



## The fall of Roman Empire

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### Abstract

<sup>1</sup>An empire is a sizable region under the control of several ethnic groups under one ruler or government. That leader or government may be located hundreds of kilometers away from the territory. The territory is still subject to the laws of that specific government, nevertheless. A government is deemed to be an empire if it controls a sufficient amount of territory and populace. The Roman Empire was one of the largest empires in world history. Rome is a city in the European continent, namely in the nation of Italy. Rome governed over regions thousands of miles distant, despite the fact that it was only a city. From 27 BCE to 476 BCE, or more than 500 years, the Roman Empire ruled over Europe.

Rome captured much of the western continent in 117 CE, when it was at the height of its power. One of the most significant moments in global history, the fall of the Roman Empire, had several different causes. This decline was historically symbolized by the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 CE, which was brought on by a confluence of internal issues and foreign factors. The empire was beset by serious political unrest, economic difficulties, and military obstacles on the inside. Effective governance was weakened by administrative inefficiencies, political corruption, and frequent leadership changes. Economically, the empire's financial stability was undermined by high taxes, the use of slave labor, and widespread inflation. The empire's resources were further taxed militarily by external invasions by a variety of barbarian tribes, including the Vandals, Huns, and Visigoths. These barbarian tribes relentlessly attacked the empire from the outside, taking advantage of its vulnerability. The empire's grip over its large lands was lost by the incapacity to manage and integrate these groups efficiently, along with a stressed military that depended more and more on mercenaries.

<sup>2</sup>The Western Roman Empire fell over time as a result of several setbacks and territory losses rather than as a single, abrupt event. The once-dominant empire had broken up into smaller, successor kingdoms by the end of

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, E. (1776-1788). *The history of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire* (Vols. 1-6). Strahan & Cadell.

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the fifth century. Nonetheless, the Byzantine Empire, also called the Eastern Roman Empire, flourished for another millennium, conserving numerous facets of Roman governance and culture. In the end, Rome's decline changed Europe's political and cultural environment, paving the way for the emergence of medieval kingdoms and the creation of modern Europe.

**Key Words:** Cause, Rule, Inflation, Administration, War.

## Introduction

<sup>3</sup>Europe, most of Northern Africa, including Egypt, and portions of the Middle East or what was once known as Asia Minor. During this era, the Roman Empire ruled over the whole Mediterranean region. More than 50 million individuals were covered by the laws of the Roman Empire. Everybody in the empire was required to abide by Roman law and speak the same language in official and commercial settings. Latin was that language. The empire was headed by a single individual. One term for him was emperor. Rome's first ruler was Augustus Caesar.

The fall of the western half of the Roman Empire was caused by a variety of factors, not just one particular one. Rather, a multitude of historians attribute the fall of the Roman Empire to a confluence of many issues. Rome fell for three main reasons: political unrest, social and economic unrest, and, lastly, a weakening of the barrier or border. The empire enjoyed centuries of political good fortune. The emperors and other imperial leaders were exceptionally intelligent and skilled in managing a government. There was a time, nevertheless, when there were a number of feeble and untrustworthy emperors.

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<sup>4</sup> Goldsworthy, A. (2009). *How Rome fell: Death of a superpower*. Yale University Press.

<sup>5</sup>Various factions inside the empire engaged in conflict for the succession of their friends and family members following the death of an emperor. This implied that the best or most qualified leaders had not been selected to be the next emperors. Rather, the new emperors were those with the greatest armies, or the most powerful allies or relatives. The new emperor was frequently chosen by the emperor's private soldiers, the Praetorian Guard. Their army was the best-equipped in the entire empire. Rather than going with the most competent candidate, they often went with the one who would give them the most reward. Caligula and Nero were two of the most infamous (renowned for being evil) emperors. They were accused of squandering enormous sums of money on public works initiatives, such as constructing stadiums, palaces, and sculptures. This indicated that although the empire was home to many exquisite buildings, a large number of people were frequently hungry. In addition, Nero gained notoriety for persecuting early Christians and entertaining the lions at the Coliseum with their flesh. Along with Nero, Diocletian was the emperor who oversaw the worst persecution of Christians in Roman Empire history.

### **Diocletian rule:**

was renowned for elevating the Emperor to the rank of a god, massively enlarging Rome's military, and increasing Rome's tax structure to finance his expanded administration and military. Even though the stability he brought about was short-lived, he effectively changed the government. A number of rulers were assassinated often during this time as various factions within the empire vied for control. There were 37 distinct emperors in a span of 100 years. Of the 37 emperors, twenty-five were killed by assassination. There was never a strong and reliable ruler to govern the vast empire for a considerable amount of time because there were so many different rulers. Rome's collapse was also attributed to social and economic issues.

<sup>6</sup>Rome had to impose hefty taxes on all of its residents in order to finance its massive army. Many people were forced into poverty by such hefty taxes. Because there were so many impoverished individuals, trade faltered, the economy suffered, and few items could be purchased. In the empire, there were concurrently other societal issues. There was corruption among the empire's rulers. Those in positions of authority frequently took bribes or looted from the empire in order to favor some individuals over the needs of the entire empire. Many people felt embarrassed to be a part of the empire because of this corruption. People's sense of allegiance to the empire waned as a result of this humiliation.

<sup>7</sup>For generations, a great deal of people took great pride in being a part of the empire. But with the emergence of societal issues like unemployment, crime, and corruption, people lost pride in being Roman

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<sup>5</sup>. Ferrill, A. (1986). *The fall of the Roman Empire: The military explanation*. Thames and Hudson.

<sup>6</sup> Jones, A. H. M. (1964). *The later Roman Empire, 284-602: A social, economic, and administrative survey* (Vol. 1). Blackwell.

<sup>7</sup> Grant, M. (1990). *The fall of the Roman Empire: A reappraisal*. Barnes & Noble Books.

citizens. External problems also led to the fall of the Roman Empire. The weakening of the empire's borders was another issue that contributed to its decline. The empire was extremely difficult to defend due to its enormous size. Leaders in Rome sometimes needed weeks to get in touch with the generals guarding the frontiers.<sup>8</sup> By the third century CE, the Germanic tribes, who were Non-Roman tribes living north of the Danube River, were encroaching on the empire and pilfering food supplies and other items. Emperor Constantine made a decision in 330 CE that permanently altered the course of the Roman Empire. He relocated the empire's capital from Rome, Italy, to Byzantium, 850 miles to the east and out of the Germanic tribes' potential for invasion. He gave the city a new name, New Rome. Afterwards, after the emperor Constantine, it was dubbed Constantinople. Currently referred to as Istanbul, the city is situated in Turkey. Following Constantine's reign, the empire's authority was typically split between two distinct emperors, one from the east and one from the west. The capitals of the two empires were Constantinople in the east and Rome in the west, respectively.

<sup>9</sup>Germanic tribes on the march always posed a menace to the emperors of Rome. At last, one of these tribes raided and pillaged Rome in 410 CE. The final Roman emperor was overthrown from power in 476. Following the fall of the Roman Empire's western half, Europe broke apart into a number of tiny kingdoms governed by various tribes. The empire in the East persisted for an additional millennium. The eastern empire is now known as the Byzantine Empire. But the splendor of Roman civilization did not end with the fall of Rome. The medieval and contemporary eras were not immune to the Roman Empire's effect. Numerous organizations and concepts that are part of modern civilization originated in the Roman Empire. The Romans invented or developed a number of modern concepts and practices, including philosophy, language, art, architecture, and law. Without the impact of the Roman Empire, our civilization would have taken a completely different turn from what it is today. A number of historical, political, economic, and social factors are intertwined with the fall of the Roman Empire, making it a complicated topic. Examining the internal and external elements that led to the fall of the empire is crucial to comprehending this complex decline.

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<sup>8</sup> Brown, P. (1971). *The world of late antiquity: AD 150-750*. W.W. Norton & Company.

<sup>9</sup> . Momigliano, A. (1981). *The conflict between paganism and Christianity in the fourth century*. Clarendon Press.

## Internal Factors

**Political Instability:** <sup>10</sup>Chronic political instability plagued the Roman Empire, especially during the Crisis of the Third Century (3rd century CE). Central authority was undermined by frequent changes in leadership, including the overthrow or assassination of multiple emperors. Civil wars and power struggles added to this instability, making it more difficult for the empire to adequately respond to both internal and external threats.

**Economic Troubles:** <sup>11</sup>The stability of the Roman economy was threatened by a number of problems. The people were burdened by high taxes, which also stunted economic growth. Slave labor was the empire's main source of inefficiencies and a barrier to technological advancement. Furthermore, widespread inflation undermined economic stability and trust because it was fueled by government spending increases and currency depreciation.

**Military Problems:** <sup>12</sup>The Roman military faced several difficulties, such as ongoing internal strife and external invasion pressure. The empire's military resources were few and its extensive frontiers were challenging to hold. The empire's capacity to uphold law and order and fend off invasions was further weakened by its growing reliance on mercenaries, who were frequently less obedient and efficient than Roman soldiers.

**Administrative Inefficiency:** Over time, the Roman Empire's administrative system grew more and more unwieldy and ineffective. Effective governance was hampered not only by the empire's enormous size but also by bureaucratic corruption and poor management. Despite the best of intentions, the separation of the empire into its Eastern and Western sections frequently resulted in rivalry and discord.

## External Factors

**Barbarian Invasions:** <sup>13</sup>Opponents of the Roman Empire included the Vandals, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, and Huns, among other barbarian tribes. These gangs launched numerous invasions and attacks by taking advantage of the empire's weaknesses. The stability of the empire suffered severe knocks with the Visigoths' capture of Rome in 410 CE and the Vandals' conquest of Carthage in 439 CE.

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<sup>11</sup> MacMullen, R. (1984). *Christianizing the Roman Empire (AD 100-400)*. Yale University Press.

<sup>12</sup> . Cameron, A. (2011). *The later Roman Empire: AD 284-430*. Harvard University Press.

<sup>13</sup> 14. Bowersock, G. W. (2018). *The throne of Adulis: Red Sea wars on the eve of Islam*. Oxford University Press.

**Pressure from the Huns:** <sup>14</sup>The arrival of Attila's Huns increased the pressure on the Roman Empire. The Huns' raids, which drove other barbarian tribes into Roman territory, exacerbated the situation. The migration and displacement of these tribes increased the volatility of the borders of the empire.

**Decline in Trade and Communication:** <sup>15</sup>Over time, the empire's capacity to sustain communication and trade throughout its enormous lands deteriorated. The empire's commercial and logistical networks became more dispersed as invasions and economic problems affected infrastructure and trade routes. The empire's ability to respond to crises and maintain cohesiveness was further undermined by this deterioration.

## Impact and Legacy

Roman influence persisted after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in 476 CE. After the collapse of the West, the Byzantine Empire, often known as the Eastern Roman Empire, flourished for almost a millennium. The Byzantine Empire transmitted and preserved Roman culture, law, and government, which had an impact on the rise of medieval European nations. The fall of Rome also prepared the way for the creation of new European political organizations. As a result of the division of Roman land, numerous barbarian kingdoms emerged, which ultimately gave rise to medieval feudal institutions. Rome's intellectual and cultural legacies influenced European culture and laid the groundwork for contemporary Western society.

A confluence of external factors like barbarian invasions and military difficulties, along with internal issues like political unrest and economic hardships, led to the fall of the Roman Empire. Europe's political and cultural environment was altered by the empire's demise, and its impact persisted in influencing later historical events. Gaining knowledge of these elements helps one better understand the workings of empire and the processes of historical change.

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<sup>14</sup> Heather, P. (2018). *Rome resurgent: War and empire in the age of Justinian*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>15</sup> Kulikowski, M. (2017). *The triumph of empire: The Roman world from Hadrian to Constantine*. Harvard University Press.

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