

Unit 2: Empires Strike Back
State-Building in Eurasia and North Africa, 500 BCE-500 CE

Big Picture:

As the early states and empires grew in number, size, and population, they **frequently competed for resources and came into conflict with one another**. In quest of land, wealth, and security, some **empires expanded** dramatically. In doing so, they built powerful military machines and administrative institutions that were capable of organizing human activities over long distances, and they created new groups of military and political elites to manage their affairs. As these empires expanded their boundaries, they also **faced the need to develop policies and procedures to govern** their relationships with ethnically and culturally diverse populations: sometimes to integrate them within an imperial society and sometimes to exclude them. In some cases, these empires **became victims of their own successes**. By expanding their boundaries too far, they created political, cultural, and administrative difficulties that they could not manage. They also experienced **environmental, social, and economic problems** when they overexploited their lands and subjects and permitted excessive wealth to be concentrated in the hands of privileged classes.

Historical Terms:

Darius, Athens & Sparta, Alexander the Great, Caesar, Augustus, Pax Romana, Qin Shihuangdi, Legalism, Mandate of Heaven, Wudi, Byzantine Empire, Xiongnu, Aryans, Ashoka

Guiding Readings Questions GRQs):

1. What is an empire?
2. How did the Persian Empire attempt to impose political unity on its people? In other words, what were the political characteristics of the Persian Empire and how did these policies create a unified empire?
3. How did the Greeks attempt to impose political unity on their people? Why did Greek government differ from the Persians? How did some semi-democratic governments emerge in some Greek city-states?
4. What changes did Alexander's conquests bring in their wake?
5. How did the Roman Empire attempt to impose political unity? How and why did the foundations of Roman government change over time? What stayed the same? (Think about growing from a single city to the center of a huge empire)
6. Compare the policies of imposing political unity by the Roman Empire to the policies of Han China. (Think about why China was able to consolidate power more quickly than Rome; relate these ideas to periods of stability)
7. Compare the collapse of the Roman Empire to the collapse of Han China. What internal and external factors contributed to their collapse? What circumstances were similar and/or different that contributed to these factors?
8. Summarize the political characteristics of classical India. Why did India have trouble creating political

Chapter Reading Outline:

1. Introduction (pp. 97-98)
2. Empires and Civilizations in collision: The Persians and the Greeks (pp.99-108)
 - 2.1. Intro
 - 2.2. The Persian Empire
 - 2.3. The Greeks
 - 2.4. Collision: The Greco-Persian Wars
 - 2.5. Collision: Alexander and the Hellenistic Era
3. Comparing Empires: Roman and Chinese (pp.108-119)
 - 3.1. Intro
 - 3.2. Rome: From City-State to Empire
 - 3.3. China: From Warring States to Empire
 - 3.4 Consolidating the Roman and Chinese Empires
 - 3.5 The Collapse of Empires
4. Intermittent Empire: The Case of India (pp. 119-121)
5. Reflections (pp.121-122)
 - 5.1 Enduring Legacies of Second-Wave Empires