

Spartan Foreign Policy in the Third Century BC

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Abstract – Spartan Foreign Policy in the Third Century BC – Andrea Scarpato

Spartan foreign policy in the third century BC is a neglected topic of Spartan history. This work explores this issue and argues for Spartan proactive participation in the interstate interactions of the third century BC. In doing so, it explains the reasons which drove Sparta to interact with other states and the extent of such interaction. It demonstrates that decision-making power was distributed between particular Spartan individuals and institutions, and that the changing distribution of power across these networks (to include ephors, *gerousia*, and kings) had a crucial impact on the articulation of foreign (military and diplomatic expeditions) and domestic (appointment of the Spartan kings) political decisions.

As shown in this work, in the formulation of Spartan foreign policy, important efforts to avoid conflict without recourse to warfare and the presence of cooperation and interstate dialogue, facilitated by tools such as kinship ties and embassies, were central. These were utilised by the Spartan governing bodies to facilitate interactions with smaller (Taras, some Cretan *poleis*) and larger (Achaean League, Macedonia, Egypt, Rome) Mediterranean states. In adopting its foreign policy, Sparta could cultivate relations with these states and was highly regarded on the international stage. In interstate interactions, certain Spartan individuals were paramount: they were deployed by the Spartan governing bodies (*gerousia*, ephors) or could act by themselves in important military and diplomatic expeditions. By articulating a proactive foreign policy, Sparta could exercise influence on many locales situated inside and outside the Peloponnese and could even compete for hegemony with superpowers of the century such as Macedonia and Rome. In addressing these issues, it will be shown that the third century was a period characterised by a remarkable Spartan continuity of interest in certain locales inside and outside the Peloponnese.

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List of Contents

| | | |
|-------|--|----|
| 1. | Introduction..... | 1 |
| 2. | Literature Review..... | 6 |
| 2.1 | Types of Ancient Interstate Interactions | 6 |
| 2.2 | The Latest Studies on Hellenistic Interstate Interactions | 10 |
| 2.3 | Studies on Spartan Interstate Interactions | 18 |
| 3. | Approaches to the Evidence..... | 24 |
| 3.1 | The Sources and their Issues..... | 24 |
| 3.1.1 | The Literary Evidence..... | 25 |
| 3.1.2 | The Epigraphic and Numismatic Evidence | 26 |
| 3.2 | Approaches..... | 30 |
| 3.2.1 | First Case Study (Embracing the Mediterranean: Cleonymus)..... | 30 |
| 3.2.2 | Second Case Study (A de facto king: Cleonymus) | 31 |
| 3.2.3 | Third Case Study (Areus and the Hellenistic World)..... | 32 |
| 3.2.4 | Fourth Case Study (The Peloponnesian Bipolarity)..... | 32 |
| 3.2.5 | Fifth Case Study (Nabis and the Wider World) | 33 |
| 4. | Embracing the Mediterranean: Cleonymus..... | 34 |
| 4.1 | Introduction..... | 34 |
| 4.2 | Appointing the King..... | 37 |
| 4.3 | Cleonymus Abroad | 38 |
| 4.4 | Spartan relationships with western Cretan poleis | 45 |
| 4.5 | Continuity of Spartan relations in southern Italy and Crete..... | 54 |
| 4.6 | Conclusions..... | 56 |
| 5. | A de facto king: Cleonymus..... | 57 |
| 5.1 | Introduction..... | 57 |
| 5.2 | Cleonymus in Boeotia..... | 61 |
| 5.3 | The Alliance against the Aetolians | 63 |
| 5.4 | Cleonymus in Messenia and Argolis..... | 70 |
| 5.5 | A de facto king..... | 76 |
| 5.6 | Conclusions..... | 81 |
| 6. | Areus and the Hellenistic World | 83 |
| 6.1 | Introduction..... | 83 |
| 6.2 | Pyrrhus' Expansionism | 86 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 6.3 Sparta's relationships with Cretan poleis | 91 |
| 6.4 The Origins of Two Alliances..... | 96 |
| 6.5 The Anti-Macedonian Coalition | 101 |
| 6.6 King Areus I..... | 104 |
| 6.7 Conclusions..... | 111 |
| 7. The Peloponnesian Bipolarity | 113 |
| 7.1 Introduction..... | 113 |
| 7.2 Agis IV and The Peloponnese..... | 116 |
| 7.2.1 Agis in Pellene | 120 |
| 7.2.2 Agis in Megalopolis | 122 |
| 7.2.3 Agis in Mantinea | 124 |
| 7.3 Cleomenes III and Peloponnesian Bipolarity..... | 126 |
| 7.3.1 The formation of alliances inside and outside the Peloponnese..... | 127 |
| 7.3.2 Cleomenes' agency in Spartan foreign policy and the role of the ephorate..... | 130 |
| 7.3.3 Spartan relationships with some Cretan poleis | 133 |
| 7.3.4 The alliance between Aratus and Antigonos Doson | 136 |
| 7.4 Conclusions..... | 138 |
| 8. Nabis and the Wider World..... | 140 |
| 8.1 Introduction..... | 140 |
| 8.2 Inside the Peloponnese: Lykourgos and Machanidas | 143 |
| 8.2.1 Lykourgos | 144 |
| 8.2.2 Machanidas | 146 |
| 8.3 Inside and Outside the Peloponnese: Nabis | 148 |
| 8.3.1 Inside the Peloponnese..... | 149 |
| 8.3.2 The creation of alliances | 151 |
| 8.3.3 Spartan relationships with some Cretan poleis and Delos | 154 |
| 8.4 Conclusions..... | 156 |
| 9. Consequences and Limitations..... | 158 |
| Bibliography..... | 167 |

List of Tables

| | |
|---|-----|
| Table 1: Literary Sources | 26 |
| Table 2: Epigraphic Sources | 27 |
| Table 3: Numismatic Sources | 28 |
| Table 4: Table featuring salient episodes of Spartan foreign policy of the early third century. . | 70 |
| Table 5: Timetable of Spartan contacts with some Cretan <i>poleis</i> | 135 |

List of Figures

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1: Map showing the Ionian and Adriatic areas, the Otranto Strait, and the peculiar position of Corcyra. | 40 |
| Figure 2: Limestone stele featuring a young goddess with chiton (nymph of Phalasarna) and a goddess with short chiton, cloak, and quiver (Diktynna)..... | 46 |
| Figure 3: Stelae from Diktynnaios.. | 52 |
| Figure 4: Silver stater from Phalasarna (struck c. 300-270 BC). Obv. Head of nymph of Phalasarna. Rev. Trident with letters ΦΑ..... | 53 |
| Figure 5: Map showing the central position of Dictynnaion..... | 54 |
| Figure 6: Map of Peloponnese highlighting the Achaean poleis involved in the coalition..... | 69 |

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Arr. | Arrian |
| CBED | <i>Cambridge Business English Dictionary</i> |
| <i>Diod.</i> | Diodorus Siculus |
| Hdt. | Herodotus |
| Just. | Justin |
| Liv. | Livy |
| Macc. | Maccabees |
| OED | <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> |
| Paus. | Pausanias |
| Plut. | Plutarch |
| Pol. | Polybius |
| Polyaen. | Polyaenus |
| Thuc. | Thucydides |
| Trog. | Trogus |
| Xen. | Xenophon |

1. Introduction

This work explores Spartan foreign policy in the third century BC. The ways in which the Spartan governing bodies articulated important decisions regarding military and diplomatic expeditions to various Mediterranean locales and the motives which lay behind Spartan decision-making represent important issues which are examined in this study. Their analysis may provide us with new insights into the ways in which smaller states interact nowadays with major powers and how certain individuals can exercise influence on foreign policy decisions. Specifically, the evaluation of foreign political undertakings – ranging from military expeditions and interstate arbitrations to diplomatic missions and other types of state contacts – enables the scrutiny of Spartan interactions with the Hellenistic powers of a poorly documented period such as the third century BC.

The third century BC, as discussed in section 2.2, is a period of Spartan history which has been neglected in the latest important contributions. The latest influential studies have examined important issues of Spartan history in the Archaic¹ and Classical² periods, and studies of the third century BCE have assessed only tangentially the nature of Spartan interactions with major and minor powers of the century and the role of the individuals in foreign undertakings.³ The analysis of the third century generates room to observe the significant continuity of interest in some Mediterranean locales which characterised Spartan foreign policy. Sparta continued to cultivate relations with both smaller and larger states: minor powers such as some Cretan *poleis* sought to utilise the intervention of Sparta to solve their internal conflicts, while a superpower such as Ptolemaic Egypt enabled Sparta to restore, even if temporarily, its rank of Peloponnesian leader. Lastly, the third century seems to have represented a period of change in domestic policy: the introduction of the first Spartan coinage (discussed below) and the internal reforms advanced by the reformer kings were two important internal changes of the period.

¹ Van Wees (1999) pp. 1-26; Langerwerf (2009) pp. 334-347; Richer (2010) pp. 1-84; Figueira (2010) pp. 265-296. See Chapter 2 for a review of Spartan studies.

² David (1989) pp. 1-25; Fisher (1989) pp. 26-50; Hooker (1989) pp. 122-141; Parker (1989) pp. 142-172; Powell (1989) pp. 173-192; Bradford (1994) pp. 59-85; Tuplin (1994) pp. 127-181; Ducat (1999) pp. 43-66; Singor (1999) pp. 67-89; Humble (1999) pp. 339-353; Millender (1999) pp. 355-391; Hodkinson (2000); Millender (2002), p. 1-61; Humble (2002) pp. 85-109; Figueira (2006) pp. 57-84; Millender (2006) pp. 235-266; Harman (2009) pp. 361-382; Powell (2010) pp. 85-135; Christesen (2010) pp. 211-263. Some of the most significant contributions related to this work are discussed below.

³ For an examination of some of the latest and most important contributions on Sparta, see chapter 2 (subsection 2.1).

The approach adopted by Sparta towards other states is paramount in this study, as its assessment may offer a new understanding of how interactions among Hellenistic states occurred. The relations among powers in the third century included frequent resort to juridical and diplomatic procedures, namely interstate arbitrations, alliances, and embassies (discussed in section 2.1). This set of tools characterised interstate interactions and the new political strategies deployed by the Hellenistic states. The resort to Spartan intervention by major and minor powers produced a peculiar interaction in which the participants were prominent Spartan individuals. The involvement of these characters in salient events of the history of the third century BC, such as the conflict between Taras and Rome (c. 281) and the Chremonidean War (c. 265), constitutes another important issue which is investigated in this work. Individual Spartans, portrayed by the ancient sources as anomalous characters, seem to have exerted disproportionate influence over the international events of this period. In this study, I shall examine some of the major Spartan personalities of the third century, their role externally in international affairs, and the extent to which they exercised influence internally on Spartan decision-making. How far did individuals such as Cleonymus, Areus I, Agis IV and Cleomenes III made independent political choices or, when performing foreign political actions, were limited by other Spartan institutions such as the ephorate, the *gerousia* and the other king of Sparta?⁴

The modern term “Foreign Policy” deployed in the title of this work may seem inappropriate if one applies it to the ancient world. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify this definition and explain how the term is employed in this study. The *Cambridge Business English Dictionary* and the *Oxford English Dictionary* offer wide-ranging definitions of it: “a plan of action adopted by one nation in regards to its diplomatic dealings with other countries”⁵ and “the official ways in which a government has decided to deal with other countries”.⁶ The assessment of the ways in which a government articulates its decisions is crucial for the study of Spartan interactions: it may provide us with new answers about how the Spartan governing bodies (discussed in sections 4.2, 4.3, 6.5, subsections 7.2.1, 8.2.1) made important decisions about foreign matters and dealt with other Mediterranean states in the third century BC. The three main governing

⁴ There is no evidence of the power held by the *ekklesia* (assembly) for the third century.

⁵ CBED s.v. “Foreign Policy”.

⁶ OED s.v. “Foreign Policy”.

bodies - namely the ephorate, the *gerousia*, and the kingship - were involved meaningfully in the articulation of Spartan foreign policy and in the interaction with other Mediterranean powers. The expeditions to southern Italy, the intervention of Sparta in Cretan matters, and the outbreak of the Chremonidean War generate a fertile ground to explore how power was distributed among the Spartan governing bodies: these three episodes are also informative for the significant role that Sparta continued to play in interstate relations of the third century. They enable us to get a sense of the authority that a middling power such as Sparta could maintain in the new world of Hellenistic superpowers. In this regard, this work argues that Sparta continued to have an important role on the international stage of the third century BC. In particular, Spartan foreign policy of this period focused a number of Mediterranean locales situated both inside and outside the Peloponnesian landmass. As will be demonstrated, these were usually locations where Sparta had previously had an interest in earlier centuries, and the policy in these locations largely remained constant. These specific locales were persistently chosen by the Spartan governing bodies as targets of military or diplomatic expeditions: some shared cultural, mythical and historical links with Sparta.

Furthermore, a scrutiny of the scanty evidence from the past (discussed in section 3.1) is invaluable to get a sense of the competitive scenario in which Hellenistic states operated and vied for hegemony: the merely pragmatic and self-interested nature (discussed at 2.1 below) of their foreign political decisions seems to have been a natural consequence of of the interstate competition for power. However, this study argues for a more nuanced reality and for the presence of subtle networks of Spartan individuals, along with their distribution of decision-making power throughout the third century. Admittedly, the Hellenistic world was characterised by warfare and a consistent struggle for hegemony: states framed their political plans and acted in the international scene by following a cruel logic of self-help and self-interest in order to attain hegemony. But, as will be contended, interstate cooperation and ways to circumvent warfare without recourse to violence seem to have occupied a central place in interstate interactions.

This work has significance for modern international relations, as it shows how a medium-rank state such as Sparta, with a shrinking population, could interact meaningfully with larger powers of the Hellenistic world. Despite operating in a wider world dominated by superpowers of the caliber of Egypt, Macedonia and, eventually, Rome, the Spartan *polis*

could still maintain a position of esteem and participate proactively within Mediterranean affairs thanks to its considerable cultural capital and ‘soft power’.

Within the discipline of International Relations, the theory of Realism offers a model of interstate relations that sees it as an anarchic system (discussed briefly in section 2.2), where there is no “international law” and the few and informal customs are largely unenforceable. When considering the foreign policies of some of the larger Hellenistic states, it could be argued that these followed a Realist approach as they were primarily concerned with maximizing the extent of their hegemony.⁷ By assessing Spartan foreign policy, a more nuanced reading of Hellenistic interstate interactions can be reached. What Spartan interactions were indeed characterised by warfare and violence, we also find evidence for interstate arbitrations, to appeals kinship ties to circumvent warfare, and the exercise of cultural influence and ‘soft power’. Several states explicitly asked Sparta to intervene in foreign political matters of the utmost importance throughout the century. King Ptolemy II seems to have sought Spartan support so as to participate in the affairs of the Peloponnese and of the Greek mainland; some Cretan *poleis* entered into military alliances with Sparta; and significant powers such as Rome and Macedonia also sought alliances with Sparta in the reign of Nabis.

This thesis seeks to address the following core questions (below). The first two address Sparta’s place in the wider international order (i.e. external), and the second two focus on decision-making processes within Sparta (i.e. internal).

- How did Sparta interact with other Mediterranean powers (of various scales) during the third century BCE?
- Why did Sparta have significant cultural and political influence in the third century, despite having only limited military and economic power?
- How was decision-making power distributed among the Spartan governing bodies when it came to formulating foreign policy in the third century?
- How far was there continuity or change in this over time?

⁷ Eckstein (2006) pp.1, 37; Eckstein (2008) p. 22.

This study features seven chapters. After this first introductory chapter, Chapter 2 offers a literary review. This presents an overview of some of the latest significant studies involving ancient interstate interactions and Spartan Hellenistic history more generally. Following this, chapter 3 explains the limits and the issues of the limited available evidence for a nebulous period of Spartan history such as the third century BC (section 3.1), and how the ancient sources are utilised to frame five case studies (section 3.2). The thesis proceeds with the examination of the main Spartan characters of this century: each chapter explores Spartan interactions which occurred with the reign of a specific royal character and demonstrates how there was a subtle distribution of power among the Spartan governing bodies. Lastly, the concluding Chapter 9 explains the outcomes of the study of continuity and change in Spartan foreign policy and how certain entities could exercise more influence in important foreign and domestic policy decisions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Types of Ancient Interstate Interactions

This section features an assessment of some of the most important contributions concerning Greek interstate interactions, namely interstate arbitrations, kinship ties, and embassies, which may offer a broader view as to how Sparta and the Hellenistic states interacted in the third century. As shall be discussed in the case studies below (Chapters 4-8), this typology of interstate interactions was consistently utilised by Sparta and other Mediterranean powers during the third century BC.

The Hellenistic period featured a persistent recourse to third-party interventions, alliance decrees, and embassies from Mediterranean powers: these political and diplomatic tools, considered holistically, contribute to the large diversity and complexity of the way in which interstate relations unfolded. In exploring three main areas of interstate relations, such as the dispatch of embassies, the stipulation and enforcement of treaties, and the beginning and undertaking of hostilities, Bederman⁸ concludes that the ancient world is characterised by a group of sources, processes and doctrines which constitute the beginnings of an international legal consciousness among states. Bederman convincingly highlights the complex nature of states' conduct in the international stage: he underlines the role of the norms of conduct which govern the behaviour of ambassadors and their dispatch abroad, the stipulation of treaties, and the behaviour of states displayed both during and after conflict.⁹ This topic is thematically close to the presence of Cleonymus in the arbitration between two Cretan *poleis* (discussed in chapter 4) and testifies to the importance of individuals in diplomatic procedures.

Moreover, the procedures performed by states before the outbreak of a conflict have been analysed by Cozzo,¹⁰ who highlights their underlying aim of circumventing violence through the consistent dispatch of embassies and the performance of interstate arbitrations from the archaic until the Hellenistic period. Heralds are defined as mediums to articulate the large discourse among Mediterranean powers:¹¹ they were dispatched

⁸ Bederman (2001) pp. 1-2, 7; Bederman (2009) p. 116.

⁹ Bederman (2001) p. 7; Allan and Grant (2003) pp. 218-219.

¹⁰ Cozzo (2008) pp. 19-21.

¹¹ Cozzo (2008) p. 21.

and deployed by cities in order to negotiate the resolution of conflicts or to represent cities in diplomatic missions. They held the power to witness the fracture between the two parties and their resort showed the formality of this interaction.¹² A good example that shows the formal nature of the interaction between parties through heralds can be seen in the envoys sent by the Corinthians to Athens during the Peloponnesian War: these were dispatched without the caduceus to signal the lack of hostility between the parties.¹³ Bearing the caduceus would have meant the beginning of the hostilities. Lastly, they had significant powers, such as the sacrosanctity bestowed upon them on missions abroad and their association with specific kin groups - which could also claim mythical origins.¹⁴ The *talthybioi* in Sparta and the *Eumolpidae* in Athens represent good examples in this sense. These features contribute to the complex nature of interstate interactions: heralds, due to their prerogatives, privileges and characteristics, point to the presence of some sort of international norms which were followed by ancient societies.

The contribution of Sammartano¹⁵ points out the renewed and notable resort to diplomatic practices in the second half of the third century BC and, above all, the role of *syngeneia* in the way in which states sought to facilitate the invitations of foreign citizens to festivals, and the foundation of colonies abroad. The ideas offered by these contributions are important to this study: kinship ties are consistently recalled by Hellenistic powers to ask Spartan intervention in foreign disputes and to facilitate the dialogue among power. In this interaction, interstate arbitrations characterised meaningfully interstate interactions since the archaic period and are object of systematic studies (explained below). This can be seen in the interstate contacts between Sparta and some Cretan states (Gortyn, Knossos, Phalasarna), which seem to have been consistently communicating with each other (sections 4.4, 6.3, 7.3.3, 8.3.3) throughout the third century.

The works of Luigi Piccirilli¹⁶ and Sheila Ager¹⁷ offer a significant assessment of the epigraphic and literary evidence regarding Greek interstate arbitrations. Piccirilli provides an evaluation of the literary and epigraphic material from the archaic period until 338 BC. His work shows a strong engagement with the primary sources by offering

¹² Cozzo (2008) pp. 20-21.

¹³ Cozzo (2008) p. 21.

¹⁴ Bederman (2001) pp. 97-98.

¹⁵ Sammartano (2008) pp. 111-112.

¹⁶ Piccirilli (1973).

¹⁷ Ager (1996).

a large commentary for each one of the inscriptions analysed. However, it is only with the later work of Ager that we are provided with a collection and a thorough assessment of the epigraphic and literary evidence for the Hellenistic period. The significance of interstate arbitrations after Chaeronea is highlighted by Ager who points out the continuing and consistent resort to arbitration procedures by Hellenistic powers.¹⁸ In Ager's contribution arises a larger sensitivity to the new dynamics of dialogue between Hellenistic monarchs and minor powers. Her introduction offers valuable insights into the arbitration procedure in the Hellenistic period and explores the issue of the existence of what can be defined nowadays as "international law". This significant topic, analysed by the previous important contributions of Westermann and Tod,¹⁹ is central in Ager's work. These works feature a broad engagement with the issue of the presence of a Greek interstate law; however, they have shown a simplistic approach toward the resort to third-party interventions. Their methodology highlights the fundamental intention of arbitrations to solve internal conflicts and to preserve peace without considering the multifaceted nature of Hellenistic diplomacy.²⁰ Furthermore, the study of Tod is mainly grounded on the evaluation of the arbitrations documented by selected epigraphic material without integrating the literary evidence; another important limit of these studies is the lack of observation of the personal interests of the Hellenistic powers and of their struggle for hegemony. It is in this period, in fact, that minor powers were more likely to ask monarchs or prominent individuals from other states to intervene so as to solve their disputes: in this environment, characterized by internal conflicts and pursuit of power, Ager contends that the consistent use of arbitrations may constitute the presence of some sort of "international law" among powers and the efficiency of interstate arbitrations to solve disputes.²¹

However, fewer than fifty percent of interstate arbitrations are resolved and we are unable to know whether the final decisions were respected or violated.²² Finally, the importance of the arbitral procedure and its recurrence in the Hellenistic period is highlighted by Anna Magnetto.²³ In her collection of interstate arbitrations,²⁴ Magnetto illustrates the

¹⁸ Ager (1996) pp. 4-26.

¹⁹ Westermann (1906); Tod (1913).

²⁰ Westermann (1906) pp. 201-204; Tod (1913) pp. 180, 190.

²¹ Ager (1996) pp. 19-20.

²² Ager (1996) pp. 30, 33.

²³ Magnetto (1997) pp. 25-26; Magnetto (2014) p. 475; Magnetto (2015) p. 67.

²⁴ Magnetto (1997).

functioning and complexities of the arbitration process and underlines its importance throughout the Hellenistic period. The arbitration involved the presence of particular individuals, which were selected for their abilities of mediators:²⁵ some of these individuals may have followed a specific training in order to perform an arbitration. Moreover, the importance and sacrosanctity of the judges, along with the formality of their duty, are testified by the presence of individuals selected to escort them during missions abroad.²⁶ These individuals – defined as *dikastagoghoi* – were entrusted with the duty to guarantee the protection of the judges during and after the travel to the location in which the arbitration had to be performed. These concepts are invaluable to this study, as they offer important insights about how the arbitration between Sparta and the western Cretan *poleis* occurred (section 4.4).

Magnetto's work provides a good starting point to broaden the view on the way in which interstate relations occurred and, more specifically, on the variety of juridical and diplomatic instruments utilised by states to avoid violence and warfare. Lastly, the significant statistical analysis performed by Grynaviski and Hsieh²⁷ on Hellenistic interstate arbitrations, through the use of qualitative comparative studies, has shown the important increase in the number of interstate arbitrations in the Hellenistic period and the notable presence of hierarchy in the environment in which arbitrations were performed.²⁸ In particular, the Hellenistic period has been identified as the period featuring the most extensive use of arbitration in world history:²⁹ some of the major powers (Egypt, Macedonia, Rome) frequently turned to this tool in order to manage subordinate cities.³⁰ The study concludes that it was hierarchy, rather than anarchy, that characterised the political context in which arbitration was undertaken: in the Hellenistic period, the Greeks constantly forged alliances in which a single power may have dominated its decision-making; or, they may have formed federal states with a common foreign policy. The use of these theories is instrumental to interpreting the evidence of the past regarding arbitrations and alliances; it may provide new answers to the ways in which Hellenistic states communicated and to the role of Spartan individuals in interstate interactions.

²⁵ Magnetto (1997) pp. XII-XVI.

²⁶ Magnetto (1997) p. XIII.

²⁷ Grynaviski and Hsieh (2015).

²⁸ Grynaviski and Hsieh (2015) pp. 698, 706.

²⁹ Grynaviski and Hsieh (2015) p. 698.

³⁰ Grynaviski and Hsieh (2015) pp. 698-699.

2.2 The Latest Studies on Hellenistic Interstate Interactions

Foreign policy in ancient history represents a topic that is still developing and that may broaden our comprehension of political dynamics in the ancient world: how interstate interactions occurred and the motivations behind these interactions are crucial aspects highlighted in some of the latest studies explained below. Specifically, the first portion of this section illustrates some of the most recent studies which cover Hellenistic interstate interactions, while the second portion explains the latest important contributions about Spartan history, which are closely connected to this study.

The last decade has seen the systematic application of International Relations theories (IR) to the evidence from the past and the growing awareness that these theories may enable us to take important steps forward in the understanding of how foreign political plans were shaped and performed by Hellenistic states. This application has allowed us to obtain new answers as to the underlying reasons which lay behind interstate interactions. In this regard, the works of Arthur Eckstein,³¹ in the form of journal articles³² and books,³³ stand as ambitious attempts to merge IR's theory of Realism with ancient history. The lack of formal and codified international law³⁴ and mechanisms designed to enforce the few and informal customs of law³⁵ were two of the fundamental causes which determined the aggressive and militarised nature of ancient societies and interstate interactions. It has been contended that states shaped their foreign political plans by following the logic (explained above) of self-help³⁶ and self-interest³⁷ and, in doing so, kept a watchful eye on how much power they had in relation to each other.³⁸ These fundamental principles borrowed from Realism are deployed by Eckstein and combined with the Classical sources to good effect so as to provide a plausible explanation to the

³¹ Eckstein (2003); Eckstein (2006); Eckstein (2008); Eckstein (2017).

³² Eckstein (2003); Eckstein (2017).

³³ Eckstein (2006); Eckstein (2008).

³⁴ Eckstein (2006) pp. 1, 4, 12, 37-75. Eckstein (2008) pp. 1, 8, 11; Eckstein (2017) pp. 1-2.

³⁵ Eckstein (2006) pp. 39, 42, 63, 65; Eckstein (2017) pp. 2, 6.

³⁶ Eckstein (2003) pp. 757-758; Eckstein (2006) pp. 74-75; Eckstein (2017) pp. 4-5.

³⁷ Eckstein (2006) pp. 49-50, 57; Eckstein (2017) pp. 10-11.

³⁸ Eckstein (2006) pp. 76-77; Eckstein (2017) pp. 3-4, 7.

behaviour displayed by Sparta towards Athens, and to the climate of warfare, which seems to have pervaded the international stage of the period. The use of Realism and its application to the evidence from the past is expanded further in two books:³⁹ these involve a combination of the theory with Classical and Hellenistic sources. The contributions, mainly concerned with Roman foreign policy and with Rome's success in the international scenario, are closely connected to this work: the focus on Spartan decision-making and foreign political actions performed in numerous locales of the Mediterranean of the third century are paramount in this study. Eckstein's works provide an explanation to Rome's decision-making and its growing success over other Mediterranean powers; moreover, they contest widely-held views about the nature of Roman imperialism proposed in previous studies⁴⁰ and, as a result, are not without their critics (discussed below).

In framing his works, Eckstein builds on a variety of contributions which suggest the extraordinary military nature and bellicosity of Rome. More particularly, the earlier contribution of Harris⁴¹ has a significant impact on the development of Eckstein's contributions and of this work. Harris seeks to find a cause for Roman success and its ability to absorb other powers in its hegemonic sphere. In doing so, his work identifies Roman triumph over other states as a natural consequence of Rome's extraordinary bellicosity and heavily militarised society. The concepts of bellicosity and imperialism consistently highlighted by Harris are recurrent in this study since, as shown below, the Hellenistic Mediterranean featured endemic warfare and a continued pursuit for hegemony among states.

Harris' argument is not without its critics: Erich Gruen⁴² - and later Eckstein (explained below) - debated his argument. In his largest contribution,⁴³ Gruen touched on important issues related to Roman interaction with Hellenistic states: these issues involved the ways in which Rome engaged with other states and managed to achieve its position of Mediterranean superpower. He includes embassies as means that facilitated Roman

³⁹ Eckstein (2006); Eckstein (2008).

⁴⁰ Harris (1979); North (1981); Rowland (1983); Mandell (1989); Mandell (1991); Derow (2003).

⁴¹ Harris (1979) pp. 24-49.

⁴² Gruen (1984); Gruen (2004).

⁴³ Gruen (1984).

interactions with Hellenistic states:⁴⁴ the envoys⁴⁵ dispatched to Ptolemaic Egypt throughout the third century BC and the creation of *amicitia*⁴⁶ between Rome and the Ptolemies occupy a central place in his discussion on the Roman approach towards other states. This was more complex and diverse than the one proposed by Harris.⁴⁷ One can see this in the embassy sent by the senate in 273 to Ptolemy II in order to forge a friendship with Rome.⁴⁸ This large Roman delegation was headed by Q. Fabius Maximus Gurgus who acted as negotiator: by resorting to these tools, Rome could adjust to and manoeuvre within Hellenistic modes of interstate relations. Harris's contribution, on the other hand, identifies the bellicose nature of Rome and its society as the conducive factor to its expansionism. Gruen⁴⁹ acknowledges later the economic benefits of empire proposed by Harris, but rejects this hypothesis of Roman aggressive behaviour. In doing so, he argues that this was not the primary motivation for expansion; instead, it was a series of circumstances which allowed Rome to achieve its position of hegemonic power. In interstate interactions, important judicial and diplomatic tools (interstate arbitrations, friendship treaties, alliances) were involved. Nonetheless, Harris' argument has been accepted by other scholars:⁵⁰ these have supported it while explaining the persistent imperialistic foreign policy performed by Rome since its earliest stages.

However, his contention has been debated and developed further by Eckstein. The application of Realism⁵¹ to the evidence from the past has led Eckstein to the conclusion that Rome was not more aggressive and bellicose than other states: it was, in fact, the anarchic environment (explained in section 2.2) in which states operated and vied for hegemony which obliged them to engage in warfare. This environment, therefore, drove Rome to pursue its strategy of conquest.

The result of the application of Realism has generated a pessimistic vision of Mediterranean interstate relations: the Mediterranean featured "one of the grimmest and

⁴⁴ Gruen (1984) pp. 673-678

⁴⁵ For *amicitia* between Rome and the Ptolemies, see Gruen (1984) pp. 678-680.

⁴⁶ Gruen (1984) pp. 675-678. This *amicitia* lasted until 204/3 BC.

⁴⁷ Gruen (1984) pp. 721-725 shows the complexity of Roman interstate behaviour, as opposed to the one proposed by Harris.

⁴⁸ Gruen (1984) p. 673.

⁴⁹ Gruen (2004) pp. 30-46.

⁵⁰ North (1981) pp. 3-5; Rowland (1983) pp. 749-760; Mandell (1989) pp. 89-94; Mandell (1991) pp. 37-42; Derow (2003) pp. 51-70.

⁵¹ Realism theory, along with other IR theories employed in the previous studies, are discussed in the next section.

most unforgiving of Realist paradigms”⁵² with every state engaged in constant warfare. Although the harsh and competitive environment in which Hellenistic states coexisted is crucial to this study, Eckstein’s vision cannot be fully accepted. In antiquity, as in the present day, the self-interest of individual states could be pursued through a range of means, not just through all-out warfare. The Hellenistic period, in particular, saw extensive use of diplomacy, cultural capital, and ‘soft power’. The criticisms of Erskine and Tröster⁵³ stress the importance of this issue and criticise Eckstein’s dependence on Realism: the application of Realism to ancient history generates a simplistic and inaccurate view of interstate relations.

This is evident from recent scholarship on the Hellenistic period. The important contributions of Adalberto Giovannini and John Ma⁵⁴ argue for the broad co-operation among states as part of their foreign policy during the Hellenistic period. Specifically, Giovannini⁵⁵ highlights the solidarity of Greek states from the archaic period and points out some of the ways in which states communicated and interacted: resort to kinship ties⁵⁶ to avoid warfare, interstate arbitrations,⁵⁷ and donations⁵⁸ from kings and states to help cities in need are central issues which are scrutinised in his study. All Greek states were linked by moral obligations and were members of a wider society of *poleis*, which shared some customs and traditions.⁵⁹ These included forms of material help granted from cities to other cities in need or from a king to a city,⁶⁰ along with the frequent evocations of kinship ties as a pretext or reason to receive grants or gifts.⁶¹ Good examples in this sense are the kinship ties recalled by Heracleia on Mount Latmus, which successfully asked the Aetolians to intercede for them with King Ptolemy, although their kinship was purely mythical.⁶² The large donations from Cassander and other cities,⁶³ in 315, was motivated by the reconstruction of Thebes and testify to the sense of solidarity among Greek states. These examples are thematically similar to some of the issues which are discussed in the case studies below. The sense of solidarity among the Greeks and the invocation of

⁵² Eckstein (2006) p. 10.

⁵³ Erskine (2008) p. 188; Tröster (2009) p. 43.

⁵⁴ Giovannini (1993) pp. 274-278, 283; Ma (2003) p. 14-17; Giovannini (2007) pp. 14, 21, 62-67.

⁵⁵ Giovannini (1993) pp. 265-266, 270-272.

⁵⁶ Giovannini (1993) pp. 278-279.

⁵⁷ Giovannini (1993) pp. 275-276.

⁵⁸ Giovannini (1993) pp. 276-277.

⁵⁹ Giovannini (1993) pp. 284-286.

⁶⁰ Giovannini (1993) pp. 278-279.

⁶¹ Giovannini (1993) pp. 276-277.

⁶² Giovannini (1993) p. 279.

⁶³ Giovannini (1993) p. 276.

kinship ties were two constitutive elements of the community of *poleis* proposed by Giovannini. These ideas are important to this study, since Spartan interstate interactions involved the resort of kinship ties from colonies (discussed in chapter 5) as a reason to receive military help; moreover, the interactions between Nabis and Delos (explored in chapter 9) included benefactions from the king to the Delians.

The concept of a wider society of *poleis* is developed further by John Ma,⁶⁴ who contends convincingly that the Greek states should be understood as a network of political actors, which constructed repeatedly their interrelations through a series of concrete and symbolic interactions. The appeal of Iasos to Priene for a team of arbitrators to help judge a backlog of judicial case shows the formality and the sense of parity among *poleis*.⁶⁵ Specifically, the marble stelae containing the decree featured a sophisticated language which provided information on how to behave during the arbitral procedure:⁶⁶ this language included the grace and the gratitude that under-pinned benefactions and honours to the city providing help or sending the arbitrators. This and other interstate interactions involved formalised behaviours and gestures, such as hospitality and material concessions (gifts, grants of money). These works are important to the argument proposed in this study, since interstate arbitrations and kinship ties represent elements which characterised the ways in which the Spartan governing bodies sought to engage with the wider world. These were valuable tools which allowed a middling power such as Sparta to participate proactively in the world of superpowers of the third century BC. The evidence examined in the case studies of this work points toward a more nuanced nature of interstate interaction which included the interstate tools mentioned above, along with more subtle networks of individuals operating within Sparta through which the decision-making power had to travel in order to legitimise foreign and domestic political decisions. The power was unevenly distributed among the Spartan entities.

The nature of the means of interactions (discussed above) are gathered, described, and explored further in the later wider contribution of Giovannini.⁶⁷ His work examines Greek interstate relations from the archaic until the second century BC. In this study, Ma's argument is expanded further: foreign relations among Greek states are defined as

⁶⁴ Ma (2003) pp. 12-15.

⁶⁵ Ma (2003) pp. 14-17.

⁶⁶ Ma (2003) pp. 14-15.

⁶⁷ Giovannini (2007).

relations that occurred inside the same large nation, Greece.⁶⁸ Inside Greece, people shared same language, religion and moral values; moreover, acts of benefaction and solidarity affected meaningfully interstate relations.⁶⁹ This notion is essential in the latest study of Giovannini, as states were not only engaged in pursuit for power and self-interest, but also in a consistent construction of dialogues with each other through a variety of tools such as interstate arbitrations, kinship ties and decrees of alliance. These factors are of paramount importance to this study: the kinship ties of Sparta with some Cretan *poleis*, Taras and some southern Italian populations (discussed in sections 5.3 and 5.4) are examples of the nuanced interactions which are explored in this work. Lastly, the formation of alliances between Sparta and other Mediterranean states, along with their motivations, are other issues which are explored in the chapters below.

Giovannini's argument is developed in the large contribution of William Mack.⁷⁰ Mack examines the institution of *proxenia*, from the earliest times until its demise, with the Roman conquest of the Greek world. *Proxenia* was a status granted to foreign benefactors – defined as *proxenoi* – which allowed *poleis* to establish permanent networks of these benefactors:⁷¹ the said status facilitated interactions between citizens of different cities and helped to connect them as communities to other *poleis*. The examination of communities of *proxenoi* enables to investigate further Greek interstate interactions. In undertaking a broad assessment of this institution,⁷² Mack resorts to the interpretative tool provided by IR's theory of Constructivism. According to Constructivism,⁷³ language and ideas are two of the main elements which construct the reality; unlike Realism – which highlights the competitive nature of both ancient and modern societies and the endemic warfare which surrounds both internal and external relations among individuals – Constructivism underlines the ability of individuals and societies to constantly engage in interactions through language and ideas. Language, specifically, is what makes up the reality. Mack's contribution acknowledges the persistent recourse to warfare from Greek states;⁷⁴ but, it points out the dialogic nature of Hellenistic interstate interactions through the analysis of *proxenia*. The resort to this ancient interstate practice allows to get a sense

⁶⁸ Giovannini (2007) p. 14.

⁶⁹ Giovannini (1993) pp. 276-277; Giovannini (2007) pp. 66-68.

⁷⁰ Mack (2015).

⁷¹ Mack (2015) p. VIII.

⁷² Mack (2015) pp. 19, 231-232.

⁷³ Wendt (1992) p. 395; Wendt (1999) pp. 29-32.

⁷⁴ Mack (2015) pp. 231-255.

of the constant and broad connection between Greek *poleis*, along with the consistent constructive attitude of Greek states. Nonetheless, it is important to differentiate between *poleis* and elites within *poleis*. As discussed in the chapters below, throughout the third century, Spartan foreign policy was articulated by Sparta's governing bodies (*gerousia*, ephors and kings): the evidence at our disposal does not offer insights into the role of the Spartan people in foreign decision-making. In particular, in articulating significant foreign political plans such as the envoy of Cleonymus to Taras (section 5.3), the start of the Chremonidean War (7.5) and the military expeditions performed by Agis (subsections 8.2.1, 8.2.2, 8.2.3) and Cleomenes (8.3.2 and 8.3.3), one can see that the behaviour of smaller networks of individuals becomes the behaviour of a state. The constructive behaviour displayed by Hellenistic states is an important caveat, which is highlighted in the case studies below, and which appears to have characterised the Spartan modes of interaction with other Mediterranean states.

However, it is worth considering that Mack's work does not stand as the only study of Ancient History employing IR Constructivism. The works of Paul Burton⁷⁵ are important contributions in this sense. They focus primarily on the way in which Rome engaged with the Greek powers.⁷⁶ In his works, the role of *Amicitia Romana* constitutes the essential vehicle that facilitates investigation of the Roman interaction with the Greek states: Rome came to establish friendship relations with other Mediterranean powers in a variety of constructive ways. Diplomatic exchanges, such as the Roman intervention and involvement in interstate arbitrations,⁷⁷ along with the establishment of agreements of mutual assistance in case of attack from enemies,⁷⁸ enabled Rome to broaden and strengthen its network of international partners. The work contends that in these interactions, a constructivist approach, rather than a realist one,⁷⁹ is more suitable to assess the diplomatic practices performed by Rome with the Mediterranean states: the way in which Rome approached Italic populations⁸⁰ and how the *Amicitia* between the parties unfolded are some of the issues explored in his contribution. The *amicitia* stipulated between Rome and the Italic population of Camerinum in 310 is a good

⁷⁵ Burton (2003); Burton (2011).

⁷⁶ Rosenstein (2012); Briscoe (2013), p. 258.

⁷⁷ Burton (2003) pp. 333-334, 349.

⁷⁸ Burton (2011) pp. 79-88.

⁷⁹ Burton (2003) pp. 349-350.

⁸⁰ Burton (2011) pp. 28-76.

example.⁸¹ Rome often required the assistance of Italic people to counter enemies: in this regard, the establishment of a friendship with the Cameritans provided Rome not only with the hospitality of the citizens of Camerinum, but also the full muster of the Camertian youth to assist in the Roman expedition against fleeing remnants of a defeated Etruscan army in Umbria.⁸² What was remarkable in that circumstance was that Rome and the Camertes established a long-lasting treaty of *amicitia*: in fact, later in 205, the Camertinians dispatched six-hundred ancillary troops to support the Roman force against Carthage and, in doing so, they recalled the friendship treaty forged previously with Rome. This testifies to the effectiveness of *amicitia* in creating networks of international partners. These ideas are connected to this work, as they highlight the dialogue among powers and the ways in which states sought to engage with the wider world through formalised practices such as treaties and invocations of older friendships or kinship ties. The call upon Sparta by Taras enabled it to obtain troops and subsidies necessary to perform military expeditions across the Mediterranean (discussed in section 5.3).

Polly Low⁸³ provides a good starting point for understanding the extent of interstate anarchy in the Classical period. Low points out the centrality of reciprocity in interstate interactions: kinship ties and grants of citizenship were based on this principle.⁸⁴ Specifically, through an assessment of the literary and epigraphic evidence of the period, Low considers the systems which underpinned the Greek society. She demonstrates that multiple systems coexisted within this society: reciprocity, *philia*, common kinship and panhellenism were some of them and were deployed in several occasions.⁸⁵ None of these systems was primary: all were present and operationalised in different contexts. We can see this in the appeal to Athens from Plataia – featured in Isocrates’ *Plataicus* – in which *philia*, common kinship and panhellenism were deployed in order to reinforce the reasons of the appeal.⁸⁶ These ideas are connected to this study, as they show the multifaceted nature of interstate interactions: states resorted to diplomatic (embassies) and judicial tools (arbitrations) to interact with other states and bolster connections on the international stage of the third century. Most of the contributions discussed above reveal an awareness of the multifaceted nature of interstate interactions of the ancient world:

⁸¹ Burton (2011) pp. 88-89.

⁸² Burton (2011) p. 89.

⁸³ Low (2007).

⁸⁴ Low (2007) pp. 33-76.

⁸⁵ Low (2007) pp. 77-126.

⁸⁶ Low (2007) pp. 68-72.

conflicts and ways to circumvent warfare seem to occupy a considerable space throughout the Hellenistic period. States were constantly communicating with each other and performed different and complex foreign policies in which interstate institutions were crucially involved.

2.3 Studies on Spartan Interstate Interactions

I will now consider the works that assess Spartan foreign relations specifically during the Hellenistic period. The work of Eckstein⁸⁷ (discussed above) addresses very peripherally the involvement and interaction of Sparta in the last decade of the third century: the character of Nabis and his involvement in foreign policy are topics which are neglected by Eckstein in order to prioritise the wider assessment of Roman interaction with other Mediterranean powers.⁸⁸ These neglected issues are significant in this analysis, as they may allow us to evaluate whether Nabis adopted a proactive stance towards Roman affairs and with the affairs of other Mediterranean superpowers. Lastly, the topic of continuity or change during Nabis' reign is another neglected issue explored below.⁸⁹ Nonetheless, the last decades have seen a flourishing of Spartan studies thanks to the use of interdisciplinary approaches. The volumes edited by Stephen Hodkinson and Anton Powell⁹⁰ provide a collection of papers exploring different issues and periods of Spartan history: these employ approaches from social sciences, comparative and ethnical studies. Ethnographic and comparative studies have been applied by Marcello Lupi⁹¹ to investigate the important issue of Spartan marriage and Spartan age classes. The contribution of Flower⁹² covers the reforms of Agis IV and Cleomenes III and offers a new interpretation which considers the theory of the Invention of Tradition postulated by Hobsbawn and Ranger.⁹³ By applying this theory, Flower concludes that Agis IV's and Cleomenes III's reforms are an invention of the reforms introduced by Lycurgus. However, there is still much work that needs to be undertaken for Sparta in the Hellenistic period.

⁸⁷ Eckstein (2008).

⁸⁸ Eckstein (2008) pp. 286, 323-325.

⁸⁹ See chapter 8.

⁹⁰ Hodkinson (2002); Hodkinson (2006); Hodkinson (2009).

⁹¹ Lupi (2002) pp. 305-322.

⁹² Flower (2002) pp. 191-217.

⁹³ Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983).

The topic of Spartan foreign policy in the third century has been partly neglected in the last few years. The few significant publications (discussed below) address tangentially the third century BC and focus mainly on specific aspects of this nebulous period. The large and significant contribution of Ioanna Kralli⁹⁴ concerning interstate relations in the Hellenistic Peloponnese addresses important issues of Spartan history of the third century, such as Spartan expansionism with Cleonymus,⁹⁵ Areus I⁹⁶ and Cleomenes III,⁹⁷ along with the overall continuity⁹⁸ that Spartan history featured in the Hellenistic period. However, the assessment of the agency of these and some overlooked Spartan individuals operating in this period (Lykourgos, Machanidas, Agis IV), the nature of Spartan interactions in the third century, the remarkable continuity of interest in some territories that pervaded the third century, and the way in which Spartan foreign policy was shaped by the governing bodies are neglected issues in this contribution.

Specifically, the role of the Spartan governing bodies in articulating important foreign political decisions represents an issue which has been overlooked by the latest studies. The lack of specific sources (discussed below) that offer more information about the role of the ephors and the agency of Spartan individuals complicate further the analysis of these topics. Their assessment may allow us to obtain new answers about how Spartan polity operated and what was the role of Spartan individuals in foreign policy. In particular, the role of the ephors, *gerousia*, and the kings in the articulation of foreign political decisions, along with the agency of Spartan individuals, represent issues which have been explored tangentially by the latest studies (discussed below). Exploring them may offer a new understanding of how Spartan interstate interactions occurred and were framed by the governing bodies. Finally, the presence of continuity of interest in the way in which Sparta framed its foreign policy in the third century is another topic which has been neglected and requires addressing: this aspect is significant in this study, as it may inform us about whether the Spartan governing bodies sought to emulate previous foreign political strategies and whether there was a consistent interest in some Mediterranean locales throughout the third century.

⁹⁴ Kralli (2017). This important work appeared too late for me to consider in depth.

⁹⁵ Kralli (2017) pp. 133-135. There is no discussion about Cleonymus' role in the interaction with some Cretan states and his presence in Northern Italy.

⁹⁶ Kralli (2017) pp. 115-118, 125.

⁹⁷ Kralli (2017) pp. 206-209, 226-255.

⁹⁸ Kralli (2017) pp. xxii, 129-130.

The institution of the ephorate has been widely explored in previous contributions.⁹⁹ Most of the studies¹⁰⁰ examine the role of the ephors and their duties in foreign policy of the Classical period: the studies of Rahe and Cartledge explore the ways in which the ephors came to power¹⁰¹ and the mechanism involved in the process of election of the ephorate.¹⁰² Nonetheless, these important contributions do not address the ways in which the ephors and other governing bodies articulated foreign political decisions in the third century BC, and whether the ephorate or other Spartan governing bodies played a major role in this process. These issues are partly addressed by Millender,¹⁰³ who explores the role of Cleomenes I and his relationship with the ephors: the picture depicted by Herodotus reveals the prerogatives of the king and the important role of the ephors in the process of transition of the royal power to the candidates of the Spartan royal dynasties, along with their authority in appointing generals for important expeditions abroad.¹⁰⁴ This issue is central and its analysis is expanded further in this work, as the assessment of the royal characters of the third century may offer new answers about the nature of the relationship between kings and ephors, and whether the ephors continued to occupy a central place in articulating foreign political decisions.

Furthermore, the studies of Michael Flower¹⁰⁵ and Anton Powell¹⁰⁶ touch tangentially on these issues: Flower points out the role played by the ephors in the religious sphere and their power to punish the kings.¹⁰⁷ Flower's work, which is partly connected to this study, illustrates how the ephors could intervene to contain or balance the power of the kings: this is an issue that is explored further in the case studies below. The intervention of the ephors in the religious sphere is also explored by Anton Powell.¹⁰⁸ In undertaking a wider assessment of the impact that divination had on Spartan decision-making, he focusses on the religious functions performed by the ephors and to Agesilaos' obedience towards

⁹⁹ Rahe (1980); Missiou-Ladi (1987); Cartledge (1987); Richer (1998); Cartledge (2000); Millender (2002); Flower (2002); Powell (2010).

¹⁰⁰ Rahe (1980) pp. 385-401; Missiou-Ladi (1987) pp. 336-345; Cartledge (1987) pp. 104-107; Cartledge (2000) pp. 5-26; Millender (2002) pp. 1-61.

¹⁰¹ Rahe (1980) pp. 389-390.

¹⁰² Cartledge (2000) p. 10.

¹⁰³ Millender (2002) pp. 1-3.

¹⁰⁴ Millender (2002) pp. 11-12.

¹⁰⁵ Flower (2002).

¹⁰⁶ Powell (2010).

¹⁰⁷ Flower (2002) p. 198.

¹⁰⁸ Powell (2010).

them.¹⁰⁹ However, these important contributions do not explore the mechanisms involved in the articulation of foreign political plans in the third century BC. The works of Paul Cartledge and Nicolas Richer represent the most important contributions connected to this work. The ways in which the Spartan governing bodies¹¹⁰ - and the ephors more specifically¹¹¹ - articulated Spartan foreign policy are central issues explored in these contributions. Cartledge illustrates how Spartan political decisions were made: the decision-making power was in the hands of different Spartan governing bodies. The decisions made by the governing bodies involved the election of a new king or the start of military and diplomatic expeditions abroad. In particular, Cartledge explains the functioning of the three Spartan governing bodies and their role: the ephors seem to have played an important role in the selective process of the Spartan kings. However, the role of the ephors, the relationship between the three governing bodies in the Hellenistic period, and more particularly in the third century, are neglected topics in his contribution. These are explored in the chapters below.

Lastly, Richer's work stands as the largest contribution as to the religious and political roles of the ephors. He points out that foreign policy represents the major sphere in which the role of the ephors was paramount.¹¹² Nonetheless, the rapport between ephors and kings, along with the role of the *gerousia* in making important foreign political decisions in the third century are addressed peripherically. Specifically, we can see this in the disputed accession to the throne of Areus I¹¹³ and the large powers in the hands of the ephors with the reigns of Agis IV¹¹⁴ and Cleomenes III.¹¹⁵ The role of the ephors in starting important expeditions abroad with Cleonymus, Areus, and the revolutionary kings of the third century are crucial issues which have been neglected: these are situated in a Realist framework and addressed in the case studies below.

Finally, the issue of continuity or change in Spartan foreign policy in the third century is another topic which has not been addressed by the latest contributions. These have explored other significant topics of foreign policy of this nebulous period. The works of

¹⁰⁹ Powell (2010) p. 99.

¹¹⁰ Cartledge (1987) pp. 103-130.

¹¹¹ Richer (1998) pp. 323-505.

¹¹² Richer (1998) p. 323.

¹¹³ Richer (1998) pp. 423, 425 n. 233.

¹¹⁴ Richer (1998) p. 520.

¹¹⁵ Richer (1998) p. 517.

Graham Shipley¹¹⁶ and Ellen Millender¹¹⁷ represent insightful contributions in this sense. The maintained authority of Sparta in the third century portrayed by Shipley generates an important ground for discussion as to Spartan interstate interactions. Sparta seems to have shown a proactive attitude in the international scenario and could negotiate subsidies with other states.¹¹⁸ The esteem of Sparta is revealed by its presence in salient events of the century, such as the Chremonidean war and the war against the Achaean-Macedonian League in the late third century. This study seeks to address further the extent of the Spartan esteem in the international stage of the third century and to explore the nature of the interaction among Sparta and other powers. It examines the relations between Sparta and some Cretan *poleis* throughout the third century and the nature of these relations. The character of Areus I and his personal power are other significant aspects adumbrated by Shipley¹¹⁹ and Christien.¹²⁰ Specifically, in her assessment of the coin type introduced by Areus - featuring the head of Herakles on the obverse and the club between the stars representing the Dioscurs on the reverse - Christien contends that the introduction of coin types by the king displayed his personal desire to imitate the patterns of the Hellenistic monarchs. The analysis of these issues is expanded and situated in the wider context of the interstate relations among Hellenistic powers in the third century: the nature of the role of Areus in the international stage of the century and his agency are main issues which are scrutinised below (chapter 6).

The study of Millender is closely connected to this work, since it explores the relationship between Sparta and Egypt in the third century.¹²¹ Millender highlights the political strategy of Ptolemy II to cement its relations with Sparta thanks to the establishment of Laconian cults inside Egypt. Foreign policy adopted by Egypt was beneficial for both parties, as Sparta obtained economic and military support from Egypt, while Ptolemy exploited the relation with Sparta to guarantee supporters from other states of the Greek mainland.¹²² The nature of the relationship between Sparta and Egypt and the role of Areus in this interaction is explored further and situated in a Realist framework: this may inform us about the motives which drove Sparta and Egypt to interact. Moreover, the

¹¹⁶ Shipley (2005); Shipley (2009).

¹¹⁷ Millender (2009).

¹¹⁸ Shipley (2009) pp. 56-57.

¹¹⁹ Shipley (2005) p. 6.

¹²⁰ Christien (2002) pp. 182-183.

¹²¹ Millender (2009) pp. 1-67.

¹²² Millender (2009) pp. 39-41.

ways in which Areus may have intervened in Spartan foreign policy and, most importantly, the position and esteem in which Sparta was held in the interaction with Egypt and other powers are issues addressed in the case studies below. Finally, the issue regarding the purported kinship between Spartans and Jews¹²³ has been widely investigated; however, it has not yet been integrated in the wider context of interstate relations of Sparta in the third century BC. This, as shown in section 7.6, seems to corroborate further Sparta's esteem in the wider world.

¹²³ See Gruen (1996) pp. 254-269; Gargiulo (2004) pp. 168-169; Themelis (2007-8) pp. 177-179.

3. Approaches to the Evidence

3.1 The Sources and their Issues

In order to create a systematic approach to Spartan foreign policy in the third century, this work combines concepts drawn from ancient interstate interactions studies (discussed in section 2.1) with the evidence from the past. This task is complicated by the critical issues posed by the variety of sources (shown in the list of tables below) regarding Sparta in the third century. The sources utilised in this work are of literary (subsection 3.1.1), epigraphic and numismatic (3.1.2) nature, although sporadic archaeological survey material (deployed only in sections 4.4, 4.5 and 6.3) provides some potential to explore the relations between Sparta and other Hellenistic states. This different set of sources is invaluable for the study of the past; but, it should be approached carefully.¹²⁴ For a narrow period such as the third century, contemporary literary sources are limited and most of the accounts prove difficult to gain any specific regional information from, as they tend to be broad historical narratives or selected accounts of certain events (See Table I).¹²⁵ These works are created in distant periods from the events they describe and are written by non-Spartans; in some circumstances, their nature is considerably fragmentary (e.g. only five books survive complete of Polybius' forty, and only books 1-5 and 11-20 of Diodorus are surviving, with the rest in very fragmentary conditions) and we need to rely on other means to obtain other information.¹²⁶ These materials are mostly represented by inscriptions and a limited number of coins (discussed below). Nonetheless, it is important to bear in mind that this set of sources is relevant to Spartan external relations in the third century BC.

¹²⁴ See List of Tables below.

¹²⁵ Table I reports the fundamental accounts which are utilised to explore Spartan foreign policy in the third century. However, the case studies could sporadically feature very short passages from minor authors.

¹²⁶ Shipley (2000) p. 13; Marincola (2007) p. 179; Marincola (2009) p. 17.

3.1.1 The Literary Evidence

The literary accounts (Table 1) belong to various literary genres designed to meet other demands, rather than to provide historical information of salient events or historical periods. For instance, the universal history genre, represented by Polybius and Diodorus, offers some insights to explore Spartan foreign policy of the third century, although these accounts are not purely historical narrative. In fact, Polybius, at the very beginning of his work, illustrates its edifying purpose (1 1, 2), while Diodorus' aim is to offer a universal history. Moreover, Livy, in writing his account, aimed to emphasise traits such as the firmness, the discipline and the political wisdom of the founders who allowed Rome to thrive, and to provide his audience with the idea that Rome was raised under the divine guidance and leadership.¹²⁷ The celebratory nature of his account raises serious interpretative issues for the analysis of Spartan foreign policy. The celebratory nature of some of the accounts deployed in the case studies below characterises the Biographical genre.

The biographies of prominent individuals offered by Plutarch are moral accounts, rather than historical portraits.¹²⁸ In shaping the *Lives*, Plutarch consulted a variety of sources: the theatrical narrative, drawn mostly by Phylarchus, features in six biographies deployed to build this study, and is only one of the issues posed by his works. Another author that raises interpretative issues and that is extensively utilised in this work is Pausanias. In writing his account, he undertook a selective process characterised by a mixture of myth and history, in which only those places that are "most worth remembering" were recorded.¹²⁹ Moreover, the *Stratagems* of Polyaeus features other issues that it is worth considering. They were designed as stories of role models that should be imitated for their intellect, as this was the characteristic which allowed them to succeed and to achieve victory.¹³⁰ In generating his narrative, the author describes events from different places and draws from earlier collections of stratagems.¹³¹ Finally, the work of Trogus, summarised by Justin, is the complete product of another author who lived and worked

¹²⁷ Gould and Whiteley (1971) p. 11.

¹²⁸ Stadter (1992) pp. 1-2; Shipley (2000) p. 14; Pelling (2002) pp. 207-208; Stadter (2007) p. 538; Stadter (2010) p. 197.

¹²⁹ Habicht (1985) p. 20.

¹³⁰ Krentz and Wheeler (1994) pp. 6-7; Bianco (1997) p. 7.

¹³¹ Krentz and Wheeler (1994) p. 8; Bianco (1997) pp. 8-9.

under Augustus.¹³² The case studies of this work acknowledge the interpretative issues for the evaluation of Spartan interstate interactions in the third century; but also recognise their importance for the assessment of Spartan foreign policy in the third century. The absence of evidence offered by these accounts would impede scrutiny of neglected topics (discussed above) of this poorly documented period.

3.1.2 The Epigraphic and Numismatic Evidence

The epigraphic material (Table 2) features other significant issues which need to be addressed before one delves deeper into the analysis of Spartan foreign policy in the third century. We should consider at least three major factors while approaching this material: its nature, the number of inscriptions found, and the locales in which they were found. Epigraphic evidence for this poorly documented period is mostly preserved in form of treaties, decrees and oaths; this material is essential to explore the relationships between Sparta and other powers. Nonetheless, most of the inscriptions are very fragmentary, due to the scarce preservation of their supports or missing texts; sometimes (e.g. the first case study, section 5.4), there is only one surviving inscription to support our argument.¹³³ Furthermore, the number of inscriptions is limited and, in most of the cases, they were found in places situated outside Sparta. Finally, the lack of preservation and the extremely limited number of items also characterise the numismatic evidence (Table 3). Only four monetary types testify to the reform of Areus I and Spartan broad engagement in Mediterranean affairs (sections 7.5 and 7.6). The scarce preservation of the first three coin types contributes to undermine the validity of this evidence: in this regard, the legend (ΒΑΣΙΛΕΟΣ ΑΡΕΟΣ) is barely legible. However, as shown in chapter 7 (sections 7.5 and 7.6), this evidence, combined with the literary and epigraphic sources, is invaluable to evaluate the extent of Areus' esteem on the international stage.

Table 1: Literary Sources

| Author | Sources | Sources Employed by the Author | Chronology |
|--------|---------|--------------------------------|------------|
|--------|---------|--------------------------------|------------|

¹³² Yardley (1994) p. 2.

¹³³ See the two Cretan inscriptions from western Crete in Chapter 5.

| | | | |
|-----------------|---|--|---|
| Polybius | 2, 4, 13, 16, 18 | Hieronymus of Cardia Ephorus of Cyme Aratus | 206 -124 BC |
| Jewish Source | I <i>Maccabees</i> | Jason of Cyrene (?) | 140-130 BC (?) |
| Diodorus | 20, 27 | Antiochus of Syracuse Ephorus of Cyme Hieronymus of Cardia | 90 - 27 BC |
| Livy | 10, 31, 32, 34, 35 | Polybius Sosylus of Lacedaemon | 64 BC - 17 AD |
| Plutarch | <i>Demetr., Pyrrh., Agis et Cleom., Arat., Philop., Flam.</i> | Hieronymus of Cardia Phylarchus Parthenius of Nicaea Duris of Samos Timaeus of Tauromenium Proxenus | 46 – 120 AD |
| Pausanias | 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10 | See above | c. 110 – 180 AD |
| Polyaenus | 2, 4, 6, 1-3; 6, 4 | See above | 2 nd c. AD |
| Justin (Trogus) | <i>Prol.</i> 15-18, 23, 25; <i>Books</i> 15-17, 24-26, 28-32 | See above | 2 nd c. AD (1 st c. AD/BC) |

Table 2: Epigraphic Sources¹³⁴

| CS | Inscription | Provenance | Chronology |
|-----------------|------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| 1 st | IC 2 11, 131-133/ SEG 50 887 | Diktynnaios | 275 BC (?) |
| 1 st | SEG 50 936 | Phalasarna | 275 BC (?) |
| 1 st | SEG 62 379 | Antikythera | 3 rd century BC |

¹³⁴ This table, along with the next section (4.2), feature and mention the most important inscriptions employed to build the case studies below. However, the case studies may sporadically include other inscriptions as well.





| | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| 2 nd | <i>Syll.</i> ³ 636 | Unknown | 280 BC (?) |
| 2 nd | <i>Syll.</i> ³ 826 E | Unknown | 280 BC (?) |
| 2 nd | IG 4 769 | Troezen | 279 BC (?) |
| 2 nd | SEG 13 341 | Oropos | 275 BC (?) |
| 3 rd | IC 2 23, 12 A | Polyrrhenia | 309-272 BC (?) |
| 3 rd | ISE 37A | Mycenae | 272 BC |
| 3 rd | ISE p. 41 | Sounion | 285-247 BC (?) |
| 3 rd | <i>Syll.</i> ³ 386 | Athens | 266-265 BC |
| 3 rd | <i>Syll.</i> ³ 434-435 | Athens | 268-265 BC |
| 3 rd | <i>Syll.</i> ³ 433 | Olympia | 285-247 BC (?) |
| 3 rd | ISE 54 | Orchomenos | 265-264 BC |
| 4 th | IG 5 2, 34/ IC 2 p. 45 | Tegea | 221 BC |
| 4 th | SEG 58 369/ SEG 60 435 | Messene | 300-250 BC (?) |
| 4 th | IC 2 12, 20 | Eleutherna | 3 rd century BC |
| 4 th | IC 3 3, 24-27 | Ierapitna | 280-250 BC |
| 4 th | IC 4 229 | Gortyn | 227-224 BC |
| 5 th | <i>Syll.</i> ³ 595 | Pergamon | 195 BC |
| 5 th | SEG 3 313 | Mycenae | c. 195 BC |
| 5 th | IC 4 176 | Magnesia | Unknown |
| 5 th | IC 4 p. 23/ ISE 49 | Epidauros | 192 BC |
| 5 th | <i>Syll.</i> ³ 584 | Delos | Unknown |



Legend

CS = Case study in which the inscription is utilised **IC** = *Inscriptiones Creticae* edited by Guarducci M. **Schmitt** = *Die Verträge der griechisch-römischen Welt von 338 bis 200 v. Chr* edited by Schmitt H. H. **IG** = *Inscriptiones Graecae* edited by Johanness Kirchener **ISE** = *Iscrizioni Storiche Ellenistiche* edited by Moretti L. **Syll.**³ = *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* edited by Dittenberger W. **SEG** = *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*

Table 3: Numismatic Sources

| Coin | Description | Chronology |
|------|-------------|------------|
|------|-------------|------------|

| | | |
|---|---|----------------------|
|  | <p>Silver stater from Phalasarna.</p> <p><i>Obv.</i> Head of nymph of Phalasarna. <i>Rev.</i> Trident with letters ΦΑ.</p> <p>SOURCE: Rome Numismatics Ltd, Auction 7, Auction date: 22 March 2014</p> | <p>c. 300-270 BC</p> |
|  | <p>Silver tetradrachm of King Areus I. <i>Obv.</i> Head of Herakles wearing a lion's skin headdress (right/front).</p> <p><i>Rev.</i> [ΒΑΣΙΛΕΟΣ ΑΡΕΟΣ] Zeus seated in his throne, with eagle standing on his right hand and a sceptre in his left.</p> <p>SOURCE: Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann (1978) pp. 1-2 T. 1 n.1 <i>cf.</i> Hoover (2011) pp. 136-149</p> | <p>c. 267-265 BC</p> |
|  | <p>Silver tetradrachm of King Areus I. <i>Obv.</i> Head of Herakles wearing a lion's skin headdress (right/front).</p> <p><i>Rev.</i> [ΒΑΣΙΛΕΟΣ ΑΡΕΟΣ] Zeus seated in his throne, with eagle standing on his right hand and a sceptre in his left.</p> <p>SOURCE: Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann (1978) pp. 1-2 T. 1 n. 2 <i>cf.</i> Hoover (2011) pp. 136-149</p> | <p>c. 267-265 BC</p> |
|  | <p>Silver tetradrachm of King Areus I. <i>Obv.</i> Head of Herakles wearing a lion's skin headdress (right/front).</p> <p><i>Rev.</i> [ΒΑΣΙΛΕΟΣ ΑΡΕΟΣ] Zeus seated in his throne, with eagle standing on his right hand and a sceptre in his left.</p> <p>SOURCE: Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann (1978) pp. 1-2 T. 2 <i>cf.</i> Hoover (2011) pp. 136-149</p> | <p>c. 267-265 BC</p> |

| | | |
|---|---|----------------------|
|  | <p>Silver tetradrachm of King Areus I. <i>Obv.</i> Head of Herakles wearing a lion's skin headdress (right/front).</p> <p><i>Rev.</i> [ΒΑΣΙΛΕΟΣ ΑΡΕΟΣ] Zeus seated in his throne, with eagle standing on his right hand and a sceptre in his left.</p> <p>SOURCE: Walker (2009) p. 61.</p> | <p>c. 267-265 BC</p> |
|  | <p>Silver Obol. <i>Obv.</i> Head of bearded Herakles with lion's skin headdress and pawn tied under the chin.</p> <p><i>Rev.</i> Club among two groups of stars.</p> <p>SOURCE: Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann (1978) pp. 1-2 T. 2 <i>cf.</i> Hoover (2011) pp. 136-149</p> | <p>c. 265 BC</p> |

3.2 Approaches

The evidence outlined above is deployed in the following chapters to present five case studies. The basis on which these have been selected is chronological: they explore five consecutive historical periods.

3.2.1 First Case Study (*Embracing the Mediterranean: Cleonymus*)

The first case study (chapter 4) scrutinises Spartan interstate relations (c. 309/8 – 276 BC) with locales of southern and northern Italy, and of the Ionian area. Moreover, it explores Spartan presence in the affairs of the western Cretan *poleis* of Polyrrenia and Phalasarna. This study relies mostly on the problematic literary evidence offered by Pausanias, Plutarch, Diodorus, Livy and Justin, as well as two similar inscriptions from Western Crete (IC 2 11, 131-133; SEG 50 936). Specifically, interstate arbitrations studies (discussed in section 3.2) offer the interpretative tools to assess the two inscriptions found in Crete and to circumscribe the role of Cleonymus in the arbitral procedure: this aspect is crucial, as it provides us with new answers the way in which we interpret the few evidence regarding Spartan interstate relations at the beginning of the third century. It offers a new understanding of Cleonymus' role in the arbitration and the

request sent to Sparta, instead of larger Mediterranean powers such as Macedonia or Rome, from the western Cretan *poleis*. This eventually leads to the conclusion that the nature of the interactions between Sparta were complex and involved networks of individual (gerousia, kings, ephors). Lastly, previous studies on the Spartan governing bodies (see 2.2 above) allow us to interrogate structures of political power inside Sparta: the appointment of Areus as king and the dispatch of Cleonymus to South Italy and Crete are two important caveats in this sense. They show that the power was distributed among Spartan entities (gerousia, kings) and that Cleonymus was highly regarded by the Spartan governing bodies and entrusted with military and diplomatic duties of the utmost importance.

3.2.2 Second Case Study (*A de facto king: Cleonymus*)

The second case study (chapter 5), which is an extension of the first one, explores Spartan foreign policy (c. 293 - 275 BC) - inside and outside the Peloponnese in the years following the expedition to Crete by Cleonymus: it highlights the significant esteem enjoyed by Sparta and its important role in foreign political matters. Cleonymus occupied a central place in Spartan foreign policy: he acted as a regent to the young Areus and as a military leader of expeditions of the utmost importance, instead of the legitimate kings of Sparta, Areus and Archidamus IV. His importance and participation in crucial events, such as the conquest of Troezen and his later conquest of Edessa, testifies to his singular leadership and personality. The case study shows the importance of single Spartan individuals in military and diplomatic missions. Moreover, the command of Areus of the first nucleus of the Achaean League (Pol. 2 41, 11-12) against the Aetolians and his later leadership of the large coalition against Antigonos Gonatas in the Chremonidean War demonstrates the esteem of Sparta and of Areus on the international stage. Even though, as discussed in chapter 6, Areus was a secondary character in foreign matters of the early third century, his outstanding role arose in the enormous Anti-Macedonian coalition and in the important interstate contacts with the Ptolemies and the Jews (discussed in chapter 6, subsection 6.6). This case study is shaped by using information offered by Plutarch, Pausanias, Polyaeus and Justin, while the epigraphic evidence (*Syll.*³ 636; *Syll.*³ 826 E; IG 4 769; SEG 13 341) is invaluable in demonstrating Spartan broad interaction with Hellenistic powers.

3.2.3 Third Case Study (*Areus and the Hellenistic World*)

The third case study (chapter 6) assesses Areus' character and the position of Sparta on the international stage (c. 279 – 265/4 BC). In order to build this study, I shall resort to the accounts provided by Plutarch, Pausanias, Polyaeus and Justin, along with the epigraphic (IC 2 23, 12 A; ISE 37A; ISE p. 41; *Syll.*³ 386; *Syll.*³ 434-435; SEG 58 369 = SEG 60 435; *Syll.*³ 433; ISE 54) and numismatic evidence (shown in Table 3). Plutarch is extensively deployed, as he provides valuable information about Spartan interstate relations under Areus I and the attempt of the Peloponnesian cities to counter the Pyrrhus' hegemonic ambitions in Greece. His *Life of Pyrrhus* offers important insights about the alliance between Cleonymus, presumably exiled by Sparta (discussed below), and Pyrrhus (*Pyrrh.* 26 19; 27 3). These passages show the importance and esteem maintained by Cleonymus even after his purported exile, since Plutarch informs us that when Pyrrhus arrived in the Peloponnese and approached Sparta, Moreover, Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 26 19) is utilised to evaluate the extent of the influence of Cleonymus in Pyrrhus' decisions and his intention to attack Sparta; this information is also reported by Pausanias (1 13, 5; 36, 3). As shown below, the sources indicate the important presence of Cleonymus; nevertheless, they also point towards the passive agency of the character in foreign political plans performed by Pyrrhus. The combination of the epigraphic evidence, specifically, allows me to evaluate the distribution of power among Spartan entities (kings, ephorate, gerousia) and to estimate whether the decision-making power was evenly distributed among them. As demonstrated below, at times, Areus seems to have been the most prominent individual representing Spartan polity abroad (kinship with the Jews, Spartan presence in some Peloponnesian locales), in others (activation of the operations of the Chremonidean War) the power distribution was more balanced among entities.

3.2.4 Fourth Case Study (*The Peloponnesian Bipolarity*)

In the fourth case study (chapter 7), we shall explore Spartan foreign policy performed under Agis IV and Cleomenes III (c. 263 – 222 BC). The use of Pausanias, Polybius and three biographies of Plutarch (*Agis et Cleomenes*; *Arat.*; *Philop.*) is invaluable to build this study. The epigraphic evidence (IG 5 2, 34; IC 2 12, 20; IC 3 3, 24-27; IC 4 229)

offers a good potential to investigate further the role of Sparta on the international stage: it provides insights into the continuing relations between Sparta and some Cretan *poleis* (subsection 7.3.3), along with the importance of Agis and Cleomenes on the international stage. The combination of the literary evidence with the previous studies on the Spartan governing bodies allows me to explore further the distribution of power among the Spartan entities: the few available evidence concerning the distribution of power points to the balanced distribution of power between Agis and the ephors. While the literary evidence utilised to explore Spartan foreign policy under Cleomenes indicates that the power was unevenly distributed at the beginning of his career; following this, -the power moved to the king, whose presence on the international matters was overwhelming.

3.2.5 Fifth Case Study (*Nabis and the Wider World*)

The last case study (chapter 8) offers an evaluation of Spartan foreign policy with King Lykourgos, the regent Machanidas and King Nabis (c. 222 – 192 BC). In order to carry out this study, I rely on literary and epigraphic sources. The literary evidence, represented by the accounts of Polybius, Diodorus, Plutarch and Livy, is paired with the epigraphic evidence (*Syll.*³ 595; SEG 3 313; IC 4 176; IC 4 p. 23 = ISE 49; *Syll.*³ 584). The case study points to the remarkable continuity of interest in locales situated inside and outside the Peloponnese, along with the importance of the three characters. It points out the subtle distribution of decision-making power among Spartan entities (ephors and one of the kings) in the appointment of Lykourgos as king. It proceeds with the assessment of the military expeditions undertaken by the three characters and with the examination of the continuity in the way Sparta shaped its foreign policy; in particular, the study allows more room to Nabis' policy, as the evidence relevant to this character is more extensive.

As will be highlighted in the case studies below, the pairing of the literary and epigraphic sources for the events of Spartan history of the third century features issues. Moreover, the lack of specific information regarding characters of events in which Sparta was directly or indirectly involved, along with information regarding characters of this period, raise other interpretative issues. However, it is important to bear in mind that the lack of specifics does not preclude the possibility to conjecture about purported relations between Sparta and other states: when speculations occur, the case studies show an awareness of the issues related to the combination of the ancient sources. What makes the evidence

listed above valuable and relevant for this investigation is the opportunity that it provides to obtain possible and plausible answers to the neglected issues of Spartan history (discussed in section 2.2).

4. Embracing the Mediterranean: Cleonymus

4.1 Introduction

This chapter features the first study. It is the first part of the broad assessment of Spartan foreign policy in which Cleonymus was significantly involved.¹³⁵ The few sources at our disposal, assembled and examined below, offer a new picture of Spartan political actions of the early third century. Spartan foreign expeditions in select Mediterranean locales of southern and northern Italy, Corcyra, and two western Cretan *poleis*, show the broad engagement of the Spartan governing bodies (discussed below) with the Mediterranean, along with a foreign policy that involved states situated outside the Peloponnese. Some of these territories – situated in Italy, in the Ionian area and Crete – shared mythical and historical links with Sparta. As argued in this case study, in the early third century, Sparta was highly regarded in the international scenario: major and minor powers (listed below) interacted with and resorted to Sparta in order to counter external or internal threats. The call upon a middling power such as Sparta in the wider world of larger and more powerful Hellenistic states such as Macedonia, Rome and Egypt generated a peculiar interaction in which the role of a Spartan individual was central, Cleonymus.

As discussed below, he was the main protagonist in Spartan foreign policy of the early third century, and his character is portrayed inconsistently by the ancient sources. He acted as a leader in numerous foreign expeditions (discussed below) of the utmost importance and participated in important diplomatic missions abroad: his capacity of referee in the third-party arbitration, presumably caused by a long-lasting dispute among two western Cretan *poleis* (Polyrrhenia and Phalasarna), was only the tip of the iceberg of his significant role in foreign matters. Moreover, the assessment of Spartan interstate

¹³⁵ The second part is Chapter 6.

interactions shows how warfare and conflicts were endemic in the Hellenistic world and how they affected the international scenario of the third century BC.¹³⁶ However, these interstate interactions also involved a meaningful dialogue among states, which was characterised by ways to circumvent conflicts without warfare (interstate arbitration) and by the recall of kinship ties (*syngheueia*). Lastly, the literary and epigraphic evidence (discussed below) points to the importance of small and subtle networks of individuals which were instrumental in articulating Spartan foreign and domestic political decisions. The power among the networks of individuals (ephorate, kings, *gerousia*) seems to have been unevenly distributed: the *gerousia*, in particular, was the governing body responsible for the accession to the throne of Areus (4.2 below) and for the authorisation of the start of the military expedition of Cleonymus to South Italy (4.3).

It has been argued that the *poleis* started to coexist in a world in which societies were essentially military and diplomatically aggressive.¹³⁷ The political scenario of southern Italy of the early third century supports this assumption, since the Spartan colony of Taras was engaged in conflict with the Romans and Lucanians; whereas Hellenistic monarchs were contending for territories of the Greek mainland. In fact, in 304 Demetrius¹³⁸ defeated Cassander in central Greece and occupied most of the Peloponnese: he deprived Cassander of important territories situated in northern Peloponnese and Arkadia (Diod. 20 102-103; Plut. *Demetr.* 25). In 302,¹³⁹ the same Demetrius announced the reconstitution of the League of Corinth, while Cassander was seeking the military support of Lisimachus, Ptolemy and Seleucus to defend his positions (Diod. 20 106, 3-5; Just. 15 2, 15-17). However, the international stage in which states were operating was characterised by more subtle interstate mechanisms which involved cooperation and solidarity among *poleis*: the recalling of kinship ties recalled by a minor power such as Taras (explained below) to overcome internal and external threats and to gain new resources are paradigmatic in this sense. This and other interstate tools (discussed below) enabled states to overcome the adversities and to exert influence in a wider political stage as the Hellenistic Mediterranean. In this regard, Spartan foreign policy is insightful. Between the end of the fourth and the beginning of the third centuries BC, Sparta

¹³⁶ For the endemic warfare, see Eckstein (2006) pp.1, 37; Eckstein (2008) p. 5-22.

¹³⁷ For the overwhelming presence of violence and warfare in these periods see Eckstein (2006) pp. 20, 24-26, 37-41 and Eckstein (2008) pp. 7-22.

¹³⁸ Marasco (1980) pp. 44-53; Marasco (1984) p. 53; Urso (1996) p. 93.

¹³⁹ Marasco (1984) p. 44; Cartledge (2002) p. 29.

strengthened its ancient bond with its colony, Taras. As suggested by the scanty literary evidence, Taras asked the motherland for help and, in doing so, asked Cleonymus to lead its army and be leader of a significant military expedition, namely the fight against Lucanians and Romans. Moreover, Cleonymus was selected and dispatched by the Spartan authorities to West Crete so as to arbitrate a dispute among two *poleis*. These historical events, as shown below, testify to the importance of single Spartan individuals in Spartan foreign plans and to the complexity of interstate interactions.

Furthermore, a renewed assessment of the evidence regarding the selective process required to appoint the Spartan kings in the early third century and the way in which the Spartan governing bodies articulated important foreign political plans points to the importance of small networks of individuals through which the decision-making power had to travel in order to legitimise a military expedition abroad. Moreover, as discussed below, the recurrent call upon Sparta – or more specifically on prominent Spartan personalities – by Taras reveals its need to find charismatic leaders able to command large military forces, to guarantee authority to its political actions, and to perform important roles of mediation. This assessment, therefore, points to the significance of Cleonymus on the international stage. Finally, in order to tackle the issue of continuity or change in the way in which Spartan governing bodies framed their foreign policy, I shall follow a chronological order. The sources examined in this chapter show a Spartan continuity of interest in some Mediterranean locales: Taras and some Cretan territories (discussed below) were persistently chosen by the Spartan governing bodies in previous periods and, more importantly, throughout the third century to perform military or diplomatic expeditions.

This chapter features four subsections. The first section (4.2) scrutinises the transition of the royal power to the candidates of the Agiad royal house, Cleonymus and Areus. In doing so, it explores the role of the Spartan governing bodies in appointing the king and how the power was distributed among the governing bodies in the early third century. Following this, it features an examination of Cleonymus' expedition to Taras and Corcyra and provides an assessment of his character and agency in Spartan foreign policy (section 4.3). The next section (4.4) explores Spartan interaction with two Cretan *poleis*, the motivations which lay behind them, and the role of Cleonymus in this circumstance. The

last section (4.3) provides a starting point for the evaluation of the remarkable continuity of Spartan interest in some locales throughout the third century BC.

4.2 Appointing the King

The troubled accession to the throne of the young Areus I is a prelude to the importance of Cleonymus' character in the events of the early third century. The problematic evidence provided by Pausanias (Paus. 3 6, 2) is important to explore the selective mechanisms which led to the transition of the royal power. Pausanias informs us that despite Areus coming to power in 309/8, it is not certain that he ruled before 280 BC, because at the start he was still a child.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, in 309/8, Cleonymus, the younger brother of Acrotatus I (the deceased father of Areus), believed he, rather than his nephew, was the rightful heir to his father, Cleomenes II. The *gerousia*, which was instrumental in the deciding between the two claimants for the supreme governing body of the Spartan state, thought differently and upheld the rule of linear succession (Paus. 3 6, 2). Hence, Cleonymus, though disappointed, had to content himself with his nephew's regency. This represents the only account which describes the selection of Areus as king of Sparta and the role of the *gerousia*. However, there is no mention about the role of the ephorate in the selection mechanism; nonetheless, this evidence testifies to the importance of the *gerousia* in appointing the Agiad king in this process. However, Pausanias is also the only source which suggests that the ephors, in the hope of soothing Cleonymus' rage, bestowed various honours upon him, namely the leadership of the armies so as to prevent him one day becoming an enemy of Sparta. This information is valuable to our argument, as it points to the importance of the ephors in appointing Spartan generals for military expeditions abroad and shows that the decision-making power was not solely in the hands of the king or the *gerousia*; rather, it was distributed among the two Spartan institutions of the *gerousia* and the ephors. These networks of individuals were paramount in making decisions regarding domestic and foreign political decisions. This evidence is valuable to this analysis: if combined with the earlier historical account of Diodorus (discussed below) and the epigraphic evidence coming from western Crete, is invaluable to assess Cleonymus' character and his role in Spartan foreign policy.

¹⁴⁰ Cartledge (2002) pp. 29-30.

4.3 Cleonymus Abroad

It was in 303 that Taras asked the homeland for help against attack from the nearby native populations:¹⁴¹ the Spartan authorities chose to take part in this foreign and potentially advantageous foreign expedition, instead of allowing their homeland to remain politically isolated, since they refused to join the Hellenic League led by Antigonos Monophthalmos. However, this isolationism can be rejected, since Sparta sought previously to participate in the Mediterranean affairs through the dispatch of its kings or representatives to various territories: past political actions such as the dispatch of Archidamus III to Crete in order to participate in the Foreign War as ally of Lyttos (c. 346) and the later envoy of Acrotatus I, who was sent to southern Italy (c. 314), are good examples of previous Spartan foreign political plans which involved particular individuals. These previous actions (analysed below) proved themselves unsuccessful, whereas the actions undertaken with Cleonymus may have been more advantageous in terms of interstate relations. The presence of Spartan leaders in past foreign undertakings testifies to the authority of Sparta in the international affairs and to the continuity of the way in which Spartan authorities shaped their foreign plans. Cleonymus, like his brother Acrotatus, sailed towards the west, thus entering conflicts not only with Taras and the *poleis* of Magna Graecia in its relationships with the indigenous peoples, but also a wider horizon which embraced other areas of the Mediterranean. One may think that Acrotatus was sent by the ephors to the west, since he was summoned by Syracusan exiles, who were hostile to Agathocles. However, Diodorus, our only source for this event, clearly suggests that Acrotatus, unlike Cleonymus, left Sparta without the blessing of the ephors (19 70, 6).¹⁴² Moreover, before arriving in Sicily, Acrotatus was engaged in the Greek western coast, and only then did he stop in Taras to request help - which he managed to obtain. If we give Diodorus the benefit of the doubt, then this very similar record should be carefully considered to comprehend foreign policy performed by Sparta in the early third century. However, as has been noted by Coppola,¹⁴³ Diodorus is resorting to a source hostile to Cleonymus and aims to find a cause for the failed action of Acrotatus. On the other hand, it is also true that Acrotatus made an enemy of himself in Sparta on the day of the battle of Megalopolis (Diod. 19 70, 5).

¹⁴¹ Cartledge (2002) pp. 25-26.

¹⁴² Marasco (1980) pp. 44-48; David (1981) p. 153; Cartledge (2002) p. 27 suggest the mere personal initiative of Acrotatus.

¹⁴³ Coppola (2004) pp. 200-201.

A short time before, a request for mercenaries from Antigonos Monophtalmus and Demetrius had been sent to Sparta, after the proclamation of liberty of Greece, and the international background foresaw an imminent battle between Monophtalmus and Cassander (Diod. 19 60, 1). Acrotatus, who was directed to Sicily, arrived in Apollonia, which was besieged by the king of the Illyrians, Glaucias. The Illyrian king was convinced by Acrotatus to stop the siege and to negotiate with the inhabitants (Diod. 19 70, 7).¹⁴⁴ Such an important diplomatic intervention, in which king Acrotatus I acted as a referee, should be considered carefully in this circumstance: it testifies to the authority and prestige of Acrotatus abroad and to a significant attempt to circumvent conflict without recourse to violence. This element points to the complexity of interstate interactions and to the importance of a charismatic individual in crucial historical events. Whether or not Acrotatus performed this arbitration with the blessing of the Spartan governing bodies, what emerges from Diodorus' passage is that he managed to persuade Glaucia to open negotiations with the Apollonians, instead of resorting to violence. Clearly, this short passage alone is not sufficient to support this assumption: it represents the only evidence which shows Acrotatus' intervention in an interstate arbitration. However, if combined with later epigraphic evidence regarding interstate arbitrations (discussed below) in which Sparta is involved, it may offer some potential to explore the diversity of the interstate interactions in the Hellenistic period and the important role of Sparta on the international stage.

Furthermore, Acrotatus' arrival in Apollonia was probably not by chance, as suggested by the Sicilian historian, according to whom Acrotatus was forced there by the winds. In fact, a short time before, Cassander had conquered Apollonia and Epidamnus and had made agreements with Glaucia, according to which the indigenous king should not have attacked the allies of Cassander. However, either the agreement was broken or Apollonia revolted (Diod. 19 67, 6). The actions of Acrotatus, as portrayed by Diodorus, may appear as personal initiatives of the Spartan leader; however, they contrast with the consistent Spartan foreign policy of sending *condottieri* abroad. Indeed, the testimony of Diodorus requires attention, as in describing the events of Acrotatus he draws from Duris and Hieronymus of Cardia – sources hostile to Sparta:¹⁴⁵ however, one should also be aware

¹⁴⁴ Ager (1996) pp. 54-55; Magnetto (1997) pp. 123-124.

¹⁴⁵ Brown (1973) pp. 140 ff.; Marasco (1980) p. 41; Urso (1998) pp. 90-91; Barnes (2005) pp. 254-256.

that this may be one of the few cases in which the Sicilian historian may have had a good knowledge of the locales he describes and may have consulted local people. Moreover, it should be noted that Spartan military activity in the Ionian Sea area had been recorded since the beginning of the fourth century, when Sparta supported the Molossians, whose king, Alcetas, was placed on the throne thanks to Syracuse, fighting against the Illyrians, already being allied with the Molossians. Lastly, Diodorus (15 45-47) suggests that Sparta intervened in the Ionian area in 373 BC; hence, the picture painted by Diodorus appears to show that the Spartan governing bodies were particularly interested in preserving access to the Ionian Sea and in blocking Macedonian expansionism in this western sector (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Map showing the Ionian and Adriatic areas, the Otranto Strait, and the peculiar position of Corcyra.
SOURCE: Wikimedia Commons.NormanEinstein, May 20, 2005. Ionian Sea.

However, this hypothesis is only grounded on the scanty and anachronistic evidence provided by Diodorus; additionally, there is no further evidence to support it. Nonetheless, if we give Diodorus the benefit of the doubt, then this political plan undermines the idea that Acrotatus' action was a personal initiative. Moreover, if Acrotatus acted under orders of the Spartan governing bodies, then we can interpret the actions of Cleonymus as the product of a larger foreign policy aimed to consolidate Spartan influence in the Mediterranean of the early third century. Through Cleonymus'

expeditions Lacadaemonian influence reached a wider horizon in which three areas of the Mediterranean are involved: the Ionian area, the Adriatic area and the western Cretan area. Through the military and diplomatic expeditions of Cleonymus, the Spartan exertion of influence reached multiple locales situated in Italy, western Crete, and the Peloponnese.¹⁴⁶ As discussed below, the desire to renew or establish contacts between Sparta and other powers was mutual and was dictated by the harsh environment generated by the interstate competition.

Our knowledge of Cleonymus' expeditions is given by two main passages: Diodorus (20 104-105) and Livy (10 2), among them Livy is the only one that offers an account of the expedition of Cleonymus in Veneto. In addition, a *prologus* by Pompeius Trogus (*Prol.* 15) provides us with more information about Cleonymus' actions in the Ionian area. Last but not least, the valuable texts of two limestone stelae found respectively in the ruins of Diktynnaion (IC 2 11, 131-133 = Schmitt n° 471 = SEG 50 887) and in Phalasarna (SEG 50 936) in western Crete demonstrate the mutual will of Sparta and the Cretan cities of Polyrrenia and Phalasarna to strengthen their relationship and the maintained esteem of Sparta in the Hellenistic world. Furthermore, this evidence is significant to our argument, as it shows that the three states involved in the interstate arbitration sought to avoid warfare through diplomatic discourse: Hellenistic states consistently endeavoured to solve disputes thanks to interstate arbitrations and the recalling of kinship ties. Moreover, the archaeological survey material coming from the harbour of Phalasarna and the island of Aigilia (modern Antikythera) would suggest the awareness of the strategic importance of this geographical point from both Sparta and Phalasarna.¹⁴⁷ The evidence consists of a military port excavated in the maritime Cretan city of Phalasarna and some sling bullets found in the fortified site of Kastro in Antikythera. Despite the archaeological evidence being patchy and uncertain, it may offer some intimations about the policy of Phalasarna and its relationship with Antikythera. On the other hand, the significant discovery of the same Cretan coins (shown below) in Phalasarna and Kastro offer more information about the Cretan influence on Antikythera. The combination of this evidence provides indirect information about the foreign policy of Sparta in western Crete.

¹⁴⁶ The Peloponnesian locales involved in Spartan foreign policy of the early third century are discussed in the next chapter.

¹⁴⁷ For the structural evidence of the military port at Phalasarna and the catapult stones, see Hadjidaki (1988a) pp. 90-98; Hadjidaki (1988) pp. 466-468. While for the archaeological material coming from Antikythera, see Martis, Tsaravopoulos et al. (2006) pp. 125-127; Tsaravopoulos (2004-9) p. 330; Tsaravopoulos (2012) p. 210; Bevan and Conolly (2013) p. 191.

It suggests the maintained esteem of Sparta in the early third century and, if considered holistically, constitutes a testament to the importance of Sparta on the international stage. As shown below, Sparta was explicitly asked to intervene in significant political matters in southern Italy and in western Crete. The rise of new conflicts and the harsh environment featured by the Hellenistic Mediterranean drove states to strengthen old bonds and to find security so as to survive in the new reality where many powers were forced to coexist. Sparta, despite being a middling state, was heavily involved in the dialogue among powers. Furthermore, the main protagonist in the interaction between Spartan government and Mediterranean states was a prominent individual, Cleonymus.

Diodorus offers a brief account of the journey of Cleonymus in Magna Graecia, a journey where it is possible to see two landings in Puglia and the conquest of Corcyra in the period between 303 and 302 BC. Livy, on the other hand, overlooks the events in Magna Graecia and highlights the encounter of Cleonymus with the Romans and his expedition to Veneto, setting these episodes in 302/1 BC. As it has been noticed in previous studies,¹⁴⁸ the reconstruction of the events is complicated by the problem of combining Diodorus with Livy. Diodorus suggests that Cleonymus was called by Taras to lead the forces against the Lucanians and Romans: the historian is explicit in saying that the Tarentines asked for Cleonymus to be their general (Diod. 20 104, 1). The precise request of a Spartan authority to act as general of the Tarentine forces may point toward the military prowess of Cleonymus and his esteem in both Taras and Sparta; moreover, it shows that Sparta was highly regarded in the early third century. Indeed, the succinct note of Cleonymus is the only source which provides information about the embassy of Taras to Sparta and this specific request; however, the presence of the same Spartan character in the Cretan affairs of the early third century (shown below) will testify to the esteem of Sparta in the Hellenistic scenario of the early third century and the significant authority of Cleonymus. Moreover, one should be aware that the resort of Taras to foreign leaders appears to be a common practice in the foreign policy of the Spartan colony: Archidamus III and Alexander the Molossian are the previous generals who led the military campaigns of Taras against the Italic populations.¹⁴⁹ The consistent resort to prominent foreign authorities by the colony in order to face the pressures from southern Italian populations

¹⁴⁸ Marasco (1984) pp. 46-48; Braccisi (1990) p. 15; Coppola (2004) pp. 205-206.

¹⁴⁹ Urso (1998) pp. 16-69; Nafissi (2002) p. 247; Bettalli (2003) pp. 113-117.

has been recently interpreted by Bettalli¹⁵⁰ in light of a deficit of important political authorities inside the Spartan colony: Archidamus' request was triggered by the attack of Italic populations (Diod. 16 63, 1), while Alexander the Molossian was asked to intervene in southern Italy due to the pressure of Messapians and Lucanians (Just. 23 1, 15). In particular, his intervention was explicitly requested by the Italic League led by Taras in need of a general able to lead the large number of forces and to sedate the revolt of the Italic populations.¹⁵¹

The intervention of Cleonymus, as described by Diodorus, bolsters this hypothesis. In fact, Cleonymus, thanks to the funds of the Tarentines, managed to recruit five thousand mercenaries and obtained ships before sailing to Taras (Diod. 20 104, 2); moreover, Diodorus suggests to us that, once in Taras, Cleonymus recruited five thousand other mercenaries and enrolled two thousand citizens as foot-soldiers and another two thousand as mounted troops. This army, mainly constituted by mercenaries paid by Taras, shows that Cleonymus had no ships to transport them nor money in order to pay them. The request for help sent by Taras had its price, but at the same time testifies to the authority of Cleonymus in Spartan foreign policy. Furthermore, the kinship ties played a pivotal role in the decision-making of the Tarentine and Spartan governing bodies. The *syngeneia* between Taras and Sparta had a significant impact on the choice of Spartan leaders by Taras: the late fourth century saw the Spartan lineage as a valuable tool for the colony to counter external threats.¹⁵² Strabo, in fact, suggests that the traditions about the Spartan kinship of the Samnites were spread in southern Italy and were framed in the interest of Taras (5 4, 12); while a very short note on the Spartan origins of the Samnites is provided by the later account of Justin (20 1, 14), who does not offer other information. According to Strabo, the Spartan origin of the Samnites may have been invented by the Tarentines for propaganda purposes: the Tarentines intended to justify an alliance with the Samnites through the means of *syngeneia*. Furthermore, as proposed by Musti,¹⁵³ it was during the Samnite wars that the Tarentines exploited their Laconian kinship in order to strengthen the Italic block against the attack of Rome. However, these suppositions are only based

¹⁵⁰ Bettalli (2003) p. 112.

¹⁵¹ Bettalli (2003) pp. 115-116.

¹⁵² Urso (1998) p.49; Nafissi (2002) p. 246; Bettalli (2003) p. 113.

¹⁵³ Musti (1995) p. 358.

on the information offered by Strabo, who in writing his work draws extensively from Timaeus, hostile to Taras.¹⁵⁴

Furthermore, in the early third century the strategy adopted by Taras and Sparta proved itself fruitful: in fact, once the large army was created, the Lucanians, alarmed, concluded a *philia* with Cleonymus (Diod. 20 104, 3). In this passage Diodorus does not mention the Romans because with these there was no fight (Liv. 10 2, 3). Hence, one may consider events at Thuriae as a propaganda exercise by the family of Aemilii in Livy's account.¹⁵⁵ Following this episode, Diodorus describes the passage of Cleonymus to Corcyra and his conquest of the island. The Sicilian historian suggests that Cleonymus established a garrison in the isle so as to use it as a strategic base and to await a chance to take part in the affairs of Greece (20 104, 4). Such an important conquest would suggest the aim of Sparta to establish a position of influence in a peculiar zone of the Mediterranean; the geographical position of Corcyra, in fact, made it an important gateway to the Adriatic zone. However, one should be aware that the intimations provided by Diodorus are not supported by other evidence; therefore, the Spartan presence on the island could not be confirmed. In spite of this, if one accepts Diodorus' information, then the significance of Cleonymus' conquest may be proven by the interest shown by Cassander and Demetrius Poliorcetes in making an alliance with Cleonymus right after his conquest of the island (Diod. 20 105, 1); furthermore, in the same passage Diodorus suggests that Cleonymus rejected both offers in order to maintain the island. However, this possession, even if kept for a short period as shown by Trogus (*Prol.* 15), is a preface of Cleonymus's action in *Veneto*.

The coming of Cleonymus to the Adriatic zone belongs to a foreign political plan that is still unclear in its specifics. The account of Livy (10 2, 4) does not offer other information about this plan as the historian only informs us that the fleet of Cleonymus is moved by the winds to the shores of the Veneti (*ad litora Venetorum*). Furthermore, the aim of Livy is to celebrate the victory of his Padua against the Spartan invader in order to project this story on to the complicated debate about the Trojan myth and the ideology of the principate that developed in the Augustan age: in particular, Livy aims to highlight the

¹⁵⁴ Urso (1998) p. 49.

¹⁵⁵ The location of Thuriae is still unknown; however, Marasco (1980) p. 47 suggests that the location is to be found at the South of the modern Brindisi.

mutual Trojan origin of Padua and Rome.¹⁵⁶ Though this account offers an idealised picture of the events and shows the patriotism of Livy, the action of Cleonymus in the Adriatic may be linked to the desire of Sparta to enlarge its influence in the Mediterranean and to find new resources. Indeed, in framing his account Livy aims to provide a narrative which aims to satisfy other demands: however, the magnitude of his information stands in the choice of Cleonymus as a military leader against the Paduan army; moreover, later in the narrative, Livy defines Cleonymus as a king (10 2, 12).

4.4 Spartan relationships with western Cretan *poleis*

Spartan broad engagement with some Mediterranean locales is further strengthened if one considers the embassy of Cleonymus to specific western Cretan *poleis*. The relationship with Cretan *poleis* is a significant feature which pervaded Spartan interactions of the third century and shows Sparta's continuing esteem in the island, along with the desire of the Cretan cities to resort to Sparta. In fact, Sparta was asked by the Cretan states to take part in a diplomatic question among the two Cretan cities of Polyrrhenia and Phalasarna. The presence and the role covered by Cleonymus in the diplomatic dialogue between Sparta and the two Cretan cities shows the importance of the Agiad representative in the Spartan foreign policy. This interaction is testified by two similar stelae which share the same text. They were found in the ruins of the Diktynnaion on the Tityros peninsula (IC 2 11 p. 129 = Schmitt n° 471 = SEG 50 887) and in the western Cretan city of Phalasarna (SEG 50 936) (Figure 2).

¹⁵⁶ Walsh (1961) p. 41; Braccisi (1977) pp. 174-175; Marasco (1984) p. 51; Braccisi (1990) pp. 69-70; Coppola (2000) pp. 11-22; Coppola (2004) p. 204; Wiseman (2004) p. 18.



Figure 2: Limestone stele featuring a young goddess with chiton (nymph of Phalasarna) and a goddess with short chiton, cloak, and quiver (Diktynna). In the background the stern of a ship, a wild goat and a tree, while on the upper part a fronton with a dog on both sides. **SOURCE:** Guarducci, IC 2 p. 129.

Here follows only the text of the stele found in Phalasarna, as this is the one almost entirely preserved, along with its rendering.

Θεοί ·

Τάδε συνέθεντο Πολυρήνιοι καὶ Φαλασάρνιοι ἐναντίον Κλεονόμου καὶ
τῷ[ν]

ἄλλων Λακεδαιμονίων οὓς ἀπέστειλε ἅ πόλεις, Ἰσοδάμου, Κερβίδα,
Ἀναδέος· φί-

(4) λον καὶ ἐχθρὸν τὸν αὐτὸν ἤμεν ἀπὸ τᾶς πρώτας ἀμέρας νῦν τε καὶ εἰς τὸν
ἀεὶ χρόνον

τὰ κατὰ Κρήταν, πόλιν καὶ γὰρ ἔχοντας αὐτοὺς τὰν αὐτῶν ἐκατέρους κατὰ
τὰ ἀρχαῖα,

νόμοις χρωμένους τοῖς αὐτῶν ἐκατέρους· ὄφρα ἂν ἐκ τῶν πολεμίων
λανβάνωμεν

[κ]αλούντων τῶν Πολυρηγίων ἂν παραγένωνται μέστε εἴκοσι ἄνδρες
λανχανόν-

(8) των τὸ τέταρτον μέρος οἱ Φαλασάρνιοι τῶν λαφύρων καὶ τῶν χρημάτων.
ἐξελέσθω<ν> δὲ

τῷ θεῷ τὰ νομιζόμενα οἱ Πολυρήνιοι· ἂν δὲ οἱ Φαλασάρνιοι τοὺς
Πολυρηγίους πα-

ρακαλῶσι καὶ παραγένωνται μέστε εἰς τεσσαράκοντα ἄνδρες λανχανόντων
τὸ τέταρτον μέρος τῶν λαφύρων καὶ τῶν χρημάτων οἱ Πολυρήνιοι· ἐξελέ-

(12) σθων δὲ τῷ θεῷ τὰ νομιζόμενα οἱ Φαλασάρνιοι· οἱ δὲ Πολυρήνιοι τοῖς
Φαλα-

σάρνιοις παρεχόντων τὰ ἐπιτάδεια ἐν ταῖ Πολυρηγίαι καὶ οἱ Φαλασάρνιοι
τοῖς

Πολυρηγίοις ἐν ταῖ Φαλασαρνίαι· ἂν δὲ εἰς τὴν ἀλλοτρίαν στρατεύωνται
παρεχέστων τὰ ἐπιτάδεια αὐτοὶ αὐτοῖς ἐκάτεροι· ἀγείσθων δὲ τῶν κατὰ γᾶν
(16) οἱ Πολυρήνιοι τῶν δὲ κατὰ θάλασσαν οἱ Φαλασάρνιοι· ἂν δέ τις ἄρχη τοὺς
Φαλασαρνίους πολέμου βοθοῦν τοὺς Πολυρηγίους παντὶ σθένει εἰς τὸ
δυν[α]-

τὸν καὶ τοὺς Φαλασαρνίους τοῖς Πολυρηγίοις κατὰ ταυτά· μηδὲ
πρεσβευόντων οἱ

Φαλασάρνιοι ἄνευ τῶν Πολυρηγίων μηδὲ οἱ Πολυρήνιοι ἄνευ τῶν
Φαλασαρνί-

(20) ων τὰ κατὰ Κρήταν περὶ πολέμου καὶ ἱράνας· ἃ δὲ γὰ ἃ Πολυρηγία εἰς
Πολυρή[ν]α

.εν FΙΣΙΟ., ἃ δὲ Φαλασαρνία εἰς Φαλάσαρναν· ἐνωνὰ δὲ γὰς ἔσθω τῷ
Φαλασαρν[ί]-

[ω]ι ἐν ταῖ Πολυρηγίαι· τὴν δὲ Πολυρηγίαν ἐργαζέσθω ὁ βουλόμενος καὶ
τελείτω

[εἰς] Πολυρήνα· τὸν δὲ ΑΙΑΚΟΝ μεγάρου [- - - - -] ΑΔΕΛΦΥ (?) [- -]
νομᾶι καὶ θήραι

χρήστω

(24) [- - - - -] ΛΥΡΗ.ΙΑΝ ..ΙΦΑΛΑ[- - - - -] ΜΟΧ[- - - - -]
ΛΑΣ[- - - - -] Ω[- -]

The Polyrrhenians and the Phalasarnians agreed these things in the presence of Cleonymus and the other Lacedaemonians whom the *polis* dispatched, Isodamos, Kerbis, Anadeus: to share the same friend and enemy since the first day now and forever throughout time

in Crete;

(5) both of them keeping their city and land as defined in ancient times

and governed by their own laws;

(6) what we, the Polyrrhenians, receive as booty from our enemies; the Phalasarnians should be summoned to be present with up to twenty men, and one fourth of the spoils and of the money should be drawn to them by lot.

(8) The Polyrrhenians should take out of the goods the things are established for the gods; (9) and if the Phalasarnians summon the Polyrrhenians, the Polyrrhenians to be present with up to forty men, and one fourth of the spoils and of the money should be drawn to them by lot;

(11) the Polyrrhenians should divide the goods as the things are established for the gods;

(12) the Polyrrhenians will offer their services to the Phalasarnians in Polyrrhenia and the Phalasarnians to the Polyrrhenians in Phalasarna.

(14) And if they wage war in a foreign place, these will offer their services to each other: let the Polyrrhenians lead (the forces) by land, the Phalasarnians (the forces) by sea;

(16) and if anyone makes war on the Phalasarnians, the Polyrrhenians will come to help with all possible strength, and the Phalasarnians (come to help) the Polyrrhenians;

(18) neither let the Phalasarnians take decision

on matters of war and peace in Crete without the Polyrrhenians, nor the Polyrrhenians

(20) without the Phalasarnians in respect of Crete on matters of war and peace, the land of Polyrrhenia is owned by Polyrrhenia, -----, the land of Phalasarnia is owned by

(22) Phalasarna; Phalasarnian has the right to purchase land in Polyrrhenia

if someone wants to work the Phalasarnia

(24) and to dwell Polyrrhen; ----- to graze and to perform the hunting of wild beasts

--

¹⁵⁷ Unless otherwise stated, the renderings of the inscriptions are my own.

This inscription not only shows the presence of Cleonymus in Crete in a treaty between the two cities of Polyrrenia and Phalasarna, but also demonstrates that Cleonymus was in Crete as a representative of the Spartan people; in fact, his name (Κλεωνύμου) is mentioned in the very first line of the text, while in the second line are mentioned three other Spartans sent with him.¹⁵⁸ The three Spartans and Cleonymus constitute a delegation sent by Sparta to western Crete in order to witness and arbitrate an alliance following a dispute and the mutual award of some economic privileges between the cities of Polyrrenia and Phalasarna. Cleonymus acted as a judge in the arbitrational procedure, since his name is separated from the other three Lacedaemonians sent with him (ll. 1-2). The role and the identity of the three Lacedaemonians sent with Cleonymus are still unclear. However, in explaining the arbitrational procedure, Ager¹⁵⁹ and Magnetto¹⁶⁰ offer some insights into the role of the witnesses in the arbitrational process. The safe escort of the arbitrator was an important duty undertaken by officials known as *dikastagoi*;¹⁶¹ their main concern was to guarantee protection and incorruptibility to the arbitrator both during the journey from the motherland to the locations where the arbitration had to be performed and during the jurisdictional act. Indeed, the scanty and fragmentary evidence provided by the two inscriptions is insufficient to bolster this assumption: the three Spartans mentioned after the main authority, Cleonymus, may have been simple guards selected by the Spartan government; however, the mention of their names in the two inscriptions, after Cleonymus, would suggest that they had to perform a specific function during or before the arbitration. In addition, as shown by Chaniotis,¹⁶² these Spartan names are unknown in other sources; in this regard, Chaniotis tried to find a link between the Anadeus of our inscriptions with the name Epitadeus. However, given the lack of specific information from the sources, the identity of the three witnesses will remain an object of speculation. Nonetheless, by acting as an arbitrator, Cleonymus was the individual whose power may have been larger if compared to the other governing bodies: there is

¹⁵⁸ SEG 50 936 pp. 313-315. Chaniotis observes that the names Anadeus and Kerbis are here attested for the first time, SEG 50 936 p. 314.

¹⁵⁹ Ager (1996) pp. 13-14.

¹⁶⁰ Magnetto (1997) pp. XIII-XVI.

¹⁶¹ Ager (1996) p. 14; Magnetto (1997) p. XVI.

¹⁶² SEG 50 .936 p. 314.

no evidence that shows the involvement of the ephorate or the *gerousia* in this matter. The larger power held by an individual during the arbitration would have meant that the decision-making power was held by Cleonymus, who acted as proxy of Sparta.

On the other hand, the important resort to the arbitrational procedure by the Cretan *poleis* provides an important ground for discussion with regards to interaction among Hellenistic powers. The arbitration of disputes through neutral third parties represents a common practice in the Hellenistic world and often aims to resolve boundary disputes: specifically, the participation of a neutral party in a mediation was always voluntary from the states involved and aimed at economic purposes;¹⁶³ furthermore, the resort to arbitration constituted a valuable tool to circumvent the violence and the losses of manpower due to interstate competition.¹⁶⁴ This deed may be interpreted as a significant effort of the Cretan *poleis* to solve their conflict pacifically without recourse to violence. The resort to Sparta by Polyrrhenia and Phalasarna offers significant insights into the nature of this interaction: calling upon prestigious personalities or Hellenistic monarchs to act as arbitrators in third party disputes was a common practice of the period to which smaller powers such as the two Cretan *poleis* assiduously resorted.¹⁶⁵ The interventions of Hellenistic monarchs guaranteed more authority to the final agreement. The two inscriptions can be read as a testament to the importance of Sparta in the early third century and to Cleonymus' authority; furthermore, the request of Sparta may have been facilitated by the Doric heritage shared by the three parties. The kinship ties between Polyrrhenia and Sparta (mentioned above) may have played a role in this interaction even though the fragmentary nature of the evidence does not allow us to establish the extent of this interaction. However, its unusual intervention instead of the intervention of larger powers such as Macedonia, Egypt or Rome may have offered more security to the Cretan cities. Sparta may have been interested in interacting with the *poleis* of western Crete, as they were minor powers if compared to larger powers of the time: Ptolemaic Egypt, Rome and Antigonid Macedonia could have hardly been objectives of a direct Spartan exercise of influence.

¹⁶³ Ager (1996) pp. XIII, 3, 7; Eckstein (2006) pp. 40-41.

¹⁶⁴ Eckstein (2006) p. 41.

¹⁶⁵ Ager (1996) pp. 19-22; Magnetto (1997) pp. XV-XVII.

Furthermore, we should consider carefully this treaty in order to comprehend the internal political dynamics of the *poleis* of western Crete and the foreign policy adopted by Sparta in this period. To begin, one should be aware that the inscription is the only example that shows good relations between Polyrrhenia and Phalasarna. As suggested by Gondicas, the presence of the Spartans in the mediation could be explained more by past relations between Sparta and Polyrrhenia rather than Phalasarna: additionally, unlike *poleis* such as Polyrrhenia and Lyttos, Phalasarna never cultivated contacts with Sparta in the previous periods; finally, Phalasarna is often the enemy of these cities and especially of Polyrrhenia.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, this interesting hypothesis seems rather unconvincing, as it is based only on the literary evidence, namely Strabo for the kinship of Sparta with Polyrrhenia (10 4, 13) and Aristotle for the mythical link between Sparta and Lyttos (*Pol.* 2 7). Lastly, Gondicas does not consider the travels of Cleonymus to other Mediterranean territories.

The inscription suggests the mutual intention of the Cretan cities to share the same friend and enemy (φίλον καὶ ἐχθρὸν τὸν αὐτὸν ἡμεν) and to come to the rescue of each other by land or sea in case of war. These two clauses are recurrent in Spartan treaties throughout the archaic and classical periods and suggest Sparta's dominance in the agreements.¹⁶⁷ The use of these formulas may be interpreted as a Spartan exercise of influence upon the two Cretan *poleis*: Sparta may have aimed to secure supporters in the two cities in order to exert its influence in the western Cretan territory. As for the agreements between the Cretan cities, the clause in lines 21-22 shows that citizens from Phalasarna were allowed to purchase land in Polyrrhenia and that there was no reciprocity in the exploitation of the land. In this regard, the Phalasarnians were the only ones who could enjoy the right to purchase land in the territory of Polyrrhenia.¹⁶⁸

In addition, the clause expressed in the last two lines provided the Phalasarnians with the right of pasture and hunting in the land of Polyrrhenia.¹⁶⁹ However, this hypothesis is only based on similar *enktesis* decrees of the period and denies *a priori* that the lost portion of the stele may have featured a similar clause for Polyrrhenia and its inhabitants. Polyrrhenia and Phalasarna could have stipulated the treaty in the presence

¹⁶⁶ Gondicas (1984) p. 126.

¹⁶⁷ Cartledge (1979) pp. 147-148; Cartledge (1987) pp. 11-12; Yates (2005) pp. 65, 70.

¹⁶⁸ One should observe that the text shows that the real name of the city was Πολυρρήν rather than Φαλασάρνια.

¹⁶⁹ SEG 50 936 p.315.

of Sparta by sharing the same conditions. Nevertheless, Phalasarna, as suggested by the iconographic evidence provided by the two stelae and by its coinage, appears as a maritime power at the beginning of the third century. In this regard, Hadjidaki and Kelly¹⁷⁰ have argued that the presence of a war ship's prow behind the nymph Phalasarna, on the left side of the two steles, suggests that Phalasarna had a prominent position in the treaty and was already a naval power. In spite of this, we should consider that the stelae feature also the non-maritime nature of the partner city: in fact, a tree and a goat are portrayed behind the patroness of Polyrrenhia; lastly, the scene seems to show Dycinna shaking hands with the nymph Phalasarna (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Stelae from Diktynnaios. **SOURCE:** Guarducci, IC 2 p. 129.

In addition, the nymph of Phalasarna appears on the coins found in the harbour area of the city and dated to the end of the fourth and the beginning of the third century BC which show the independence of the city that minted its own coins: these coins, on the one side, feature the nymph, while on the other, a trident, symbol of Poseidon, with the first two letters of the city's name (ΦΑ) (Figure 4).¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Hadjidaki (1988) p. 468 *cf.* Kelly (2013) pp. 288-289.

¹⁷¹ Head (1911) p. 474; Hadjidaki (1988a) p. 94; Hadjidaki (1988) p. 467.



Figure 4: Silver stater from Phalasarna (struck c. 300-270 BC). Obv. Head of nymph of Phalasarna. Rev. Trident with letters ΦΑ. **SOURCE:** Roma Numismatics Ltd, Auction 7, Auction date: 22 March 2014.

Moreover, the importance of Phalasarna in the early third century is suggested by the presence of defensive structures. These consist of walls and a circular tower in the harbour area. In particular, the survey undertaken by Hadjidaki showed that the city was equipped with a military port separated from the commercial port;¹⁷² the military port was connected to the sea through a rock-cut channel that facilitated the entrance of the ships, and its strategic position in the most western part of Crete made it a valuable point for the maritime travel. Therefore, the evidence would suggest that Phalasarna was a significant power in western Crete at the beginning of the third century. The awareness of Sparta on the part of this rising power and its will to establish a position to exert its influence in western Crete is attested by the two aforementioned steles found in the two peculiar locales of the Dictynnaion and Phalasarna. In this regard, the Dictynnaion sanctuary lies in a singular location within western Crete: it is in the most westerly territory of the island and its position allows the visual control of an important sector of the northern coast and the seas; a space that comprehends the coasts of Kydonia and the most western part of Crete. Furthermore, its central position, in the promontory among the three cities of Polyrrenia, Phalasarna and Kydonia, makes it a strategic point in western Crete. Establishing a base here meant being in contact with these three cities and securing maritime and visual control on the northern coast (Figure 5).

¹⁷² Hadjidaki (1988) pp. 469-472; Kelly (2013) p. 290.



Figure 5: Map showing the central position of Dictynnaion. **SOURCE:** Perlman (2000).

The presence of the sanctuary of the goddess Dycinna contributes to bolstering its importance: this sanctuary hosted the cult of the most ancient West Cretan goddess and its possession was often disputed between Polyrrhenia and Phalasarna.¹⁷³ Furthermore, Phalasarna was the city that enjoyed a direct access to the sea and whose short distance from Aigilia and Kythera made it a valuable gateway to the island and a strategic place for Sparta.

4.5 Continuity of Spartan relations in southern Italy and Crete

The interest of Sparta in some Cretan locales and in Taras is already attested in the mid-fourth century BC. Two short passages from Diodorus (16, 62, 3-4; 16, 63, 1) and other two passages from Arrian (*An.* 2 13, 6; 3 6, 3) suggest the interest of Sparta in these locales and the old relationships with other Cretan *poleis*. It was in this period that Sparta officially entered the island for the first time and took part in the struggle between the cities of Knossos and Lyttos (Diod. 16 62, 3-4). Diodorus suggests to us that Lyttos, because of its relationship with Sparta, managed to obtain help from the Spartans led by Archidamus III (346-343 BC): in the first place, the king, on his way to southern Italy, since Taras was engaged in a war with the Lucanians and asked for help from the motherland, received a request of help for the Lyttians (Diod. 16 62, 4). Once in Lyttos,

¹⁷³ Hadjidaki (1988a) p. 97; IC 2 p. 128 *cf.* Chaniotis (1996) p. 179.

Archidamus succeeded in defeating the mercenaries recruited by Knossos and restored the land to the Lyttians (Diod. 16 62, 4). However, Diodorus also portrays the negative outcome of Sparta, which lost its king on the battlefield (16 63, 1).

Despite this failure, the *polis* tried again to consolidate its position in Crete. In fact, Arrian (*An.* 2 13, 6) suggests that Sparta, hostile to Alexander, allied itself with the Persians; following this, Agis III dispatched his brother Agesilaos to Crete in order to strengthen the Lacaedemonian position in the island. Arrian sets this episode in 330 BC and shows yet another Spartan failure, as Alexander sent Amphoteros to suppress the acts of piracy performed by the Spartans and to solve the affairs in Crete (*An.* 2 13, 6; 3 6, 3). Nevertheless, in contrast with past expeditions, the dispatch of Cleonymus to the Cretan locales seem to have been more productive and advantageous in foreign political terms: it did not involve a clash with other powers and the loss of manpower; moreover, it may have facilitated the subsequent foreign policy during the reign of Areus since the two stelae are dated in a period earlier than 275 BC;¹⁷⁴ in fact, as discussed in chapter 7 (sections 7.2 and 7.3), it was in 273/2¹⁷⁵ that Areus I was in Crete to rescue the Gortynians in a war (Plut. *Pyrrh.* 26 2). However, this hypothesis is based only on Plutarch's information and is not supported by further evidence. However, cultivating relations with the maritime power of Phalasarna may have offered a valuable entrance for Sparta to the affairs of the island.

Finally, there has been suggested the hypothesis that the sum of thirty talents received by Agis III from the Persian commanders (Arr. *An.* 2 13, 6) may have been used to finance the building of the fortification of Kastro in this period.¹⁷⁶ One may hardly believe that this sum was utilised by Sparta to finance the building of a fortification that did not belong to its territory: rather, this sum could have been used to pay the mercenaries under the service of Agis III or to recruit other soldiers; in addition, this hypothesis is only based on the short passages of Diodorus and Arrian mentioned above. The interest of Sparta in the western Cretan *poleis* appears more consistent if we consider that Kastro was a Phalasarnian possession in the early third century. The

¹⁷⁴ Schmitt n°471; SEG 50 887; SEG 50 936; Chanotis (1996) p. 180. The year 275 is the year of Cleonymus' supposed exile from Sparta, see Marasco (1980) pp. 85, 101; Cartledge (2002) p. 29. However, Cleonymus' purported exile is discussed in chapter 5.

¹⁷⁵ Van Effenterre (1948) p. 248; Willets (1955) p. 235; Marasco (1980) p. 85; David (1981) p. 129; Gondicas (1984) p. 314. This expedition is discussed further in chapter 6.

¹⁷⁶ Sekunda (2004-9) p. 599.

finding of many silver coins from Phalasarna (shown above) and of two unused sling bullets inscribed ΠΑΡΑ ΦΑ[ΛΑΣ]ΑΡΝΙΩΝ (SEG 62 379) belonging to the early third century suggest that Kastro was in of Phalasarna in this period.¹⁷⁷ This area offered two important advantages for the network of exchanges between Laconia and Crete: its possession guaranteed the control of the maritime passage from the Aegean to the western Mediterranean; lastly, it constituted a position of control for maritime travel from Laconia to Crete. Moreover, we should remember the very short distance that separated Phalasarna from *Aigila*; a distance of no more than 20 miles could have facilitated the presence and the control of the island from the Cretan power. This would explain the interest of Sparta for Phalasarna: by entertaining relations with the Cretan city, Sparta would have been able to use important observation bases in strategic zones of the Mediterranean. As we have seen above, the actions of Cleonymus in Taras, Corcyra and the Veneto aimed to secure important positions of exertion of influence in the Ionian and Adriatic areas. While the contact with the western Cretan *poleis* aimed to guarantee important observation bases both in the island and throughout the maritime space between Laconia and Crete. As discussed below, the new policy of consolidation of influence adopted by Sparta had its beginning with Cleonymus but reached its zenith with Areus I.

4.6 Conclusions

The evidence examined above has shown a proactive Spartan foreign policy and the significant role of Cleonymus in foreign matters of the early third century. The combination of literary and epigraphic evidence shows the esteem in which Sparta was still held in Mediterranean affairs and its authority on the international stage: Taras asked its motherland to counter the threat from Romans and Lucanians, while two Cretan *poleis* resorted to Sparta to solve their contentions, instead of asking major Hellenistic powers such as Rome or Macedonia. It has also been noticed the complex and diverse nature of interstate interactions: these featured a notable variety of tools to which states resorted throughout the Hellenistic period. These facilitated their dialogues and endorsed their political plans. In particular, foreign political actions were facilitated by significant interstate institutions such as kinship ties and interstate arbitrations: these

¹⁷⁷ Martis, Tsaravopoulos et al. (2006) pp. 125-126; Sekunda (2004-9) pp. 598-599; Tsaravopoulos (2004-9) p. 338; Tsaravopoulos (2012) p. 210; Kelly (2013) p. 290.

not only allowed Hellenistic powers to solve internal or internal issues, but did also function as a way to avoid warfare. The resort to the motherland by Taras and the dispute between the two Cretan *poleis*, discussed above, represent good examples of this theoretical background and show how states put some effort to circumvent violence. It has also been noticed how these states were consistently and meaningfully interacting with each other not only in the early third century, but also in the previous periods: Taras asked Sparta for help more than once, and the Spartan governing bodies decided to grant help to the colony. Moreover, earlier Spartan involvement in Cretan affairs is another element that has been highlighted in this chapter. Sparta and the Cretan *poleis* continued interacting in the early third century and, in doing so, they resorted to kinship ties and interstate arbitration. These features, considered together, point toward a continuity in the way in which Sparta and the Mediterranean states shaped their foreign plans and to Spartan interest in some Mediterranean locales: as discussed below, this interest characterised Spartan foreign policy in the entire third century.

5. A *de facto* king: Cleonymus

5.1 Introduction

The accession to the throne of Areus did not lead to an open dispute between Cleonymus and the Spartan governing bodies (*gerousia*, ephors).¹⁷⁸ There is no evidence from the literary sources of open disagreements between Cleonymus and the Spartan authorities in the period following the year 309/8; moreover, the fact that Cleonymus was appointed to undertake the significant expeditions mentioned in the previous chapter indicates an agreement between him and the Spartan governing bodies. The personal expedition of Acrotatus to southern Italy has been previously discussed (section 4.3): this was undertaken without the blessing of the ephors and in disagreement with the Spartan authorities; this was due to Acrotatus' rejection of the decree issued by the Spartan

¹⁷⁸ See section 4.2.

authorities in order to release from the charge of infamy those who retreated from the battle against Antipater (Diod. 19 70). Unlike Acrotatus' case, Cleonymus' presence in Spartan foreign policy did not generate hostilities among the governing bodies. Furthermore, his participation as a regent in the foreign political actions of Sparta, given the very young age of Areus, shows a strengthening of his position in the polity. The literary sources provide us with good examples of previous regencies granted by the governing bodies to outstanding individuals: Pausanias, winner of Plataea, was nominated regent for the young Pleistarchus (Hdt. 9 10), while Herodotus (1 65) and Plutarch (*Lyc.* 3) report the traditional regency of Lycurgus. In addition, there are no testimonies of explicit political actions undertaken under the command of Areus until 280 BC,¹⁷⁹ year of the military expedition against the Aetolians (discussed in section 5.3 below). The age of Areus provided Cleonymus with the chance to play a pivotal role in Spartan foreign policy. The expeditions of Cleonymus to Italy and western Crete (sections 4.3 and 4.4) have shown its involvement in important political matters and his prominent position in the diplomatic procedures in Taras and the western Cretan *poleis*. This chapter assesses his authority and unusual position in the proactive Spartan foreign policy that involved other important locales situated inside and outside the Peloponnese: specifically, his presence and leadership in regions such as Boeotia (discussed in section 5.2), Phocis (section 5.3), Messenia, Arkadia and Argolis (section 5.4) are primary objectives of this analysis.¹⁸⁰

The participation of Cleonymus in these important military expeditions abroad testifies to his significance on the international stage and to his leadership ability: the Spartan governing bodies (discussed below) resorted to him to perform these foreign expeditions, instead of the legitimate kings, Archidamus IV and Areus I. Some of the sources deployed in the previous chapter (Livy)¹⁸¹ and in this case study (Polyaenus) – in section 5.4 – define Cleonymus as king: if one considers these and the epigraphic evidence coming from western Crete (4.4), along with the accounts offered by Diodorus, Plutarch and Pausanias (deployed and explained in sections 5.2, 5.4), it is possible to argue for the prominent position of Cleonymus on the international stage, and his esteem and exceptional prerogatives in the early third century. He was constantly involved and

¹⁷⁹ Oliva (9171) p. 203; Marasco (1980) pp. 65-66; Scholten (2000) pp. 20, 31; Shipley (2000) p. 125.

¹⁸⁰ The problematic presence of the purported Cleonymus the Spartan in the Arkadian Alipheira, testified by the inscription SEG 25 447, and discussed in Roy (1972), relies on extremely circumstantial evidence. Therefore, it is not considered in this chapter.

¹⁸¹ See section 5.3.

participated proactively in salient events of this period, and the sources portray his leadership ability: the cases of Boeotia (5.2), Messenia and Argolis (5.4) reinforce this hypothesis. Throughout this period, he acted as representative of Sparta in diplomatic and military expeditions of the utmost importance, instead of the legitimate kings, Archidamus IV and Areus I. The evidence, accumulated and illustrated in this case study, shows that his authority and prerogatives went well beyond the role of regent; they demonstrate that he acted as a *de facto* king of Sparta. After this examination, I shall draw conclusions in regards to the agency of Cleonymus and its subtle nature (sections 5.5 and 5.6): as discussed below (5.6), the problematic literary and epigraphic evidence is insufficient to verify whether Cleonymus utilised Spartan maintained esteem on the international stage in order to fulfil his personal ambitions, or undertook these expeditions on behalf of the Spartan governing bodies.

Specifically, there are no precise indications of the power transition process necessary to activate the military expeditions - in which Cleonymus was the leader - among the Spartan governing bodies (*gerousia*, ephors). Nonetheless, attempts to avoid warfare (discussed in section 5.4) point to a more complex reality in which efforts to avoid conflict occupied an important place in the international scene.

Plutarch (*Demetr.* 35 1), Pausanias (1 13, 6) and Polyaeus (4 7, 9) offer important information about the new international scenario that arose after the death of Cassander (298/7 BC):¹⁸² Plutarch suggests to us that Demetrius Poliorketes, after his conquest of Athens, moved his army against Sparta and reports the failed attempt of king Archidamus IV to stop him; following the victory in Mantinea, Demetrius entered Laconia. Valuable information regarding the battle of Mantinea is offered by Polyaeus (4 7, 9). He informs us that the Macedonian army led by Demetrius was in severe difficulty while passing through Mount Lycaeus in Arkadia because it was unacquainted with those territories. However, Polyaeus also suggests to us that Demetrius managed to achieve a complete and easy victory over Archidamus thanks to a stratagem. Through this stratagem, Polyaeus might be indicating that the defeat at Mantinea constituted a severe blow for Sparta; nevertheless, the sole testimony of Polyaeus is insufficient to explain the failure of Sparta. On the contrary, the intimations provided by Plutarch regarding the expansionist policy followed by Demetrius are also briefly reported by Pausanias and

¹⁸² Marasco (1980) p. 49; Shipley (2000) p. 42; Cartledge (2002) pp. 27-28.

seem to confirm that the war against Sparta was an initiative of Demetrius, who aimed to take possession of Greece before moving against Macedonia. The three aforementioned sources all share the predominance of Demetrius' character in the new international scenario and his expansionist policy in the Greek mainland and beyond: the new international stage featured a multitude of states engaged in the pursuit for hegemony. In this environment, Macedonia was conquering smaller states and was seeking to establish a new equilibrium of power in the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁸³ It was in these broad interactions that a small power like Sparta was able to exert influence on some Peloponnesian states and be the leader of coalitions composed of smaller and larger powers (discussed in sections 6.2 and 6.3).

In this regard, the grand foreign political plan of Demetrius featured an important point of interest: the selected target of his invasion in the Peloponnese was Sparta. Specifically, Plutarch (*Demetr.* 35 2) and Pausanias (1 13, 6; 7 8, 5) communicate that the Lacedaemonians, despite strengthening the walls of the city, were again defeated at the doors of Sparta by Demetrius, who killed two hundred enemies and was about to conquer the city. The lost opportunity by Demetrius to conquer the city was due to the wider scenario of conflict that had arisen in Asia: here, the struggle between Lysimachus and Ptolemy deprived Demetrius of many of his territories (Plut. *Demetr.* 35 3); however, it is more likely that Demetrius decided to leave the siege at Sparta since the struggle for the throne of Macedonia between Antipater and Alexander (sons of the deceased Cassander) may have provided him with the opportunity to intervene in Macedonian affairs. In particular, Plutarch (*Demetr.* 36 1) communicates that Antipater asked Pyrrhus for help, while Alexander summoned Demetrius from the Peloponnese. Therefore, the death of Cassander destroyed the equilibrium of Mediterranean powers and triggered a larger conflict where the vast Macedonian empire was at stake: the competitors for this territory were four significant Hellenistic personalities (Alexander, Demetrius, Antipater, and Pyrrhus). Within this broad interstate conflict, Sparta appeared as a smaller state in the interstate competition for power of larger states; the necessity for Demetrius to leave the siege in Sparta in order to move to Macedonia so as to take advantage of the situation in that locale shows that Sparta, unlike Macedonia, was not an important objective in terms of foreign policy. Hence, Sparta's position on the international stage was negligible if compared with the other larger realities of the Hellenistic Mediterranean. Nonetheless,

¹⁸³ Waltz (1979) p. 119.

the subsequent intervention of Cleonymus in Boeotia (6.2) testifies to the esteem maintained by Sparta by some in the international stage, its exercise of influence in this territory, and the continuity of interest in Boeotia. This demonstrates the large political vision of Sparta and the awareness of the importance for Sparta of participating in the struggle for hegemony in the Mediterranean.

5.2 Cleonymus in Boeotia

Plutarch is the only source which provides information about the intervention by Cleonymus in Boeotia (*Demetr.* 39 2-3). This intervention by Cleonymus in Thebes (*Demetr.* 39 2) shows the importance of this character in Spartan foreign policy: our source exposes his charisma in military matters and the desire of the Spartan governing bodies to interact with locales situated outside the Peloponnese. The two passages of Plutarch stand as the only sources at our disposal which provide information about a supposed agreement between Sparta and the Boeotians in order to contain Demetrius' expansionism. Furthermore, in the absence of contradictory evidence, this seems to be one of the rare cases where Plutarch's information may be considered more trustworthy: as a Chaeronean, the author may have had a good acquaintance with historical data regarding Boeotia and may have consulted lost accounts regarding the battles in those locales; therefore, there is no compelling reason to reject this testimony. Moreover, classical sources bolster this assumption. One should not forget, in fact, the previous Spartan relations with the Boeotians which attest to a consistent interest in the Boeotian territory. Some significant precedents testify to Spartan presence in Boeotia and its interest in some Boeotian locales. Specifically, Herodotus (5 74, 1) and Xenophon (5 4, 38; 5 4, 41) provide important information about the Spartan presence in Boeotia and the relationship with some Boeotian states. Herodotus describes the large coalition led by Cleomenes against Athens in 506 BC where Thebes and its allies took the side of Sparta, while Xenophon communicates the important Spartan presence and interest in Boeotian territory. He reports that in 378 Agesilaos, during his campaign in Boeotia, made Thespieae his base for the military operations and then he left Phoibidas as harmost there to secure this territory. The literary sources point toward the persistent awareness of Sparta for the Boeotian territory and to Spartan relations with a few Boeotian states. The intervention of Cleonymus in Boeotia (analysed below) and his presence in other

significant episodes of the early third century shows a continuity of interest in Boeotian territory and corroborates Cleonymus' significance in international matters.

The hegemonic ambitions of Demetrius pushed him to the conquest of Boeotia: according to succinct information offered by Plutarch (*Demetr.* 39 2), the Boeotians, in the first place, tried to avoid an open battle with Demetrius through an embassy, but after the arrival of Cleonymus with an army in Thebes, the Boeotians regained confidence and exhorted by their leader, Pisis of Thespieae, revolted (*Demetr.* 39 1). Despite the initial positive outcome due to Cleonymus' arrival, Plutarch describes the surrender of Thebes and the subsequent escape of Cleonymus. The testimony of Plutarch, considered alone, does not show that Cleonymus' actions are the product of his personal initiative. Moreover, it does not provide specifics about the role of the Spartan governing bodies in selecting Cleonymus for this important foreign undertaking. However, the significance of this information lies in the Cleonymus' leadership in this important duty: Plutarch clearly mentions Cleonymus alone in this episode, instead of Archidamus IV or Areus I. In this regard, one should be aware that of the two Spartan kings in charge Areus was at that time too young to be the leader of the military expeditions, while Archidamus IV, the king that according to the aforementioned note of Polyaeus suffered a severe defeat in Mantinea (section 5.1), may have been discredited as a general: this is confirmed by his absence in the following Spartan foreign policy¹⁸⁴ and by the silence of the sources towards him. Hence, Cleonymus was the character of royal lineage who was most suitable to lead the army and, since Areus was not yet of age, his position as regent indicated the favourable behaviour (shown in sections 4.2, 5.1) of the Spartan governing bodies in this circumstance. Unfortunately, the sources offer no information about the distribution of power among Spartan entities: however, they point to the concentration of the decision-making power in the hands of Cleonymus. Specifically, there is no mention of the role of either the *gerousia* or the ephors in starting the military operations in Boeotia; the sources (mentioned above) only signal the presence and leadership ability of Cleonymus.

Nevertheless, the easy victory achieved by Demetrius against Cleonymus as portrayed by Plutarch provides little information about the clash: the description of Plutarch only refers to the final part of the struggle with the siege of Thebes and the escape of Cleonymus (*Demetr.* 39 2). Furthermore, in portraying the prowess of Demetrius in this event,

¹⁸⁴ Marasco (1980) p. 53; Shipley (2000) p. 142; Cartledge (2002) p. 28.

Plutarch may have consulted the previous account of the philo-Macedonian Hieronymus of Cardia,¹⁸⁵ who aims to extol the tactical skills of Poliorketes. This may explain the extremely negative portrayal offered by Plutarch where the escape of Cleonymus, due to his fear, undermines his military expertise and leadership ability. Moreover, after the expedition of Cleonymus to Boeotia, we do not have other information regarding a direct struggle against Demetrius in the early third century. However, as discussed below, in spite of the lack of sources and evidence offered by Plutarch, Cleonymus was still highly regarded on the international stage and was again the main protagonist in Spartan foreign policy.

5.3 The Alliance against the Aetolians

The anti-Macedonian foreign policy adopted by Sparta seems to have attracted the favour of other Greek states. This is confirmed by the events of 280 BC, which followed the weakening of Macedonia and the struggles caused by the disappearance of Lysimachus and Seleucus: these struggles ended in a naval battle in which Ptolemy Ceraunus defeated Gonatas, thus taking possession of Macedonia and compelling Gonatas to retreat to Boeotia (Just. 17 2, 10; 24 1, 8). The weakening of Macedonia under Demetrius is reported by Plutarch (*Demetr.* 39 6-7), who informs us that when Poliorketes learned about Lysimachus being a prisoner of Dromichetes (the king of the Getai), he immediately went north with the hope of conquering Thrace. However, Plutarch also suggests to us that he was forced to retreat to southern Greece due to a rebellion of the Boeotians supported by the Aetolians and Pyrrhus. These circumstances seem to have provided the Spartan government with the opportunity to exploit the anti-Macedonian feelings spread among the Greeks in order to improve its position in the international stage. Polybius (2 41, 11-12) and Justin (24 1, 1-8) represent the only sources that offer information regarding Spartan foreign policy and the esteem of Sparta among other Peloponnesian states. Specifically, the evidence provided by Justin shows the first direct involvement of the young Areus I in the political and military affairs and his failure. Moreover, the earlier note of Polybius (2 41, 11-12), combined with two fragmentary inscriptions (*Syll.*³ 636; *Syll.*³ 826 E), enables us to evaluate the esteem in which Sparta

¹⁸⁵ Marasco (1980) p. 54; Hornblower (1981) p. 17; Stadter (2007) p. 538.

was still held in the early third century and the role of Areus in a salient episode, in which many Hellenistic states (mentioned below) were involved.

The evidence considered in this chapter portrays a world characterised by consistent warfare and personal ambitions, along with the desire of small states to gather in a coalition in order to contain Macedonian expansionism. As will be discussed, this period witnessed the creation of Greek coalitions intended to contain the expansionism of the Antigonids. It was on this political stage that Sparta, despite being a state with limited resources, occupied a significant position and exerted its influence on some Peloponnesian states: the creation of a small coalition, composed of Peloponnesian states and led by Sparta, along with the revolt of states situated outside the Peloponnese against Macedonian rule, represents the tip of the iceberg in the struggle against the Macedonian threat. This coalition (discussed below), in which a group of states gathered in order to free themselves from the Macedonian yoke, reached its zenith with the enormous coalition led by the Spartan king Areus (discussed in section 6.5). This points to a continuity in Spartan relations with some of the Peloponnesian states (discussed below). Moreover, at the time of the second larger coalition (section 6.5), a considerable number of small powers and a superpower like Ptolemaic Egypt gathered in order to contain Macedonian expansionism; it was on this occasion that Sparta acted as leader of the military operations. In this section, I shall analyse the smaller, yet important alliance between Sparta and other Peloponnesian states.

To begin, in his account Justin states that Areus was in charge of the military operations against the Aetolians; the Spartan army moved to Phocis because the Aetolians occupied the plain of Cyrrha sacred to Apollo (24 1, 1-3) and in the meantime the struggle among the monarchs ended with the conquest of Macedonia by Ptolemy Ceraunus. However, the source does not provide specifics about the distribution of power among Spartan entities: Justin (24 1, 1) only reports that “the Spartans chose Areus as their generals”. This account provides an exaggerated number of Spartans engaged in battle with the Aetolian shepherds: in fact, according to Justin, five hundred Aetolian shepherds killed nine thousand Spartan soldiers in battle (24 1, 4-6). The picture painted by Justin seems to tarnish the reputation of Areus as a general and highlight his incompetence in regards to military matters. In spite of this, one should be aware that the extent of the casualties presented by Justin, along with the anachronistic and fragmentary nature of his account, seriously undermine the reliability of this information. On the other hand, the indirect

testimony offered by Polybius (2 41, 11-12) is invaluable in this circumstance, as it testifies to the esteem of Sparta among other Peloponnesian states, which fought the Aetolians, allies of Macedonia, alongside Sparta. Polybius, in fact, informs us that at the time Pyrrhus landed in Italy (280 BC), the *poleis* of Dyme, Patrai, Tritaia and Pharai gathered in order to form the first nucleus of the future Achaean League: these four Achaean cities participated in the battle against the Aetolians by taking the side of Sparta. This testimony is valuable in this circumstance, as Polybius is one of the few authors who was close to the events described and may have had access to important eye-witness testimonies. Moreover, as a Megalopolitan and anti-Spartan, he may have been quite knowledgeable about the history of the formation of the Achaean League, future bitter enemy of Agis IV and Cleomenes III (chapter 7).¹⁸⁶

The alliance between Sparta and the four Achaean cities demonstrates the large influence exerted by Sparta in the northern Peloponnese and the desire of these smaller powers to combine in order to contain Macedonian expansionism. The extent of the conflict that involved these states is shown by two inscriptions (*Syll.*³ 636; *Syll.*³ 826 E) found in Phocis, which testify to the presence of a monument dedicated to the Spartans who were killed in the battle against the Aetolians. These inscriptions are significant, since they offer some potential to evaluate the participants in battle against the Aetolians, allied with Macedonia, and obtain more information about the extent of Spartan influence inside the Peloponnese. As discussed below, the epigraphic evidence found in Phocis combined with the literary evidence suggests the wide extent of the coalition of Greek states against Macedonian expansionism. Here follow the parts of the two texts, which show the existence of the monument, along with their renderings.

*Syll.*³ 636:

20 τᾷς ἱερᾶς χώρας ὑπάρχειν τόπον| ταῖς ἱεραῖς βόοις καὶ ἵπποις καταλελειμμένον
ἀπὸ τᾷς ὁδοῦ τᾷς ἐπὶ τὸ Ἄστυρον ἀγούσας, αἱ ἃ ὁδὸς ἄγει ἐπὶ τὸν Παι|παλίδαν
καὶ ἐν τὸ Λακωνικόν· ἀπὸ τοῦ Λακωνικοῦ ἐν σκαι|ᾶν ἐν τὰν νάπαν τὰν ἐν
Ἱεραπέτειαν [κατ' ὀρθόν], ὥς ἃ ὁδὸς ἄγει ἃ ἐξ ἵπποδρόμου ἃ ξενίς 25 ἃ ἐπὶ τὸ
Λ[ακωνικόν, ἃ νομὰ] ταῖς ἱεραῖς βόοις καὶ ἵπποις ἔστω. ποτ[ὶ νομὰν μὴ ἐξέστω]

¹⁸⁶ The bipolarity created in the Peloponnese by the Achaean League led by Aratus and Sparta led by Cleomenes III will be discussed in chapter 7.

ποτάγειν τὰ ἰδιωτικὰ θρέμματα [ἐν τε τὰν κράναν] τὰν ποτὶ τᾷ Κεραμείᾳ οὔσαν
 τό [τε τέμενος τοῦ] | Ἑλλανίκου ἡρώιου· εἰ δέ τις ἐπινέμ[ει ἐν τούτοι τῶι] | τόπωι,
 ἐξουσίαν 30 εἶμεν- - -] | τε δεΓΛ [- - - - τῶι] | θέλοντι. ἀναγράψαι δὲ τὸ δόγμα
 τοὺς | ἄρχοντας τῶν Δελφῶν | ἐν τῶι ἱερῶι.

In the sacred land there is a place reserved for the sacred cows and horses whose boundaries are (the following): from the road that leads to Astyron, as the road leads to Paipalidas and to the Lakonikon 25; from the Lakonikon to the left [straight] along the valley of Hierapeteia, as the road passes from the hippodrome to the borders of the [Lakonikon] where the sacred cows and horses can graze. [It will not be permitted] to bring privately-owned animals to the spring which is by the Kerameia where the *heroon* of Hellanikos is to be found. If anyone takes their animals to graze [in this] place, [anyone] who wishes shall be authorised 30 -----
 ----- . The magistrates of Delphi will inscribe this decree in the temple.

Syll.³ 826 E, Col. III, ll. 14-15:

ἐκ πέτρας τῆς ἐ[π]άν[ω τᾶς ὁδοῦ εἰς ὀρθὸν εἰς πολυ]ανδρ[εῖ]ον Λακόνων ὑπὸ τὸν
 ὀπλίταν. 15 ἐκ πολυανδρείου ἐπ' [ὀ]ρθὸν εἰς πέτρ[αν - -, οὔ] τρίπου[ς]
 ἐνκεκόλαπται· ὃ ἐντὸς τούτων ὀρίων κατέχε[ι Μεγάρτ]ας Μ[ελισσίωνος]
 ἐκχωρεῖτω.

From the rock before the road straight to the common burial of the Laconians under the hoplite statue. 15 From the common burial straight to the rock ---, where a tripod is chiselled. Whatever is (to be found) within these boundaries is property of Megartas son of Melissios.

The two inscriptions, found in Phocis, indicate the presence of a Spartan commemorative monument erected not far from Delphi for the soldiers fallen in battle against the

Aetolians.¹⁸⁷ The fragmentary nature of the texts and the imprecise provenance of the inscriptions raises interpretative issues for the assessment of the extent of the Spartan interaction inside and outside the Peloponnese. Nonetheless, the use of the words *Λακωνικόν* (Syll.³ 636, l. 25) and *πολυανδρεῖον Λακώνων* (Syll.³ 826 E, l. 14-15) attests to the presence of a common burial which could have contained the bodies of the troops led by Sparta and fallen during the battle; therefore, the two inscriptions may refer to the casualties following the clash and partially explain the exaggerated figure provided by Justin. Furthermore, an element that requires considerable attention in these inscriptions is the presence of the words *Λακώνων* (Syll.³ 826 E, l. 14) and *Λακωνικόν* (Syll.³ 636, l. 25): the resort to these terms, instead of the usual *Lakedaimonion* to indicate the Spartiates alone, may indicate the military contribution and the presence of Spartan *perioikoi* alongside *Spartiatiai* during the battle. This would mean that soldiers from the perioikic towns of Laconia gave their contribution in battle. Hence, Sparta could count on a large number of troops in order to face the Aetolian force. However, the names of the perioikic towns, which contributed in this expansionist endeavour, are not reported in the inscriptions; nonetheless, one could conclude that the broad coalition led by Sparta included cities situated not only in Laconia but even in Achaea. Moreover, it is plausible to claim that also the Arkadian cities and possibly even some towns of Argolis (discussed further in the next section), which freed themselves from the rule of Gonatas in the same year, joined the coalition.

However, in this circumstance, two obstacles seem to undermine this assumption: the lack of specific evidence and of more information (including exact location) regarding the monument of the Laconians who perished in battle (mentioned in the two inscriptions). Furthermore, from a closer scrutiny of the inscriptions emerges one important point of interest: the lack of an explicit reference to the clash. None of the two inscriptions, in fact, features references which point toward a direct clash between Spartans and Aetolians. In spite of this, the passage of the Spartan army from Laconia to Phocis could have meant at least the tacit consent of Arkadian and other Peloponnesian states; in addition, the use of further fragmentary literary evidence offers some potential to investigate the attempt of revolt against Macedonia shared not only by Sparta, but also by other Greek states situated outside the Peloponnese. Unfortunately, even in this case we are obliged to rely on circumstantial evidence to support our argument. Pausanias (10

¹⁸⁷ Syll.³ 636 p. 188; Syll.³ 826 E p. 528.

20, 3-4) and Memnon of Heraclea (*FGrHist* 434 F 8, 6) provide some insights into the attempted revolt against Macedonian expansionism. Memnon points out that Boeotia, which was still subject to Gonatas after his defeat from Ceraunus, freed itself from Macedonian rule; while Pausanias informs us that, in the same year, Boeotia and Megara collaborated with their own troops to the defence against the Galatians. This latter note, specifically, would indirectly suggest that even Megara freed itself from the dominion of Gonatas in 280, which was the year of the conflict in Phocis. However, the scanty and anachronistic information provided by Pausanias and Memnon is hardly sufficient to obtain an estimate of the number of states which fought the Aetolians alongside Sparta.

Nonetheless, the evidence accumulated so far demonstrates the leadership of Sparta in the conflict and its effort to gain a position of prestige on the international stage. The combination of literary and epigraphic evidence shows a multipolar system where Macedonia was certainly playing a major role: however, within the same environment, Sparta, despite being a middling power if compared to the Seleucid and Ptolemaic superpowers engaged in the struggle for power, was able to attract the sympathies and support of other Hellenistic *poleis* and to create an obstacle to the Antigonids. The sources employed and examined so far portray an international stage characterised by warfare and personal interests of the Hellenistic kings, along with Spartan expansionism. Moreover, they show important efforts by other Greek states to combine and face the external threat represented by Macedonia. In this regard, the aforementioned testimony of Justin, according to which the Spartans took the Aetolian occupation of the plain of Cyrrha as a pretext to the conflict may be acceptable: by taking the initiative, in fact, Sparta attracted the favour of other Greek states and linked its political action to the traditional relations of friendship with Delphi; furthermore, in terms of foreign policy, an attack on the Aetolians, allies of Macedonia, meant circumventing an open and direct clash with Antigonos Gonatas. The Spartan move against the Aetolians could also have been motivated by strategic reasons: as discussed in section 5.2, Boeotia and Megara revolted to Gonatas and since Areus was not able to reach central Greece by land due to the Macedonian garrison situated in Corinth, he might have considered joining the Boeotians and the Megarians by passing through Phocis (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Map of Peloponnese highlighting the Achaean poleis involved in the coalition. **SOURCE:** Wikimedia Commons/Ancient Greece/ southern Regions with modifications.

This move could have constituted a double-edged obstacle for Macedonia: by joining the Boeotians and Megarian forces, Areus may have undermined the security of the Macedonian garrison in Corinth and may have pushed Athens to join the anti-Macedonian coalition. Despite the nature of the evidence at our disposal being insufficient to confirm this picture, one should consider the significant Spartan initiative against Macedonia and the adhesion of the Peloponnesian *poleis* to the coalition led by Sparta. As explained in the next section, Sparta interacted meaningfully in the wider Hellenistic scenario to coexist with other powers and regain a position of prestige inside the Peloponnese and on the international scene; moreover, the available literary sources (examined below) point again to the unusual position of Cleonymus in international matters and the proactive participation of Sparta on the international scenario of the third century. In effect, the royal member of the Agiad house was the main protagonist of Spartan foreign policy in expeditions of the utmost importance (discussed below).

5.4 Cleonymus in Messenia and Argolis

Pausanias (4 28, 3; 8 6,3) and Polyaeus (2 29,1) provide significant information about the aftermath of the battle against the Aetolians and the political scenario that had arisen inside the Peloponnese; the combination of the two sources shows an important attempt at expansionism from Sparta and the presence of Cleonymus in the international matters, instead of king Areus or Archidamus. The selected targets of Spartan expansionism that emerge from the literary sources are limited, since they involved Messenia and Arcadia. In this regard, Pausanias (4 28, 3) informs us that the Messenians did not participate in the defence of Greece against the Galatians because “Cleonymus and the Spartans” refused to conclude a truce with them. The magnitude of this information lies in the command of the troops granted to Cleonymus instead of Areus or Archidamus: the Spartan governing bodies may have deemed it inappropriate to give the command of the troops to the young Areus, given the defeat he suffered in Phocis. However, there is no evidence from the sources in regards to the role of the governing bodies in selecting the leader of these expeditions.

| Spartan Foreign Expeditions | Timeline |
|---|-----------------|
| Cleonymus in Taras | c. 303-302 BC |
| Cleonymus in Corcyra | c. 303-302 BC |
| Cleonymus in Crete | c. 276 BC (?) |
| Expedition of Archidamus IV in Mantinea | c. 294 BC |
| Cleonymus in Thebes | c. 293 BC |
| Areus against the Aetolians | c. 280 BC |
| Cleonymus in Messenia | c. 279 BC |
| Cleonymus in Troezen | c. 277 - 275 BC |

Table 4: Table featuring salient episodes of Spartan foreign policy of the early third century.

However, if that was the case, the decision may have strengthened the position of Cleonymus in international matters; moreover, the sole testimony of Pausanias does not seem to show a personal expansionist initiative on the part of Cleonymus, as he is

mentioned along with the Spartans. Lastly, there are no specifics in Pausanias about the struggle between Sparta and Messenia; however, Spartan expansionism inside the Peloponnese is confirmed by another passage (8 6, 3) where Pausanias provides an explanation to the missed participation of the Arcadians in the conflict against the Galatians. This passage suggests that the Spartans could have taken advantage of the lack of Arcadian men in military age in order to lay waste their land. One should be aware that the use of the scanty and anachronistic information coming from Pausanias' narrative *per se* cannot confirm Spartan expansionism inside the Peloponnese; nonetheless, the use of a stratagem of Polyaeus (2 29, 1) combined with the epigraphic evidence coming from Troezen in Argolis (IG 4 769) and Oropos in Attica (SEG 13 341) allows us to evaluate the extent of Spartan expansionism inside the Peloponnese and the role of Cleonymus in Spartan foreign policy. The use of these fragmentary sources testifies to the important role of Sparta in the international matters and to the struggle for power that Sparta was undertaking in order to exert its influence inside the Peloponnese.

Polyaeus (2 29, 1) informs us of the important conquest of Troezen, then under Macedonian rule, by Cleonymus. He describes the siege of the city by Cleonymus, mentioned as "the king of the Lacedaemonians", and its capture thanks to a stratagem. Following the conquest, Cleonymus placed a Spartan garrison in it. The testimony of Polyaeus shows that Cleonymus' action in Argolis was driven by his personal ambitions. The resort to a stratagem on such an important occasion may be considered as an attempt to avoid warfare: by resorting to cunning, Cleonymus managed to avoid a direct clash with the soldiers of the Macedonian garrison; in fact, the message written on the Spartan javelins "I have come to preserve the freedom of Troezen" and the return of the Troezenians, whom Cleonymus had taken as prisoners, without ransom in order to persuade the Troezenian party seem to validate this assumption. One could conclude that the Spartan governing bodies, aware of Cleonymus' charisma and of his military prowess, decided to deploy his authority in order to undertake this significant expedition. Indeed, Polyaeus' testimony by itself does not explain Spartan expansionism and Cleonymus' agency: the insights about the fate of Troezen offered in this account reveal the biased nature of the source; moreover, one should be aware that while producing his account the author may have resorted to a variety of sources and, more particularly, to Hieronymus of Cardia - hostile to Sparta. Nonetheless, an inscription found in Troezen may confirm the presence of a Macedonian garrison and the name of its commander (IG 4 769).

Φρούραρχος Κυρθαῖος τοῦ δεινός Μακεδῶν
καὶ φρουροὶ ἀνέθεν.

The Macedonian commander of the garrison, Kurtaios, son of so-and-so, and the
guards dedicated (this).

The very fragmentary nature of the inscription, along with the lack of archaeological material which may support the presence of a Macedonian garrison, raises important issues for our interpretation. Moreover, other than the very short stratagem, we do not have other literary sources which would testify to the actual Spartan conquest of Troezen mentioned by Polyaeus. Despite these issues, the inscription attests to the presence of a Macedonian garrison and the name of its commander, Kurtaios; furthermore, the precise provenance and findspot of the inscription may confirm its reliability. The sources do not offer other information about this garrison and its watchmen; however, the use of the inscription found in Oropos demonstrates the Spartan conquest of Troezen and its liberation from the Spartan rule by Diomedes (SEG 13, 341). Here follows the inscription, which recites an epigram, along with its translation.

SEG 13, 341:

1 ἐπὶ ἱερέως Ὀλυμπίκου
τηλόθεν ἰσταμένοι Διομήδεα χαλκὸς αὐτεῖ
ἄνθα ἀπ' ἐυσήμου κεκριμένον γενεᾶς,

ὄμ παρὰ δυσμενέων Τροζήνιοι ἄστν λαβόντα
5 καὶ πάλιν ἀρχαίοις εὖ περιθέντα νόμοις
τὸμ πολὺν ἐστήσαντο μένειν χρόνον· ἐγ δ' ἐνὸς οἴκου
Τροζὴν δις πατ[ρί]ωι τείχει ἐνηυγάσατο·
τῶι σὲ κατ' ἀμφότερον σέβεται πατρίς, ἄνδρα καὶ ἥρω
φθεγγομένα πλείστας αἴτιον εὐνομίας.
10 Ξενοκράτης Ἀθηναῖος ἐποίησε.

1 In the priesthood of Olympikos

From a distance one can see the bronze (statue) of Diomedes
From the distinguished lineage of Anthas,
who took the city of the Troezenians from its enemies
5 and adorned it again with its ancient laws
And was set up in order to remain for ever; from (the exploits of) one family
Troezen has shone within the ancestral walls twice;
For these two reasons his hometown honors you, as man and hero,
and praises him as creator of an excellent constitution.
10 Xenokrates the Athenian made (this).

The inscription, which belongs to the base of a statue, celebrates the liberation of Troezen from its enemies and the restoration of its ancient laws by the Troezenian Diomedes. This evidence is important to our argument: it testifies to the conquest of Troezen from Sparta and to the liberation of the city from Spartan rule; moreover, it demonstrates the regained

autonomy of Troezen.¹⁸⁸ However, one should consider that the inscription, if employed alone, is insufficient to illustrate Spartan expansionism inside the Peloponnese. In this regard, we should not overlook the celebratory nature of this inscription, generated to commemorate the hero of Troezen, along with his prestigious family, and the absence in the inscription of elements linked to Sparta; finally, its distant provenance constitutes another element which undermines this assumption. However, as explained above, its combination with the testimony of Polyaeus and the other inscription from Troezen itself has been useful to assess the Spartan interaction with other Peloponnesian *poleis* and the extent of Cleonymus' participation in international matters. Moreover, the conquest of Troezen by Cleonymus features some points which deserve attention in order to comprehend Spartan foreign policy inside the Peloponnese. Polyaeus, in fact, informs us that Cleonymus tried to introduce himself to the Troezenians as their liberator from Macedonian rule and that, following his message written on javelins, the Troezenians revolted (2 29, 1). If we give Polyaeus the benefit of the doubt, then Cleonymus' intervention alone managed to trigger a revolt inside the city: such conduct from the Troezenians shows that Sparta could have had supporters inside the city who were animated by the same anti-Macedonian feelings and is a testament to the important leadership of Cleonymus.

In addition, the position of Troezen in the Peloponnese seems to bolster the presence of sympathies towards Sparta on the part of the Peloponnesian *poleis*. The location of Troezen, in the strategic position of the Argolic Alce, shows the consent and participation of other Peloponnesian *poleis* to the Spartan anti-Macedonian policy. In this regard, as argued by Marasco,¹⁸⁹ a Spartan military expedition in a distant locale from Laconia such as Troezen could show the consent of the traditional enemy of Sparta, Argos: a military intervention by Argos against the Spartan army led by Cleonymus may have certainly caused severe issues to the Spartan military operations; moreover, a crucial element that should not be overlooked in this circumstance is represented by the fact that the Spartan army should have passed through the territory of Argos in order to reach Troezen. Moreover, one should bear in mind that, in spite of the defeat suffered in Phocis (section 5.3), Sparta not only did not lose the support of the Peloponnesian *poleis*, but could have also counted on other Peloponnesian supporters: these may have seen in

¹⁸⁸ SEG 13, 341; IG 7 336; ISE 1, 62.

¹⁸⁹ Marasco (1980) p. 79.

Sparta a valid opponent of the Macedonians. In this regard, valuable intimations regarding the diffusion of anti-Macedonian feelings among the Peloponnesian states are offered by Polybius (2 41, 12-14), while Pausanias provides some insights about the sympathies attracted by Sparta inside Elis (4 28, 4-6).

Polybius offers important information about Achaean matters and describes the domestic and foreign policy adopted by the *polis* of Aegium: he suggests that Aegium expelled the Macedonian garrison and joined the growing Achaean League. The confederation, in fact, was increasing the number of its adherents since even the *poleis* of Bura and Kerynea freed themselves from the rule of the tyrants imposed by Macedonia so as to become its members. This information testifies to the continuing growth of the Achaean League which, as discussed in section 5.3, saw the creation of its first nucleus thanks to the gathering of the *poleis* of Dyme, Patrai, Tritaia and Pharai; these were the four states which fought alongside the Spartans against the Aetolians in 280. The more problematic evidence offered by Pausanias' non-historical narrative (4 28, 4-6), on the contrary, paints a picture of the political scenario that arose in Elis and, more specifically, describes the presence of a philo-Spartan party in Elis and the contrasts between Sparta and Messenia. In this regard, Pausanias informs us of a civil war in Elis triggered by contrasts regarding the relations of Elis with Sparta. Pausanias suggests to us that when the Spartans knew about these, the Lacedaemonians prepared to assist their partisans in Elis: while they were preparing themselves in squadrons, the Messenians, having selected one thousand men, armed them with shields bearing Laconian blazons and sent them to Elis. Once arrived and welcomed in Elis by the Spartan supporters who mistook them for their allies, the Messenians took possession of the city and drove out the Spartan supporters; in this way, the Messenians gave the city to their partisans (Paus. 4 28, 5-6). This represents the only available evidence that provides some intimations about the presence of a philo-Spartan party in Elis; in addition, this information, combined with the insights provided by the passages of Polybius and the epigraphic evidence analysed in sections 6.2 and 6.3, bolsters Spartan expansionism inside the Peloponnese and its esteem on the international stage. One could conclude that the evidence, gathered and analysed so far, shows the attempt by the Peloponnesian *poleis* to counteract Macedonian ambitions and the significant leadership of Sparta in this endeavour. The formation of the coalition described above was triggered by the self-interest of the Peloponnesian states which perceived Macedonian expansionism as a threat to their existence. This points toward the

validity of Realism in explaining the motivations which lie behind important foreign policy decisions undertaken by Sparta and the Peloponnesian states.

5.5 A *de facto* king

The exertion of influence by Sparta in several Peloponnesian locales would show the esteem of Sparta in the international scenario and its important initiative in the foreign political matters: in its undertakings, the Spartan government counted consistently on the personality of Cleonymus instead of Areus. The evidence assessed above shows that Cleonymus was present in political matters of the utmost importance of the early third century: the sources portray the presence of the Agiad member in the six most significant events of the early third century and show that Areus did not cover any significant expedition until the exile of Cleonymus (discussed below). Hence, Cleonymus was the leader of the main military undertakings and was the main protagonist of Spartan foreign policy in this period: the call by Taras upon Cleonymus in order to counter the Lucanians and Romans was only the beginning of his growing importance in Spartan foreign policy. The expeditions in southern Italy, Corcyra, and Northern Italy (section 5.3) bolster his importance and tend to promote the image of a powerful personality operating within the Spartan government; moreover, his intervention in Crete as an arbitrator in the dispute between the two cities of Polyrrhenia and Phalasarna (section 5.4) has demonstrated his preeminent position and prestige in the international matters; in this regard, Ager and Magnetto¹⁹⁰ observe that power and prestige are vital characteristics of the arbitrator which expose the peculiarity and expertise of the character involved in the jurisdictional process. This was a crucial factor in the choice of the arbitrator, since the more prestigious the arbitrator, the larger was the authority of his judgement:¹⁹¹ the Spartan governing bodies (*gerousia*, ephors) may have decided to send Cleonymus to perform the arbitration, instead of the other member of the Eurypontid or Agiad royal house, given his growing prestige and experience in matters of foreign policy. Moreover, one should bear in mind the aforementioned severe defeat suffered by Archidamus IV, which should have conveyed more room and political stature to the member of the Agiad house; this seems confirmed by the absence of political actions carried out by Eurypontid

¹⁹⁰ Ager (1996) p. 21; Magnetto (1997) p. XXVI; Magnetto (2015) p. 67.

¹⁹¹ Ager (1996) p. 11; Magnetto (1997) p. XXI.

representatives until the expedition to Corinth by king Agis IV (discussed in section 8.2) in 241 (Plut. *Agis* 13 5).¹⁹² One should also not forget that the Cretan *poleis* may have resorted to Hellenistic kings such as the Antigonids or the Ptolemies, or they could have asked the growing superpower that was Rome in the early third century in order to solve their disputes without resorting to violence. As discussed in the previous chapter, these cities instead asked Sparta to intervene and what matters the most is that the Spartan governing bodies deemed it appropriate to deploy an individual with more experience and prestige in international matters such as Cleonymus, instead of the Eurypontid king Archidamus IV or the less experienced and young Agiad king Areus I.

Finally, as explained in sections 6.2 and 6.4, Cleonymus' unusual leadership is again confirmed by his intervention in Boeotia and by the subsequent conquest of Troezen. In particular, the conquest of Troezen attests his presence as leader of the Spartan army and instigator of the revolt inside the city. The presence and leadership of Cleonymus, instead of king Areus, in these important military operations generates a fertile ground of discussion with regards to the participation of royal characters in battle. Classical sources, specifically, offer important information about the selection of the king who had to command an expedition: Herodotus (5 75) communicates the Spartan habit of entrusting the command of the army to only one of the kings, while Thucydides (5 75, 1) informs us that the participation of the other king in military campaigns was extremely occasional. Given the failed action of Archidamus IV in Mantinea in 294 (section 6.1) and the following debacle of the Eurypontid house, Areus and Cleonymus were the two characters of royal lineage most suitable to lead military operations and to perform important duties in the international scenario. However, even the supposedly severe defeat, suggested by Justin and by the inscriptions mentioned above, of Areus in Phocis may have led the Spartan government to move its preferences towards Cleonymus in order to undertake its political plans inside the Peloponnese. Moreover, the literary sources, accrued and examined above, confirm the peculiar position of Cleonymus within Spartan foreign political actions: the persistent resort to the words "Cleonymus and the Spartans" (Paus. 4 28, 3; SEG 50, 887; SEG 50, 936) or simply to "Cleonymus" (Paus. 3 6, 3; Diod. 20 104-105; Liv. 10 2; Plut. *Demetr.* 39 1-2; Polyaen. 2 29, 1) in order to indicate this character, his leadership and involvement in salient episodes of Spartan foreign policy appear to validate this assumption. This evidence, in sum, reveals the

¹⁹² Marasco (1980) p. 70; Shipley (2000) p. 144; Cartledge (2002) p. 43; Shipley (2007) p. 3.

portrait of a Spartan personality with significant prerogatives within foreign political matters: the important foreign expeditions analysed above point toward his prestige and seem to portray a picture of a *de facto* king of Sparta; such a consolidation of power by an individual, however, was not overlooked by the watchful eye of the Spartan internal factions who, at some point, became hostile to Cleonymus and pushed him to leave his homeland.¹⁹³

Cleonymus' exile represents a poorly documented topic that is still unclear in its specifics:¹⁹⁴ Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 26 16-19) and Pausanias (1 13, 5; 3 6, 3) offer two different and problematic traditions concerning the reasons for his departure from Sparta. This evidence, which appears to mirror the hostility of the Spartans towards Cleonymus, should be approached carefully in order to further explore his character and esteem on the international stage. In particular, Pausanias suggests to us that Cleonymus' departure was due to his hostility towards the Spartan governors, who denied him access to the throne by preferring the young Areus. While a different and wider version of the reasons of Cleonymus' departure is provided by Plutarch. The biographer, who also reports his exclusion from the throne, provides other valuable intimations: he informs us that Cleonymus, in his later years, married a woman of royal lineage, Chilonis (*Pyrrh.* 26 17-18); this latter engaged in a relationship with the young Acrotatus II, son of king Areus, thus causing great pain and a strong dishonour to Cleonymus. As a result of this personal reason, along with the political one, Cleonymus left Sparta and took the side of Pyrrhus. One should be aware of the important limits posed by the theatrical nature of Plutarch's account: the biographer seems particularly interested in presenting the troubled relationship between Cleonymus and Chilonis and, above all, in developing a story in which the romance of the characters, set within Spartan internal political matters, occupies a central place. Moreover, in this specific episode, Plutarch is strongly engaged in highlighting the role of the Spartan women in the historical events. In effect, in creating these passages, the biographer is extensively drawing from Phylarchus' narrative: in this regard, the relationship of Chilonis with Acrotatus is reported not only by Phylarchus (*FGrHist* F 32 a; 70) but also by Parthenius of Nicaea (*narr. am.* 15; 25). Lastly, one should consider that even Pausanias' non-historical account raises important interpretative issues, since it was generated in a period that is fairly distant from the

¹⁹³ Marasco (1980) pp. 93-95; Cartledge (2002) p. 29.

¹⁹⁴ Marasco (1980) pp. 97-99; Cartledge (2002) pp. 29-30.

events. Whether or not this relationship was real and generated rage and disappointment in Cleonymus, an important element that emerges from the broader assessment of the literary sources is the absence of a formal step taken by the government in order to expel Cleonymus from Sparta: neither Plutarch nor Pausanias suggest that Cleonymus was forced to leave Sparta because of his conduct or growing power. However, in spite of this, both authors (Plut. *Pyrrh.* 26 19; Paus. 1 13, 5; 3 6, 3) inform us that Cleonymus went to Pyrrhus in order to persuade him to attack Sparta.

The coming of Cleonymus to Pyrrhus' court and the relationship between these two prominent characters of the third century BC seems to bolster Cleonymus' prestige on the international stage and his unusual position inside and outside Sparta: the evidence appears again to support the image of a *de facto* king of Sparta who was highly regarded in the international scenario. Polyaeus (2 29, 2), Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 26 14-16) and Parthenius of Nicaea (*Narr.am.* 23) offer important information about Cleonymus' contribution and influence on the foreign political actions performed by Pyrrhus. Polyaeus (2 29, 2) communicates Cleonymus' significant conquest of Edessa, ancient capital of Macedonia, thanks to a stratagem: he carefully describes the tactical manoeuvre undertaken by Cleonymus in order to thwart the advantage, due to the length of their *sarissae*, of the Macedonian opponents; the author informs us that Cleonymus deepened his phalanx so that the soldiers managed to seize the enemy's spears, while the next rank could attack the enemy. This significant foreign undertaking was part of Pyrrhus' larger plan to conquer Macedonia: this episode demonstrates that Cleonymus had occupied since 274,¹⁹⁵ the year of the conquest of Macedonia, a central place at the court of the king; from Polyaeus' account, in fact, one may deduce that he was entrusted with the command of the phalanx; this shows the high esteem in which he was held by Pyrrhus. Furthermore, the military past shared by Cleonymus and Pyrrhus may have had an important impact on the esteem in which the Spartan was regarded by the Epirote king: this seems to locate Cleonymus' character closer to the portrait of a Hellenistic king. Pyrrhus, like Cleonymus, carried out a significant expedition to help Taras and managed to conquer the strategic island of Corcyra in 281.¹⁹⁶ As observed by Marasco,¹⁹⁷ it would be tempting to imagine that, before performing these foreign political undertakings, Pyrrhus had heard of the previous outstanding expeditions of Cleonymus across the

¹⁹⁵ Marasco (1980) p. 101; Cartledge (2002) p. 30.

¹⁹⁶ See Marasco (1980) p. 101; Urso (1997) pp. VI, 6-7; Bettalli (2003) pp. 112-118.

¹⁹⁷ Marasco (1980) p. 101.

Mediterranean. But, one should bear in mind that both characters were involved in arbitrational procedures: in 280, in fact, according to the scanty and uncertain evidence offered by Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 3 4) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (19 9-10), Pyrrhus offered his availability to arbitrate the conflict between the Romans and Tarentines before the battle of Heraclea. The magnitude of this information seems to promote the extraordinary role played by Cleonymus in the early third century and the preference of the Spartan governing bodies towards him, rather than to the *de iure* kings of Sparta, in the dispute between Polyrrhenia and Phalasarna (discussed in section 5.4).

Furthermore, Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 26 14-16) suggests the influence exerted by Cleonymus in pushing Pyrrhus to move his army toward the Peloponnese. In this regard, Plutarch states that Pyrrhus, before consolidating his new conquests in Macedonia, moved his attention to other objectives; in this circumstance, Cleonymus exhorted him to move the army against Sparta and Pyrrhus gladly followed his advice. The problematic information provided by Plutarch is integrated by Parthenius (*narr. am.* 23) who reports the speech and the suggestion of Cleonymus to Pyrrhus to promptly attack Sparta so as to easily conquer the city. This passage, along with the circumstantial evidence provided by Plutarch, testifies to his influence on Pyrrhus' decision-making: this influence may have been caused by the military and political prestige of Cleonymus. Last but not least, despite being on the side of Pyrrhus, Cleonymus may have counted on the help of many supporters in Sparta: Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 27 3) reports the presence of *philo*i of Cleonymus and of his *hilotai* who were ready to welcome him to Sparta and to provide him with support; in particular, Plutarch clearly suggests that they were ready to welcome him in his property situated outside of the city. These *philo*i may have constituted a group which was politically linked to Cleonymus' character and their mention in Plutarch's account seems to undermine the anti-oligarchic policy undertaken by Cleonymus before leaving Sparta: as a Hellenistic king, he may have counted on a group of people selected by him who could have provided him with political and moral support. Indeed, the scanty and problematic evidence offered by Plutarch and Parthenius alone would be not sufficient to validate this argument: however, the holistic assessment of the sources and the combination of literary and epigraphic evidence points toward the dominance of Cleonymus in the domestic and foreign policy of Sparta and to his unusual position, which made him not that separate from the royal personalities operating in the early third century BC.

5.6 Conclusions

The evidence, accumulated and examined in this chapter, has shown the significance of Cleonymus in Spartan foreign policy and its esteem. However, the circumstantial and fragmentary nature of the sources employed to frame this chapter has not been sufficient to completely address two important questions whose answers may tremendously broaden our understanding of the ways in which such a personality operated inside and outside of Sparta: whether Cleonymus was an active or passive agent (discussed in detail in section 7.2), and the extent to which he was exploiting Spartan esteem in order to fulfil his personal ambitions, represent enquiries that are, and probably will remain, an object of speculation due to the severe interpretative issues posed by the available sources. The use of information offered by later authors, some of them concerned to provide a non-historical narrative generated in distant periods from the events described, along with the use of extremely fragmentary and problematic inscriptions, has been often pointed out throughout the sections of this chapter, and constitutes a recurrent issue for the analysis of a poorly documented period such as the third century. Nonetheless, the exceptional multitude of diplomatic and military expeditions undertaken by Cleonymus - some of which (western Crete, Taras, Boeotia, Messene) could have been assigned to one of the *de iure* kings of Sparta - makes this character peculiar in Spartan history of the third century.

Moreover, the application of Realism has revealed itself as valuable in illustrating the competitive environment featured by the Hellenistic Mediterranean of the early third century and the personal ambitions of the Antigonids, consistently engaged in absorbing smaller and larger territories and in maintaining possessions inside the Peloponnese thanks to the recourse to tyrannical regimes and garrisons. In particular, it has been demonstrated (section 6.3) that Realism is valuable to explain the formation of the alliance against the Aetolians (allies of Macedonia), along with the motivations which lie behind the foreign political decisions of Sparta and some Peloponnesian states, with which the *polis* interacted meaningfully. In particular, the evidence shows that Sparta participated proactively in international matters and endeavoured to achieve hegemony within the Peloponnese. Lastly, Spartan foreign policy, in which Cleonymus was the most

prominent individual, featured a continuity of interest in two territories situated outside the Peloponnese, Boeotia (6.2) and Phocis (6.3).

6. Areus and the Hellenistic World

6.1 Introduction

The circumstantial evidence provided by Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 26 14-16), Pausanias (1 13, 5; 3 6, 3) and Parthenius of Nicaea (*Narr. am.* 23) informs us of the coming of Cleonymus to Pyrrhus' court, Cleonymus' exhortation to attack Sparta and, above all, his purported responsibility for the siege that Sparta had to suffer at the hands of Pyrrhus. This information indicates the significance of Cleonymus in the events of the early third century and his influence on Pyrrhus' decision making: however, the negative portrayal of the Spartan's character, engaged in persuading Pyrrhus to move against Sparta, points toward a bias in the source adopted by Plutarch. In describing Cleonymus' misconduct towards Sparta, Plutarch may have consulted sources hostile to Cleonymus such as Hieronymus of Cardia.¹⁹⁸ In effect, elsewhere Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 26, 20) suggests to us that from the way in which Pyrrhus was preparing his expedition it was clear that he aimed to conquer Sparta and the Peloponnese in order to fulfil his personal ambitions, rather than to please Cleonymus. In this regard, the biographer provides a clear estimate of the military forces gathered by Pyrrhus: he states that the Epirote king raised an army of twenty-five thousand foot soldiers, two thousand horsemen and twenty-four elephants (*Pyrrh.* 26 19). Plutarch's account portrays a very ambitious political plan designed by Pyrrhus, along with Cleonymus' importance¹⁹⁹ in the expansionist policy performed by the Epirote king. Such a grand expansionist plan is also reported in the later account of Justin (25 4, 1), who does not offer other insights about his expedition. This information shows that Pyrrhus intended to conquer the Peloponnese not only to consolidate his power in Greece, but also to deprive Antigonus Gonatas of the cities which were under his control: a military manoeuvre in the Peloponnese and the conquest of this massive territory could produce a significant advantage in Pyrrhus' struggle for power with the Antigonids. Clearly, the anachronistic and non-historical nature of some of the accounts utilised in this chapter creates a serious obstacle to our argument: nonetheless, one should be aware that these are the only available passages which offer valuable information about Pyrrhus' foreign political plan and the extent of his hegemonic ambitions.

¹⁹⁸ Garoufalas (1979) p. 157; Hornblower (1981) p. 17; Stadter (2007) p. 538.

¹⁹⁹ This topic, along with the nature of Cleonymus' agency while on the side of Pyrrhus, are discussed in sections 7.2 and 7.3.

The scanty evidence adopted to frame this case study portrays a harsh interstate competitive environment characterised by consistent warfare and pursuit for hegemony where three major Hellenistic personalities seem to have occupied a central place: Antigonos Gonatas, Ptolemy II and Pyrrhus. However, in this scenario, dominated by larger powers, a middling power such as Sparta was able to exert its influence over a considerable number of states situated inside and outside the Peloponnese. In Sparta's important interactions with the Hellenistic powers two significant factors will emerge: Areus' prominent personality in foreign political and military matters and Sparta's outstanding position in the wide background of power relations. This background featured a multitude of states, whose foreign policy was driven by self-interest, and powerful personalities who were contending for hegemony in the Mediterranean. Sparta's predominance in the vast anti-Macedonian coalition (discussed in section 7.5) will constitute an outward manifestation of its authority on the international stage and of Areus' importance in Spartan foreign policy. Moreover, as we shall see from the first portion of this study (section 7.3), Cleonymus will still cover a meaningful role in the following events of the third century; nevertheless, from the analysis of the sources at our disposal, the passive nature of his agency while performing military operations on the side of Pyrrhus will emerge. The passive role of Cleonymus and his last military undertakings will be assessed in the next section, since they will function as a prelude to Areus' significant predominance (discussed in section 7.6) in Spartan foreign policy. In particular, the literary, epigraphic, and numismatic record will signal Areus' exceptional leadership and authority both inside and outside the Peloponnese, and the importance of a Spartan individual in momentous episodes (explained below) of the third century BC.

The late literary evidence, and its combination with the short and sometimes fragmentary inscriptions utilised in this study highlight that there was a hostile and competitive environment in the third century. Sparta and other Hellenistic states were forced to coexist in this tense environment, with strategic decisions taken based on self-interest²⁰⁰ being crucial to survival.²⁰¹ The theory of Realism²⁰² can in part describe the climate of bellicosity and the ruthless pursuit for power in which Hellenistic states engaged. For

²⁰⁰ Waltz (1979) pp. 92-93, 104-105.

²⁰¹ Eckstein (2006) pp. 13-14; Eckstein (2008) p. 21.

²⁰² Walt (1987) p. 18; Mearsheimer (2001) pp. 34-35; Mearsheimer (2010) p. 78; Lebow (2010) p. 61.

example, it can explain the mechanism of formation of two alliances of this period, the coalition of Greek states against Pyrrhus (section 7.4) and the massive anti-Macedonian coalition against Gonatas (7.4 and 7.5). However, a broader assessment of the epigraphic evidence shows that Realism is insufficient in explaining all of the ways in which Spartan polity formulated and operationalised important foreign political decisions. We can see this in the discussion regarding the formation of the anti-Macedonian coalition led by Sparta (discussed in section 7.5). In this regard, Realism perceives states as large and monolithic groups of individuals which articulate their decisions by following the logic of self-interest and self-help. A closer scrutiny of the epigraphic evidence, represented by the Chremonides decree, shows a complex mechanism of power transition which is neglected by Realism. In articulating foreign political decisions, small and more subtle networks of individuals representing the Spartan polity were significantly involved: in order for a foreign political decision to be authorised, the decision had to travel from one Spartan institution to another. As demonstrated in section 7.4, the ephors, the *gerousia* and the kings had to participate in the decision-making process and give their consent to start the military or diplomatic operations. This, in contrast with Realism, shows that, in articulating foreign political plans, small and more subtle networks of individuals are crucial.

Realism, nonetheless, provides us with the interpretative tools to observe and evaluate those main factors such as expansionist ambitions and the lack of any significant authority able to control other states, which led to continuous warfare and to the creation of alliances against outstanding common threats²⁰³ of the third century. These threats were embodied in the first place by Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, and later by the Macedonian king, Antigonos Gonatas. The harsh international stage dominated by states consistently engaged in expanding their military and territorial capabilities represents another issue that Realism addresses convincingly throughout this chapter. However, the other side of interstate interactions, characterised by constant interstate dialogue among states (kinship ties) in order to avoid conflict (embassies) constitutes an important piece of evidence that Realism *per se* is not able to address (sections 7.2 and 7.6).

The analysis of the sources and its integration into the theoretical framework (proposed in section 3.2) provides us with a more nuanced vision of Hellenistic interstate

²⁰³ Waltz (1979) pp. 92-93, 104-105; Walt (1987) pp. 23-27; Mearsheimer (2001) pp. 34-35; Mearsheimer (2010) p. 78; Lebow (2010) p. 61.

interactions in the third century: the said interactions featured more subtle networks of power in which single individuals and not only large groups of people played an important role. The most prominent individual in Spartan foreign policy of the mid-third century was the Agiad king, Areus I. He was selected by the Spartan governing bodies (7.3, 7.4) to undertake military expeditions of the utmost importance and took part in significant diplomatic procedures such as the formation of the massive anti-Macedonian coalition (7.5). Moreover, he performed important military expeditions in Crete and was deployed by the Spartan governing bodies (*gerousia*, ephorate, the other king) in order to cover the significant role of military leader of the anti-Macedonian coalition. Finally, the combination of the few available sources (analysed in the sections below) point towards the continuity in the way in which Spartan governing bodies performed their foreign political plans and, most importantly, to the maintained authority of Sparta in the international scenario of the mid-third century.

6.2 Pyrrhus' Expansionism

The evidence offered by Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 26 20; 30 1-2; 27 2; 29 11; 27 2; 26 21; 26 23; 27 1-2; 27 4-6; 27 7-9; *Ap. Lac.* 219 F), Pausanias (6 14, 9; 3 24, 1; 1 13, 6; 4 29, 6), Polyaeus (6 6, 2; 8 49; 4 6, 18; 8 6, 8) and Justin (25 4, 3; 4, 4-5; 26 1, 3; 26 1, 2-4) provides valuable insights into the international scenario in which Pyrrhus, Antigonos Gonatas and Sparta operated. Unfortunately, even in this case we rely on circumstantial evidence: these accounts were written in periods which are fairly distant from the events they describe and their non-historical (Plutarch, Pausanias, Polyaeus) and brief nature might be seen to undermine our argument; nonetheless, their combination with inscriptions (reported below) coming from inside and outside the Peloponnese may offer some potential in order to explore Spartan foreign policy in the mid-third century and the complex nature of the Hellenistic interstate relations. In particular, a renewed examination of these literary texts will highlight the persistent resort to embassies by some Peloponnesian states so as to avoid an open conflict with Pyrrhus, and the formation of a transitory coalition between Sparta and Antigonos Gonatas. This coalition, constituted by a large number of states and intended to contain Pyrrhus' expansionism inside the Peloponnese, will eventually lead to a new Mediterranean equilibrium of power in which Sparta played a significant role. Moreover, as we shall discuss below, in Spartan

foreign policy another predominant personality will lead crucial military expeditions and will be present in diplomatic procedures of the utmost importance, king Areus I. This will point toward the significance of single Spartan individuals in momentous events of the third century.

The coming of Pyrrhus and his large army to the Peloponnese generated a strong impression in the Greek states.²⁰⁴ Thanks to the consent of the Aetolians, with whom the king had good relations,²⁰⁵ Pyrrhus passed through their territory and landed in Achaia. In this regard, Justin (25 4, 3-5) suggests to us that the king landed in Achaia in the spring of 272 and that many states promptly sent envoys to him: Athenian, Messenian and Achaean ambassadors were dispatched by their respective cities in order to meet him and open negotiations with him. The short passages mentioned above do not provide sufficient information about the terms of the alliances and the nature of the interaction between the king and the ambassadors. Nevertheless, Justin's information is also reported in Plutarch's account (*Pyrrh.* 26 20); the biographer clearly illustrates the circle of alliances created by Pyrrhus' coming to the Peloponnese. He suggests to us that Megalopolis, Elis and probably Achaia decided to ally with Pyrrhus; furthermore, Plutarch informs us that Pyrrhus may have enjoyed the support of many cities of the Peloponnese, including Argos - one of the most important (*Pyrrh.* 20 2). Pausanias (6 14, 9) further integrates Plutarch's information by offering more insights about the alliances created after Pyrrhus' arrival: specifically, he suggests that the alliance of Elis with Pyrrhus is confirmed by the construction of a statue by the Elean Thrasybulus situated in Olympia and portraying Pyrrhus; lastly, the broad support granted to the Epirote king by the Peloponnesian states is again mentioned by Justin (26 1, 3).

The combination of these problematic accounts reveals the important effort of several Peloponnesian states to avoid violence and bloodshed by negotiating alliance agreements with Pyrrhus through embassies: these efforts point toward the desire of Hellenistic states to build a diplomatic discourse so as to circumvent warfare. The complexity of these interstate behaviours seems to undermine the one-sided theory postulated by Realism in which Hellenistic states were constantly engaged in warfare; moreover, they suggest the common advantage of the members of the alliance, since Pyrrhus may have obtained the political support of some states of the northern Peloponnese, while these states could have

²⁰⁴ Marasco (1980) p. 105; Cartledge (2002) p. 30.

²⁰⁵ Marasco (1980) p. 105; Cartledge (2002) pp. 29-30.

enjoyed the substantial military protection of Pyrrhus against the Macedonian threat. Finally, through the construction of diplomatic discourse and the opening of negotiations, these powers sought to avoid violence and to preserve their human capital.

An important element that emerges from the assessment of the limited sources at our disposal is the rather feeble position of Sparta in the international scenario, along with its relative military weakness. This may have incentivised Sparta to engage in diplomatic discourse, rather than to face Pyrrhus on its own. Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 27 2) communicates Sparta's unpreparedness in the face of Pyrrhus' conquest plan and the absence of king Areus, who at that time was engaged in a military expedition in Crete where he was bringing military help to the Gortynians (*Pyrrh.* 27 2). Furthermore, if one wants to believe Plutarch, one should consider that in Pyrrhus' ambitious plan there might have been some room for Cleonymus' personal interests: Pyrrhus, by taking advantage of Areus' absence and by placing his Spartan ally on the Agiad throne of Sparta, may have hoped to secure the control of a significant Peloponnesian state. However, this assumption, based only on the information offered by Plutarch, is not supported by other evidence. Moreover, the other extant sources (discussed below) that describe Cleonymus' contribution to the grand expansionist plan of Pyrrhus demonstrate that Cleonymus was instrumental in the positive outcome of Pyrrhus' undertaking. However, as discussed below, they point to the passive agency of the Spartan character in the foreign policy of the Epirote king and the rise of Areus I as main protagonist of Sparta's foreign policy.

The literary sources suggest to us that Pyrrhus did not attack Laconia, but limited himself to strengthening his positions in Arkadia. Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 26 21) and Polyaeus (6 6, 2) offer invaluable information about Pyrrhus' political plan in the Peloponnese: Plutarch informs us that he received a first Spartan embassy at Megalopolis, where he explained his coming as a way to free the cities under the control of Gonatas and that he aimed to send his younger sons to Sparta so that they could receive the traditional Spartan education. This episode is also reported by Polyaeus: the author mentions Pyrrhus' stratagem to mislead the Spartan ambassadors by recalling the famous education offered by the Spartans (6 6, 2). Whether or not Plutarch's information may be accepted, what matters the most is that the sources we have examined previously communicate Spartan authority in the international scenario and its diplomatic effort to avoid a direct clash with Pyrrhus through an embassy. Such an important effort to avoid conflict is reinforced by a second Spartan embassy to the Epirote king, about which we have only two extant

anecdotes: one is reported in the biography of Pyrrhus (Plut. *Pyrrh.* 26 23), while the second belongs to the extremely problematic evidence featured by the collection of the *Sayings of the Spartans* attributed to the same author (*Ap. Lac.* 219 F).

Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 26 23) states that when the Spartan ambassadors accused Pyrrhus of making war on them with no formal declaration, he argued that the Spartans were used to starting a war without warning their enemies. This information is also reported in a brief stratagem of Polyaeus (6 6, 2), who does not provide other insights about the diplomatic procedure and the beginning of Pyrrhus' attack on Sparta. In the second Spartan embassy, which preceded his attack, the king may have stated his intentions and may have declared to the Spartan ambassadors an ultimatum. Plutarch's apophthegm (219 f) features the blunt answer given by Dercylidas, one of the Spartan ambassadors dispatched to negotiate with Pyrrhus. This small story portrays Pyrrhus' attempt to force the Spartans to accept Cleonymus as their king. Its magnitude lies in the importance of Cleonymus' role in Pyrrhus' foreign policy and the prestige that he may still have enjoyed in Sparta. Pyrrhus may have counted on the personality of Cleonymus for this significant foreign undertaking, as the Spartan could have had supporters in Sparta who could help him in this circumstance: in effect, through their help, Pyrrhus may have hoped to persuade the Spartans to accept a prestigious personality such as Cleonymus as their king; moreover, one could argue that Pyrrhus may have taken advantage of the absence of the younger and less experienced King Areus I in order to accomplish his plan. Despite this assumption being only grounded on the few and late literary sources mentioned above, the previous chapters have exposed the importance of Cleonymus in military and diplomatic expeditions across the Mediterranean, his outstanding prestige in Spartan foreign political matters and, most importantly, the presence of his *philoï* and helots in Spartan territory.²⁰⁶ One should not forget that these were ready to welcome him in his property situated outside of Sparta: Pyrrhus, therefore, may have been aware of these factors and may have exploited Cleonymus in order to fulfil his personal ambitions and to conquer one of the most respected states in the Peloponnese. This, in contrast with Realism, would show the importance of single individuals in foreign political plans and not only of large groups of people.

²⁰⁶ See section 6.5 above.

Furthermore, Pyrrhus seems to have framed this strategic political plan so that Sparta went to Cleonymus without recourse to warfare. By doing so, he might have added the military forces of Sparta to his allies and may have avoided the Spartans seeking military help from Antigonos Gonatas and other Greek states: these states may have been alarmed because of the new political scenario that had arisen in the Peloponnese. As stated in section 7.1, Pyrrhus and Gonatas were engaged in a ruthless competition for power inside the Peloponnese; Pyrrhus raised a massive military force and was heading toward Laconia, while Gonatas was undertaking a policy of control through the use of garrisons.²⁰⁷ Indeed, one should be aware of the problematic evidence provided by Plutarch, which considered alone would hardly be sufficient to support our argument: in fact, in writing his accounts, the biographer may have consulted a variety of works, among them the theatrical narrative of Phylarchus.²⁰⁸ However, in composing his narrative, Plutarch seems to unite his paired biographies in an articulate literary cycle that emphasises the importance of characters in the events:²⁰⁹ the pairing of the *Pyrrhus* and the *Alexander* shows the extraordinary nature of the two main characters in their childhood, while the pairing of the *Pyrrhus* with the *Marius* reveals that both Pyrrhus and Marius were persistently striving to pursue their military and diplomatic careers. Clearly, these represent only a very small portion of the examples of the selective process performed by Plutarch: nonetheless, a significant factor that emerges from the broader assessment of the biographies employed to frame this study is that Plutarch allows important room to the characters of Cleonymus and Areus I and eloquently fits them into the broad narrative tissue. The combination of Plutarch with both earlier and later literary accounts, along with the use of inscriptions analysed in the previous chapters, has bolstered the significance of Cleonymus in the political stage of the early third century and some meaningful attempts from the Hellenistic powers to avoid conflict. However, despite Plutarch revealing the later Cleonymus' passive agency on the side of Pyrrhus and the demise of his significant role in the international matters as a Spartan representative, Cleonymus would again undertake an important military duty (discussed below) for Pyrrhus.

The use of the little literary evidence provided by Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 27 1-2; 27 4-6; 27 7-9; 28 7; 28 5; 29 11; 30 1-4), Pausanias (1 13, 6; 3, 24 1; 4 29, 6), Polyaeus (8 49; 4 6,

²⁰⁷ Marasco (1980) pp. 81, 105 n. 45; Shipley (2000) pp. 122-123; Cartledge (2002) pp. 26, 29.

²⁰⁸ Garoufalas (1979) pp. 153, 157-161; Hornblower (1981) p. 17; Stadter (2007) pp. 538-539.

²⁰⁹ Mossman (1992) p. 95; Pelling (2002) p. 219; Stadter (2010) p. 198.

18; 8 68) and Justin (25 4, 6-7; 26 1, 2-4), will enable us to obtain more intimations about the position of Sparta in the international background during and after the coming of Pyrrhus to Laconia. In particular, these passages will reveal the new but ephemeral alliance between Sparta and Gonatas in order to contain Pyrrhus' hegemonic ambitions, and the victory of a coalition composed of states inside and outside the Peloponnese (discussed in section 6.4). This will eventually lead to the provisional restoration of Sparta's significant authority in the Mediterranean contestation of power. Moreover, the presence of Areus in an important military expedition in Crete and other Mediterranean locales, along with his presence in the fight against Pyrrhus, will reveal his importance in the events of the mid-third century. This will show his outstanding authority in the international stage.

6.3 Sparta's relationships with Cretan *poleis*

The siege of Sparta by Pyrrhus provides a fertile ground to explore foreign political relations of the third century BC: it provides us with the opportunity to evaluate the position of Sparta in the world of superpowers and the foreign political actions of Pyrrhus and Antigonos Gonatas. In particular, Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 27 2), while describing the beginning of Pyrrhus' siege of Sparta, highlights the intention of the Spartan governing bodies to send their women and children to Crete and the strong and heroic opposition of Archidamia, mother of Archidamus IV, to this plan. This information is also reported by Polyaeus (8 49), who underlines the final victory of the Spartans against the invader. Moreover, Plutarch's short passage, along with others mentioned below, will be valuable to our argument, since they will testify to the continuing interaction between Sparta and some Cretan *poleis*, and to Areus' outstanding leadership.

In the aforementioned passage (Plut. *Pyrrh.* 27 2), Plutarch states that Areus was in Gortyn to help the Gortynians in a war. The literary evidence does not offer other information about the conflict; additionally, the lack of epigraphic and archaeological material from the Cretan *polis* that might support a military or economic relationship between Sparta and Gortyn in the third century, creates a serious obstacle to our argument. However, the fragmentary literary evidence offered by Ephorus of Cyme (*FGrHist* 70 F 117-118) and Conon (*FGrHist* 26 F 1 36) provides some insights about the mythical colonisation of Gortyn by Spartan founders. Ephorus suggests that Lemnian

and Imbrian settlers rebelled against Philonomos - the Amyklaian leader responsible for having settled Lemnians and Imbrians at Amyklai. Following this rebellion, they were sent overseas under Spartan founders to colonise Melos and Gortyn. This information is also reported by Conon (*FGrHist* 26 F 1 36), who offers no other details about the Spartan contribution to the colonisation of the *polis*. One may argue that these mythical origins may have been exploited by the Spartan governing bodies in order to participate in Gortynian affairs and cultivate a relationship with the *polis*; moreover, an element that requires considerable attention in this circumstance is that it was Areus that undertook a military expedition to Gortyn instead of Cleonymus or Archidamus IV. This would confirm the significance of Areus in Spartan foreign policy; this foreign policy shows a continuity (discussed in more detail in section 7.5) in the relations between Sparta and some Cretan *poleis*. Nevertheless, a very short passage of Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 27 2) provides no other information which could enable us to establish the nature of the agency of Areus in this undertaking; in the end, the purported exploitation of the mythical origins of Gortyn, which could have justified Areus' expedition, cannot be confirmed due to the lack of specific and more solid evidence.

Nonetheless, in describing the events of the siege by Pyrrhus, Plutarch repeatedly mentions the significant presence of Cretan troops in Sparta and their important contribution during the siege: in this regard, he describes the fatal wound that caused the death of Pyrrhus' horse, due to a Cretan javelin (*Pyrrh.* 29 4) and, most importantly, before Areus' arrival from Crete with a thousand Cretans and Spartans (*Pyrrh.* 32 2), Plutarch emphasises the military prowess of a certain Oryssus, from the Cretan *polis* of Aptera, who killed Ptolemy, son of Pyrrhus, during the clash (*Pyrrh.* 30 2). Ptolemy seems to have played a significant role in the expansionist policy undertaken by his father. Justin (25 4, 6-7) is the only available source which exposes the exceptional military prowess of Ptolemy, who managed to conquer Corcyra with only sixty men. Indeed, the very late nature of this information, along with the very limited number of men provided by Justin, undermines the reliability of our source; however, the insertion of a royal personality such as Ptolemy into this momentous event, and his death due to a Cretan, may indicate the presence of troops from Aptera inside of Sparta and a relationship between Sparta and the Cretan *polis*. This assumption cannot be validated, as there is no other evidence in the epigraphic or archaeological record which could testify to the Spartan presence or relationship with the Cretan *polis* in the third century. However, later

archaeological evidence²¹⁰ may offer some potential to explore the political position of Aptera within Crete and the involvement of Sparta at Gortyn. The use of Kydonian coins by Aptera in the Roman period and, above all, the remains of a Hellenistic-Roman road²¹¹ linking Kydonia to the main entrance of Aptera, point to the subordination of the city to Kydonia. Moreover, this road was part of the large road network in which the significant centre of Gortyn was included:²¹² this broad network also included the *poleis* of Eleutherna and Polyrrhenia in the imperial period. The connection between Sparta and Aptera in the third century may therefore be better understood as a product of the relationship between Sparta and Gortyn: Gortyn in the third century was contending for supremacy in the island with its rival, Knossos²¹³ - the other significant Cretan power of the century. In this relationship, Aptera represented a minor state, which may have been in a subordinate position to Gortyn. Therefore, Areus may have been sent by the Spartan governing bodies to Gortyn in order to provide military support against Knossos and to participate in the political matters of the island. However, there is no information in the literary sources about the governing bodies involved in the dispatch of Areus to Gortyn. Admittedly, this assumption relies only on late and circumstantial evidence; however, the few extant sources seem to reveal a continuing interaction between Sparta and some Cretan *poleis*.

In this regard, Plutarch's account by itself appears to demonstrate that Sparta may have counted on steady and regular Cretan military support: this may have contributed significantly to Sparta's protection against external threats. The presence of Areus in Gortyn, along with the return of Spartans from the Cretan *polis*, would attest to the mutual presence of Gortynians and Spartans in both the Laconian and the Cretan *poleis*. However, this assumption is only grounded on the biographical narrative of Plutarch and on the very short passage of Polyaeus (mentioned above); but the importance of the relationship between Sparta and the Cretan *poleis* of Polyrrhenia and Phalasarna has been shown in the previous overseas actions by Sparta, in which Cleonymus was asked to intervene in a diplomatic question (discussed in section 5.4) of the utmost importance. Moreover, since Cleonymus took the side of Pyrrhus, the Spartan governing bodies may have deemed it appropriate to ask Areus I to return from Crete in order to stop Pyrrhus'

²¹⁰ Niniou-Kindeli and Christodoulakos (2004) p. 313; Baldwin Bowski and Niniou Kindeli (2006) pp. 414-431.

²¹¹ Baldwin Bowski and Niniou Kindeli (2006) p. 412.

²¹² Baldwin Bowski and Niniou Kindeli (2006) pp. 414-431.

²¹³ Van Effenterre (1948) pp. 203-204; Spyridakis (1970) p. 48; Theocaris (1994) pp. 69-70; Raab (2001) p. 56.

siege. Finally, an element that requires considerable attention is the lack, in this and other momentous episodes (discussed below) of the mid-third century, of references to the royal member of the Eurypontid house, Archidamus IV. Hence, Areus I was the Spartan royal personality who had to perform the most significant political and military duties. His involvement in Gortynian affairs and his return with a thousand Cretans (mentioned above) in order to stop Pyrrhus' attack, testify to his authority and predominance in the international stage.

Furthermore, the literary record shows a continuity in the way in which Spartan authorities carried out their foreign policy; Areus I participated in Cretan affairs like his uncle Cleonymus and the king Archidamus III before him.²¹⁴ However, one should consider that unlike the expedition of Cleonymus (partially facilitated by the kinship ties between Sparta and Polyrrhenia) and of Archidamus III in Lyttos during the Foreign War (also facilitated by the kinship ties between motherland and colony), the presence of Areus I in Gortyn does not feature compelling elements which could have motivated the performance of such a military undertaking. Except for the aforementioned information offered by Ephoros and Conon and by the late archaeological remains, there is no other evidence which would attest a continuity in the relationship between Sparta and Gortyn. Nonetheless, an inscription from Polyrrhenia (IC 2 23, 12A) testifies to the continuing interaction and relationship of Sparta with the Cretan *polis*, along with the importance of king Areus I in the said relationship.

Ἀ πόλις ἃ Πολυρηνίων ἀνέθηκε
Ἄρεα Ἀκροτάτ[ω] Λακεδαιμονίων
[βασιλέα.]

The city of Polyrrhenia dedicated (this statue of)
the king of the Lacedaemonians, Areus,

²¹⁴See section 4.4.

This short dedicatory inscription belongs to the base of a statue portraying Areus dedicated by the Polyrrenians. Areus' statue was later replaced by a sculpture of Augustus, while the support featuring our inscription was reversed so as to carry the new celebratory inscription for Augustus.²¹⁵ The brief nature of the text and the uncertain provenance of the statue pose an interpretative issue; moreover, the lack of chronological information which may indicate whether the Polyrrenians dedicated this statue to Areus before or after the siege of Pyrrhus seems to undermine our argument. Nevertheless, its combination with the literary evidence offered by Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 27 2; 29 4; 30 2) and Polyaeus (8 49), the inscriptions from the western Cretan *poleis* of Polyrrenia and Phalasarna (analysed in section 5.4), and the use of further epigraphic material (discussed in the section below) confirms Areus' presence in Crete and reinforces the hypothesis of a long-term relationship between Sparta and Polyrrenia, and continuous Spartan interaction with some Cretan *poleis*. Sadly, we have no other literary or epigraphic evidence which would attest the continuing relationship of Sparta with Phalasarna: moreover, given the merely celebratory nature of this inscription, we would be unable to evaluate the precise nature of the relationship between Sparta and Polyrrenia. However, this inscription is important to our argument, since it shows the choice of the Polyrrenians to mention only Areus in the dedication, without the other king, Archidamus IV. Furthermore, Areus' prominent personality in Spartan foreign policy seems again attested by his presence and participation in the military affairs of Gortyn (mentioned above). The Spartan authorities, therefore, may have deployed this royal character in order to cultivate a relationship with Polyrrenia and Gortyn and to maintain their presence in Crete. However, as discussed in section 7.2 above, there is no information which could testify to the selection made by the Spartan governing bodies to dispatch Areus to Gortyn. Lastly, the Polyrrenians may have dedicated this statue to Areus because they may have been aware of his prestige and authority on the international stage. This would show that Areus was the royal personality in charge of the command of significant military expeditions abroad: Spartan authorities decided to deploy him instead of Archidamus IV in order to accomplish their political plans.

²¹⁵ IC 2 pp. 250-251.

The assessment of the expansionist venture of Pyrrhus in Laconia allows us to observe the rise of the ephemeral alliance between Sparta and Antigonos Gonatas and other Peloponnesian states. Moreover, it enables us to evaluate the foreign policy performed by Gonatas on the wider Mediterranean stage. Realism provides us with the interpretative tools to examine the nature of the foreign policy undertaken by Sparta and other states: it will be useful to explain the reasons that led to the formation of the coalition against the significant threat represented by the vast military force raised by Pyrrhus and the causes of the creation of the massive coalition led by Sparta, in which king Areus I will cover the role of leader.

6.4 The Origins of Two Alliances

The combination of Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 29 3; 29 6; 32 1), Pausanias (4 29 6), Polyaeus (4 6, 18; 8 68) and Justin (25 4, 6-7; 26 1, 1-3) with inscriptions coming from locales situated across the Mediterranean (ISE 37A; *Syll.*³ 433; *Syll.*³ 434-5 = IG 2 687; ISE 54 = SEG 25 444) will enable us to assess Hellenistic interstate interactions in which Sparta was significantly involved, along with the nature and the mechanisms of formation of the two alliances. Last but not least, it will allow us to explore the meaningful role of Sparta and king Areus I in the said coalitions.

To begin, the pairing of literary and epigraphic sources will reveal a broad but short-lived alliance composed of Sparta, Macedonia, Messene and Argos: this important group of states united in order to suppress Pyrrhus' threat. Plutarch is the main source that provides valuable insights about the alliance between Sparta and Antigonos Gonatas. He suggests that the Macedonians helped the Spartans to restore the trenches excavated by the Spartans during the siege (*Pyrrh.* 29 3) and, above all, he informs us of the significant intervention of Ameinias the Phocian (*Pyrrh.* 29 6), one of the military leaders of Gonatas. The Macedonian king, aware of the outstanding threat represented by Pyrrhus, resorted to one of his finest and trusted generals in order to contain his hegemonic ambitions. Gonatas, in fact, entrusted him with the significant duty to capture the city of Cassandreia, which was under the rule of the tyrant Apollodoros (*Polyaen.* 4 6, 18); moreover, according to the short passage of Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 29 6), Gonatas will resort again to his intervention in order to bring military help to Sparta and to fight against Pyrrhus. In effect, Plutarch clearly states that Gonatas asked Ameinias to return from

Corinth in order to perform this duty. These short and late passages testify to Gonatas' concern to defeat Pyrrhus and, most importantly, to the role of Ameinias as a leader of the military forces of Gonatas: the king resorted to him in order to carry out this significant military expedition. The participation of Argos in the coalition is attested by Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 32 1) and Polyaeus (8 68), while Pausanias is the only source which testifies to the important contribution of the Messenians in the fight against Pyrrhus (4 29, 6) and to the destruction of Zarax by Cleonymus during the siege (3 24, 1).

Plutarch describes the final stage of the clash in Argos and the request of military help sent by the Argives to Antigonos in order to face the large number of mercenary troops recruited by Pyrrhus (*Pyrrh.* 32 1). Earlier in his account (*Pyrrh.* 30 2), Plutarch mentions the massive army of Pyrrhus mainly composed by Gaulish and Molossian mercenaries and his expansionist attitude; this information is also reported by Justin (25 4, 6-7), who highlights the will of the Epirote king to subjugate Greece and Asia, along with the Laconian invasion. Moreover, Polyaeus (8 68) provides valuable details about the final stage of the battle against Pyrrhus and the significant military contribution of the Argives: these gathered an army in the marketplace and the Argive women also participated in the battle by throwing tiles from the rooftops of their houses. Specifically, Polyaeus mentions the immortal reputation achieved by the Argive women for this reason, since it was one of them who killed Pyrrhus by hurling a tile to his head. This information is also reported by Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 34 2), who does not offer other insights about the contribution of the Argives in the coalition. One should not forget that the non-historical narrative produced by Plutarch and Polyaeus was designed to meet other demands, rather than to provide historical facts: in fact, Plutarch recalls frequently the courageous conduct of the women in battle and is strongly engaged in extolling their role (*Pyrrh.* 27 2; 27 5; 29 3; 34 1-2).²¹⁶ However, this information is partly confirmed by an inscription (ISE 37A) found in Mycenae, which would attest the contribution of the Argives and their victory over Pyrrhus.

Τοὶ Ἀργεῖοι[ι--]

θεοῖς ἀπὸ β[ασιλέως]

²¹⁶ Marasco (1980) p. 109; Cartledge (2002) p. 30; Millender (2009) p. 27.

Πύρρο[υ]

The Argives (dedicated this)

to the gods from king

Pyrrhus

The short inscription belongs to a broken shield found in a sanctuary of Mycenae not far from the acropolis.²¹⁷ It represents part of the booty captured from the Epirote army by the Argives: this evidence is important to our argument, since it confirms the contribution of the Argives against Pyrrhus; moreover, its discovery in Mycenae may indicate the participation of the Mycenaeans in the clash. However, the lack of specific references to the Mycenaeans in the other inscriptions and in the literary evidence, along with the brief and merely celebratory nature of the text, leaves this as merely a hypothesis.

The literary evidence points out the widespread concern raised by Pyrrhus' expansionism, the large extent of the alliance and the logic of self-interest which led to the creation of the coalition; furthermore, what matters the most in this circumstance is that the Messenians took the side of Sparta against Pyrrhus in joining the coalition (Paus. 4 29, 6). As discussed in section 6.4, the Messenians, according to Pausanias (4 28, 3), had earlier refused to join the Greek alliance against the Galatians because Cleonymus and the Lacedaemonians would not conclude a truce with them. Pausanias' observation highlights the larger threat represented by Pyrrhus and the desire of a wide number of Peloponnesian states to gather against him: as discussed above, the king's enormous military force triggered the formation of a wide coalition in which even the Messenians participated. Their involvement was essentially due to self-interest, given their previous absence in the alliance of the Greeks against the Galatians. In the process of creation of such an alliance, Pyrrhus may have been considered by Hellenistic states as a major threat and the Messenians seem to have shown a particular awareness of his expansionist attitude. Moreover, Pausanias (3 24, 1) records the only achievement of Pyrrhus' attack: the depopulation of the Laconian settlement of Zarax, in the southern part of the eastern

²¹⁷ ISE 37A p. 86.

coast of Laconia, in an expedition led by Cleonymus. There is no other evidence to confirm this, and we are unable to evaluate the overall extent of Cleonymus' military undertaking in Laconia and the nature of his relationship with Pyrrhus in the latest stages of his career. Nonetheless, from the assessment of the available sources adopted so far, one may simply note that this was the last important recorded undertaking of Cleonymus and the only success during Pyrrhus' venture in Laconia. Therefore, this, along with the passages mentioned above, would confirm the tactical skills and the significant position that Cleonymus maintained on the side of Pyrrhus.

The demise of Pyrrhus seems to have had serious consequences for the geopolitical scenario of the mid-third century and, especially, for the network of power relations. Justin (26 1, 1-3)²¹⁸ suggests the turbulent political condition that had arisen in Greece following Pyrrhus' death and the climate of insecurity and confusion which affected the Peloponnesians.

After the death of Pyrrhus there were great military upheavals not only in Macedonia, but in Asia and Greece as well. The Peloponnesians were treacherously delivered up to Antigonos. Elsewhere there was either dismay or jubilation, as the various states had either hoped for assistance from Pyrrhus or had lived in fear of him, and these accordingly allied themselves with Antigonos or else, driven by their mutual animosities, rushed into war with each other. (trans. Yardley)

The passage reveals the large power vacuum caused by Pyrrhus' demise and the predominant warfare which characterised interstate interactions. This evidence, combined with the epigraphic material discussed below, shows that the Peloponnesians were looking for a leader capable of facing the significant danger constituted by Gonatas: as we shall see below, this Peloponnesian leader would be Sparta and its king, Areus I. This will eventually demonstrate the continuing esteem of Sparta in the international stage; moreover, the examination of the start of the military operations will lead us to the

²¹⁸ Cf. Trog. *Prol.* 26.

conclusion that smaller networks of individuals, and not only large groups of people - as argued by the Realist vision of international relations - covered a significant role in the interaction among powers.

The death of Pyrrhus may have incentivised Gonatas to perform his expansionist plan inside and outside the Peloponnese: in an international environment in which one of the main actors disappeared, a larger power such as Macedonia was striving to achieve hegemony and to sit above other states.²¹⁹ The broad expansionist policy carried out by Gonatas is attested by the considerable number of Macedonian garrisons installed across Greece. The literary (Pol. 2 41, 12; Plut. *Mul. Vir.* 251A; Paus. 5 5, 1; 3 6, 5) and epigraphic evidence (ISE p. 41; *Syll.*³ 386) offers valuable intimations about the Macedonian garrisons established in Elis, Troezen, Corinth and Attica and would testify to the widespread exercise of control over Greece by Gonatas. Polybius (2 41 12) suggests to us the large number of Achaean *poleis* in which Demetrius Poliorketes and Antigonos Gonatas installed garrisons; while Plutarch (*Mul. Vir.* 251A) and Pausanias (5 5, 1) communicate the tyrannical regime of Aristotimus in Elis in 272, established thanks to the support of the Macedonian king. The combination of Pausanias (3 6, 5) with two inscriptions from Sounion (ISE p. 41) and from the hilltop of the Mouseion in Athens (*Syll.*³ 386) would attest the strict Macedonian control in Attica. Furthermore, as it has been discussed in section 5.4, other Macedonian garrisons were situated in Argolis (IG 4 769) and in Corinth (*Pyrrh.* 29 6). The growing power of Antigonos and his expansionist attitude triggered the formation of a massive anti-Macedonian coalition in which a multitude of states participated. As we shall discuss below, this alliance was motivated by the pressing concern raised by Gonatas' expansionism to other Greek states, and was essentially motivated by the self-interest shared by the members of the coalition. Specifically, the epigraphic evidence (*Syll.*³ 434-5 = IG 2 687; *Syll.*³ 433; ISE 54 = SEG 25 444) points to the presence of a wide number of Hellenistic powers in a momentous episode of the third century such as the Chremonidean War. This significant conflict featured the clash between that superpower that was Macedonia, led by Antigonos Gonatas, and the massive alliance, whose command of the army was granted to Sparta. The aforementioned inscriptions, found in various Mediterranean locales, appear to bolster Areus' prestige and meaningful authority in the international stage, along with his

²¹⁹ Waltz (1979) pp. 118-119; Morgenthau (1985) pp. 187-189; Mearsheimer (2001) pp. 2-4, 21, 29-30; Mearsheimer (2010) pp. 78-79.

anomalous position (discussed in the next section) in the Spartan proactive foreign policy of the mid-third century.

6.5 The Anti-Macedonian Coalition

Our knowledge of the anti-Macedonian alliance and of its participants is mainly created by the invaluable inscription featuring the Chremonides decree (*Syll.*³ 434-5 = IG 2 687) found in the acropolis of Athens; while two dedicatory inscriptions from Olympia in Elis (*Syll.*³ 433) and Orchomenos in Arkadia (ISE 54 = SEG 25 444), may offer some potential to explore Areus' unusual position in Spartan foreign policy and his significance on the international stage. The Chremonides decree, in particular, seems to show that the creation of the alliance was justified by the shared desire of the *poleis* to free themselves from the yoke imposed by Gonatas and, most importantly, by the self-interest of these smaller states to contain Gonatas' hegemonic ambitions. It was in the self-interest of smaller and less powerful states to preserve their territories and to combat together the Macedonian threat. This logic can be seen in the shared interest of the parties involved in the defence of Greece against the Macedonian king (*Syll.*³ 434-5: ll. 8-16).

*Syll.*³ 434-5, ll. 8-16: ἐπειδὴ πρότερον μὲν Ἀθηναῖοι καὶ Λακεδαιμόνιοι καὶ οἱ σύμμαχοι οἱ ἐκατέρων φιλίαν καὶ συμμαχίαν κοινὴν ποιησάμενοι πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς πολλοὺς καὶ καλοὺς ἀγῶνας ἡγωνίσαντο μετ' ἀλλήλων πρὸς τοὺς καταδουλοῦσθαι τὰς πόλεις ἐπιχειροῦντας, ἐξ ὧν ἑαυτοῖς τε δόξαν ἐκτίσαντο καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις/ Ἑλλησιν παρεσκεύασαν τὴν ἐλευθερίαν· καὶ νῦν δὲ κ[α]ιρῶν/ καθεληφότων ὁμοίων τὴν Ἑλλάδα πᾶσαν διὰ το[ύς κ]αταλύειν ἐπιχειροῦντας τοὺς τε νόμους καὶ τὰς πατρίους ἐκάστ[οις] πολιτείας, ὃ τε βασιλεὺς Πτολεμαῖος ἀκολούθως τεῖ τ[ῶν] προγόνων καὶ τεῖ τῆς ἀδελφῆς προ[α]ιρέσει φανερός ἐστιν σπουδάζων ὑπὲρ τῆς κοινῆς τ[ῶν] Ἑλλήνων ἐλευθερίας

Whereas, in former times, the Athenians and the Lacedaemonians and the allies of each,/ after making friendship and common alliance with one another,/ together fought many noble struggles alongside one another against those who were trying to enslave the cities,/ from which deeds they both won for themselves fair

reputation and brought about freedom/ for the rest of the Greeks, and (whereas) now, when similar circumstances have overtaken all Greece on account of those who are trying to overthrow the laws and the ancestral institutions of each (of the cities),/ King Ptolemy, in accordance with the policy of his ancestors and his sister, shows clearly his concern for the common freedom of the Greeks (trans. Austin, with slight modifications)

The threat to the “laws and the ancestral institutions” of the cities mentioned in the decree refers to the Macedonian threat:²²⁰ the growing expansionism of Antigonos is compared to the threat faced by Athens and Sparta in the Persian wars. The invocation of the Persian wars may be intended to highlight the desire of the members of the coalition to suppress Gonatas’ expansionism, which is compared to the barbarian one; moreover, the overthrowing of the laws and of the ancient constitution of the cities may refer to the installation of tyrannical regimes by Gonatas.²²¹ However, it is worth noting that the incomplete nature of the text and the lack of explicit references to Antigonos Gonatas in the surviving part of the inscription would undermine this assumption. Nonetheless, this evidence, combined with the literary and epigraphic accounts mentioned above, points toward the expansionist attitude and the significant threat posed to Greece by Gonatas. This threat generated the concerns of states situated both inside and outside the Peloponnese. In this regard, the decree, examined with other two inscriptions (*Syll.*³ 433; ISE 54 = SEG 25 444), provides us with valuable information about the members of the coalition and the role of Areus and his agency in this important matter of foreign policy (discussed below). Realism offers us a plausible model to explain the policy of the Greek states in this period. The Macedonian threat generated the concerns of states situated both inside and outside the Peloponnese: clearly, it was in the self-interest not only of a larger power such as Egypt, but also of many smaller states to gather together and counter Gonatas’ expansionism.

Chremonides decree (*Syll.*³ 434-5: ll. 21-22) reveals that the Athenians, king Ptolemy II of Egypt, the Spartans, and a large number of Spartan allies took part in the coalition; these allies included the Eleans, the Achaeans, the Arkadian *poleis* of Tegea, Mantinea,

²²⁰ Schmitt n. 476 p. 133; Marasco (1980) p. 121; Austin (1989) p. 94; Cartledge (2002) p. 33.

²²¹ Schmitt n. 476 p. 133; Marasco (1980) pp. 121-122.

Orchomenos, Phigalia and Caphyae, and all the Cretans who were in the alliance with the Spartans, Areus, and the other allies (*Syll.*³ 434-5: ll. 23-26; ll. 38-41). The evidence, therefore, shows the large extent of this coalition. However, as discussed in the previous section, Corinth, which was under the control of Gonatas, could not participate to the alliance together with Argos and Megalopolis; these two were in good relations with the Macedonian king. As for the Cretans who took part in the coalition, the decree does not offer specific information about the names of the cities; nonetheless, the mention of the Cretans in the inscription, combined with the evidence coming from Polyrrenia, Phalasarna, and the literary evidence discussed in section 6.3, appears to bolster the continuity of relations between Sparta and some Cretan *poleis*. This continuity is further strengthened if one considers that Sparta seemed to enjoy the support of a considerable number of Peloponnesian states. In effect, the literary evidence (*Aeschn.* 3 165; *Diod.* 17 65) suggests that some Peloponnesian states fought alongside Sparta in the earlier conflict against Macedonia. Specifically, Aeschines (3 165) informs us that Elis, Achaia and Arkadia, except Megalopolis, had fought alongside Sparta against Macedonia in the war undertaken by Agis III in 331; while Diodorus (17 65) suggests the wide coalition of Peloponnesian states and the leadership of Agis III. This argument receives further support if one remembers that the Achaean cities of Dyme, Patrai, Pharai and Tritaia allied with Sparta in 280 in the military expedition against the Aetolians (discussed in section 5.3). This notable continuity in Spartan foreign relations seems to suggest that Sparta could have counted on stable Peloponnesian allies whose support in the alliances was generated by the common self-interest in combating the Macedonian threat.

Furthermore, Chremonides decree, combined with the inscriptions found in Olympia (*Syll.*³ 433) and Orchomenos (ISE 54 = SEG 25 444), testifies to the high esteem of Sparta on the international stage and to the outstanding role of Areus in foreign policy (discussed in the next section). The Spartan governing bodies deployed Areus to carry out such an important military undertaking as the Chremonidean war; additionally, the epigraphic evidence indicates the presence of smaller and more subtle networks of power – overlooked by Realism – in which small groups of individuals occupied a central place in the articulation of Spartan decision-making (discussed below). Finally, the evidence shows that states situated inside and outside the Peloponnese celebrated Areus alone, without the other Spartan king, Archidamus IV (see 6.6 below).

The decree supports our argument, as it reveals that other Spartan governing bodies also played an important part in the mechanism required to make the decree binding. In fact, the text tells us that the alliance was also agreed between the Athenians and the Spartans, and the kings of the Spartans (l. 36); furthermore, elsewhere (ll. 90-91) the inscription suggests that “the oath will be sworn for the Lacedaemonians to the Athenians by the kings, the ephors and the elders”.²²² This line shows the more nuanced networks of individuals, which were significantly involved in the articulation of Spartan foreign policy: it reveals that Areus’ position was indeed central in the decree, but that the role of the other king (Archidamus IV), the ephors, and the elders was also paramount in the process of formation of the coalition. In effect, the text shows that the Spartan governing bodies participated proactively in the procedure required to authorise the military operations and had to give their consent. Therefore, the power to articulate the decision to start the military operations did not lie in the hands of a monolithic block of individuals as postulated by Realism, but in smaller and more subtle groups of individuals through which the decision-making power had to travel. This power, as shown in the decree, was subtly distributed among Spartan institutions. In this regard, a closer scrutiny of the only extant testimony of the decree, along with its combination with two inscriptions (*Syll.*³ 433; ISE 54 = SEG 25 444), points towards Areus’ prestige and authority in international matters (discussed below).

6.6 King Areus I

The Chremonides decree (*Syll.*³ 434-5 = IG 2 687), the inscriptions found in Olympia (*Syll.*³ 433) and Orchomenos (ISE 54 = SEG 25 444), along with the first Spartan coinage represented by silver obols and the silver tetradrachms featuring the legend “ΒΑΣΙΛΕΟΣ ΑΡΕΟΣ”²²³ show the predominance and leadership of Areus I in Spartan foreign political matters; whereas the use of literary evidence (Plut. *Lac. Apophth.* 217 F; *Macc.* 1 12, 7-8; 20-23) offers further insights into the nature of Areus’ authority in the Mediterranean stage and to evaluate further whether there was continuity or change in the way in which the Spartan governing bodies performed their foreign plans. As discussed below, the Spartan governing bodies deployed Areus’ personality to carry out an important military

²²² Austin (1989) p. 96.

²²³ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann (1978) pp. 1-2 T. 1 n.1-3, T. 2 *cf.* Hoover 2011 pp. 136-149; Walker (2009) p. 61.

undertaking such as the Chremonidean war; additionally, the epigraphic evidence will show the choice of states situated inside and outside the Peloponnese to celebrate Areus alone, without the other king, Archidamus IV. This evidence will point to the magnitude of this individual in Spartan foreign policy of the third century and to the authority maintained by Sparta in the network of power relations.

In the Chremonides decree, the name of Areus is mentioned five times and is separated by the Lacedaemonians and the other allies (*Syll.*³ 434-5 = IG II 687: ll. 26, 29, 40, 51, 55), whereas there is no reference to Archidamus IV. Areus seems to have occupied a central place in the diplomatic proceedings: the text shows that the representatives of the people of Athens communicated “the zeal displayed by the Lacedaemonians and Areus and of the other allies toward the city of Athens” (*Syll.*³ 434-5 = IG II 687: ll. 27-30);²²⁴ in addition, Areus is mentioned along with the councillors of the allied cities to participate to the commission, which had to take care of the procedures of common interest (*Syll.*³ 434-5 = IG II 687: ll. 49-52). Last but not least, he is cited among those who should receive a gold crown in accordance with the law (*Syll.*³ 434-5 = IG II 687: ll. 54-56). This would demonstrate the significant position of Areus in the coalition and his prominent position in Spartan foreign policy. However, as discussed in the previous section, the decree shows that even the other Spartan governing bodies (the other king, the ephorate, *gerousia*) were instrumental in the formation of the alliance and in the procedure required to start the military operations. However, one should consider the fragmentary nature of the source and the finding location of the inscription: it was found in only one of the *poleis* which were involved in the conflict, Athens. Nonetheless, a closer scrutiny of the only extant testimony of the decree, along with its pairing with two inscriptions (*Syll.*³ 433; ISE 54 = SEG 25 444) and the literary evidence offered by Pausanias (6 12, 5; 15 9) point towards Areus’ prestige and authority in international matters. Finally, the numismatic evidence²²⁵ seems to corroborate the portrayal of an outstanding personality operating in Spartan domestic and foreign matters.

The mention of the king with the councillors of the allied cities in the commission in charge of the war preparations (*Syll.*³ 434-5 = IG II 687: ll. 50-52) may have been due to Areus being entrusted with the duty of leading the Peloponnesian army.²²⁶ Furthermore,

²²⁴ Austin (1989) p. 95.

²²⁵ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann (1978) pp. 1-2 T. 1 n.1-3, T. 2; Walker (2009) p. 61.

²²⁶ Marasco (1980) p. 133; Cartledge (2002) p. 33; Millender (2009) pp. 32-33.

the reference to Areus as an ally of the Cretans (*Syll.*³ 434-5 = IG 2 687: ll. 25, 40) may be explained with the proactive Spartan foreign policy in the island (discussed in sections 5.4 and 7.3) and, most importantly, with the significant presence of Areus in the aforementioned relationships with the Cretan *poleis*. Moreover, the inscriptions belonging to two statues dedicated to Areus found in Orchomenos (ISE 54 = SEG 25 444) and Olympia (*Syll.*³ 433) show that he is mentioned alone without Archidamus IV. The importance of these inscriptions lies in the dedication of a statue of Areus to Olympian Zeus: Areus is defined as the king of the Lacedaemonians and he is mentioned with the king Ptolemy II. The short length of the inscriptions, along with the lack of chronological information, which could confirm if the statues were produced before or after the Chremonidean war, may represent an obstacle to this argument; nonetheless, this evidence, paired with the epigraphic and literary material discussed in the previous sections, testifies to Areus' significance in Spartan foreign policy and to his authority in the international stage. Lastly, an important point of interest which emerges from the inscription found in Olympia (*Syll.*³ 433) is that Ptolemy II was the dedicator of Areus' statue.

[Βασιλεὺς] Πτολεμαῖος βασιλέω[ς Πτολεμαίου]
 [Ἀρέα Ἀκρο]τάτου Λακεδαιμονί[ων βασιλέα],
 [εὐνοίας ἔ]νεκεν τῆς εἰς αὐτὸν [καὶ εἰς τοὺς]
 [ξύμπαντας Ἑλ]ληνας, Δί[ο]λυμ[π]ίωι [ἀνέθεκεν]

King Ptolemy, son of king Ptolemy, dedicated
 to Olympian Zeus this statue of Areus, son of Acrotatos,
 king of the Lacedaemonians, on account of his goodwill
 towards Ptolemy and all the Greeks.

Ptolemy II is also mentioned with Areus in the inscription from Orchomenos (ISE 54 = SEG 25 444): in that inscription, however, the Orchomenians are the ones dedicating the

statue to Areus and celebrating him. Despite its brevity and uncertain chronology, the epigraphic evidence, gathered and examined so far, has shown Areus' significance in the international stage and his high esteem in the wide network of power relations in which superpowers such as Egypt and Macedonia were contending for hegemony. This dedication appears to show that Ptolemy was aware of Areus' prestige and leadership in the international stage. Moreover, the late and non-historical narrative of Pausanias (6 12, 5; 15 9) provides us with further insights about the large number of supporters that Sparta may have had inside the Peloponnese and, most importantly, about Areus' prominent position in Spartan foreign matters. Pausanias (6 12, 5; 15 9) informs us that other statues of Areus were erected in Olympia by the Eleans. This information seems to suggest that all the Eleans may have participated in the coalition and may have taken the side of Sparta in the war against Gonatas; nevertheless, the two short passages of Pausanias alone would be insufficient to validate this assumption. However, the pairing of Pausanias with the inscriptions mentioned above points to the broad support of Peloponnesian states towards Sparta and to Areus' significance in the anti-Macedonian foreign policy. Finally, Areus' authority is attested by the first Spartan coinage (described in chapter 3), which features his name. One should not forget that there are no coins mentioning the other king of Sparta, Archidamus IV. Therefore, the evidence from the Peloponnese, Crete and Athens shows that Areus was the personality selected and asked not only by the Spartan authorities, but also by other states, to lead foreign military expeditions and to attend to diplomatic duties of the utmost importance.

In addition, the mention of Areus and King Ptolemy II in the three inscriptions discussed above bolsters his prestige: the Spartan authorities may have decided to deploy Areus in the Chremonidean War as a military leader in order to cultivate a relationship with Egypt. In effect, the Chremonidean decree reflects the important contribution and participation of Ptolemy II in the coalition (*Syll.*³ 434-5 = IG 2 687: ll. 15-20; 22-25; 33-35) and the relationship between Sparta and Egypt. The decree reveals that the Spartans were already allied with Ptolemy II (*Syll.*³ 434-5 = IG 2 687: ll.21-22) before the creation of the coalition. The potent support offered by Ptolemy was invaluable to Sparta: Ptolemy was able to provide important military and economic support for Spartan military operations.²²⁷ Thanks to the financial subsidies offered by Ptolemy, Sparta was able to

²²⁷ Marasco (1980) p. 141; David (1981) p. 135; Cartledge (2002) pp. 33-34; Millender (2009) pp. 39-41; Shipley (2009) p. 57.

recruit a large number of mercenaries so as to perform its military expeditions.²²⁸ Moreover, in the aforementioned inscriptions from Orchomenos and Olympia and from the Chremonidean decree (Il. 21-22), one may deduce that Ptolemy was seeking to appear as a friend of Sparta and as an ally of the Greeks against the Macedonian threat. This assumption is reinforced by the establishment of Laconian cults in Egypt:²²⁹ the cult of Arsinoe Chalkioikos stands as a good example of the philo-Laconian policy performed by the Ptolemies. Lastly, one should bear in mind that Ptolemaic Egypt, like Sparta, was engaged in a proactive foreign policy in Crete. This politics is attested by an inscription found in Itanos, which features a decree in honour of the admiral of the Ptolemaic fleet, Patroclus (IC 3 9, 1, 43).²³⁰ Moreover, the interest of Ptolemy for Crete and its support towards the Gortynian faction – as opposed to the Knossian one – shows his expansionist ambitions and exercise of influence in the island. These policies may have facilitated the alliance between Sparta and Egypt, along with the anti-Macedonian policy performed by the two powers. However, this hypothesis cannot be confirmed due to the lack of direct and more precise evidence, which could confirm a relationship between Sparta and Ptolemy II in Crete.

Nonetheless, through the adoption of Laconian cults and the military, economic and political support provided to Sparta, Ptolemy was seeking to exercise its influence over the Greeks of the mainland and on some Cretan *poleis* so as to succeed in the larger and more significant conflict with the other superpower of the century, Macedonia.²³¹ Sparta may have been perceived by Ptolemaic Egypt as an effective means of uniting states situated inside and outside the Peloponnese due to its outstanding authority: in effect, as it has been discussed in the previous sections, Sparta was able to attract the political support and the sympathies of a considerable number of states, and the Spartan authorities deployed a particular royal personality such as Areus in order to engage in conflict with Gonatas and to foster their relationship with Ptolemy II. Hence, one may deduce that Sparta and the other Mediterranean powers involved in the coalition may have been exploited by Ptolemy in order to carry out his broader struggle for power with Antigonos Gonatas. Nevertheless, this assumption cannot be validated if one considers the overall literary, epigraphic and numismatic evidence adopted to frame this study: as it has been

²²⁸ Marasco (1980) p. 142; David (1981) p. 135; Cartledge (2002) p. 34; Millender (2009) p. 40; Shipley (2009) p. 57.

²²⁹ Millender (2009) p. 39.

²³⁰ Spyridakis (1970) p. 46; Marasco (1980) p. 87; Theocaris (1994) p. 70.

²³¹ Theocaris (1994) p. 70; Raab (2001) p. 56.

noticed, Areus was present in significant foreign matters and Sparta was interacting meaningfully with the wider world. Furthermore, the outstanding position of Areus in Spartan foreign policy and the maintained authority of this middling power, which was proactively participating in Mediterranean affairs, is corroborated by further literary evidence. The use of one of the apophthegms belonging to the collection of the *Sayings of the Spartans* of Plutarch (217 F) and two passages from the First Book of the Maccabees (12 7-8; 20-33) reveals the presence of Areus in other Mediterranean locales, the authority of Sparta, and the significant prestige of its king in the international stage of the third century. Moreover, it will enable us to obtain more insights into the extent of the continuity in the way in which the Spartan governing bodies carried out their foreign political plans. Admittedly, the late and problematic nature of the evidence poses serious interpretative issues; nonetheless, their use, paired with the evidence accrued and examined so far, supports Areus' prestige and Spartan authority in this poorly documented period.

The late and non-historical testimony of Plutarch (*Ap. Lac.* 217 F) reveals the Spartan presence in southern Italy: in this small story, it is described the passage of Areus I through the Sicilian city of Selinus. This is the only surviving information which would attest the presence of the Spartan king in southern Italy. One should consider that this short anecdote *per se* does not allow us to support a Spartan presence in Italy in the mid-third century; moreover, there are no chronological indications, which may enable us to link Areus' expedition with the wider picture of the events of the third century. Nonetheless, if one accepts Plutarch's information, then the continuity of Spartan foreign policy in southern Italy is further strengthened. In effect, we discussed above (section 5.3) the presence of Cleonymus in Taras and Sparta's engagement with the foreign matters of the colony. Additionally, Diodorus (19 70-71) communicates another important precedent, which should be carefully considered in this circumstance: king Acrotatus I, the father of king Areus and brother of Cleonymus, was in Sicily in 315 in order to fight Agathocles, the tyrant of Syracuse. Whether or not Plutarch's information is reliable, it is worth remembering that Areus is the royal character selected as main protagonist of this story; moreover, the literary evidence, accrued and examined in the previous chapters, suggests the remarkable continuity in the way in which the Spartan governing bodies carried out their foreign policy and their interest in some locales inside and outside the Peloponnese. One should consider, however, that the sources do not

always allow us to identify which governing bodies (ephorate, *gerousia*, kings) were more involved in the formulation of foreign political plans. Nonetheless, one should bear in mind that Areus is mentioned alone in this circumstance and that there are no apophthegms referring to the contemporary royal member of the Eurypontid house, Archidamus IV.

Finally, the authority of Sparta in the international stage and the importance of Areus' personality is further strengthened by his mention in the First Book of the Maccabees (*Macc.* 1 12, 7-8; 20-23), in which is recalled the purported kinship between Spartans and Jews and, above all, the role of Areus in the said interaction. Areus is presented as the king and the representative of the Spartans and as the one claiming the kinship between Spartans and Jews (*Macc.* 1 12, 7-8; 20-21). In this regard, the passages refer to a letter sent by Areus to the high priest Onias in order to establish an alliance through *syngeneia*. This evidence is significant to our argument, since it would demonstrate the mutual desire of Sparta and the Jews to create an alliance by the means of kinship ties. Despite the late and extremely problematic nature of the evidence,²³² the presence of Areus in this interaction points towards the continued authority of Sparta on the international stage and to the significant authority of the Spartan king. As we discussed in the sections above, Areus was consistently engaged in foreign political matters of the utmost importance and was highly regarded not only by the *poleis* with whom Sparta interacted, but also by an Hellenistic king of the calibre of Ptolemy II. It was Areus who was celebrated by the *poleis* situated inside and outside the Peloponnese and, most importantly, by Ptolemy II; moreover, he was the royal person who featured on the first Spartan coinage. Last but not least, his significant presence in the proceedings of the creation of the massive anti-Macedonian coalition (section 6.5) has shown his leadership and esteem by the Peloponnesian and Cretan states: these states decided again to follow Sparta and its king in an outstanding military venture against a common enemy, Antigonos Gonatas. This evidence, therefore, promotes the authority of Sparta in the Hellenistic scenario and Areus' significance in Spartan foreign policy.

²³² Marasco (1980) pp. 162-163; Gruen (1996) pp. 254, 259; Gargiulo (2004) pp. 168-169; Themelis (2007-8) pp. 40-41.

6.7 Conclusions

Areus is the Spartan personality most consistently mentioned in the literary evidence (Plut. *Pyrrh.* 27 2; *Ap. Lac.* 217 F; Paus. 6 12, 5; 15, 9; *Macc.* 1 12, 7-8; 20-23) and in the epigraphic record from inside and outside the Peloponnese (IC 2 23, 12A; *Syll.*³ 434-5 = IG 2 687; *Syll.*³ 433; ISE 54 = SEG 25 444); moreover, his name on the first Spartan coinage and ambitions corroborate the image of a powerful and prestigious personality operating in the international stage (section 7.6). The combination of the epigraphic and literary evidence adopted to frame this study has revealed his outstanding authority and leadership in the international stage, along with his importance in the proceedings of the creation of the anti-Macedonian coalition: this assessment has shown that Areus was consistently deployed by Spartan authorities because of his prestige and that he was the royal personality most heavily involved in crucial political matters of the mid-third century (7.5). However, the circumstantial and fragmentary evidence, constituted mostly by later and non-historical accounts, along with fragmentary inscriptions, whose majority are of celebratory nature, does not enable us to evaluate thoroughly the agency of this individual in the broad Spartan interaction with other Hellenistic states. However, it has shown that Areus was highly regarded by the Hellenistic powers and by a Hellenistic king such as Ptolemy II.

Furthermore, while Realism has revealed itself a valuable interpretative tool to get a sense of the continuous warfare and of the expansionist behaviours of Pyrrhus and Antigonus Gonatas, it has its limits. Their expansionism triggered the formation of two alliances (7.4): the smaller alliance composed of Peloponnesian states and Antigonus in order to suppress Pyrrhus' threat and the larger anti-Macedonian coalition, in which king Areus covered the position of military leader, were motivated by the logic of self-interest and by the concerns posed by Pyrrhus' and Gonatas' expansionist ambitions to Sparta and other Greek states. But Realism has not provided a coherent and convincing explanation of the subtle nature of the mechanism required to start the military operations of the Chremonidean war, as it perceives states as larger blocks of people: this theory does not consider the role of smaller networks of individuals in framing foreign political decisions. The decision-making power had to travel among the Spartan governing bodies to legitimise and operationalise the military expeditions of the Chremonidean war. The lack of the common consent from the Spartan institutions (ephorate, *gerousia*, kings) would

have impeded the start of the operations (7.5). Moreover, this theory neglects meaningful interstate patterns such as embassies and kinship ties. The resort to these interstate tools points towards the more complex nature of interstate interactions: states engaged meaningfully in diplomatic discourse so as to foster connections and to circumvent warfare. The case of the embassies sent by some Peloponnesian states (7.2) to Pyrrhus and the purported kinship ties between Spartans and Jews, in which Areus was central, are paradigmatic in this sense. This points to the large discourse among powers in which diplomatic tools were essential in interstate contacts.

Additionally, the role of individuals in Spartan foreign policy represents another crucial element that has been highlighted throughout this case study. Areus played a pivotal role in the events of the mid-third century. He was involved in and participated in diplomatic and military affairs of the utmost importance. His involvement with a Hellenistic personality of the calibre of Ptolemy II and his esteem among Mediterranean states reveal his importance in foreign relations of the mid-third century and in Spartan interaction with the wider world. Lastly, Spartan interactions featured a remarkable continuity. The way in which the Spartan governing bodies formulated foreign political plans was led by the desire to exert control over locales situated inside and outside the Peloponnese: these locales were consistently chosen to perform military or diplomatic expeditions and Sparta was aware of their strategic importance. In this regard, Areus, like his uncle Cleonymus, was engaged in Cretan affairs and was involved in military expeditions, which commanded the wide support of Peloponnesian states. However, his close relation with a major Hellenistic personality such as Ptolemy II and the large number of states which engaged with Sparta, and with Areus' personality more specifically, has shown his overwhelming presence in foreign matters and his high esteem in the wider Hellenistic world.

7. The Peloponnesian Bipolarity

7.1 Introduction

The use of literary and epigraphic evidence will be invaluable in this chapter, in which two peculiar Spartan characters of the third century will be explored, Agis IV and Cleomenes III. The biographical genre, on the one hand, will allow us to build the foundations of this analysis and to obtain specific intimations about the agency of the Spartan kings in foreign policy of this poorly documented period. It will offer some potential to evaluate whether Agis and Cleomenes were deployed by the Spartan governing bodies (discussed in subsections 7.2.1, 7.2.2, 7.2.3, 7.3.2 below) in order to carry out foreign political plans, or if they acted independently in salient events of the late third century. On the other hand, the use of the biographies of Agis and Cleomenes will oblige me to operate with the constant awareness of the fragility of their reliability: the extremely circumstantial nature of these non-historical and late accounts will pose serious interpretative issues. These issues have been consistently highlighted in the previous chapters and will characterise the following analysis. However, the use of Polybius' narrative will be valuable to obtain information regarding Spartan foreign policy and Spartan relationships with states inside and outside the Peloponnesian landmass. Specifically, Polybius' *Histories* represents the only significant source composed in a period which is near to the events it describes. Nonetheless, its edifying purpose and partly fragmentary nature,²³³ along with Polybius' bias towards characters and particular events (e.g. subsection 7.3.4 below), are factors that should not be overlooked. In shaping this case study, I shall rely on Plutarch (*Agis* 14-15; *Cleom.* 4 1, 4; 6 1; 7 1; 10 1; *Arat.* 30 5; 38 3), Pausanias (2 8, 5; 7 7, 3; 8 27, 13-15; 8 10, 5-10) and Polybius (2 44; 46; 48-50); whereas the use of inscriptions (IG 5 2, 34 = IC 2 p. 45; IC 1 9, 84-87 = Schmitt n°584; IC 1 16, 108-111 = Schmitt n°569; IC 3 4, 86 = Schmitt n°579; IC.3.3, 24-27 = Schmitt n°502; IC 4,229 = Schmitt n°498 = SEG 13 465) from different Mediterranean locales may provide indirect evidence in regards to the new international stage that arose in the second half of the third century and the position of Sparta in the network of power relations. The pairing of literary and epigraphic evidence will enable me to assess Spartan interactions with smaller and larger Hellenistic powers such as the

²³³ Shipley (2000) p. 13; Marincola (2007) p. 179; Marincola (2009) p. 17.

Achaean League and Macedonia. An important element that will emerge from this assessment is the bipolarity which seems to have pervaded the Peloponnese: in this region, featuring a multitude of states, two major powers were contending for hegemony, Sparta and the Achaean League. The literary and epigraphic evidence will reveal the predominant warfare which characterised interstate interactions and the constant pursuit for hegemony by Sparta and the Achaean League more particularly. In this struggle for supremacy within the Peloponnese, both states concluded alliance agreements with major Mediterranean powers in order to obtain military and economic assistance: as shall be discussed, the nature of these alliances was ephemeral and essentially governed by the sole logic of self-interest.²³⁴

This study shows the importance of the role of smaller networks of individuals such as the ephorate and the kings in articulating important foreign political decisions (section 7.2). The definition “bipolarity” deployed in the title of the study, which is drawn from IR studies, is adopted to indicate a relatively small environment in which two major military powers are contending for hegemony and, in doing so, are supported by weaker blocs of allies (in this case, the smaller Peloponnesian states).

Moreover, the reasons which lay behind the creation of the alliances and the climate of warfare which pervaded the region are two other elements that Realism explains convincingly. However, as demonstrated in subsections 7.2.1 and 7.3.1, the role of smaller networks of Spartan individuals operating outside the Spartan state represents another issue overlooked by Realism. These individuals, belonging to the Spartan elite (subsection 7.2.1), by establishing and cultivating friendship relations with people living in other states, could facilitate Spartan interaction with other states, thus occupying an important place in foreign policy. As shall be illustrated below, these interactions were based on hospitality and friendship and seem to undermine the pessimistic vision of interstate interactions dominated by endemic and constant warfare. Furthermore, a renewed assessment of the scarce and fragmentary literary evidence at our disposal may allow us to evaluate whether there was a continuity or change in the way in which Spartan authorities carried out their foreign political plans. This study will eventually point to Spartan authority in the international scenario, to a continuity of interest in certain locales inside and outside the Peloponnese in Spartan foreign policy, and to the significance of

²³⁴ Waltz (1979) pp. 92-93, 104-105; Walt (1987) pp. 23-27; Mearsheimer (2001) pp. 34-35; Mearsheimer and Walt (2007) pp. 225-226, 344-345; Mearsheimer (2010) p. 78; Lebow (2010) p. 61.

Spartan individuals in salient events of the late third century. Finally, while exploring these issues, I shall analyse the role of the ephorate and the agency of Agis and Cleomenes in foreign political matters; whether the ephorate had a major impact on foreign military expeditions and on important political decisions of the period represents an issue that will be addressed further in this study; while the assessment of the nature of the agency of the two Spartan royal characters may allow us to achieve a new understanding of Spartan royalty in the third century BC.

In particular, this analysis will feature two sections: each section will offer an evaluation of a specific Spartan royal individual who carried out significant military and political undertakings during his reign. The first section will explore Spartan foreign policy under King Agis IV. The broader analysis of the scanty evidence (analysed in the first four subsections below), mostly represented by Plutarch and Pausanias, will show the leadership of this character, as he was the Spartan individual selected to lead military expeditions of the utmost importance. This will point towards the significance of Agis IV in Spartan foreign policy: as has been demonstrated in previous chapters, particular Spartan individuals occupied an important place in foreign policy. Furthermore, a significant factor which will emerge from this analysis is the continued Spartan interest in certain Peloponnesian locales: Corinth (section 7.2), Pellene (subsection 7.2.1), Megalopolis (subsection 7.2.2), and Mantinea (subsection 7.2.3) were some of the main objectives of Spartan expansionism. The undertaking of military expeditions in these locales will reveal a continuity in foreign policy, along with the meaningful creation of coalitions aimed at containing Spartan expansionism. The second section explores Spartan foreign policy during the reign of Cleomenes III. The assessment of this topic shows the constant Spartan interest in specific Peloponnesian locales that characterises the later foreign policy in which another particular individual plays the role of main protagonist, Cleomenes III. This section features an examination of the international stage in which Cleomenes operated in the first years of his reign (7.3.1), a scrutiny of his agency (7.3.2) in Spartan foreign policy and his engagement with smaller and larger powers of the period (7.3.3 and 7.3.4).

7.2 Agis IV and The Peloponnese

The combination of Plutarch (*Agis* 13-15) and Pausanias (2 8, 5; 7 73; 8 27, 13-15; 8 10, 5-10) offers valuable intimations about Spartan foreign undertakings inside the Peloponnese. Admittedly, the non-historical narrative might be perceived as creating an obstacle to the argument: however, one should bear in mind that these are the only available sources at our disposal which attest to a proactive Spartan foreign policy inside the Peloponnese. Moreover, as shall be shown, while Plutarch, in providing information about the expedition of Agis to Corinth in 241,²³⁵ is reproducing the theatrical narrative of Phylarchus and is persistently engaged in extolling Agis' *persona*,²³⁶ along with his moral values, Pausanias seems to have resorted to a variety of accounts (explained below) and, presumably, to philo-Achaean sources. This testimony has been neglected²³⁷ or rejected²³⁸ in the assessment of Spartan foreign policy under Agis IV: in this regard, previous studies have explored the military expedition (described by Plutarch) of Agis to Corinth and rejected the information offered by Pausanias. The validity of the testimony of Plutarch has driven scholars to address this issue and to overlook the expeditions of Agis to other Peloponnesian locales. Specifically, the Spartan military campaign against Mantinea represents the other military expedition (recorded by Pausanias)²³⁹ to be explored²⁴⁰ and situated in the examination of the international scenario in which King Agis IV was operating. In particular, it has been noted by other scholars²⁴¹ that the campaigns of Agis in the three locales (discussed below) do not fit in the historical reconstruction of the events, and contrast with the version offered by Plutarch in regards to Agis' death (see subsection 8.2.3 below). The philo-Achaean sources, which Pausanias may have employed in order to create his account, offer important insights with regards to military undertakings performed by Agis; but, as has been argued by Pretzler,²⁴² these were versions of local histories which were re-shaped by local elites and recorded by

²³⁵ Urban (1979) p. 55; Marasco (1980) p. 70; Scholten (2000) p. 124.

²³⁶ Oliva (1971) p. 213; Marasco (1979a) pp. 30-31; Marasco (1979b) p. 156 n. 18; Marasco (1981) p. 35; Hornblower (1981) p. 17; Pédech (1989) p. 403; Stadter (1992) pp. 1-2; Cartledge (2002) p. 35; Stadter (2007) pp. 538-553.

²³⁷ Chrimes (1949) pp. 1-56; Oliva (1971) pp. 214-263. Shimron (1972) p. 28, only mention Agis' expedition at Mantinea, but rejects this testimony. Marasco (1980a) pp. 5-34; David (1981) pp. 142-155; Cartledge (2002) pp. 37-51 seem to neglect this issue.

²³⁸ Urban (1979) pp. 39-40; Cartledge (2002) p. 37. Chrimes (1949) p. 3 and Jones (1967) p. 151 tacitly accept this information. Marasco (1979) pp. 159-161 argues for the reliability of Pausanias about the three expeditions.

²³⁹ This expedition is discussed in subsection 8.2.3.

²⁴⁰ Cartledge (2002) p. 37.

²⁴¹ Pretzler (2005) p. 244. In particular, Marasco (1979) p. 159 n. 37 and Cartledge (2002) pp. 37 and 224 n. 6 offer a synthesis of the previous debates about Pausanias' reliability in this circumstance.

²⁴² Pretzler (2005) pp. 240-241; Pretzler (2005a) pp. 21-24.

Pausanias. However, it is worth noting that Agis is presented as the leader of the Spartan force in the expeditions and that a later author - who wrote in the second century AD and was repeated these stories by local informants - decided to collect and preserve the local histories concerning Agis IV. One should remember that these expeditions would otherwise be unknown without Pausanias.

Moreover, a closer scrutiny of the biography of Agis, paired with the earlier evidence offered by Polybius (5 37, 1), would seem to point towards Agis' broad engagement in foreign political matters and to the preference of the Spartan governing bodies towards him. The identity and impact on foreign policy of said governing bodies will be discussed below and will provide us with more information about the agency of the Spartan kings of the later third century. Additionally, these accounts will portray the expansionist ambitions of Sparta, which was striving to conquer some positions inside the Peloponnese: in this struggle, Agis and Aratus were the two personalities who dominated foreign political and military matters. The continuing Spartan interest in certain Peloponnesian (discussed at 7.2.1, 7.2.2, 7.2.3 and 7.3.2 below) locales in which Agis and Cleomenes undertook military expeditions points to a strategy aimed to exercise control over these locales and to Sparta's ambition to regain hegemony inside the region.

To begin, Plutarch (*Agis* 13-15) informs us of the Peloponnesian invasion by the Aetolians by way of Megara and of the command of Aratus of the large force raised in order to counter the Aetolian threat.²⁴³ According to the biographer (*Agis* 13 4), Aratus was the leader of the army and was the one assembling the force whose purpose was to stop the Aetolian invasion. This expansionist policy seems to have triggered the desire of the Achaean League to ally with other Peloponnesian states in order to suppress the Aetolian threat: an important point which emerges from this non-historical narrative is that, while describing the gathering of the army, Plutarch reveals the awareness of Aratus of the importance of Sparta in this military venture and of the valuable contribution it was able to offer in the military operations. In this regard, Plutarch (*Agis* 13 4) clearly states that Aratus wrote a letter to the ephors in order to obtain military help so as to counter the Aetolian threat. This information is significant to our argument, as it reveals the importance that the ephorate may have had in shaping Spartan foreign political actions and the high esteem of Sparta on the international stage. Specifically, the choice of the

²⁴³ Oliva (1971) p. 227; Shimron (1972) p. 25; Marasco (1979) p. 302; Cartledge (2002) p. 43.

ephors to entrust Agis IV with the command of the Spartan army in order to support Aratus' force in Corinth suggests the passive nature of Agis' agency and the important prerogatives of the ephors in Spartan decision-making; moreover, it shows the significance and preference from the ephorate towards Agis in carrying out this expedition. This evidence shows that Spartan decisional power in foreign and domestic policy travelled from the ephors to the king; this, shows that smaller networks of individuals were paramount in the activation of foreign policy decisions (military expeditions abroad). However, the short note of Plutarch does not offer information about the role of the *gerousia* in this circumstance; nonetheless, it shows that two smaller groups of individuals were involved in this endeavour.

One should consider the theatrical and celebratory nature of this narrative: Plutarch, in fact, is essentially engaged in portraying the admirable conduct of Agis (*Agis* 15 1) and his notable leadership; the lack of plundering during the march to Corinth and the steadfast loyalty of the Spartan army to its leader are consistently highlighted (*Agis* 14; 15 1-3). Furthermore, the celebratory nature of the narrative emerges in the speech of Agis to Aratus: Plutarch highlights the sensible conduct of the Spartan king in suggesting to the general of the Achaean force to fight a definitive battle with the enemy, rather than to abandon the doors of the Peloponnese (*Agis* 15 1). This passage reveals the significance of the two individuals in foreign policy and, most importantly, the leadership of Agis in this event. However, one may argue that, in writing his account, Plutarch extensively draws from Phylarchus' theatrical narrative;²⁴⁴ nevertheless, this is the only available information which testifies to the role of the ephors in the Spartan decision-making and to the military expedition led by Agis to Corinth in order to provide Aratus with military support. Moreover, from this narrative, it may be possible to deduce the importance attributed by Plutarch to the two characters involved in this momentous event: Aratus and Agis IV are the outstanding personalities selected as military and diplomatic leaders of this undertaking, and Plutarch effectively unites these characters in the wider narrative tissue. In effect, their significance is further strengthened if one considers that the author created a biography for each of the two characters; lastly, despite these personalities operating on behalf of broader power systems, such as the Achaean League and the Spartan ephorate, they were able to exert a considerable influence on foreign political

²⁴⁴ Oliva (1971) pp. 213, 221; Shimron (1972) pp. 9-11; Marasco (1979a) p. 30; Marasco (1979b) p. 156 n. 18; Marasco (1981) p. 35; Shipley (2000) p. 143; Cartledge (2002) p. 35.

undertakings (discussed below). Aratus, in particular, is portrayed as the general who renounced the expedition against the Aetolians and dismissed the young Agis IV (Plut. *Agis* 15 3). This appears to bolster the significant role of Agis in Spartan foreign policy. He acted as an agent of a larger power system such as the Spartan polity and, in performing his actions, he represented his *polis*. The sources portray these individuals and states as interchangeable; but, as has been discussed in the previous sections (5.3 and 7.5), more subtle networks of individuals intervened in foreign policy decisions and, at times, affected the actions of Spartan individuals.

In addition, from the scarce available information, it is hardly possible to identify the reasons which drove Sparta to take part in this military venture against the Aetolians: whether the Spartan ephorate decided to send Agis in order to proactively participate in the fight against the Aetolian invasion of the Peloponnese, or to establish a position of influence in Corinth, represent unanswered questions due to the lack of evidence. This scarcity of evidence may undermine the hypothesis of Spartan expansionism inside the Peloponnese: nonetheless, the later information of Pausanias, along with literary evidence (discussed below), which attests the previous desire of Sparta to occupy important Peloponnesian locales, seems to support Spartan expansionism and to suggest the bipolarity in which Agis and Aratus were playing a major role. In particular, Pausanias (2 8, 5; 7 73; 8 27, 13-15; 8 10, 5-10) is the only extant source which testifies to the expansionist ambitions of Sparta and to its continued interest in certain Peloponnesian locales at this time. In Spartan foreign policy actions, Agis emerges as the most prominent Spartan personality. The source reveals his important leadership in three military expeditions and indicates a proactive foreign policy aimed to consolidate the Spartan power inside the Peloponnese. Unfortunately, there are no chronological indications, which may enable us to fit these ventures in the wider context of the events of the late third century and to recognise a clear Spartan foreign political pattern. Nevertheless, Pausanias briefly summarises the expansionist endeavours performed by Agis IV and appears to arrange them in chronological order (8 27, 14): the selected targets of Spartan expansionism were the Achaean Pellene, followed by the Arcadian *poleis* of Megalopolis and Mantinea. This, as we shall see below, would point to the continued Spartan interest in certain Peloponnesian locales: moreover, in these military expeditions King Agis IV was the royal personality in charge of the command of the Spartan army and he is mentioned along with the Lacedaemonians (2 8, 5; 8 10, 5-6); finally, the assessment of

the last expedition in Mantinea (discussed below) will allow us to evaluate his agency in foreign policy and to explore further the role of the Spartan governing bodies.

7.2.1 Agis in Pellene

In describing the conquest of Pellene by Agis (2 8, 5) and the Spartan defeat at the hands of Aratus, Pausanias suggests the formation of an alliance composed of the Achaean League led by Aratus, the Epidaurians, the Troezenians inhabiting the Argolid *polis* on the Acte, and the Megarians. The temporary conquest of Pellene by Agis is confirmed in another passage, which does not feature other insights about the military operations (Paus. 8 27, 14). Moreover, the source portrays the environment characterised by bipolarity, in which Sparta and the Achaean League were operating and, above all, appears to point towards a significant expansionist attempt by Sparta inside the Peloponnese and the concerns it may have raised in the Peloponnesian states. This expansionism²⁴⁵ triggered the creation of an alliance led by Aratus in which Megara, the *polis* of Epidaurus, and the Troezenians participated. Such a broad coalition may have been due to the lofty expansionist ambitions of Sparta, which was seeking to achieve hegemony inside the Peloponnese. This assumption is reinforced by another passage, in which Pausanias (2 7, 73) states that the Lacedaemonians were the only ones among the Greeks to be bitter enemies of the Achaeans and to carry out war against them. Furthermore, in assessing Spartan foreign relations with the Peloponnesian states, one should not neglect the position of the Messenians towards Sparta: Pausanias (4 29 6) is the only available source which provides us with valuable information about the relationship between Sparta and Messene at this point in time. Pausanias suggests the good relations between the Spartans and the Messenians after Pyrrhus' demise, along with the Messenians' unwillingness to join the Achaean League in order to avoid becoming enemies of the Spartans again. Additionally, later in the same passage, there emerges the strong animosity between Sparta and the Achaean League; in fact, Pausanias defines the Achaean League as the bitterest enemy of the Lacedaemonians. Admittedly, Pausanias' testimony *per se* would be hardly sufficient to confirm the good relations between Sparta and the Messenians; nevertheless, it is worth noticing that there is no

²⁴⁵ For the expansionism that triggers the formation of alliances, see Waltz (1979) pp. 118-119; Walt (1987) pp. 33, 37; Mearsheimer (2001) pp. 2-4, 21, 29-30.

information in the literary and epigraphic record which would point to a conflict between Sparta and Messene during Agis' reign. Moreover, the invaluable testimony of Polybius (5 37, 1) offers some potential to explore further Sparta's relationship with Messene in this period.

Polybius informs us that Archidamus V, brother of King Agis IV, fled from Sparta in 240 and went to Messenia, where he was hosted by the Messenian Nicagoras:²⁴⁶ this Nicagoras is defined by Polybius as an ancestral guest-friend (πατρικὸς ξένος) of Archidamus (5 37, 1). The little available evidence points to good relations between Sparta and Messene, or at least, some Spartan and Messenian elites. Specifically, the testimony of Polybius is important to our argument, as it shows the importance of a smaller network of individuals operating outside of Sparta, and which could maintain a long-lasting friendship relation. This network included a member of the Eurypontid royal family which could have played an important role abroad on behalf of the Spartan polity. Indeed, the scarce information offered by Polybius are insufficient to confirm this; but, they point towards friendship ties and smaller groups of individuals operating outside the *polis*: this shows the importance of more subtle networks of individuals who were able to facilitate interstate contacts. This argument is further strengthened if one considers the information provided by Plutarch (*Cleom.* 35 1), in which one can see that these good relations continued during the reign of Cleomenes III (discussed in subsection 8.3.1). Therefore, the literary evidence, gathered and examined so far, corroborates the portrait of a peaceful relationship between Sparta and Messene during Agis' reign and Sparta's important attempt to achieve a position of supremacy inside the Peloponnese.

Furthermore, one should bear in mind that Polybius' information is invaluable in this circumstance: as we have seen above, despite their problematic and circumstantial nature, the accounts of Plutarch and Pausanias have been useful to assess Spartan foreign policy under King Agis IV; whereas Polybius, as an author who wrote in a period which was much closer to the events narrated, as a Megalopolitan, and as a philo-Achaean, may have had a good knowledge of foreign relations of the Peloponnesian states and of the past military expeditions undertaken by the kings Agis IV and Cleomenes III. His important testimony, paired with the later accounts of Plutarch and Pausanias, is instrumental in

²⁴⁶ For a detailed discussion of the relation between Nicagoras and Archidamus, see Oliva (1971) pp. 236-240. The reconstruction of the presence of Archidamus in Messenia and his later stay in Egypt are still unclear. Oliva (1971) pp. 236-238 points out the issues raised by the pairing of the testimony of Polybius with Plutarch. For the relation between Sparta and Messene, see Marasco (1979) pp 166-167 and Marasco (1980) p. 117 and n. 97.

supporting this argument. Hence, one may conclude that the Achaean League, along with the aforementioned Peloponnesian states which took its side, may have been aware of Sparta's authority and of the threat it may have posed to other states: these seem to have been conducive factors which led to the formation of the alliance.

7.2.2 Agis in Megalopolis

Spartan expansionism emerges in the second military expedition in Megalopolis (Paus. 8 27, 13-15). Pausanias communicates the large amount of allied forces gathered by Sparta in order to conquer Megalopolis and, most importantly, the significant number of Spartan troops assembled in order to undertake this expedition (8 27, 13). Specifically, he suggests to us that the forces gathered in order to accomplish this mission were stronger than the ones collected by King Acrotatus II for the previous expedition (discussed below) in the same locale; furthermore, while describing the initial positive outcome of the Spartan military operations, Pausanias reports the use of engines of war by Agis in order to conquer the city (8 27, 14). This information seems to demonstrate the desire of Sparta to take possession of some important Peloponnesian locales and the leadership of Agis in the events. The large human and material capital raised and employed in order to undertake this military venture constitutes one of the symptoms of the struggle for hegemony²⁴⁷ in which Hellenistic states engaged. This Spartan territorial expansionism may have been incentivised by the desire to achieve a more prominent position in the network of power relations and appears to show that Sparta was able to pose a threat to the Peloponnesian states. Furthermore, if we give Pausanias the benefit of the doubt, then the Spartan continued interest in some Peloponnesian *poleis* is further strengthened: in effect, before Agis' expedition to Megalopolis, King Acrotatus II, son of King Areus I, sought to conquer the Arcadian *polis*, which was ruled by the tyrant Aristodemus in 262 (Paus. 8 27, 11).²⁴⁸ Pausanias' information is also reported by Plutarch (*Agis* 3 7), who only communicates the death of Acrotatus II on the battlefield. It is worth bearing in mind that these are the only available information which attest to a continued Spartan interest in Megalopolis; moreover, this continuity of interest in Arcadian territory is supported by the previous anti-Macedonian attack led by King Agis III (mentioned in section 7.5) in

²⁴⁷ Eckstein (2006) pp. 49, 79, 83; Eckstein (2008) pp. 9-12.

²⁴⁸ Marasco (1980) p. 155; Cartledge (2002) p. 33.

Megalopolis in 331 (Diod. 17 65). Last but not least, as we shall see below (subsection 8.3.2), Spartan foreign policy, in which King Cleomenes III will be the main protagonist, will again feature a particular interest in this locale.

Despite our argument being mostly grounded on Pausanias' information, one should consider that, in creating his narrative, the author may have had access to a variety of lost accounts: these may have been composed in periods closer to the events they describe such as lost portions of Polybius' *Histories*, or accounts written by eye-witness testimonies such as the *Memoirs of Aratus*. In particular, in describing the military ventures of Agis, Pausanias appears to highlight the leadership and victories of Aratus over the enemy and the failures of Agis (2 7, 73; 2 8, 5; 8 10, 6-7). This may indicate the use by Pausanias of philo-Achaean sources in which are recorded salient foreign political actions performed by the Achaean League, along with important details about Sparta's position in the network of power relations. Despite this evidence being rejected because of the issues raised by the inaccuracy of the conflicting accounts offered by Plutarch and Pausanias, it is important to bear in mind that the local oral traditions recorded by Pausanias feature the presence and significance of Agis on the international stage of the third century, and that Pausanias, in selecting accounts that were "most worth remembering", decided to include these events. These stories, as it has been observed by Pretzler,²⁴⁹ were important to the informants and to the local level. What it is worth to consider here is that the informants to whom Pausanias collected data for his work put forward the character of Agis IV in their narrations. Lastly, the literary evidence, accrued and examined so far, promotes a continuity of interest in some Peloponnesian locales in Spartan foreign policy and the important role of Spartan royal individuals in significant military and diplomatic expeditions of the third century. In this regard, the expedition of Agis to Mantinea (discussed in the next subsection) seems to support this argument: Pausanias' information (8 10, 5-10) is invaluable in this circumstance, since it allows us to obtain more information about the nature of Agis' agency and to draw further conclusions about the international stage in which Sparta and the Achaean League were occupying a central position.

²⁴⁹ Pretzler (2005) p. 237.

7.2.3 Agis in Mantinea

Pausanias (8 10, 5-10) provides valuable details about the last military expedition undertaken by Agis in Mantinea and about Sparta's expansionist ambitions in Arcadia. In this military undertaking, Agis and Aratus covered the role of leaders of the large forces arranged on the battlefield; moreover, the assessment of this important battle provides us with the opportunity to observe the relationships among Peloponnesian states. Unfortunately, even in this case Pausanias is the only source which reveals a significant alliance of Peloponnesian states against Sparta: the coalition comprehended Achaeans and Sicyonians led by Aratus, all the Mantineans of military age under the command of Podares, along with the Arcadians and the *polis* of Megalopolis led by Lydiades and Leocydes (8 10, 5-6). This evidence reveals the importance of Sparta in the Peloponnesian scenario, since such an enormous military force was raised in order to fight the army led by King Agis IV.

Moreover, in communicating the extent of the coalition, Pausanias states that the Mantineans were joined by the Elean seer Thrasybulus (8 10, 5), who gave his contribution in battle and foresaw a victory before the beginning of the clash. The presence of this Elean character in such a momentous event may point to the adhesion of Elis to the anti-Spartan alliance; moreover, it may speak generally to the favour of the gods for the anti-Spartan coalition. However, there are no indications in the literary or epigraphic record of Agis' reign which may support this assumption. But, the Elean adhesion to Sparta (discussed in subsection 8.3.1) seems to be attested during the reign of Cleomenes. Admittedly, the celebratory nature of Pausanias' narrative would pose interpretative issues: in fact, the author fits the narration of this event while he is engaged in describing the trophy situated in the sanctuary of Poseidon in Mantinea; this trophy was crafted to commemorate the victory over the Lacedaemonians (Paus. 8 10, 5). In particular, it has been highlighted²⁵⁰ the resort to local sources by Pausanias in describing this expedition and its outcome. This local story, which encloses theatrical and mythical elements, like the account offered by Plutarch about Agis' expedition to Corinth, belongs to a non-historical genre. However, since Plutarch's account involves regional stories, rather than stories at a local level, it has been deemed to be more useful for the historical reconstruction. Nonetheless, the narration of the event by Pausanias shows the

²⁵⁰ Pretzler (2005) p. 244; Pretzler (2005a) pp. 21-22.

significance of this victory over Sparta, which was seeking to achieve hegemony inside the Peloponnese. Moreover, an element that requires particular attention is the importance attributed by Pausanias to the personalities of Agis and Aratus, along with the role of the leaders of the other *poleis*, which joined the anti-Spartan coalition. In this regard, Pausanias reports that Agis, at the head of the Lacedaemonian army, was at the centre of the Spartan force with the royal staff officers (8 10, 6). Pausanias' detailed description of the forces arranged on the battlefield does not offer other intimations about the identity of these royal officers, who may have covered a particular role on the side of King Agis IV.

However, an important factor which emerges from the wide description offered by Pausanias is the clear mention of Agis with the Lacedaemonians (8 10, 5-6). These royal officers may have been sent by the Spartan ephorate in order to support Agis in the war preparations. As has been discussed above, the ephorate seems to have covered a significant role in shaping Spartan foreign plans; nonetheless, the persistent presence and engagement of King Agis IV in foreign political actions of the utmost importance would bolster the leadership and prerogatives that the king may have had on the international stage. In effect, the rather short testimony of Plutarch (Plut. *Agis* 13 4) represents the only evidence which reveals the passive agency of the king; whereas the larger and more detailed account offered by Pausanias, combined with Polybius' information (deployed above), points towards the authority of the Eurypontid king on the international stage and to his leadership.

The picture depicted by Pausanias reproducing the battle in Mantinea reveals the leadership of Agis and Aratus, and highlights their animosity. Agis and Aratus are described as the leaders who occupied the central positions on the battlefield (8 10, 6); moreover, the author allows considerable room for the clash between the Spartan and Achaean force (8 10, 7). In this passage, in which he describes in detail the battle of Aratus' force against the Lacedaemonians, Pausanias reveals the initial positive outcome for the Spartans, who managed to put Aratus to flight. However, in the same passage, Pausanias reports the severe defeat of the Lacedaemonians that followed: this was due to their negligence towards the Arcadian force, which was attacking the Spartan army in the rear. Finally, Pausanias records that the Spartan force was surrounded and defeated by the enemy, while King Agis IV fell in battle (8 10, 7-8). As discussed in section 8.2, Pausanias' version of the death of Agis contrasts with the picture painted by Plutarch

(*Agis* 20): in this account, in fact, Agis is put to death by the ephors. Plutarch's version highlights the large powers of the ephorate and appears to suggest the passive agency of Agis; however, as it has been discussed previously, the biography, paired with Pausanias' extant testimony about Agis' expeditions, would seem to reveal his leadership in Spartan military expeditions and Sparta's significance in the international stage. Furthermore, despite Pausanias' information featuring interpretative issues, it is worth bearing in mind that this account points to a continuity of interest in Sparta for Mantinea. It has been previously discussed (section 5.2) the failed military expedition undertaken by King Archidamus IV to Mantinea in 294: one should remember that this expedition was carried out by another king of the Eurypontid house and would reveal the continued interest of Sparta in this locale. This interest will be supported by the later Spartan foreign policy in which Cleomenes III will be the most prominent character (discussed in subsection 8.3.1).

7.3 Cleomenes III and Peloponnesian Bipolarity

The literary (Pol. 2 44; 2 46; 2 48-50; Plut. *Arat.* 30 5; 38 3; *Cleom.* 4 1, 4; 6 1; 7 1; 10 1; Just. 28 1, 1-4) and epigraphic (IG 5 2, 34 = IC.2 p. 45; IC.1.9, 84-87 = Schmitt n°584; IC.1.16, 108-111 = Schmitt n°569; IC.3.4, 86 = Schmitt n°579; IC.3.3, 24-27 = Schmitt n°502; IC.4, 229 = Schmitt n°498 = SEG.13.465) evidence at our disposal offers important insights about the international stage on which Sparta was operating and the extent to which it was interacting with the wider world. The sources will again portray a significant Spartan expansionist policy and the bipolarity (analysed in subsection 7.3.2) which seems to have pervaded the Peloponnese: inside this large region, in which many states coexisted, the Achaean League, led by Aratus, and Sparta, led by King Cleomenes III, were the main competitors for hegemony. Specifically, the literary accounts will be useful to obtain information about the origins of the Cleomenean War (Pol. 2 46), to explore the motives which triggered the creation of alliances inside and outside the Peloponnesian landmass, the effects that these alliances had in the international scenario during the reign of Cleomenes (Pol. 2 44, 46; Plut. *Arat.* 30 5), to examine the agency of Cleomenes, and the role of the ephorate (Plut. *Cleom.* 3 1; 4 1, 4; 6 1; 7 1; 10 1; *Arat.* 38 3) until its demise. The analysis of the role of the ephorate will be instrumental in defining the nature of the agency of King Cleomenes III (discussed in subsection 7.3.2) and his role in Spartan foreign policy. Realism will be valuable to achieve a new understanding

of the reasons which drove states to engage in warfare and to gather themselves in larger and smaller coalitions. As we shall see below, states were struggling in order to expand their territorial capability and to attain hegemony;²⁵¹ while the creation of alliances was essentially due to the cruel logic of self-interest²⁵² proposed by Realism. States seem to have united in alliances because of a growing outside power which was able to pose a threat to their existence.²⁵³ Moreover, the pairing of the aforementioned literary accounts will allow us to address further the issue of continuity or change in the way in which Sparta was undertaking its foreign plans. These issues have been neglected²⁵⁴ in the assessment of Spartan foreign policy with the reign of Cleomenes: the few significant contributions have addressed important questions such as the nature of Spartan internal reforms²⁵⁵ advanced by Cleomenes and the impact they had on Spartan society; moreover, in order to explore Spartan expansionism inside the Peloponnese, the few important contributions²⁵⁶ have adopted a positivist approach. This section aims to explore the formation of alliances inside and outside the Peloponnese (subsection 8.3.1), the nature of the agency of Cleomenes in Spartan foreign policy and the role of the ephorate (subsection 8.3.2), Spartan relationships with some Cretan *poleis* (subsection 8.3.3), and the origins of the anti-Spartan alliance between Aratus and Antigonos Doson (subsection 8.3.4) which preceded the end of Cleomenes' reign.

7.3.1 The formation of alliances inside and outside the Peloponnese

The combination of Justin (28 1, 1-4) and Polybius (2 44) provides valuable information about the political scenario of the late third century and the formation of two coalitions: the alliances between Epirus and Macedonia and the coalition between Achaean and Aetolian Leagues. This evidence is important to our argument, as it shows that the creation of these alliances led to a significant change in the equilibrium of power and to the growth of the Achaean League, which caused concerns amongst Peloponnesian states

²⁵¹ Waltz (1979) pp. 118-119; Morgenthau (1985) pp. 187-189; Mearsheimer (2001) pp. 2-4, 21, 29-30; Mearsheimer (2010) pp. 78-79.

²⁵² Waltz (1979) pp. 92-93, 104-105; Walt (1987) pp. 23-27; Mearsheimer (2001) pp. 34-35; Mearsheimer and Walt (2007) pp. 225-226, 344-345.

²⁵³ Morgenthau (1985) p. 4; Eckstein (2006) pp. 49, 79, 83; Eckstein (2008) pp. 9-12.

²⁵⁴ Chrimes (1949) pp. 1-56; Jones (1967) pp. 154-156; Oliva (1971) pp. 230-268; Shimron (1972) pp. 29-53; David (1981) pp. 145-162; Cartledge (2002) pp. 37-53.

²⁵⁵ Chrimes (1949) pp. 1-56; Oliva (1971) pp. 234-247; Shimron (1972) pp. 37-45; Cartledge (2002) pp. 35-53.

²⁵⁶ Chrimes (1949) pp. 1-56; Jones (1967) pp. 154-156; Oliva (1971) pp. 230-268; Shimron (1972) pp. 29-53; Cartledge (2002) pp. 35-53.

(discussed below). The late testimony of Justin (28 1, 1-4), drawn from Trogus, informs us that the kingdom of Epirus was threatened by the Aetolians: these were attempting to deprive Olympias (daughter of Pyrrhus and widow of Alexander) of part of Acarnania. This threat drove Olympias to ask for assistance from the king of Macedonia, Demetrius II (c. 239-229).²⁵⁷ In order to secure Macedonian support, Olympias gave Demetrius her daughter in marriage. One may argue that the late testimony of Justin by itself is insufficient to confirm this alliance and does not offer specifics regarding the nature of the assistance offered by Macedonia. Nonetheless, its combination with Polybius' information (reported below) seems to support this assumption. The alliance between Epirus and Macedonia, due to the expansionism and growing power of the Aetolian League, pushed this League to search for allies in the south: the union between Macedonia and Epirus may have been perceived by the Aetolian League as a serious threat. This concern may have driven the Aetolians to make an alliance with the Achaean League. Polybius (2 44) records the formation of an alliance between the two Leagues and reveals the important advantage achieved by the Achaean League following this alliance: he suggests that, after the death of Demetrius II (c. 229), Lydiades, tyrant of Megalopolis, decided to join the Achaean League. Polybius describes the reasons for the tyrant's decision: Lydiades, because of his personal ambitions, and aware that he could no longer rely on the help offered by Macedonia inside the Peloponnese, decided to abdicate his tyranny and join the Achaean League. The missing help from Macedonia inside the Peloponnese and the alliance of Demetrius II with Epirus seem to have had a major impact on the Peloponnesian equilibrium of power: later in the same passage, in fact, Polybius reports that the tyrants of Argos, Hermione and Phlius emulated Lydiades and joined the Achaean League. The two alliances portrayed by the few available sources point to the validity of Realism in illustrating the process of creation of coalitions. Epirus and the Aetolian League saw their enemies expanding their power and representing a serious menace to their existence: these states, driven by self-interest, each decided to ally with another major power.²⁵⁸

In its turn, the adhesion of the three Peloponnesian states (mentioned above) to the Achaean League and the personal ambitions of Aratus adversely affected the balance of power inside the Peloponnese. Moreover, they aggravated the tensions between the

²⁵⁷ Oliva (1971) p. 233; Shipley (2000) p. 151; Scholten (2000) p. 134.

²⁵⁸ Waltz (1979) pp. 92-93, 104-105; Walt (1987) pp. 23-27; Mearsheimer and Walt (2007) pp. 225-226, 344-345.

Achaean League and Sparta inside the Peloponnese: in this struggle for hegemony, Cleomenes and Aratus were the most prominent individuals. The pairing of Polybius (2 46) and Plutarch (*Cleom.* 3 4-5) informs us of the expansionist policies of Sparta and of the Achaean League. Polybius reports the treacherous attack of Cleomenes upon the cities of Tegea, Mantinea and Orchomenos (allies of the Aetolians) and the lack of indignation on the part of the Aetolians at this attack. The testimony of Polybius suggests that the Aetolians confirmed the Spartan occupation of the three cities and waited for Cleomenes to become the most dangerous enemy of the Achaeans. The source does not offer other insights about the political stance of the Aetolians and its reasons; whereas Plutarch records the large power achieved by Aratus among the Achaeans and his personal ambition of reuniting all the Peloponnesians in a confederation. However, later in the same passage, the biographer provides us with important intimations about the political arrangement of the Peloponnesian states: he reports that most of the Peloponnesians followed Aratus, except the Arcadians and the Eleans. These, according to Plutarch, took the side of the Lacedaemonians. However, the biography does not provide information about the Arcadian and Elean *poleis* which joined Sparta.

Finally, the scanty evidence at our disposal shows the overall good relations between Sparta and Messene, along with the Messenian neutral position in this circumstance. The pairing of the testimonies (discussed in subsection 8.2.1) of Polybius (5 37, 1) and Pausanias (4 29 6) with two passages of Plutarch (*Cleom.* 5 2; 35 4) enables us to obtain more information about this relationship. Polybius (5 37 1) informs us that Archidamus V (brother of Cleomenes) was hosted by Nicagoras the Messenian; while Pausanias (4 29, 6) reports the unwillingness of the Messenians to participate in the war against Agis IV to avoid becoming enemies of the Spartans. These good relations are also reported by Plutarch, who suggests the bringing of Archidamus V from Messene by Cleomenes (*Cleom.* 5 2), and the continued relationship of Cleomenes with Nicagoras during his stay in Alexandria (*Cleom.* 35 4). Arguably, the pairing of the available evidence raises some important interpretative issues: the earlier version offered by Polybius contrasts with the account offered by Plutarch.²⁵⁹ Polybius, in fact, reports that it was Cleomenes who wished to murder Archidamus V (5 37, 2); whereas Plutarch (*Cleom.* 5 3) records that Archidamus V was murdered by the same individuals who had put Agis to death. Nonetheless, the aforementioned passages constitute the only extant evidence which

²⁵⁹ Jones (1967) p. 154; Oliva (1971) p. 234; Cartledge (2002) p. 47.

allows us to evaluate the relationship between Sparta and Messene during Cleomenes' reign. In sum, the sources, accumulated and examined so far, show that the growth of the Achaean League generated an opposing coalition led by Sparta. Admittedly, the late and biographical narrative of Plutarch *per se* would be insufficient to support this assumption; however, its combination with the earlier account of Polybius offers a good potential to further explore Spartan foreign policy and the nature of the agency of Cleomenes. Moreover, as we shall discuss below, Plutarch (*Cleom.* 3 1; 4 1; 4 4; 6 1; 7 1; 10 1; *Arat.* 38 3) represents the only extant source which enables us to evaluate the nature of the role of the ephorate and to obtain information about Cleomenes' agency in Spartan foreign matters. Specifically, the source suggests two stages with regards to his agency: in the first place, the Spartan king seems to have been an instrument of the ephors (*Cleom.* 3 1; 4 1; 4 4); while the later stage (*Cleom.* 6 1; 7 1; 10 1; *Arat.* 38 3) features the increasing influence of Cleomenes in Spartan decision-making (discussed below) and the demise of the ephorate with the greater power achieved by Cleomenes.

Plutarch (*Cleom.* 3 5) informs us that the decision of the Arcadians to join the Lacedaemonians drove Aratus to plunder their territory and, especially, the territory of those who were near to Achaia. Additionally, in the same passage, the biographer exposes the contempt of Aratus towards Cleomenes and his intention to put the Lacedaemonians to the test. The sources adopted so far bolster the Peloponnesian bipolarity in which Sparta and the Achaean League were the main actors: these were the major powers contending for hegemony inside the Peloponnese. Moreover, the combination of Plutarch (*Cleom.* 4 1) and Polybius (2 46) provides further insights about the competition between the two powers and the outbreak of the Cleomenean war: the sources, in fact, report the fortification (undertaken by Cleomenes) of the fortress of Athenaeum in the territory of Megalopolis against the Achaeans. Plutarch's testimony, specifically, is invaluable in this circumstance, since it offers more insights about the role of the ephors in the Spartan decision-making and the nature of the agency of Cleomenes (discussed below).

7.3.2 Cleomenes' agency in Spartan foreign policy and the role of the ephorate

Plutarch (*Cleom.* 4 1) states that the ephors decided to start military operations and to send Cleomenes to undertake them. This seems to show the extensive powers of the ephorate and the passive agency of the king, who was put forward by them to carry out

this military expedition. The passive nature of Cleomenes' agency is confirmed by a previous passage in which Plutarch records the extensive powers of the ephors and highlights the limited powers of Cleomenes, who, according to the biographer, was king only by name (*Cleom.* 3 1). Moreover, the biography offers other important information about the target selected by the ephorate: the territory was object of a boundary dispute between Sparta and Megalopolis. In particular, the fortification of the fortress undertaken by Cleomenes is recorded by Polybius (2 46) as one of the main causes which brought about the open declaration of war upon Sparta by the Achaean League. One may argue that this hypothesis is mostly grounded on the scanty and problematic evidence offered by Plutarch: nevertheless, it is worth considering that the role of the ephorate would be otherwise unknown without this source. Moreover, one should remember that Plutarch's information regarding the passive agency of the king features an important parallel with the initial passive agency portrayed in the biography of Agis IV (discussed in section 8.2). Nonetheless, despite the biography conveying the image of a powerful ephorate and the passive agency of Cleomenes in his initial undertakings, one should bear in mind that Cleomenes was the individual selected to carry out the military expedition to Megalopolis. Lastly, the interest in this locale points to a continuity in Spartan foreign policy: the previous expedition (discussed in subsection 8.2.2) of King Agis IV to Megalopolis - known only thanks to Pausanias (8 27, 13-15) - represents an important precedent that should be carefully considered: Cleomenes, like Agis IV and Acrotatus II, was the individual entrusted by the ephors with the duty of performing this significant foreign political undertaking. The sources employed in this chapter corroborate the portrait of continuity in the way in which Sparta was interacting with some Peloponnesian states and to the significant role of certain blocs of Spartan individuals in the said interactions. The importance of these individuals in foreign matters shows their significance in articulating Spartan foreign policy.

Cleomenes' importance in Spartan foreign policy is reinforced by four other passages (Plut. *Cleom.* 6 1; 7 1; 10 1; *Arat.* 38 3), which point to his active agency. Plutarch (*Cleom.* 6 1) informs us that he bribed the ephors in order to perform an expedition. The source does not provide specifics about this undertaking: however, in the same passage, Plutarch highlights his leadership and suggests his ability to win the favour of many citizens. This information is significant to our argument, since it would show that it was Cleomenes who influenced the ephors in their decisions regarding foreign policy. This chapter is

important to our argument, as it reveals the subtle mechanism involved in the selection of the Spartan individuals who had to perform the military expeditions: this involved the transition of the decision-making power through the governing bodies (ephors and kings) and shows that smaller networks of individuals were paramount in articulating foreign policy operations. Moreover, in the same chapter (*Cleom.* 6 2-3), Plutarch describes the military expedition led by the king to Leuctra (a stronghold of Megalopolis): from this passage emerges the strong rivalry between Cleomenes and Aratus, along with their leadership in the military operations. Finally, Plutarch (*Cleom.* 7 1; 10 1; *Arat.* 38 3) offers further information about the personal ambitions of Cleomenes and his growing importance in the events of the late third century. He suggests the strong initiative of Cleomenes to eliminate the ephorate (*Cleom.* 7 1) and the subsequent demise of this institution (*Cleom.* 10 1). This information is also reported in the biography of Aratus (38 3), which reports the killing of the ephors and the great power achieved by Cleomenes as a result of this undertaking.

In sum, the sources employed so far reveal two stages with regards to the king's agency: at the beginning of his career, the king was deployed by the ephors to lead military expeditions inside the Peloponnese; later, he was able to play a pivotal role in Spartan foreign policy and acted independently in salient events of the century. Moreover, the sources point to the important role of the ephorate in the initial foreign undertakings of Cleomenes. However, Cleomenes' leadership ability and the preference of the ephorate to employ him in military expeditions of the utmost importance contribute to support the significance of this individual on the international stage, along with Sparta's expansionism inside the Peloponnese. Moreover, as shall be discussed below, in pursuing this expansionist policy Sparta interacted meaningfully with states situated not only inside, but even outside the Peloponnese: Ptolemaic Egypt and some Cretan *poleis* (discussed below). It is worth keeping in mind that it was Cleomenes who was the most prominent Spartan personality engaged with the major Hellenistic powers of the period. Lastly, the demise of the ephorate, due to Cleomenes' plot, points again to his strong personal ambitions and outstanding leadership.

7.3.3 Spartan relationships with some Cretan *poleis*

In describing the expedition to Leuctra (in Megalopolitan territory), Plutarch (*Cleom.* 6 2-3) suggests that the Achaeans, led by Aratus, supported their ally, Megalopolis. He reports the presence of Cretans in Cleomenes' army, along with the eventual Spartan victory. This information is central to our argument, as it would show the important contribution that the Cretan troops may have offered in a significant battle; in addition, it would allow us to obtain further insights into the nature of the relationship between Sparta and some Cretan *poleis* in the reign of Cleomenes, and to evaluate whether there was continuity in the way in which Sparta interacted with these *poleis*. Unfortunately, Plutarch does not offer indications regarding the provenance of the Cretan troops; moreover, it is worth noticing that this is the only passage which testifies to the presence of Cretans in the military expedition led by Cleomenes. Nonetheless, the combination of this short passage with a very fragmentary inscription (IG 5 2, 34 *cf.* IC 2 p. 45) found in Tegea may offer some potential to evaluate the relationship between Sparta and some Cretan *poleis* and, most importantly, to establish whether there was continuity or change in the way in which Sparta was interacting with these *poleis*.

IG 5 2, 34, ll. 5-32: ⁵ [- - N]άξιος {['Οά]ξιος?} | [- -]..άτεος Ἀ[ρ]γεῖο[ς] | [- -]...Ἀργεῖος/[- -]ιος Λακεδαιμόνιος | [- -].ΙΓΙΚΟΣ | ¹⁰ [- -]..Ο[- - -] | [- -]..Ἀργεῖος | [- -]των[ος.] ΓΜΙΟΣ | [- -]. Ὀρχομένιος | [- -].Κυν[α]. {ι}[Θ]εύς? {Κυναιθεύς} | ¹⁵ [- - -] | [- -]..Φωκεύς | [- -]...λαυ Ὀρχομένιος | [- -]..Σεκυ[ώ]ινος | [- -]....νιος | ²⁰ [- -]...ους Μυλασεύς | [- -]....Δίονος Ἀργεῖος | [- -]..ω Λακεδαιμόνιος | [- -]....Μαντινῆς | [- -]....μένεος Ἀργεῖος | ²⁵ [- -].... ΑΩΛ αυ Ἀργεῖος | [- -]....ω Ῥιθύμνιος | [- -]....όλαυ Ἀργεῖος | [- -]..αυ Ἀργεῖος | [- -]. Ἀριστονόω Ἀργεῖος | ³⁰ [- -]..N?]αυσικράτεος [Ἀ]ργεῖο[ς] | [- -]..α]νδρος Νεμονείου ν Κ[νώσιος?] | [- -]...σύνιος

⁵ Naxian (or Oaxian)(?) | ...ateos from Argos | ... from Argos | ...ios the Lacedaemonian | | from Argos | from Orchomenos | ... from Kynatha | ¹⁵ | ... from Phocis | ...from Orchomenos | ...from Sikya | ...from Orchomenos | from Mylasa | ... from Argos | the Lacedaemonian | ... the Mantinean | ... from Argos | from Argos | ... from

Rethymnon | ... from Argos | ...from Argos | Aristonoos from Argos | ³⁰ ... son of Nausikrates from Argos | ...andros son of Nemoneos from Knossos(?) |

This inscription, containing a list of names and patronymics and ethnics, dates from the third century and would appear to testify to the presence of three Cretan mercenaries in the service of Sparta:²⁶⁰ a man from Oaxos and, one or two other Cretans from Rethymnon (l. 25) and possibly Knossos (l. 31). There is no previous evidence in the literary or epigraphic record which may enable us to support a relationship between Sparta and the three *poleis*. Furthermore, the extremely fragmentary nature of the text, the lack of explicit references to King Cleomenes, along with the imprecise chronology²⁶¹ of the inscription, might create serious interpretative issues. Nonetheless, one should bear in mind that the aforementioned passage of Plutarch (*Cleom.* 6 2-3) and the inscription (reported above) constitute the only extant evidence which would point towards a continued interaction between Sparta and some Cretan *poleis* during Cleomenes' reign; additionally, the finding of the inscription in an Arcadian locale such as Tegea and the relatively short distance of the *polis* from Megalopolis - in which Cleomenes engaged in battle with the Achaean force - may bolster this assumption.

Moreover, another fragmentary inscription found in Messene (SEG 58 369 *cf.* SEG 60 435)²⁶² may provide indirect evidence about the continued relationship between Sparta and certain western Cretan *poleis*. This inscription, whose chronology is uncertain,²⁶³ testifies to an alliance of Messene with the Cretan states of Aptera, Eleutherna, Sibytos, Anopolis and possibly a fifth city, which has been identified with Phalasarna. If one includes this inscription in this context and accepts a later chronology, rather than the one proposed by Luraghi, one may support further the continued good relations (discussed in subsections 8.2.1 and 8.3.1) between Sparta and Messene – ally of the Cretan *poleis*. It has been argued, in this regard, that Aptera and Phalasarna featured among the Cretan

²⁶⁰ IG 5 2, 34; IC 2 p. 45; Marasco (1979) pp. 408-409.

²⁶¹ IG 5 2, 34 dates this inscription in c. 222; whereas IC 2 p. 45 and Marasco (1979) p. 408 date the inscription in the years between 331 and 224/3.

²⁶² Luraghi (2015) pp. 285-296 mentions this inscription while exploring the presence of federalism in Messenia.

²⁶³ Luraghi (2015) p. 287 dates this inscription in 300-250 BC.

poleis with which Sparta cultivated relations in the early third century (sections 5.4, 7.3 and 7.5). It is reasonable to argue that the relations continued for most of the third century BC and also with the kingdoms of Agis and Cleomenes.

Finally, we have previously discussed the presence and importance of Cretans in a momentous episode such as the siege of Sparta by Pyrrhus (7.3); if one accepts Plutarch's testimony (discussed above) and the information offered by the inscription found in Tegea, then the continued Spartan interaction with some Cretan *poleis* is further strengthened. Arguably, there are no previous contacts in the third century and in the earlier periods between Sparta and the two or three *poleis* named in the two inscriptions; nevertheless, the pairing of inscriptions (IC 1 9, 84-87 = Schmitt n°584; IC 2 12.20 = Schmitt n°501; IC 3 3, 24-27 = Schmitt n°502; IC 4, 229 = Schmitt n°498 = SEG 13 465; IC 3 4, 86 = Schmitt n°579) found in other Cretan locales with a passage of Polybius (2 66 6), may enable us to obtain some intimations with regards to the political alignment of Cretan *poleis* with Macedonia in the island and to establish further putative links between Sparta and the Cretan states mentioned in the inscription from Tegea.

| Spartan Character | Chronology | <i>Polis</i> |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Archidamus III | c. 346 | Lyttos |
| Cleonymus | c. 279 | Polyrrhenia, Phalasarna |
| Areus I | c. 272/ c. 265-4 | Gortyn, Aptera, Polyrrhenia |
| Acrotatus II | n/a | n/a |
| Agis IV | n/a | n/a |
| Cleomenes III | c. 222 | Oaxos, Rethymnon, Knossos |

Table 5: Timetable of Spartan contacts with some Cretan *poleis*.

In this regard, two inscriptions found respectively in Eleutherna (IC 2, 12 20 = Schmitt n°501) and Ierapitna (IC 3 3, 24-27 = Schmitt n°502) feature alliance treaties with Antigonos Doson and the recruitment by the king of mercenaries from the two Cretan *poleis*. It has been argued²⁶⁴ that the Antigonos mentioned in the inscriptions is Antigonos Doson. However, there are no indications in the inscriptions which may corroborate this

²⁶⁴ IC.2 12 20; Schmitt n°501; IC 3 3, 24-27; Schmitt n°502; Marasco (1979) p. 408.

assumption; moreover, the fragmentary nature of the inscriptions appears to undermine the relationship between the *poleis* and Antigonos Doson. Nonetheless, the testimony of Polybius (2 66, 6), combined with an inscription from Gortyn (IC 4, 229 = Schmitt n°498 = SEG 13 465), supports this relationship. The inscription contains an alliance agreement between Demetrius II and Gortyn; while the passage of Polybius (2 66, 6) reveals the presence of Cretan mercenaries recruited by Doson in the battle of Sellasia. Polybius does not provide information about the exact provenance of these Cretan mercenaries; however, the evidence accumulated and examined so far, points to the large-scale recruitment of Cretan mercenaries by both Macedonia and Sparta.

In the previous chapter (section 8.3), we have examined the engagement of Sparta with the *polis* of Gortyn and, above all, the role of King Areus in the conflict between the Cretan *polis* and its main competitor for hegemony in the island, Knossos. From the scanty and circumstantial literary and epigraphic evidence regarding Cleomenes, it is hardly possible to identify the specific Cretan *poleis* with which Sparta was cultivating relations. However, from the information gathered so far, one may conclude that Sparta was pursuing a policy of engagement with some Cretan *poleis* during the reign of Cleomenes and, more importantly, was possibly interacting with one of the major powers in Crete, Knossos. These interactions were mostly of a military nature. Finally, this information, combined with the literary and epigraphic evidence accumulated and scrutinised in the previous chapters, supports the continuity of relations between Sparta and some Cretan *poleis*, along with the importance of a single Spartan individual in these interactions. As has been argued previously, throughout the third century two other outstanding Spartan personalities such as Areus and Cleonymus were involved in crucial Cretan matters and were explicitly selected to perform military and diplomatic duties of the utmost importance. This shows that single Spartan individuals played a significant role in foreign political undertakings.

7.3.4 The alliance between Aratus and Antigonos Doson

The testimonies of Plutarch (*Cleom.* 14 1-2; 16 4, 5; 17 3) and Polybius (2 48-50) offer valuable information about the continued Spartan interest in certain Peloponnesian locales such as Mantinea and Pellene, the considerable authority achieved by Cleomenes inside the Peloponnese, and the concerns that his expansionism generated inside the

Peloponnese. This expansionism (discussed below) seems to have triggered the serious concerns of Aratus, who asked Antigonos Doson for help in order to contain Cleomenes' hegemonic ambitions. As shall be demonstrated, Realism will be useful to get a sense of the formation of this significant alliance and of the struggle between Aratus and Cleomenes.

Plutarch (*Cleom.* 14 1) suggests to us that the Mantineans asked Cleomenes for help and that, once he entered the city, they expelled the Achaean garrison and put themselves in his hands. The defeat of the Achaeans is also reported in the biography of Aratus (39 1), which only features the conquest of the city by Cleomenes. Arguably, the late and non-historical narrative of Plutarch is insufficient to demonstrate the significance of this conquest; but, the severe defeat of the Achaeans in Mantinea, and the initiative of the Mantineans to ask Cleomenes to intervene in order to free themselves of the Achaean garrison, are also featured in Polybius' account (2 58, 4). Polybius highlights the treacherous nature of the political action performed by the Mantineans and condemns their behaviour: the Mantineans betrayed the League, put to death the soldiers of the garrison and put themselves in Cleomenes' hands. The interest of Sparta in this territory, and the desire of Cleomenes to intervene in Mantinean affairs, point to a continuity in Spartan foreign policy: moreover, as has been discussed above (subsection 8.2.3), king Agis IV had sought to conquer Mantinea and was the royal individual deployed by the Spartan governing bodies in order to carry out this expedition. However, Cleomenes' case seems to indicate his larger powers and his significant authority on the international stage. In fact, he was asked by the city to intervene and, according to Plutarch (*Cleom.* 14 2), he was the one restoring their laws and constitution. Moreover, another passage of Plutarch (*Cleom.* 17 3) testifies to the conquest of Pellene during Cleomenes' invasion of Achaia. According to the biographer, Pellene was the first city to be conquered and to be emptied of its Macedonian garrison. The evidence, gathered and examined in this chapter, shows a remarkable continuity of interest in certain Peloponnesian locales in Spartan foreign political plans: Megalopolis, Mantinea and Pellene were selected targets of Spartan expansionism during the reigns of both Agis and Cleomenes.

Furthermore, the pairing of Plutarch (*Cleom.* 16 4-5) and Polybius (2 49-50) reveals the strong personal ambitions of Cleomenes and offers valuable information about the reasons which brought to the creation of the alliance between Aratus and Antigonos Doson. Plutarch (16 4-5), in particular, reveals the strong opposition of Aratus to

Cleomenes' ambitious plan to restore the ancient state of the Peloponnese. Aratus decided to invite Antigonos into the Peloponnese and to grant access to the Macedonians in order to frustrate Cleomenes' plan. This significant Spartan expansionism also emerges in the earlier account of Polybius (2 49-50). The author confirms the desire of Cleomenes to expand Sparta's power and suggests that through his policy he aimed to conquer the entirety of Greece: the Peloponnese was only one of his objectives. In effect, it has been observed the consistent endeavour by Sparta to expand its territorial capability and to restore its authority inside the peninsula. In this struggle for supremacy, Sparta, under Cleomenes, and the Achaean League, led by Aratus, were the main competitors. One may conclude that Cleomenes' expansionism and desire to restore Sparta's supremacy inside the Peloponnese triggered the concerns of Aratus and the formation of this alliance. To this extent, the evidence examined in this chapter reveals the validity of Realism²⁶⁵ in explaining interstate behaviours: the growing power of a state, along with its expansionist ambitions, and the threats they may have posed to the existence of a smaller state such as the Achaean League, were the essential elements which motivated the creation of an alliance with a superpower such as Macedonia. Nonetheless, the role of single individuals in foreign policy such as Aratus and Cleomenes constitutes a crucial aspect overlooked by Realism.

7.4 Conclusions

The epigraphic and literary evidence utilised to frame this study has shown the leadership and significance of two Spartan individuals in foreign policy, Agis IV and Cleomenes III. Agis was deployed by the ephorate in order to carry out military expeditions of the utmost importance. Despite the scanty literary sources portraying the passive agency of the king, we have also shown his leadership in numerous military operations at Pellene, Megalopolis and Mantinea. Moreover, the strong animosity between Agis and another important character, Aratus, has shown the centrality of these individuals in the international scenario. This rivalry continued in the longer reign of Cleomenes III and made the Peloponnesian landmass a bipolar environment in which Sparta and the Achaean League were seeking to achieve hegemony. Moreover, Cleomenes III, unlike Agis IV, was able to overpower the ephorate and act independently in foreign political

²⁶⁵ Waltz (1979) pp. 92-93, 104-105; Walt (1987) pp. 23-27; Mearsheimer and Walt (2007) pp. 225-226, 344-345.

matters. His strong personal ambitions and outstanding authority on the international stage of the late third century have shown the esteem of Sparta in the international scenario and the strong continuity of its foreign policy. In this regard, Spartan interest in the same Peloponnesian locales, as shown by Agis' reign, and the continued interaction of Sparta with some Cretan *poleis*, have demonstrated that Sparta was able to interact meaningfully with the wider world and pose a threat to other Peloponnesian states.

Realism has revealed itself to be a valuable interpretative tool to get a sense of the consistent struggle for hegemony inside the Peloponnese. The desire of states to increase their territorial capability, the creation of alliances and the consistent recourse to warfare were symptoms of the perennial struggle for power in which Hellenistic states engaged. However, the sources examined in this study have shown that, in making important foreign political decisions, the power travelled among small networks of individuals (kings ephors) before activating the start of military expeditions (subsection 8.3.2). Moreover, it has been demonstrated that smaller networks of individuals operated outside Sparta and through friendship ties could cultivate interstate contacts: the case of Nicagoras and Archidamus (8.2.1) is important in this sense. Finally, the reassessment of the sources has shown the significance and esteem of the kings object of this chapter, Agis and Cleomens, on the international stage and the subtle nature of their agency in Spartan foreign policy.

8. Nabis and the Wider World

8.1 Introduction

This chapter explores Spartan foreign policy following the demise of the reign of Cleomenes III. It assesses foreign political plans carried out with other peculiar Spartan characters of the third century, King Lykourgos, the regent Machanidas, and King Nabis. The assessment of foreign political actions performed by Nabis occupies a larger portion of this study: the extant evidence (listed below) at our disposal is larger than the one concerning Lykourgos and Machanidas. Nonetheless, the examination of the scanty evidence of foreign political plans, in which Lykourgos and Machanidas were the main protagonists, provides us with more room to address further the issue of continuity or change in the way in which the Spartan governing bodies (discussed in subsection 9.2.1) performed their foreign plans. Exploring these topics enables us to evaluate the nature of the agency of the three characters and to analyse the role of the Spartan governing bodies (ephors, kings) in the undertaking of foreign political plans: whether the three personalities were active or passive agents of broader Spartan power networks is a question that is addressed further below. Moreover, the evidence employed to frame this study allows us to evaluate the nature of Spartan interactions with other Mediterranean powers (discussed below) and their extent.

Polybius and Livy represent the main sources for this neglected period of Spartan history. In resorting to these narratives, one should bear in mind the interpretative issues they may raise: Polybius of Megalopolis,²⁶⁶ son of the Achaean League general Lycortas,²⁶⁷ and advocate of the Achaean league, constitutes the main original source²⁶⁸ of the later accounts (Livy, Plutarch, Pausanias) employed in this study. His bias against Machanidas and the later character of Nabis - defined by him as tyrants - ²⁶⁹ along with the negative portrayal (8.2.2 and 8.3.1 below) of their undertakings, are only two of the symptoms of his patriotic and hostile stance towards the Spartan personalities of the last decades of the third century. Nonetheless, *Histories* is the closest account in time to the events described,

²⁶⁶ Walbank (1957) pp. 1-2; Texier (1975) p. 15; Eckstein (1995) pp. 1-2; Shipley (2000) p. 7; Cartledge (2002) p. 56.

²⁶⁷ Walbank (1957) pp. 1-2; Shimron (1972) p. 81; Texier (1975) p. 15; Eckstein (1995) pp. 3-4; Shipley (2000) p. 8.

²⁶⁸ Oliva (1971) pp. 274-275; Shimron (1972) pp. 70, 101; Texier (1975) p. 14; Eckstein (1987) p. 233; Shipley (2000) p. 8; Cartledge (2002) pp. 56, 60.

²⁶⁹ Oliva (1971) p. 275; Shimron (1972) p. 99; Texier (1975) pp. 11, 24-25; Forrest (1980) p. 148; Karafotias (1995) p. 106; Shipley (2000) p. 148; Cartledge (2002) pp. 56, 60; Pomeroy (2002) p. 89; Kennell (2010) p. 177; Stewart (2017, forthcoming).

and he consulted eye-witness testimonies in order to create and supplement sections of his work; therefore, this narrative, in absence of contradictory evidence, may be considered sound and instrumental in framing this case study. The interpretative issues raised by Polybius are further complicated by the use of his *Histories* by the Paduan Livy:²⁷⁰ the author, in generating his account, is mainly concerned to celebrate the glory and the role of Rome on the international stage. However, Livy is the only available source which enables us to have access to lost information from Polybius' work: this information, as shown below, is invaluable to assess the character of Nabis and his engagement with the wider world. It is worth remembering that lost information of Polybius' work would be otherwise unknown without Livy. Moreover, despite their late and non-historical nature, the narratives of Plutarch and Pausanias may provide some insights about Spartan interactions with locales situated inside and outside the Peloponnese (discussed at 8.3.1, 8.3.2 and 8.3.3 below) with the reign of Nabis. Finally, the analysis and combination of the inscriptions with the literary accounts will offer some potential to investigate Spartan engagement with some Cretan *poleis* and Delos.

The nature of the alliances between Sparta and other states (8.3.2) is another aspect enlightened by Realism: the constant creation of alliances and their ephemeral²⁷¹ nature are factors highlighted by this theory. The creation of the coalitions was motivated by the desire of Sparta to increase its influence inside the Peloponnese and beyond. However, this analysis points to the more nuanced nature of Spartan foreign policy: in making important political decisions, smaller networks of individuals (ephors, kings) were crucially involved. We can see this in the transition of the royal power to Lykourgos (subsection 8.2.1). Moreover, the assessment of the rapport between peculiar Spartan personalities (mentioned above) with some of the Spartan governing bodies (ephorate) represents an important caveat that points to the subtle distribution of power between Spartan entities. Moreover, as will be demonstrated, interstate interactions were indeed characterised by struggle for hegemony and warfare, but also by other interstate contacts in which cooperation and acts of benefaction were central (subsection 8.3.3).

²⁷⁰ Texier (1975) p. 14; Shipley (2000) p. 368; Cartledge (2002) p. 56.

²⁷¹ Mearsheimer (2001) pp. 34-35; Eckstein (2006) p. 28; Mearsheimer and Walt (2007) pp. 225-226, 344-345; Mearsheimer (2010) p. 78; Lebow (2010) p. 61.

The few important contributions²⁷² have addressed issues related to this poorly documented period of Spartan history. The urban transformations of Sparta under Nabis' reign,²⁷³ the social reforms introduced during his reign, the way in which these reforms differed from Cleomenes' social and military arrangements,²⁷⁴ and the reforms advanced by Nabis in Argos,²⁷⁵ represent the main topics which have been explored in earlier studies. Some of these studies have adopted a positivist approach:²⁷⁶ this was based on the acceptance of the written sources related to this nebulous period. Nabis' identity, the nature of his royalty,²⁷⁷ and Spartan foreign policy under his reign, stand as issues which have been tangentially addressed by the latest significant contributions.²⁷⁸ These have focused their attention on the narratives of this period and on Roman expansionism in the Peloponnese and in the Greek East more generally.²⁷⁹

This chapter features two sections: the first portion (section 8.2) scrutinises the characters of King Lykourgos (subsection 8.2.1) and Machanidas (subsection 8.2.2). It will explore Spartan foreign political plans which, according to the evidence discussed below, comprehended Peloponnesian locales such as Argos, Megalopolis, Messenia, Tegea, and Mantinea. In discussing these topics, I shall follow a chronological order, as this will enable me to tackle the issue of continuity or change in Spartan foreign policy of the third century in a systematic manner: as demonstrated in subsections 8.2.1, 8.2.2, 8.3.1 and 8.3.3, the evidence employed to build this study will eventually confirm a remarkable continuity of interest in certain locales situated inside and outside the Peloponnese, which characterised Spartan foreign policy of the third century BC. Additionally, this section will feature an evaluation of the agency of the two characters and, where the evidence permits, an analysis of their rapport with the ephorate. As we shall see, the evidence will point to the nuanced relationship between single individuals and broader Spartan power systems. This will eventually lead to the conclusion that smaller networks of individuals, represented by the Spartan governing bodies (ephorate, kings), played a major role and were significantly involved in the decision-making process of the appointment of one of

²⁷² Chrimes (1949) pp. 24-37; Jones (1967) pp. 157-164; Oliva (1971) pp. 269-298; Shimron (1972) pp. 79-122; Texier (1975) pp. 11-74; Forrest (1980) pp. 143-150; Karafotias (1995) pp. 105-111; Cartledge (2002) pp. 54-72; Eckstein (2008) pp. 323-324, 362; Stewart (2017, forthcoming).

²⁷³ Shimron (1972) p. 90; Cartledge (2002) pp. 65-66.

²⁷⁴ Oliva (1971) pp. 279-282; Shimron (1972) pp. 84-86, 88-90; Texier (1975) pp. 26-31; Cartledge (2002) pp. 65-66.

²⁷⁵ Oliva (1971) pp. 287-288; Shimron (1972) p. 96; Texier (1975) pp. 53-57.

²⁷⁶ Chrimes (1949) pp. 24-37; Jones (1967) pp. 157-164; Forrest (1980) pp. 143-150.

²⁷⁷ Texier (1975) pp. 14-15, 24-25; Cartledge (2002) p. 64.

²⁷⁸ Cartledge (2002) pp. 66-71; Eckstein (2008) pp. 323-324; Stewart (2017, forthcoming).

²⁷⁹ In particular, see Eckstein (2008) pp. 323-326.

the Spartan kings. The second section (8.3) offers a re-evaluation of Spartan foreign policy with Nabis and his engagement with the wider Hellenistic world. It will involve an assessment of foreign military expeditions undertaken in Megalopolis, Messene, Achaea, and Argos (discussed in subsection 8.3.1). Following this, it will provide an examination of the conducive factors which led to the creation of two alliances, the coalition between Nabis and Rome and the alliance between Nabis and Philip V; the second coalition led to rapid negotiations between Nabis and Flamininus (subsection 8.3.2). Lastly, it will offer a re-assessment of Spartan relationships with some Cretan *poleis* and with Delos (subsection 8.3.2).

8.2 Inside the Peloponnese: Lykourgos and Machanidas

Polybius (4 35-37; 5 5 1; 5 17 1-2) is the only available source which allows us to examine Lykourgos' character and foreign political actions undertaken during his reign. The source seems to point towards the nuanced rapport between the systems of powers of the kinship and the ephorate. This will corroborate the importance of smaller networks of individuals in Spartan decision-making and undermine the monolithic nature of states (9.2.1). Moreover, it will reveal a meaningful Spartan expansionism inside the Peloponnese and Sparta's attempt to conquer some locales in Argive territory, Megalopolis, and Messenia. The assessment of these expansionist endeavours, along with its comparison with the later expansionist attempts performed with Machanidas, will bolster the portrait of continuity of interest in certain Peloponnesian locales and in the Spartan strategy of exercise of control on locales inside and outside the Peloponnese, which characterised Spartan foreign policy throughout the third century. Polybius (10 41, 2; 11 11-18) provides invaluable information about foreign political actions undertaken with Machanidas; this information will be paired with the later testimonies of Livy (28 5; 28 7), Plutarch (*Phil.* 10), and Pausanias (8 50, 2) in order to address further the issue of continuity or change in Spartan foreign policy. The combination of the sources will again reveal an important Spartan expansionist endeavour and the hostilities between Sparta and the Achaean League. However, as will be discussed below, the extant evidence employed to explore Machanidas' character does not offer specifics about his agency and relationship with the Spartan governing bodies. Nonetheless, this character seems to have occupied a meaningful role in foreign political matters.

8.2.1 Lykourgos

Polybius (4 35) reports the climate of instability inside of Sparta following the end of Cleomenes' reign. In describing this turbulent period, which lasted for three years, Polybius highlights the need of the people and of the ephors to restore the Spartan kinship. In doing so, he points out the important role of the ephors in selecting the kings of Sparta: he states that they selected the young Agiad Agesipolis by following the traditional royal succession.²⁸⁰ However, in restoring the kingship, the source informs us that Lykourgos bribed the ephors by giving a drachm to each one of them in order to become son of Herakles and king of the Eurypontid house (4 35, 11). The analysis of the passage, however, shows that the ephors were the authorities in charge of appointing the kings: nonetheless, the bribery performed by Lykourgos shows his active role in the selective mechanism which led to his accession to the throne. From the only available information offered by Polybius, it would be hardly possible to define the agency of Lykourgos; but, one may deduce that Lykourgos, and not only the ephorate, may have played an important role in the process of transition of the royal power. The important role of the ephors in decision-making regarding the selection of the kings and the start of military expeditions has been previously discussed by Millender.²⁸¹ the classical period, in particular, saw King Cleomenes I as a powerful personality who could intervene in the decision process of the appointment of Spartan kings and who was selected to undertake military expeditions abroad. The evidence deployed in this subsection confirms this picture of continuity in the way in which decisions were formulated in the third century BC: it points to the importance of both ephors and the kings in the articulation of foreign political decisions and in the appointment of the Spartan kings. Polybius, in fact, suggests the mechanism involved in the decision of undertaking a military expedition in Argive territory (4 36, 3): he highlights the common consent that needed to be reached by both the kings and the ephors so as to make the start of the expedition binding. Lastly, a successful military expedition in this territory may have provided Sparta with the possession of Argos, traditional enemy of Sparta.

²⁸⁰ Oliva (1971) p. 268; Shimron (1972) p. 73; Cartledge (2002) p. 57.

²⁸¹ Millender (2002) pp. 11-14.

Additionally, if one accepts Polybius' information (4 35), in which it is reported that the Aetolian Machatas urged the kings and the ephors to go to war against the Achaeans, then this argument is further strengthened. Therefore, the kings were involved meaningfully in the decision to perform military expeditions. This reveals that the Spartan governing bodies (ephorate and kings) were crucial in the decision-making process regarding foreign policy and the appointment of the kings. Lastly, it is worth bearing in mind that King Lykourgos was the royal character who undertook this expedition; in this regard, Polybius (4 36) records the success that he achieved in seizing four Argive locales, Polichna, Prasiae, Leucaea and Cyphanta. The interest in Argive territory supports the hypothesis of a strong continuity in certain locales situated inside the Peloponnese in Spartan foreign policy throughout the third century BC. In effect, the biography of Cleomenes (Plut. *Cleom.* 4 4) – deployed in subsection 8.3.2 – reveals that Cleomenes III performed an expedition in Argolis; while according to Polyaeus (29 1), in the years between 277 and 275, Cleonymus conquered the Argive Troezen thanks to a stratagem (discussed at 6.4 above). This evidence, in sum, corroborates the portrait of a remarkable continuity in Spartan foreign policy during the third century. The said continuity seems to have pervaded foreign political actions carried out under Machanidas (explained in the next subsection) and Nabis (subsections 9.3.1 and 9.3.3).

Furthermore, Polybius (4 37) informs us of the military expedition led by Lykourgos in Megalopolis in 219:²⁸² he clearly states that Lykourgos, by encamping in Athenaeum and by lying siege to it, wished to follow Cleomenes' plan of conquest of this territory. The author offers no specifics about the way in which the military operations were carried out and their outcome; nonetheless, Polybius is the only available source which informs us of this expedition. Moreover, this evidence, combined with the literary and epigraphic information examined in the previous chapters, reinforces the continuity of interest in certain Peloponnesian locales in Spartan foreign policy and, most importantly, Spartan continued interest in the Megalopolitan territory. One should not forget that Cleomenes III (discussed in subsection 8.3.2), Agis IV (8.2.2), and Acrotatus II (8.2.2) were the other royal personalities who undertook military operations in the same locale. The interest in this territory will be eventually confirmed in the assessment of Spartan foreign policy under Nabis (discussed below). Finally, Polybius (5 5, 1) reports the Spartan invasion of

²⁸² Oliva (1971) p. 269; Shimron (1972) p. 74; Cartledge (2002) pp. 57-58.

Messenia in 218²⁸³ and the subsequent plundering of Tegea by Lykourgos (5 17, 1-2). There are no other intimations about these expeditions: Polybius only suggests that the Messenian invasion brought no important achievements in terms of Spartan territorial expansion. Nevertheless, this scanty information, paired with the testimonies examined in the previous chapter, points towards an expansionist Spartan foreign policy inside the Peloponnese and to the continued hostility between Sparta and the Achaean League. These hostilities continued after the reign of Lykourgos (discussed below). The evidence accumulated and examined so far shows that Sparta was seeking to conquer the same Peloponnesian locales and territories throughout the third century: the continued and strong interest from the Spartan governing bodies in seizing these territories points to a significant Spartan expansionism and desire to achieve hegemony inside the Peloponnese.

8.2.2 Machanidas

The literary sources (Pol. 10 41, 2; 11 11-18; Liv. 28 5; 28 7; Plut. *Phil.* 10; Paus. 8 50, 2) represent the only information about Machanidas' character and his engagement in foreign policy. However, they do not offer insights with regard to the relationships between this character and the Spartan governing bodies. Nonetheless, the combination of the aforementioned narratives in a complementary fashion reveals a persistent Spartan expansionism inside the Peloponnese, along with important military expeditions led by Machanidas in Argive territory and Mantinea. Moreover, they provide us with valuable insights into the international stage in which Sparta was operating; lastly, they strengthen the portrait of continuity of Spartan foreign policy in the third century.

Polybius (10 41, 2) informs us that Machanidas commanded the expedition into Argive territory in 207:²⁸⁴ Spartan expansionism compelled the Achaeans to ask Philip V for help, since the Spartan army led by Machanidas was ravaging the Argive frontier. In particular, Polybius highlights the Spartan threat and the leadership of Machanidas in this circumstance. He reports that the Achaeans, aware of Spartan expansionism and of Sparta's alliance with the Aetolians, decided to ask a superpower such as Macedonia to

²⁸³ Oliva (1971) pp. 270-271; Shimron (1972) p. 76; Cartledge (2002) p. 58.

²⁸⁴ Oliva (1971) p. 273; Cartledge (2002) p. 60.

intervene. Clearly, the coalition may have posed a threat to the existence²⁸⁵ of the Achaean League. This information seems to bolster the validity of Realism and its effectiveness in explaining this foreign political action: Sparta was seeking to regain some important territorial positions so as to achieve hegemony inside the Peloponnese. Polybius' information is also reported by Livy (28 5; 28 7), who communicates the ensuing retreat of Machanidas from Argive territory due to the arrival of Philip V at the Argive Heraea. Whether Machanidas acted independently or on behalf of the Spartan governing bodies in order to perform this military expedition represents an unanswered question: in none of the available sources is reported the intervention of the ephors or of other Spartan governing bodies in this important foreign matter. But, it is important to bear in mind that Polybius, in recording these events, tends to prioritise individuals rather than networks of people. In fact, the fragmentary book 10 sees Scipio compared to Lysurgus.

The military expedition led by Machanidas against Mantinea and the clash in the same locale in 207²⁸⁶ - in which he was killed on the battlefield - is relatively widely documented by the literary evidence (Pol. 11 11-18; Plut. *Phil.* 10; Paus. 8 50, 2). Polybius and Plutarch are the most detailed accounts of this foreign military expedition, while Pausanias only reports the expedition of Machanidas and his death. However, despite Polybius being the fuller source with regards to the military operations in Mantinea, Plutarch's biography of Philopoemen is the only surviving account which underlines the expansionist ambitions of Machanidas and his intention to restore Spartan hegemony inside the Peloponnese. In effect, the sources gathered and examined so far support the idea of consistent Spartan expansionism in the region and reveal the significant role played by single Spartan individuals: these individuals were constantly involved and engaged in foreign matters of the utmost importance. Furthermore, the three accounts contribute to bolstering the pervasive continuity of Spartan foreign policy throughout the third century BC: Mantinea may have represented a locale of particular interest for Sparta in this period. In this regard, the evidence assessed in the previous chapter reveals former Spartan expeditions led by peculiar individuals in this locale, namely Cleomenes III (subsection 7.3.4), Agis IV (7.2.3), and Archidamus IV (7.2). Last

²⁸⁵ Waltz (1979) p. 104; Mearsheimer (2001) pp. 3-4; Eckstein (2006) pp. 4, 14; Eckstein (2008) pp. 12-13; Mearsheimer (2010) p. 80.

²⁸⁶ Oliva (1971) p. 278; Shipley (2000) p. 147; Cartledge (2002) p. 61; Kennell (2010) p. 177; Stewart (2017, forthcoming).

but not least, if one considers that two Spartan characters of the third century lost their lives in Mantinea, Agis IV (7.2.3) and Machanidas (discussed in the previous subsection), then this persistent Spartan interest in certain locales and the continued nature in the way in which Spartan foreign policy was articulated are further strengthened. This continuity seems to have pervaded foreign political plans undertaken by Nabis (discussed in subsections 8.3.1, 8.3.2 and 8.3.3).

8.3 Inside and Outside the Peloponnese: Nabis

This final section features an evaluation of Nabis' character and Spartan engagement with the wider world. The literary and epigraphic evidence (reported in the subsections below) will portray a significant Spartan expansionism: this policy involved locales situated not only inside the Peloponnese (subsection 8.3.1), but also outside (8.3.3). The evidence points to a meaningful Spartan interaction with major and minor states: as will be argued, under Nabis (c. 207-192), Sparta was striving to expand its influence across the Mediterranean and was able to pose a threat to other powers. Moreover, it will confirm the significant continuity of interest in certain locales situated inside and outside the Peloponnese and in the way in which Sparta performed its foreign plans. In particular, the holistic assessment of the evidence employed in this chapter will eventually promote the strong portrait of continuity which characterised Spartan foreign political plans in the last decades of the third century BC. The creation of some coalitions such as the alliances between Sparta and Rome and Sparta and Macedonia (discussed at 8.3.2) was a mere consequence of the struggle for hegemony,²⁸⁷ which dominated the Hellenistic Mediterranean. States were forced to gather in alliances to defend themselves from external threats and counter hegemonic ambitions of other powers: Sparta, as discussed below, figured among these powers. Nonetheless, interstate interactions featured broad networks of power in which cooperation and solidarity occurred and seem to have been paramount: during the reign of Nabis, Sparta was involved in these networks (see 8.3.3 below) and interacted meaningfully with the wider world. This, in contrast with previous interstate relations studies (see 2.2 above) points towards the presence of subtle networks of power in which cooperation and solidarity occupied an important place.

²⁸⁷ Mearsheimer (2001) pp. 2, 4, 10; Eckstein (2006) pp. 28, 51, 56; Eckstein (2008) p. 20; Wohlforth (2008) p. 139; Mearsheimer (2010) p. 78.

8.3.1 Inside the Peloponnese

The pairing of literary (Pol. 13 8, 3-7; 21 9, 1; 16 1-3; 18 17, 1-5; 13 7; Liv. 34 32, 16; 31 25, 3; 32 38, 1-9; 32 39, 1-10; Plut. *Phil.* 13) and epigraphic (*Syll.*³ 595) evidence offers valuable information with regards to Spartan foreign policy inside the Peloponnese. Unfortunately, there is no evidence of a relationship between Nabis and other Spartan governing bodies. In this regard, Livy (34 32, 1) is the only available source which suggests Nabis' illegitimate accession to the power and the young king Pelops' exclusion from important political matters due to his young age;²⁸⁸ while the later account of Diodorus (27 1) reports the assassination of Pelops - son of Lykourgos - by Nabis. Nonetheless, the assessment of the aforementioned sources points to a predominant continuity in the way in which Sparta framed its foreign policy and to Nabis' hegemonic ambitions inside the region. The selected targets of his expansionism were Megalopolis, Messene, Achaea, and Argos.

Polybius provides us with invaluable information about the causes which triggered the battle of Megalopolis (13 8, 3-7; 21 9, 1) in 204.²⁸⁹ He records the contention that arose in Megalopolis due to a theft of one of Nabis' best bred horses by some Boeotian soldiers. Polybius does not offer insights about the motives which drove the Boeotians to visit Megalopolitan territory; moreover, there are no intimations about possible relations between Sparta and Boeotia. Nonetheless, Nabis' long pursuit of the soldiers to Megalopolis and his eventual refusal to wait for the sentence delivered by the Megalopolitan magistrates with regards to the soldiers' misconduct seem to have aggravated the hostilities between Megalopolis and Sparta. Moreover, the sympathetic attitude displayed by the Megalopolitan people towards the Boeotian soldiers may suggest good relations between Megalopolis and Boeotia in this circumstance, but bad relations with Sparta. The hostilities between Nabis and Megalopolis, along with their subsequent conflict, are confirmed in another passage (21 9, 1); in this passage is mentioned the contribution of Diophanes the Megalopolitan in the military operations. This expansionism is also attested by Plutarch (*Phil.* 13 1-3), who reports the absence of Philopoemen during Nabis' attack and his departure for Crete (see 9.3.3 below). Last but

²⁸⁸ Oliva (1971) p. 278; Shimron (1972) p. 84; Cartledge (2002) p. 60.

²⁸⁹ Oliva (1971) p. 283; Shimron (1972) p. 81; Texier (1975) pp. 37-38.

not least, this information contributes to confirming the continuity of interest in certain Peloponnesian locales in Spartan foreign policy: in effect, as discussed previously, the Spartan interest in Megalopolis is confirmed by the undertaking of military expeditions in the same locale by King Lykourgos (8.2.1), Cleomenes III (7.3.2), Agis IV (7.2.2), and Acrotatus II (7.2.2).

In addition, the literary sources (Pol. 16 1-3; Liv. 34 32, 16) provide valuable insights into Spartan military expedition in Messene in 201²⁹⁰ and its conquest by Nabis. Polybius, in describing this expedition, adopts a condemnatory tone. He exposes the treacherous nature of Nabis' attack on Messene and his strong hegemonic ambitions; while Livy only communicates the unexpected Spartan conquest of Messene. Spartan conquest of Messene is also attested by an inscription (*Syll.*³ 595) found in Pergamon. This inscription contains a dedication by King Eumenes II of Pergamon,²⁹¹ who freed Messene from the rule of Nabis in 195. This, therefore, demonstrates that Sparta was pursuing a consistent expansionist foreign policy inside the region. Moreover, the evidence (analysed below) points to interstate mechanisms featuring friendship relations facilitated by the institution of *proxenia* (discussed at 8.3.3) were also significantly involved. As shown below, these networks of *proxenoi* characterised meaningfully interstate connections of the third century and, more importantly, Nabis was significantly involved in the dialogue among powers.

Finally, Livy is the only extant source which informs us of the following expedition of Nabis in Achaean territory in 200 (31 25, 3-4) and his conquest of Argos (32 38, 4-9).²⁹² The source does not reveal the exact Achaean locales in which he engaged in battle with Achaean forces: but, it exposes the significant threat posed by Nabis' expansionism and the concerns it may have raised among the delegates of the Peloponnesian states who were present at the Achaean council held in Argos. These concerns and the hegemonic ambitions, which led to the creation of alliances among a large number of states, will be discussed in the next subsection. Moreover, Nabis' conquest and rule of Argos are confirmed by Polybius (18 17, 1-5; 13 7), who reports the conquest of the city and the rule of Nabis' wife Apega; this narrative highlights the climate of terror and the violence allegedly exerted by the couple in extorting money from the people of Argos.²⁹³ Indeed,

²⁹⁰ Oliva (1971) p. 283; Shimron (1972) p. 87; Stewart (2017, forthcoming).

²⁹¹ Oliva (1971) p. 283; Cartledge (2002) p. 66.

²⁹² Oliva (1971) p. 286; Shimron (1972) p. 91; Cartledge (2002) p. 67.

²⁹³ Cartledge (2002) p. 63; Pomeroy (2002) p. 89; Kennell (2010) p. 178; Stewart (2017, forthcoming).

this description reveals Polybius' biased stance towards Nabis and his wife; however, this is the only available evidence which testifies to the conquest of Argos and to the rule of the city by Nabis and Apega. Lastly, Nabis' interest in Argos and Messene supports further the overall continuity in the way in which Sparta framed its foreign policy throughout the third century BC: Argos had been an object of Spartan interest under Lykourgos (8.2.1), Machanidas (8.2.2), Cleomenes III (8.2.1), and Cleonymus (5.4 and 8.2.1); while interest in Messenia is corroborated by the previous expedition of Lykourgos in 218 (8.2.1). In sum, the evidence, gathered and examined in this chapter, shows a remarkable continuity in Spartan foreign policy of the third century BC and Spartan persistence in achieving hegemony inside the Peloponnese.

8.3.2 The creation of alliances

The available literary evidence (Liv. 29 12; 32 38; 32 39) shows the creation of two coalitions in which Nabis was involved. It offers an overview of the international stage in which Hellenistic states operated and, most importantly, reveals Sparta's significant engagement with the Hellenistic superpowers of the century, Rome and Macedonia. The evidence shows that Sparta forged alliances with these two powers and was highly regarded in the international scenario. The said coalitions seem to have been created because of the merely pragmatic and self-interested policy²⁹⁴ of states striving to expand their territorial and military capabilities so as to attain hegemony; moreover, they gathered in alliances because of the concerns raised by expansionism and growing military and territorial power of Hellenistic states (discussed below). In performing this expansionist foreign policy, Nabis was able to compete with and pose a threat to other powers of the century.

Livy (29 12) provides invaluable information about the international stage of the last decade of the third century: Philip V was engaged in war with the Aetolians and compelled them to conclude a peace with him. According to Polybius, this arrangement was due to the growing power of Rome and, more specifically, to the impressive army led by Publius Sempronius, who was dispatched to provide the Aetolians with military assistance. The source portrays the significant stage of conflict in which Philip and Rome

²⁹⁴ Waltz (1979) pp. 92-93; Eckstein (2006) pp. 57, 179; Eckstein (2008) pp. 8-9; Lebow (2010) p. 61.

were vying for hegemony: Philip was seeking to conquer Apollonia immediately after the Roman change of plans. This was due to the swift change of position by the Aetolians. Once he arrived in Apollonia, Philip engaged in battle with the Roman force which was settled in that locality. In effect, Livy reveals the strong hegemonic ambitions of Rome and Macedonia, along with the self-interested nature of the alliance between Philip and the Aetolians: Macedonia and Rome were striving to conquer territories of the Eastern Mediterranean, while the Macedonian-Aetolian alliance was due to Roman significant expansionism and to its growing military capability. However, as discussed in previous studies (see subsections 2.1 and 2.2 above), Rome's intention was not just one of conquest, and Realism does not explain holistically the nature of its interactions: Rome was also engaged in forging alliances and friendships with other Hellenistic powers of the century in order to broaden its network of international partners. In these interstate interactions, the creation and invocation of old friendship ties was paramount. In fact, in the friendship between Sparta and Rome (discussed below), Nabis was received by Rome into *amicitia* and, later in 195, Nabis recalled his ancient agreement with Rome (Liv. 34 31, 5) to reinforce his claim. This network of friendships facilitated interstate contacts and shows the subtle nature of interstate interaction.

Moreover, in reporting the terms of the peace treaty of Phoenice (c. 205),²⁹⁵ Livy exposes the presence of Nabis among the Roman allies involved in the negotiations. These allies included a multitude of states, namely the Ilians, the Eleans, the Messenians, the Athenians, and Pergamon in the person of King Attalus I. This may indicate that Nabis was already an ally of Rome before the peace was concluded and that he was significantly involved in the struggle for hegemony featured by the Hellenistic Mediterranean. However, it is worth noticing that Livy is the only source which communicates this information; nonetheless, it has been contended²⁹⁶ that the combination of this chapter with another passage of Livy (26 24, 8) seems to suggest that in 211 Sparta was already an ally of Rome (confirmed by debate at Pol. 9 28-39 and Liv. 34 32, 1). In effect, if one gives Livy the benefit of the doubt, then it is possible to argue for a continuity in Spartan foreign plans with Nabis. In this regard, the aforementioned supposed alliance between Sparta and Rome, in which Machanidas - given his strong engagement (discussed at 8.2.2

²⁹⁵ Shimron (1972) p. 78; Cartledge (2002) p. 61; Eckstein (2008) pp. 122, 211.

²⁹⁶ Chrimes (1949) p. 28; Shimron (1972) p. 77; Cartledge (2002) p. 60.

above) in foreign policy - may have been the authority in charge of the military and foreign matters, bolsters this assumption.

Furthermore, Livy's account (32 38) enables us to evaluate the nature of the later alliance forged between Nabis and Philip in 197.²⁹⁷ This information reveals the high esteem in which Nabis was regarded by a Hellenistic king of the calibre of Philip V; moreover, it seems to bolster the grand hegemonic ambitions of Nabis and the proactive Spartan foreign policy undertaken throughout the third century BC. According to Livy, this treaty of alliance, was sealed by a promise of marriage between Nabis' own sons and Philip's daughters: this would have guaranteed Nabis possession of Argos, since the city is described by Livy as a property that Philip was struggling to maintain. By performing numerous military expeditions inside the Peloponnese, Nabis was seeking to restore the hegemonic role of Sparta inside the region; moreover, the considerably consistent and strong Spartan interest in this locale characterised foreign political plans undertaken not only under Nabis, but also under his predecessors (listed in subsection 8.3.1). In addition, by taking possession of Argos, he may have consolidated his position inside the Peloponnese and supported Philip's struggle against Rome. Hence, the evidence seems to show that it was in the advantage of both parties to conclude an alliance; but, it was clearly the pursuit of hegemony which drove Nabis' foreign policy. In fact, later in the same chapter (32 39), Livy reports the betrayal of Nabis: as soon as Nabis occupied Argos, he reopened negotiations with Flamininus. Nabis, as stated by Livy, now took all the possible steps to ensure that Philip lose the war against Rome. Among these steps, Nabis agreed to furnish a contingent of six hundred Cretans to the Romans. From the evidence gathered and examined so far, one may conclude that the nature of these alliances was ephemeral. But, these interactions seem to have been more diverse: the friendship between Rome and Sparta and the later invocation by Nabis of the ancestral agreement (*vetustissimum foedus*) are elements that point to a more complex interaction between states.

²⁹⁷ Oliva (1971) p. 286; Shimron (1972) p. 91; Cartledge (2002) p. 68.

8.3.3 Spartan relationships with some Cretan *poleis* and Delos

A re-assessment of the literary and epigraphic evidence involving Spartan relations with certain Cretan states and Delos generates a fertile ground to explore further the meaningful Spartan interaction with the wider world and the continuity in the ways in which Sparta performed its foreign plans. The evidence points towards the significant engagement of Nabis with some Cretan states, the continued nature of the Spartan relations with some of them, and the more nuanced interstate interactions, which occurred throughout the third century. In the said interactions, solidarity and cooperation were central.

Earlier scholarship²⁹⁸ has focused its attention on the political alignments of the Cretan *poleis* during Nabis' reign. In particular, it has been argued that there were two opposing blocs in the island; these were led respectively by Gortyn and Knossos.²⁹⁹ The Gortynian faction was an ally of the Achaeans, while the Knossian appears to have pursued a pro-Spartan foreign policy (explained below). Scholars have pointed out the struggle for supremacy between the two major powers of the island. Other important studies have highlighted the large-scale recruitment of Cretan mercenaries by Nabis.³⁰⁰ these have linked the said recruitment to his hegemonic ambitions. Therefore, the picture painted by the latest studies seems to bolster the importance in which Crete was held by Nabis. Specifically, the combination of literary and epigraphic evidence has allowed a reconstruction of the political scenario in which some Cretan *poleis* - which earlier in the third century had cultivated relations with Sparta (section 6.3 and subsection 7.3.3) - were involved: Aptera and Polyrrhenia were allies of Knossos, while Gortyn was hostile to Nabis.³⁰¹ The friendly relations between Gortyn and the Achaeans are testified by two inscriptions (SEG 3 313 = *Syll.*³ 594 = IG 4 497; IC 4 176). The first inscription contains a proxeny decree of Mycenae for Protinus of Gortyn, who was responsible for an attempt to save the Mycenaean *epheboi* who had been taken to Sparta by Nabis in 195.³⁰² The second inscription (IC 4 176) features a decree in which is reported a war between Knossos and Gortyn. Despite its uncertain chronology, in combination with a passage from Pausanias (8 50, 6), it suggests an alliance between Gortyn and Achaea. This

²⁹⁸ Errington (1969) pp. 38-39; Brulé (1978) pp. 49-50; Karafotias (1995) pp. 107-108.

²⁹⁹ Errington (1969) p. 40; Brulé (1978) p. 49; Karafotias (1995) p. 107.

³⁰⁰ Oliva (1971) pp. 286-287; Shimron (1972) pp. 90-91; Texier (1975) pp. 27-28; Cartledge (2002) p. 68.

³⁰¹ Errington (1969) p. 38; Karafotias (1995) p. 107.

³⁰² Errington (1969) p. 36; Karafotias (1995) pp. 107-108.

evidence, despite its interpretative issues, testifies to the hostility of Gortyn towards Knossos. Moreover, another inscription (IC 4 p. 23 *cf.* ISE n. 49) has been deployed³⁰³ to reinforce further and confirm the hypothesis of this political arrangement inside the island. This celebratory inscription, which belongs to the base of a statue, mentions a certain Telemnastos of Gortyn who occupied the position of commander of the Cretan ancillary troops employed in the Roman army during the war against Nabis in 195. This evidence, combined with the previous inscriptions, confirms the presence of an anti-Knossian party led by Gortyn. But, if one takes into account the inscription (IG 5 2, 34) found in Tegea (examined at 7.3.3 above), then the hypothesis of a pro-Spartan faction led by Knossos is further strengthened. This inscription has been neglected in the latest studies and its use corroborates a relationship between Sparta and Knossos. As discussed above, the inscription reports the presence of a soldier from Knossos and, possibly, two others from (probably) Oaxos and Rethymnon. Lastly, it may indicate the participation in the coalition of the cities of Oaxos and Rethymnon and point to the continuing relations between Sparta and Knossos since the battle of Sellasia (c. 222). In sum, the evidence assessed so far supports Nabis' broad engagement with some Cretan *poleis* and shows the military nature of the relationship. In this regard, the literary and epigraphic evidence reveals the continued resort by Sparta to Cretan *poleis* in order to recruit mercenaries throughout the third century and in the 190s. These mercenaries seem to have been recruited on a regular basis since the reign of King Areus I and their recruitment continued in the reigns of Cleomenes III and Nabis.

Furthermore, an inscription from Delos (*Syll.*³ 584 = IG 11 4 716) bolsters Spartan engagement with locales outside the Peloponnese and Nabis' significant role on the international stage. This inscription celebrates Nabis as *proxenos* and benefactor of the temple and the people of Delos (IG 11 4 716: ll. 9-10);³⁰⁴ moreover, it testifies to his continued assistance towards the island during his reign. Unfortunately, there is no other information in the literary or epigraphic record which may enable us to explore further the relation between Nabis and the island, or the nature of the assistance offered to the Delians. Moreover, the literary and epigraphic evidence shows no previous contacts between Sparta and Delos. Nonetheless, this represents the only available evidence with regards to Sparta's engagement with Delos and to Nabis' presence and relation with the

³⁰³ Karafotias (1995) p. 110.

³⁰⁴ Oliva (1971) p. 287; Shimron (1972) p. 98; Texier (1975) p. 31; Cartledge (2002) p. 65.

island. This evidence forms a pattern of euergetism and benefaction that characterised interstate interactions of the period and points to a more diverse interaction between states. What is remarkable in this circumstance was that Sparta figured in this network of benefactions in which superpowers of the calibre of Rome were constantly involved. In effect, Flamininus appears in the capacity of *proxenos* in an inscription (*Syll.*³ 585) from Delphi (c. 189/8) and as a benefactor in a dedication from Aristainos found in Corinth (ISE 37). Earlier studies have deployed the inscription from Delos to undermine Nabis' image of tyrant³⁰⁵ conveyed by the literary sources (Polybius, Livy) and to support his ambition to provide Sparta with a naval force³⁰⁶ capable of competing with the other Hellenistic powers. However, a combination of the epigraphic evidence employed in this subsection shows that Nabis was certainly involved in networks in which the struggle for hegemony and a desire to increase military power were paramount; but, the evidence also seems to point towards the Spartan presence in an environment in which solidarity and cooperation were involved. The aforementioned decree of *proxenia* testifies to a connection between Nabis and Delos: while the decree of *proxenia* that mentions Protinus of Gortyn and his contribution to Mycenae also shows a meaningful relationship between Gortyn and Mycenae. Therefore, there is no compelling evidence that could support the self-interested nature that could have governed these relations: whether Nabis intended to exploit Delos as a strategic locale to recruit mercenaries, or as a naval base to engage in piracy, are assumptions which cannot be decided for lack of further sources. Nonetheless, the available evidence reveals a more nuanced network of contacts in which Nabis was able to interact.

8.4 Conclusions

The literary and epigraphic evidence employed to frame this study has highlighted a significant continuity in the ways in which Sparta was framing its foreign plans throughout the last decades of the third century under Lykourgos, Machanidas and Nabis. These characters dominated foreign political matters and were consistently involved in military expeditions of the utmost importance. This chapter has shown Spartan continued interest in some Peloponnesian locales such as Mantinea, Megalopolis, Messene, and

³⁰⁵ Oliva (1971) p. 278; Texier (1975) p. 31; Cartledge (2002) p. 65.

³⁰⁶ Oliva (1971) p. 287; Texier (1975) p. 31.

Argos; moreover, it has demonstrated a continued relation between Sparta and the major power of Crete, Knossos. Spartan continued relationships with some Cretan *poleis* characterised the third century and featured the constant presence of a particular Spartan individual: the inscriptions gathered and examined in this case study have shown Nabis' presence in Cretan matters and the military nature of these relations. The continuity of interest in Peloponnesian locales shows that Sparta was seeking to restore its role of hegemon within the region and that was competing with larger Hellenistic powers such as Rome and Macedonia.

Sparta was striving to restore its role of leader inside the region by expanding its territorial and military capabilities. The evaluation of the motives which triggered these coalitions has shown that Sparta was highly regarded in the international stage and was able to negotiate agreements with the superpowers of the time. Nonetheless, the assessment of the scanty evidence regarding Lykourgos has pointed out the importance that smaller networks of individuals had in making important foreign political decisions and in appointing the kings of Sparta. A single individual such as Lykourgos was able to exert influence on Spartan domestic and foreign matters of the utmost importance. These included the mechanism which led to the succession to the throne and the consent that needed to be reached in order to start a foreign expedition. Lastly, states seem to have operated in a more complex environment in which solidarity and cooperation occupied an important place: the *proxenia* decree in which Nabis is mentioned and the broad networks in which cities cooperated and communicated with other states represent other crucial issues that Realism *per se* has not been able to address. This has been evidenced in the *amicitia* forged between Nabis and Rome and the later invocation of Nabis of the ancient agreement concluded with Rome (discussed in subsection 8.3.2) and in the decree found in Delos (8.3.3) in which Nabis is celebrated as benefactor and *proxenos* of the Delians.

9. Consequences and Limitations

The literary and epigraphic evidence deployed to frame this study has shown a meaningful Spartan interaction with the wider world in the third century. Locales situated inside and outside the Peloponnese were involved in the interstate dialogue with the *polis*: smaller and larger powers interacted with and resorted to Sparta to solve disputes without recourse to warfare and form alliances against common threats. Smaller powers participating in this interaction were Cretan states, which shared mythical and historical links with Sparta (Polyrrhenia, Gortyn, Knossos), and the southern Italian colony of Taras. Three of these states (Taras, Polyrrhenia, Phalasarna) explicitly asked the *polis* to intervene in diplomatic and military matters of the utmost importance (discussed in sections 4.3 and 4.4). Moreover, the interaction with other Cretan *poleis* (Oaxos, Rethymnon, Aptera) was motivated by the recruitment of mercenary troops and by the desire of Sparta to exercise control over some of them: the instances of Polyrrhenia, Gortyn and Knossos, provided by the combination of the scanty literary and epigraphic evidence, have supported further this argument. Interaction with larger powers, such as Antigonid Macedonia and Ptolemaic Egypt, has reinforced the hypothesis of a broad and meaningful Spartan engagement with the Hellenistic Mediterranean. In this regard, the ephemeral alliance forged between Sparta and Antigonos Gonatas, motivated by the desire to suppress Pyrrhus' expansionism, along with the later Spartan leadership in the anti-Macedonian coalition during the Chremonidean War, are two examples discussed above that testify to Sparta's proactive foreign policy and to its high esteem on the international stage of the third century BC.

In addition, Spartan contacts with states situated inside the Peloponnese also characterised meaningfully the events of this poorly documented period: Achaean *poleis* such as Dyme, Patrai, Tritaia and Pharai took the side of Sparta against Macedonia in the early third century (discussed in section 5.3), while some *poleis* of Arkadia (Tegea, Mantinea, Orchomenos, Phigalia and Caphyae), the Eleans, the Achaians, and other Cretan states (listed in section 6.5) took the side of Sparta and Ptolemy II in countering Gonatas' expansionism. In the significant anti-Macedonian coalition, Sparta, and Areus more specifically, were granted the role of military leader of the expedition. All these instances point to the significant esteem in which Sparta was held on the international stage and its proactive foreign policy. The said Spartan interactions were dictated by

pragmatic reasons: receiving military support from smaller Peloponnesian states and from a superpower such as Ptolemaic Egypt provided Sparta with the troops and subsidies necessary to counter Pyrrhus and Gonatas expansionisms, and maintain Spartan esteem on an international scenario in which larger powers (Egypt, Macedonia, Rome) coexisted.

The meaningful extent of Spartan interaction with the wider world, along with its proactive foreign policy, has also emerged from the assessment of the literary and epigraphic evidence related to the second half of the third century. Specifically, with the reigns of Agis IV and Cleomenes III, the *polis* continued to adopt a foreign policy motivated by the desire to exercise control over a multitude of Peloponnesian states: the cases of Pellene, Megalopolis, Mantinea and the friendly relations with Messene not only testify to Sparta's proactive stance and to its expansionism inside the region, but also to Spartan meaningful interaction with these locales. Some of these locales were consistently chosen by the Spartan governing bodies as targets of military expeditions: this has indicated Spartan ambition to exercise control over these Peloponnesian locales with Agis, and later with Cleomenes. Lastly, while Spartan expansionism with Agis and Cleomenes (discussed in chapters 8) was mainly focused on the Peloponnese, although Spartan contacts with Cretan *poleis* (Oaxos, Rethymnon, Knossos) continued with Cleomenes and were motivated by the recruitment of mercenaries, with Nabis' reign Spartan interaction reached a wider horizon (chapter 8). Not only was the *polis* significantly involved in the negotiations of the peace treaty of Phoenice as an ally of Rome, but it also participated proactively in the creation of the alliance with Philip V; this alliance guaranteed Spartan possession of Argos and was forged to counter Roman expansionism. Lastly, with Nabis' reign Sparta interacted with Delos and continued its policy of recruitment from Crete: the evidence, accumulated and examined in chapter 9, promotes and confirms the presence of continued contacts with some Cretan states, along with the military nature of these interactions. Throughout the third century, Cretan *poleis* supplied Sparta with important military troops: these troops were instrumental in supporting its expansionism. In this regard, Nabis' foreign policy was essentially dictated by pragmatic reasons: the creation of two alliances, as discussed in chapter 8, was motivated by Spartan expansionism and a desire to restore its prominent position inside the Peloponnese. In sum, the pairing of literary and epigraphic evidence has shown the meaningful Spartan interaction with locales situated inside and outside the Peloponnese throughout the nebulous third century.

Furthermore, the call upon Sparta, instead of larger powers such as Rome or Macedonia, by smaller powers, namely Cretan states - throughout the third century - and Taras, may have provided them with more security. In effect, the literary and epigraphic evidence (scrutinised above) has shown that these *poleis* shared cultural, historical and mythical links with Sparta. These characteristics, along with the Doric heritage shared by the parties involved in the interactions with Sparta, facilitated interstate contacts. This factor has contributed to strengthening Spartan esteem on the international stage and shows the authority of this middling power. In these interactions, the role of Spartan individuals was central: Cleonymus, Areus I, Agis IV, Cleomenes III, Lykourgos, Machanidas and Nabis were main protagonists of Spartan engagement with the Hellenistic powers. Some of these individuals (Cleonymus, Areus, Agis, Cleomenes, Lykourgos) were deployed by the Spartan governing bodies to undertake military or diplomatic missions of the utmost importance. Cleonymus, specifically, was the character involved in the largest number of expeditions in the first half of the third century and was the Spartan royal individual consistently called upon by Sparta and other Hellenistic powers, instead of the legitimate kings of Sparta, Areus I and Archidamus IV. The assessment of the evidence regarding Spartan royal individuals has also indicated their subtle agency: at times, these individuals acted on behalf of the Spartan governing bodies (*gerousia*, kings, ephors); in others, the sources point towards their independence in important military expeditions abroad and their notable role in international matters. The characters of Cleonymus and Areus are paradigmatic in this sense: Cleonymus was selected by the Tarentines to lead their army against the Romans and Lucanians, and was selected and dispatched by the Spartan governing bodies to arbitrate the dispute between the western Cretan *poleis* (discussed in chapter 4).

However, in other circumstances, namely the conquest of Argolid Troezen and the seizure of Thebes, Cleonymus was the general in charge of the military operations and there are no indications from the sources that signal his dependence on the Spartan governing bodies. Areus was the king appointed to lead the unsuccessful expedition against the Aetolians in 280 (section 5.3), but was also the individual in charge of the anti-Macedonian force during the Chremonidean War. This has shown his subtle agency in foreign matters. Moreover, the broader evaluation of the literary evidence has indicated his significance and independence in Cretan matters, along with his role of facilitator in

the purported relationship between Spartans and Jews (sections 6.5 and 6.6). The agency of Agis and Cleomenes is also portrayed inconsistently by the sources: Agis was deployed by the ephors to lead the military expedition to Corinth, but is also mentioned as the leader of important military operations in certain Peloponnesian locales (Pellene, Megalopolis, Mantinea). In these operations, he acted independently and the sources do not report the intervention of the ephors or other governing bodies in foreign matters. The sources also show the subtle nature of Cleomenes' agency: in the first place, he was deployed by the ephors and the sources point to his limited power; at a later stage, the sources show that he could make important foreign policy decisions and act as a leader of military expeditions within the Peloponnese. Lastly, it has been examined the agency of Lykourgos. We have seen that the ephors exercised influence in foreign policy decisions and deployed the king for military expeditions abroad; nonetheless, Lykourgos could significantly influence the decision regarding the appointment of the king of Sparta (9.2.1 above) and participated proactively in the decision-making concerning the expedition in Argive territory. However, whether these individuals were aware of Spartan authority on the international stage and utilised it to accomplish personal plans in the third century, remain unanswered questions due to the fragmentary and problematic nature of the available sources.

The examination of the evidence from the past related to Spartan interactions in the third century has offered new and important answers about the reasons for Sparta's interaction with the wider world and to the motivations which lay behind interstate relations. Spartan foreign policy was motivated by the consistent pursuit for hegemony: Sparta endeavoured to conquer and maintain Peloponnesian locales and to engage with other Hellenistic states in order to broaden its military and territorial capabilities. Moreover, the consistent creation of alliances was due to the growing power of single states that sought to achieve hegemony: Sparta figured as an important actor in these alliances and, more importantly, was itself one of the states competing for hegemony. The case studies show the mechanism which led to the creation of alliances throughout the third century: for instance, the anti-Macedonian coalition was due to the pressing concern raised by Antigonos Gonatas' expansionism, which was constantly trying to absorb territories in his hegemonic sphere and to exercise control over some Peloponnesian locales through garrisons. The creation of larger alliances with the reign of Nabis was motivated by the larger expansionist policy performed by Rome and has testified to Spartan participation

in significant international matters such as the negotiations of the peace of Phoenice and the later alliance with a superpower of the century, Macedonia.

The renewed evaluation of the evidence regarding Spartan foreign decision-making has shown that the mechanism of appointment of Spartan kings, the nomination of generals for important military and diplomatic expeditions abroad, along with the resort to interstate tools (arbitrations, kinship ties, benefactions) in which solidarity and cooperation occupied a central place, are issues that have been neglected in previous studies (explained in section 2.1 and 2.2). Specifically, the study of the appointment of the Spartan kings points to the subtle distribution of power among Spartan networks of individuals: the appointment of kings required the consensus of the Spartan governing bodies through which the decision-making power had to travel in order to make a decision binding. More particularly, the nomination of Areus I as a king required the consensus of the *gerousia* to be legitimised (section 5.2); similarly, the appointment of Lykourgos as king of Sparta involved a subtle mechanism in which Lykourgos himself and the ephorate were paramount in the transition of royal power (subsection 8.2.1). The role of the governing bodies was instrumental in articulating foreign political decisions: the appointment of Cleonymus as a general and the activation of the military operations with the Chremonidean War are two examples which attest to the importance of smaller networks of individuals in the articulation of foreign policy decisions. Cleonymus was the general appointed by the ephors and the *gerousia* to engage with Taras; moreover, he was explicitly asked by the colony to act as leader of its military expedition. While the start of the military operations with the Chremonidean War (section 6.5) shows a subtle mechanism of power among networks of individuals: despite Areus being nominated alone in the decree, it has been demonstrated that the other king (Archidamus IV), the ephors and the *gerousia* had to give their consent to activate the military operations. The lack of common consensus between the three institutions (ephorate, *gerousia*, kings) would have impeded the start of the military operations. This shows that the Spartan decision-making power was subtly distributed among ephorate, kings and *gerousia* throughout the third century.

Moreover, this analysis provides us with new insights into the Spartan governance and the governmental practice. The role of individuals and networks of individuals is paramount: the sources deployed in this study have pointed out that single individuals, whether kings or regents, acted as proxies of the Spartan state in the third century. The

sources often paint them as individuals able to embody Sparta in order to make important decisions, along with the interchangeable nature of their role: Spartan individuals such as Areus, Cleomenes and Nabis are depicted as representatives of Sparta and vice versa. In this regard, the decisions made by individuals (Agis, Cleomenes, Nabis) to perform military expeditions in the same Peloponnesian locales over the third century is an element that characterised the way in which foreign policy decisions were articulated within and outside Sparta. Important decisions were made by a single individual or, as often indicated by the evidence, by smaller networks of individuals (ephors, kings, *gerousia*) who could act on behalf of the Spartan state and may have represented indirectly the Spartan people. The sources of the period depict these groups as governing bodies following the traditional way to shape foreign policy: ephors, kings and *gerousia* were involved in the process to start military or diplomatic operations abroad or to appoint one of the kings of Sparta. However, it has also been observed that single individuals acted as Hellenistic kings, rather than as mere representatives of the Spartan state. The case of Areus (section 6.6) is a good example. The literary (Pausanias) and epigraphic evidence (Chremonides decree) shows the presence of other governing bodies significantly involved in making important decisions (the appointment of Areus as a king and the activation of the military operations of the Chremonidean War), along with the subtle distribution of power they had; while the evidence offered by the coins and inscriptions (featuring the dedications from states inside and outside the Peloponnese and a king such as Ptolemy II) shows that Areus was portrayed and considered as a Hellenistic monarch. This represents a change in regards to the Spartan modes of interaction with other powers. It demonstrates that Sparta not only could perceptively adapt to and interact within the competitive environment in which Hellenistic kings such as Ptolemy II, Pyrrhus and Antigonos Gonatas were main protagonists, but was also able to maintain traditional governmental practices (appointment of one of the kings and selection and dispatch of an individual able to lead military or diplomatic missions) and institutions (ephorate, kings, *gerousia*) over the long third century.

Moreover, the recourse to interstate tools which facilitated interstate contacts throughout the third century is another aspect highlighted in this study. Kinship ties, whether mythical or historical, were recalled by Taras and the Jews to facilitate interaction with Sparta. It has been demonstrated that the invocation of Spartan kinship ties helped Italic populations in avoiding warfare (section 4.3) well before the early third century and were

frequently utilised by Taras; moreover, interstate arbitration was deployed by the western Cretan *poleis* in order to solve their territorial dispute without recourse to violence (section 4.4). What matters the most in this circumstance is that Sparta was the state selected to act in the capacity of referee, instead of the superpowers of the century: this selection was motivated by the Doric heritage and the kinship ties shared by the parties. Some of the Cretan *poleis* (Polyrrhenia, Gortyn) assiduously cultivated relations with Sparta in the third century and this relationship was mutually beneficial for the parties: Polyrrhenia received Spartan assistance in order to solve the dispute with Phalasarna (4.4), while Gortyn received the military help of Areus when engaged in conflict (6.3). Hence, these interstate tools were instrumental in articulating dialogues and facilitating interactions between Sparta and other powers: throughout the third century, other Cretan states (Gortyn, Aptera, Knossos) which interacted with the *polis* also shared mythical links with Sparta. These links played a pivotal role in facilitating interstate interactions. This shows that Sparta and other Hellenistic states adopted this interstate tool in order to develop and intensify interaction with each other. A notable aspect that emerges from the wider assessment of the evidence utilised in this study is that these tools were deployed by the Spartan governing bodies in a surgical way and adapted to the traditional governmental practice: Sparta was aware of the changes which occurred during the third century and endeavoured to adjust to the new environment. Equally, it sought to maintain traditional institutions and ways to interact with other states.

Furthermore, the presence of *proxenia* relations in which Nabis was involved (subsection 9.3.3) corroborates the nuanced reality featured by interstate interactions. Nabis and other states were involved in the networks of *proxenia* relations in which smaller groups of individuals or single individuals participated: these networks featured important acts of benefaction and solidarity among Greek states and facilitated interstate contacts. The donations of Nabis to the temple and people of Delos, attested throughout his reign (subsection 8.3.3), is another aspect which points to the diversity of interstate relations. Sparta, in the person of Nabis, was involved in a network of benefaction: it has been highlighted (8.3.3) that there is no evidence in the literary and epigraphic evidence that demonstrates the mere self-interested and pragmatic nature of these relations. These interactions occurred regularly among Hellenistic states and bolstered interstate contacts. Sparta, like Rome and other superpowers of the century, participated in these networks of benefaction and had a strong and continued interaction with Delos in the 190s. Sparta

utilised successfully interstate tools such as kinship ties, invocation of friendship and interstate arbitrations to endorse its foreign political plans and exercise control over locales situated inside and outside the Peloponnese.

Finally, the literary and epigraphic evidence deployed to build this study has shown a remarkable continuity which pervaded the third century history of Sparta. Locales situated inside and outside the Peloponnese were consistently chosen by the governing bodies to perform military and diplomatic expeditions: this continuity has revealed a notable Spartan interest in exercising control over these territories and in restoring its role of hegemon inside the Peloponnese. The selection and interest in the same Peloponnesian locales – especially with the reigns of Areus, Acrotatus, Agis and Cleomenes – has shown that the third century BC represents a period which features the greatest continuity in Spartan Hellenistic history. Moreover, the way in which important foreign policy decisions were formulated by the Spartan governing bodies also points to a continuity which pervaded the century: the ephors and the kings seem to have been the most involved governing bodies in the process of articulation of domestic and foreign policy decisions. The sources portray the governing bodies as actors which followed the same strategy of control within the Peloponnese during the third century BC: ephors, kings and *gerousia* are portrayed as the governing bodies most involved in foreign policy decisions. More specifically, the dispatch of Spartan leaders abroad (e.g. Taras, Crete, Peloponnesian locales) and the appointment of the kings (Areus, Lykourgos) were two of the decisions in which both ephorate and kings seem to have occupied a central place in the third century and which the sources portray as the most involved governing bodies. This confirms the overwhelming continuity in the way in which Sparta shaped its foreign and domestic policy in the third century BC. In sum, from the available sources one can conclude that there was an attempt to maintain the traditional role of Spartan institutions and individuals, but a change in the way in which foreign policy decisions were formulated and operationalised.

The assessment of the ways in which a middling power such as Sparta could cultivate relations with superpowers of the calibre of Egypt in order to counter external (enemies) and internal (lack of manpower and subsidies) threats, features a strong connection with the modern reality. In a crucial historical period, in which a state is seeking to forge a new role on the international stage as a result of significant foreign political decisions driven by national self-interests, the invocation and strengthening of ties with older and

larger superpowers, and cooperation with smaller states are essential. The invocation of old ties among countries is an instrument which facilitates the dialogue among states and offers security to the parties involved; this dialogue is based on a sense of solidarity among states. In articulating the way in which these interactions occur, individuals or small networks of people are of paramount importance in the process of formulation of foreign policy decisions. The process of articulation features a distribution of power among groups of individuals. We can see this in the way in which new legal procedures are taking place. They show that the power necessary to activate foreign policy decisions and make them binding travels from a bloc of individuals to another.

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