

Political Issue D: Trade and Prosperity

The Delian League and the Peloponnesian League have different trade policies and different views on how to achieve prosperity. Representatives of Athens and Sparta will now explain how joining their league will allow your city-state to prosper.

Athens

Delian League members benefit greatly from our trade policies. Our ships travel without fear to Egypt, Italy, and the Near East to acquire unique and valuable goods in exchange for our products. As a result of this highly successful trade, the economies of our member city-states are prospering. Protecting this trade network is, of course, very important. That's why we insist on maintaining one system of currency, which makes it easier for the exchange of goods to take place. Naturally, the strength of the Delian League depends on its unity. That is why it is important for all members to remain in the league. Recently we were forced to take action against the city-state of Naxos, which wanted to withdraw from the league. Such an action could only hurt trade and weaken all the league member city-states. We showed Naxos the foolishness of its plan, and it wisely chose to rejoin the league. We also protect the security of the Delian League members by stationing our troops in city-states that may be invaded. We Athenians have taken these actions to help guarantee that Delian League members continue to achieve prosperity—a prosperity that you too can have if you join our league.

Sparta

We in the Peloponnesian League also believe in prosperity. However, unlike Athens, we do not believe in forcing our members to remain in the league against their will. Nor do we believe in disciplining them if they do decide to leave. The Athenian representative did not mention that his city sent a fleet of ships to blockade Naxos. They then forced Naxos to dismantle its walls, give up its own fleet, and contribute money to the Delian League. We would never treat a member of the Peloponnesian League in that way. As for trade, our policy is simple. We engage in limited trade only among ourselves. This avoids the likelihood of military conflicts with such powers as Persia for control of the trade routes in the eastern Mediterranean. We Spartans also have no desire to dominate or interfere in the affairs of our member city-states. The Athenians' insistence on using only one currency—their own—makes it easier for them to use their coins to influence and pay off political leaders of other Delian League city-states. Soon they will have created an Athenian empire within their league. We believe the best way to achieve equal prosperity among all members is to follow the economic policies of our Peloponnesian League. If you join our league, you can achieve that prosperity too—and not at the cost of your own free will.

Critical-Thinking Question D: Now that you have heard the two viewpoints on how to best achieve prosperity, do you want to remain with the league you chose, or change your alliance? What other city-states would also benefit by being a member of the league you chose?