

# Classical Era

## Strengths and Accomplishments

Holding empires together  
took political and technological innovation

Romans

Qin-Han

Mauryan - Gupta

# Empires

- *Hegemony* simply means dominance over others
- In the context of empires it can mean →  
political / economic / cultural dominance
- How do they dominate
  - Inclusive
  - Exclusive
- Aristocracy vs. citizenship
- Enslavement
  - Does not always mean ownership or becoming property
  - Can be economic enslavement such as tribute or repayment of debt
- What type of new political structures are established to create and later maintain the empire?
- Does the culture present have to be destroyed OR can it be incorporated into the new culture?
- How well is it done so that a large army does not suck dry the empire's resources?

## Plato - *"The Republic"*:

### A ship, to have a safe and successful journey...

- needs an expert navigator at the helm, a captain who knows the capacities of the vessel, geography, meteorology, water currents, navigational astronomy, supplies management, and good communication with all parts of the ship and other matters.
- An ignorant and untrained person at the helm of a ship would endanger vessel, cargo, crew, and passengers alike.
- Similarly, Plato suggests, the ship of state needs expert governors at the helm, governors who are well informed about such things as law, economics, sociology, military strategy, history, and other relevant subjects.
- Ignorant and incompetent governors can be and have been disasters for citizens and states.

# Confucius on Good Government

*“When a Prince’s personal conduct is correct, his government is effective without the issuing of orders.*

*If his personal conduct is not correct, he may issue orders, but they will not be followed.”*

- *Mandate of Heaven*
- Later compare to Machiavelli’s *The Prince*

# What forces caused the rise of classical civilizations?

- Strong government
- Prosperous economy
- Changes in philosophical and religious world views
- Advanced technology and learning (Lasting contributions and achievements)

# Strong Government

- Empires:
  - Provided large, secure areas for trade
  - Accumulated wealth necessary for basic economic development
  - Provided political stability

# Prosperous economy

- Commercial and economic development
- Trade routes connected the Mediterranean Sea with Asia
  - Water
  - Land (Silk Roads)
- Cultural Diffusion: In addition to exchanging goods, traders carried ideas, religious beliefs, art, and ways of living

*The stability provided by the great empires helped to create great trading networks.*

# What forces caused the fall of classical civilizations?

- Peace made people soft
  - First generation builds
  - Next generation spends interest (extra)
  - Last generation spends principal (everything)

# External Forces

- Expanding borders made it difficult to defend
  - Invasion
    - China: nomadic northern tribes
    - Rome: German tribes
    - Greeks: Romans
    - India: Mid-East

# Internal Forces

- Wars of expansion took toll on lower classes
  - China / Rome - peasants kept out of their fields
- Mediocre/incompetent successors
  - Death of Alexander, Asoka
- Social and economic imbalance
  - Wealthy landowners challenge authority of government, poor lower class (peasants / slaves) revolt

## END GAME:

- Large empire disintegrates into smaller rival kingdoms.

## Fall of Classical Empires

	Han	Western Rome	Gupta
Time of Fall	220 C.E.	476 C.E.	550 C.E.
Economic Reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Scholar officials were often exempt from taxes and peasants often fled from tax collectors to these estates.</li> <li>- As a result, a severe reduction in tax revenue financially crippled the empire.</li> <li>- Long-distance trade did decrease, but the Chinese were quite self-sufficient and were not severely hurt by this.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The rich landowning class often resisted paying their taxes and when the tax collectors did approach, they were driven away by the landowners private armies. Also the church land was not taxable.</li> <li>- As the empire declined, so did the trade because of unsafe roads and because it relied on economic interdependence.</li> <li>- The drop in tax revenue and inflation crippled Rome's economy.</li> </ul>	<p>The government had great difficulty raising enough taxes to pay the army to protect its borders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Gujarti guild (<i>jati</i>) of silk weavers formed during the Gupta, moved to the south and their economic influence declined.</li> </ul>

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<b>Political Reasons</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government was unable to check the power of the large private estate owners.</li> <li>- The emperor heavily relied on the advice of his court officials and was often misinformed for their personal gain.</li> <li>- Lack of consistent succession to the imperial rule created instability and corruption.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government had trouble finding bureaucrats who could enforce the laws.</li> <li>- Power struggles for the throne plagued the empire. From 235 to 284 CE, 25 out of 26 emperors died of violent death.</li> <li>- The division of the empire into two sections allowed the eastern portion to remain stronger, while the western portion weakened.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The regional powers of the Guptas allowed them to keep much of their administrative power.</li> <li>- They eventually grew more powerful than the central government.</li> </ul>

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<b>Social Reasons</b>	<b>The population increase led to small family plots and increased difficulty of the peasant class to pay taxes.</b>	<b>Plagues dramatically reduced the population, in particular the farming population.</b>	<b>Decline of the jati class contributed to fewer groups to tax.</b>

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<b>Role of Nomadic Invasions</b>	<p><b>- The Xiongnu invaded, but only after the empire had already fallen.</b></p> <p><b>- Nomadic invasions took place because the empire was no longer providing them with what they needed.</b></p>	<p><b>- The Roman army could not defend against the movement of such nomadic groups as the Ostrogoths, Huns, and Visigoths.</b></p> <p><b>- Rome was sacked by the Visigoths in 476 C.E.</b></p>	<p><b>The government was too weak to defend against the nomadic invasions of the White Huns as weak rulers and tribal in fighting continued.</b></p>