

The Big Picture

Latin America, the Islamic Empires, and Qing China

Mexico

After Mexico gained its independence from Spain it went through a series of governments the most significant being the dictatorship of Santa Anna. Under Santa Anna's leadership the territory of Texas was lost to Mexico followed by a disastrous war with the United States.

Santa Anna was deposed and followed by Benito Juarez (1861) who established an unsuccessful liberal, democratic government. Juarez was ousted by the French (Napoleon III) who set up the Mexican Empire under the leadership of Emperor Maximilian. This empire remained intact until Juarez successfully regained power (Maximilian was executed) in 1867.

By the late 19th century power shifts to Porfirio Diaz who establishes political stability using a dictatorial role. The dictatorship of Diaz was corrupt and harsh. Only a privileged few flourished largely due to a large influx of cash that poured into Mexico from foreign investment.

By 1911 a liberal Francisco Indalecio Madero forced Diaz's resignation. Madero was assassinated by General Victoriano Huerta who established himself as president. President Woodrow Wilson of the United States, disapproving of Huerta, actively worked to replace him. Ultimately Huerta was forced to resign (1914) succeeded by Venustiano Carranza, Wilson's choice.

South America

South American countries struggle throughout the middle to late 19th century with internal as well as international problems. States such as Paraguay, Argentina, and Uruguay fought among themselves while Peru and Chile fought the Spanish. Class and economic problems were significant. In Argentina the province of Buenos Aires attempted domination of the more rural areas.

Most of the states were republics. Some such as Paraguay and Venezuela had a strong and dominating centralized government while others were reasonably democratic and progressive such as Chile. Brazil remained unique not only because of its Portuguese origin but also because it was the only monarchy on the continent.

In the last decade of the 19th century a territorial dispute between Great Britain and Venezuela pulled the United States into the argument, the issue ultimately was resolved through arbitration after the United States supported Venezuela. Shortly after, under a harsh dictator Cipriano Castro, Venezuela accumulated large European debts, which once again forced the United States to intervene. The end result of this situation was the establishment of the "Roosevelt corollary", an edict in which the US claims the right to collect Latin American tariffs when necessary to pay off European debt.

The United States also organized a Panamanian uprising against the Colombians as Columbia had refused the US the right to build the Panama Canal. By 1904 Panama had become an independent nation granting freedom to the US to interfere whenever it deemed necessary. The only other crisis during that time was a brief civil war within Chile, which resulted in a less centralized government.

The Caribbean

Cuba continued to suffer under harsh and unbending rule from Spain. In 1868 the Cubans unsuccessfully revolted receiving no help from the United States. Once the Cubans had gained independence the United States accepted the responsibility in helping the new state establish a government, organize schools, and eradicate disease.

While Cuba had not been given colony status by the US, it did enjoy the United States' protection and support. In 1901 the US withdrew military support from Cuba but retained Guantanamo Bay as a naval base via the Platt Amendment. In addition, Cuba virtually fell into protectorate status due to its United States friendly conservative government. Ultimately, a liberal opposition assumed power, an event, which motivated the United States to send troops, overthrew Thomas Estrada Palma. US troops finally left in 1908 when President Jose Miguel Gomez, a liberal, was elected.

The Dominican Republic suffered from insecurity concerning its neighbor Haiti to the point in 1861 of asking Spain to pull them back into the fold. Spanish domination did not last long ending in 1865 due to a popular uprising. At one point the Dominican explored the idea of being incorporated into the United States although they remained independent. Incurring a great deal of debt largely to European countries the United States had to intervene ("Dollar Diplomacy") collecting customs for fifty years to repay the Dominican debt.

Central America

For the latter part of the 19th century attempts were made to unify the states of Central America. They ultimately failed due to individual state demands, rivalries, and distrust.

The Ottoman Empire

Subject Nationalities at the Beginning of the 19th century:

Arabs (Middle East and North Africa)
Egyptians (North Africa)
Slavs, Albanians, Rumanians, Bulgarians, and Greeks (Balkans)

19th Century Wars and Crisis around Ottoman Empire

Greek Revolution (1821-1829)
Crimean War (1853-1856)
Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878)
Balkan Wars (1912-1913)
Bulgarian Independence (1911-1912)
War with Italy Ottomans lose Tripoli (1912-1913)
World War I (1914-1918)

In the 1820's the Ottoman Sultan replaced his Janissaries with regular military. The Sultan's troops and the people of Constantinople proceeded to slaughter the Janissaries. Tension developed between Britain and Russia over the

increasing inability of the Ottoman ability to control and retain its empire.

Britain ultimately made the protection of the Ottoman Empire a central theme to its foreign policy, as she believed that the Ottomans protected her interests in India, while Russia claiming to be the “Big Brother” to the Slavic Balkans becomes a menacing presence to not only the continuation of the Ottoman Empire but to the stability of Europe as well. A dispute over Syria between the Ottomans and Egypt pulled in Britain and France. With additional European support Britain convinced Egypt to take only southern Syria. Russia proposed (Nicholas I) that the Ottoman Empire be partitioned vetoed by Britain.

The Crimean War was fought with Britain and France against Russia as the western powers wanted to keep the Ottoman Empire intact. In 1876 the Sultan Abdul Hamid offered the Turkish people a liberal constitution in order to gain sympathy from the western powers. His strategy worked as when the Ottomans were forced to accept an extremely unfavorable peace with the Russians. It was basically overturned by the Congress of Berlin, an international congress held by the western powers.

After the Congress, Hamid dismissed the constitution and returned to business as usual. As the century neared the end, the Ottoman Empire continued to shrink especially in the Balkans. Encouraged by the successful revolts of much of the Balkan area, the Armenians revolted in the 1890's. The Ottomans put the revolt down with so much cruelty that even the British pulled their support for the Empire.

By the turn of the century the Turks inspired by a group known as the Young Turks rebelled against their repressive government. With the tremendous loss of territory and internal instability Sultan Hamid II reinstated the Constitution of 1876. The new government lead by the Young Turks supported unity and nationalism, which angered minorities who had supported them. This situation encouraged instability and resulted in governmental repression.

By 1914 the Ottomans had lost most of the Balkans (Bosnia-Herzegovina to the Austrians) and its territories in North Africa.

Islamic Middle East

At the beginning of the 19th century Persia was under the influence of Russia and Great Britain. Egypt while technically under Ottoman control was venturing out into international commerce as the market for Egyptian cotton was good and the Suez Canal was opened (1869).

Egypt joined with the British in conquering and occupying the Sudan beginning a long time British domination over Egypt. To pay foreign debt the Egyptian Viceroy Ismail sold the shares to the Suez Canal to Britain. Due to heavy debt of the Islamic states (particularly in North Africa) the 19th century is a period when Islamic leaders found themselves dominated by their European counterparts.

By the end of the 19th century a strong nationalistic movement developed in Egypt. Under the leadership of the Egyptian Ahmad Urabi western methods were used to gain independence, an effort which resulted in Great Britain occupying the Suez Canal. British presence in Egypt only strengthened the nationalistic movement. The fight between Britain and the Egyptians resulted in the Suez Convention (1888), an international conference which declared the Suez Canal open to all vessels, in war and in peace.

As the Egyptians continued to resist British control, British troops under the leadership of Herbert Kitchener march up the Nile taking territory as the go. The British and the Egyptians jointly control Sudan as “the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan”.

China

The British taste for tea resulted in a deficient trade situation for the European country. To offset this deficient the British sold Indian opium to the Chinese. The Chinese government forbade the sale of opium to the Chinese people to which the British responded by instigating the Opium War. This war resulted in the Manchu dynasty being forced to accept the concept of "Extraterritoriality". Extraterritoriality exempted the foreign population from having to obey certain Chinese laws basically placing them under the protection of their own countries (similar to diplomatic immunity today).

Foreign domination of China ultimately resulted in the outbreak of the T'ai P'ing Rebellion, a bloody and destructive civil war serving to weaken the Chinese government. With the help of the British the T'ai P'ing rebels were defeated and a western friendly dynasty was placed in power.

By the end of the 19th century the Chinese were losing territories to largely western powers (Indo-China to French, Burma to British, and Korea gaining its independence at the insistence of the Japanese). In 1894 the Japanese and the Chinese fought the Sino-Japanese War over the fate of Korea. As the Japanese had quietly modernized over the years, China was defeated.

This war clearly demonstrated how powerful Japan had become while the Chinese had clung to the traditional values resisting industrialization and modernization. The western countries quickly moved in and staked their claim to dominance over areas of China (spheres of influence). Emperor Tsai T'ien attempted to reform and modernize in order to strengthen China's status. This action resulted in a coup by the Emperor's aunt and Tzu His to seize control, a move which led China to disaster.

China spent the rest of the century under the control of more developed powers despite the Empress Dowager's resistance. The Boxer Rebellion (ultimately unsuccessful) was an example to violent resistance to western control.