Corinthian ambassadors proceeded directly from Sparta to Argos where they "entered into negotiations with some members of the Government there." These ambassadors made a direct appeal to Argos' fear and distrust of Sparta, and at the same time they offered the Argives the prospect of becoming the head of a coalition of Peloponnesian states. The Corinthians argued that the Spartan treaty with Athens was merely a ruse, the aim of which was to allow the Spartans to subvert the independence of the Peloponnesus. The Argives could prevent this by taking the lead in establishing a defensive alliance against Sparta, and there were, the Corinthians assured them, many states that would join such a league out of hatred for Sparta.⁴⁵ This was clever propaganda, and no doubt it was promptly recognized as such by the Argive politicians who had received the Corinthians;⁴⁶ but it was also

when they refused to renew the treaty with Sparta; but, as I have argued above, this does not appear to be the case. Indeed, *Ar. Pax* (esp. 475-77), which was performed only a few days before the Peace of Nicias was concluded, shows no hint of Athenian-Argive co-operation.

44. Thuc. 5. 22. 2.

45. Thuc. 5. 27. 1-3; the quotation is from 5. 27. 2.

46. H. D. Westlake, "Corinth and the Argive Coalition," *AJP*, LXI (1940), 413-21, esp. 414, points out that Thucydides, although he reports the Corinthian charge against the Spartans, does not suggest that it had any concrete foundation. Diod. 12. 75. 4 accepts it as fact, as do many modern scholars.

a useful tool which might convince the Argive demos to follow the advice of the Corinthians. Having actively sought to widen the gap between Sparta and her allies, Argos now had to act quickly and decisively to accommodate the Corinthians, for, if no effort was made to do so, the Corinthians would have no choice but to reconcile their differences with Sparta and agree to the terms of the Peace of Nicias.

It seems clear that the Argives abandoned their treaty with Sparta and their official neutrality in order to secure more friendly relations with Corinth and other Spartan allies who were not in favor of the Peace of Nicias. Just a few years earlier, in 426, however, Argos had turned down Cleon's offer of an alliance with Athens, and we should need no clearer indication that Argive foreign policy did not revolve around the dual poles of friendship for Athens and hatred for Sparta. The Argives elected to follow a foreign policy which was decidedly anti-Spartan, but it was not at the same time pro-Athenian. They were fully aware that none of their potential allies in the league they were trying to create was even remotely pro-Athenian. They were either anti-Spartan like Elis and Mantinea, anti-Athenian like Boeotia, Megara, and the Chalcidians, or both anti-Spartan and anti-Athenian like Corinth.⁴⁷ There was no possibility that the Argive league might co-operate with Athens. By this time, however, both major powers had built up a legacy of hatred and mistrust throughout the Greek world, and the Argives had no doubt acquired a reputation for being neither pro-Spartan nor pro-

Athenian. They were, therefore, in a unique position to capitalize upon both anti-Spartan and anti-Athenian feeling, and this is precisely what they were attempting to do.

From the very outset, however, this new Argive foreign policy was not likely to succeed. Greece was still dominated by two superpowers, and too many of Argos' potential allies had their own self-interest at heart. Although the Mantineans and Eleans quickly joined the league, their main aim was to resist Spartan encroachment on their own affairs. The Corinthians and Chalcidians soon followed, but they were primarily interested in renewing the war against Athens. Unfortunately for the Argives, however, Boeotia, Megara, and Tegea remained aloof from the alliance. The Boeotians and Megarians, though unhappy with the Peace of Nicias, were distrustful of the democratic government of Argos; the Tegeans had engaged in a minor war with the Mantineans only a short time earlier, and they were not at all disposed toward a policy of co-operation with them now.⁴⁸ When these three states refused to desert their Spartan allies, Argive enthusiasm for the league noticeably declined. Argos must have quickly come to realize that anti-Spartan feeling was not so widespread or so deep-seated as the Corinthians had led them to believe. In addition Corinthian behavior was becoming increasingly cause for concern: the Corinthians had sabotaged attempts to bring Boeotia into the league; and when Mantinea and Elis agreed with Argos to turn their defensive alliance into an offensive alliance as well, the Corinthians refused to participate.⁴⁹

47. D. Kagan, "Corinthian Diplomacy after the Peace of Nicias," *AJP*, LXXXI (1960), 291-310, and "Argive Policy and Politics after the Peace of Nicias," *CP*, LVII (1962), 209-18, has examined the aims of each of the various states.

48. On Boeotian and Megarian fear of the democratic government of Argos, see Thuc. 5. 31. 6; on the war between Tegea and Mantinea, 4. 134. 1; on Tegea's refusal to desert Sparta, 5. 32. 3-4.

49. Thuc. 5. 48. 2 mentions the Corinthian refusal to participate in an offensive alliance, but the exact date of this alliance cannot be determined. I accept here the argument of Kagan, *AJP*, LXXXI (1960), 302-304, that Corinth opposed, and succeeded in preventing, an alliance between Argos and Boeotia. For a different interpretation of the evidence, see Westlake, *AJP*, LXI (1940), 413-21.

By the spring of 420, therefore, the Argive attempt to create an independent league of states had, predictably, ground to a halt, and it was obvious that the foreign policy adopted in the previous summer had failed dismally. It was now necessary for the Argives to consider what other options were open to them. The only apparent alternatives were either to resume their neutrality or to seek an alliance with one of the major powers. It was the latter course that the Argive demos chose; incongruous as it may seem, they did not turn toward Athens, but rather toward Sparta.⁵⁰ At first sight, this seems to constitute conclusive and irrefutable proof that Argos was not committed to a policy of friendship toward Athens, but the situation is a good deal more complicated than a quick glance at the evidence might suggest.

It has often been noted that internal politics played a large part in determining the course of Argive foreign policy in this period, but scholars who have called attention to this fact have not always seen it in its proper perspective. They tend to classify all Argives as either oligarchs who favored closer relations with Sparta or democrats who opposed Sparta and must have been, therefore, pro-Athenian.⁵¹ As we have seen, those Argives who favored the attempt to create an independent league of states in 421 were neither pro-Spartan nor pro-Athenian. They were, rather, thoroughly loyal to and predominantly interested in the well-being of their own city. There is no reason to believe, however, that this independent foreign policy was unanimously supported by the Argive demos. Many thoroughly loyal democrats may well have believed that it was an unwise

course and that Argos' only hope lay in securing an alliance with Athens. More importantly, however, there was a group of Argives who were sympathetic to and eager to pursue closer relations with Sparta. This latter group, in fact, actually desired Spartan aid in overthrowing the democratic government of the city and in establishing an oligarchy.⁵² These pro-Spartan oligarchs in all probability did not wholeheartedly support the attempt to create an independent league of states, but they were in a decided minority and could hardly oppose it openly. Since, moreover, the league was potentially as much anti-Athenian as it was anti-Spartan, they could probably give it at least their passive support.

Yet even if these pro-Spartan oligarchs passively supported the attempt to create an independent league of states, they were probably not entirely disappointed when the league failed to materialize. Although Thucydides implies that they made no overt attempt to gain control of the government of the city prior to 418, it seems clear from his account that it was they who advocated the policy of alliance with Sparta early in the summer of 420. What is not so readily apparent, however, is how they were nearly able to achieve this goal. In order to understand the situation, it is necessary to keep in mind that substantial political changes had taken place at Sparta since the Peace of Nicias and the alliance with Athens had been concluded in the previous year. In the winter of 421/20, elections were held and the Spartans rejected, at least in part, the ephors who had favored closer relations with Athens. New ephors were chosen; and at least two of these, Cleobulus

50. Thuc. 5. 40. 3.

51. See, e.g., Kagan, *CP*, LVII (1962), 209–18; E. Schwartz, *Das Geschichtswerk des Thukydides* (Bonn, 1919), pp. 66–71; G. Busolt, *Forschungen zur griechischen Geschichte* (Breslau, 1880), pp. 75–181. The common assumption that political factions in the various Greek states can be divided into democrats who favored Athens and oligarchs who favored

Sparta (see most recently Fliess, *Thucydides and the Politics of Bipolarity*, pp. 138–50) may be an oversimplification. R. P. Legon, "Megara and Mytilene," *Phoenix*, XXII (1968), 200–25, has shown that there is evidence for more than two factions at Megara and Mytilene in the late fifth century.

52. Thuc. 5. 76. 2.

and Xenares, not only were opposed to the Peace of Nicias and the alliance with Athens, but actively sought a renewal of the Peloponnesian War. They were interested, additionally, in arranging an alliance between Sparta and Argos. Almost immediately upon assuming office, they launched a plan which they hoped would result in such an alliance. Cleobulus and Xenares secretly and privately communicated with the Boeotians and urged them to enter the Argive league. Once Boeotia had joined the league, the ephors believed, the Boeotians could then use their influence to swing Argos into alliance with Sparta.⁵³ Corinthian ambassadors were also informed of the plan, but as it turned out they did not favor it. It was Corinth's aim, rather, to prevent an alliance between Argos and Sparta, in the belief that Cleobulus and Xenares would have greater success in renewing hostilities with Athens if Argos remained a threat to Spartan hegemony and security in the Peloponnesus. The Corinthians were successful in preventing the Boeotians from entering an alliance with Argos;⁵⁴ and, when their initial plan was thus thwarted, Cleobulus and Xenares sought other means to renew the war with Athens and to gain an alliance with Argos.

Thucydides tells us nothing about this second plan of the Spartan ephors, but, as I have tried to show elsewhere,⁵⁵ Cleobulus and Xenares must have played a greater role in succeeding events than the historian realized. He does tell us that they advised and encouraged their fellow Spartans to agree to enter a separate alliance with the Boeotians in the spring of 420; in return for this treaty, the Boeotians agreed to turn Panactum over to the Spartans so that they

in turn might exchange it with Athens for Pylos. Cleobulus and Xenares knew that a separate treaty with Boeotia was an open violation of the Peace of Nicias, and they were counting on it to strain Spartan-Athenian relations seriously, perhaps even to goad the Athenians into a renewal of the war. But that was not, apparently, their sole motive, for at the same time they hoped to secure an alliance with Argos. Thucydides tells us that immediately upon the conclusion of the treaty the Boeotians began to demolish the fortification at Panactum, and he assures us that they did this on their own. Cleobulus and Xenares seem to have been fully aware that the demolition was taking place, however, and it was probably begun at their suggestion. Although the demolition of Panactum and the Spartan-Boeotian treaty were supposedly kept secret, it is clear from Thucydides' account that the Argives learned about the demolition of the fort before either the Athenians or the official government at Sparta, and that they learned at the same time that Sparta and Boeotia had concluded a treaty. Whoever informed the Argives about these events completely misinformed them as to their significance. The Argives were led to believe that the Athenians, who were in fact not aware of either the treaty or the demolition of the fort, knew about and approved both measures, and that Sparta, Boeotia, and Athens were acting in concert. The Boeotians, they believed, were on the verge of agreeing to the terms of the Peace of Nicias; and, when this happened, the Argives might be forced to fight a war against all three states as well as Tegea. In such circumstances, there was only one course of action open to them: an

53. Thuc. 5. 36. 1-2. I. Hahn, "Aspekte der spartanischen Aussenpolitik im V. Jh.," *AAnt Hung*, XVII (1969), 285-96, has argued, I believe correctly, that the Spartan ephors had no long-range effect on Spartan foreign policy, but that they could, nevertheless, exert considerable influence during their one-year term of office.

54. This is the argument of Kagan, *AJP*, LXXXI (1960), 302-304, which I accept.

55. See my article, "Cleobulus, Xenares, and Thucydides' Account of the Demolition of Panactum," *Historia*, XXI (1972), 159-69, where the pertinent passages of Thuc. have been cited.

immediate alliance with Sparta on any terms they might get. To this end the Argives immediately dispatched to Sparta two ambassadors "who seemed most likely to be acceptable to the Spartans," to arrange an alliance.⁵⁶

It was only while these ambassadors were in Sparta that the Argives learned that they had been completely misled. When news of the demolition of Panactum and the Spartan-Boeotian treaty reached Athens, Alcibiades, acting in a private capacity, quickly informed the Argives of the true state of affairs and urged them to send ambassadors to Athens, where he promised to do all he could to secure an alliance between the two states.⁵⁷ Without even bothering to inform their ambassadors at Sparta, the Argives, along with the Mantineans and Eleans, agreed to enter an alliance with Athens,⁵⁸ and for the first time in more than thirty years Argos and Athens agreed to follow a common foreign policy. It is absolutely essential to recognize, however, that the Argives agreed to co-operate with Athens only after they had detected a serious threat to the democratic government of their city. They had nearly been tricked into an alliance with Sparta.

While Cleobulus and Xenares were the instigators of the plot, there can be no doubt that they had the full co-operation of the pro-Spartan oligarchs at Argos. The Argive ambassadors "who seemed most likely to be acceptable to the Spartans" were surely pro-Spartan Argives, and their behavior at Sparta shows clearly where their sympathies lay. It is not surprising that these ambassadors were not favorably received at Sparta and were unable to gain any concessions on Cynouria. Cleobulus

and Xenares were in a minority; the three other ephors, apparently, were not party to their plot and were not especially interested in securing an alliance with Argos. Initially the Argive ambassadors proposed that the whole matter of Cynouria be settled by arbitration, but the Spartans refused to discuss such a proposal. The Spartans did, however, offer to renew the treaty of 451 on the same terms. Under the circumstances, this was probably the most the Argives could hope for, but they refused the Spartan offer and advanced a counterproposal. They suggested that a fifty-year treaty of peace be arranged between the two states, but with the important qualification that "each state should have the right, provided that there was no plague or war in Sparta or Argos, to issue a challenge to the other to decide the question of the disputed land by battle . . ." The Spartans initially regarded this proposal as "a piece of foolishness," but finally agreed to accept it on condition that it was approved by the Argive demos. Clearly, the Argive ambassadors had betrayed the trust placed in them. There was no possibility that the Argive army could have defeated the Spartan army in a battle over Cynouria; and this treaty, if approved by the Argive demos, would have given the Spartans an opportunity to settle the question of control of Cynouria to their own satisfaction once and for all.⁵⁹ In short, it was not any natural affection for the Athenians that led the Argives to conclude an alliance with them;⁶⁰ it was, rather, a serious threat to the democratic government of the city which had come dangerously close to being subverted from within.

In opting for alliance with Athens in the

56. These events are described at Thuc. 5. 40–5. 43.

57. Thuc. 5. 44. 1–3.

58. Thuc. 5. 47. 1–12, and cf. Bengtson, *Staatsverträge*, Nr. 193. Note that the Argives were eager to arrange an alliance while the pro-Spartan ambassadors were still negotiating in Sparta.

59. These events are described at Thuc. 5. 40–5. 41.

60. M. Treu, "Staatsrechtliches bei Thukydides," *Historia*, XVII (1968), 155–56, points out that the motivation for the treaty came from Athens, not Argos.

summer of 420, the Argives had chosen the lesser of two evils, but for the next two years they fully co-operated with their new ally. They assisted in preventing the Spartans from participating in the Olympic games in the summer of 420,⁶¹ and in the following year they invaded Epidaurus on the advice of Alcibiades.⁶² Although Alcibiades proposed this invasion on the grounds that the capture of Epidaurus would quiet the Corinthians and give the Athenians a shorter route by which they might more easily supply aid to their Argive allies, his real aim was to provoke Sparta to war. The Spartans were duty-bound to come to the defense of their ally and fellow member of the Peloponnesian League; this invasion, consequently, placed the Argives on a collision course with Sparta. Many genuinely patriotic Argives undoubtedly feared an invasion of their territory in retaliation, and their fears were not allayed when the Athenians proved incapable of preventing Spartan reinforcements from reaching Epidaurus by sea and an all-out attempt to take the city by siege ended in failure.⁶³

It is hardly surprising that the ill-fated invasion of Epidaurus was followed in 418 by a reaction against the policy of alliance with Athens, and, as a result, the position of the pro-Spartan oligarchs at Argos was strengthened. Indeed, Thrasyllus, one of the five strategoi elected in this year, was an avowed Spartan sympathizer, and he appears to have had sufficient influence to be in command of the Argive army when the

Spartans decided to press for a military showdown in the summer of this year.⁶⁴ As hostilities were about to begin on the field of battle at Methydrium, Thrasyllus and an accomplice held a private meeting with the Spartan king Agis, and a four-month truce was arranged. Professor Kagan has argued,⁶⁵ I believe rightly, that by this time the oligarchs were supremely confident of their position in Argos and believed that it was only a matter of time until they could convince the Argive demos that it was wise to reach some accord with Sparta. The oligarchs were apparently able to convince Agis that they would soon bring Argos into an alliance with Sparta by peaceful means, and he agreed to a four-month truce to give them time to accomplish this.

The truce was not greeted favorably in either Sparta or Argos. In fact, Thrasyllus was subsequently attacked for his cowardice and saved his life only by fleeing to an altar. Yet the Argives did not immediately renounce the agreement he had made with Agis. This may seem odd at first sight, but it is easily explained. The Argives were becoming thoroughly suspicious of the real intentions of their Athenian allies. Alcibiades had, after all, urged them to follow a course of action which led directly and predictably to a military showdown with Sparta; but, when a military confrontation seemed imminent, the Athenians were not on hand to support their Argive allies.⁶⁶ There can be no doubt that Athenian-Argive relations were seriously strained as a result. Thucydides expressly tells us that,

61. On the Olympic games see Thuc. 5. 50. 3. It is worth noting here that shortly after this the Argives approached the Corinthians and invited them to join the alliance with Athens (Thuc. 5. 50. 4). Westlake, *AJP*, LXI (1940), 418, cites this passage, along with 5. 48, as proof that the Argives were completely fooled by the Corinthians and never fully understood their motives, but this does not do the Argives justice. The Spartans had, after all, been thoroughly humiliated at Olympia, and the Argives had some reason to believe that the Corinthians might now be willing to desert the Peloponnesian League.

62. Thuc. 5. 53. 1 and 5. 55. 1-4.

63. Thuc. 5. 56. 1-5.

64. Kagan, *CP*, LVII (1960), 212-13.

65. Thuc. 5. 59-5. 60 and Kagan, *CP*, LVII (1960), 212-15.

66. Thuc. 5. 59. 3; Busolt, *Forschungen zur griechischen Geschichte*, p. 176, has argued that the Athenian cavalry was on the way and that Thrasyllus knew this and told Agis, who then agreed to a four-month truce. This seems most unlikely. Thuc. 5. 61. 1 indicates that the Athenians did not finally appear until after the Argive forces had arrived back in the city of Argos. Thuc. 5. 55. 3-4 may imply that the Athenians had failed to arrive in time to help the Argives at Epidaurus in the previous year, but the passage is difficult to interpret.

when Alcibiades arrived at Argos—shortly after Thrasyllus had arranged the truce with Agis—and sought to present his case before the Argive demos, they initially refused to hear him and finally consented to do so only at the urging of their Mantinean and Elean allies.⁶⁷ Although Alcibiades was able to convince the Argives that they had no right to make a separate truce with Sparta, he was not immediately successful in getting them to renounce that truce; and they refused to join in the attack on Orchomenus that was now being planned by the Athenians, Mantineans, and Eleans. For some reason unknown to us, however, once the attack was in progress, the Argives reversed their position and joined in the campaign; subsequently they agreed to participate in an assault upon Tegea, where there was a substantial pro-Argive party.⁶⁸

The pro-Spartan oligarchs had clearly misjudged their influence within the city. They had not been able to bring Argos into alliance with Sparta as they had promised Agis, who was now seriously reprimanded by his own people. The Spartans were in a critical position. They could not allow Tegea to fall into enemy hands, and they began to prepare for a full-scale military confrontation. Much has been written about the battle of Mantinea, and the evidence has been variously interpreted.⁶⁹ It is difficult to decide whether the Argive oligarchs fought bravely or did less than their share. One way or the other, however,

the Spartans emerged victorious from this campaign; they defeated the combined forces of Argos, Athens, Mantinea, and Elis, and were once again the unchallenged masters of the Peloponnesus. To make matters worse, the Epidaurians had attacked and laid waste the city of Argos while the Argives were busy at Mantinea.⁷⁰ Clearly, therefore, alliance with Athens had proven no more successful than the attempt to create an independent league of states; in fact, there was now nothing to prevent the Spartans from moving into the Argive plain and attacking the city of Argos.

It is no wonder that after the battle of Mantinea the Argive oligarchs were, as Thucydides puts it, “now far better able to persuade the people to come to an agreement with Sparta.”⁷¹ By the winter of 418/17 the Argive position was desperate, and when ambassadors arrived from Sparta offering a choice of peace or war, it is not surprising that the oligarchs were able to persuade a majority of Argives to come to some agreement with Sparta and accept the Spartan terms for peace. Thucydides clearly states, however, that the oligarchs’ aim was to follow this treaty of peace with an alliance and after that to “attack the democracy.”⁷² This is precisely what they proceeded to do; a short time later the Argives renounced their treaty with Athens, Elis, and Mantinea, and concluded an alliance with Sparta. In the spring of 417, the Spartans, in co-operation with one

67. Thuc. 5. 61. 2–3.

68. Thuc. 5. 61. 4–5, 5. 64. 1–3.

69. Thuc. 5. 61–5. 75; Diod. 12. 79. 4–7. W. J. Woodhouse, “The Campaign and Battle of Mantinea in 418 B.C.,” *BSA*, XXII (1916–18), 51–83, and *King Agis of Sparta and his Campaign in Arkadia in 418 B.C.* (Oxford, 1933), argues that the battle was brilliantly planned by Agis to spare the life of the Argive aristocrats. This view was attacked by A. W. Gomme, “Thucydides and the Battle of Mantinea,” *Essays in Greek History and Literature* (Oxford, 1937), pp. 132–55. D. Gillis, “Collusion at Mantinea,” *RIL*, XCVII (1963), 199–226, has relied heavily on Diodorus to support his thesis that the Argive oligarchs were all but guilty of treason on the field of battle.

70. Thuc. 5. 75. 4.

71. Thuc. 5. 76. 2; Kagan, *CP*, LVII (1960), 216, notes that after the battle of Mantinea the oligarchic Thousand formed the only substantial force in the city. Kagan also notes, and rightly, that the oligarchs were now politically as well as militarily stronger. Argos, even with the aid of their Mantinean, Elean, and Athenian allies, had suffered a severe military defeat, and this defeat reflected upon the politicians who had supported Argos’ policy of alliance with Athens. Busolt, *Forschungen zur griechischen Geschichte*, pp. 178–81, notes that the battle gave rise to a general oligarchical reaction throughout the Peloponnesus.

72. Thuc. 5. 76. 2.

thousand Argives, overthrew the democratic government of the city and established an oligarchy.⁷³

The policy of alliance and co-operation with Sparta advocated and pursued by the Argive oligarchs had led directly to the overthrow of the democratic government of the city and the complete subordination of Argive interests to those of Sparta. The result was predictable: a severe reaction against the pro-Spartan sympathizers and their policy. Although few of the details are known to us, it is clear the Argive democrats succeeded in regaining power by force in the summer of 417. In the course of their uprising, some of the pro-Spartan oligarchs were killed and others driven into exile. Yet the democrats still had to contend with a sizable group that continued to oppose the democracy, and in such circumstances it was essential that the new government seek closer ties with Athens. From this time onward, accordingly, the Argive democrats seem to have been irrevocably committed to a policy of alliance with Athens,⁷⁴ but only as the lesser of several evils. With Athenian aid they began to construct long walls from the city to the sea, and in 416 they called upon the Athenians to remove an additional three hundred Spartan sympathizers from the city. Thereafter, while a few Argives still continued to oppose the democracy and to favor closer ties with Sparta,⁷⁵ they were never again able to acquire a prominent place in the government of the city, and Argive foreign policy was never again avowedly pro-Spartan. At the same time, however, it was

not necessarily pro-Athenian either. The Argives, in fact, never contributed any substantial support to their Athenian allies. The two states did co-operate on several campaigns within the Peloponnesus;⁷⁶ but the Argives sent only a token force of five hundred hoplites to Sicily, and Thucydides says expressly that they did so more out of hatred for Sparta than love for Athens. A few years later, fifteen hundred Argives sailed with the Athenians to Miletus, but withdrew hurriedly after an initial defeat there.⁷⁷

In sum, it seems safe to conclude that any characterization of fifth-century Argive foreign policy as unalterably and irrevocably anti-Spartan and pro-Athenian is a gross oversimplification. Prior to 461 Athens and Argos had little in common, and it was only when Athens and Sparta began to have serious differences with each other that Argos drew closer to Athens. The Argives' initial attempt at alliance quickly ended in failure, and from 451 until 420 there is not a shred of evidence to suggest that democratic Argos was interested in maintaining particularly close relations with democratic Athens. The Athenians may have been desirous of an alliance with Argos in 446, but they had lost interest in such an alliance by the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War in 431. Throughout this same period, Argos and Sparta were sometimes at odds, at other times reasonably friendly. Early in the century, the Argives had halfheartedly tried to take advantage of dissent within the Peloponnesian League, and later they had

73. Thuc. 5. 77-5, 79 and 5. 81. 2; cf. Bengtson, *Staatsverträge*, Nr. 194. It is worth noting here that the treaty offered to the Argives was very favorable. By its terms Argos and Sparta were to serve as equal partners in determining matters within the Peloponnesus; see Schwartz, *Das Geschichtswerk des Thukydides*, pp. 63-71. S. Payrau, "Sur un passage d'Andocide (Paix, 27)," *REA*, LXIII (1961), 15-30, has also called attention to the favorable terms granted to the Argives, but his attempt to prove that a *παρπία ελπίσιν* existed between Argos and Sparta throughout the fifth century is not entirely convincing.

74. Thuc. 5. 82. 2, and cf. Bengtson, *Staatsverträge*, Nr. 196.

75. Long walls: Thuc. 5. 82. 6; removal of oligarchs: 5. 84. 1; continued opposition from pro-Spartan party: 5. 116. 1 and 6. 61. 3.

76. Thuc. 6. 7. 1-2, 6. 105. 1-3, 7. 26. 1-3; and several campaigns were waged against Sparta without aid from the Athenians: see Thuc. 5. 115. 1 and 6. 95. 1.

77. Sicily: Thuc. 6. 4. 31, and esp. 7. 57. 9; Miletus: Thuc. 8. 25-8. 27. 5.

tried to co-operate with Athens, but after 451 there is no hint of hostility between Sparta and Argos until the winter of 422/21. When it became clear at that time that there was once again serious dissatisfaction within the Peloponnesian League, the Argives decided to retreat from the policy of neutrality they had adopted in 451. The league they attempted to create, however, was at least as much anti-Athenian as anti-Spartan; and, when the league did not materialize, the Argives agreed, in 420, to enter an alliance with Athens. They did so only after the democratic government of their city had almost been subverted from within. Less than two years later the Argives withdrew from this alliance, and the Argive oligarchs, with Spartan assist-

ance, proceeded to overthrow the democratic government of the city. From that time onward, a majority of Argives seem to have been irrevocably committed to a policy of co-operation with Athens, but they adopted this course of action largely in self-defense. Fifth-century Argive foreign policy, in short, can only be characterized as essentially pro-Argive. On occasion the Argives' own interests brought them into conflict with Sparta and resulted in the adoption of a foreign policy which can only be termed anti-Spartan, but it was not at the same time necessarily pro-Athenian. In the Argive mind these were not, apparently, synonymous terms.

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