In 1453, the Ottomans conquered Constantinople and turned it into their capital of Istanbul. Ottoman power continued to expand into Europe, and in 1529, under Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, the Ottomans besieged the city of Vienna in Austria, marking the furthest extent of their power in Europe until they were pushed back by an alliance of major European powers. However, a series of broader factors all contributed to Ottoman decline. During the Age of Exploration, the Portuguese discovered a sea route to the Indian Ocean by going around the southern tip of Africa, opening up Asia to direct European trade and domination, thereby economically weakening the Ottomans, who had acted as the middleman between Asia and Europe in the lucrative spice trade. They were further weakened by the inflation resulting from the influx of New World silver into Europe. The Ottoman Empire struggled to keep pace with the development of Europe as it was bombarded by the combined forces of revolutionary liberalism, nationalism, and industrialization.

The Ottoman Empire Heads Toward Collapse

Directions: Examine the map on page 707 in the textbook, and compare the main map of ethnic groups to the smaller map showing the borders of states. Read the text on page 708 to provide context for the map, and answer the questions below.

1. What ethnic groups, other than Turks, existed within the Ottoman Empire?

2. How was the Ottoman struggle with nationalism similar to that faced by Austria at the same time?

3. Examine the cartoon titled “The Sick Man of Europe” on page 708. Why was the decline of Ottoman Empire an opportunity to the great powers in Europe?

4. Considering your answer to the last question, why would the decline of Ottoman Empire also be a threat to the Balance of Power in Europe?

Pan-Slavism Threatens Ottoman Control

...In 1875, the Slavic peoples living in the Ottoman provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (currently the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina), led an uprising against the Ottomans in order to gain their freedom. The general weakness of the Ottomans led two independent, neighbor Slavic states, Montenegro and Serbia, to aid the rebellion. Within a year, the rebellion spread to the Ottoman province of Bulgaria. The rebellion was part of a larger political movement called the Pan-Slavic movement, which had as its goal the unification of all Slavic peoples—most of whom were under the control of Austria, Germany, and the Ottoman Empire—into a single political unity under the protection of Russia. Anxious also to conquer the Ottomans themselves and seize Istanbul, the Russians allied with the rebels, Serbia, and Montenegro and declared war against the Ottomans....

Source: Richard Hooker, “European Imperialism and the Balkan Crisis,” The Ottomans, World Cultures

5. Why would Russia, the largest Slavic power, want to encourage Pan-Slavic Nationalism in the Balkans?
History of the Crimean War

**Directions:** Answer the questions below using your article of the Crimean War as well as your general knowledge of the Ottoman Empire and 19th Century politics.

6. “Concern over the Eastern Question was the main cause of the Crimean War. Religion had nothing to do with it.” Argue either in support of or in opposition to this assertion using supporting evidence from your article on the Crimean War.

7. What did the Treaty of Paris (1865) do? Do you think this solved the Eastern Question? Why or why not?

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**European Influence and the Tanzimat Reforms**

From the late eighteenth century onward the Ottoman Empire faced three prominent challenges: a strategic threat posed by the Russian Empire, the emergence and spread of nationalist ideas and movements in the Ottoman Empire after the French Revolution, first among non-Muslim elements, and then among non-Turkish Muslim elements, and the empire's incremental financial dependence on the West and the "peaceful penetration" of the major European powers. The European powers acquired certain legal rights of interference in Ottoman internal affairs as part of treaty agreements, and the considerable expansion of the Ottoman Empire's trade with the European powers, and the various economic concessions, including ports, railways, mines, and river navigation awarded by the Ottoman government to European enterprises enabled the European powers to economically dominate the ailing empire. All these challenges pushed the Ottomans into a new series of reforms, called the **Tanzimat**, or "Reorganization," directed towards centralization and Westernization.


The reforms included the development of a new secular school system, the reorganization of the army based on the Prussian conscript system, the creation of provincial representative assemblies, and the introduction of new codes of commercial and criminal law, which were largely modeled after those of France (Napoleonic Code). These laws, moreover, were administered by newly established state courts independent of the 'ulama', the Islamic religious council.

(Source: “Tanzimat,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, adapted)

8. What three problems did the Ottoman Empire face, and how did they attempt to solve these problems?

9. What does the cartoon suggest about the Tanzimat reforms? Were they a helpful or harmful move? Explain.