

# Civilizations in Crisis: The Ottoman Empire, the Islamic Heartlands, and Qing China

## From Empire to Nation: Ottoman Retreat and the Birth of Turkey

- Ottoman decline can be attributed to weak rulers in a system dependent on effective leadership. Urban artisans suffered from competition from European goods, resulting in urban riots. With division at the top and the empire's commercial economy threatened, European neighbors could take advantage of Ottoman weakness. Russian threats were only countered by Ottoman alliances with other European nations. Serbian and Greek national uprisings drove the Ottomans back in the Balkans.
- Yet the empire survived, in spite of military defeat and territorial loss. This was in part due to European efforts to support the Ottomans against the Russians. Reforms within the empire only further divided the ruling elites. **Selim III** attempted reforms, which were viewed as a threat to the Janissaries and other groups in power. **Mahmud II** was more successful in pushing reform. Intentionally spurring the Janissaries to mutiny, Mahmud then suppressed them. His reforms followed Western precedents. The **Tanzimat reforms**—from 1839 to 1876—included Western-style universities, legal reforms, and establishment of newspapers. Opening the economy to foreigners adversely affected artisans. Pushing reforms against women's seclusion, veiling, and polygamy had a limited impact.
- The reform movements brought Western-educated Turks to question the role of the sultanate. **Abdul Hamid** attempted to establish autocratic rule, while still continuing reforms. The coup of 1908 brought the Young Turks—members of the Ottoman Society for Union and Progress—to power. The constitution—set aside by Abdul Hamid—was reestablished, with the sultan a figurehead. Internal struggles and Balkan conflicts nearly toppled the movement. Arabs of the Fertile Crescent and Arabia were disappointed to find that the Young Turks wished to maintain the empire.

## Western Intrusions and the Crisis in the Arab Islamic Heartlands

- Arabs of the Ottoman Empire had some commonalities with the Turks, especially Islam, but were left undefended from European attacks.
- Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 opened a new era in reforms between the Middle East and Europe. At the time, Egypt had been led by Mamluk families, headed by **Murad**. Their defeat by Napoleon was a shock, following as it did cen-

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- turies of Mamluk military ascendancy. The conflict brought no lasting gains for France, but it was a watershed. **Muhammad Ali** emerged to lead Egypt following Napoleon's departure. He reformed the army along Western lines. Egyptian peasants were forced to grow export crops. His successors were unable to capitalize on his partial success. His descendants—the **Khedives**—ruled Egypt until 1952.
- Muhammad Ali's reforms made Egypt dependent on cotton exports and therefore at the mercy of European markets. European lenders gained control of cotton prices and then shares in the **Suez Canal**. Courses proposed among Egyptians to solve the problem of weak sultans and khedives included jihad and more borrowing from the West. These two approaches were and are essentially at odds. **Alafghani** and **Muhammad Abduh** favored the latter course, partly because they valued the Islamic tradition of rational inquiry. The financial problems of the khedives led to greater financial control of British and French bankers. **Ahmad Orabi** led a revolt in 1882, which resulted in the British restoration of the khedives. British control of the puppet rulers and British financial control began a new era.
  - Egypt had become involved in wars in the Sudan. Egyptian power, centered on **Khartoum**, was fiercely opposed by Sudanic peoples, especially as Egypt tried to stop the slave trade. **Muhammad Ahmad** emerged to lead these opponents as the **Mahdi**. He launched a jihad against Egypt and Britain, motivated by a desire to purify Islam. His military skill led to control of modern Sudan. Following his death, a successor, the **Khalifa Abdallahi**, built a state in the region. The British sent Lord Kitchener to Sudan in 1896. The Battle of Omdurman in 1898 ended the Mahdist state.

### The Last Dynasty: The Rise and Fall of the Qing Empire in China

- Manchu nomads, north of the Great Wall, were united by **Nurhaci** in the early 1600s. His **banner armies** were a powerful force. For decades, the Manchu learned from Chinese bureaucratic methods and employed scholar-officials. Called in to help put down a rebellion, they instead took Beijing. Under the dynastic name Qing, they ruled China. The Manchu elite ruled with few changes to court or bureaucratic procedure. They patronized traditional Chinese arts and Confucianism. **Kangxi** was himself an important Confucian scholar.
- Minimal changes occurred in Chinese society under the Manchu, except possibly a decline in the status of women. Rural reforms attempted to bring more land into cultivation and restore the infrastructure of dikes, roads, and irrigation. These improvements were partially successful, yet did little to mitigate the power of landlords. Merchants did well under the Qing as exporters of tea and silk. These **compradors** linked China to the rest of the world.
- Qing decline went along familiar lines. The examination system ceased to fill its role in bringing forward able administrators. Posts could be bought, and cheating was allowed. The abuses were troubling in a system based on Confucian education, intended to engender concern for the people of China. Again, public works in rural areas were abandoned. In the Shangdong peninsula, the Huanghe river was allowed to flood. Thousands died from famine and disease. Banditry, on the rise, signaled a weakening dynasty. Many expected that a new dynasty would now renew the historical cycle.

- Yet the new “barbarians” threatening China could not be sinified and absorbed. In the 18th century, British merchants had turned to opium for export to China. British depended on the trade, but the Chinese saw it as a threat. As much as one percent of the Chinese were addicted, causing widespread social and administrative problems. Efforts to stop the trade began in the 1820s. In the 1830s **Lin Zexu** was sent to end the opium trade. To do so he confiscated opium, destroyed warehouses, and imposed a blockade. The resulting **Opium War** ended with Chinese defeat. China was forced to open its ports to foreign trade. Hong Kong was developed as a British outpost. British officials oversaw Chinese trade, and the government was forced to accept foreign ambassadors.
- Chinese defeat and growing foreign interference led to revolts. The **Taiping Rebellion** was led by **Hong Xiuquan** against the Qing. Although successful militarily, the movement fell apart, especially under British opposition. The Taiping Rebellion challenged not just the Qing government, but also the traditional order. The scholar-gentry thus rallied to the regime. Men such as Zeng Guofan led the **self-strengthening movement** against Western influence, while embracing Western technology. Manchu attempts at reform were blocked by those resistant to change, such as the dowager empress **Cixi**. In 1901, the **Boxer Rebellion** tried to expel foreigners. It resulted in greater European control.
- Numerous secret societies formed to end Qing rule, without success. Yet they spawned a succeeding generation of reformers, such as **Sun Yat-sen**. These revolutionaries targeted foreigners. In 1911, they forced the Manchu from power. The revolution ended the Qing dynasty. In 1905, the civil service exams had been discontinued, after 2,500 years.

### **Multiple-Choice Questions**

1. The decline of the Ottoman Empire in the 18th and 19th centuries can be traced to all of these reasons EXCEPT:
  - (A) sultans who were weak or inept rulers.
  - (B) frequent defeat of the Ottoman Empire and annexations of its land.
  - (C) religious divisions within Islam.
  - (D) decline in the productivity of peasants and artisans.
  - (E) Christian and non-Turkish populations, who resented Turkish rule.
2. The group that opposed most internal Ottoman reforms was the
  - (A) university-educated students.
  - (B) Christians.
  - (C) merchants.
  - (D) peasants.
  - (E) ruling religious, political, and social elites.
3. Reforms under the late Ottoman sultans and Young Turk leaders
  - (A) attempted to modernize Turkey without Westernizing.
  - (B) sought Muslim solutions to internal problems.
  - (C) emphasized westernization and copied Western models openly.
  - (D) were opposed by most members of Turkish society.
  - (E) had no effect.
4. The strategic importance of Egypt was changed by
  - (A) Napoleon’s invasion in 1798.
  - (B) the khedive’s conquest of the Middle East and defeat of the Ottoman Empire.
  - (C) building the Suez Canal.
  - (D) the conversion of a majority of Egyptians to Christianity.
  - (E) building Alexandria and Cairo.

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5. The Muslim Sudanese revolted under the Mahdi for all of these reasons EXCEPT:
    - (A) opposition to the effort to end the slave trade.
    - (B) the conquest of the Sudan by the British.
    - (C) opposition to British influence in the area.
    - (D) a desire to purge Islam of Western influences.
    - (E) opposition to Egyptian rule in the area.
  6. Although they were nomadic tribesmen from beyond the Great Wall, the Manchus, when they conquered China,
    - (A) freely settled among the Chinese people.
    - (B) reformed the Ming bureaucracy and removed local elites.
    - (C) emancipated women and peasants.
    - (D) retained the Ming emperors as nominal leaders.
    - (E) retained the Confucian gentry-scholars and much of the political system.
  7. Socially, the Manchu (Qing) rulers
    - (A) encouraged innovative organizations such as unions.
    - (B) reinforced much of the Confucian value system, including the family.
    - (C) began to slowly emancipate women.
    - (D) discouraged Manchu elites from adopting Chinese ways.
    - (E) refused to reinstate the Confucian testing system.
  8. All of these incidents were signs of the decline of the Qing Dynasty in China EXCEPT the:
    - (A) breakdown of honesty on the Chinese bureaucratic exams.
    - (B) diversion of taxes and revenues to enrich bureaucrats and their families.
    - (C) rise of banditry.
    - (D) rise of a wealthy group of merchants.
    - (E) neglect of public works and utilities.
  9. The most immediate result of the Opium War was
    - (A) the partition of China between European nations.
    - (B) the collapse of the Qing dynasty and its replacement.
    - (C) the beginning of a powerful reform movement to strengthen China.
    - (D) Korea was ceded to Japan.
    - (E) China was forced to open its ports to European trade and grant European extraterritoriality.
  10. In the last decades of the 19th century, the Chinese inability to reform or modernize was largely due to
    - (A) foreign pressures not to modernize at all.
    - (B) constant rebellions and peasant revolts.
    - (C) elites and the dowager empress, who would allow nothing to limit their authority.
    - (D) the lack of an educated elite willing to lead or propose reform.
    - (E) the lack of a prosperous merchant class.

**Free-Response Question**

*Compare the Ottoman and Qing Empires under the pressure of Europeans. Consider the manner of foreign intervention in each and the manner in which rulers of the two empires responded.*

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**ANSWERS AND EXPLANATIONS**

*Multiple-Choice Questions*

- **1. (C) is correct.** Although religious divisions existed, divisive religious groups arose more in reaction to decline than as a cause.

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- **2. (E) is correct.** As was so common, reform was resisted by entrenched groups that saw their position threatened by change, and that in fact were too comfortable to want reform.
  - **3. (B) is correct.** Westernization in this period began a lasting shift in Turkey, placing one foot in the West and one in the Middle East.
  - **4. (C) is correct.** The Suez Canal made control of Egypt crucial to any country hoping to control trade to the East.
  - **5. (B) is correct.** The Egyptians had attempted to conquer the area, and the British were intervening, but the Sudanese had not been conquered.
  - **6. (E) is correct.** The Manchus generally retained Chinese political traditions.
  - **7. (B) is correct.** Socially as well as politically, the Qing continued Chinese policies.
  - **8. (D) is correct.** Merchants did indeed prosper under the Qing, but their rise was not connected to the dynasty's decline, which came at higher levels.
  - **9. (E) is correct.** The other answers followed, but only over decades.
  - **10. (C) is correct.** As in the Ottoman Empire, those in privileged positions had no wish for reform.

### ***Free-Response Essay Sample Response***

*Compare the Ottoman and Qing Empires under the pressure of Europeans. Consider the manner of foreign intervention in each and the manner in which rulers of the two empires responded.*

Pressures on both empires increased in the 19th century. However, the pressure was motivated in China largely by a desire for export goods, and in the Ottoman Empire for strategic reasons. The Europeans, especially the British, forced their way into China to trade highly desirable finished products. While Ottoman goods such as textiles were attractive to Europeans, other motivations prevailed. Europeans were eager to prop up the Ottomans to counter Russian expansion. With the completion of the Suez Canal, interest turned to protecting the shorter route to the East.

In China, the Qing emperors responded through traditional channels, but their attempts at diplomacy were met with British force. Anti-foreigner movements arose, but were not successful until much later. The Ottoman emperors, on the other hand, did little to oppose foreign intervention. As in China, movements arose in Egypt and elsewhere against Westerners, especially along religious lines.

