

GREEK & ROMAN CIVILAZTION





LEARNING JOURNAL UNIT 5

HIST 1421-01 GREEK & ROMAN CIVILIZATION - AY2024-T3



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Rome's conquest of Syria and Egypt further extended its control in Asia and Africa. Based on your understanding of the two conquests, answer any one of the following questions.

Put yourself in the position of Antiochus III of the Seleucid Empire of Syria.

How would you have acted differently in order to avoid conflict with Rome?

INTRODUCTION

Originally founded as an agricultural society, Rome was long focused fully on farming, land management, and domestic trade within the Italian peninsula, developing strength as a terrestrial rather than naval power. However, the landscape shifted following Rome's successful conquest of the Greek city-states occupying southern Italy, which had previously blocked expansion southward. Victory over the colonies opened access to the Mediterranean for the Romans, who recognized the potential for amassing wealth through maritime commerce in this sea. As Roman interests grew to include control of these lucrative Mediterranean trade routes, there was impetus to build a navy that could contend with other powers like Carthage. This pivoting of priorities and military capabilities marked Rome's transformation from a contained inland territory to an extended empire intent on dominating the Mediterranean world (Streich & Streich, 2018).

As Antiochus III, the Seleucid King who lost territories in Asia Minor and Syria to the rising Roman Republic in the late 3rd and early 2nd centuries BCE, I clearly made mistakes in my foreign policy and military strategies that led to direct confrontation and defeat by the Romans. If I had the opportunity to approach relations with Rome differently to avoid head-to-head conflict, there are several key actions I could have taken.

SEEK DIPLOMATIC SOLUTIONS, NOT MILITARY ONES

My first mistake was resorting too quickly to military action instead of prioritizing diplomacy in resolving territorial disputes with Rome. For example, when I wanted to reestablish Seleucid control over lands in Asia Minor, I raised a large invasion force instead of opening negotiations. I could have sent envoys first to determine if a diplomatic compromise was possible regarding these territories. If I had demonstrated willingness to talk through disputes, conflict may have been avoided.

DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE ROME'S MILITARY MIGHT

Additionally, I vastly underestimated the strength and commitment of Roman military power. Accustomed to Greek rivals who lacked resources for sustained warfare, I did not recognize at first the scale of armies Rome could marshal. I should have gathered more intelligence on Roman defense capabilities and the political will of its Senate and people to prosecute wars over territories they deemed in their sphere of control. With more accurate insight, I may have been deterred from steps Rome saw as overly aggressive.

WITHDRAW FORCES FROM EGYPT PRE-EMPTIVELY

Finally, I could have pre-emptively withdrawn my occupying forces from Egypt instead of allowing them to provide a basis for Roman intervention. Though I had fought to add Egypt to the Seleucid Empire years earlier, Rome had enforced a policy that Egypt should remain its own kingdom without foreign rule. By keeping my troops there, I gave the Roman Senate a convenient justification to declare me a threat. A voluntary pullout would have demonstrated respect and avoided triggering Roman action against my holdings in Syria as well.

CONCLUSION

Poor diplomacy, military overconfidence, and strategic missteps regarding Egypt set me on a collision course with rising Roman power that proved catastrophic for the Seleucid Empire's control in Asia. With savvier statecraft focused on diplomatic solutions, avoidance of direct military confrontation, and pre-emptive strategic concessions, I may have preserved more Seleucid territory and influence instead of hastening its decline. Though Rome's ascent could not likely be prevented outright, different approaches on my part could have mitigated the worst territorial losses if I had recognized earlier the prudent course was to accommodate not antagonize Roman interests.

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