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**THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES AND THE MAIN GOALS  
OF ATHENIAN IMPERIALISM IN THE 5<sup>th</sup> CENTURY BC  
(‘IMPERIAL’ POLICIES AND MEANS OF CONTROL  
IN THE MID 5<sup>th</sup> CENTURY ATHENIAN EMPIRE)<sup>1</sup>**

*The main priority of my paper will be to point out characteristic features and the most important objectives of Athenian “imperialism” during the last two decades of the period called Pentekontaetia (the period of fifty years – 479–431 BC.). I will try to characterize terms “imperialism” and “empire” in context of their application to the 5<sup>th</sup> century Athens in modern historiography, which I suggest is quite problematic and doesn’t precisely define the true image of Athenian ἀρχή (arche – empire, realm, magistracy, office etc.).<sup>2</sup> My other objective will be to describe how frequently and to what extent the Athenians used various kinds of policies and means of control in attempt to transform the first Athenian naval League, also known as the Delian συμμαχία (symmachia – alliance, offensive and defensive), into their own thalassocratic empire and allies into their subjects. Finally, I will also focus my attention on how the lust for power and hegemony affected Athenian foreign policy and Athenian relationship with other Greeks, either allies or not, living in the Aegean and the eastern part of Mediterranean.*

**Key words:** Athens, allies, arche, empire, imperialism, naval League, Delian symmachy, Pericles.

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<sup>2</sup> Translating some of the key words and terms I used LIDDELL, HENRY G. – SCOTT, ROBERT 1940. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

## Introduction

The story of Athenian aspirations to hegemony and the history of Athenian imperialism are well established subjects of research in Greek history among historians.<sup>3</sup> The question of Athenian imperialist policy generally also touches on the problem of connection between foreign policy and the composition and political ideology within the state. Though the composition and the inner circulation of political leadership inside the *po-*

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<sup>3</sup> Works on the Athenian empire, in the sense in which scholars have followed and applied various methods, producing descriptive accounts, with the general synthesis as the master trope. The core questions about the transformation of the Delian League into an Athenian empire, the veracity of Thucydides' and other ancient literary accounts, and the causes of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War were all established in the late 19th and early 20th century. One of the most influential synthesis of that time, concerning the history and development of Athenian *arche* in 5th century BC was Karl Beloch's *Griechische Geschichte* (1912–1927). In mid 20th century, apart from various ancient literary sources, which formed the „core“ of research, other very important sources were discovered and presented by authors of the *Athenian Tribute List* (MERITT – WADE-GERY – MCGREGOR: 1939–1953). The reconstruction of the epigraphic fragments from the inscribed records of the Athenian tribute lists helped many historians to take different perspectives and approaches on mid 5th century Athens and their policy towards their „subject-allies“. These new data stimulated various debates about the character of Athenian imperial exploitation and were used by many authors (i.e. KAGAN: 1969; FINLEY: 1978; MEIGGS: 1979). The influx of new information meant that these books in most cases supplanted earlier narratives. However, neither the questions asked nor the methods used to answer them had radically changed. Three major themes still continued to dominate discussion: 1) The story of Athenian exploitation of the allies and the transformation from a Delian league to an Athenian empire; 2) Moral evaluation of the Empire; 3) Assigning blame for the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. There have been few major works in this tradition since the 1970s (i. e. FORNARA – SAMMONS: 1991; RHODES: 1985, 2006; HORNBLOWER: 2002; BLEICKEN: 2002), but the steady stream of specialist publications has continued till nowadays. The historians, either in monographic or article form, usually focus their attention on many problems of particular bodies of evidence, such as economic relations and possibilities, various types of inscriptions or specific decrees and of course; the Athenian concepts of power, primarily concerning on the relationship between the *hegemon* and its “subject-allies”. Last but not least, the historians also try to examine some specific episodes of Athenian “imperial” history (most notoriously the Peace of Callias). As a result, the topic of Athenian empire has been left to those scholars, who in most cases favors empiricist and narrative approaches. There is now an enormous literature, mostly of very high technical quality. Therefore, I make no claims to contribute to this body of scholarship, hoping instead to help the growth of a more comparative, analytical approach. Virtually every point I touch on in this essay has its own steadily growing bibliography of learned articles and monographs. I cannot possibly cite this literature in full, so I limit myself to the works that has most influenced my thinking.

*lis* have been reconsidered by historians in the past, it seems that there is still a widespread tendency to attribute “extreme” imperialistic policy to “radical” democrats (Ephialtes, Pericles) and a “moderate” foreign policy or opposition to imperialistic expansion to “moderate” – the rich and those who incline to oligarchy more than to democracy (Cimon, Thucydides). Therefore, the main question for which we should try to find an explanation in this paper is whether the mid 5<sup>th</sup> century Athenian empire, with all its characteristic forms and features, should be considered as an “empire” in the true sense? This question evoked many disputes among scholars in the past. Most historians, dedicated to this topic even nowadays cannot reach an agreement. However, if we want to refer to the 5<sup>th</sup> century Athens as an “empire”, we first have to consider some important aspects and different points of view.

The first one is the size of Athenian *arche*. According to standards of some ancient multi-ethnic empires, such as Persia or Rome were, the Athenian empire was tiny. It covered just a few thousand square miles and less than a million people lived there at the height of its power in the mid 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. However, compared to Persia or Rome, the Athenian *arche* was ethnically and culturally remarkably homogeneous – not just all the Greeks, but almost all the Ionian Greeks. Second important aspect was the rule in *polis*, which wasn’t in the hands of an autocratic monarch or a small group of privileged individuals, but in the hands of the Athenian δῆμος (*demos* – “the people” – meaning adult male citizens). The system of government, applied both to domestic and foreign policy, was called δημοκρατία (*demokratia* → *demos* – “the people”, *kratos* – “rule”). And finally, for something so seemingly insignificant, considering its size, the Athenian empire attracted considerable attention. The reason is that it represents the unique form of ancient “naval empire”, the Greek world had never known before. Therefore, the research is not primarily focused on its size. On the contrary; the historians are trying to find an explanation for some more relevant questions and discuss topics concerning primarily the various forms and features of Athenian imperial policy and its growing intensity during particular periods of *Pentekontaetia*, which played a decisive role in process of transforming Delian symmarchy into Athenian empire.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> General discussion of the various meanings of “imperialism” is provided by Mason Hammond’s *Ancient imperialism: Contemporary Justifications* in: *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 58/59, p. 105–161, where he pointed out various kinds of imperialisms and stated that the term has no clearly defined meaning and has become a political catchword rather than a scientific term. Also Polly Low’s study *Looking for the Language of Athenian Imperialism* in: *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 125, p. 93–111, is primarily focused on sets of the mid 5<sup>th</sup> century Athenian epigraphic inscriptions,

Unfortunately, two key words of this topic – *empire and imperialism* – used frequently by many contemporary historians in association with the 5<sup>th</sup> century Athens, don't precisely express the exact image, and therefore need to be treated with special attention. Nonetheless, both of them are used mostly as a technical term; fit enough to get the closest expression for political organization, which the Athenians led in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. The term “imperialism” appeared only in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to signify an imperial system of government; the rule of an emperor, especially when despotic or arbitrary. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century it became a political catchword, quite popular among scholars and ultimately found its place in association with the 5<sup>th</sup> century Athens.<sup>5</sup> The imperialism was defined simply as “the principle or policy of seeking an extension of empire” or as “an urge on the part of one people to extend its political rule over others”.<sup>6</sup> Although

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and challenge them with Thucydides and his conventional portrayal of Athenian imperialism. An interesting view on imperialism is also provided by Thomas Harrison's article *Modern and Ancient Imperialism* in: *Greece & Rome*, 55, p. 1–22, where the author deals with modern imperialism, but also gives us historical résumé of its features in the past. He also mentions how the term made its way towards the history of the 5<sup>th</sup> century Athenian empire, focusing primarily on the economic benefits and costs of empire, but also on more intangible aspects of imperialism: the cultural benefits of being part of a larger community, for example: the sense of identity shared between imperialists and subjects, or the benign intentions of the imperialists.

<sup>5</sup> Russell Meiggs in his paper *The Crisis of the Athenian Imperialism* in: *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 67, p. 1–36, focused mainly on the economic benefits and costs of empire. However, he also regularly applied “imperialism” on to more intangible aspects, for example: the cultural benefits of being part of a larger community, or the sense of mutual identity shared between Athenians and their allies, based on common cult etc. Moses Finley in his article *Empire in the Graeco Roman World* in: *Greece & Rome*, 25, p. 1–15, where he deals almost exclusively with Athens and Rome, suggest (p. 6) that various characteristic forms of imperial policy, like 1) restriction of freedom of action in interstate relations, 2) political, administrative, or judicial interference in local affairs, 3) military and naval conscription, 4) the exaction of ‘tribute’ in some form, whether in the narrow sense of a regular lump sum or as a land tax and also 5) confiscation of land, with or without subsequent emigration of settlers from the imperial state, were all applied by the Roman as well as they were by the Athenians, although in a vastly reduced scale. From modern Czech historiography, some important opinions on development of Athenian democracy in 5<sup>th</sup> century BC was presented by prof. Pavel Oliva, who in his publications *Kolébka demokracie* and *Recko mezi Makedonií a Římem* dedicates (apart from many other things) also on historical “evolution” of Athenian *arche* in 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, mentioning various aspects and features of Athenian “imperial” policy, applied in *Pentekontateia* period, which ultimately helped Athenians to become the *hegemon* of many Greek *poleis* in Aegean and its surrounding area.

<sup>6</sup> The causes and methods of imperialism had been much discussed by scholars in the past. Mason Hammond in his *Ancient Imperialism* (p. 105–161) provides us with

the word “imperialism” itself is modern, I suggest we can presume that it can also characterize certain people or political organizations existing from time immemorial. Moreover, reflective persons among these ancient people were not blind to its existence, whatever term they applied to it. Their attempts to rationalize and justify the imperialism of their respective people form a suitable introduction to a consideration of imperialism in general.

### **Characteristic forms and distinctive features of Athenian imperialism in the mid 5<sup>th</sup> century**

In the mid 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, the Athenian empire was at its height. After assignments of the so-called Peace of Callias,<sup>7</sup> which officially terminated

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some main opinion on this topic in historiography. According to him (p. 105–107), some historians argued that imperialism was to the effect that whereas various real and powerful motives of pride, prestige, and pugnacity, together with the more altruistic professions of a civilizing mission, figured as causes of imperial expansion, the dominant directive motive was the demand for markets and for profitable investment by the exporting and financial classes within each imperialistic regime. This economic interpretation of imperialism became very fashionable and has been applied by many historians to Athens (e.g. FINLEY, 1978; MEIGGS, 1963; 1979). However, according to Hammond, other factors, have as much importance as the economic one. For instance, imperialism by „satisfying the superiority complex of the general public affords demagogues the opportunity to enlarge on the theme of conquest, or a people who thinks itself better than its neighbours may invoke the presumed right of the fittest to dominate over the less fit and to carve up the decadent.” Many people sincerely feel that they have better religion or higher culture than others and should extend the benefits thereof by a sort of cultural imperialism. In the end, the strongest element in the imperialistic urge is, as he quotes (p. 107) „the atavistic, irrational disposition of a state to forceful expansion without any special object and without a definable limit.“ Although the present day discussion is concerned primarily with the causes and methods of imperialism it will appear that all the above motives were invoked by ancient thinkers to account for process of “empire-building” in ancient Athens.

<sup>7</sup> Much has been disputed about Peace of Callias among historians in the past. Our knowledge of it comes from references by the fourth century orators Isocrates (IV, 118–120; XII, 59–60) and Demosthenes (XIX, 273) as well as from the historian Diodorus (XII, 4), who dates it 449/8 BC. However, according to some modern-day historians (e. g. RHODES, 2009: 208–209; OLIVA, 2000: 24) it is possible that the treaty never officially existed, and if it did exist, its importance is disputed. Thucydides did not mention it, however, Plutarch (*Cim.* 14) thought that it had been signed much sooner – after the Battle of the Eurymedon in 467/6 BC. On this topic see: FORNARA (1991: 172–176) and BADIEN (1987: 1–39). The editors of the Athenian Tribute List (*ATL*, III, p. 275f.) put 450/49 BC as the date for the Peace and this date has been also supported by MEIGGS (1979: 125f.). Nevertheless, it seems that there has been some agreement, which ended the hostilities between both sides, and allowed Athens

almost a half-century long period of mutual confrontation with the Persians, the Athenians under Pericles' leadership could finally focus all their attention on building and managing their thalassocratic empire. Although the fundamental purpose of the League's existence – to fight Persians – was now finally fulfilled, the Athenians, mainly due to various types of benefits, didn't want to disband the League. On the contrary, after crushing the rebellions in Euboea and Megara in 446/5 BC,<sup>8</sup> and assignment of the Thirty-Years' Peace with the Spartans,<sup>9</sup> by which the First Peloponnesian War (460–446/5 BC) came after fifteen years finally to its end, Athenians strengthened their hegemonic position in the League even more by unleashing a full-scale imperialism, which included various types of policies and means of control, applied in most allied *poleis* throughout Aegean, limiting their autonomy.<sup>10</sup>

The most fundamental method of oppression used by the Athenians was forcing allies to annually pay Φόρος (*foros* – payment, tribute), which supposed to serve as a financial contribution to military purposes of symmarchy and its amount was precisely defined for every single *polis* according to its financial possibilities.<sup>11</sup> Annual collection of money from allies as an

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to focus its attention on affairs in mainland Greece. Nonetheless, the case of the Peace of Callias still remains an increasingly controversial topic among historians till today.

<sup>8</sup> THUC. I, 114; PLUT. *Per.* 22–23; DIOD. XII, 5, 7, 22.

<sup>9</sup> DIOD. XII, 7; THUC. I, 42–43, 115; PLUT. *Per.* 24; The most important term of the Thirty-Year's Peace was that each hegemon was free to use force to resolve conflicts within its own alliance. For closer look on the Peace and its terms see e. g. LEWIS (1992: 136–138).

<sup>10</sup> Some of these “imperial” policies and means of control were applied by Athenians basically soon after the Delian symmarchy was established. Ancient historians mention i.e. Naxian (Thuc. I, 98) or Thasian (Thuc. I, 100–101; IV, 102; Diod. II, 70; XI, 64; Plut. *Cim.* 14) revolts, which both took place in first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. However, these two most famous examples of Athenian harshness towards their allies in first decades of League's existence, whether their reasons were either political or economical, should serve as an examples, to prevent other members of the League from revolting and also helped Athenians to gain supreme control over the alliance. In case of any signs of disunity inside the symmarchy, Athens had to act swiftly, if they want to protect their emerging realm in Aegean. Although their economic interests; dependent mostly on allied financial contributions, from which both foreign and domestic Athenian policy had been financed, played no doubt, key role in this process. Therefore, if Athenians wanted to fully concentrate on building up their hegemony in Greece, they could not afford to risk League's disintegration under any circumstances.

<sup>11</sup> Collecting of *foros* started right after establishment of Delian symmarchy in 478/7 BC. The members were given a choice of either offering armed forces or paying a tax to the joint treasury. As Thucydides mentions (I, 96), most allies chose the tax, because ship building was costly and most allies couldn't afford it. The first sum collected

alternative solution instead of sending military envoys was something new in the Greek world. It was caused primarily by fact that most *poleis*, joining the League, were small states for which it was easier to contribute money every year to allied treasury, than to build and man ships into allied fleet. On the other hand, the strongest and wealthiest allies like Chios, Samos, Lesbos and Thasos had a privileged status among others in the League and from the beginning they were contributing ships instead of money.<sup>12</sup> After the transfer of the League's treasury from Delos to Athens in 454 BC, money of the allies had been more often used not for military purposes of the League, as it was supposed, but primarily on Athenians' personal interests. Thucydides mentions that the biggest sum collected on Acropolis during *Pentekontaetia* was 9 700 talents. He also says that, apart from other sources of Athenian annual revenue, only *foros* accounted c. 600 talents.<sup>13</sup> It was collected from every tributary *polis* or, where a number of them were too small, by one *polis*, which was made responsible for a group. In order to simplify the accounts, the allies were in 443/2 BC listed and divided into five geographical districts – Ionia, Hellespont, Thrace, Caria and Islands.<sup>14</sup> These districts varied in size, interests, accessibility and their political, judicial and commercial relations with Athens were governed by a separate treaty in each case.<sup>15</sup>

For Athenians, *foros* represented the essential source of their income. Money of the allies served not only for financing various military and na-

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into League's treasury was according to Plutarch (*Arist.* 24) and Thucydides (I, 96) 460 talents. On the other hand Diodorus (XI, 47) puts 560 talents as the final amount of money collected from allies. Unfortunately, due to the lack of financial evidence, we are unable to put exact amount of contributions collected from the allies in League's early existence. However, some historians argue that both numbers are impossibly high due to limited number of allies in 478/7BC (for this dispute see e. g. HORN-BLOWER, 2007: 145; RHODES, 2006: 17; OLIVA, 1995: 20.). Nonetheless, the most attractive solution for us would be to accept that the ship suppliers were also assessed in a *foros* equivalence (possibly 1 ship was the equivalent of 1 talent), and therefore its height probably included besides cash money also a value of provided ships altogether with their crews.

12 ARIST. *Ath. pol.* 24, 2.

13 THUC. II, 13; Apart from Thucydides, we have testimony from Diodorus, who uses Ephoros's account of 8 000 talents (XII, 38), which was the total sum accumulated in the League's treasury shortly after its transfer to Athens in 454 BC, and 10 000 talents (XII, 40, 54; XIII, 21) as the highest amount of money deposited on Acropolis during *Pentekontaetia*. Also Isocrates mentions 8,000 (VIII, 126) and 10,000 talents (VIII, 69; XV, 234), which Pericles brought up into the Acropolis, apart from the sacred treasures.

14 OLIVA (1995: 19; 2000: 32); *ATL*, I, List 12, p. 138f.

15 For closer look on the Tribute lists from 454/3 to 415/4 BC see: *ATL*, I, List 1–40, p. 128–153.



val expeditions of Athenian fleet, but also on financing Athenian domestic policy as well. There were whole series of fees and payments for the performance of civilian duties, to make to enable the poorer citizens to play an active part in Athenian public life.<sup>16</sup> Paying for holding offices and the engagement of masses in public affairs of the *polis* should helped Pericles to win popularity of the common citizens and also to strengthen his position in the city by gaining upper hand against his political opposition from among wealthy aristocrats.<sup>17</sup>

In order to protect their interest, the Athenians were placing garrisons under command of φρουράρχοι (sg. *phrouarchos*) into those *poleis*, where the possibility of rebellion was high, or where the rebellion was already crushed. Their presence might be justified as a military measure in time of war, but they also served a political purpose.<sup>18</sup> To those *poleis*, whose activities were safeguarded by the military garrison, the Athenians were also sending political overseers: ἐπίσκοποι (sg. *episkopos*) or ἄρχοντες (sg. *archon*) to allied *poleis*. They were widespread throughout the empire and their primary concern was to install a puppet, or at least a compliant government, which would act in accordance with Athenian conception. The councillors in allied *poleis* were all put under oath, for which violation the councillor could be executed alongside with his sons. The Athenian supervisors could sometimes become a regular board of political residents and an oath of loyalty was sometimes exacted from people as well as from members of the Council. Therefore we could presume that garrisons, overseers and compliant governments were probably imposed on most allied *poleis* to secure their allegiance towards Athens, not just on those who had recently rebelled. The democracy itself had in the mid 5<sup>th</sup> century BC become one of

<sup>16</sup> Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 24, 3) provides us with the list of Athenian officials, who were paid for their public service from the public funds, from which allied *foros* represented by far the most considerable part. According to his calculations, more than 20 000 officials were annually paid from these sources.

<sup>17</sup> After the death of Cimon (451 BC), the leadership of the opposition to Pericles have passed to one of Cimon's relatives, Thucydides son of Melesias. According to Plutarch (*Per.* 11–14), Thucydides was more a man of the agora and a politician, who was responsible for a polarization of the Athenians into democrats and oligarchs, and made his upper-class supporters sit together in the assembly to form a more effective block. He pressed Pericles, particularly on financing the building program in Acropolis and also on threats against Athenian offenders from among the allied *poleis*. However, against all his acquisitions, the Assembly backed Pericles. In c. 444/3 BC Thucydides was ostracized and Pericles' position as a leader politician in *polis* was afterwards greatly consolidated by holding the office of first *strategos* every year for fifteen years.

<sup>18</sup> *GHI*, 40, (M&L); OLIVA (1995: 20–21).



the most important control mechanisms, which the Athenians used in allied *poleis* as a guarantee of their obedience to them.<sup>19</sup>

Other very important means of controlling allies was the establishment of κληρουχία (*kleroukhia*) of Athenian settlers, which were planted mostly in strategically favourable positions across the Aegean. Cleruchies represented specific types of colonies, which the Athenians used mostly as their bases in economically profitable areas. Many of them were also planted within the land of allies and functioned as pickets of empire. For the settlers – κληροῦχοι (sg. *klerouchos* – “lot-holder”) – who all acquired hoplite status, deterred their allied neighbours from revolting and were also providing their obedience.<sup>20</sup> Athenians usually confiscated the best land, divided it into plots (*kleroi*) and gave each settler his lot. The *polis*, from which the best land had been withdrawn, was compelled to pay tribute in accordance with the new assessment of its diminished resources.<sup>21</sup>

Also the question of unifying League’s currency, weight and measures didn’t stay untouched. The Clearchus’ Coinage Decree, released c. 449/8 BC, imposed Athenian silver coinage, weights and measures throughout the empire and was obligatory for all the allies (probably except Chios, Lesbos and Samos, which were the strongest and most wealthiest *poleis* from among

<sup>19</sup> A regulation decree for Erythrae from 453/2 BC (*GHI*, 40, (M&L); *ATL*, II, D10) represents a classic example of how the Athenians made their policy towards those allies, who rebelled against them in that period. The decree made arrangements for a council of 120, whose members were appointed by a lot and were established to office by Athenian *episkopoi*. The democratic constitution was given to the city and after that *phrouarchos* prescribed an oath of loyalty for members of the Council: both to the people of Erythrae, and to Athens and its allies. This oath included undertakings not to revolt and not, without the permission of Athens, to take back those, who had fled to the Persians, who as it seems, had supported the revolt. Similar regulations were later applied also to some other *poleis*, for example: Kolophon in 447/6 (*ATL*, II, D15), Eretria and Chalkis in 446/5 (*Ibid.* D16–17), Samos in 439/8 (*Ibid.* D18) and Mytilene on Lesbos in 427/6 BC. (*Ibid.* D22).

<sup>20</sup> Plut. *Per.* 11.

<sup>21</sup> The best example of forcefully taking allied land and planting the Athenian cleruchy there happened on Euboea. Thucydides (I, 114), Plutarch (*Per.* 23) and Diodorus (XII, 7) tell us that after crushing rebellion in 446/5 BC, the Athenians seized the most fertile land for themselves. They moved its inhabitants away, and planted cleruchies there, which main purpose was to support Athens with mounts of grain. Thucydides also mentions (III, 50) that after suppressing Mytilenian rebellion on Lesbos in 427 BC, the Athenians turned the land into 3000 *kleroi*, 300 of which were reserved as sacred to the gods; to the remaining *kleroi* they sent out cleruchs chosen by a lot from among the Athenians themselves. The Mytilenians agreed to pay these men the sum of 2 *minae* per year for each *kleros*, and then worked the land themselves.

the allies and still possessed some guarantees of their autonomy).<sup>22</sup> All local silver currencies were recalled from circulation and melted down. Athenian coins were then issued, and a slight exchange loss was carried by the recipients. The silver mints of allies were closed down and thereby the Athenian mints benefited at their expense. Members of the councils in allied *poleis* had to swear an oath that if anyone minted silver coinage in the cities or used foreign coinage, weights or measures instead of those of the Athenians, he had to be punished or fined according to the decree.<sup>23</sup> The surplus from a minting operation was to go into a special fund and anyone, who proposed a motion against decree's regulations, became subject to the death penalty.<sup>24</sup>

The final means of control was direct interference in allied jurisdiction. Major lawsuits were transferred from local to Athenian courts, which were likely to favour those litigants with a pro-Athenian record, first in individual cases, but later also in general.<sup>25</sup> Judicial control operated at both state and private level. With the demise of the Delian League synods probably in the early 440s, the Athenian law courts took over responsibility for judicial action involving allied states.<sup>26</sup> In the same way a city wishing to appeal against its assessment of *foros* had to make an appeal before the Athenian law-court. The allied states would need to furnish the relevant proof in Athens in an open tribunal to have any chance of reduction in *foros*. The Athenians also ensured that certain cases concerning individuals in the allied cities should be compulsorily transferred to Athens and that the punishments should be enforceable throughout the empire.<sup>27</sup> Athens claimed the right to exile offenders from the territory of all League members. It was essential for the Athenians to exercise a close scrutiny over all political cases, especially those that affected their imperial interests.<sup>28</sup>

The change of relationship between the Athenians and their allies could be also well observed in "League's language".<sup>29</sup> Allies had started to be

<sup>22</sup> *GHI*, 45, 1–14 (M&L); *ATL*, II, D14, p. 61, 67–68; MEIGGS (1963: 28–29).

<sup>23</sup> *ATL*, II, D14, line 12: ἐάν τις κόπητι νόμισ[μα] ἀργυρίου ἐν ταῖς πό[λεσι ἢ μ]ἢ χρηται νομ[ίσμασιν τοῖς Ἀθηναί]ων ἢ σταθμοῖς ἢ μέτ[ροις, ἀλλὰ ξενικοῖς νομίσμασι]ν καὶ μέτροις καὶ σταθμοῖς, [τιμωρήσονται κα]ὶ ζ[ημιώσω κατὰ τὸ πρότε]ρον ψήφισμα ὃ Κλέαρχ[ος εἶπεν].

<sup>24</sup> *GHI*, 45, 8 (M&L); *ATL*, II, D14, 8; OLIVA (1995: 20).

<sup>25</sup> See e. g. the regulation treaty of Chalcis in 446/5 BC. (*GHI*, 52, (M&L); *ATL*, II, D17).

<sup>26</sup> RHODES (2006: 173); OLIVA (1995: 21).

<sup>27</sup> RHODES (2006: 175–176).

<sup>28</sup> See e. g. *GHI*, 40, 52, 69 (M&L).

<sup>29</sup> From inscriptions in *ATL* we can observe, besides exact accounts of allied money and

marked by the Athenians simply as πόλεις,<sup>30</sup> or πόλεις ὅσων Ἀθηναῖοι κρατοῦσιν – the cities which the Athenians rule.<sup>31</sup> The oaths of allegiance imposed on members, who were forcefully brought back into League, from now included a promise of obedience only to Athenians rather than to Athenians and the allies, as we can observe on Chalcis' example after unsuccessful Euboean revolt in 446/5 BC:

*I will not revolt from the demos of Athens in any way or by any means whatever, in word or in deed, nor will I heed anyone who revolts, and if anyone stirs up revolt, I will denounce him to the Athenians; and I will pay to the Athenians such tribute as I persuade the Athenians; and I will be as excellent and just an ally as I am able, and I will help the demos of Athens, and I will defend the Athenian demos if anyone wrongs them, and I will be loyal to Athenian demos.*<sup>32</sup>

In the period from the establishment of the League till the mid 5<sup>th</sup> century BC the number of tribute-paying *poleis* had been continuously rising. However, by the year 454 BC, when the League's treasury was removed from

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offerings, when and how did the language expression inside League changed. I agree with Low (2005: 96), who states that this “imperial language” does exist and should be seen as a marking and significant turning point in Athens' “imperial history” and its relation towards allies.

30 Contrast the form of words used in some decrees that relate more directly to the control of the empire. For example: in the Clearchus' and Cleinias' decrees on tribute payments and offerings (*GHI*, 45–46; *ATL*, II, D7, D14), the allies are simply defined only as *poleis*. In both decrees, various restrictions and regulations directed against allies' autonomy show us how this “imperial language” was used by the Athenians. Therefore we can assume that League's transformation into the Athenian empire was in the mid 5<sup>th</sup> century BC already completed.

31 A change in language is seen to be so important, however, largely because of the presumed existence of a close, if not absolute, link between changes in language and changes in the type of behaviour that it represents. If the language of decrees was not overtly imperialistic then it would follow that the Athenians were not overtly imperialistic either. Therefore I again agree with LOW (2005: 95) that shift from the language of alliance to the language of empire is indicative of a shift from the fact of alliance to the fact of empire.

32 *ATL*, II, D17, lines 21–32: “οὐκ ἀπο[σ]τέσομαι ἀπὸ τοῦ [δ]έμο τοῦ Ἀθηναίων οὔτε τέχνη οὔτε μηχανῆν οὐδέμην οὐδ' ἔπει οὐδὲ ἔργον οὐδὲ τῷ ἀφισταμένοι πείσομαι, καὶ ἐὰν ἀφίστη τις κατερῷ Ἀθηναίοισι, καὶ τον φόρον ηὑποτελῶ Ἀθηναίοισιν, ἤν ἂν πείτο Ἀθηναίος, καὶ χσὺμμαχος ἔσομαι ἠοῖος ἂν δύνομαι ἄριστος καὶ δικαιοτάτος καὶ τοὶ δέμοι τοὶ Ἀθηναίων Βοεθέσο καὶ ἄμυνο, ἐὰν τις ἀδικεῖ τὸν δέμον τὸν Ἀθηναίων, καὶ πείσομαι τοὶ δέμοι τοὶ Ἀθηναίων“. Similar oaths of allegiance to Athens were in those years also sworn by Erytreia (*ATL*, II, D16) and Kolophon (*Ibid.* II, D15). See also: *GHI*, 52, lines 22–34 (M&L); LEWIS (1992: 135–136); RHODES (1992: 56–57).

Delos to Athens, many allies were in position of Athenian subjects rather than of independent *poleis*.<sup>33</sup> Others, who in the past revolted against the Athenians (e. g. Naxos or Thasos) were subsequently forced to rejoin the League and compelled or persuaded to convert their contributions from ships to money, in order that they should lack the means to revolt again. They had been also rendered defenceless and forced to obey the command of Athens. Some others had deprived themselves of the means to resist by contributing money to the allied treasury instead of ships to the allied fleet. They were already intimidated and they tended to cast their vote on the allied Synod in accordance with the wishes of the Athenians, who were using various methods mentioned above, to secure their allegiance.<sup>34</sup> However, there were still allies who retained some guarantee of their autonomy from the Athenians. As mentioned, these were the strongest and the wealthiest members of the League, such as Chios, Lesbos and Samos, who were contributing ships to the allied fleet instead of money to the League's treasury. Technically, they could flout the will of Athens, yet their chance of withdrawal from the League was little. This group of allies, however, steadily diminished in number and at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War in 431 BC, only Chians and Lesbians preserved their privileged status in the League.<sup>35</sup>

Alongside the political motives and economical profits of imperialism, which, no doubt, played a key role in Athenian imperial foreign policy, there was also another strong element that has to be mentioned: the relation between imperialism and religion.

The religious consequences of the ties of common Ionian kinship which made the allies willingly acquiesce in Athenian leadership at the founding of the Delian League were skilfully exploited by Athens after the transfer of the League's treasury from Delos to Athens in 454 BC to secure imperial control over the allies. After the establishment of symmarchy, the Apollo's sanctuary on Delos, which had developed into a centre of the Ionians since the time of Pisistratus, became League's official headquarters. Nonetheless, in 449 BC, shortly after the treasury had been moved to Athens and the peace with Persians had been signed, Pericles initiated the temple-rebuilding program on Acropolis. In Athenian point of view (or at least states-

<sup>33</sup> Nor that they were marked by Athenians as *hypoteleis* („tributary“), but also, according to Thucydides (VI, 69; VII, 57) as the Athenian “subjects” (*hypékooi*).

<sup>34</sup> Thuc. II, 41; VI, 69, 85; VII, 57; Arist. *Ath. pol.* 24, 2.

<sup>35</sup> By 450 BC only Samos, Lesbos and Chios supplied ships to the League's campaigns and even this number was soon reduced with the reduction of Samos in 439 BC (Thuc. I, 117) and Lesbos in 427 BC (Thuc. III, 27–28) – thus the Athenians had the military strength to crush any ally that revolted or opposed their wishes.

man's), its greatness should demonstrate that Ἀθηνᾶ Παρθένος (Athena the Virgin) would now replace Apollo as the recipient of the tribute, which was assessed every fourth year at the Μεγάλα Παναθήναια (Great Panathenae) and was annually collected during the Μεγάλα Διονύσια (Great Dionysia).<sup>36</sup> Participation in the religious aspects of these festivals was, as the 4<sup>th</sup> century Athenian orator Isocrates mentions, expected from the allies.<sup>37</sup> The procedures, followed by the Athenian officials in order to collect payments from the allies were in detail inscribed in so-called Decree of Cleinias, dated to c. 448/7 BC.<sup>38</sup> Refusal to bring tribute together with special offerings (cow and the panoply on Panathenaea and phallus on Dionysia) to Athena during these two largest festivals was strictly prosecuted by the Athenians.<sup>39</sup> The defendant was judged by *heliaea* and if he was found guilty, he was sent to the Council, where *prytaneis* recommended the punishment or fine, they thought he should receive.<sup>40</sup> I agree with Bleicken who states that the democracy was trying to put Athena not only to the position of mother-goddess and patron of the city: for the Athenians she was a personification of democracy itself. And as long as the 5<sup>th</sup> century democracy in Athens was closely related with Athenian thalassocracy, the goddess was also presented among the Greeks as a symbol of Athenian power.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, it can be claimed that the primary aspect of huge building program on Acropolis, which started probably in 447 BC and was financed primarily from allied

<sup>36</sup> As it is stated in the so-called "Papyrus Decree" from 450/49 BC (*ATL*, II, D13, lines 6–8), 5,000 talents (which probably represents the current balance of the League's funds transferred from Delos) were stored up in the state treasury. If we accept Thucydides' statement about Athenian finances (II, 13), the capital expenditure on the building program, which was recovered from unspent annual surpluses, could therefore offset to a total of c. 3,000 talents. Authors of the Athenian Tribute List suggest (*ATL*, III, p. 328.) that Pericles in 450/49 BC moved a decree for the funding of the building program, which included two main provisions: 1.) 5000 talents were to be given to Athena on her birthday, only a short time hence, at the Panathenaea of 449 BC. 2.) A sum of 200 talents should be taken up to the Acropolis at every succeeding Panathenaeic festival until an additional total of 3000 talents had been reached. This reconstruction of events was accepted by MEIGGS (1979: 515–518), however, objected by FORNARA (1991: 93–96).

<sup>37</sup> Isoc. VIII, 82–83.

<sup>38</sup> *ATL*, II, D7, 5–22; *GHI*, 46, 6–21. (M&L); MEIGGS (1963: 24); OSTWALD (1992: 312). For different approaches and opinions on decree's dating see: RHODES (2006: 174); FORNARA (1991: 180–182). Both authors believe that decree is best to be dated to 420s (c. 425/4 BC).

<sup>39</sup> *GHI*, 40, 2–4; 46, 41–43; 49, 12 (M&L); OSTWALD (1992: 312).

<sup>40</sup> *GHI*, 46, 32–40. (M&L); *ATL*, II, D7, 31–41; OLIVA (2000: 30); RHODES (1992: 54–55).

<sup>41</sup> BLEICKEN (2002: 171–172).

sources, wasn't Pericles' attempt to provide work for poor Athenians, nor a simple plan to rebuild the temples destroyed by Persians in 480 BC, but through the outside expression to convey the power and greatness of Athens to all Greeks and extend the importance of Athena's cult among allies, which should symbolize that Athena, instead of Apollo, should become the new protector of the League, not just for the Athenians, but for all its members. Therefore, the main purpose of allied participation in religious aspects of these two great festivals, alongside with bringing *foros* and offerings to Athena, was, as Ostwald stated, to tighten the bond between Athens and her subject-allies and also to give the Panathenaea and Dionysia Pan-hellenic dimension, with Athens as the cultural centre of entire Hellas.<sup>42</sup>

### Crisis of imperialism

From the establishment of the Delian symmarchy in 478/7 BC, following the imperialistic actions of their hegemon in the mid 5<sup>th</sup> century, the allies had continuously started to realize more clearly that the Athenian empire was indeed a tyranny and that the Athenians would take a great risk in order to gratify their lust for wealth and power. In the last decade before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, Pericles intensified Athenian control over the empire, increased its military and naval strength and endeavoured to weight the balance of power in favour of Athens by expanding its influence further beyond the Aegean. As the Athenian power was growing the *poleis* inside the empire were starting to be dissatisfied with Athenian oppression and their new status as Athenian subjects. They soon realized that the democratic system, with all its features, had suddenly become the main tool and characteristic symbol of Athenian supremacy over them. Even the strongest and the wealthiest from among the allies had to obey Athenian regulations without any objections.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, many *poleis* were trying to withdraw from the empire and to restore their autonomy by seeking for an opposition to Athenian imperialistic ambitions in Greece. The only capable *polis* that could help them to achieve their goal was Sparta. So in the early 430s BC

<sup>42</sup> OSTWALD (1992: 312–313).

<sup>43</sup> Most famously Samians, who after defeat in 439 BC, had to pay a war indemnity of c. 1 300 talents to Athenians (Thuc. I, 115–117; Plut. *Per.* 24–25; Diod. XII, 27; *ATL*, III, p. 334–335). In Samos case, Thucydides expressed (VIII, 76) that the revolt was the biggest among all allied rebellions against Athenian supremacy in *Pentekontaetia*. To suppress Samos the Athenians had to use very large forces and came nearer than at any other time to be defeated by a rebellious ally and to loose their dominance in Aegean.

the Greek political scene had started to bipolarize. On one side, there were supporters of Athenian democracy and on the other one the supporters of oligarchy, represented by Spartans. This political dualism was in the last years before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War characterized by virtually for whole Greek community and gradually became an essential element of its foreign policy.<sup>44</sup> Many *poleis*, too weak to face Athens or Sparta alone had to adapt their foreign policy to the needs and interests of their hegemonic leader, which represented a guarantee of security for them. The political climate was in each *polis* divided into two irreconcilable camps, where each one, directly supported by its hegemonic leader, was trying to gain power in the *polis* and to promote its interests at the expense of interests of his political rival.<sup>45</sup>

Pericles saw that the situation inside the empire wasn't ideal. Nonetheless, he continued to extend Athenian positions in Greece and across the eastern Mediterranean, mostly by interfering in internal affairs of those *poleis*, which were in some kind of relationship with Sparta or other members of the Peloponnesian League. These Athenian actions raised a big resentment inside the Peloponnesian League, because they were in conflict with the conditions, which both sides agreed upon after signing the Thirty-Years' Peace in 446/5 BC: that they would not interfere into each other's affairs and interests. Therefore, due to recent Athenian military and naval actions in Corcyra (434/3)<sup>46</sup> and Potidaea (432/1),<sup>47</sup> the congress of the Peloponnesian League was summoned to Sparta in 432 BC. At the congress, the Spartans were urged by their allies (especially Corinth), as well as by other *poleis*, whose interests were threatened or restricted by Athenian presence (e.g. Aegina, Megara),<sup>48</sup> to strictly act against Athens, which in 431 BC ultimately led to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War.<sup>49</sup> Pericles, who had been since his political leadership tirelessly trying to limit Spartan po-

<sup>44</sup> RHODES (2006: 181–182; 2009: 208); OLIVA (1995: 22–23).

<sup>45</sup> BLEICKEN (2002: 69–70); MEIGGS (1963: 27–29); KAGAN (1969: 123–125); OLIVA (1995: 22–23).

<sup>46</sup> THUC. I, 24–55.

<sup>47</sup> THUC. I, 56–66.

<sup>48</sup> THUC. I, 67, 139–140, 144; PLUT. *Per.* 29–31.

<sup>49</sup> Thucydides in detail mentions (I, 67–88) that the Spartans were moved more by fear of Athens' growing power than by the allies' complaints. Later he mentions the congress of the Peloponnesian League, which approves Sparta's decision to go to war; with an exchange of propaganda, in which Sparta begins with particular grievances but ends by demanding that Athens should restore the freedom to the Greeks; and with a speech of Pericles in Athens claiming that the Athenians were well prepared, and that if they were to give way to the grievances, Sparta would come back with others (I, 118–146).



sitions in Greece convincing the Athenians to decisive confrontation with them, actually died two years later from plague, which had spread in Athens a year before, in 430 BC.<sup>50</sup>

The Peloponnesian War lasted for almost thirty years and ended in 404 BC by defeat of Athens. The peace terms were dictated by the Spartans and the Athenians were given to taste their own medicine: By the peace treaty, Athens had to demolish Long walls and Piraeus walls, lost all its overseas possessions, had its navy limited to twelve ships and became a subordinate ally of Sparta, bound to follow Sparta's lead in foreign policy. This practically terminated Athenian hopes and claims for hegemony in Greece and meant destruction of its 5<sup>th</sup> century empire.<sup>51</sup>

### Conclusion

On various examples mentioned in paper we could observe how the imperial policy of democratic Athens continuously evolved during last two decades of the *Pentekontaetia*: from the occasional interferences into allied autonomy at the beginning, to a rise of a full-scale imperialism concerning primarily with a strict supervision over the allies and an implementation of various kinds of policies and control mechanisms. All of these most significant features of imperial policy served the Athenians primarily to one purpose. Besides huge material and financial profits, which played decisive role in this process, another key motive for the Athenians was to gain an absolute control and supremacy over their allies by enlarging and transforming symmarchy into their own private sphere of influence, which in their Pan-Hellenic conception should ultimately help them to claim not only political and economical, but also cultural dominance over all other Greeks living in eastern the Mediterranean.

Therefore, I suggest that various disputes about general timeline restrictions, since when we can or cannot use the terms "empire" or "imperialism" in connection with 5<sup>th</sup> century Athens, shouldn't be considered as substantial. There are also other, more important and relevant questions, which we should discuss and focus our attention on. Hence, in my opinion, one of the main disputes in this topic should be appointed for example to scale of intensity, in which the particular forms of imperialism in Athenian policy expressed themselves right from the beginning of League's existence and also how its intensity continuously grew hand-in-hand with the Athenian hegemonic

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<sup>50</sup> PLUT. *Per.*, 33–38; THUC. II, 65.

<sup>51</sup> DIOD. XIII, 107; XIV, 3.

ambitions during the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Even if we could suggest, according to the League's main objectives, that right after Persian wars the main purpose for the Athenians was to liberate all Greeks from the rule of the Persians, we can hardly support our statement claiming that the Athenians were doing it without any future interests. On the contrary, from various actions of Athenian fleet, mentioned in ancient sources, we can observe that right from the beginning, the Athenians started building up their strategic positions in the Aegean, which should serve them as starting points for their future expansion. Athenian hegemonic interests were quite soon comprehended even by some of the allies, who when realized true Athenian intentions were trying to withdraw from the League. However, as it was demonstrated in the paper (on Samian example), their attempts were not successful and they were forced to rejoin the League, pay large war contributions and obey harsh Athenian directives. Therefore, I suggest, that the imperialistic features were present in Athenian foreign policy basically right from the beginning of the League's existence. Their forms and nature had, of course, changed and evolved during passing years, but it is quite certain, that alongside with the growth of Athenian power during *Pentekontaetia*, the assertive features of imperialism had gradually emerged to such an extent (especially during Pericles' tenure), as to become common and inseparable part of Athenian foreign policy in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.

Due to the size restriction, provided for the paper, I wasn't able to mention all of them, nor the scale of intensity, in which they were applied during whole *Pentekontaetia* period as I had initially meant to. Therefore, I was primarily focusing my attention on those types of imperial policies and means of control, which I assume were most common and also frequently used by the Athenians in the final stage of this period, although some of them existed and were applied also in earlier stages of Athenian "empire-building" program in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Nevertheless, dear reader, I hope that my paper brought you at least partially satisfying view on how the Athenians were managing and running their empire in the mid 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.

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