

Model of Empires

Necessary preconditions for the rise of empires

The region must have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • state-level government • high agricultural potential of the environment • several small states with no clear dominant state power (power vacuum) • mutual antagonism among those states • desirable environmental resources, soil, location, terrain (good variety) • adequate military resources (or a military or technological advantage) • states succeed in empire building if they have an ideology that promotes personal identification with the state, empire, leader, conquest, and/or militaristic trend
Characteristics of well-run empires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the building of roads and transportation systems, canals, ports, and other infrastructure • increased trade • cosmopolitan cities: art and education flourish • effective bureaucracy to ensure communication, tax collection, coinage, and enforcement of laws and tax system • common official language to facilitate communication and efficient administration • a system of justice and law for the entire empire • extension of rights to some degree to the conquered to consolidate sufficient support and cooperation
Major results of empire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economic rewards, especially in the early years, redistributed to the elite with trickle down to lower classes, especially to merchants, scribes, etc. • relative stability and prosperity • increased population
Reasons for decline of empire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • failure of leadership; focus on wealth, not the needs of the state • the goal of expansion and conquest leading to attempted new conquests beyond a practical limit: overextension of bureaucracy, military, resources, communications • lack of new conquests, leading to erosion of economic base and declining faith in the ideology that supported the empire in the first place • rebellions from within; challenges from without

Based on: Demarest, Arthur A. and Geoffrey W. Conrad. 1994. ***Regions and Empire: The Dynamics of Aztec and Inca Expansionism***. Cambridge University Press.