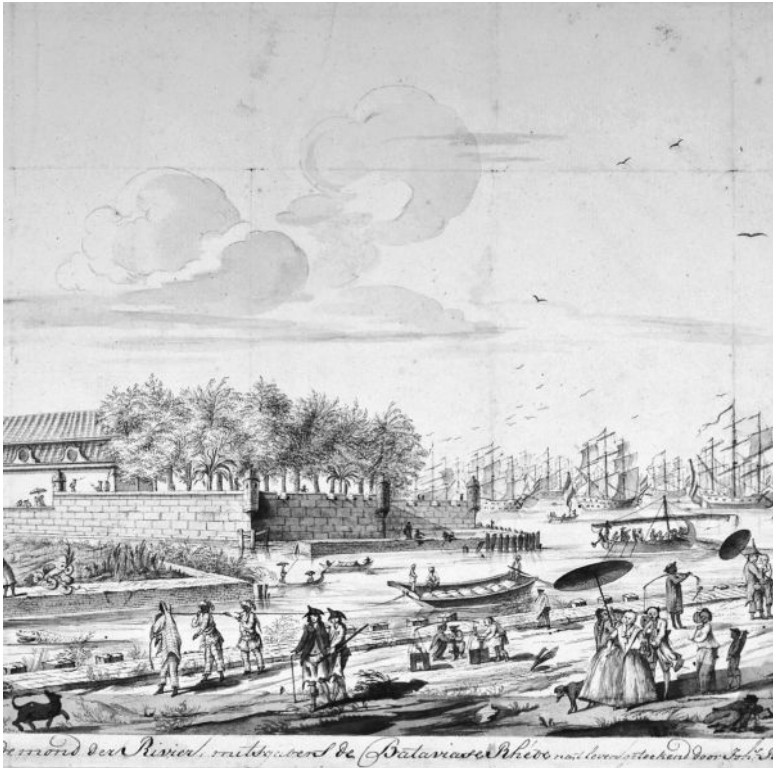


Southern Asia and the Global Shift in Wealth and Power, 1500–1800



- Confrontation: Europe and Islam in Southern Asia
- Transformation of the Indian Subcontinent
- Muslims and Europeans in Southeast Asia
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Batavia In The 18th Century

The commercial port of Batavia in the Dutch East Indies is shown in this eighteenth century drawing. The Dutch United East India Company helped transfer wealth and commercial domination from Southern Asia to Europe (page 547).

In the stifling early morning heat of June 23, 1757, Siraj-ud-Daulah (*sir-AHJ ud-DOW-luh*), ruler of the East Indian region of Bengal, surveyed his fifty thousand soldiers as they prepared for battle on an open field near the village of Plassey. Looking across the field at the tiny forces of his British opponent, Siraj was confident of victory. The British possessed modern weapons, technologically superior to those manufactured in Asia, but Siraj had purchased some for his own men. The 2,800 troops commanded by the young British officer, Robert Clive, could hardly expect to defeat such a large Bengali host.

Across the field, Clive had long since reached the same conclusion. Weeks earlier, recognizing that he was unlikely to win on the battlefield, he had opened secret negotiations with local Hindu bankers interested in preferential trading agreements with Britain. These wealthy men helped Clive convince Siraj's commanding general to betray his master. So when this general approached Siraj on the morning of June 23, it was not to ask for instructions. Instead, he informed the Bengali ruler of his decision to support the British. Faced with this treachery, Siraj had no choice but to retreat. Clive would later be hailed in England as the "victor of Plassey."

Victory takes many forms, of which success in battle is only one. Economic influence and technological innovation can also prove decisive, as southern Asia's ruling Muslims discovered when challenged by outsiders from Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Europe's success in its confrontations with these Islamic empires integrated the Indian Ocean into a global trading network and set in motion a tremendous transfer of wealth and power from Asia to Europe.

Southern Asia



Confrontation: Europe and Islam in Southern Asia

In 1600, nearly all of southern Asia, from Anatolia to Indonesia, was dominated by Islam. The three great Islamic empires—Mughal India, Safavid Persia, and the multinational empire of the Ottoman Turks—ruled huge and populous domains, while Muslim merchants exercised commanding influence on trade and culture in Malaya and Indonesia. Connected by Islamic culture and linked by flourishing overland and Indian Ocean trade, these regions together constituted one of history's mightiest and wealthiest civilizations (Map 22.1).

By 1800, however, Islamic preeminence in southern Asia had yielded to the Europeans, whose economic and technological strength helped reorient the global balance of wealth and power. Indian Ocean trade had always been regional rather than global. It was more profitable than Mediterranean trade even before the Ottomans took Constantinople in 1453, and in the early 1500s it dwarfed the emerging Atlantic trade. But when the Europeans moved into the Indian Ocean with monopolistic trading companies, they connected Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Indian Ocean commercial networks into a global trading system. Commercial power thereupon became global rather than

Europeans challenge
Islamic dominance in
southern Asia

FOUNDATION MAP 22.1 Islamic Asian Empires in 1600

As the seventeenth century began, Islam's position in the world seemed unshakable. Notice that the great Islamic empires consolidated in the sixteenth century spread across southern Asia, southeastern Europe, and northeastern Africa. Using the Indian Ocean as a commercial highway, Muslims dominated oceangoing trade in the eastern hemisphere. The Arabic language, colored and enriched by Persian, united the Muslim faithful in a spiritual and cultural community spanning thousands of miles. What advantages and disadvantages can you identify for these empires?



regional, and wealth flowed *out* of the Indian Ocean region through the trading companies and *into* Europe. The great Islamic empires of southern Asia lost this struggle for economic power.

The Indian Ocean Trade

During the sixteenth century, and in the centuries immediately preceding it, the Indian Ocean basin served as the world's main center of maritime trade. Riding the seasonal monsoon winds, which generally blow to the south and west from November to March, and to the north and east from April to September, Arab and Persian sailors carried on a lively commerce connecting India, Persia, Arabia, the city-states of East Africa, and Europe. Farther east, Chinese and Southeast Asian ships carried merchandise back and

The Indian Ocean connects world trade networks

forth from India to Southeast Asia and the East Indies, and through the Straits of Malacca to the South China Sea and southern China.

Indian Ocean commerce was highly specialized, with each region typically supplying products that were locally raised, manufactured, or mined (Map 22.2). East Africa, for example, supplied ebony, ivory, slaves, and especially gold, mined in southeastern Africa and shipped from the great port of Kilwa. Arabia and Persia provided horses, figs, dates, and incense, as well as fine woven tapestries and carpets. India was known for its superb cotton textiles as well as for various dyes (including indigo), leather goods, carpets, knives, and assorted spices, including especially cinnamon and pepper. Southeast Asia

Map 22.2 Trade Routes Across the Indian Ocean, 1600

Hindu, Muslim, and Chinese traders crisscrossed the Indian Ocean using trade routes that had been established for centuries. Their familiarity with and systematic exploitation of these routes guaranteed their wealth and power. Note that the Indian Ocean's central position linked the Pacific Ocean with the Mediterranean/Red Sea trade. Why did the arrival of the Europeans in the sixteenth century challenge this established network?



and the East Indies produced rubies, gold, tin, sandalwood, camphor (a waxy substance with a strong aroma used as an insect repellent, embalming oil, and medicine for fighting colds and fevers), and spices such as cinnamon and ginger. The Moluccas (now Maluku), a group of islands in the eastern East Indies, were famous for their nutmeg and cloves; Westerners called them the Spice Islands. And Chinese products, such as porcelains and silks, were valued throughout the Indian Ocean basin and in Europe.

To handle all this trade, thriving seaports had grown up along Asia's southern coast. These commercial centers included Aden at the mouth of the Red Sea, Hormuz at the entrance to the Persian Gulf, Cambay in northwestern India, and Calicut on India's southwestern seaboard, known as the **Malabar Coast**.

Farther east, Malacca, on the straits connecting the Indian Ocean with the South China Sea, served as the region's greatest commercial center. Although Muslim merchants and mariners conducted much of the commerce, many of these cities were religiously and culturally diverse, with Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, and others engaging in crafts and commerce.

The Islamic empires of southern Asia derived substantial benefits from the Indian Ocean trade. It not only added immensely to the wealth of their realms but also helped fill the treasuries of their rulers, who charged a variety of licensing fees, taxes, and customs duties on artisans, merchants, and shippers. To a certain extent, then, the wealth and power of the Muslim world derived from Islamic domination of the Indian Ocean trade.

Ironically, one of Islam's greatest triumphs—the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 by the Ottoman Turks—set in motion events that eventually undermined this domination and the fortunes of Islamic southern Asia. For in the late fifteenth century, to avoid paying the huge fees and markups imposed by the Ottomans on goods coming through Constantinople from the East, Portuguese sailors had begun seeking an all-water route around Africa to southern Asia. In doing so they initiated the European voyages of discovery (Chapter 19) and challenged Muslim control of the Indian Ocean.

Shifting Balances of Power and Commerce

Europe's voyages of discovery quickly produced conflict with the hitherto dominant Islamic societies of southern Asia. The newcomers were interested mainly in trade, but also used their warships to project their power in the Indian Ocean. Sixteenth-century European warships were engineered to include powerful cannons whose shot could penetrate the hulls of enemy ships. Mounted on wheeled carriages to make them quickly interchangeable with one another, so that if one failed another could easily be brought up, these cannons revolutionized naval warfare. European nations such as England and Holland developed iron-smelting industries to produce large numbers of naval cannons. The Islamic navies of southern Asia found themselves at a great disadvantage, one that the Europeans were quick to exploit.

At first the European traders and merchants came mainly from Portugal, which established trading posts in the Moluccas, Macao, Timor, and elsewhere (Map 22.2). But soon the Portuguese had to share the region with commercial enterprises from England and Holland (also called the Dutch Republic or United Provinces of the Netherlands). Channeling the talents of their ambitious middle classes, these countries constructed large maritime trading empires. Using advanced weaponry, improvements in navigational instruments, and



A seventeenth-century drawing of the port of Hormuz.

Islamic empires rely on Indian Ocean trade

European technology puts Muslims at a disadvantage

superb organizational skills, they accumulated unprecedented wealth. Although these newly arrived entrepreneurs came mainly to seek riches, and frequently fought one another, eventually they had a profound political and economic impact on India, Indonesia, and mainland Southeast Asia.

The Dutch seize Asian trade routes from Portugal

Portugal's Indian Ocean outposts survived into the twentieth century, but by the middle of the seventeenth its hold on the Southeast Asian trade had been seized by the Dutch. During the next two centuries the Dutch gradually established territorial sovereignty over Indonesia, which they called the Dutch (or Netherlands) East Indies. France and Britain competed for influence in the Indian subcontinent, and by 1763 the British emerged victorious. British domination of India gave London effective control of the Indian Ocean, with naval and military bases in East Africa, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Malay archipelago. France, removed from the subcontinent, expanded elsewhere in the nineteenth century, eventually dominating much of North Africa and the Southeast Asian mainland.

Atlantic commercial routes become more valuable

At the same time, however, the focus of the global economy was shifting away from the Indian Ocean. As Europe's trade with the Americas became more profitable than its trade with the East, the busiest commercial routes shifted to the Atlantic. Traffic in Asian luxury goods, which had stimulated Europe's initial explorations in the 1400s, was now surpassed by exponential growth in the Atlantic trade, involving slaves from Africa and sugar, silver, tobacco, and coffee from the Americas. A modern mercantile system was in place, as Europe's colonies supplied their mother countries with the raw materials from which to fabricate finished goods. The mother countries then sold those goods on the open market, using the profits to increase their investment in their colonies and obtain more raw materials. Mercantilism enabled England and Holland to seize the dominant commercial status previously enjoyed by the Islamic world. Global networks, controlled by the English and Dutch, linked Indian Ocean trade with the Atlantic trade. The Indian Ocean commerce itself, however, was clearly in decline, and the Islamic trading centers were dominated, directly or indirectly, by Europeans.

Islamic empires decline as their commercial networks are lost

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, as commerce and control of the global economy shifted to the land- and sea-based empires of Europe, the Islamic realms declined in power and influence. Mughal India dissolved into several competing provincial states and came increasingly under British control. The trading states of Indonesia became, for the most part, economic appendages of Holland. Safavid Iran, deserted by a multitude of tribes that had once been its vassals, was plagued by Afghan, Russian, and Turkish invaders. The Ottoman Empire became politically decentralized, militarily weak, and vulnerable to attacks from Austria and Russia. For Islamic southern Asia, the transition to a global economy, and the consequent shift in the global balance of power, had a highly negative impact.

Transformation of the Indian Subcontinent

The Indian subcontinent was the first southern Asian region to be affected by the European expansion. In 1497–1498, Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama's voyage round the southern tip of Africa brought him to India's Malabar Coast, where he established commercial

contacts in the port of Calicut. In the centuries that followed, increasing numbers of merchants and traders from Europe made their way to India, bringing Western wealth, products, weapons, and ways. By the end of the eighteenth century, as the Mughal Empire declined, much of the subcontinent came under European control.

Europeans Arrive in India

When da Gama's two ships entered Calicut harbor in 1498, their appearance perplexed virtually everyone in the port. The admiral explained that he had been sent to develop a southern trade route that would bypass the ancient land connection now dominated by Muslims and preyed on by Mongols. That explanation made a certain amount of sense to the Hindu traders of Calicut, and as the Portuguese had been instructed to pay any price for spices, Indian traders quickly stopped asking questions and started counting their profits. Competing Arab and Chinese merchants, long established in the region and aware of actual values, thought the Portuguese were fools. But when da Gama returned to Portugal, he sold his cargo for 3,000 percent more than the entire cost of his expedition. Soon hundreds of Portuguese ships were sailing regularly to India, and other Europeans eagerly pushed their way into this highly profitable trade. They created a baffling new challenge for India's Muslim rulers.

PORTUGUESE AND MUSLIM RIVALRY. Portuguese seamen soon realized that, although their sea route cut out the land-based Ottoman middlemen, they were now competing for spices with seagoing Muslim merchants in the Indian Ocean. In 1501 Portuguese navigator Pedro Alvares Cabral brought six ships to Calicut after being blown off course along the way and landing accidentally on the coast of Brazil. He left 54 Portuguese merchants in India, directing them to buy spices at the lowest prices possible and store the goods until the next ships arrived. On his way back to Portugal Cabral captured and looted an Arab merchant ship, provoking Muslims to kill all the Portuguese he had left behind in Calicut. In 1502 Vasco da Gama returned with a powerful fleet, pulverized the port of Calicut with his cannons, and sliced off the ears, noses, and hands of eight hundred Muslim seamen. Indian Muslims then left the Portuguese alone. But the Portuguese government in Lisbon realized that it would have to protect its traders, so in 1509 the Portuguese king appointed Dom Afonso d'Albuquerque as his viceroy in the East.

Albuquerque, a passionate Catholic who despised Islam, built bases on the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and the Straits of Malacca. At his suggestion, Portugal seized the island of Goa on India's Malabar Coast; it served as Lisbon's Indian headquarters from 1510 until 1961. By cutting in half the taxes of every Hindu on the island, the Portuguese won local support against the Muslims. Albuquerque devised a number of bizarre schemes to destroy Islam, most of which—such as stealing the remains of Muhammad or damming the Nile so Egypt would starve—were beyond the capacity or interest of the Portuguese Empire. But he did succeed in making his king fabulously wealthy, as Portuguese imports at bargain prices generated a huge increase in European demand for spices.

Portugal's power was brief, however. While the Hindus of South India welcomed the Portuguese as traders and as potential allies against Islamic rule, in the 1560s several central Indian Muslim sultanates declared *jihad* against the Hindus. They defeated the

Portugal intrudes on
Indian Ocean trade



View of Goa in the middle of the 17th century.

Islamic states strike back
against Portugal

South Indian Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar, depriving Portugal of the South Indian trade and jeopardizing its Malabar Coast position.

Shortly thereafter, King Philip II of Spain inherited the Portuguese crown, creating a union between Spain and Portugal that lasted from 1580 until 1640. Philip, like Albuquerque a devoted Catholic, promptly closed the Portuguese port of Lisbon to Protestant shipping. Protestant nations such as Holland and England, previously content to buy their spices from Portugal, now had reason to seek their own sea routes around Africa to India. The Portuguese tried using their bases in Angola and Mozambique to blockade the relatively narrow passage around the Cape of Good Hope, but blockading was an inexact science and their efforts failed. Moreover, after England destroyed the Spanish Armada in 1588 (Chapter 20), the Iberian threat to Dutch and English shipping was substantially diminished.

THE ENGLISH AND DUTCH EAST INDIA COMPANIES. In 1600 and 1602, the English and Dutch governments each created a large commercial enterprise and gave it a national monopoly over trade with India. Before long these ventures, known respectively as the English (later British) East India Company and the Dutch United East India Company, were vigorously pursuing this trade. The problem was that India was not particularly interested in expanding commerce with Europe. The Portuguese were valued customers because they paid in gold, but the Dutch and English companies wanted to create a balance of trade in which they would pay for spices with money that the Indians would then return to them in exchange for manufactured goods. India neither wanted nor needed anything made in northern Europe at that time and was already selling enough spices to Portugal to satisfy its need for gold. But after a demonstration of English naval power in 1612, when one English ship defeated four Portuguese galleons, India's Mughal Emperor was convinced that dealing with London was worth his time.

The Mughal Emperor also turned to England for protection from pirates, asking its navy to escort the annual pilgrim ship to and from Mecca. As one of the Five Pillars of Islam, the pilgrimage to Mecca played a vital role in unifying Muslims throughout the world, and the Mughal Empire sponsored an annual ship to transport the faithful. Previously the Portuguese navy had provided the escort, but now, in return for trading privileges, England took over.

England was willing to cooperate commercially with Holland against Portugal, but the Dutch shortsightedly shut the English out in Indonesia. They kept the Indonesian trade for themselves and eventually established a colony there known as the Dutch East Indies. England, in turn, excluded the Dutch from India, thereby laying the foundation of what would become by the nineteenth century a vast British Empire.

Meanwhile the English were finding ways to build further connections with India. Since India was unwilling to buy English goods, the English East India Company tried to reduce its gold payments by establishing factories in the region. Recognizing that the Indian cotton cloth known as **calico** (since it came from Calicut), already fashionable in England, could also be used in the spice trade, the English built a textile factory on the east coast of India, paying Indian weavers in gold to make calico cloth. The cloth was then traded for spices in the Moluccas and other islands. Using calico, the English were able to get three hundred times the spices that the gold they paid the weavers could have bought. At the same time the English, by using inexpensive local

England and Holland
contend for trade routes

labor, reduced the cost of calico in the English home market and tied India more closely to England itself.

THE MUGHAL RESPONSE. By this time India's Great Mughal rulers were beginning to notice European activities. The Mughal Empire had earlier been able to control Arabian Sea traffic into Indian ports, but now the English dominated those waters. Also worrying the emperor was London's construction of Fort Saint George beside the East Indian seaside village of Madras (*MAH-drabs*), a sleepy town that would soon become, with Calcutta and Bombay, one of the three principal British ports in India. Obviously the English intended to protect their trade, but a fort constructed for protection, the Mughals realized, could also be used for domination.

The Mughals were uncertain of the precise nature of the threat and didn't know how to handle it. India for centuries had been invaded by land (the Mughals themselves were simply the last in a long line of Central Asian conquerors), but the Europeans had not come by land and did not seem to be invading. They apparently had no desire to move entire populations to India, as previous invaders had done; rather they sought economic relations, to which the empire had no objection. What was worrisome, however, was the military and naval power of the Europeans and the English construction of Fort Saint George. For the moment the Mughals watched and waited. They did not realize that once the Europeans had gained a foothold on the coasts of the subcontinent, it would be nearly impossible to expel them.

DIFFERING EUROPEAN INTERESTS IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA. Regimes throughout South and Southeast Asia were similarly perplexed about European intentions. Their confusion was compounded by sharp differences in motivation among various European groups.

One difference concerned geographic focus. The Portuguese, who arrived first, were interested in the entire region, hoping to turn the Indian Ocean into a Portuguese-controlled commercial zone. Later arrivals, however, focused more narrowly. The Dutch were primarily concerned with Southeast Asia, the English and French with India. It took nearly a century for local rulers to appreciate fully the implication of this difference: if Europeans were interested not only in commercial relations but political control, dividing up the region would make individual parts of it easier to conquer.

A second difference concerned religious attitudes. The Catholic Portuguese and French intended not only to make money but to save souls. Catholics viewed Indians, both Hindus and Muslims, as highly civilized people who needed the Gospel preached to them by missionaries of the universal Roman Catholic Church. The Protestant English and Dutch, on the other hand, were principally interested in doing business. Protestantism rejected the concept of a universal church structure, so establishing a Protestant Church of England in India made little sense, except to serve the spiritual needs of transplanted English subjects. The Dutch, as Calvinists, were even less interested in encouraging conversion: since Calvinism held that everyone on Earth was predestined either to heaven or to hell, there seemed to be no point in laboring strenuously in vain efforts to change what God had already decided.

These differences among Europeans were at first not clear to South and Southeast Asian rulers. When the differences became clear, the motivations behind them remained difficult to understand. And when those motivations became clear, it was too late to dislodge the Europeans.



Monogram of the Dutch East India Company.

British intrusions perplex the Mughals

Europeans have differing motives for entering South and Southeast Asia

The Mughals in Decline

As the English were establishing a foothold on the coasts of India, the Mughal Empire was weakening from within. The oppressive Aurangzeb, who reigned from 1658 to 1707, destroyed the Mughal legacy of tolerance and benevolence established earlier by Akbar (Chapter 17). Aurangzeb's militant Muslim policies alienated Hindus and Sikhs who had previously supported the regime, and he drained the imperial treasury to put down rising opposition from these groups. His son and successor, Bahadur Shah (*BAH-hah-dūr SHAH*), already 63 when he inherited the throne, spent his brief five-year reign fighting his younger brothers and the persistent Sikhs. After the death of Bahadur Shah in 1712, central control of the empire deteriorated as separate groups competed for power. The chaos ended in 1719 when the Sayyid (*SĪA-yēd*) brothers, two influential and ruthless courtiers, killed the inept emperor and became the powers behind the throne.

Mughal power deteriorates

The Sayyids selected the weak but cultivated Muhammad Shah as emperor. His lengthy reign (1719–1748) was culturally beneficial: Hindus and Muslims drew closer to one another, primarily through their common use of the Urdu (*UR-doo*) language, a Hindu tongue written with the Persian alphabet and employing many Persian terms. Urdu poetry flourished at Delhi, and the Mughal court began to tolerate Hindu deities and myths as cultural curiosities, though not as gods deserving of worship.

The Marathas become an important force in India

But Muhammad Shah's rule further weakened the empire's political unity. He tried but failed to restore confidence in central authority, and some of his policies actually strengthened his adversaries. For example, he sought to gain the loyalty of the Marathas (*mah-rub-TAHZ*), a staunchly Hindu people of central India, by recognizing their autonomy and granting them taxation authority. In the short term, the Marathas ceased their opposition, but in the long term these concessions helped them become a powerful force in their own right. To counterbalance the Marathas, Muhammad Shah then tried to win the loyalty of local princes, or *nawabs* (*NĀ-wabs*) (corrupted into English as “nabobs”) by granting them taxation privileges in their own regions. The nawabs took the tax advantages but did not prove loyal. Gradually the Mughal Empire dissolved into independent states, owing nominal rather than real allegiance to the emperor in Delhi.

Persians sack Delhi and end Mughal authority

As Mughal power in India declined, Persia was invaded by the Afghans. Nadir (*NAH-dēr*) Shah, the Persian ruler, asked Muhammad Shah for help, but the Mughal emperor, who was fighting the Marathas, refused. Exasperated, the Persians moved against Afghanistan on their own and then continued across the Indus River to punish the Mughals. In 1739, they sacked Delhi and captured Akbar's legendary Peacock Throne. Carrying it back to their capital at Isfahan (*ISS-fah-hahn*), they made it the throne of all Iran's shahs until 1979.

The Persian sack of Delhi marked the end of Mughal centralized authority, although the empire officially continued into the nineteenth century. Abandoning the policies of Akbar, which had made it great, the empire gradually fell apart. Afghans, Iranians, Sikhs, Marathas, and minor Muslim states fought over what remained, and petty rajahs and nawabs played roles well beyond their financial means and political capacities. For many Muslims, these startling developments called into question not only Islamic political power but also the future of Indian Islam.

The Crisis of Islamic India

Islam had conquered India but had never converted it. Hinduism remained the subcontinent's dominant faith, and India's caste system defied repeated Islamic efforts at social leveling. Muslims had successfully installed their own political systems, but religiously and culturally India remained Hindu, a fact impossible to ignore when Mughal authority collapsed. This political crisis caused soul-searching among Indian Muslims.

Ever since waves of Muslim cavalry poured forth from the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century C.E., Islam had identified closely with Arab and Persian cultures. This connection had enabled most Muslims, from West Africa to Indonesia, to consider themselves part of a cosmopolitan cultural world centered in Southwest Asia. But the Indian subcontinent had always been different. There Islam was the religion of the ruling elites, not the common people. India's complex and rich Hindu culture resisted Arab-Persian influences and offered a viable alternative to the faith and customs of its Muslim conquerors. Most of the Indian population retained its pre-Islamic ways. Even where elements of Islam were assimilated into the local culture—such as in the Punjab, where Sikhism offered a popular synthesis of Hinduism and Islam (Chapter 17)—Muslims viewed the result as a corruption of the pure monotheism of the Prophet.

Elsewhere, in Afghanistan and Anatolia for example, Muslim conquest had brought in large numbers of Islamic immigrants. But few Muslims emigrated to India, and those who did had to work hard to avoid being assimilated into the Hindu masses. They therefore isolated themselves in the top political structures of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire, structures that remained closed to Hindus. Their only success in converting Hindus was among the lower castes, a development that made Indian Islam even less attractive to well-born Hindus.

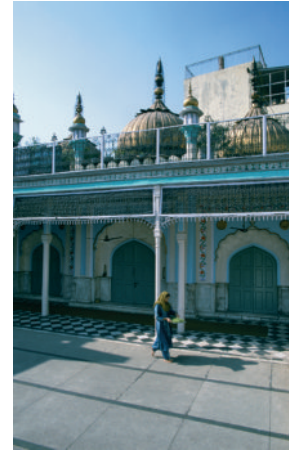
The collapse of Mughal authority brought Indian Muslims face to face with a disturbing possibility: they might no longer be able to practice their religion in India. No longer in power, they feared being absorbed into Hindu culture. Many viewed emigration or political separation from Hindu India as their only practical alternatives. This crisis of confidence troubled Indian Islam from 1739 until 1947, when India was divided into separate Hindu and Muslim states.

British and French Rivalry in India

Meanwhile, a new group of Europeans was making inroads in India, ready to take advantage of Mughal decline. In 1664 France founded the French East India Company, which from 1674 was headquartered at Pondichéry (*pawn-dib-share-RE*), 85 miles south of the English East India Company's base at Madras (Map 22.3). As the French began to challenge the English, Anglo-French trade became intensely competitive. By 1739 both Madras and Pondichéry had grown to cities of fifty thousand inhabitants as their respective companies jockeyed for position.

This Anglo-French rivalry took on a new dimension in 1740, when Britain and France went to war against each other in the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748). This war was fought not only in Europe but in each nation's colonial possessions. In 1746 the French, led by Joseph-François Dupleix (*zhō-SEFF frahn-SWAH doo-PLAY*), governor of

Indian Islam faces a crisis



Delhi's Golden Mosque, built by Muhammad Shah in 1722.

Europeans take advantage of Mughal decline

Map 22.3 The Mughal Empire in India, 1707

India proved to be a commercial cornucopia for European merchants. Its cotton, spices, gold, diamonds, and sugar sold in Europe for prices that guaranteed those merchants profits in the hundreds of percents. Observe that European trading settlements were concentrated in the southern portion of the subcontinent. Why was this the case?



Pondichéry, captured the British fort at Madras. Among those in the garrison who were expelled was a 21-year-old bookkeeper named Robert Clive.

Clive had at one point become so bored in his job with the British East India Company that he allegedly attempted suicide, only to have the gun he was using misfire. The fall of Madras suggested to him that it might be more exciting to shoot French soldiers than to

shoot himself, and the following year he enlisted in the British forces. In 1748 the English regained Madras, pushing the French back to Pondichéry as the war in Europe closed. Clive returned to Madras, watched Dupleix work at Pondichéry, learned from him, and became his rival.

Using a combination of military force, bribery, and behind-the-throne manipulation, Dupleix extended French civil authority throughout southern India by early 1751. But in 1751 Clive, now a captain, struck a deal with Maratha leaders, and led a joint English-Maratha force that defeated the French. Thereupon the French East India Company recalled Dupleix, who had been appointed, the company contended, to make a profit, not to create a French empire in India.

Britain, by contrast, backed Clive and his ambitions for empire. War resumed in 1756 (the Seven Years War), and in 1757 Clive won the victory at Plassey, as described at the beginning of the chapter. By 1763 Britain had conquered nearly all of France's Indian possessions, establishing a foundation for British domination of the entire subcontinent. In 1765 Clive became governor of Bengal, with enough money to buy off the nawabs and enough soldiers to defend the Company's assets.

The British thereafter expanded their influence in India, gradually transferring power from the Company to the British government. Following Clive's policy, they sent out a few tough and competent Englishmen to oversee British rule through Indian leaders. During the next century, India became the "jewel in the crown" of the British monarchs—the cornerstone of England's worldwide empire and a principal element in its prosperity. Once again, the Indian subcontinent was unified under foreign rule.

Britain outmaneuvers
France in India

Muslims and Europeans in Southeast Asia

Unlike India, Southeast Asia proved to be a place where Islam could continue to expand. Located at a crossroads of international trade, it was of interest to both Muslims and Europeans. But the large number of islands in the Indonesian and Malayan archipelagos, and the imposing mountain ranges and rain forests of the Southeast Asian mainland, all proved obstacles to the development of political unity across the region.

Coexistence Between Muslims and Hindus

Beginning in 632, Muslim armies conquered North Africa, the Iberian peninsula, and substantial portions of South Asia. The expansion of Islam into Southeast Asia, however, was carried out by merchants rather than warriors. The Indonesian kingdom of Srivijaya controlled the Straits of Malacca (Chapter 12), and therefore also the flourishing seaborne trade between China and India. Srivijaya was a Hindu kingdom, unlike the Buddhist societies of the Southeast Asian mainland, and might have been expected to resist Islam with the same intensity demonstrated by Hindus in India. But Indonesia gradually accepted Islam as its dominant belief system. A number of factors made this outcome possible.

First, while Muslims came to India as conquerors, they came to Southeast Asia as commercial partners. Islamic merchants settled in Indonesia and the Malay archipelago, established businesses that enriched the communities in which they lived, and married

Muslims and Hindus
prove compatible in
Indonesia

Map 22.4 Southeast Asia and Indonesia, 1500–1700

Southeast Asia's strategic location at the juncture of the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, and the South China Sea made it an indispensable thoroughfare for Eastern Hemispheric trade. The region produced spices in abundance and boasted several useful natural harbors. Notice the enormous number of islands in the Malayan, Indonesian, and Philippine archipelagos, making the development of centralized government extremely difficult. How would this geographic handicap leave the region vulnerable to European intrusion?



into the families of local elites. Several rulers converted to Islam in the expectation that it would improve their position with regard to rival Hindu states in central Java (Map 22.4). Conversion was also useful for trade, as Muslim connections could bring the India-China trade into Islamic trading networks across the Indian Ocean. Since there were no atrocities of the kind committed against Hindus in India, Muslims were not demonized in Southeast Asia.

Second, Islam appealed to the common people of the region by advocating the essential equality of all believers in the sight of Allah. Since Southeast Asian Hindus did not practice the caste system that so offended Muslims in India, they were not conditioned to lives of inequality and discrimination. Their attitudes toward society were therefore already consistent with those of Islam. Islam's radical leveling, derived from the horizontal social structure of the Arabian Peninsula and from the Prophet

Muhammad's message that all were slaves before God, attracted the lower classes without threatening elite interests.

Finally, Islam was transmitted to Southeast Asia by Sufi mystics rather than by orthodox Muslims. Sufis practiced a form of **pantheism**, the belief that God is present in all things, both animate and inanimate. Since Hinduism is not only polytheistic but pantheistic, Indonesians and Malays found Sufi Islam compatible in this respect with their own beliefs. Sufis also worshiped saints and believed that they could heal the sick, doctrines and practices abhorred by orthodox Muslims but widely practiced in pre-Islamic Southeast Asia.

These conditions eased the spread of Islam across the region beginning in the thirteenth century. When Iskandar, the ruler of Srivijaya, was overthrown by princes from central Java around 1400 and driven from Palembang, he converted to Islam and founded the trading state of Malacca. Soon it was a center of Islamic culture, and the prosperous connections it built with China, Java, and India helped disperse this culture across the region. By the time the Portuguese arrived in 1511, Islam was the most widely accepted belief system in Malaya and Indonesia.

Islam dominates Malaya and Indonesia

The European Intrusion

The Portuguese conquest of Malacca in 1511 forced Muslims to move into the interior forests of Sumatra, Java, and Borneo, thus accelerating the geographic spread of the faith. Other Muslims traveled up the Malay Peninsula and established sultanates there. Once the ordinary people of those regions were introduced to Islam, significant numbers of conversions followed. The Malay sultanate of Johore (*jeh-HÖR*) and the Javanese kingdom of Mataram (*mah-TEHR-rum*)—both Muslim realms—developed into formidable rivals of the Europeans by 1650. By that time Portuguese commercial dominance had been supplanted by the Dutch.

Having gained independence from Spain through a prolonged and bitter revolt in the late 1500s (Chapter 20), the Calvinist Dutch found themselves denied access to Lisbon's pepper and spice markets by the Catholic kings of Spain, who also ruled Portugal from 1580 to 1640. Accepting this exclusion as the price of liberty, the Dutch promptly sailed for the East Indies and waged naval warfare against the Portuguese. Through their Dutch United East India Company they founded Batavia in 1619 (see page 533); in 1949 it was renamed Djakarta (*jub-KAR-tuh*) and is now Indonesia's capital. In 1641 they joined with Johore to capture Malacca from the Portuguese, and in 1658 they took Palembang. By this time the Portuguese were in full retreat from Southeast Asia, pulling back to the Indian Ocean, where their struggles against the Ottomans and the British were also going badly. The Portuguese were expelled from the Persian Gulf in 1650, and from East Africa (with the exception of Mozambique) by 1696.

Dutch supremacy in Indonesia, like the earlier Portuguese impact, stimulated Islamic expansion rather than blocking it. The introduction of European culture, with values so alien to those of southern Asia, provoked a flight to Islam as a form of reaction against the Dutch intruders. Islamic institutions and culture formed the backbone of Indonesian resistance to European domination for the next three centuries. Additionally, Sufi pantheism produced a synthesis of Hindu and Islamic practices that was particularly notable in the Javanese state of Mataram. In Malay and Indonesian villages, Islam blended easily



The Chronicles of Java.

The Dutch challenge Portuguese commercial supremacy

with local beliefs that demons, spirits, and natural powers manipulated all aspects of daily life.

Although the European commercial empires continued to control trade and exclude rival powers, they had minimal impact on local culture and customs. At the close of the eighteenth century, Southeast Asian Muslims were unconcerned that the Dutch East India Company fell victim to British competition and the French conquest of Holland in 1795. They assumed that the change from Dutch domination to British would have no greater impact on their daily lives than had the replacement of the Portuguese by the Dutch in the seventeenth century.

But their assumptions were mistaken, for events in Europe had a direct impact on Southeast Asia. After the king of Holland collaborated with the British against the French occupation of his country (Chapter 26), Britain took control of Java and Malacca for their military value in a global war against France. When the Napoleonic Wars ended in 1815, a victorious Britain returned the East Indies to the Dutch but kept Malaya for itself. This new configuration of European influence was not only economic but also political and territorial. Southeast Asian Muslims, long accustomed to Dutch and British *commercial exploitation*, suddenly found themselves subjects of European *colonial empires*.

European domination changes from commercial to colonial

The End of Safavid Persia

Islam's conquest of Persia in the seventh century C.E. had enriched the new monotheistic faith with the splendor of Persian language and culture. That enrichment survived the rise and fall of dynasties and a whole series of invasions across the Iranian plateau. In the late sixteenth century, the Safavid Shah Abbas I (1587–1629) reconstituted a strong Persian state as a rival to the neighboring Ottoman Empire (Chapter 17). From his capital at Isfahan, he presided over a golden age of commerce, refinement, and reform. His reign marked the height of Safavid Persia's success. By the mid-eighteenth century, this Persian dynasty was gone.

Safavid Centralization and Decline

The death of Abbas I began the empire's decline. His immediate successors, Safi (*SAH-fē*), who ruled from 1629 to 1642, and Abbas II, who ruled from 1642 to 1666, ended the decentralized provincial administration under which the empire had thrived and replaced it with repressive centralization. This concentration of power at the center caused increasing corruption and inefficiency at the local level, as governors responsible directly to the Shah neglected rural roads and defenses in order to please their royal master by maximizing imperial tax revenues. Surrounded by envious neighbors searching for any evidence of Safavid weakness, Persia grew increasingly vulnerable.

At the same time, Safi decided to confine all the royal princes within the harem, hoping thereby to minimize the possibility that the heir would be challenged by his brothers. But Safi thereby lost the opportunity to train his successor for rule. Traditionally, the heir to the Peacock Throne served an apprenticeship as governor of the strategically and economically valuable province of Khurasan. There he would learn the practical arts of governance from provincial chiefs and royal advisors, in a setting in which the errors typically made by an inexperienced young man would not prove serious. His brothers were traditionally appointed

The successors of Abbas I centralize the Safavid Empire

to lesser posts, providing them with valuable administrative experience but also with power bases from which they often challenged the heir upon their father's death.

These rebellions by younger brothers were what Safi hoped to prevent, but by ordering that all princes remain secluded he produced a succession of emperors after Abbas II who preferred the pleasures of the harem to the duties of statecraft. Authority passed to the court eunuchs and the mothers of competing princes, who intrigued constantly against one another and ignored the legitimate needs of the state.

One of the most important of those needs was imperial defense. By 1700 the Safavid army had suffered from the effects of decentralization and the obsession with a revenue surplus. It was disintegrating into regiments led by officers jealous of competing authorities, and in response to this weakness various provinces of the empire rose in revolt. Taking advantage of this civil unrest, Afghan rebels captured Isfahan in 1722. Their success encouraged the Russian and Ottoman empires to attack Persia. Two years later southern Iran was firmly under Afghan control, while the Turks and Russians dominated the North (Map 22.5).

Afghans, Turks, and Russians attack Persia

Map 22.5 Safavid Persia in 1736

Safavid Persia's pivotal location between the Ottoman and Mughal Empires prevented the creation of a unified Sunni Muslim state across southern Asia in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Note that the Ottoman Empire could never penetrate any further into Persia than the western edge of the Zagros Mountains. But also notice the presence of Russia on Persia's northern border. How might this fact call into question the survival of the Safavid dynasty?



Under such circumstances, the dynasty could not survive. Nadir Shah, a Persian military commander of Turkish ancestry, deposed the last Safavid emperor in 1736 and drove the Turks and Russians off the Iranian plateau. Nadir, a Sunni Muslim ruling a Shi'ite empire, tried unsuccessfully to unify Persia religiously by reconciling Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims. In 1739 he sacked Delhi and threw the Mughal Empire into disarray. But after he was assassinated in 1747, his kingdom fell apart. By 1779 a new regime, the Qajar (*kab-JAR*) dynasty, consolidated its power in Isfahan. The Qajars ruled Persia until the twentieth century.

Shi'ite Islam After the Safavids

The end of Safavid rule carried with it sobering implications for Persia's future. Shi'ite Islam, despite Nadir Shah's efforts, refused to support the new regime. Under the Qajar dynasty, Shi'ism transformed itself into an inward-looking spiritual movement concentrating on the eventual reappearance of the **Twelfth Imam** (also called the Hidden Imam), a messianic leader whose return Shi'ites believed would create a religious kingdom and usher in a period of prosperity and peace enduring until the Last Judgment. The Shi'ite clergy, through its religious schools, became the principal adversary of any dynasty that claimed the right to rule Persia, reserving that right for the Twelfth Imam and, in his continued absence, for the clergy itself.

At the close of the eighteenth century, then, Shi'ism was moving in a direction contrary to that of secular state control. Shi'ite religious reformers insisted that society and government be organized according to genuine Islamic principles, that the Shari'ah replace civil and royal legal codes, and that only religious scholars and teachers lead the *umma*. In the face of growing Russian and British interest in the strategically located Iranian plateau, Shi'ism reasserted itself as the best guarantee of spiritual and moral strength. If the state could no longer defend Persia, Islam itself must do so.

These events separated Persia from other modernizing Muslim cultures. In most such cultures, modernization began with Western economic contact that escalated into colonial and imperial control. But in Persia, the desertion of the dynasty by the religious establishment preceded the introduction of European influence, which therefore proved to be largely economic and indirect. The spiritual authorities, never fully understood by the Europeans, considered themselves the only genuine caretakers of Persian Islamic culture. They stood in opposition to both internal and external political forces, hoping one day to seize the state for themselves.

The Ottoman Response to Europe's Challenge

The Ottomans had for centuries been a formidable power, but by 1700 they had lost the initiative. As the tide increasingly turned against them, they belatedly responded to Europe's challenge by adapting to European ways. In Arabia, however, Wahhabism, an austere Muslim movement, blamed Islam's decline on lax devotion, condemned the Ottomans for modeling themselves after unbelievers, and warned that Muslims could triumph only by rigidly adhering to the Prophet's original message.

Shi'ite Islam opposes centralized government in Persia



Cover of a Persian book, circa 1800.

Document 22.1 A European Visitor Describes Arabia

John Ovington, an English merchant and traveler, traversed the Indian Ocean in 1689. On his journey he stopped in many Islamic countries, including Arabia, which he describes here.

Muscatt is a city in Arabia the Happy, which lies to the eastward of that kingdom, situated upon the Persian Gulf . . . It abounds with many useful and beneficial commodities, with several kinds of drugs, with balsam and myrrh, incense, . . . dates, gold, frankincense and pearl, and maintains a constant trade of rare and valuable goods to Persia, Egypt, Syria, the Indies, etc. . . .

These Arabians are very courteous in their deportment, and extreme civil to all strangers; they offer neither violence nor affront to any; and though they

are very tenacious of their own principles, and admirers of their own religion, yet do they never impose it upon any, nor are their morals leavened with such furious zeal, as to divest them of humanity, and a tender respect. A man may travel hundreds of miles in this country, and never meet with any abusive language, or any behavior that looks rude. And if you happen to be loaded with any money in your travels, you need no arms to defend your person, nor any guards to secure your purse; for you may sleep with it in your hands in the open fields, or lay it by you with safety as you repose yourself in the king's highway.

SOURCE: John Ovington, *A Voyage to Suratt in the Year 1689* (London: J. Tonson, 1696) 187, 192.

The Ottomans Lose the Initiative

In 1683, the Ottomans' last great invasion of central Europe had taken their forces to the gates of Vienna, where they were stopped by a multinational coalition of Christian powers led by the king of Poland. Then, suddenly and unexpectedly, the Christian powers seized the offensive, setting out to reconquer southeastern Europe from the Ottomans and push them back to Constantinople.

Although it was unable to expel the Ottomans from Europe, the multinational Christian coalition did recapture most of Hungary. In 1699, the Peace of Karlowitz transferred these lands from the Ottomans to the Austrian Habsburgs, sealing the failure of Islam's thousand-year quest to conquer Europe for the faith. The Habsburgs had stood for two centuries on the front lines opposing the Muslim advance, and their success in doing so accelerated the erosion of Ottoman power. But while the Safavid decline had led to collapse in only one century, the Ottoman slide took more than two, in part because of the Ottoman Empire's greater power and wealth, and in part because its multicultural, tolerant nature minimized internal dissatisfaction.

The Ottoman position with respect to Europe had been deteriorating even before 1699. Within a half century after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, which consolidated Islamic control over the profitable trade routes connecting Asia with Europe by land, the sea voyages of da Gama and Cabral had opened the Indian Ocean to Portuguese vessels. As European traders increasingly bypassed the Muslim-dominated land routes, Ottoman income from trade and taxes declined. Unwilling to accept this loss of income, in the sixteenth century the Ottomans competed vigorously against Portugal for Indian Ocean trade. But by the beginning of the seventeenth century, England and Holland had pushed both the Portuguese and the Ottomans aside (see "A European Visitor Describes Arabia"). The efforts of the energetic British and Dutch East India Companies drew

The Ottoman Empire begins to decline

commerce to the European sea routes across the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, and trade on the Muslim land routes across Eurasia decreased further. As Ottoman commerce became increasingly marginalized, the Ottoman sultan's cash flow fell steeply. These commercial conditions contributed greatly to the empire's economic decline.

This decline also stemmed from a gradual weakening of Ottoman central authority. In the seventeenth century the Ottomans, like the Safavids, had begun to seclude young princes within the harem, depriving them of the possibility of training in administration and politics. Sultans became less competent, while courtiers and provincial governors grew more powerful as greater authority was delegated to them.

Finally, the termination of Ottoman expansion with the Karlowitz treaty of 1699 accelerated the empire's decline. As there were no newly conquered lands for the Ottoman armies to loot, the absence of plunder produced riots in the army over pay and a breakdown of discipline in the sultan's elite corps of Janissaries. Individual generals who could satisfy their soldiers' desires for payment by diverting tax revenues gained power at the expense of Istanbul and undermined the empire's defenses at the same time.

After 1699, Russia transformed itself from a potential area of Ottoman conquest into a grave threat to that empire's continued existence. Having taken Azov (*ah-ZOFF*) in the Crimea from the Turks in 1696, Russian Tsar Peter the Great modernized his forces and prepared for more extensive campaigns against them. While briefly fighting on Sweden's side in 1710–1711 in the Great Northern War, the Ottomans managed to trap Peter's army and force him to return Azov; in the next decades they reclaimed some of their earlier territorial losses. But Peter went on to defeat the Swedes in 1721, and Russia's emergence as Eastern Europe's dominant power eventually undercut the Ottoman position there.

In 1768, the Russians renewed their advance. After invading Ottoman territories in the Crimea and the Balkan Peninsula, and annihilating the Ottoman navy off the Turkish coast in 1770, they secured access to the Black Sea through the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji (*koo-CHOOK kā-NAR-jē*) in 1774. Two decades later, the Russians once again triumphed over the Ottomans, this time taking the entire northern Black Sea coast. All these losses troubled the sultan greatly, not only in themselves but for what they meant. With Russia clearly capable of conquering the Turks, the Ottomans could no longer think of European powers as their inferiors. By 1800 the combination of commercial decline, decentralization, military losses, and Russian pressure had reduced the once-imposing Ottoman Empire to a condition that would later lead a Russian tsar to label it “the sick man of Europe.”

Ottoman Reform and Cultural Synthesis

The Ottomans' difficulties in competing with Europeans commercially and militarily forced the rulers to recognize that the empire had to change to survive. But early in the eighteenth century, many highly placed officials believed that the empire had nothing to learn from unbelievers. Ottoman deterioration, they felt, could be reversed only by strengthening Ottoman practices and insights. Battlefield defeats, the sultan's advisors told him, were caused by the failure of Ottoman armies to follow the time-tested techniques of the past; they had nothing to do with the superiority of European weaponry. In the face of such obstinacy, serious reform seemed impossible. Centuries of hostility

Ottoman central authority grows weaker

Russia threatens Ottoman security



The entertainment room of Topkapi Palace in Constantinople (Istanbul), with a large throne on the left from which the sultan could observe the proceedings.

had isolated the Ottomans from the West and left them largely ignorant of the scientific, technological, commercial, and industrial advances that had transformed Europe since the boyhood of Suleiman the Magnificent.

When Russia's naval victory in 1770 destroyed the entire Ottoman maritime high command, some saw a chance to reform the navy without entrenched resistance from admirals. In the 1780s, the Ottoman government imported Western experts to assist in creating modernized military units. Sultan Selim III (1789–1807), building on these beginnings and pressured by defeat in war with Austria and Russia in 1792, created a new European-style military force with modern weapons and training. But it never exceeded ten thousand soldiers at a time when the French were placing hundreds of thousands of men under arms. Once again the old army remained hostile to the new.

But Selim's military schools for his modernized forces introduced Western knowledge into the empire, and his European military experts ended Istanbul's isolation from the West. During the nineteenth century, extensive reforms based on Western models changed the empire significantly. Contempt for western accomplishments gave way to grudging respect. European fashions in art, architecture, and clothing inspired Ottoman syntheses. Decentralization permitted healthy increases in local autonomy without compromising the Ottoman state as a whole. The empire once again appeared formidable and cohesive. It might be sick, but it was far from being dead.

The Ottomans innovate by turning westward

Decentralization strengthens the Ottoman Empire

Wahhabism in Arabia

The Ottoman Empire controlled most but not all of southwestern Asia. Central Arabia lay outside its domain, but not outside the feelings of disgust and shame sweeping the Islamic world at the sight of Muslim weakness. In Arabia in the 1740s, a young religious scholar named Muhammad ibn abd-al Wahhab (*wah-HAHB*) concluded that all Islamic states, and especially the Ottoman Empire, had strayed from the path of strict observance of the teachings of the Prophet. In doing so they had incurred the wrath of Allah. Only by returning to this strict observance, al-Wahhab preached, could Islam triumph over unbelievers, whose ranks included (in his opinion) not only Jews, Christians, and polytheists, but also most Muslims.

Wahhabism, the austere, deeply puritanical brand of Islam preached by al-Wahhab and still practiced in Saudi Arabia today, contended that the sultan's authority derived neither from God nor from the *umma*; indeed, the sultan had no legitimate claim to power at all. Both the Ottoman religious elite and the entire state apparatus were un-Islamic by nature. Veneration of holy people, living or dead, was idolatry, as were pilgrimages to sacred shrines and gravesites. Sufi mysticism was reprehensible nonsense. The teachings of al-Wahhab, troubling to many Muslims, made him an outcast in Arabia until 1744, when he forged an alliance with the house of the Amir Ibn Saud (*sah-OOD*), who immediately established a small central Arabian state on Wahhabist principles.

Al-Wahhab died in 1791, but by the early nineteenth century Ibn Saud's grandson had taken Mecca and Medina and, following al-Wahhab's opposition to pilgrimages to gravesites, had destroyed all sacred Muslim tombs located there—including, to the horror of orthodox Muslims, the tomb of the Prophet himself. Wahhabist raids on Shi'ite holy sites in Iraq left faithful Shi'ites frantic and finally exhausted Ottoman patience. By 1818 Wahhabism was suppressed by force, but in the twentieth century it seized control of the Arabian Peninsula and created Saudi Arabia.

Wahhabism transforms Arabia



Medina in the 18th Century.

Chapter Review

Putting It in Perspective

By the end of the eighteenth century, the global balance of power and prosperity had clearly shifted away from the Muslim world. Islamic southern Asia, which had long drawn strength and wealth from its control of the land and sea routes connecting East and West, declined as European countries seized control of the Indian Ocean trade and then intruded, commercially and militarily, on southern Asia itself. Of southern Asia's three great Islamic empires, India's Mughal Empire was largely inoperative, Persia's Safavid empire was gone, and the multicultural Ottoman Empire was clearly in decline.

As the Muslims struggled to meet the Western challenge, two very different responses had emerged. One approach, pursued by the Ottoman Turks, was to adopt some Western ways, seeking to modernize their economic and military structures along European lines. The other response, pursued by Wahhabists and Shi'ites, was to reject Western ways and restore traditional Islamic practices, seeking to preserve and purify their faith so as to draw strength from their seventh-century religious roots.

Neither approach proved effective in slowing the Islamic world's political and economic deterioration. By the eighteenth century, the center of the global trade network had shifted from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic, where Europe was deriving vast power and wealth from its connections with Africa and the Americas. These connections were both immensely profitable and exploitative, for in the Atlantic world, prosperity was increasingly linked with slave labor transferred by ship from Africa to the western hemisphere.

Reviewing Key Material

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ASK YOURSELF

1. How did control of the Indian Ocean trade benefit Islamic southern Asia? How were Europeans able to gain control of this trade?
2. Why were the Mughals unable to mount an effective resistance to Europeans in India?
3. Why were Muslims and Hindus able to coexist peacefully in Southeast Asia, but not in India? What were the implications for the two regions of these differences in coexistence?
4. How did Shi'ism shape the character of post-Safavid Persia?
5. How and why did Wahhabism develop as the dominant strain of Islam in Arabia?

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Key Dates and Developments

ca. 1400	Iskandar founds the trading state of Malacca
1510	Portugal seizes Goa
1511	Portugal conquers Malacca
1600	Establishment of the British East India Company
1602	Establishment of the Dutch East India Company
ca. 1650	Mataram and Johore dominate Southeast Asian trade
1658	Dutch expel Portuguese from Indonesia
1664	Establishment of the French East India Company
1699	Peace of Karlowitz
1739	Nadir Shah sacks Delhi; the Mughals lose control
1740–1748	War of the Austrian Succession
1744	Alliance between al-Wahhab and Ibn Saud in Arabia
1747	Collapse of Safavid Iran
1756–1763	Seven Years War
1757	Clive's victory at Plassey
1774	Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji
1779	Qajar rule in Iran
1792–1807	Sultan Selim III reforms the Ottoman Empire
1795	France conquers Holland; Britain moves into Southeast Asia
1818	Ottomans suppress Wahhabism in Arabia