

# Roman Empire

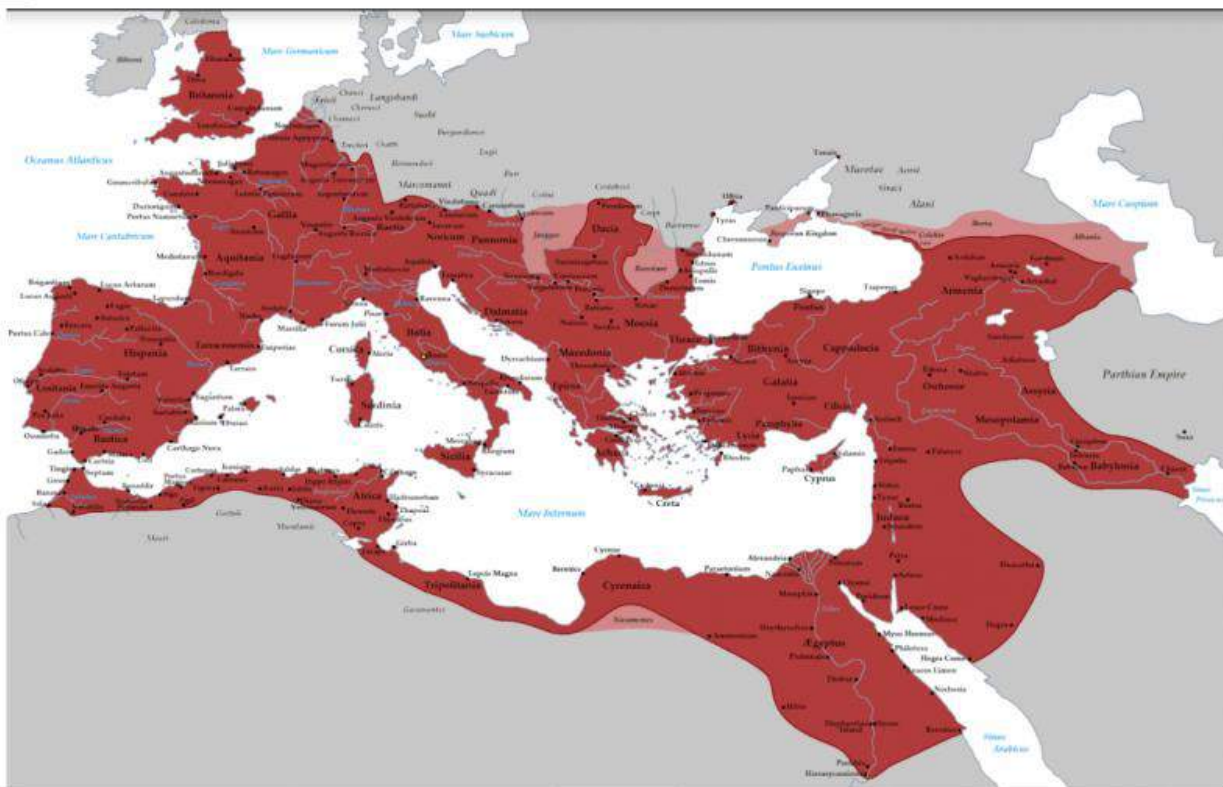
## UPSC World History Notes

The Roman Republic, founded in 509 BC was a nation-state of the classical Roman Era that was governed by the citizens of Rome. After the Roman Republic was defeated, the Roman Empire was founded in 27 BCE, and it lasted until the Western Empire finally eclipsed it in the fifth century CE. The Roman Empire was centred on the city of Rome. Prior to the Roman Republic, which began in 27 BC and ended in 476 AD, there was a definite political, social, and cultural heritage that is still evident today.

Roman Empire is one of the important topics for [UPSC IAS](#) exam. It also covers a significant part of [GS paper-1](#) syllabus. In this article, we shall discuss the Holy Roman Empire, Roman Civilization, the history of Rome, decline and fall of the Roman empire.

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Extent of Roman Empire

## Roman Empire: Historical Background

The Roman Empire was started after the establishment of the city of Rome in 753 BC.

- Romulus and Remus, two brothers, are credited with founding the city, according to Roman legend. Remus was killed in a dispute over the city's boundaries, and Romulus, who succeeded him as the first ruler of Rome, gave the capital city its name.
- Rome developed from a modest collection of towns to become the magnificent capital of the most potent empire in antiquity.
- Rome was formerly governed by kings. King Tarquin the Proud was thereafter driven from Rome in 509 BC, and for the following 500 years, Rome was a republic.

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### Highlights Of the Roman Empire

- The Roman Republic, founded in 509 BC was a nation-state of the classical Roman era that was governed by the citizens of Rome.
- After the Roman Republic was defeated, the Roman Empire was founded in 27 BCE. Romulus, the city's first founder, laid the foundation for Rome atop Palatine Hill.
- Rome served as the Roman Empire's initial capital from 27 BC until AD 286.
- Five extraordinary kings led successively between 96 and 180 CE, bringing the Roman Empire to its pinnacle:
  1. Nerva (96-98 CE)
  2. Trajan (98-117 CE)
  3. Hadrian (117-138 CE)
  4. Antoninus Pius (138-161 CE)
  5. Marcus Aurelius (161-180 CE)

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## Roman Empire Timeline

One of the greatest and most significant civilizations in human history was the Roman Empire. It started in Rome in 753 BC, and it lasted for well over a thousand years. Rome expanded throughout this period and came to dominate most of Western Asia, Northern Africa, and Europe. Here is a timeline of some of the significant events in Ancient Rome's history..

Year	Events
<b>753 AD</b>	Rome was founded as a city. According to legend, the city was established by Romulus and Remus, the twin sons of Mars, the war god. Romulus overthrew Remus, took control of Rome, and gave the capital city his name.
<b>509 BC</b>	Rome gains republican status. Rome is today governed by senators, who were elected when the last king was deposed. There is a complex republican government with a constitution with laws
<b>218 BC</b>	Invading Italy is Hannibal. In his infamous journey across the Alps to assail Rome, Hannibal commands the Carthaginian army.

<b>73 BC</b>	The slave rebellion is led by the gladiator Spartacus.
<b>45 BC</b>	As the first dictator of Rome, Julius Caesar. In order to take over as the only ruler of Rome, Caesar performs his renowned Crossing of the Rubicon and defeats Pompey in a civil war. The Roman Republic is over as a result of this.
<b>44 BC</b>	Marcus Brutus killed Julius Caesar on the Ides of March. In an effort to restore the republic, civil war breaks out.
<b>27 BC</b>	Caesar Augustus becomes the first Roman Emperor, ushering in the Roman Empire.
<b>64 AD</b>	Rome is largely on fire. According to legend, Emperor Nero played the lyre while he observed the city burn.
<b>80 AD</b>	The Colosseum is constructed. One of the finest works of Roman engineering has been completed. There are seats for 50,000 people.
<b>121 AD</b>	Buildup of the Hadrian Wall. A substantial wall is erected across northern England to keep the barbarians out.
<b>306 AD</b>	Constantine ascends to the throne. Rome would become a Christian empire after Constantine's conversion to Christianity. Rome had previously persecuted Christians.
<b>380 AD</b>	Theodosius I declares that the Roman Empire will only practise Christianity.
<b>395 AD</b>	Rome splits into two empires.
<b>410 AD</b>	Rome is taken by the Visigoths. For the first time in 800 years, Rome has been conquered by an enemy.
<b>476 AD</b>	The dissolution of Ancient Rome and the end of the Western Roman Empire. The German Goth Odoacer defeats Romulus Augustus, the final Roman Emperor. This marks the beginning of Europe's Dark Ages.
<b>1453 AD</b>	The Ottoman Empire conquered the Byzantine Empire, bringing an end to it.

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## 5 Major Roman Empire Kings

The first Roman emperor, Augustus Caesar (27 BCE–14 CE), established the Roman Empire. Romulus Augustulus (475–476 CE), the final Roman emperor, was overthrown by the Germanic King Odoacer (476–493 CE).

- Up until the death of Constantine XI (1449–1453) and the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453 CE, it was known as the Byzantine Empire in the east.

- The Roman Empire had a significant impact on western civilisation, making long-lasting contributions to almost every facet of western culture.
- Nerva founded the Nervan-Antonin Dynasty which ruled Rome from 96-192 CE.
- This period is marked by increased prosperity owing to the rulers known as The Five Good Emperors of Rome.
- The Nerva-Antonine Dynasty, which ruled Rome from 96 until 192 CE, was created by Nerva.
- The leaders referred to as The Five Good Emperors of Rome were responsible for this era's improved prosperity.
- Five extraordinary kings led successively between 96 and 180 CE, bringing the Roman Empire to its pinnacle:

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#### Nerva (96-98 CE)

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- From 96 CE to 98 CE, Nerva ruled as emperor of Rome.
- After serving as an emperor for a lifetime under Nero and the Flavian dynasty,
- Nerva was crowned at the age of nearly 66.

#### Trajan (98-117 CE)

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- Trajan was known as a kind-hearted leader, his reign was notable for public initiatives that benefited the people, including repairing the shoddy road network, creating aqueducts, erecting public baths, and enlarging the port of Ostia.
- The Roman Empire expanded to its largest size to that point under Trajan, who was also a very effective general.
- Trajan triumphed in three significant wars against the Dacians and in the east.

#### Hadrian (117-138 CE)

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- Hadrian was the Roman emperor from 117-138 CE.
- Hadrian had a keen interest in both Egyptian mysticism and magic as well as literature, particularly Greek literature.
- He was one of the most well-read Roman emperors even among the fabled top five- wrote his own poetry and other literary works, and he insisted on personally overseeing as many of the construction projects he had commissioned.

#### Antoninus Pius (138-161 CE)

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- Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius ruled from 138 to 161 CE.
- Roman emperor Hadrian, like his forebears, named Antoninus Pius as his successor.
- Antoninus was a kind and caring king. He was admired and respected by both the common populace and those in the Roman government.
- His 23-year reign, which was the second-longest after Augustus', would be marked by relative tranquility, earning him a spot among the Five Good Emperors.

#### Marcus Aurelius (161-180 CE)

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- He ruled as Roman emperor from 161 to 180 CE
- Marcus Aurelius was the last of the Five Good Emperors of Rome
- He was also known as the creator of the philosophical treatise Meditations.
- He also earned a reputation for embodying the Platonic ideal of the Philosopher King

## Western Roman Empire

- The western half of the Roman Empire, which was split in two by the emperor Diocletian (r. 284–305 CE), is now referred to as the Western Roman Empire.
- This phrase was not used by the Romans themselves.
- At its height (around 117 CE), the Roman Empire covered a vast area that included Mesopotamia, Anatolia, North Africa, Europe, the British Isles, and North Africa. By 285 CE, the Roman Empire had expanded to such a size that it was no longer possible for Rome to rule over all of the provinces.

## Eastern Roman Empire

- Eastern Roman Empire was also known as the Byzantine Empire.
- It reigned between 330 to 1453. The capital of the eastern roman empire was established in Constantinople by Constantine I (reigned 306-337).
- The name 'Byzantine' was coined by 16th-century historians because the capital city's original name was Byzantium before it was changed to Constantinople (modern Istanbul).
- After the collapse of the latter in the fifth century, it was crucial to maintain this less-than-ideal but practical designation that distinguished the Eastern Roman Empire from the Western Roman Empire.

## Government and Military of Roman Empire

- The Roman army, which at the time was the best trained and equipped in the ancient world, was largely responsible for the astounding expansion and prosperity of the Roman Empire.
- The Roman Army was first created to defend the city of Rome and was primarily composed of volunteers.
- The Army has reorganized under the general and consul Marius' (155–86 BC) direction into a more organized and effective combat force. Soldiers signed up for 20 to 25 years and received pay.
- The army offered many young men from respectable backgrounds a stepping stone to political success.
- Ordinary troops were divided into legions, which were composed of around 5000 men apiece, inside the Army itself.
- The armies, in turn, were composed of smaller groups called centuries, each of which contained 80 soldiers and was led by a centurion.
- Even the most ardent of Rome's adversaries fled in terror at the sight of its army going into combat behind flags topped by a silver eagle (a symbol of Jupiter, king of the gods).

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## Foreign Trade, Economy and Urban Settlements: Roman Empire

- Trade on a local, interregional, and global scale was prevalent in the Roman empire.
- Products made in one place might be exported all over the world because of a combination of state control and a free-market philosophy.
- Huge amounts of cereals, wine, and olive oil were exported in particular, while substantial amounts of precious metals, marble, and spices were imported in the opposite way.
- The economy was based on agriculture. There were a lot of little farmers, but there were also big landowners who used a lot of slaves and peasants to labour on their vast holdings.
- Following the creation of an agricultural surplus, population movement and urban growth, territorial expansion, technological advancement, taxation, the spread of coinage, and not

insignificantly, the necessity to feed the great city of Rome itself and supply its massive army wherever it might be on the campaign, the Romans gradually developed a more sophisticated economy.

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## Fall of the Roman Empire

The reasons which led to the fall of the roman empire are as follows:

- Rome engaged in a series of conflicts with Goth invaders from 376-382 CE that is now referred to as the Gothic Wars.
- The Roman Emperor Valens (reigned 364–378 CE) was defeated at the Battle of Adrianople on August 9, 378 CE, and historians consider this battle to be a turning point in the fall of the Western Roman Empire.
- Christianity had a crucial role in the fall of the Roman Empire because the new religion threatened the paganism-based social mores of the time.
- However, the theologian Orosius (5th century CE) maintained Christianity's innocence in Rome's demise as early as 418 CE, so the idea that Christianity was a major factor in the empire's decline was contested even before Gibbon.
- Orosius asserted that the primary causes of the collapse of Rome were religions and religious practices.
- Other elements that contributed to Rome's collapse include:
  - a. Political unrest caused by the extent of the empire
  - b. The two aspects of the empire's self-interest
  - c. Tribes of advancing barbarians
  - d. Corruption by governmental
  - e. Armed Soldiers
  - f. Excessive reliance on forced labour
  - g. Enormous levels of unemployment and inflation

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## Roman Empire: third-century Crisis

Due to the numerous significant crises that took place in the third century, historians refer to it as "The Crisis of the Third Century." However, the political and social unrest that pervaded this crisis can be used to describe a number of more general structural issues.

Some instances of Rome's Third-Century Crisis are listed below:

- The Roman Empire was racked by ongoing civil conflicts.
- Barbarian attacks on the Roman Empire
- The Crisis of the Third Century, an economic calamity that brought about the fall of the Roman Empire, was a direct result of the two before it.
- Natural calamities like earthquakes and floods occurred frequently in the Roman Empire.
- Finally, the vastness of the Roman Empire was a problem since it was too big to be governed by just one person, as evidenced by how slowly communications could be conveyed from Rome to the frontiers.

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