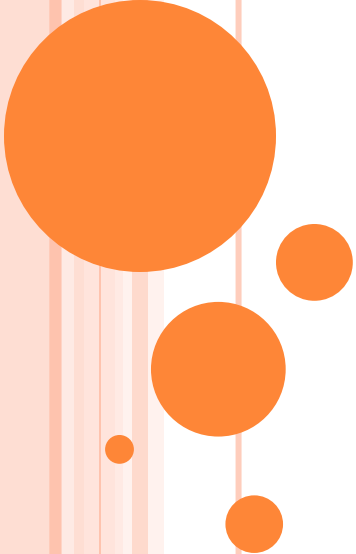




SPARTA: AN EXTRAORDINARY CITY

Lecture 10: Pentekontaetia I

THE PENTEKONTAETIA

- The Pentekontaetia is the period between the battle of Plataia (479 BCE) and the beginning of the Peloponnesian War (431 BCE)
- Our main sources are Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* (Book 1.89-118), Diodoros' *Bibliotheke* and inscriptions (mainly found in *IG I³*)



THE PENTEKONTAETIA: TIMELINE

Battle of
Plataia
479

Institution of
the Delian
League 478



INSTITUTION OF THE DELIAN LEAGUE

The Athenians having thus succeeded to the supremacy by the voluntary act of the allies through their hatred of Pausanias, fixed which cities were to contribute money against the barbarian, which ships; their professed object being to retaliate for their sufferings by ravaging the king's country. [2] Now was the time that the office of 'Treasurers for Hellas' was first instituted by the Athenians. **These officers received the tribute, as the money contributed was called.** The tribute was first fixed at four hundred and sixty talents. **The common treasury was at Delos, and the congresses were held in the temple. Their supremacy commenced with independent allies who acted on the resolutions of a common congress.** It was marked by the following undertakings in war and in administration during the interval between the Median and the present war, against the barbarian, against their own rebel allies, and against the Peloponnesian powers which would come in contact with them on various occasions. ... **Besides, the history of these events contains an explanation of the growth of the Athenian empire.**

Thucydides 1.96-7



EXTENT OF THE DELIAN LEAGUE



THE PENTEKONTAETIA: TIMELINE

Battle of
Plataia
479

Capture of
Eion and
Skyros by
Athens
476/5

Institution of
the Delian
League 478



EION AND SKYROS



EION AND SKYROS

First the Athenians besieged and captured Eion on the Strymon from the Medes, and made slaves of the inhabitants, being under the command of Cimon, son of Miltiades. Next they enslaved Scyros the island in the Aegean, containing a Dolopian population, and colonized it themselves.

Thucydides 1.98



BONES OF THESEUS

And after the Median wars, in the archonship of Phaedo, when the Athenians were consulting the oracle at Delphi, they were told by the Pythian priestess to take up the bones of Theseus, give them honourable burial at Athens, and guard them there. But it was difficult to find the grave and take up the bones, because of the inhospitable and savage nature of the Dolopians, who then inhabited the island. However, **Cimon took the island, as I have related in his Life, and being ambitious to discover the grave of Theseus, saw an eagle in a place where there was the semblance of a mound, pecking, as he says, and tearing up the ground with his talons.** By some divine ordering he comprehended the meaning of this and dug there, and there was **found a coffin of a man of extraordinary size, a bronze spear lying by its side, and a sword.** When these relics were brought home on his trireme by Cimon, the Athenians were delighted, and received them with splendid processions and sacrifices, as though Theseus himself were returning to his city. And now he lies buried in the heart of the city...

Plutarch *Life of Theseus* 36



WHY EION AND SKYROS?

- Eion was a Persian base of operations. It was also one of the outlets of the Strymon region, one of the most important timber and silver producing regions in the Greek world.
- Skyros was one of the main ports of call for ships travelling from the Hellespont to southern Greece; it was also a known pirate base.



THE PENTEKONTAETIA: TIMELINE

Battle of
Plataia
479

Coercion of
Karystos in
Euboea, late
470s

Suppression
of Naxian
Revolt, early
460s

Institution of
the Delian
League 478

Capture of
Eion and
Skyros by
Athens
476/5



CARYSTUS AND NAXOS

This was followed by a war against Carystus, in which the rest of Euboea remained neutral, and which was ended by surrender on conditions. After this Naxos left the confederacy, and a war ensued, and she had to return after a siege; this was the first instance of the engagement being broken by the subjugation of an allied city, a precedent which was followed by that of the rest in the order which circumstances prescribed.

Thucydides 1.98

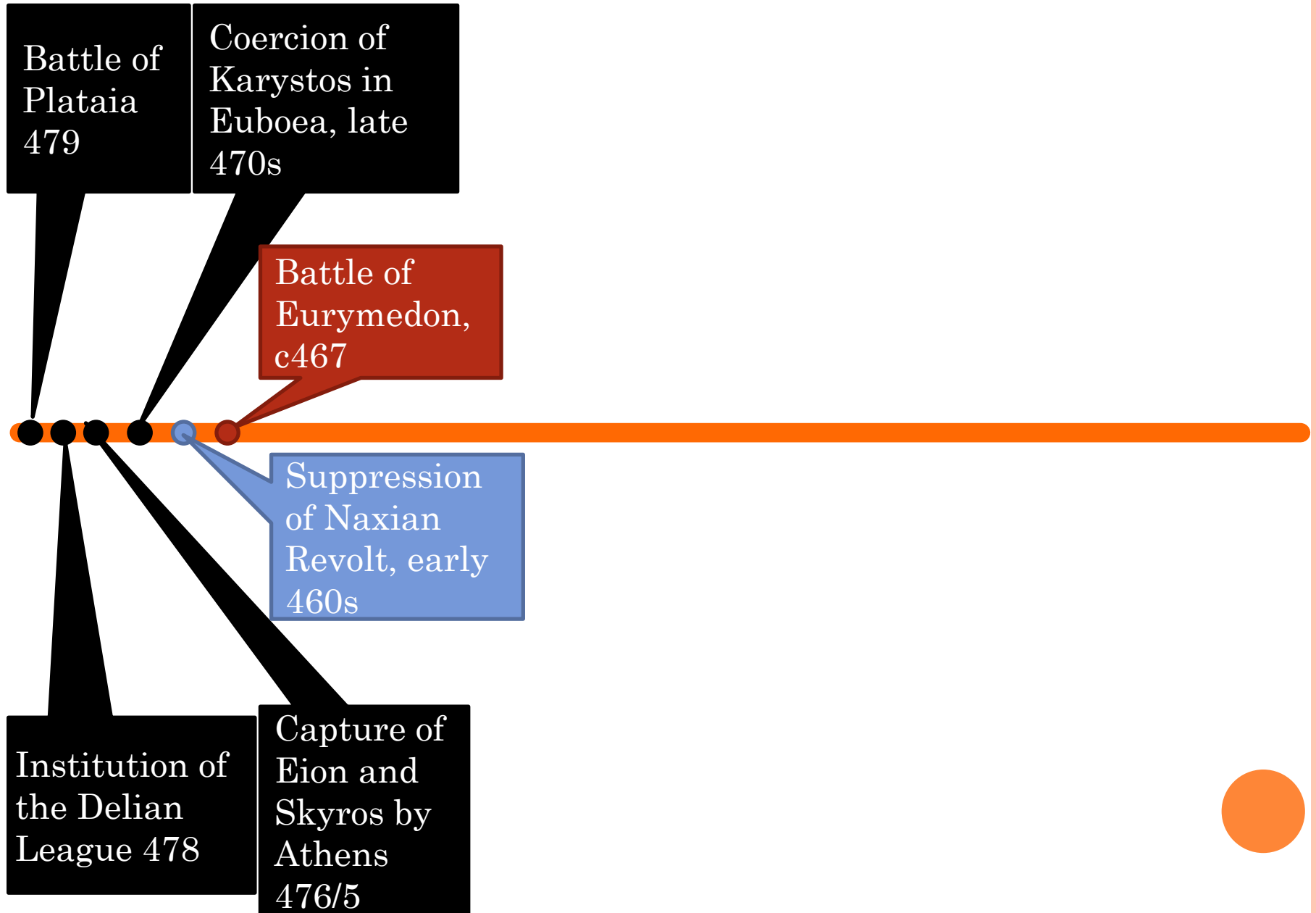


THE NAXIAN REVOLT

- The suppression of the Naxian revolt was the first clue that Athens would not tolerate any dissenters from the League.
- It was also the first time that Athens infringed upon the freedom of individual allies.



THE PENTEKONTAETIA: TIMELINE



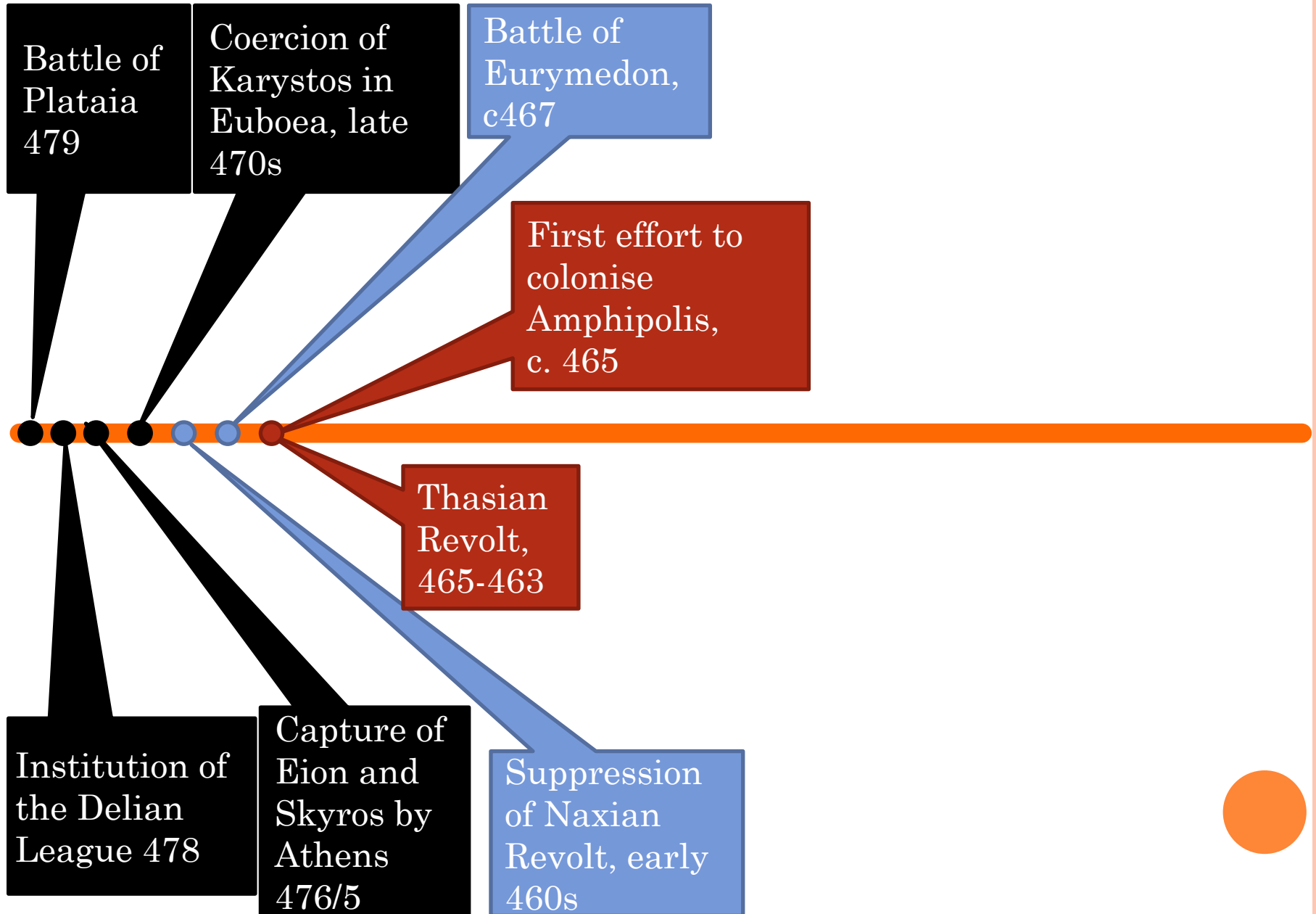


BATTLE OF EURYMEDON

- The Battle of Eurymedon was the next operation against Persia after the capture of Eion a decade before.
- It also provided security for the southern Aegean and southern Asia Minor, which were always under Phoenician threat.



THE PENTEKONTAETIA: TIMELINE



THASOS AND AMPHIPOLIS

Some time afterwards occurred the defection of the Thasians, caused by disagreements about the marts on the opposite coast of Thrace, and about the mine in their possession. Sailing with a fleet to Thasos, the Athenians defeated them at sea and effected a landing on the island. About the same time they sent ten thousand settlers of their own citizens and the allies to settle the place then called Ennea Hodoi or Nine Ways, now Amphipolis. They succeeded in gaining possession of Ennea Hodoi from the Edonians, but on advancing into the interior of Thrace were cut off in Drabescus, a town of the Edonians, by the assembled Thracians, who regarded the settlement of the place Ennea Hodoi as an act of hostility.

Thucydides 1.100





THE THASIAN REVOLT AND THE HELOTS

Meanwhile the Thasians being defeated in the field and suffering siege, appealed to Lacedaemon, and desired her to assist them by an invasion of Attica. Without informing Athens she promised and intended to do so, but was prevented by the occurrence of the earthquake, accompanied by the secession of the Helots and the Thuriats and Aethaeans of the Perioeci to Ithome. Most of the Helots were the descendants of the old Messenians that were enslaved in the famous war; and so all of them came to be called Messenians. So the Lacedaemonians being engaged in a war with the rebels in Ithome, the Thasians in the third year of the siege obtained terms from the Athenians by razing their walls, delivering up their ships, and arranging to pay the monies demanded at once, and tribute in future; giving up their possessions on the continent together with the mine.

Thucydides 1.101

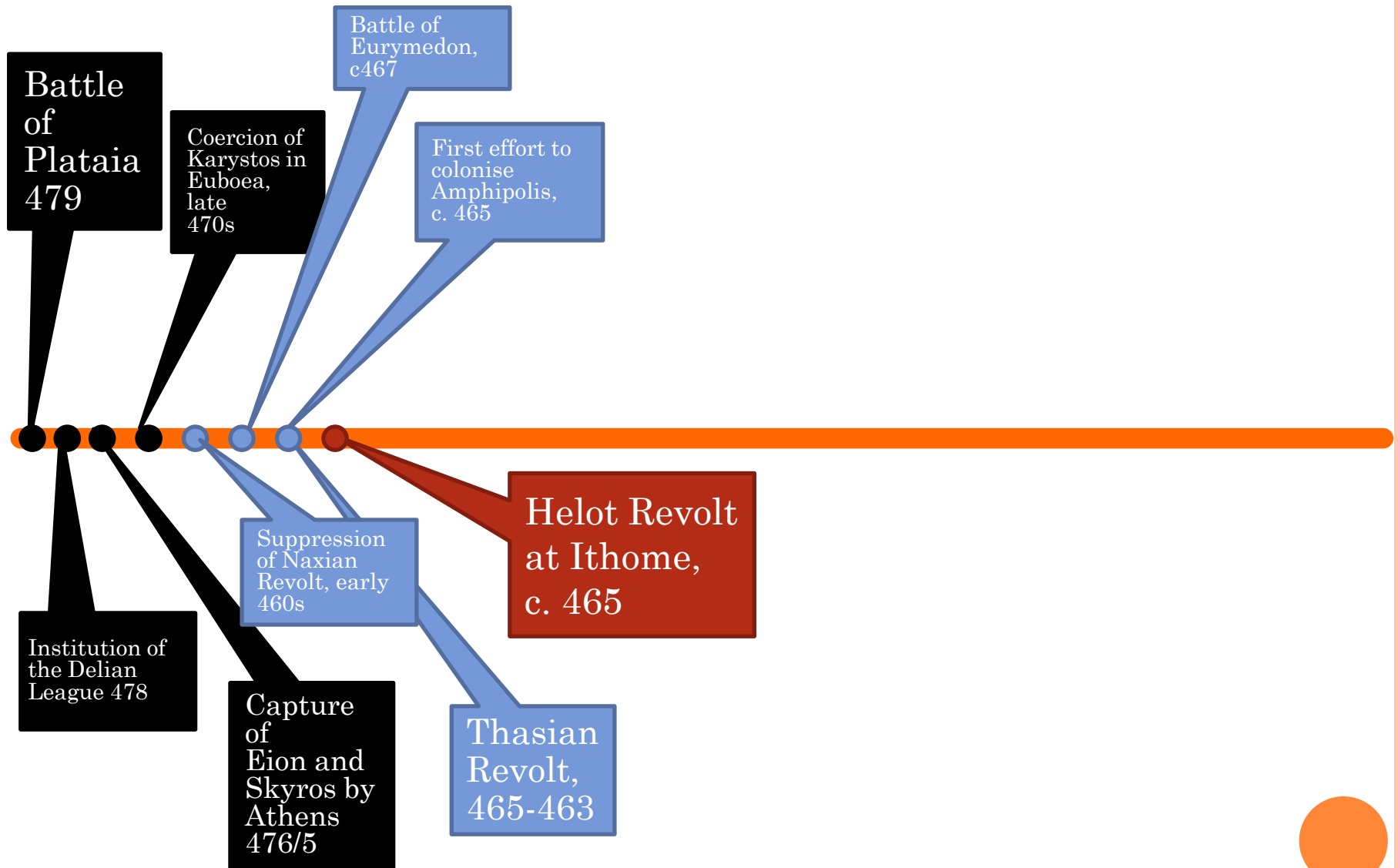


SPARTAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 460S

- Sparta in the Thasian Revolt is seen as quite willing to try to break the deadlock of Athenian domination in the Aegean.
- Note how the plan to help Thasos involves invading Attica; the same general plan followed by the Spartans in the Archidamian War



THE PENTEKONTAETIA: TIMELINE



ATHENS AND ITHOME

The Lacedaemonians meanwhile finding the war against the rebels in Ithome likely to last, invoked the aid of their allies, and especially of the Athenians, who came in some force under the command of Cimon. The reason for this pressing summons lay in their reputed skill in siege operations; a long siege had taught the Lacedaemonians their own deficiency in this art, else they would have taken the place by assault. **The first open quarrel between the Lacedaemonians and Athenians arose out of this expedition.** The Lacedaemonians, when assault failed to take the place, apprehensive of the enterprising and revolutionary character of the Athenians, and further looking upon them as of alien extraction, **began to fear that if they remained, they might be tempted by the besieged in Ithome to attempt some political changes.** They accordingly dismissed them alone of the allies, without declaring their suspicions, but merely saying that they had now no need of them.

Thucydides 1.102



SPARTA AND ATHENS

- It is very interesting that the Spartans were willing to ask the Athenians to come to their help against the helots at the same time that they were willing to help the Thasians by invading Attica.
- Note that for the Spartans the helot revolt was so important that they called in the help of their allies.
- The Athenians are dismissed because of the Spartan fear that they would support the helots.



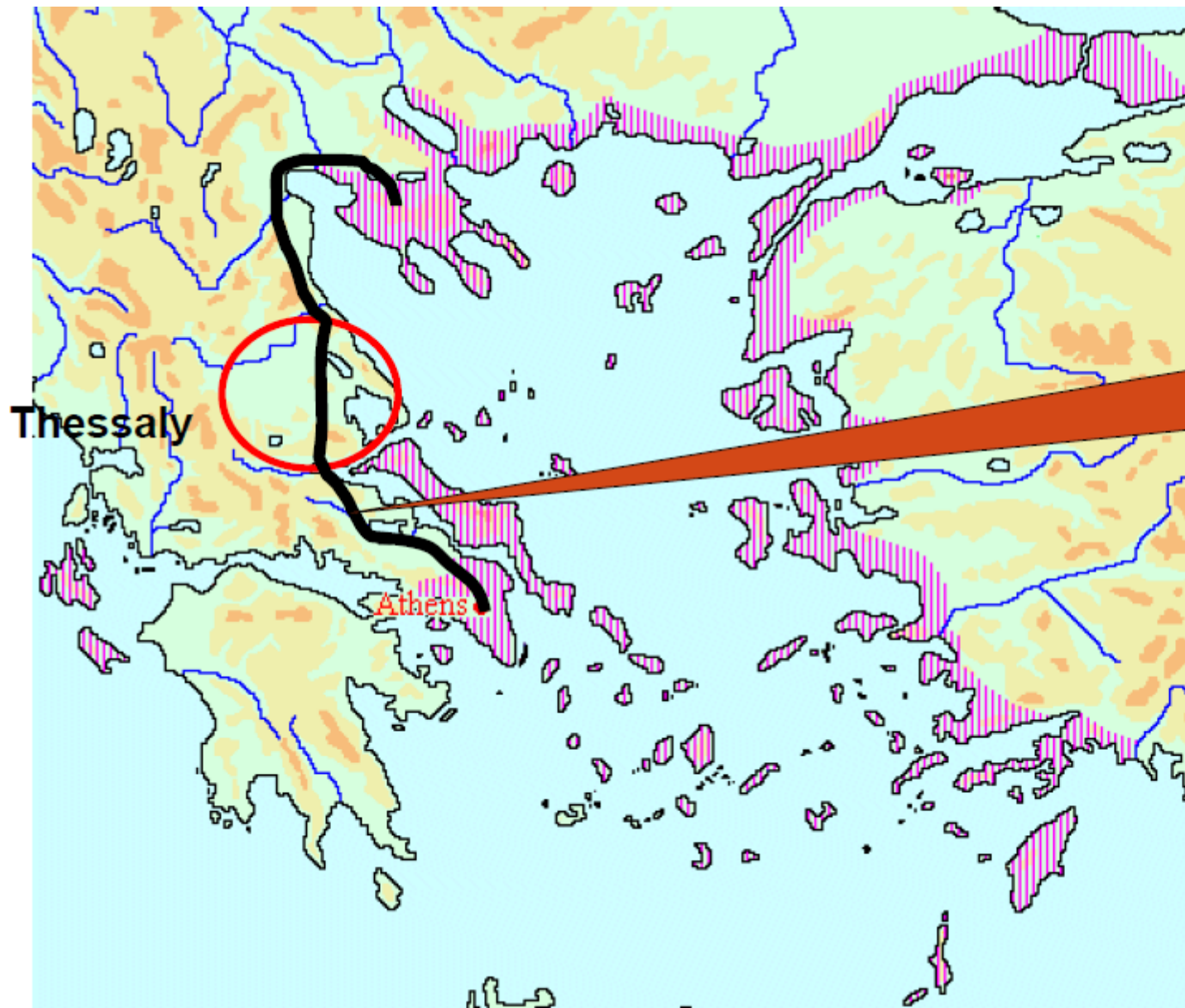
THE ATHENIAN REACTION

But the Athenians aware that their dismissal did not proceed from the more honorable reason of the two, but from suspicions which had been conceived, went away deeply offended, and conscious of having done nothing to merit such treatment from the Lacedaemonians; and the instant that they returned home **they broke off the alliance which had been made against the Mede, and allied themselves with Sparta's enemy Argos; each of the contracting parties taking the same oaths and making the same alliance with the Thessalians.**

Thucydides 1.102

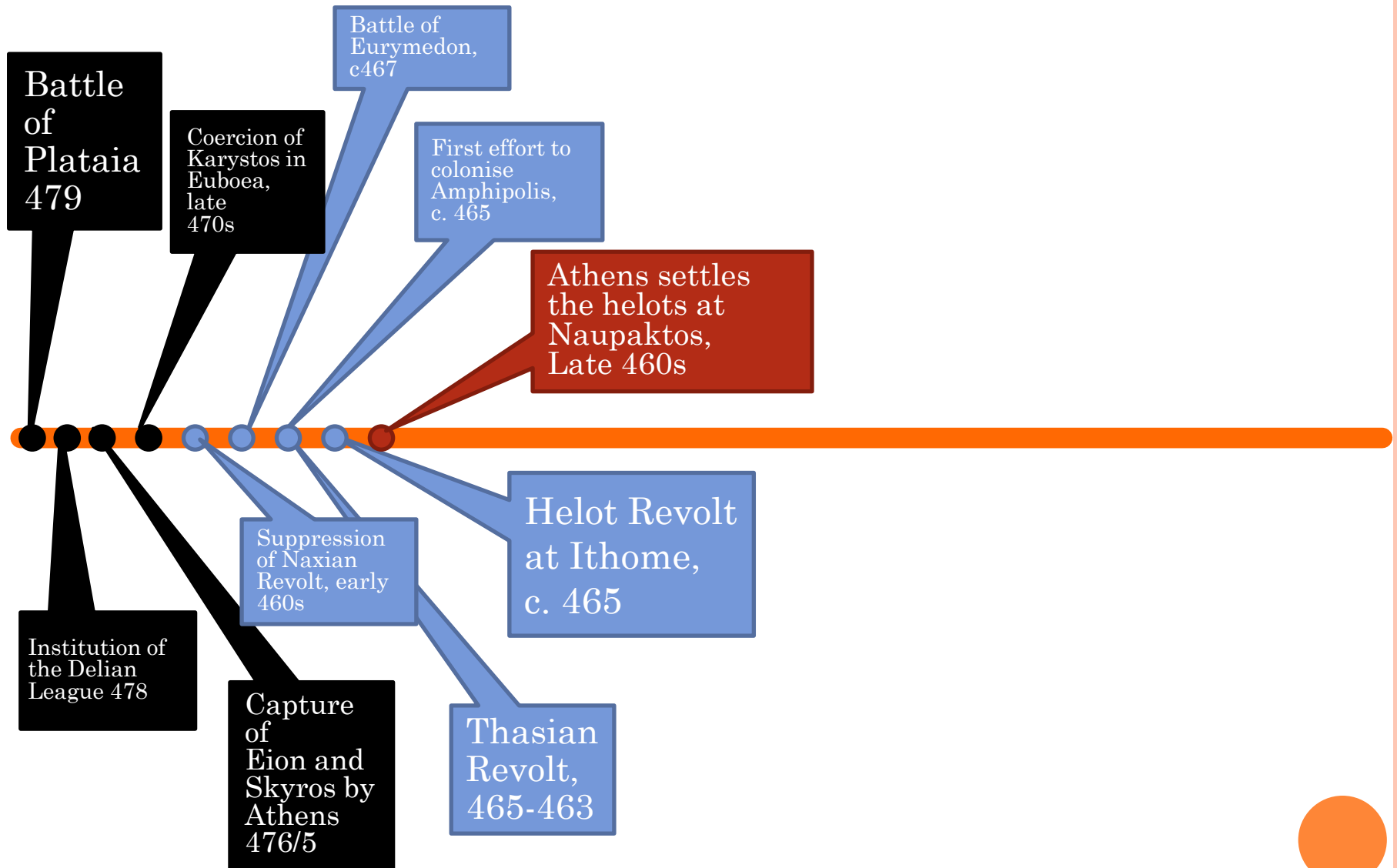


THESSALY AND THE WAY NORTH



Brasidas
route to the
Athenian
allies

THE PENTEKONTAETIA: TIMELINE



HELOTS AND ATHENS

Meanwhile the rebels in Ithome, unable to prolong further a ten years resistance, surrendered to Lacedaemon; the conditions being that they should **depart from Peloponnese under safe conduct, and should never set foot in it again: any one who might hereafter** be found there was to be the slave of his captor. **It must be known that the Lacedaemonians had an old oracle from Delphi, to the effect that they should let go the suppliant of Zeus at Ithome.** So they went forth with their children and their wives, and **being received by Athens from the hatred that she now felt for the Lacedaemonians, were located at Naupactus, which she had lately taken from the Ozolian Locrians.**

Thucydides 1.103



THE MESSENIANS AT NAUPAKTOS

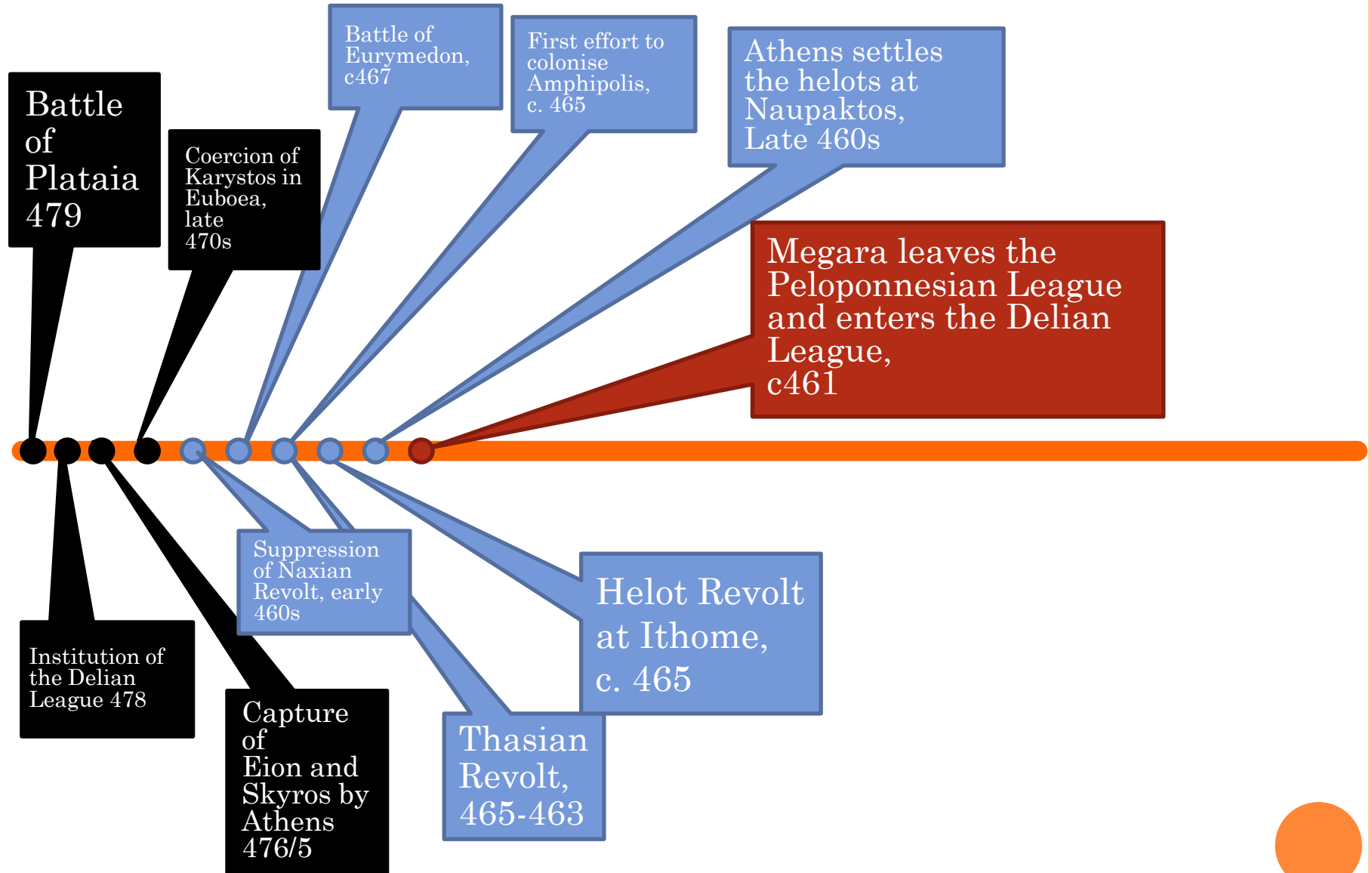


THE MESSENIANS AT NAUPAKTOS

- By settling the helots at Naupaktos, the Athenians managed to control a vital route (economic and military) to the Peloponnese, particularly to Corinth.
- That meant (as happened in the Peloponnesian War) that Athenian squadrons could be stationed at Naupaktos and from there control the shipping in the Corinthian Gulf and raid the northern shore of the Peloponnese.



THE PENTEKONTAETIA: TIMELINE



ATHENS, MEGARA AND CORINTH

The Athenians received another addition to their confederacy in the Megarians; who left the Lacedaemonian alliance, annoyed by a war about boundaries forced on them by Corinth. **The Athenians occupied Megara and Pegae, and built the Megarians their long walls from the city to Nisaea, in which they placed an Athenian garrison. This was the principal cause of the Corinthians conceiving such a deadly hatred against Athens.**

Thucydides 1.103



ATHENS, MEGARA AND CORINTH



THE MEGARIAN ALLIANCE

- By having Megara as an ally rather than an enemy, Athens secured its southern border. i.e. the Spartans and their allies could no longer invade Attica, as they had wanted to do in the Thasian Revolt.
- Also Athens gained a foothold on the main route into the Peloponnese and could easily raid Corinthia. Further by having a port at Pagae, it obtained naval access to the Corinthian Gulf and no longer had to sail around the Peloponnese.

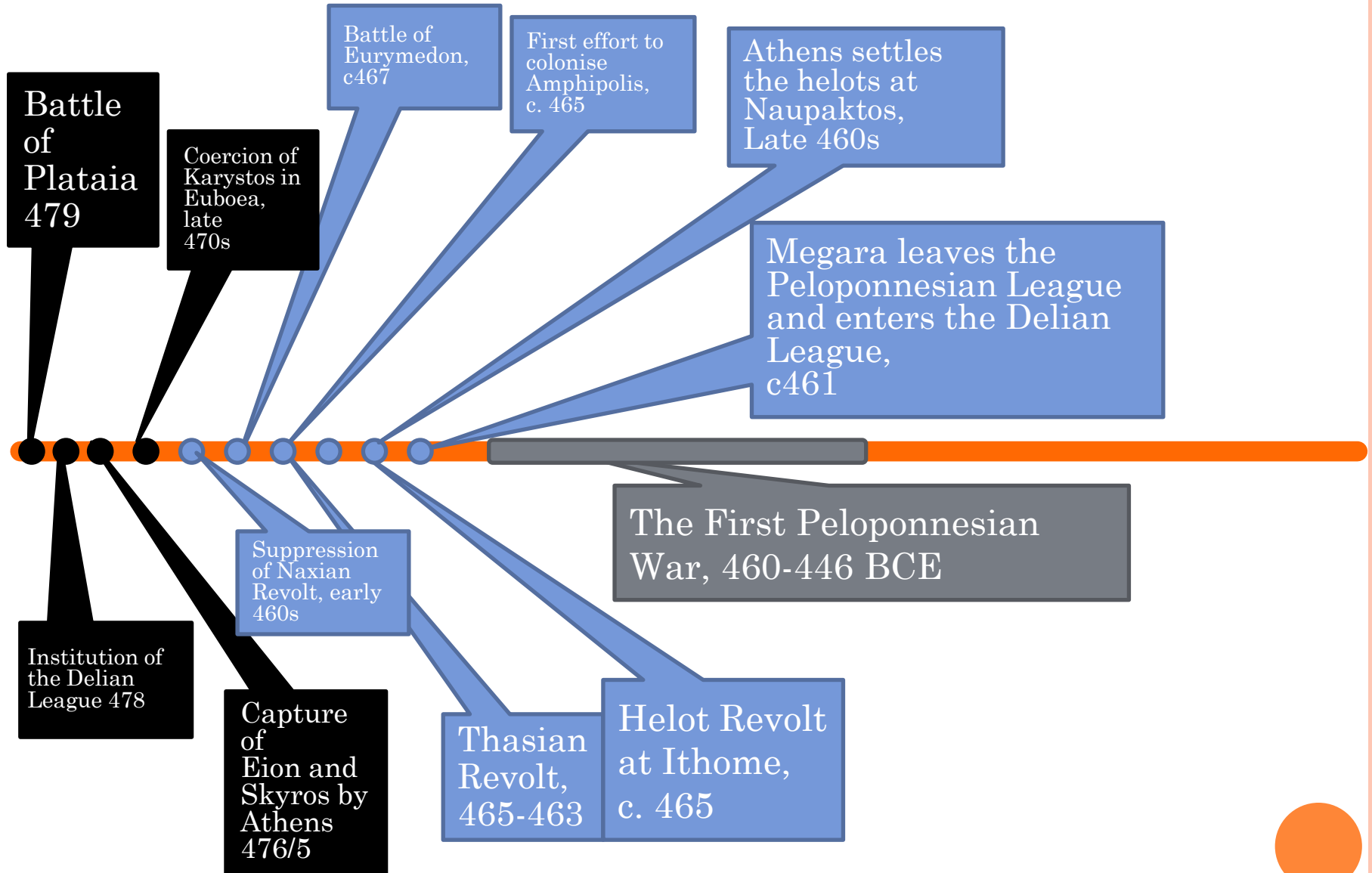


CORINTHIAN ENMITY

- Corinth until the late 460s had been generally pro-Athenian in spite of being a Spartan ally.
- Corinthian friendship for Athens is easily explained because of Corinth's border problems with Megara, i.e. the enemy of my enemy is my friend.
- Corinth generally supported Athens against Megara and Aigina; by supporting Athens, Corinth made certain that both Megara and Aigina were occupied with the north not the west.



THE PENTEKONTAETIA: TIMELINE



FOLLOW-UP READING

- Cartledge, P. *Sparta and Lakonia: A Regional History, 1300-362 BCE*, London, 2002, pp. 171-191. (Chapter 11)
- Meiggs, R. *The Athenian Empire*, Oxford, 1972, pp. 42-91 (Chapters 3 and 4)
- Thucydides *Book 1*

