

It is a well-known fact that the Greeks never did unite in antiquity but were brought collectively under Roman control c. 146 B.C. Nevertheless, there were political experiments and structures developed by them which stood some chance of success in this regard.

1. Symmachia -- a network of independent city-states in alliance for a common purpose.
2. Hegemonia -- domination of weaker states by a stronger, patron state.
3. Koinon -- a federal league in which a number of cities yield some of their sovereignty to a federal body which is especially concerned with military and foreign affairs.
4. Amphictiony -- a group of states allied for a religious purpose.

As early as the 6th century B.C. in the First Sacred War, it could be seen that Greek states could combine for some common good (liberation of Delphi in this case). Yet by the end of this century, Sparta had fabricated her Peloponnesian League in which Sparta's role was clearly dominant. This pattern of one state dominating her allies was indeed followed in the so-called Hellenic League formed by 31 Greek states to resist Persia in 481 B.C. Athens was taken on board as a sort of junior partner but soon wearying of subordination, Athens struck her own Delian League of free allies in 478. This association was turned into an Athenian Empire by the middle of the century. The restricted resources of wealth and manpower proved Athens' undoing and she lost her war with

Sparta in 404 B.C. The path to Greek unity was not to be found in empire-building by individual states. What solution then to this dilemma?

There were two ways to bring about Greek unity. The first way proved unappetizing to the Hellenes: foreign conquest.

In 336 Philip, King of Macedon, forced all of Hellas, except Sparta, to join his Macedonian-dominated Corinthian League, an organization which his son Alexander inherited but which partially disintegrated upon his death in 323.

The second way to unity was in the spread of the Federal League idea, the Koinon (common thing).

Federal leagues were deep-rooted in Greek history, some going back to the 6th century B.C. Early examples are the Thessalian, Phocian and Boeotian Leagues. By the fourth century this concept was given new birth when the successful Boeotian League under Epaminondas defeated Sparta (371) and created two Koina in the Peloponnese, the Messenian and the Arcadian, while stimulating a third, the Achaean, to greater activity.

By the third century, the real power in the Peloponnese was to be the vibrant Achaean League. Cities which joined this organization kept their local autonomy in a separation of powers well recognized by modern Canadians, and elected a representative federal council and magistrates (first two, then one strategos) to look after their foreign affairs. The constitution was somewhat oligarchic (conservative) in that only men over 30 could vote in the federal assembly and there was no payment for

public office (restricting it to the rich). Indeed, after the Roman defeat of Macedon in 198, Achaean came for a time to dominate the entire Peloponnese, including Sparta. Southern Greece, at least and at last, was a single unified state (something which in her heyday Sparta never accomplished), though north of the isthmus the old particularism

prevailed. Unfortunately, restiveness in Sparta and eventual Roman intervention led to the downfall of this great Hellenic experiment. Achaean was crushed under the Roman boot in 146. Had there been no Romans about, would she have gone on to unify the whole country in one solid federal union? Probably not.