1   Introduction

Philip de Souza and John France

War and peace are familiar terms to historians, yet in Antiquity and the High Middle Ages they conveyed a variety of meanings. The ten new essays in this book examine the processes of the making and breaking of peace treaties and truces, challenging many traditional assumptions. They discuss how far political conventions and legalities mattered in agreements that were based not so much on trust as on recognition of the practical limits of military and political power, and they show how conventions and solemn agreements were frequently reinterpreted and manipulated for political ends. We begin with four chapters that span a period of a thousand years from Classical Greece to Imperial Rome.

In the first of these chapters, P. J. Rhodes analyses a series of important peace treaties from the Greek world of the fifth and fourth centuries BC, examining how far the specific terms of an agreement really mattered to the different parties, and what it took to break a treaty. He does not feel that the Classical Greek states were consciously deceitful in their dealings with each other, but argues that during the fourth century BC they tended to insert ambiguous clauses into their treaties, which they would be able to interpret to their own advantage.

Eduard Rung's chapter considers how international relations were conducted between the Greek states and their powerful eastern neighbour, the Achaemenid Persian Empire. He traces the evolution of a diplomatic system between Persia and the Greeks after the failed Persian invasions of the early fifth century BC, arguing that it was the fruits of numerous diplomatic missions, negotiations and a variety of treaties, rather than open warfare, that were principally responsible for maintaining the balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean up to the time of Alexander the Great.

Moving into the Western Mediterranean, John Rich's chapter takes a fresh look at the part played by treaties of alliance in the Roman conquest of Italy. He boldly challenges one of the most widely held assumptions about the history of the Roman Republic, namely that Rome's Italian allies were all bound to her by treaties. Reviving and

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further developing a view propounded by the great Danish historian
Niebuhr, he shows how weak the foundations of the orthodox view
are, and demonstrates that many of the allied communities may instead
have been bound to the Romans through the institution of *deditio*, or
surrender. Although this was followed by restitution of their liberty
and laws, they remained formally in the Romans' power and were thus
required to meet regular demands for the troops with which Rome
increasingly fought her wars. As he explains in his chapter, this hypoth-
esis has far-reaching implications for our understanding of how the
Romans conquered and controlled their empire.

Philip de Souza's chapter discusses the views that emerged in the first
four centuries of the Roman Empire concerning the role of the emperor
as a maker of both war and peace. Through analysis of the works of some
of the best-known Latin writers, he examines the changing expectations
of the aristocratic elite of the Roman world and shows how successive
emperors from Augustus to Constantine strove to maintain a balance
between the traditional role of the successful war leader and the complex
responsibilities of the peacemaker.

In the first of three chapters focused on the Late Roman and
Byzantine periods, Doug Lee examines the practical and political aspects
of treaty-making in Late Antiquity, comparing Rome's dealings with the
peoples of Northern and Central Europe and the Sasanid Persian
Empire. He shows that while the mechanics of treaty-making with Persia
had important distinctive characteristics, notably the use of written treat-
ies and the emperor never negotiating directly with the shah, neverthe-
less the broader process of negotiating the content of treaties shared
significant features with Roman dealings with other neighbours, particu-
larly the role of ceremonial and gift-giving. He argues that this shows
how adaptable and pragmatic Roman diplomacy could be in Late
Antiquity.

Michael Whitby follows this with a discussion that highlights the
extent to which trust and good faith were important in diplomatic rela-
tions in this period. Adopting a similar comparative approach to Lee, he
finds little evidence for respect or trust in Roman dealings with their
European, 'barbarian' neighbours. By contrast, he shows how Rome and
Persia respected each other as established empires, and so evolved more
regular diplomatic procedures to conduct international relations be-
tween political equals.

Catherine Holmes examines how the Byzantine Empire conducted
negotiations with local populations and potentates in areas formerly un-
der Muslim control in the later tenth and early eleventh centuries. She
develops the idea that Byzantine governance of the frontier proceeded by

the very gradual tightening of a tribute-based system and compares this
with other parts of the medieval Mediterranean world where, from the
eleventh century onwards, Christian forces began to expand into terri-
tories that had previously been under Muslim rule.

The three remaining chapters on medieval peacemaking concern the
period from the ninth to the twelfth centuries, and they cover rather
different levels of peacemaking in very different parts of the medieval
world. John France is concerned with what might be termed the 'oper-
ational level' of peacemaking in the field of crusading. Attacks on castles
and fortified cities dominated medieval warfare, but presented formida-
ble problems for both attackers and defenders. The besieger had to
recognise that storming a strongly held fortification demanded a high
price in blood or the uncertainties of a long blockade, or both. The
defender had to assess the determination of the attackers and the likeli-
hood of relief arriving before the morale and the food stocks of his
garrison plummeted to unsustainable levels. As a result of these hard
military necessities which pressed on both sides a series of conventions
grew up governing relations between besieger and besieged, based on the
notion that the earlier a surrender is given, the better the terms. It is
widely believed that crusading introduced a new ferocity into warfare
which overwhelmed such fragile understandings. But, in fact, by and
large these conventions applied throughout the crusading period, though,
as in western Christendom, they were often breached when feelings ran
high or when it was seen to be in the interests of one of the parties.

Richard Abels explores a very much wider problem – how peace was
made between a settled kingdom like Anglo-Saxon England, and those
rather fluid and changing groups of raiders, the vikings. Propounded in
this way, the difficulties of coming to any arrangements are seen as not
merely physical but conceptual because each side has a different view of
what it wants from any arrangement, and indeed of what constituted
peace. As Abels says: 'for ninth-century vikings, peace (*grið*) was merely
a cessation of hostilities, a promise to refrain from harming another.
Whereas English kings thought in terms of ''treaties'', vikings thought
in terms of ''truces''.' But in this conceptual argument Abels does not
forget that ultimately arrangements depended on the balance of power
and advantage, and his analysis very sharply illuminates the problems of
the Anglo-Saxon monarchy. Indeed it goes much further, because across
the medieval period and beyond settled states had to come to terms with
fluid bodies of raiders like the later medieval *ecorcheurs*.

Esther Pascua considers the subject of peacemaking at a yet higher
level and across Europe as whole in the key period of the twelfth century.
In her analysis the conclusion of treaties between kings is part of the

process of monarchical centralisation which was such a feature of twelfth-century Europe. She sets out to elucidate the way in which peace treaties contributed to it. In her analysis treaties emphasised the equality of kings and the gap between them and all others involved in the business of war. They also defined who owed allegiance to which king and thereby strengthened the notion that subjects, however important, were indeed subjects and inferiors in the hierarchy of power. Provisions to this effect in many agreements between monarchs directly confronted the nobility's practice of passing from one kingdom to another, from one king's service to another's.

War was an ever-present feature of the ancient and medieval worlds, but particular wars could not last for ever. The ultimate aim of war was usually peace, but peace on terms that the warring parties considered desirable, or at least acceptable. Treaties, truces and other diplomatic pacts and agreements are therefore central to an understanding of the aims of ancient and medieval warfare. The detailed terms and conditions of the agreements, and the processes by which they were negotiated, enable historians to see how key issues were articulated by the protagonists. They can tell us a great deal about how the opposing parties perceived their relative political statuses and how they understood the nature of the circumstances at the end of a conflict.

A recurring theme in this volume is the important contribution that individual treaties and truces made to long-term political developments. Specific treaties served not only to end immediate conflicts, but also to determine territorial boundaries and spheres of political influence for the future, thus giving shape and substance to an emerging or evolving situation. The ways in which peace terms might be tested, strained to breaking point and re-negotiated or replaced by new agreements are important indicators of how changes in relative power were realised.

Several of the chapters emphasise the pragmatic nature of ancient and medieval diplomacy. Although the cultures under consideration traditionally had very persistent ideas about the distinctions between enemies and friends, this did not mean that their attitudes were set in stone. Mistrust of and hostility towards the 'barbarian' Persians has been shown to be a defining feature of classical Graeco-Roman culture by recent scholarship, but for those who were faced with the military and political realities of war and peace it was necessary to adapt to changing circumstances. Similarly, throughout Late Antiquity and the medieval period it was vital for both Christian rulers and their pagan or Muslim counterparts not to allow inflexible concepts of long-standing enmity to undermine their practical efforts at peacemaking. In this respect, as in

many others, ancient and medieval notions of war and peace bear a strong resemblance to those of modern times.

These chapters offer much food for thought, not just to readers interested in one or more particular periods, but to everyone who is concerned about the history, theory and practice of international relations.

2   Making and breaking treaties in the Greek world[1]

P. J. Rhodes

In this book we are concerned with various aspects of the making and breaking of peace treaties. I concentrate here on various kinds of ambiguity with regard to treaties in the Greek world – concerning the extent to which the participants could choose to decide what actions counted as a breach of a treaty, and whether the breach was so blatant that the treaty could then be considered to be at an end; and concerning the use, whether innocent or deliberate, of ambiguous language that required interpretation in particular cases, where a state in a strong position might try to impose an interpretation that other states might consider unjustified.

I begin with a striking instance of Athens' deciding that an ally had broken his treaty with Athens, declaring that treaty to be at an end, and instead making an alliance with his opponent. In the 360s Athens was allied to Alexander, the tyrant of Pherae in south-eastern Thessaly, while Thebes supported the Thessalian *koinon*, i.e. the league of Thessalians opposed to Alexander. However, at the end of the 360s Alexander was defeated by Thebes, and, restricted on the mainland, turned to naval action against Athens. In 361/0 Athens reacted by making an alliance for all time with the *koinon*, and we have the text that was inscribed on stone in Athens. Two clauses in the treaty read:

> It shall not be permitted to put an end to the war against Alexander, either to the Thessalians without the Athenians or to the Athenians without the *archon* and *koinon* of the Thessalians.

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[1]   I hope this chapter will interest both specialists and non-specialists. It is revised from my David Lewis Lecture given in Oxford on 31 May 2000 and repeated at Cologne, Göttingen, Heidelberg, Royal Holloway and Tübingen; a shorter version was read to the Panel on Treaties and Truces in Ancient and Mediaeval History in the Anglo-American Conference of Historians on 5 July 2000. My thanks to those who invited me to speak on those occasions, and to all who have discussed the subject with me. In addition to those collections of inscriptions for which abbreviations are listed in *OCD*, 3rd edn, I cite as Rhodes & Osborne P. J. Rhodes and R. Osborne, *Greek Historical Inscriptions, 404–323 B.C.* (Oxford, 2003): this contains both Greek texts and English translations.

The *stele* for Alexander concerning the alliance shall be demolished by the treasurers of the Goddess.

Although this alliance with the *koinon* was said to be for all time, it lasted less than ten years: by the late 350s Athens and Pherae were both supporting the Phocians in the Third Sacred War for the control of Delphi, while the *koinon* was opposed to the Phocians. Presumably 'the *stele* for Alexander' was indeed demolished – certainly no trace of it has been found – but when Athens was led to support Pherae and oppose the *koinon* once more it did not occur to anybody to demolish this *stele* or to erase passages on it, and it survives, complete though badly worn.[2] We do not know whether this alliance between Athens and the *koinon* was formally ended, by either side, or was simply allowed to lapse. D. M. Lewis used to insist that epigraphy is not a subject: what we should be engaged in is using all the available evidence to study and interpret the ancient world, and inscriptions simply form part of that evidence.[3] My chapter, accordingly, will not be about inscriptions but, as in this introduction, will use inscriptions as part of its evidence.

Thirty Years' Peace between Athenians and Peloponnesians	446/5
Appeal of Corcyra to Athens	433
Beginning of Athens' attack on Potidaea	432
Outbreak of Peloponnesian War	431
Year's truce between Athenians and Peloponnesians	423
Peace of Nicias, and alliance between Athens and Sparta	421
Athenians fail to prevent Spartan naval expedition	419/18
Battle of Mantinea, in which Athenians fight against Spartans	418
Beginning of Athens' great Sicilian expedition	415
Athenian ships raid Spartan territory	414
Spartans establish fort at Decelea in Attica	413

The Peloponnesian War

To see some of the problems which can arise with treaties, I turn back to the time of the Peloponnesian War, in the late fifth century. In 433 Corcyra, involved in a war against Sparta's ally Corinth, asked Athens for an alliance, claiming that, since it had not been listed as an ally of either side in the Thirty Years' Peace of 446/5 (which had recognised the

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[2]   *IG* ii² 116 = Rhodes & Osborne 44: passages quoted 31–4 and 39–40; alliance with *koinon* for all time 11–12.

[3]   Esp. D. M. Lewis, 'The Testimony of Stones', *Listener* (20 August 1959), 281, 284; Lewis, 'Boeckh, *Staatshaushaltung der Athener*, 1817–1967', in *Acta of the Fifth Epigraphic Congress, 1967* (Oxford, 1971), 35–9 = his *Selected Papers in Greek and Near Eastern History* (Cambridge, 1997), 1–6.

division of the Greek world into an Athenian bloc and a Spartan bloc),
Athens could grant this without breaking the peace. Corinth argued
against. Athens finally decided to make not a full alliance with Corcyra –
because (Thucydides says) if it did that and Corcyra called on it to attack
Corinth it would be in breach of the peace – but simply a defensive
alliance.[4] Athens sent ships to support Corcyra, and these ships did
end up fighting against the Corinthians. After the battle the Corinthians
wanted to withdraw, but 'were afraid that the Athenians might think that
the treaty was at an end and not allow them to leave'.[5] They claimed that
the Athenians were in breach of the peace; the Athenians denied it, and
in accordance with their interpretation of their defensive alliance with Cor-
cyra the Athenians did not interfere when the Corinthians did withdraw.[6]

After that Athens tried to put pressure on Potidaea, a colony of
Corinth but a tribute-paying member of Athens' alliance, the Delian
League – which appears to mean that in terms of the Thirty Years' Peace
Athens was within its rights in exerting that pressure. Potidaea, encour-
aged by Corinth, asked Sparta for support, and Sparta promised (but did
not immediately keep its promise) that if Athens attacked Potidaea
Sparta would invade Athens' territory.[7] Athens did attack Potidaea;
Corinth sent a force of volunteers and mercenaries to support Potidaea;[8]
there was a battle, which the Athenians won, and after it they settled
down to besiege Potidaea. Thucydides comments that as a result of this
each side had a grievance against the other; 'however, the war had not yet
broken out, but they were still in a hands-off state; for the Corinthians
had done these things privately' (the last clause has two possible mean-
ings, but we need not worry about that here).[9]

Had the Thirty Years' Peace been broken in either of these episodes,
or had it not? It is clear that the legalities mattered, and that each side
was trying to keep its own hands clean while complaining that the other
side had not kept its hands clean; but had either side really succeeded in
keeping its hands clean? How much did it take to break a treaty? At this
time Athens was accused of two other breaches, about which

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4   Thuc. 1.44.1.
5   Thuc. 1.52.3.
6   Thuc. 1.53.1–54.1.
7   Thuc. 1.58.1.
8   Thuc. 1.60.1.
9   Thuc. 1.66: I take 'privately' to mean that the Corinthian support for Potidaea was not
    an official undertaking of the Corinthian state (e.g. Gomme in A. W. Gomme *et al.*, *A
    Historical Commentary on Thucydides* (Oxford, 1945–81), *ad loc.*) rather than that the
    Corinthians were acting independently of their allies in the Peloponnesian League (e.g.
    S. Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides* (Oxford, 1991–), *ad loc.*, cf. A. Andrewes
    in Gomme *et al.*, *Historical Commentary*, on 5.30.2).

Thucydides says frustratingly little: in one case, that of Megara, I should guess that Megara was guilty of small-scale breaches of the Thirty Years' Peace and that Athens' retaliation broke the spirit of the peace but not the letter; in the other, that of Aegina, we have so little information that we cannot even guess. Thucydides thinks these accusations were less important than the fact that the Spartans were afraid of Athenian power, and could claim that they were making war on Athens in order to liberate the Greeks; Athens offered to go to arbitration, but the offer was not taken up, and it is hard to imagine who could have been acceptable to both sides as impartial arbitrators. In 431 an attempt by Sparta's ally Thebes to get control of Athens' ally Plataea misfired, and the Spartans formally embarked on the Peloponnesian War against Athens, with each side able to persuade itself that the other was in the wrong.

In the spring of 423 a year's truce was made between the two sides, which its makers hoped would lead to a more lasting settlement. Readers of Thucydides' narrative are made well aware that in the north-east this truce failed to hold, because Scione, one of the member states of the Delian League, went over to the Spartan Brasidas after the truce had been made but before the news of it arrived in the north-east. Thucydides does not emphasise that in the rest of the Greek world the truce does seem to have held, and it appears from the corrupt opening sentence of book 5 that, in spite of the continuing war in the north-east, elsewhere the prospects of peace seemed good enough for the truce to be renewed for a further five months before it finally lapsed.[10]

Less than a year after the truce did lapse, in spring 421, a treaty which seemed to end the war was made, the Peace of Nicias. However, it was flawed from the start, in that it ought to have included all the states which had been engaged in the war, but several of Sparta's allies, because they were not satisfied regarding the matters which concerned them most, refused to accept it. The Athenians presumably knew that when they did accept it; they did still accept it at the time, though they could reasonably have refused to do so, and to reassure them the Spartans also made an alliance with the Athenians. In the years that followed various things went wrong, and yet it suited both sides to pretend that the peace treaty and the alliance were still in force: clauses about the return of captured territory were not acted on; Sparta broke its alliance with Athens by making a separate alliance with Boeotia;[11] when Sparta tried to salvage its alliance with Athens, the Athenian Alcibiades saw to it that the attempt failed, and Athens in turn broke the alliance by making a separate

[10]   Thuc. 5.1 (where I read διεγένοντο with L. Canfora).
[11]   Thuc. 5.39.2–3.

alliance with Argos and other states;[12] but still the alliance between Sparta
and Athens was not renounced by either side.[13] Campaigning followed
in the Peloponnese, which could have led to a direct clash between Athe-
nian and Spartan forces on a number of occasions, and actually did so in
the battle of Mantinea, in 418. After one of the earlier episodes, in 419/18,
Argos complained that the Athenians, as the dominant naval power, by
not preventing the Spartans from sending an expedition by sea had
committed a breach of the alliance between Athens and Argos[14] – as a re-
sult of which the Athenians added a postscript to their inscribed copy of
the Peace of Nicias, stating that the Spartans were in breach of the peace.[15]

   One of the captured territories not returned in 421 was Pylos, which
the Athenians had taken from the Spartans in 425. In annoyance at
Sparta's failure to comply with the Peace of Nicias the Athenians refused
to give it up, but later in 421 they were persuaded to withdraw from it the
former subjects of Sparta whom they had installed there to raid Spartan
territory.[16] When Argos complained about Athens' failure to prevent the
Spartans from using the sea, as well as adding a postscript to their text of
the peace the Athenians were persuaded by the Argives to reinstate those
men in Pylos – and in 416 the Spartans in response 'even so did not
renounce the treaty and go to war against them, but proclaimed that
any one on their side who wished might make raids on the Athenians';
the Corinthians did 'go to war' against the Athenians, but they had never
sworn to the Peace of Nicias.[17]

   At the end of 415, when the Athenians had embarked on a war in Sicily
which was going to turn into an attack on Corinth's colony Syracuse, and
the Athenian Alcibiades had arrived in Sparta as a fugitive from Athens,
the Spartans sent to support Syracuse a commander and (it later
appears) two ships with what was otherwise a force from Corinth and
its colonies.[18] At last, in 414, a squadron of Athenian ships supporting
Argos made raids on Spartan territory, which they had previously re-
fused to do, and this 'most clearly broke their treaty with the Spartans',
and 'now rather gave the Spartans a most justifiable cause to defend
themselves against Athens'.[19] In 413 the Spartans sent a force to estab-
lish a fort at Decelea in northern Attica, and we can say that the Peace of

[12]   Thuc. 5.42–7 (cf. Tod 72 = IG i³ 83).
[13]   Thuc. 5.48.1.
[14]   See the text of the alliance, Thuc. 5.47.5.
[15]   Thuc. 5.56.2–3.
[16]   Thuc. 5.35.4–7.
[17]   Thuc. 5.56.2–3, 115.2–3.
[18]   Thuc. 6.93.1–3, 104.1.
[19]   Thuc. 6.105.1–2.