

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19659380>

The causes of Decline of Mughal rule in India

Aisha Bibi	Ph.D Scholar at Pakistan Study Centre University of Peshawar, madamaisha17@gmail.com
Uzma Rahman	M.Phil, Physical Education, Hazara University, Mansehra, Lecturer at Government Girls Degree College, Kernal Sher Khan, Swabi, uzmarahman2015@gmail.com
Saima Rahman	M.Phil Physical Education & Sports from Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, Assistant Professor at Government Girls Degree College, Rustam, Mardan, Saimarahmanhpe@gmail.com
Sana Rahman	M.Phil, Physical Education, Hazara University, Mansehra. Subject Specialist (SS) at Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Rustam Khel, Mardan, Sanahpe1990@gmail.com

Abstract: *This paper investigates the multifaceted causes behind the collapse of the Mughal Empire, examining internal and external factors that contributed to its downfall. The Mughal Empire, once a powerful and prosperous empire in South Asia, but gradually started its decline over several decades during the 17th and 18th centuries. These factors include political instability, administrative inefficiency, military challenges, economic decline, and the impact of European colonialism. The study draws upon historical records, scholarly analyses, and primary sources to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex process that led to the eventual disintegration of the Mughal Empire. The Mughal Empire, which ruled much of South Asia for over 300 years, began to decline in the early 18th century, culminating in its eventual disintegration in the mid-19th century. This paper explores the multifactorial causes of the Mughal Empire's decline, examining both internal and external factors that led to its fall. Key causes include weak political leadership, military defeats, economic mismanagement, administrative inefficiencies, and the growing influence of European colonial powers. The study also highlights the role of internal rebellion and the fragmentation of the empire into regional powers. By exploring these causes, the paper offers insights into the complex dynamics that led to the end of Mughal rule and the eventual rise of British colonial dominance in India. This paper seeks to explore these various causes in greater depth, providing a comprehensive understanding of how the Mughal Empire, once one of the most prosperous and powerful empires in the world, gradually crumbled.*

Keywords: Mughal Empire, Decline, Political Instability, Economic Decline, European Colonialism, Military Challenges.

Introduction

The Mughal Empire, founded by Babur in 1526 when he defeated Ibrahim Lodhi in the first Battle of Panipat, and he got the Mughal empire which was one of the largest and most influential empires in Indian history. The first six Mughal emperors from Babur to Aurangzeb are called as “The Great Mughal”. While those who came after emperor Aurangzeb are called “The Later Mughals”. The Mughals of the later era were weak and useless. Especially after Aurangzeb's death, they declined

because their successors were weak and incapable, and they always fought for power and the kingdom. They also liked to pump and show. The rulers, such as Rangila and Muhammad Shah, preferred to sing and dance rather than focus on other state matters. Following the advice of a dancing girl named Kumari, Jahandar Shah came to power. As his contemporary writer Khafi Khan wrote about his kingdom “In the brief reign of Jahandar, violence had full sway. It was a fine and suitable time for minstrels and singers and all the dancers and actors”. Beginning with Babur's ascension to the throne in 1526 A.D, the Great Mughal era came to an end in 1707 A.D. with Aurangzeb's passing. The passing of Aurangzeb signaled the end of a chapter in Indian history. The Mughal Empire, however, fell apart within half a century of his death. Degeneration was clear in the systems and institutions that were part of their administrative policies and cultural identity. Aurangzeb's weak successors were unable to stop the general rot that had started to develop during his rule, and the ongoing succession conflict simply made matters worse. In addition, the lack of capable leaders undermined the Mughal army; unlike Akbar, no new technologies or military reforms were implemented. It was evident from the political climate in Northern India that the Mughal Empire's heyday was coming to an end. The decline and dissolution of the powerful Mughal Empire can be attributed to several factors, according to historians.

At its zenith, the empire controlled vast territories, stretching from present-day Afghanistan to Bengal and down to the Deccan Plateau. The Mughals were known for their administrative efficiency, cultural achievements, and military prowess. However, by the early 18th century, the empire began to face a series of challenges that ultimately led to its decline. The causes of the Mughal Empire's decline are complex and multifactorial, involving political, economic, social, military, and external factors. The Mughal Empire, founded by Babur in 1526, stood as one of the largest and most powerful empires in South Asia, reaching its peak in the 17th century under rulers such as Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan. However, by the early 18th century, the empire began to experience a steady decline. After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, a series of weak and ineffective rulers failed to maintain the strength and unity of the empire. Over the next several decades, the Mughal Empire faced a combination of internal turmoil, economic challenges, military setbacks, and the rise of regional powers, which ultimately led to its collapse by the mid-19th century.

The decline of the Mughal Empire is a subject of extensive debate among historians, with various scholars attributing its downfall to a combination of factors. These include administrative inefficiency, economic strain, military defeats, the decentralization of power, and external pressures from emerging European colonial powers, particularly the British and the French.

Research Methods

Research methodology is based on secondary sources i.e., books, magazines, library, articles, MPhil and Ph.D. thesis newspaper, journal, internet to complete the research paper.

Vastness of the Empire

Since Emperor Jalal-ud-din Akbar's reign, the Mughal Empire has expanded after Aurangzeb's southern region was conquered. From Kabul to Chittagong and from Kashmir to Kaveri, it encompassed nearly the entirety of India. In the years following Aurangzeb's passing, the Mughal empire had grown significantly. The empire was so large after the Deccan was annexed that it was nearly impossible to manage the government. Communication was challenging due to the vast distances. Thus, the empire started to collapse under its own weight. To manage a kingdom's affairs, Mughal princes lacked the necessary skills. As a result, the empire, which was once a representation of grandeur and glory, could not be sustained.

Reasons for the Mughal Empire's weak successors' decline

No law of succession, such as the law of primogeniture, was observed by the Mughals. Consequently, a struggle for the throne between the brothers began every time a ruler passed away. Particularly after

Aurangzeb, this made the Mughal Empire weaker. The nobles bolstered their own power by supporting one candidate over another. Because they were weak, Aurangzeb's successors fell prey to the plots and intrigues of the faction-ridden nobles. They could not put down uprisings and were ineffective generals. The Mughal Empire was weakened by the lack of a strong leader, an effective administrative system, and a strong military.

Decline of the Mughal Nobility

Bairam Khan, Munim Khan, Muzaffar Khan, Abdur Rahim Khan Khana, Itimad Uda Daulah, Mohabbat Khan, Asaf Khan, and Saadallah Khan wrote the history of India during the Akbar, Jahangir, and Shahjahan eras. However, the later Mughal emperors' deteriorating character also affected the nobilities. The foreign Muslims' wealth and leisure in India encouraged luxury and sloth, and the large number of women in their harems encouraged debauchery, which in turn damaged the nobility's moral fiber and spirit of adventure. In turn, the ruling classes became physically, morally, and intellectually degenerate.

Aurangzeb's Religious Persecution of Hindus

Aurangzeb was unaware that the people's voluntary cooperation was essential to the Mughal Empire's size. He lost the backing of Rajput's, who had made significant contributions to the empire's power. Although they had been a source of support, Aurangzeb's policy made them enemies. The resources of the Mughal Empire had been depleted by the wars with the Sikhs, Marathas, Jat's, and Rajput's. By showing religious tolerance and providing opportunities for talent regardless of caste, race, or creed, Akbar had gained the favor of the Hindus. As trustworthy guardians of his throne, he had recruited Hindu warrior tribes, primarily the Rajput. The Mughal banner had been carried to the farthest reaches of the Indian subcontinent and into the center of Central Asia by the Rajput's, who were his immediate successors. The gaddi of Marwar's heir was converted to Islam by Aurangzeb, who also mistrusted the Rajput's and reimposed the despised jizyah on the Hindus. The Rajput's were therefore estranged and resolved to oppose the Mughal tyrant. The Sisodia's and Rathors essentially remained in rebellion until the fall of the empire. The Bundel, as well as the Sikhs, followed their lead.

Demoralization of the Mughal Army

Since the Mughal army was weak and flawed by birth and composition, demoralization of the army was another significant factor in the fall of the Mughal Empire. It was primarily made up of contingents that were enlisted and kept up by nobles and high officials who were given money from a sizable portion of the nation to support them. As a result, the soldier viewed his Mansabdar as his chief rather than his officer. Individual soldiers, who were paid by their commander or Mansabdar rather than directly from the royal treasury, had no contact with the emperor. During the rule of Aurangzeb and his successors, the fundamental flaws in this radical and sound system work were made worse.

The great nobles or officers of the empire started to turn the post they held for maintaining troops into their inherited property as the later Mughal emperors' authority waned. Because of this, the emperor was unable to establish his power with a sizable personal army. Furthermore, the Mansabdars were so envious of one another due to the imperial authority's weakness that a commander would frequently purposefully avoid giving credit for a successful siege or battle to another officer if he believed that another officer would share it. The last quarter of the 17th century saw the Mughal officers develop the habit of engaging in shady correspondence with the enemy. They couldn't because the emperor and the Mir Bakshi themselves lacked the necessary skills and moral fortitude. Because they were incompetent and lacked moral integrity, the emperor and the Mir Bakshi were unable to maintain order in the army, which had been reduced to a well-armed gang. Even Aurangzeb failed to notice military crimes, and regular penalties for lack of duty were not applied. Consequently, the army that had transported the Mughal banners to the most remote regions of the nation, as well as to the Oxus and Helmand rivers in Central Asia, lost its ability to defend and launch offensives.

Economic Bankruptcy

The treasury had been exhausted by Shah Jahan's construction fervor. The protracted conflict in the south between Aurangzeb and Shah Jahan had also further depleted the exchequer. They raised the state's demand to half of the soil's produce, and production decreased proportionately as the demand for revenue increased. The farmers were forced to continue cultivating even though they started to abandon their fields. During the reigns of Aurangzeb and his successors, who had to wage numerous wars to seize and hold the throne, bankruptcy started to loom large over the Mughal government. During the reign of Alamgir II (1754–1759), the economy collapsed, and the dishonest Wazir Imad-ul-Mulk usurped the royal privy purse estate's earnings. A month and a half after his accession, Alamgir II was forced to walk from the harem to the fort's stone mosque because he lacked the necessary convenience to ride in procession to the Eidgah. It is astonishing that the insolvent Mughal regime continued to exist for an additional half-century.

Economic Mismanagement

The economic stability of the Mughal Empire was deeply tied to agricultural production and trade. However, by the 18th century, the empire faced several economic challenges that contributed to its decline. Which are as below:

Heavy Taxation: Aurangzeb's prolonged wars, particularly the Deccan campaigns, drained the empire's resources. To finance these wars, Aurangzeb imposed heavy taxes on the peasants and farmers, which led to widespread economic hardship. This burden on the agricultural sector weakened the economic foundation of the empire.

Decline in Trade: The Mughal Empire had once been a major center for trade, both within India and internationally. However, by the 18th century, internal trade routes were disrupted due to political instability, and the rise of European colonial powers (particularly the British and the French) undermined the empire's commercial dominance. The empire's inability to control maritime trade routes further exacerbated its economic decline.

Inflation and Debasement of Currency: The Mughal economy suffered from inflation, partly due to the debasement of currency under later rulers. The weakening of the imperial treasury led to a lack of funds for maintaining the military, infrastructure, and administration, further diminishing the empire's capacity to govern effectively.

Financial Strain from Military Campaigns

The Mughal Empire's military expenditures, especially under Aurangzeb, placed a severe strain on the imperial treasury. Aurangzeb's continuous wars in the Deccan, including the protracted struggle against the Marathas, drained the empire's resources. The Mughal military was one of the largest in the world, and maintaining such a force required a significant financial outlay. By the time of Aurangzeb's death, the empire's financial resources were exhausted, and the Mughal state faced serious economic difficulties.

Agricultural Decline and Over-Taxation

Agriculture was the backbone of the Mughal economy, and the empire relied heavily on the revenue generated from land taxes. However, the economic situation worsened as the empire's over-taxation of the peasantry led to widespread discontent. High taxes, coupled with frequent famines and natural disasters, severely impacted agricultural productivity. The lack of investment in irrigation and infrastructure further exacerbated the situation.

Decline in Trade and Commerce

The Mughal Empire had once been a key player in international trade, but by the 18th century, it began to lose its dominance. The rise of European colonial powers, particularly the British and the Dutch,

shifted the center of global trade towards Europe. The Mughal Empire's inability to maintain control over trade routes and its failure to adapt to changing global economic conditions led to a decline in its commercial power.

Empire Size and Threat from Regional Powers

The Mughal Empire had grown too big for any one ruler from Delhi to control. The later Mughals were bad administrators, but the Great Mughals were effective and had command over the army and ministers. The far-off provinces consequently gained their independence. The Mughal Empire fell apart as independent states gained power.

Aurangzeb's Deccan Policy

This policy significantly contributed to the fall of his dynasty by destroying the finest soldiers and irreparably damaging the Mughal prestige. He fought a protracted, never-ending war of extermination against the Marathas and destroyed the Shia kingdoms of Bijapur and Golconda. The resilient Marathas were forced to defend themselves, and when they were successful, they were urged to launch an offensive, cross the Narmada, and invade the northern Indian Mughal provinces. Aurangzeb's policy of religious persecution had already alienated the Hindus in Northern India, and the Mughal cause was secretly opposed by the Hindu officers and vassals of the empire.

The Marathas have an opportunity as a result. When Bajirao boldly carried out his policy of striking at the withering trunk of the Mughal Empire, they catered to the common sentiments of Rajputs and Hindus who had secretly allied themselves with him in the hope that the independent provincial Muslim dynasty would fall to them after the fall of the Mughal Empire. As a result, his successor had to fight the Sikhs, Jats, Bundelas, Rathores, Kachhwahas, and Sisodias within thirty-one years of Aurangzeb's passing, and no Hindu tribe of military importance remained on their side. Too many provincial governors became independent because of the emperor's protracted absence from Northern India, and some areas even experienced unrest. A major factor in the fall of the Mughal Empire was Aurangzeb's Deccan strategy, which killed the best soldiers and permanently tarnished the Mughal Empire's reputation.

The Jagirdars Crisis

The Mughal emperor was a highly bureaucratized, centralized authority whose vitality depended on the military aristocracy, who were positioned directly beneath him. The aristocracy was accommodated within the Mansabdari system, which was introduced in the late 16th century in civil and military organization by Akbar. A jagir, or landed estate, was given to the Mansabdars who did not receive cash payments in lieu of salary. To pay for his personal expenses and the upkeep allowances for his soldiers and horses, the jagirdars were tasked with collecting the revenue from the jagir, of which one part was to be given to the state. In the final years of Aurangzeb's rule, there was a severe scarcity of *paibaqi* land (land designated to be given as jagirs) due to the large number of jagirdars appointed. The emperor and the aristocracy's functional relationship was disrupted by this decline in the empire's resources, signaling the start of inefficiency in the Mughal administrative structure. This 18th-century economic crisis led to competition between the different ethno-religious groups that made up the aristocracy. The 18th-century "jagirdari crisis" was characterized by an economic situation in which "the available social surplus was insufficient to defray the cost of administration, pay for wars of one type or another, and give the ruling classes a standard of living in keeping with their expectations," according to Satish Chandra. The actual revenue collection in this case was significantly lower than the estimates made, which reduced the jagirdars' anticipated income. The Deccan War was the primary cause of the crises that worsened in the final year of Aurangzeb's rule. Since more Mansabdars were needed, the resulting political unrest made it more challenging to collect taxes. An unhealthy competition to control the fertile jagir resulted from the jagirdari crisis. This exacerbated the factionalism that was already present at the court following Bahadur Shah's death in 1712 A.D as lower-ranking officials now struggled to support

themselves on the meager income they received from the jagirs. After Aurangzeb's death, the Mughal Empire abruptly declined within a few decades due to several different but connected factors. In this way, the heyday of the great Mughals, a glorious chapter in medieval Indian history, came to an end, and numerous autonomous regional Oppression and intolerance Mughal emperors were renowned for integrating the conquered peoples into their military and government and for making amends with them. Mughal emperors, however, grew increasingly authoritarian and intolerable in the last decades of the empire. In addition to being heavily taxed and excluded from the Mughal court, Hindus and other groups were also seen as inferior. Sikh and Hindu temples and schools were destroyed because of religious intolerance. These practices severely undermined the Mughals' authority, divided their kingdom, and stoked popular discontent and rebellion against them.

The Mughal Empire was a highly centralized bureaucracy, with the emperor at the top, whose health rested on the strength of the military elite immediately beneath him. In the late 16th century, Akbar established the Mansabdari civil and military organization system, which allowed for nobility within this framework. Mansabdars who were not paid in cash were instead given a landed estate, or jagirs.

The jagirdars oversaw collecting the money from each jagir; the government was to receive one-third of the money, while the jagirdar himself was to use the remaining two-thirds to cover his personal costs and the maintenance of his troops and horses. However, the way income was distributed, particularly as the Empire's resources were depleting, made the nobility jealous. In this instance, the actual revenue collection was much less than expected, which reduced the jagirdars' expected income. Tax collection was hampered by the political turmoil that followed. The Mughal Empire declined because of the chaos.

Problems with the economy

The Mughal Empire's economy started to deteriorate under Aurangzeb's rule (1658–1707). The farmers were left in poverty because of their high taxes. Meanwhile, the Mughal government's quality steadily declined. Later emperors were not particularly interested in governing or spending money on the military, agriculture, or technology. Fearing that the wealthy might build their own armies, some emperors even discouraged economic prosperity. The empire's downfall was accelerated when local leaders eventually rebelled and proclaimed their independence from the national government.

Losses in Territory

The Mughal Empire ruled over most of Afghanistan and the Indian subcontinent at its height. When Muhammad Shah came to power in 1719, the empire was already starting to disintegrate. The process was accelerated by factional rivalries, dynastic warfare, and the short-lived but disruptive invasion of northern India by the Iranian conqueror Nadir Shah in 1739. The Marathas seized control of nearly all northern India following Muhammad Shah's death in 1748. Mughal dominion was confined to the immediate vicinity of Delhi. In 1803, the British seized this region. The British and its rivals had seized all the Mughal Empire's territory by the middle of the 1800s.

An increase in British influence

When the British East India Company first started out in 1600, its sole focus was on trade with the Mughal Empire. However, the British had more sway over Mughal rulers as the empire waned. The Battle of Plassey (Palashi), fought in 1757, saw British forces defeat French forces and the nawab (ruler) of Bengal. Following that, the East India Company seized political authority over a large portion of the Indian subcontinent. Even though they held onto their thrones, Mughal emperors lacked actual authority. The final Mughal emperor was exiled by the British during the Indian Mutiny of 1857–1859.

External Encroachment

The decline of the Mughal Empire was accelerated by foreign invasions, which also diminished the

Mughals' remaining power. Because of the expeditions of Ahmad Shah Abdali and Nadir Shah, a great deal of wealth was lost. The stability of the empire itself was shaken by these attacks. This had a significant role in the Mughal Empire's downfall.

The Scale of Empires and the Danger Presented by Local Powers

Independent states came into being with the fall of the Mughal Empire. The Mughal Empire was too big for a single Delhi king to continue ruling over. While the subsequent Mughals were ineffective rulers, the Great Mughals ruled over armies and aristocrats. As a result, the remote areas became independent. This played a significant role in the decrease and the downfall of Mughal rule in India.

Political and Administrative Weakness of Mughal Empire

The Decline of Strong Leadership

One of the most significant factors in the decline of the Mughal Empire was the weakening of central authority following the death of Emperor Aurangzeb in 1707. Under his rule, the Mughal Empire had expanded to its greatest territorial extent, but his long reign (1658–1707) was marked by constant military campaigns, particularly in the Deccan, which drained the empire's resources. Moreover, Aurangzeb's authoritarian policies, including his strict enforcement of Islamic orthodoxy, alienated large segments of the population, including non-Muslim communities such as the Rajputs, Marathas, and Sikhs.

Demise of Aurangzeb

After Aurangzeb's death, the empire struggled to find strong leadership. Successive Mughal emperors were weak and ineffective, often more concerned with their own survival than with the administration of the vast empire. The lack of a clear succession system led to internal strife, with sons and courtiers vying for the throne. The absence of strong leadership and central authority led to fragmentation and weakened the empire's ability to respond to internal and external challenges.

Administrative Inefficiency and Corruption

The Mughal administrative system, which had been highly efficient under emperors like Akbar and Shah Jahan, began to deteriorate in the 18th century. The central bureaucracy became increasingly corrupt, and provincial governors (Nawabs) gained more autonomy, often acting independently of the emperor. The inefficiency and corruption within the Mughal administration led to a lack of coordination and control over the empire's vast territories.

As the empire expanded, the Mughal rulers relied heavily on local rulers and military commanders to maintain order in the provinces. However, these regional leaders often pursued their own agendas, which led to the decentralization of power. The decline in the empire's ability to enforce laws and collect taxes effectively led to economic hardship, especially for the peasantry.

Military Defeats and External Threats

The Maratha Challenge

The Marathas, under leaders like Shivaji and later the Peshwas, rose as a significant challenge to Mughal power in the Deccan and western India. The Marathas adopted guerrilla warfare tactics, which were difficult for the Mughal army to counter effectively. By the early 18th century, the Marathas had become a major regional power, and their raids into Mughal territory weakened the empire's military and territorial integrity.

Military Challenges

The Decline of the Mughal Army

The Mughal military, once the most formidable in the world, began to deteriorate during the 17th and

18th centuries. Several factors contributed to this decline:

Weakening of Military Leadership: After Aurangzeb's death, the Mughal military was led by ineffective commanders who failed to maintain the discipline and strength of the army. The lack of strong leadership led to the deterioration of the Mughal military forces.

Maratha Resistance: The Marathas, under leaders like Shivaji and later the Peshwas, posed a significant threat to the Mughal Empire. The Marathas' guerrilla tactics and mobile warfare made it difficult for the Mughal forces to maintain control over vast territories. The Maratha raids into Mughal territories in the Deccan and Gujarat severely weakened Mughal authority in these regions.

Invasions by Foreign Powers: The Mughal Empire also faced repeated invasions from external forces, notably the Persian invasions led by Nadir Shah in 1739 and the Afghan invasions under Ahmad Shah Durrani (also known as Ahmad Shah Abdali). These invasions devastated the Mughal economy, led to the plunder of wealth, and further weakened the Mughal military's ability to defend its territories.

Invasion

The Mughals' remaining power was depleted by foreign invasions, which accelerated their dissolution. More money was lost because of the invasions by Ahmad Shah Abdali and Nadir Shah. The empire's stability was rocked by these invasions.

Invasions by External Forces

The Mughal Empire also faced external threats from Persian and Afghan invaders. The most devastating of these invasions was the invasion of Nadir Shah of Persia in 1739, who sacked Delhi and took vast amounts of wealth, including the famous Peacock Throne. This invasion severely weakened the Mughal Empire's ability to defend its territories.

Additionally, the Afghan ruler Ahmad Shah Durrani (also known as Ahmad Shah Abdali) conducted several invasions of northern India, further depleting the Mughal Empire's resources and weakening its military presence.

The Rise of European Colonial Powers

By the 18th century, European powers, particularly the British East India Company and the French, had established a strong presence in India. The British capitalized on the declining Mughal authority and began to exert increasing control over Indian territories. The defeat of the Mughal-backed Nawab of Bengal at the Battle of Plassey in 1757 marked the beginning of British political domination in India. The Mughal Emperor became a mere figurehead, and the British East India Company gradually took control of large parts of India.

The Rise of Regional Powers

The decline of central authority allowed regional powers to rise and challenge Mughal control. These included:

The Marathas: Once loyal to the Mughal Empire, the Marathas became one of the most powerful forces in India, establishing their own empire in the western and central parts of the subcontinent.

The Rajput: The Rajput, who had long been incorporated into the Mughal military structure, began to assert their independence, particularly in Rajasthan.

The Sikhs: In the Punjab region, the Sikh community grew in power and resisted Mughal rule, particularly under Guru Gobind Singh and later Sikh leaders.

The Jat's: The Jat's in northern India also rebelled against Mughal rule, further weakening the empire's control over its territories.

Political Instability

One of the primary reasons for the decline of the Mughal Empire was the weakening of central authority. Under the rule of powerful emperors like Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan, the Mughal Empire experienced strong centralization of power. However, after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the empire saw a series of weak and ineffective rulers who were unable to maintain the stability and unity of the empire. The Mughal court became increasingly fragmented, with infighting and factionalism taking root.

Succession Struggles: The Mughal Empire faced constant succession disputes, particularly after the death of Aurangzeb. His sons and grandsons engaged in violent struggles for the throne, which weakened the central authority and diverted resources from state governance. The lack of a clear and strong ruler after Aurangzeb led to political instability and loss of control over distant provinces.

Administrative Corruption: Corruption within the Mughal administration also contributed to the empire's decline. The empire's vast bureaucracy, which had been effective under earlier rulers, became riddled with inefficiency, corruption, and nepotism. Provincial governors (Nawabs) became more autonomous and were often more loyal to their own interests than to the central Mughal authority.

Decentralization of Power

As the central authority weakened, the Mughal emperors became increasingly dependent on local rulers and military commanders, leading to the decentralization of power. Regional kingdoms, such as the Marathas, Rajputs, and Sikhs, grew in power and autonomy, challenging the Mughal Empire's territorial integrity.

Rise of Regional Powers: The decline of central authority allowed regional powers like the Marathas, Rajput, and Jat's to gain strength. The Marathas became a significant force, challenging Mughal rule in much of northern and central India. The Rajput, once loyal allies of the Mughals, also started asserting their independence in Rajasthan. This fragmented the empire and led to the loss of key territories.

Loss of Sovereignty: By the mid-18th century, the Mughal Emperor was reduced to a symbolic figurehead, with real power being held by the British East India Company. The Treaty of Allahabad in 1765 formalized British control over Bengal, and by the early 19th century, the British had effectively dismantled the Mughal Empire.

CONCLUSION

The decline of the Mughal Empire was a complex process that occurred over several decades, driven by a combination of internal and external factors. Political instability, weak leadership, military challenges, economic mismanagement, and the rise of European colonial powers all played a role in the collapse of this once great empire. While the Mughals were able to maintain their rule for over 300 years, their inability to adapt to changing political, military, and economic circumstances led to their downfall. The legacy of the Mughal Empire, however, continues to influence South Asian culture, architecture, and history, serving as a reminder of the empire's former glory and the challenges of sustaining power over time. The decline of the Mughal Empire was a complex and multifaceted process that occurred over several decades. Numerous incidents that occurred over a long period of time and the emperors' poor choices led to the fall of the Mughals. But the main causes of this fall were the poor selection of successors, the feuding of nobles, the army's decline, the economy, attempts to take over the empire by invasion from abroad, and the lack of administrative expertise that led to the emergence of independent provinces.

The weakening of central authority after Aurangzeb's death, combined with military defeats, economic decline, and the rise of regional powers, set the stage for the empire's eventual collapse. The growing influence of European colonial powers, particularly the British, further eroded the Mughal Empire's

ability to maintain control over its territories. By the mid-19th century, the British had effectively replaced the Mughal Empire with their own colonial rule, marking the end of Mughal dominance in India. The legacy of the Mughal Empire, however, remains significant in Indian history, as it left a lasting impact on Indian culture, architecture, and administration. Understanding the causes of the Mughal Empire's decline helps shed light on the broader historical processes that led to the establishment of British colonial rule in India.

References

- Athar, M. (1966). *Mughal nobility under Aurangzeb*. Bombay.
- Alam, M. (2003). *The Mughal Empire in India: A historical overview*. Oxford University Press.
- Chandra, B. (2007). *Medieval India: From Sultanate to the Mughal Empire*. Har-Anand Publications.
- Chaudhuri, K. N. (1990). *Trade and civilization in the Indian Ocean: Economic history from the rise of Islam to 1750*. Cambridge University Press.
- Chandra, S. (1981). *Medieval India: Society, the jagirdari crisis and the village*. Delhi.
- Eaton, R. M. (2005). *The rise of Islam and the Bengal frontier, 1204–1760*. University of California Press.
- Gammons, J. (2002). The rise of the Marathas and Mughal decline. In *The Mughal Empire* (pp. 231–250). Cambridge University Press.
- Habib, I. (1999). *The decline of the Mughal Empire*. Indian History Congress.
- Habib, I. (1963). *The agrarian system of Mughal India*. New Delhi.
- Mukhia, H. (2004). *The Mughals of India*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Marshall, P. J. (2004). *The Cambridge history of India: Volume VI: The Mughal Empire*. Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. F. (1993). *The Mughal Empire*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sarkar, J. (2001). *The fall of the Mughal Empire*. Orient Longman.
- Subrahmanyam, S. (2005). *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500–1700*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Sarkar, J. N. (1964). *Fall of the Mughal Empire* (Vols. 1–4). Calcutta.
- Zahir, S. (2011). *Decline of the Mughal Empire and the rise of the British in India*. Routledge.