The Rise of Europe
and
the Eclipse of Islam as the Pivot of the World Order

- The early modern Muslim empires had sufficient internal reasons for destruction, but their demise was made more certain by a common ignoring of the rising European threat.

- Little effort was made to incorporate European technological advances.

- The failure to meet the European challenge weakened the economic base of their empires as revenues and profits were drained off by foreigners. Importation of European bullion brought damaging inflation.

- EUROPEAN GAINS IN WAYS TO GENERATE WEALTH AND ECONOMIC GROWTH MEANT INCREASING LOSSES FOR MUSLIM SOCIETIES AND POLITICAL SYSTEMS.

- Muslim leaders and scholars ignored these trends and caused serious difficulties for the world of Islam in the future. Thus, they were largely oblivious to the scientific ideas that were transforming the European worldview and steadily enhancing the Western / Christian ability to tap new sources of power for production, communications, and war.

- Muslim peoples and cultures paid a high price for this arrogance and the failure of their leadership to recognize and match the intellectual and material accomplishments of the West.

The Deterioration of Islamic Imperial Leadership, 16th to 18th centuries

1. Dynastic decline caused by negligent rulers, factions, and government corruption

2. Religious tensions increased when Muslim conservatives abandoned policies of religious tolerance

a. In Ottoman empire: protest against installation of a telescope, resistance to printing press
b. In Safavid empire: Shiite leaders pressured the shahs to persecute Sunnis, non-Muslims, and even the Sufis
c. In Mughal India, Aurangzeb's policy provoked deep animosity of Hindus

3. Economic and Military Decline

a. Economic stagnation
    1. When territorial expansion slowed, ceased, or reversed, the empires had financial difficulties in maintaining armies and bureaucrats
    2. Officials resorted to raising taxes or corruption to deal with financial problems
    3. Lost initiatives to western European merchants in terms of foreign trade
b. Military decline
    1. Importing European weapons only promoted European weapon industries
    2. No large armament industries in Islamic empires, and imported arsenals became increasingly dated

4. Cultural Insularity

a. Cultural conservatism
    1. Muslim rulers and conservatives were absolutely confident of their superiority
    2. Remained oblivious to European cultural and technological developments
b. An example -- Resistance to printing press
    1. Jewish refugees introduced printing presses to Anatolia, the late 15th century
    2. Ottoman authorities banned printing in Turkish and Arabic
    3. Even though the ban was lifted in 1729, conservatives forced closure of a Turkish press in 1742
    4. In India, Mughal rulers showed little interest in printing technology

The Islamic rulers preferred political stability to risks that foreign cultural innovations might bring.