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+91 9940572462

+91 9940572462

ijarasem@gmail.com

www.ijarasem.com

Decline of Mughal Empire

KULDEEP SINGH

STUDENT, JAIPUR, RAJASTHAN ; PG IN 2022 FROM IGNOU, IN HISTORY; UGC NET/JRF IN
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ABSTRACT: The Mughal Empire began to decline in the 18th century, during the reign of Muḥammad Shah (1719–48). Much of its territory fell under the control of the Marathas and then the British. The last Mughal emperor, Bahādur Shah II (1837–57), was exiled by the British after his involvement with the Indian Mutiny of 1857–58.

KEYWORDS: mughal empire, decline, british, mutiny

I. INTRODUCTION

The Mughal Empire declined rapidly after the death of Aurangzeb in c. 1707 CE. This year is generally considered the differentiating year to separate the era of the Great Mughals from that of the lesser Mughals, also known as the Later Mughals.[1,2,3]

The period between c. 1707 CE and c. 1761 CE (the time of Aurangzeb's death to the period when the Third Battle of Panipat took place, wherein Ahmad Shah Abdali defeated the Maratha chiefs), witnessed the resurgence of regional identities and highlighted a sad state of affairs for the once-mighty Mughals. The Mughal court became the scene of factions among the nobles. The weakness of the empire was exposed when Nadir Shah imprisoned the Mughal Emperor and looted Delhi in c. 1739 CE. After the death of Aurangzeb in c. 1707 CE, a war of succession broke out among his three sons – Muazzam (the governor of Kabul), Muhammad Kam Baksh (the governor of Deccan) and Muhammad Azam Shah (the governor of Gujarat). Muazzam emerged victorious and ascended the throne with the title of Bahadur Shah I.

Bahadur Shah I/Shah Alam/Muazzam (c. 1707 – 1712 CE)

Muazzam ascended the throne and assumed the title of Bahadur Shah, at the age of 63.

- He followed a liberal policy towards the nobles, granted them the territories of their preferences and promoted them. This led to the worsening of the state finances. It is also believed that the real power was in the hands of the wazir, Zulfiqar Khan.
- He showed a tolerant attitude towards Hindus, though he never abolished jizya.
- During his reign, the independence of Marwar and Mewar was acknowledged. However, the settlement could not restore these states to become fully committed warriors for the Mughal cause.
- His policy towards the Marathas was also half-hearted reconciliation. He did not recognize Shahu (whom he released) as the rightful Maratha king. He granted Maratha the sardeshmukhi of the Deccan, but failed to grant the Chauth and thus could not satisfy them fully. Marathas, thus, continued to fight among themselves as well as against the Mughals.
- Jat chief Charuman and the Bundella chief Chattrasal joined him in his campaign against the Sikhs. High mansab was granted to the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh. He, however, had to face rebellion from Banda Bahadur and it was during the course of his campaign against Banda Bahadur that he died (in c. 1712 CE).
- He was given the title of “Shah-i-Bekhabar” by Mughal historians like Khafi Khan.

Jahandar Shah (c. 1712 – 1713 CE)

After the death of Bahadur Shah, a new form of politics emerged in the Mughals' political sphere wherein the nobles became 'king makers' and the kings mere 'puppets' in their hands. Jahandar Shah was the first puppet ruler in Mughal India. He was supported by Zulfiqar Khan (wazir) who had the reins of the executive in his hands.

- Zulfiqar Khan built friendly relations with the Marathas, the Rajputs and different Hindu chieftains. He abolished jizya and gave the title of “Maharaja” to Ajit Singh (Marwar) and Mirza Raj Sawai to Jai Singh of Amber. He also granted the Chauth and Sardeshmukhi of the Deccan to Shahu. However, the old policy of suppression was continued against Banda Bahadur and the Sikhs.
- Zulfiqar also tried to improve the financial situation of the empire by checking reckless grants of jagirs and offices. He also made mansabdars maintain the official quota of troops. However, he is infamous in history for introducing the evil practice of Ijarah (revenue farming).
- Jahandar Shah’s favourite lady, Lal Kanwar (a dancing girl) dominated the court. [4,5,6]

Farrukh Siyar (c. 1713 – 1719 CE)

Farrukh Siyar defeated his brother Jahandar Shah at Agra in c. 1713 CE.

- He ascended the throne with the support of the Saiyyad brothers (the kingmakers) – Saiyyad Abdullah Khan (Wazir) and Hussain Ali Khan (Mir Bakshi). The Saiyyad brothers killed Zulfiqar Khan and appointed themselves to key positions.
- The Saiyyad brothers tried to make peace with the Marathas, the Jats, the Rajputs and were also successful in suppressing the Sikh revolt. It was during this time that Banda Bahadur, the Sikh leader, was executed.
- In c. 1717 CE, Farrukh Siyar granted many trading privileges to the East India Company and also exempted customs duties for its trading through Bengal.
- The Saiyyad brothers completely did away with jizya and also abolished pilgrimage tax at a number of places.
- Due to the overwhelming powers of the Saiyyad brothers, differences grew between Farrukh Siyar and the Saiyyad brothers. The emperor plotted thrice against the brothers, but failed to overpower them.
- In c. 1719 CE, the Saiyyad brothers forged an alliance with Balaji Vishwanath (Maratha ruler) and with the help of Maratha troops, the Saiyyad brothers killed Farrukh Siyar.

Rafi-us-Darajat (c. 1719 CE)

The Saiyyad brothers placed Rafi-us-Darajat at the throne. In fact, within a short span of eight months three young princes were raised to the throne by the Saiyyad brothers.

- He died within four months due to excessive consumption.
- Grandson of Aurangzeb, Nikusiyar revolted during his reign and occupied the throne at Agra with the support of Mitrasen (a Nagar Brahmin).

Rafi-us-Daula (c. 1719 CE)

Hussain Ali Khan (the Saiyyad brother) marched upon Agra and imprisoned Nikusiyar.

- Rafi-us-Daula was titled as Shah Jahan II.
- He ruled for a very short period and died of consumption (Tuberculosis).

Muhammad Shah (Rangeela)/Roshan Akhtar (c. 1719 – 1748 CE)

Brother of Jahan Shah who was fond of dancing and was himself an expert Kathak dancer.[7,8,9]

- In c. 1720, he successfully dislodged the Saiyyad brothers with the help of Nizam-ul-Mulk, Chin Qilich Khan and his father’s cousin Muhammad Amin Khan. He appointed Muhammad Amir Khan, who killed Hussain Ali Khan, as wazir under the title of Itmad-ud-Daula. However, independent states emerged during his reign, the Deccan under Nizam-ul-Mulk, Awadh under the leadership of Saadat Khan and Murshid Quli Khan reigned Bihar, Bengal and Orissa.
- The weakness of the Mughal empire was exposed when Nadir Shah invaded India, imprisoned the Mughal emperor and looted Delhi in c. 1739 CE.

Invasion of Nadir Shah (c. 1739 CE)

Nadir Shah was the Emperor of Iran. He was a national hero there who drove the Afghans out of Iran.

Reasons for invasion:

- When Nadir Shah came to power in c. 1736 CE, Muhammad Shah Rangeela withdrew his ambassador from the Persian court and snapped all diplomatic ties with that country. Nadir Shah sent three envoys to the Mughal court and his third envoy was detained by Rangeela which enraged him.
- When Nadir Shah invaded Afghanistan, some of the Afghan nobles took shelter under Rangeela.
- Also, Saadat Khan and Nizam-ul-Mulk invited Nadir Shah to invade India.

Course of invasion:

- He captured Jalalabad, Peshawar (c. 1738 CE) and then Lahore in c. 1739.
- Battle of Karnal (c. 1739 CE)
 - Upon hearing of the advancing Persian army, Muhammad Shah marched his forces out of Delhi in order to meet the invading army and prevent their entry into his capital.
 - The two forces met at Karnal for battle (about 120 km north of Delhi). The Persian soldiers wreaked havoc on the Mughal army.
 - Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah surrendered and he had to take Nadir Shah to his capital. The entire treasury was looted and the soldiers indulged in a gruesome massacre of the general population including women and children at Delhi.
 - The sack of Delhi lasted for several days, after which Nadir Shah asked his men to cease. In May c. 1739 CE, Nadir Shah and his troops left the city.
 - Muhammad Shah was retained as the emperor of the Mughal empire but was compelled to cede to him all the provinces of the empire falling west of the river Indus.
 - Nadir Shah almost emptied the treasury and also took away the famous Kohinoor and the Peacock throne.
 - Nadir Shah's invasion caused an irreparable loss of prestige and exposed the weaknesses of the empire to the Maratha Sardars and the foreign trading companies as well.
 - Read more about the Battle of Karnal in This Day in History dated Feb 24.[10,11,12]

Ahmad Shah (c. 1748 – 1757 CE)

Son of Muhammad Shah Rangeela and Kudsia Begum (a dancing girl).

- Ahmad Shah Abdali (ruler of Afghanistan) invaded Delhi many times, and Punjab along with Multan was ceded to him.
- The Marathas snatched Malwa and Bundelkhand.
- His wazir, Imad-ul-Mulk, blinded him and imprisoned him at Salimgarh.

Alamgir II (c. 1754 – 1759 CE)

He was the second son of Jahandar Shah and was raised to the throne by Imad-ul-Mulk after he deposed Ahmad Shah.

- Had to face repeated invasions of Ahmad Shah Abdali.
- The famous Battle of Plassey (23 June c. 1757 CE) was fought during his tenure. The Battle of Plassey helped the British East India Company to seize control of Bengal.
- He was also murdered by his wazir, Imad-ul-Mulk.

Ali Gauhar/Shah Alam II (c. 1759 – 1806 CE)

During his reign, the Mughal power was so depleted that it led to a saying in Persian “Sultanat-e-Shah Alam, Az Dili ta Palam”, meaning “The kingdom of Shah Alam is from Delhi to Palam,” Palam being a suburb of Delhi.

- Due to his conflict with the wazir, he fled to Awadh (c. 1761 – 1764 CE). He returned to Delhi when Marathas re-established their hold and invited him to the capital.
- The third Battle of Panipat (c. 1761 CE) was fought during his reign between the Marathas and Ahmad Shah Abdali.
- The Battle of Buxar was fought in c. 1764 CE between the forces under the command of the British East India Company, led by Hector Munro and the combined armies of Mir Qasim (Nawab of Bengal), Shuja-ud-Daula (Nawab of Awadh) and the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II. The war was brought to an end by the Treaty of Allahabad (c. 1765 CE) under which Diwani rights (right to collect land revenue) of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa were granted to the British East India Company.
- He was the first Mughal ruler who became an East India Company pensioner.

Akbar II (c. 1806 – 1837 CE)

He was the son of Shah Alam II and remained only under British protection as in c. 1803 CE, the British had captured Delhi.

- He conferred the title of “Raja” on Ram Mohan Roy.
- He was a great poet and is credited with the introduction of the Hindu-Muslim unity festival Phool Walon Ki Sair.[13,14,15]

Bahadur Shah II/Zafar (c. 1837 – 1857 CE)

He was the last ruler of the Mughal Empire. He was an accomplished poet and his pen name was Zafar (victory).

- He participated in the revolt of c. 1857 CE. After the revolt was suppressed, he was deported to Rangoon (Burma) where he died in c. 1862 CE.

Decline of Mughal Empire

The decline and downfall of the empire was due to economic, social, political and institutional factors:

1. Orthodox rule of Aurangzeb – The religious and Deccan policies of Aurangzeb contributed to the empire’s decline. The attempt to extend the Mughal administration over Golconda, Bijapur and Karnataka stretched the Mughal administration to a breaking point. It also laid Mughal lines of communication open to Maratha attacks so much so, that the Mughal nobles in the area found it impossible to collect their dues from the jagirs assigned to them and sometimes made private pacts with the Marathas. His failure to respect the susceptibilities of his non-Muslim subjects on many occasions, his enunciation of a policy that led to the destruction of many temples and re-imposition of jizya alienated the Hindus and strengthened the hands of the section which were opposed to the Mughal Empire for political or other reasons.
 1. It is said that by the time Aurangzeb came to the throne, the socio-economic forces of disintegration were already strong. Aurangzeb lacked the foresight and statesmanship to effect fundamental changes in the socio-political structure, or to pursue policies that could, for the time being, reconcile the various competing elements. Thus, Aurangzeb was both a victim of circumstances and also helped to create the circumstances of which he became a victim.
2. Weak Successors – The successors of Aurangzeb were weak and were not able to hold the administration effectively. Most of them were puppets in the hands of powerful nobles. The war of succession that plagued Delhi from c.1707 – 1719 CE gradually weakened the empire.
3. Role of nobility – After the death of Aurangzeb, the nobility assumed a lot of powers and the course of politics and state activities were guided by their individual interests. The Mughal court consisted of four groups of nobles – the Turanis, the Iranis, the Afghans and the Indian born Muslims. These groups constantly fought with each other for more power, jagirs and high offices which eventually led to the weakening of the empire.[16,17,18]

4. Lack of strong finances and foreign invasions – Due to the emergence of many autonomous states, the revenue resources got depleted and the continuous wars further emptied the treasury. Also, the foreign invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali took a heavy toll on the imperial treasury.
5. Ineffective Mughal army and neglect of naval power – The Mughal army gradually became inefficient and demotivated after losing several battles. The neglect of naval power by the Mughals also cost them dearly.
6. The advent of the British – The emergence of British and other European colonial powers and their arrival to India was the last nail in the coffin of any hope of survival of the Mughal empire. The western colonial powers were militarily and financially superior and politically informed of the Indian conditions.

Rise of Regional Powers and States

The decline of the Mughal authority gave rise to the emergence of a number of independent kingdoms. The later Mughal rulers were not in a position to militarily enforce its regulations in all parts of the empires; as a result, many provincial governors started to assert their authority. In due course of time, they gained independent status. At the same time, many kingdoms which were subjugated by the Mughals also claimed their independence. Some new regional groups also consolidated and emerged as political powers. The states that arose in India during the decline of the Mughal empire and the following century (between c. 1700 – 1850 CE) varied greatly in terms of resources, longevity and essential character. Some of them – such as Hyderabad had been in a region where there had been an older regional tradition of provincial states in the immediate pre-Mughal period too, whereas many of the other post-Mughal states were based on either ethnic or sectarian groupings – the Marathas, the Jats and the Sikhs.

The regional states that emerged during this period can be divided into three categories-

1. States formed by former Mughal nobles – The founders of these states were important and influential high mansab Mughal nobles. They established some of the formidable provincial kingdoms on the basis of their growing strength and administrative ability. Though they had declared independence from the Mughal rule, they never broke ties with the Mughal state. The prominent states that belonged to this category were Bengal (founder – Murshid Quli Khan), Awadh (founder – Saadat Khan) and Hyderabad (founder – Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah). The founders of these states were either former governors of these provinces or powerful members of the Mughal nobility.
2. Watan Jagirs – The second category of regional states that emerged in the 18th century had served very well under the Mughals and as a result were allowed to enjoy considerable autonomy in their watan jagirs such as the Rajput states.
3. Rebellion states – The states that had emerged after rebelling against the Mughal authority belonged to this category. The Sikhs, the Jats and the Marathas belonged to this group, and among them, the Marathas over the course of time emerged as a formidable power.

II. DISCUSSION

Role of East India Company and Political, Socio-economic & military factors in Decline of Mughals[19]

The decline of the Mughal Empire has been a topic of historical debate, with two main perspectives: the Mughal-centric view focusing on internal factors and the region-related view emphasising external turmoil. While the disintegration began during Aurangzeb's reign, it gained momentum after he died in 1707. Challenges to Mughal authority from various factions were present, but no one could achieve complete independence. The subsequent weak and inept rulers further accelerated the empire's collapse.

After Aurangzeb's death, the succession of incapable rulers weakened the Mughal Empire's foundation. Internal issues, such as administrative corruption and infighting among nobles, eroded the centralised authority. Simultaneously, external factors, like regional turmoil and instability, added to the empire's challenges. The failure to address these issues and govern effectively led to the empire's eventual collapse. Had capable rulers followed Aurangzeb, the empire's decline might have been avoided or significantly delayed.

Political factors leading to the decline of Mughals

The political weaknesses encompassed succession issues, regional disintegration and weak rulers. These factors collectively contributed to the erosion of the empire's power and paved the way for its eventual downfall.

Succession issues

- Lack of rule of succession: Unlike primogeniture, the Mughal succession was often influenced by factors such as the preferences of the ruling emperor, the support of influential courtiers, and the power dynamics within the imperial family.
 - This ambiguity and lack of a clear succession mechanism led to disputes and conflicts over the rightful heir to the throne.
- Fratricidal wars: Succession disputes in the Mughal Empire frequently resulted in fratricidal wars, where brothers fought against each other to claim the throne.
 - Following the death of emperor Aurangzeb in 1707, a war of succession erupted among his sons to claim the throne.
- Court factions: The influential nobles and court factions often played a significant role in shaping the outcome of succession disputes. They viewed power and sought to influence the selection of the next emperor based on their personal interests and ambitions.
 - Two prominent court factions, led by the sons of Shah Jahan, Dara Shikoh and Aurangzeb, vied for control and sought to secure their positions as the next emperor.
- Weak central authority: The lack of a clear succession mechanism and the resulting power struggles weakened the central authority of the Mughal Empire.

Regional disintegration

- Regional governors: The Mughal Empire relied on regional governors known as Subahdars to administer and govern different provinces. Gradually they aspired to establish their own kingdoms as the central authority was declining.
 - For example, the Marathas, led by influential leaders like Shivaji and his successors, carved out their kingdom in western India and challenged Mughal authority.
- Regional rebellions: The Deccan Sultanates in the southern region of the empire, such as Bijapur, Golconda, and Ahmadnagar, declared their independence and fought against Mughal forces.
- Regional centres: The weakening of the central authority allowed local rulers and aristocratic families to consolidate power in their respective regions.
 - The rise of the Rajput states, such as Mewar, Marwar, and Amber, as powerful regional entities illustrates this trend. [18,19,20]

Weak and inefficient rulers after Aurangzeb

Several emperors lacked the qualities and skills required for effective governance, weakening the empire's administration and ability to respond to challenges.

- Lack of leadership and vision: Emperor Farrukhsiyar (1713-1719 AD) was known for his indecisiveness and inability to control the power of the nobles.
 - His reign witnessed increased political corruption, court intrigues, and the erosion of central authority.
- Corruption and favouritism: Incapable rulers often succumbed to corruption and nepotism, favouring their loyal courtiers and family members over competent and qualified individuals.
 - Emperor Muhammad Shah (1719-1748 AD) was known for his indulgence in a luxurious lifestyle and his lack of interest in the affairs of the state.
- Ineffectiveness in military matters: Emperor Alamgir II (1754-1759 AD) faced numerous military challenges during his brief reign but proved ineffective in countering them.
 - He failed to address the rising power of regional kingdoms like the Marathas and provide strong leadership to the Mughal army.

Economic factors leading to the decline of Mughals

Several economic factors played a significant role in the decline of the Mughal Empire. These factors include the decline in agricultural productivity, excessive taxation, and the emergence of European trading powers.

The Decline of Trade and Commerce

The Mughal Empire, once a thriving hub of trade and commercial activity, witnessed a gradual deterioration of its trade networks and a decline in economic prosperity.

- **Depletion of Treasury:** The continuous wars and extravagant lifestyle of the Mughal court depleted the empire's treasury, leading to financial instability and inability to maintain a strong military and administrative apparatus.
- **Loss of Control over Trade Routes:** Initially, the Mughal Empire boasted a robust trade network that connected various regions, facilitating extensive international trade with neighbouring countries and distant territories.
 - However, over time, the empire lost control over crucial trade routes due to internal strife and external invasions, resulting in disruptions and hindrances to the flow of goods and commodities.
- **Impact of European Trading Companies:** These European powers established fortified trading posts and gradually gained control over key coastal regions, bypassing traditional Mughal trade routes and diverting lucrative trade opportunities to their own territories.
- **Decline in Manufacturing and Crafts:** The Mughal Empire boasted a rich tradition of manufacturing and crafts, producing highly sought-after goods like textiles, carpets, metalwork, and ceramics.
 - However, as the empire weakened, so did its ability to sustain and support these industries.
- **Agrarian Crisis:** Mismanagement of agricultural resources, heavy taxation, and frequent wars led to a decline in agricultural productivity.
 - This crisis not only reduced the availability of food and essential commodities but also disrupted the rural economy and weakened the overall economic foundation of the empire.
- **Monetary Issues:** Devaluation and inflation eroded the value of the empire's currency, making trade transactions more complicated and uncertain. This monetary instability had adverse effects on trade and commerce, discouraging merchants and traders from engaging in commercial activities.

High taxation burden

The empire heavily relied on revenue from land taxation, known as the Zabt system, which placed a substantial burden on the peasantry and various economic sectors.[15,16,17]

- **The strain on the peasantry:** The Mughal Empire's taxation policies placed a disproportionate burden on the peasantry, who constituted the majority of the population. Peasants were subject to high land taxes, often exceeding their agricultural capacity.
- **Agricultural productivity:** Excessive taxes compelled farmers to focus on meeting tax obligations rather than investing in agricultural improvements or diversifying their crops, leading to a reduction in production and productivity.
- **Tax farmers and corruption:** The Mughal Empire relied on tax farmers or revenue collectors known as zamindars to collect taxes from the population. However, the system of tax farming often led to corruption and abuse.
- **Artisanal industry:** Artisans, such as weavers, metalworkers, and artisans, faced high taxes on their tools, raw materials, and finished products. This industry witnessed a decline under the tax burden.

III. RESULTS

Social and cultural factors leading to the decline of Mughals

The decline of the Mughal Empire was not solely attributed to political and economic factors. Social and cultural issues also played a role in the empire's decline.

Religious and communal divisions

- **Aurangzeb's policies:** Emperor Aurangzeb's policies profoundly impacted religious and communal relations within the empire.

- Unlike his predecessors, Aurangzeb adopted a more orthodox interpretation of Islam and implemented measures favouring Muslims while suppressing other religious communities.
- Hindu-Muslim relations: The policies of Aurangzeb, along with the perceived favouritism towards Muslims, resulted in heightened Hindu-Muslim tensions, at least among the ruling class.
 - Hindu resistance movements, such as the Marathas and Rajputs, emerged to challenge Mughal authority and protect their religious and cultural identity.
- Sikh resistance: The rise of Sikhism in the Punjab region presented a unique challenge to the Mughal Empire. Sikh gurus and their followers faced persecution under Aurangzeb's religious policies, leading to the militarisation of the Sikh community.

The influx of foreign influences

- European trading companies: European trading companies, such as the British East India Company, Dutch East India Company, and French East India Company, established a strong presence in India during the decline of the Mughal Empire.
 - These companies sought to exploit India's wealth and resources, leading to the establishment of trade settlements, forts, and factories along the coastal regions.
- Power imbalance: The arrival of European powers brought with them advanced military technologies and tactics that outmatched the traditional Mughal military forces.
 - The Mughal Empire's army, which had once been formidable, struggled to keep pace with the modernised European armies.

Military factors leading to the decline of Mughals

The Mughal Empire faced several military challenges during its decline, significantly contributing to its weakening and eventual downfall.

Rise of the Maratha Confederacy [18]

The Marathas' military campaigns, territorial expansion, and political manoeuvres weakened the already declining Mughal authority and hastened the empire's demise.

- Territorial losses: Through their military campaigns and conquests, the Marathas gradually captured territories that were previously under Mughal control.
 - They expanded their influence across western and central India, establishing their own regional power.
- Drain on resources: As the Marathas gained control over key regions, they imposed taxes and collected revenues from these territories.
 - This reduced the revenue available to the Mughal Empire, as they lost control over prosperous regions that were now under the Maratha administration.
- Military pressure: The Marathas posed a direct military threat to the Mughals. The Mughal Empire had to divert its military forces and resources to counter the Maratha advancements and defend against their attacks.

The threat of Afghan and Persian invaders

- Invasion of Nadir Shah: His invasion culminated in the sack of Delhi, a devastating event known as the Battle of Karnal. Nadir Shah's forces plundered the city, looting its wealth and treasures, including the famous Peacock Throne.
- Invasion of Ahmedshah Abdali: He continuously harassed the Mughals, who tried to buy peace in 1751-52 by ceding Punjab to him. In 1757, Abdali captured Delhi and left behind an Afghan caretaker to watch over the Mughal emperor.

Lack of technological developments in the military

The Mughal Empire faced challenges from external powers that possessed superior military technology.



- Enemies possessed advanced technology: The invaders, such as the Afghan and Persian forces, utilised advanced firearms and artillery, giving them a significant advantage over the Mughals.
- Mughals not kept pace: The Mughals, on the other hand, did not keep pace with advancements in military technology, relying heavily on traditional warfare methods.
- Disparity: This technological disparity weakened the Mughal military and made it difficult for them to defend their territories effectively.

IV. CONCLUSION

Role of East India Company in the decline of Mughals

The East India Company played a significant role in the fall of the Mughal Empire. Initially arriving in India as a trading entity, the company gradually expanded its influence and power, eventually leading to the downfall of the Mughals.[19]

- Political manipulation: The East India Company skillfully exploited the political divisions and instability within the Mughal Empire.
 - They formed alliances with disaffected regional powers and played them against each other, weakening the central authority of the Mughal emperors.
- Economic exploitation: Through unfair trade practices, imposition of high tariffs, and monopolistic policies, the company systematically undermined the indigenous industries and artisans, leading to a decline in Mughal economic power.
- Military supremacy: The East India Company had a superior military organisation and weaponry than the Mughals. The Battle of Buxar (1764) was a significant turning point that showcased the military superiority of the East India Company over the Mughal Empire.
- Annexation of provinces: The East India Company gradually annexed Mughal provinces and territories through a series of wars and diplomatic manoeuvres.
- Financial drain: The Mughal emperors increasingly became dependent on financial assistance from the East India Company, which hastened the submission of the Mughals to the Company.
- The capture of Delhi: In 1803, the East India Company captured Delhi, the Mughal capital, and deposed the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II.[20]

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12. ^ Stein, Burton (2010), *A History of India*, John Wiley & Sons, pp. 159–, ISBN 978-1-4443-2351-1, archived from the original on 22 September 2022, retrieved 15 July 2019 Quote: "The realm so defined and governed was a vast territory of some 750,000 square miles [1,900,000 km²], ranging from the frontier with Central Asia in northern Afghanistan to the northern uplands of the Deccan plateau, and from the Indus basin on the west to the Assamese highlands in the east."
13. ^ Gilbert, Marc Jason (2017), *South Asia in World History*, Oxford University Press, p. 62, ISBN 978-0-19-066137-3, retrieved 15 July 2019 Quote: "Babur then adroitly gave the Ottomans his promise not to attack them in return for their military aid, which he received in the form of the newest of battlefield inventions, the matchlock gun and cast cannons, as well as instructors to train his men to use them."
14. ^ Stein, Burton (2010), *A History of India*, John Wiley & Sons, pp. 159–, ISBN 978-1-4443-2351-1, archived from the original on 22 September 2022, retrieved 15 July 2019 Quote: "Another possible date for the beginning of the Mughal regime was 1600 when the institutions that defined the regime were set firmly in place and when the heartland of the empire was defined; both of these were the accomplishment of Babur's grandson Akbar."
15. ^ Stein, Burton (2010), *A History of India*, John Wiley & Sons, pp. 159–, ISBN 978-1-4443-2351-1, archived from the original on 22 September 2022, retrieved 15 July 2019 Quote: "The imperial career of the Mughal house is conventionally reckoned to have ended in 1707 when the emperor Aurangzeb, a fifth-generation descendant of Babur, died. His fifty-year reign began in 1658 with the Mughal state seeming as strong as ever or even stronger. But in Aurangzeb's later years the state was brought to the brink of destruction, over which it toppled within a decade and a half after his death; by 1720 imperial Mughal rule was largely finished and an epoch of two imperial centuries had closed."
16. ^ Richards, John F. (1995), *The Mughal Empire*, Cambridge University Press, p. xv, ISBN 978-0-521-56603-2, archived from the original on 22 September 2022, retrieved 1 July 2019 Quote: "By the latter date (1720) the essential structure of the centralized state was disintegrated beyond repair."
17. ^ Stein, Burton (2010), *A History of India*, John Wiley & Sons, pp. 159–, ISBN 978-1-4443-2351-1, archived from the original on 22 September 2022, retrieved 15 July 2019 Quote: "The vaunting of such progenitors pointed up the central character of the Mughal regime as a warrior state: it was born in war and it was sustained by war until the eighteenth century, when warfare destroyed it."
18. ^ Robb, Peter (2011), *A History of India*, Macmillan, pp. 108–, ISBN 978-0-230-34549-2 Quote: "The Mughal state was geared for war, and succeeded while it won its battles. It controlled territory partly through its network of strongholds, from its fortified capitals in Agra, Delhi or Lahore, which defined its heartlands, to the converted and expanded forts of Rajasthan and the Deccan. The emperor's will was frequently enforced in battle. Hundreds of army scouts were an important source of information. But the empire's administrative structure too was defined by and directed at war. Local military checkpoints or thanas kept order. Directly appointed imperial military and civil commanders (faujdar) controlled the cavalry and infantry, or the administration, in each region. The peasantry in turn were often armed, able to provide supporters for regional powers, and liable to rebellion on their account: continual pacification was required of the rulers."
19. ^ Gilbert, Marc Jason (2017), *South Asia in World History*, Oxford University Press, pp. 75–, ISBN 978-0-19-066137-3, archived from the original on 22 September 2022, retrieved 15 July 2019 Quote: "With Safavid and Ottoman aid, the Mughals would soon join these two powers in a triumvirate of warrior-driven, expansionist, and both militarily and bureaucratically efficient early modern states, now often called "gunpowder empires" due to their common proficiency in using such weapons to conquer lands they sought to control."
20. ^ Asher, Catherine B.; Talbot, Cynthia (2006), *India Before Europe*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 115–, ISBN 978-0-521-80904-7, archived from the original on 22 September 2022, retrieved 15 July 2019



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