

## ISOCRATES ON THE PEACE TREATIES

‘The Greeks have two treaties with the King: the one which our city made, which all praise; and later the Lacedaemonians made the one which all condemn,’ says Demosthenes (15. 29) c. 350. Isocrates, however, did not always run with the pack, for a few years earlier he urged the Athenians to make peace on the basis of the treaty ‘with the King and the Lacedaemonians [which] commands the Greeks to be autonomous, the garrisons to depart from the cities of others, and each people to have its own territory’ (*On the Peace* 8. 16).

Scholars used to take this as a reference to the Peace of Antalkidas in 386, but Ryder (generally followed by Sinclair and Cargill) argues that the Peace of 375 is meant, since it, and not the earlier treaty, called for the removal of garrisons.<sup>1</sup> Even Cawkwell, who points out that Diodorus (15. 5. 1) gives the withdrawal of garrisons as one of the terms of the Peace of Antalkidas, nevertheless considers it ‘much more likely that [Isocrates] is thinking of the Peace of 375’.<sup>2</sup> Another section of the speech shows that Isocrates is talking about the Peace of Antalkidas.

In §64 Isocrates urges the Athenians to give up their lust for *τῆς ἀρχῆς τῆς κατὰ θάλατταν*. ‘For this is what has now put us into disarray and destroyed that democracy with which our ancestors were the most fortunate of the Greeks, and is the cause of practically all the ills which we have ourselves and inflict upon others.’ Thalassocracy also did the Spartans no good, for when they held (*εἶχον*) this power we repeatedly denounced them, called cities into alliance against them, and sent ambassadors to the King. ‘We did not stop making war and taking risks on land and sea before the Lacedaemonians were willing to make the treaty about autonomy’ (67 f.).

The key here is *εἶχον*. When did the Spartans hold *τὴν ἀρχὴν τὴν κατὰ θάλατταν*? Throughout his writings Isocrates says that the Spartans lost their *arche* when Konon defeated them in a naval battle. In 380 he notes the arrest of Konon, who *στρατηγήσας τὴν ἀρχὴν Λακεδαιμονίων κατέλυσεν* (4. 154). In the 360s he says, *Λακεδαιμόνιοι μὲν κατεναυμαχήθησαν καὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἀπεστερήθησαν, οἱ δ’ Ἕλληνες ἡλευθέρωθησαν... Κόνωνος μὲν στρατηγούντος* (9. 56). Here he specifies Knidos as the location of the battle and details its results: ‘The King was established as master of all Asia, the Lacedaemonians instead of ravaging the continent were compelled to take risks for their own country, the Greeks achieved autonomy instead of slavery, and the Athenians increased so much that their former rulers came to offer the *arche* to them’ (9. 68).<sup>3</sup> Implicitly he is connecting the battle with the Peace of Antalkidas. Still in 346 Konon *νικήσας τῇ ναυμαχίᾳ Λακεδαιμονίους μὲν ἐξέβαλεν ἐκ τῆς ἀρχῆς, τοὺς δ’ Ἕλληνας ἡλευθέρωσεν* (5. 63 f.). Finally in 339 he is explicit

<sup>1</sup> T. T. B. Ryder, *Koine Eirene* (London, 1965), p. 122; Robert K. Sinclair, ‘The King’s Peace and the Employment of Military and Naval Forces 387–378’, *Chiron* 8 (1978), 29 f.; Jack Cargill, *The Second Athenian League* (Berkeley, 1981), p. 182.

<sup>2</sup> G. L. Cawkwell, ‘The King’s Peace’, *CQ* n.s. 31 (1981), 72 f.

<sup>3</sup> At 7. 65 Isocrates, contrasting the tyranny of the Thirty with the government of the restored democracy, says that ‘when the exiles, having returned, dared to fight on behalf of liberty and Konon conquered in a sea battle, ambassadors came from [the Lacedaemonians] and offered the command of the sea to the city’. This offer is otherwise unattested, but surely Isocrates means that it occurred in the 390s, not the 370s.

about the relationship between Knidos and the treaty. When the Spartans 'desired to take power on the sea' (12. 103), *καταναυμαχθέντες ὑπὸ τε τῆς βασιλέως δυνάμεως καὶ τῆς Κόνωνος στρατηγίας τοιαύτην ἐποίησαντο τὴν εἰρήνην* (105 f.).<sup>4</sup>

At times Isocrates assigns the credit for destroying the Spartan *arche* to Athens. Even in 380 he suggests that the Persian authorities were militarily incompetent and that it was Greeks who won the battle of Knidos: the Athenian rowers, the *synedrion* at Korinth, and especially Konon as admiral.<sup>5</sup> By 373 he has proof. The recent fighting has shown that Athens by itself can force the Spartans to sue for peace. Using the 'method of difference' he concludes that it was Athens, not the King, which destroyed Sparta's *arche* in the Korinthian War: 'Who does not know that... you in turn took away their *arche*, starting out from a city which was unwalled and faring badly, but having Justice as an ally? And the recent past [378–375] showed clearly that the King was not the cause of [your earlier success]: although he was [now] out of the affair, your condition was hopeless, and practically all the cities were subject to the Lacedaemonians, nevertheless you so outfought them that they welcomed the peace' of 375.<sup>6</sup>

Isocrates, then, holds that Sparta's naval empire was overthrown by Konon and Athens during the Korinthian War. It was while Sparta still possessed this empire (ᾧτε... ταύτην εἶχον τὴν δύναμιν) that 'we did not stop making war and taking risks on land and sea before the Lacedaemonians were willing to make the treaty about autonomy' (16. 67 f.). The fighting actually ended in 386; it did not continue down to 375. Conversely, when war broke out again in 378, the Spartans no longer held sway on the sea. The 'treaty about autonomy' which Isocrates mentions in sections 16 and 68 of *On the Peace* is therefore the Peace of Antalkidas.

Both *On the Peace* and *Against Leptines* come from the 350s. In the latter Demosthenes says (20. 60) that Thrasyboulos provided the Athenians with enough money to enable them *Λακεδαιμονίους ἀναγκάσαι τοιαύτην οἶαν ὑμῖν ἐδόκει ποιήσασθαι τὴν εἰρήνην*. This confirms what one can learn from Isocrates himself: at this time the Athenians could believe that they had compelled the Spartans to make a treaty which was beneficial to Athens.

The Peace of Antalkidas was, after all, half a loaf and, as such, could be blamed or praised, as the situation demanded. In his role as panegyrist Isocrates does both, adopting in the *Panathenaicus* the Athenian tradition of contrasting it unfavourably with the Peace of Kallias (12. 59 f. and 105 f.), but also embracing the results of Knidos when his task is to praise Euagoras, a ruler who contributed mightily to that victory (9. 67 f.). It is only in the symbouleutic speeches that we can expect to find a more searching consideration of the Peace of Antalkidas. Even in 380, when it was an unpleasant reality and not yet a *topos*, Isocrates had to admit that it contained good provisions. The problem was, he says, that only the bad portions were enforced: 'We happen to be preserving the worst of what is written in the agreements. For the terms which set the islands and the cities in Europe free (*αὐτονόμους*) have been undone long ago and stand on the stelai in vain' (4. 176). And while Sparta and the King have managed to deprive some of the cities of their freedom, αἱ μὲν ἡλευθερωμέναι τῶν πόλεων βασιλεῖ χάριν ἴσασιν (4. 175). Thus it should come as no surprise that a quarter of a century later Isocrates and Demosthenes could find enough good in the Peace to claim it as an Athenian accomplishment.

The Peace of Antalkidas was always to hand for the Athenians to use as propaganda

<sup>4</sup> In this speech (56) the Spartan sea empire lasts ten years, obviously 404–394.

<sup>5</sup> 4. 142; the theme of Persian incompetence appears again at 9. 55. <sup>6</sup> 14. 40 f.

against the Spartans, initially for making it, later for breaking it. Everyone knows the heading of the Decree of Aristoteles establishing the Second Athenian League, ὅπως ἂν Λακεδ[αιμό]νιοι ἐώσι τὸς Ἑλλήνας ἐλευθέ[ρ]ος [κα]ὶ αὐτονόμος ἡσυχίαν ἄγειν.<sup>7</sup> It may even be that this decree endorses the Peace of Antalkidas.<sup>8</sup> Less familiar is the evidence of the *Plataicus*.<sup>9</sup> Whereas Theban embassies used to talk of 'freedom and autonomy', now Thebes is trying to extinguish the liberty of Plataia once and for all (14. 24). The speaker urges the Athenians to aid Plataia as they had aided Thebes in the war which broke out in 378. You will not lack allies 'if you are willing to aid those who are wronged and not the Thebans alone' and 'are prepared to fight for all equally, on behalf of the treaty'. The Greeks will join 'with you who struggle for their own freedom'. But if you do not assist Plataia and war begins anew, you cannot expect to win over the Greeks, 'if, while offering autonomy, you permit the Thebans to sack any city they wish'. You will act in a self-contradictory way 'if you do not prevent the Thebans from violating the oaths and the treaty but pretend to wage war against the Lacedaemonians on behalf of these same' oaths and treaty (14. 42 ff.).

The speaker is asking the Athenians to live up to their own pretensions and infers what they will say in the next war from what they said in the previous one, in the years between 378 and 375. Since Sphodrias had violated Athens' own autonomy in 378, they easily posed as champions of the principle of autonomy itself.<sup>10</sup> What is more surprising is that Athens claimed to be fighting for the treaty which embodied it, the Peace of Antalkidas.<sup>11</sup> This line of propaganda opened the way for Isocrates and Demosthenes to say that their city won the Korinthian War and forced Sparta to make peace, and for Diodorus (15. 5. 1) to say that Sparta regarded the Peace of Antalkidas as a 'heavy burden'.

We turn now to a neglected passage from the *Panathenaicus* (12. 156 ff.) in which Isocrates upbraids Athens and Sparta for their conduct toward the King of Persia. 'Although they could easily have conquered him on both land and sea, they concluded (*συνεγράψαντο*) peace with him for all time as though with a benefactor. And because they envied their own virtues, once they entered into the war and strife with one another, they did not stop destroying themselves and the other Greeks before they made the common enemy dominant and placed our city in extreme danger through the power of the Lacedaemonians, and again [endangered] their city through our city.' Some have taken Isocrates to mean the Peace of Antalkidas,<sup>12</sup> but the clear implication is that the Athenians made peace with Persia before engaging in a war with Sparta which

<sup>7</sup> *IG* ii<sup>2</sup>. 43, lines 9 ff., as revised by Cargill, op. cit. 16. Cf. also *IG* ii<sup>2</sup>. 44 for an Athenian treaty providing for autonomy.

<sup>8</sup> See Cargill, op. cit. 28 ff. In other inscriptions of the 380s (*IG* ii<sup>2</sup>. 34 and 35) it is not clear whether the Athenians are lauding the King's Peace or merely saying that their current activities do not contravene it.

<sup>9</sup> This evidence is not considered by Charles Hamilton, 'Isocrates, *IG* ii<sup>2</sup>. 43, Greek Propaganda and Imperialism', *Traditio* 36 (1980), 83 ff.

<sup>10</sup> The scholiast to Aeschines (3. 222) says that the battle of Naxos occurred ἐν τῷ ὑπὲρ τῶν Ἑλλήνων δικαίῳ πολέμῳ, where the emendation Ἑλληνικῶν δικαίων is very likely. Demosthenes refers to Athens' championing of Hellenic rights at 2. 24; cf. also 4. 3, 6. 10, and 15. 29. Notice that Isocrates is alive to another Athenian propaganda ploy, the renunciation of the right to own property in other states; compare 15.44 with lines 35 ff. of the Aristoteles Decree.

<sup>11</sup> This is true whether or not David Lewis, *Sparta and Persia* (Leiden, 1977), p. 147, n. 80, is correct in saying, 'in 377 the Athenians did not denounce the Peace, as Cawkwell thinks, but were proclaiming that Sparta had broken it'. See Cawkwell's rejoinder, op. cit. 75.

<sup>12</sup> See the translations by George Norlin (Loeb) and Argentina Argentati and Clementina Gatti, *Orazioni di Isocrate* (Turin, 1965).

brought them to disaster (at Aigospotamoi).<sup>13</sup> Isocrates should, then, be talking about the Peace of Kallias, and it might just be possible to say that the Spartans were signatories of that agreement or that they made a separate peace of their own with the King at about the same time. For Diodorus under the year 442/1 writes (12. 26. 2) that the world was at peace since the Persians had two treaties with the Greeks, one with the Athenians and another with the Spartans. Yet almost all scholars hold, correctly, that Diodorus has simply misplaced the Peace of Antalkidas, so there is no evidence for an accord between Sparta and Persia at this time. It seems clear to me that Isocrates means that the two cities negotiated two different peace pacts with the King, more than fifty years apart.

In this speech Isocrates reviews the whole course of Greek history in comparing Athens and Sparta, especially the events which occurred between Xerxes' invasion and his own day. In taking such a large period of time he naturally ignores the finer points of chronology. He sets off the fifth-century empire of Athens against the fourth-century *arche* of the Spartans, criticizing the excesses of both: *συνέβη κυρίαν ἐκατέραν γενέσθαι τῆς ἀρχῆς τῆς κατὰ θάλατταν, ἣν ὁπότεροι ἂν κατὰσχωσιν, ὑπηκόους ἔχουσι τὰς πλείστας τῶν πόλεων* (53). As a result of imperial abuses *ἀμφοτέραι μισηθεῖσαι κατέστησαν εἰς πόλεμον καὶ ταραχήν*, 'in which one would find that our city, although all the Greeks and barbarians had attacked it, was able to hold out against them for ten years, but the Lacedaemonians, although still dominating on land, having fought only the Thebans and having lost a single battle, were deprived of everything they had' (57). Likewise the Athenians were superior in their diplomatic dealings with the Persians. Here Isocrates mentions only two peace treaties, the famous pair.<sup>14</sup>

Sections 156 ff. can be taken as a résumé of the argument. What is the basic outline of Greek history? The leading cities preferred to fight each other rather than the natural enemy. Accordingly, making peace with Persia, they almost destroyed each other. Just as the two cities reached the brink of disaster years apart (404 and 371), so they made peace with the King years apart (c. 450 and 386). In all three passages where I have quoted the Greek the two subjects of the verb do not act simultaneously. The whole point of Isocrates' comparison is to juxtapose significant similarities and differences without regard for chronological or other minor details.<sup>15</sup>

This appears to be the only criticism of the Peace of Kallias extant.<sup>16</sup> To be sure, Theopompus seems to indicate that the Peace was a forgery or had been greatly exaggerated,<sup>17</sup> but here we have an Athenian chastising Athens for making the treaty. The reason is clear enough. If the Peace of Antalkidas was half a loaf, the Kallias Treaty was not the whole loaf. Within a decade of the *Panathenaicus* forces from Greece overwhelmed the Persian Empire. It had always been Isocrates' opinion that Persia

<sup>13</sup> §§ 56 f. show clearly that Isocrates regards Aigospotamoi as the ultimate disaster produced by Athenian imperialism: Athenian supremacy was undisputed from 480 to 415; thereafter the city held out for ten years against all opponents. He describes the crisis which followed the battle at 7. 64 ff., 8. 91 ff., and 14. 31 f.

<sup>14</sup> See especially §§ 59 ff. and 102 ff. In the latter he is discussing a treaty of friendship and alliance, not a peace.

<sup>15</sup> This severe telescoping of events also occurs in Polybius, writing – of course – at a far greater distance from them: 'Fighting for the freedom of the Greeks [the Spartans] conquered the Persians when they invaded but betrayed the Greek cities to them once they had gone home and fled, in accordance with the Peace of Antalkidas' (6. 49. 4 f.).

<sup>16</sup> The *Panathenaicus* is an unusual panegyric in praising by comparison, not absolutely; thus there is room for such a criticism.

<sup>17</sup> F 153; for the view that Theopompus is discussing the nature of the treaty cf. A. E. Raubitschek, 'The Treaties between Persia and Athens', *GRBS* 5 (1964), 158.

was ripe for conquest. Retrojecting that condition into the past, he can say that the Peace was well enough but Athens in the fifth century (just like Sparta in the fourth) could have conquered the King by continuing the war (κρατήσασαι ῥαδίως ἂν in § 158). In his earlier speeches Isocrates does not actually praise the treaty. He merely uses its terms as evidence of the decline in Greek might from the fifth to the fourth century.<sup>18</sup> Only in the *Panathenaicus* does he praise it, and then conventionally, so it seems to me, when he applauds it as superior to the Peace of Antalkidas (60). His remarks in 156 ff. cancel his favourable treatment of the agreement.

Isocrates has the reputation of talking out of both sides of his mouth. Welles, for instance, expresses the prevailing view when he says, 'In view of this dedication to his cause, we need not expect to find Isocrates either consistent or accurate in his references to contemporary events. Conon's victory at Cnidus in 394 was normally a source of pride; but it was shameful if one thought of it as a Persian success. The King's Peace of 386 was disgraceful; but its provisions for peace and autonomy were good. The Spartan invasions of Asia... showed the weakness of Persia – but also showed Spartan highhandedness and unpopularity.'<sup>19</sup> Add to this Buckler's recent exposition of what Isocrates says about the Spartan seizure of the Kadmeia: in the *Plataicus*, 'The loss of the Kadmeia, in Isokrates' view, was the punishment which the gods meted out for Theban perfidy.... Yet compare 4. 126, where Isokrates states that the seizure of the Kadmeia was unjust.'<sup>20</sup>

Any inconsistencies here on Isocrates' part are easily reconciled. Just as one orator can praise the brave men who fought at Gettysburg, yet deplore the necessity for that battle, so another can celebrate Konon as the liberator of Greece but complain that his victory at Knidos allowed the barbarian to return to the Aegean. Likewise, because the Peace of Antalkidas ratified the results of the battle, both the end of Sparta's naval empire and the preeminence of Persia, Isocrates' attitude toward the treaty is ambivalent. We have here a pattern that recurs throughout his thought. In education, for instance, those who criticize the teaching of eristic, astronomy, and geometry are correct, but then so are those who recommend such instruction (15. 263). These studies, containing both good and bad elements, benefit pupils more than their detractors admit but less than their proponents claim. So in his treatment of history. The Athenian Empire had its faults, but it was far superior to the Spartan.<sup>21</sup> The Athenian democracy degenerated in the fifth century, but the tyranny of the Thirty was infinitely worse.<sup>22</sup> Artaxerxes II was a bumbler, but compared to his successor he was a worthy adversary.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> 4. 115 ff.; 7. 79 ff.

<sup>19</sup> C. Bradford Welles, 'Isocrates' View of History', in *The Classical Tradition*, ed. Luitpold Wallach (Ithaca, 1966), p. 23. Those scholars who criticize Isocrates for inaccuracy should avoid this fault themselves. Contrary to Welles, Isocrates does not say that the Spartan kings never lost a battle or that the Chians were always successful at sea. Nor does he actually say that the bands of exiles roaming through Greece consist of oligarchic gentlemen; in any event, these mercenaries were no less dangerous for their pedigree.

<sup>20</sup> John Buckler, 'The Alleged Theban-Spartan Alliance of 386 B.C.', *Eranos* 78 (1980), 180 f., including n. 13.

<sup>21</sup> cf. 4. 100 ff. and 12. 53 ff.

<sup>22</sup> *Areopagiticus*, passim, especially 63 ff.

<sup>23</sup> 5. 100 and 9. 64 vs 4. 140 ff. Notice here Isocrates' treatment of the three years prior to Knidos. As a panegyrist, he says that in ten years of fighting the King could not subdue Euagoras, but it took him *only* three years to deprive the Spartans of their sea empire. As a counselor, he argues that Sparta's fleet besieged the Persian for three years: πολιορκούμενον is the same term Xenophon uses (*Hell.* 5. 1. 29) to describe the harassment inflicted on Athens by raiders from Aigina.

Again, there is no inconsistency in wishing a plague on both houses. Isocrates does not, in fact, say that the Spartans were justified in taking the Kadmeia to requite Theban disloyalty to them. Thebes had been disloyal to *Athens* and so got what it deserved (14. 27 f.) even though the Spartan action, for its own part, was wicked. What Isocrates says about Sparta's betrayal of its partners in crime corresponds exactly to the view that Hitler's invasion of Russia was an instance of his own perfidy but at the same time a demonstration of the weakness of Stalin's regime and fitting retribution for his invasion of Finland. Isocrates, in short, knows and expresses both sides of an issue, but as an advocate (and not a judge) he argues one side in one place, and the other in another.

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