

# 3 Muslim Lands Fall to Imperialist Demands

## TERMS & NAMES

- geopolitics
- Crimean War
- Suez Canal

## MAIN IDEA

European nations expanded their empires by seizing territories from Muslim states.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Political events in this vital resource area are still influenced by actions from the imperialistic period.

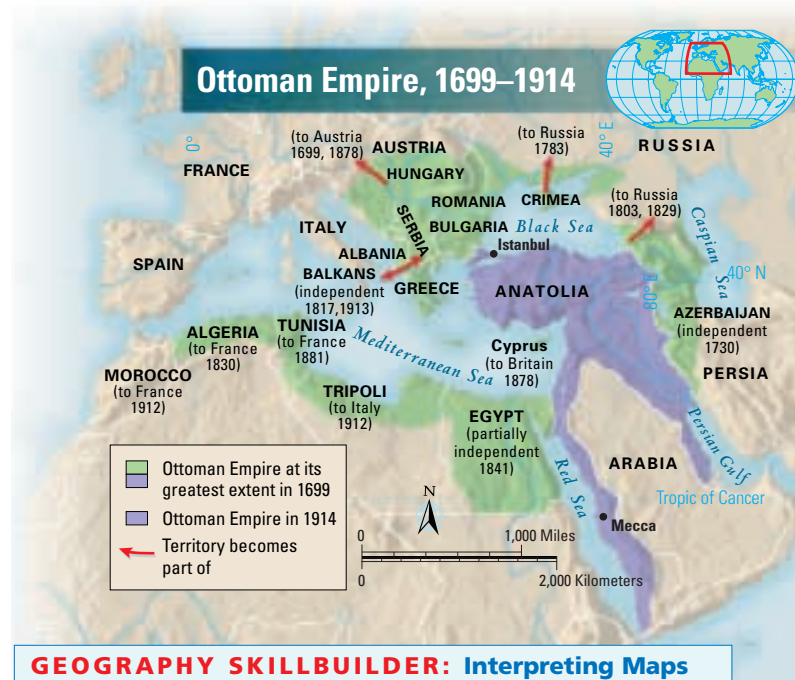
**SETTING THE STAGE** The European powers who carved up Africa among themselves also looked elsewhere to see what other lands they could control. The Muslim lands that rimmed the Mediterranean had largely been claimed as a result of Arab and Ottoman conquests. Now the Muslim power in those areas was weakening. Europeans competed with each other to gain control of this strategically important area.

## Ottoman Empire Loses Power

The Ottoman Empire at its peak stretched from Hungary in the north, through Greece, around the Black Sea, south through Syria, and across Egypt all the way west to the borders of Morocco. But during the empire's last 300 years, it steadily declined in power. The declining empire had difficulties trying to fit into the modern world. However, the Ottomans made attempts to change before they finally were unable to hold back the European imperialist powers.

**Reforms Fail** When Suleiman I, the last great Ottoman sultan, died in 1566, he was followed by a succession of weak sultans. The ruling party broke up into a number of quarreling, often corrupt factions. Along with weakening power came other problems. Corruption and theft had caused financial losses. Coinage was devalued, causing inflation. Unemployed ex-soldiers and students caused trouble. Once a leader in scientific, mechanical, and administrative achievements, the Ottoman Empire fell further and further behind Europe.

When Selim III came into power in 1789, he attempted to modernize the army. The older janissary corps resisted his efforts. Selim III was overthrown and reform movements were temporarily abandoned. Meanwhile, nationalist feelings began to stir among the Ottoman's subject peoples. In 1830, Greece gained its independence, and Serbia gained self-rule. The Ottomans' weakness was becoming apparent to European powers, who were expanding their territories. They began to look for ways to take the lands away from the Ottomans.



## GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

1. **Region** Approximately how much of the Ottoman Empire was lost by 1914?
2. **Region** How many European nations claimed parts of the Ottoman Empire? Which areas became independent?



This 1897 lithograph shows the British forces at the Battle of Balaklava in the Crimean War. This battle was the inspiration for a famous poem by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "The Charge of the Light Brigade."

## Europeans Grab Territory

**Geopolitics**—an interest in or taking of land for its strategic location or products—played an important role in the fate of the Ottoman Empire. World powers were attracted to its strategic location. The Ottomans controlled access to the Mediterranean and the Atlantic sea trade. Merchants in landlocked countries that lay beyond the Black Sea had to go through Ottoman lands. Russia, for example, desperately wanted passage for its grain exports across the Black Sea and into the Mediterranean Sea. This desire strongly influenced Russia's relations with the Ottoman Empire. Russia attempted to win Ottoman favor, formed alliances with Ottoman enemies, and finally waged war against the Ottomans. Discovery of oil in Persia and the Arabian Peninsula around 1900 focused even more attention on the area.

**Russia and the Crimean War** Each generation of Russian czars launched a war on the Ottomans to try to gain land on the Black Sea. In 1853, war broke out between the Russians and the Ottomans. The war was called the **Crimean War**, after a peninsula in the Black Sea where most of the war was fought. Britain and France wanted to prevent the Russians from gaining control of additional Ottoman lands. So they entered the war on the side of the Ottoman Empire. The combined forces of the Ottomans, Britain, and France defeated Russia. The Crimean War was the first war in which women, led by Florence Nightingale, established their position as army nurses. It was also the first war to be covered by newspaper correspondents.

The Crimean War revealed the Ottoman Empire's military weakness. Despite the help of Britain and France, the Ottoman Empire continued to lose lands. The Russians came to the aid of Slavic people in the Balkans who rebelled against the Ottomans. The Ottomans lost control of Romania, Montenegro, Cyprus, Bosnia, Herzegovina, and an area that became Bulgaria. The Ottomans lost land in Africa, too. By the beginning of World War I, the Ottoman Empire was reduced to a small portion of its former size.

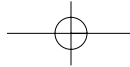
Observing the slow decline of the Ottoman Empire, some Muslim leaders decided that their countries would either have to adjust to the modern world or be consumed by it. Egypt and Persia both initiated political and social reforms, in part to block European domination of their lands.

**Egypt Tries Reform** Modernization came to Egypt as a result of the interest in the area created by the French Revolution. Egypt's strategic location at the head of the Red Sea appeared valuable to France and Britain. After Napoleon failed to win Egypt, a new leader emerged: Muhammad Ali. The Ottomans sent him to govern

### THINK THROUGH HISTORY

#### A. Analyzing

**Causes** Why would the decline of the Ottoman Empire make other Muslim countries try to change?



### THINK THOUGH HISTORY

#### B. Recognizing

**Effects** What two effects did raising cotton have on Egyptian agriculture?

Egypt, but he soon broke away from Ottoman control. In 1841, he fought a series of battles in which he gained control of Syria and Arabia. Through the combined efforts of European powers, he and his heirs were recognized as hereditary rulers of Egypt.

Muhammad Ali began a series of reforms in the military and in the economy. He personally directed a shift of Egyptian agriculture to a plantation cash crop—cotton. This brought Egypt into the international marketplace, but at a cost to the peasants. They lost the use of lands they traditionally farmed. They were forced to grow cash crops in place of food crops.

Muhammad Ali's efforts to modernize Egypt were continued by his grandson, Isma'il. Isma'il supported the construction of the **Suez Canal**. The canal was a man-made waterway that cut through the Isthmus of Suez. It connected the Red Sea to the Mediterranean. It was built mainly with French money and Egyptian labor. The Suez Canal was opened in 1869 with a huge international celebration. However, Isma'il's modernization efforts, such as irrigation projects and communication networks, were enormously expensive. Egypt soon found that it could not pay its European bankers even the interest on its \$450 million debt. The British insisted on overseeing financial control of the canal, and in 1882 the British occupied Egypt.

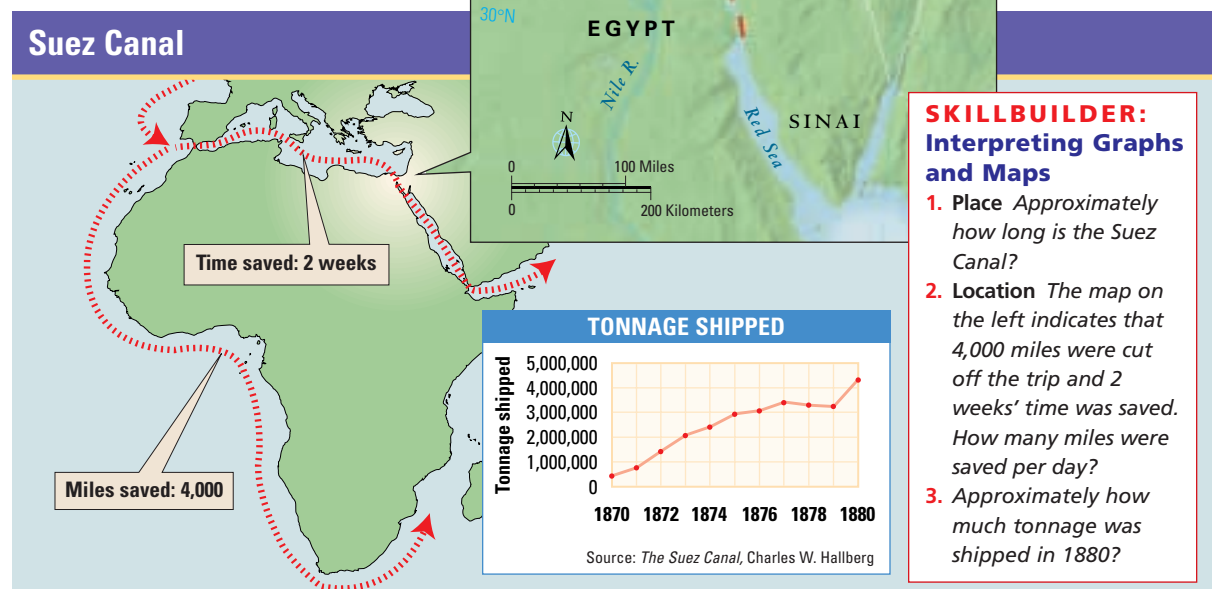
British control of the Suez Canal remained an important part of British imperial policy. The canal was viewed as the "Lifeline of the Empire" because it allowed the British quicker access to its colonies in Asia and Africa. A British imperialist, Joseph Chamberlain, presented a speech to Parliament. In it he supported the continued control of the canal:

#### A VOICE FROM THE PAST

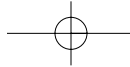
I approve of the continued occupation of Egypt; and for the same reasons I have urged upon this Government, . . . the necessity for using every legitimate opportunity to extend our influence and control in that great African continent which is now being opened up to civilization and to commerce. . . .

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN, in a speech, January 22, 1894

**Persia Pressured to Change** Elsewhere in southwest Asia, Russia and Britain competed to exploit Persia commercially and to bring that country under their own spheres of influence. Russia was especially interested in gaining access to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Twice Persia gave up territories to Russia after military defeats in 1813 and 1828. Britain was interested in using Afghanistan as a buffer between India and Russia.







In 1857, Persia resisted British demands but was forced to give up all claims to Afghanistan. Britain's interest in Persia increased greatly after the discovery of oil there in 1908.

Persia lacked the capital to develop its own resources. To raise money and to gain economic prestige, the Persian ruler began granting concessions to Western businesses. Businesses bought the right to operate in a certain area or develop a certain product. For example, a British corporation, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, began to develop Persia's rich oil fields in the early 1900s.

Tension arose between the often corrupt rulers, who wanted to sell concessions to Europeans, and the people. The people were often backed by religious leaders who feared change or disliked Western influence in their nation. In 1891, Nasir al-Din attempted to sell the rights to export and distribute Persian tobacco to a British company. This action outraged Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, a modernist leader, who helped set up a tobacco boycott by the heavy-smoking Persians. In the following quote, he expresses his contempt for the Persian ruler:

#### Background

Britain needed oil for its ships, which now ran on oil rather than coal. Thus, they needed greater supplies of petroleum.

## CONNECT to TODAY

### Tobacco and Politics

Tobacco production is a huge industry in the world. It is estimated that about 7 million metric tons of tobacco are consumed each year. (That is about 6 trillion cigarettes per year.)

In some countries, production of tobacco is a major part of the economy. Taxes on tobacco products generate much revenue in countries across the world. Since the tobacco industry creates huge profits, it often has an impact on the politics of a country as well.

Health concerns about tobacco consumption have also found their way into politics. Worldwide, countries are looking at government control of tobacco products as a way to deal with health problems.

Since the 1980s the World Health Organization has promoted a World No-Tobacco Day, which occurs on May 31 each year.

### A VOICE FROM THE PAST

... He has sold to the foes of our Faith the greater part of the Persian lands and the profits derived from them, for example ... tobacco, with the chief centers of its cultivation, the lands on which it is grown and the warehouses, carriers, and sellers, wherever these are found. ...

In short, this criminal has offered the provinces of Persia to auction among the Powers, and is selling the realms of Islam and the abodes of Muhammad and his household to foreigners.

SAYYID JAMAL AL-DIN AL-AFGHANI, in a letter to Hasan Shirazi, April 1891

#### THINK THROUGH HISTORY

**C. Clarifying** Why did al-Afghani condemn the actions of the Persian ruler?

The tobacco boycott worked. Riots broke out and the ruler was compelled to cancel the concession. As unrest continued in Persia, the government was unable to control the situation. In 1906, a group of revolutionaries forced the ruler to establish a constitution. In 1907, Russia and Britain took over the country and divided it into spheres of influence.

In the Muslim lands, the European imperialists gained control by using economic imperialism and creating spheres of influence. Although some governments made attempts at modernization, in most cases it was too little too late. In other areas of the globe, imperialists provided the modernization. India, for example, became a colony that experienced massive change as a result of the occupation of the imperialist British. You will learn about India in Section 4.

## Section 3 Assessment

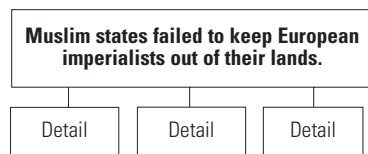
### 1. TERMS & NAMES

Identify

- geopolitics
- Crimean War
- Suez Canal

### 2. TAKING NOTES

Re-create the diagram below and fill in at least three details that support the main idea.



What imperialistic forms of control did the Europeans use to govern these lands?

### 3. COMPARING AND CONTRASTING

How were the reactions of African and Muslim rulers to imperialism similar? How were they different?

#### THINK ABOUT

- African and Muslim patterns of resistance
- African and Muslim efforts toward modernization

### 4. ANALYZING THEMES

**Economics** Why did European imperialist powers want to take over Ottoman Empire lands?

#### THINK ABOUT

- the location of the Ottoman Empire
- its special resources
- European ambitions