The Ultimate AP® World History Unit 3 Cheat Sheet

3.1 Empires Expand: Overview

Why Land Empires Grew

Gunpowder empires: cannons & muskets let states conquer walled cities & control large territories after 1450.

Centralization: rulers built armies, bureaucracies & tax systems to hold diverse lands & peoples together.

Empire	Region	Key ruler(s)	Religion
Ottoman	Anatolia, Balkans	Mehmed II, Suleiman	Sunni Islam
Safavid	Persia (Iran)	Ismail, Abbas I	Shia Islam
Mughal	South Asia	Babur, Akbar	Islam (Hindu maj.)
Qing	China	Kangxi, Qianlong	Confucian, Buddhist
Russian	Eurasia	Ivan IV, Peter I	Orthodox

Expansion Patterns

Conquest + rivalry: Ottomans vs. Safavids (Sunni vs. Shia), Mughals vs. Rajputs, Qing vs. Zunghars.

Russia pushed east across Siberia for furs & land; the Qing pushed west into Central Asia & Tibet.

Trade & taxes: land empires taxed farmers & trade routes; control of the Silk Roads & Indian Ocean ports mattered.

Other Empires c. 1450–1750

Songhai (W. Africa) grew from trans-Saharan trade; **Aztec** & **Inca** ruled the Americas until Spanish conquest.

Europe: Spain, France & the Habsburgs centralized; absolutist kings (Louis XIV) claimed divine right.

Limits: rivals, revolts & distance slowed expansion; most land empires peaked in the 1600s, then strained.

⚠ "Gunpowder empire" is a teacher label; on the exam, explain HOW military tech enabled expansion.

✓ Memorize 1 ruler + 1 policy + 1 building per empire; that's enough specific evidence for most essays.

The Ottoman Empire

Rise & Peak

1453: Mehmed II captured Constantinople w/ huge cannons → renamed Istanbul; end of the Byzantine Empire.

Suleiman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566): expanded into Hungary & the Mediterranean; codified laws ("Lawgiver").

1529: the failed siege of Vienna marked the limit of Ottoman expansion into central Europe (again in 1683).

Ruling a Diverse Empire

Devshirme: Christian boys from the Balkans were taken, converted to Islam & trained as **Janissaries** or officials.

Janissaries: elite infantry loyal only to the sultan; they checked the power of the Turkish landed nobility.

Millet system: non-Muslim communities (Christians, Jews) ran their own religious & legal affairs under leaders.

Tax farming: officials bought the right to collect taxes in a region & kept what they collected above the quota.

Legitimacy & Culture

Sultan as caliph: claimed leadership of Sunni Islam; built mosques like the Süleymaniye (architect Sinan).

Trade: Istanbul controlled routes between Europe & Asia; high Ottoman tolls pushed Europeans to seek sea routes.

Decline signs (after 1600): Janissary revolts, corrupt officials & military losses (Vienna 1683) weakened the state.

Policy	Purpose
Devshirme	Loyal elite
Millets	Manage diversity
Tax farming	Steady revenue

⚠ Tax farming raised money fast but encouraged officials to overtax peasants; it's a cause of later unrest.

✓ Ottoman tolerance (millets) + Sunni identity is a strong contrast to Safavid forced Shia conversion.

Safavid & Mughal Empires

Safavid Persia (1501–1736)

Shah Ismail made Twelver Shia Islam the state religion & pushed conversion of the largely Sunni population.

Battle of Chaldiran (1514): Ottoman guns beat Safavid cavalry; the Sunni–Shia rivalry shaped the region.

Shah Abbas I: built a gunpowder army, moved the capital to Isfahan & grew the silk & carpet trades.

Safavid tension: forced conversion & the Sunni–Shia split made Persia a rival, not an ally, of the Ottomans.

Mughal India (1526–1857)

Babur founded the empire in 1526 using cannons; Mughals were Muslim rulers of a Hindu-majority land.

Akbar (r. 1556–1605): religious tolerance, ended the jizya tax on non-Muslims & married a Rajput princess.

Zamindars: local landholders who collected taxes for the Mughal state & kept a share for themselves.

Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707): expanded to the south, reimposed the jizya & strained ties w/ Hindus & Sikhs.

Mughal economy: cotton textiles & a huge population made Mughal India one of the richest states of the era.

Mughal decline: costly wars, Hindu & Sikh revolts & weak heirs after 1707 let the British East India Co. gain power.

Culture & Legitimacy

Taj Mahal (Shah Jahan) & Isfahan's mosques show rulers using monumental architecture to display power.

Ruler	Policy toward non-Muslims
Akbar	Tolerant, no jizya
Aurangzeb	Restrictive, jizya back

⚠ Don't call all Mughal rulers tolerant: Akbar & Aurangzeb are a classic contrast in change over time.

✓ Use Akbar vs. Aurangzeb to show change over time in how a ruler maintained (or lost) legitimacy.

Qing China & Russia

Qing Dynasty (1644–1912)

Manchus from the northeast conquered Ming China in 1644; a minority ruling a Han Chinese majority.

Kept Confucian rule: retained the civil service exam & bureaucracy, w/ Manchu & Han officials in pairs.

Queue: Han men were forced to wear the Manchu hairstyle as a sign of loyalty to the new dynasty.

Kangxi (r. 1661–1722): expanded into Taiwan, Mongolia & Tibet; sponsored Confucian scholarship.

Qianlong: the empire reached its largest size; he limited European trade to the port of Canton (see Unit 4).

Qing tension: Han resistance & later rebellions show the limits of minority rule, despite Confucian continuity.

Russian Empire

Ivan IV ("the Terrible"): crowned tsar, expanded east & crushed the boyars (nobles) w/ secret police.

Siberia: Cossacks pushed east for furs (a key export) & reached the Pacific by the mid-1600s.

Peter the Great (r. 1682–1725): Westernized the army & government; built St. Petersburg on the Baltic.

Serfdom: peasants bound to the land expanded, giving nobles labor & the state loyal landholders.

Catherine the Great (r. 1762–1796) later expanded to the Black Sea, just past this unit's period.

Empire	Minority rule?	Key tool
Qing	Yes (Manchu)	Confucian exams
Russia	No	Serfdom, military

Ming → Qing: same capital (Beijing), same exams.

⚠ Peter's Westernizing reforms were top-down; serfdom & absolute rule stayed in place, not democracy.

✓ Qing & Mughal both = minority rulers of a majority population; a strong comparison essay pair.

3.2 Administration & Legitimacy

Methods to Consolidate Power

Method	Examples
Bureaucratic elites	Ottoman devshirme, Qing exams
Military professionals	Janissaries, Qing banners
Tax collection	Ottoman tax farms, zamindars
Tribute & labor	Aztec tribute, Inca mit'a
Monumental art	Taj Mahal, Versailles

Bureaucracy: trained officials loyal to the ruler replaced or balanced old landed nobles in many empires.

Military: standing armies w/ gunpowder weapons; rulers paid soldiers directly so they stayed loyal to the state.

Ex: Qing banners were hereditary military units.

Legitimacy

Religion: rulers claimed divine support: caliph (Ottoman), divine right (Louis XIV), Mandate of Heaven (Qing).

Art & architecture: palaces, mosques & temples (Versailles, Taj Mahal, Inca Temple of the Sun) display power.

European absolutism: Louis XIV built Versailles & kept nobles at court, where they could be watched & controlled.

Revenue

Inca mit'a: required labor service on state projects (roads, terraces, mines) instead of money taxes.

Aztec tribute: conquered city-states sent goods (cloth, cacao, feathers) to the capital, Tenochtitlan.

Challenges

Size & diversity: huge empires faced revolts, corrupt officials & costly wars at their distant borders.

⚠ An LEQ asking HOW states consolidated power wants specific methods + examples, not just a list of empires.

✓ Group evidence by method (military, bureaucracy, religion) to build a clear, comparative LEQ body.

3.3 Belief Systems

Christianity Splits

Protestant Reformation: Martin Luther's 95 Theses (1517) attacked indulgences & papal authority.

Spread: printing press + political support from German princes & kings let Protestant ideas spread fast.

Counter-Reformation: Council of Trent reaffirmed Catholic doctrine; Jesuits spread Catholicism worldwide.

Catholic expansion: Spanish & Portuguese missionaries spread Catholicism in the Americas & Asia (Unit 4 link).

Wars of religion: Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) → Peace of Westphalia; rulers chose their state's religion.

Ex: Henry VIII broke from Rome (1534) to create the Church of England, a clear political use of reform.

Islam Divides Politically

Sunni Ottomans vs. Shia Safavids: religious difference fueled wars & shaped borders in the Middle East.

New Syncretic Faiths

Sikhism: founded by Guru Nanak in Punjab; blended elements of Hinduism & Islam (1 God, rejects caste).

Akbar's Din-i Ilahi: a court faith mixing religions; it showed his tolerance but gained very few followers.

Effects on Power

Religion & politics: rulers used faith to unite subjects but also faced revolts from religious minorities.

Development	Political effect
Reformation	Weakened papal power
Sunni–Shia rivalry	Ottoman–Safavid wars
Sikhism	Later Mughal conflict

⚠ The Reformation was religious AND political; kings & princes backed it to gain power over the Church.

✓ SAQs often ask for 1 cause or effect of the Reformation; name a specific one (printing press, Westphalia).

3.4 Comparing Land-Based Empires

Comparison Table

Empire	Diversity policy	Admin tool	Decline factor
Ottoman	Millets	Devshirme	Corruption
Safavid	Forced Shia	Shah's army	Afghan invasion
Mughal	Akbar tolerant	Zamindars	Aurangzeb wars
Qing	Han + Manchu	Exams	Rebellions later

Similarities

All used gunpowder armies, bureaucracies & religion or art to legitimize rule over very diverse subjects.

Minority rule: Mughals (Muslim over Hindu) & Qing (Manchu over Han) both had to win majority support.

Differences

Religious policy: Ottoman millets & Akbar's tolerance vs. Safavid forced Shia conversion & Aurangzeb's limits.

Revenue: tax farming (Ottoman), zamindars (Mughal), mit'a labor (Inca) & tribute (Aztec) differed in form.

Ex: Ottomans recruited outsiders (devshirme) while the Qing kept Han scholars via exams; both built loyal elites.

Continuity & Change

Continuity: agrarian economies & reliance on peasant taxes; religion stayed central to political legitimacy.

Change: gunpowder & centralized bureaucracies made states larger & more powerful than before 1450.

Comparison Language

Phrases: "Both... however..."; "While X relied on..., Y instead..."; "Similarly..."; "In contrast..."

Decline often came from overextension.

⚠ A comparison needs BOTH a similarity or difference AND an explanation of why it existed in each empire.

✓ Compare 2 empires on 1 category (religion, military, tax) at a time; it keeps your essay organized.

Unit 3 on the Exam

Exam Format

Section	Questions	Time	Weight
MCQ	55	55 min	40%
SAQ	3	40 min	20%
DBQ	1	60 min	25%
LEQ	1	40 min	15%

Unit 3 = 12–15% of the exam; it often pairs w/ Unit 4 (also 1450–1750) in stimulus-based question sets.

Likely Question Types

SAQ: "Identify 1 way the Ottoman state consolidated power" → devshirme, Janissaries or tax farming + detail.

LEQ: "Compare methods 2 land-based empires used to legitimize rule, 1450–1750" → pick 2 & 1 category each.

MCQ stimulus: maps of expansion, images of monuments or edicts; identify the purpose & context.

Thesis Templates

Comparison: "Both the Mughal & Qing used X to rule majority populations; however, the Mughals... while the Qing..."

Causation: "Gunpowder weapons & centralized bureaucracy enabled expansion b/c... & b/c..." (2 clear reasons).

Rubric Reminders

Context: open LEQs w/ the bigger picture, e.g., the fall of the Mongols & the spread of gunpowder before 1450.

DBQ sourcing: for an edict or traveler's account, explain the author's purpose, audience or point of view.

LEQ: thesis (1), context (1), evidence (2), reasoning & complexity (2) = 6 points; the DBQ is worth 7.

⚠ Don't confuse eras: the Ottomans last to 1922, but Unit 3 asks about c. 1450–1750; date your evidence.

✓ For each empire know: founder, peak ruler, religion, 1 admin policy & 1 cause of its later decline.