



## **A study on the rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire**

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### **Abstract**

The Mughal Empire, one of the most influential and enduring empires in Indian history, ruled over much of the subcontinent for over 300 years. Its legacy continues to shape India's culture, architecture, and society. The Mughal Empire's roots can be traced back to Central Asia. Babur, a descendant of Timur and Genghis Khan, led a small army from Afghanistan and invaded India in 1526. His victory at the Battle of Panipat marked the beginning of Mughal rule in India. Babur's son, Humayun, briefly ruled but was forced to flee the country. However, Humayun's son, Akbar, reestablished Mughal control and expanded the empire significantly. Akbar, often considered the greatest Mughal emperor, implemented a series of reforms that strengthened his rule and promoted religious tolerance. He abolished religious taxes, encouraged inter-faith marriages, and established a new faith called Din-i-Ilahi, which combined elements of Islam, Hinduism, and other religions. Akbar's policies fostered a climate of religious harmony and contributed to the empire's stability. Akbar's successors, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, continued to expand the empire and patronized the arts and culture. Shah Jahan, in particular, is renowned for his magnificent architectural achievements, including the Taj Mahal, a mausoleum built in memory of his wife Mumtaz Mahal. However, Shah Jahan's reign was marred by conflicts with

his sons, leading to a civil war that eventually resulted in his imprisonment. Aurangzeb, the last powerful Mughal emperor, reversed his father's tolerant policies and imposed strict Islamic laws. His religious intolerance and heavy taxation alienated many of his subjects, leading to widespread rebellions and the decline of the empire. Aurangzeb's death in 1707 marked the beginning of the Mughal decline, as the empire gradually fragmented and lost control over many of its territories.

**Keywords:**

Mughal, Empire, Culture, Administration, Victory

**Introduction**

Babur, a Central Asian ruler, invaded India in 1526 and defeated the Sultan of Delhi, Ibrahim Lodi, at the Battle of Panipat. This victory marked the beginning of Mughal rule in India. Babur's son, Humayun, briefly ruled the empire but was ousted by Sher Shah Suri, a Pashtun Afghan. Humayun regained control in 1555, but died shortly after. His young son, Akbar, ascended to the throne and consolidated Mughal power through his wise and tolerant policies. (Banerjee , 2021)

Akbar's reign is considered the golden age of the Mughal Empire. He introduced a series of administrative and religious reforms, including the establishment of a uniform land revenue system, the promotion of religious tolerance, and the founding of the Akbarnama, a comprehensive history of his reign. Akbar's policies fostered peace and prosperity, leading to a flourishing of art, culture, and literature.<sup>1</sup>

Akbar's successors, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb, continued the empire's expansion and cultural achievements. Jahangir was a patron of the arts and commissioned many beautiful paintings and architecture. Shah Jahan, known for his magnificent Taj Mahal, also oversaw the

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<sup>1</sup> S.N. Banerjee and John S. Hoyland, Asian Publishers Jalandhar, 2021

construction of other grand monuments. However, Aurangzeb's policies, which included the imposition of religious taxes on non-Muslims and the suppression of dissent, led to the decline of the empire.

The Mughal Empire faced increasing challenges in the 18th century. Internal strife, coupled with external threats from the Marathas and other regional powers, weakened its authority. The Third Battle of Panipat in 1761, where the Marathas defeated the Afghans, marked a turning point in the history of India, as it signaled the decline of Mughal power. (Gibb, 2020)

The final blow to the Mughal Empire came from the British East India Company, which gradually gained control over Indian territories. In 1857, the British faced a major uprising known as the Indian Rebellion of 1857, which was partially led by disgruntled Mughal soldiers. Although the rebellion was ultimately suppressed, it marked the end of Mughal rule in India.



Figure 1: India in 1700

The Mughal Empire left a lasting legacy on Indian history and culture. Its architectural marvels, such as the Taj Mahal and the Red Fort, continue to inspire awe and wonder. The empire's contributions to art, literature, and music have enriched Indian cultural heritage. While the Mughal dynasty may have ended centuries ago, its influence on India's past and present can still be felt today.

Akbar, Humayun's son, succeeded him in 1556 and proved to be one of the greatest Mughal emperors. Akbar implemented a policy of religious tolerance, which earned him the support of many non-Muslim subjects. He also established a strong central administration, which helped

to consolidate Mughal rule. Under Akbar's reign, the Mughal Empire reached its greatest extent, encompassing much of the Indian subcontinent. (Tavernier , 2021)

Akbar's son, Jahangir, continued his father's policies of religious tolerance and administrative reforms. However, Jahangir's reign was marred by his addiction to opium and the growing influence of his wife, Nur Jahan. Shah Jahan, Jahangir's son, succeeded him in 1627 and is best known for his construction of the Taj Mahal, a magnificent mausoleum for his wife Mumtaz Mahal. However, Shah Jahan's reign was also characterized by extravagance and a decline in Mughal power.<sup>2</sup>

Aurangzeb, Shah Jahan's son, succeeded him in 1658. Aurangzeb reversed his father's policy of religious tolerance and imposed strict Islamic laws on the empire. This led to widespread discontent among non-Muslim subjects and contributed to the decline of the Mughal Empire. Aurangzeb also engaged in costly wars against the Marathas, which further weakened the empire.

The Mughal Empire continued to decline throughout the 18th century. Internal strife, economic problems, and the growing influence of European powers, such as the British East India Company, contributed to its downfall. In 1707, Aurangzeb died, and the empire was plunged into a period of civil war. The Marathas, a powerful Hindu confederacy, emerged as a major force in India and challenged Mughal authority. Despite its eventual decline, the Mughal Empire left a lasting impact on Indian history and culture. The Mughals introduced new architectural styles, promoted Persian literature and art, and fostered religious tolerance. Their legacy can still be seen in the numerous monuments, cultural traditions, and historical sites that dot the Indian landscape. (Manucci, 2020)

At the heart of the Mughal administrative system was the emperor, who held absolute power. The emperor was assisted by a council of ministers, known as the Mansabdars, who were

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<sup>2</sup> Storio Do Mogor, Vol. 3, 1653-1708, Tr. by William Irvine, Editions Indian Calcutta, 2020.

responsible for various administrative functions. The Mansabdars were ranked according to their military and administrative capabilities, and their ranks determined their salaries and responsibilities. The most important Mansabdars included the Wazir (Prime Minister), the Mir Bakshi (Paymaster General), and the Qazi (Chief Justice).

The Subadars were assisted by a team of local officials, including the Faujdar (military commander), the Kotwal (city magistrate), and the Pargana (sub-district) officers. (Qandhari, 2021)

### **Study duration**

We studied the Mughal Empire duration from 1526

### **Main Text**

### **Objectives**

- To study the rise of the Mughal Empire
- To study the fall of the Mughal Empire

### **Review of Literature**

Sinopoli et al. (2019): The Mughal administrative system was based on the concept of centralization, with the emperor at the apex of the system. However, the empire was so vast that it was difficult for the emperor to exercise direct control over all aspects of administration. As a result, the Subadars and other local officials were given a great deal of autonomy. This decentralization was necessary to ensure the effective governance of the empire.

Peter et al. (2018): The Mughal administrative system was also characterized by its emphasis on military power. The Mansabdars were primarily military officials, and their ranks were based on their military capabilities. The Mughal army was a formidable force, and it played a crucial role in maintaining the empire's stability.

Richards et al. (2020): The Mughal administrative system was a complex and efficient mechanism that ensured the smooth functioning of a vast empire. The system was based on the concept of centralization, but it also incorporated a degree of decentralization to ensure effective governance. The Mughal army played a crucial role in maintaining the empire's stability. The Mughal administrative system was a testament to the administrative genius of the Mughal rulers.

Zahiruddin et al. (2020): One of the most significant features of the Mughal administration was its centralized nature. The Emperor appointed governors, known as "Subadars," to oversee different provinces. These Subadars were accountable to the Emperor and were expected to enforce his policies. To ensure effective control, the Mughal Empire maintained a vast network of spies and informers, who kept the Emperor apprised of developments in the provinces.

Gulbadan et al. (2019): The Mughal administration also implemented a sophisticated land revenue system known as the "Zabti" or "Todar Mal's System." This system involved accurate land surveys and the assessment of land productivity. Revenue was collected in cash or kind, based on the estimated yield of the land. This system ensured a steady flow of revenue to the imperial treasury and helped to maintain stability.

Fazl et al. (2019): The Mughal Empire established a system of courts, headed by Qazis. These courts administered Islamic law, known as Sharia. However, the Mughal rulers also recognized the importance of local customs and traditions and allowed for the application of customary laws in certain cases.

Abul et al. (2018): The Mughal Empire also invested heavily in infrastructure, such as roads, canals, and forts. This investment helped to improve connectivity and trade within the empire. Additionally, the Mughals promoted cultural and intellectual activities, establishing universities and libraries.

Ahmad et al. (2020): The Mughal Empire eventually declined due to a combination of factors, including internal strife, economic problems, and external threats. However, its legacy of administrative innovation and efficiency continues to inspire scholars and policymakers. The Mughal administrative system serves as a valuable model for understanding the complexities of governance in large, diverse empires.<sup>3</sup>

Nizamuddin et al. (2021): Centralization was a key feature of Mughal administration. The emperor, as the head of state and the supreme authority, exercised control over all aspects of government. He appointed and removed officials, collected taxes, and dispensed justice. The emperor was assisted by a large bureaucracy of officials, who were divided into different departments based on their functions. These departments included the Diwan (finance), the Sadr (justice), the Mir Bakshi (military), and the Wazir (chief minister).

Niccolo et al. (2020): The Mughal administration also relied on a system of land revenue, which was the primary source of government income. Land was measured and assessed for tax purposes, and the revenue was collected by government officials. The land revenue system was complex and varied depending on the region.

Manucci et al. (2019): The Mughal administration was characterized by a strong emphasis on law and order. The emperor established a system of courts, which were presided over by judges appointed by him. The courts dealt with both civil and criminal cases. The Mughal administration also introduced a number of reforms, such as the standardization of weights and measures, and the establishment of a postal system.

Mogor et al. (2020): The Mughal administration was a complex and efficient system that helped to maintain order and stability in the empire. However, it also had its weaknesses. The system was vulnerable to corruption, and it could be slow and inefficient. Moreover, the growing

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<sup>3</sup> Storio Do Mogor, Vol. 1, 1653-1708, Tr. by William Irvine, Editions Indian Calcutta, 2020



power of provincial governors and the decline of the emperor's authority contributed to the eventual decline of the Mughal Empire.

Tavernier et al. (2021): One of the cornerstones of Mughal financial services was the *diwani*, a revenue department that oversaw the collection of taxes and the management of public funds. The *diwani* was headed by the *diwan*, a high-ranking official who reported directly to the emperor. The *diwani* implemented a complex system of land revenue collection, including *zabti* and *chahar-baghi*, which involved precise measurement of land and assessment of its productivity. The revenue collected was used to fund various government activities, such as maintaining a large army, constructing public works, and supporting religious and cultural institutions.

Hamilton et al. (2020): The Mughal Empire also had a well-developed banking system. Merchants and bankers established money exchange houses and provided credit facilities to traders and consumers. These institutions played a crucial role in facilitating domestic and international trade, as well as in managing financial risks. The Mughal Empire also minted its own currency, the *rupee*, which was a valuable commodity in regional and global markets.

### **Concepts**

The Mughal Empire's financial services were further supported by a system of *watan* grants, which were hereditary land assignments given to certain families in return for their loyalty and services to the emperor. These grants provided a stable source of income for the families and helped to maintain social order.

The Mughal Empire's financial services were not without challenges. Corruption, inefficiency, and political instability could undermine the system. However, at its peak, the Mughal Empire's financial institutions were among the most advanced in the world. They contributed significantly to the empire's economic prosperity, political stability, and cultural flourishing.

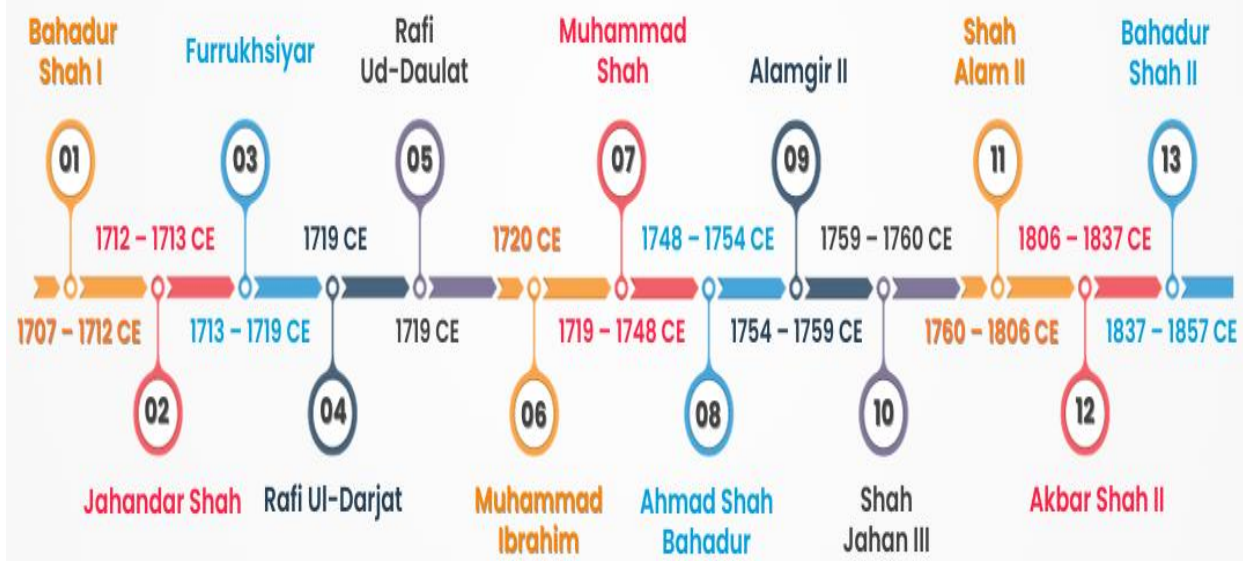


Figure 2: Mughal Emperor Time Period

The financial services of the Mughal Empire were a vital component of its imperial power. The *diwani*, banking system, *watan* grants, and currency system collectively provided a strong foundation for the empire's economic growth and political stability. While challenges and setbacks were inevitable, the Mughal Empire's financial institutions left a lasting legacy that continues to influence the economic and financial systems of South Asia today.<sup>4</sup>

The primary source of income for the Mughal Empire was land revenue, collected through a complex system of taxation known as the "zabti" or "zamindari." This system involved periodic assessments of land productivity and the imposition of taxes based on these assessments.

The Mughal Empire controlled important trade routes, allowing it to levy taxes on goods passing through its territories. These taxes, including customs duties and transit fees, generated significant revenue.

<sup>4</sup> The *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, Vol. 2, Tr. by Brajendranath De, Rev. and Ed. by Bains Prasad, Rpt. Delhi, 2021.

## Research Design

The empire's abundant natural resources, such as precious metals and minerals, were exploited to generate revenue. Additionally, Mughal patronage of various crafts and industries, including textiles and handicrafts, contributed to the economy. The Mughal Emperor maintained a centralized treasury in Agra, which served as the hub of the empire's financial operations. This treasury received and disbursed funds, ensuring efficient management of the empire's finances.

The diwani system, introduced by Akbar, delegated the responsibility for revenue collection and administration to provincial governors. This system helped to improve efficiency and accountability in financial matters. The Mughal Empire minted its own coins, which were used as a medium of exchange throughout the empire. The standardization of coinage facilitated trade and commerce.

The financial services of the Mughal Empire were essential to its success and longevity. The efficient collection and management of revenue, the development of financial institutions, and the promotion of economic growth ensured the empire's stability and prosperity. However, the decline of the Mughal Empire was also linked to financial challenges, including corruption, excessive spending, and the weakening of the centralized administration.

One of the most important aspects of the Mughal financial system was taxation. The empire implemented a complex system of taxes that generated significant revenue for the government. The primary source of income was the land revenue tax, which was levied on agricultural land. This tax was often collected in kind, with farmers paying a portion of their crop yield to the state. Other taxes included customs duties on imported and exported goods, head taxes, and taxes on various professions. The Mughal rulers were careful to ensure that the taxation system was fair and efficient, and they appointed experienced officials to oversee the collection of taxes.

## **Finding**

The Mughal Empire also had a well-developed monetary system. The official currency was the rupee, which was a silver coin. The rupee was divided into smaller denominations, such as the anna and the paisa. The Mughal rulers minted large quantities of rupees to meet the growing demand for currency. They also established mint houses in various parts of the empire to ensure a steady supply of coins.

Banking was another important aspect of the Mughal financial system. The empire had a network of banks, both private and state-owned, that provided financial services to merchants, traders, and the general public. These banks offered services such as loans, deposits, and money exchange. They also played a crucial role in facilitating trade and commerce within the empire.

The Mughal Empire was a major trading power, and its financial system supported its economic activities. The empire had a vast network of trade routes that connected it to other parts of Asia and Europe. Merchants from all over the world traveled to the Mughal Empire to trade in goods such as textiles, spices, precious metals, and gemstones. The Mughal government encouraged trade by providing a safe and secure environment for merchants and by imposing reasonable customs duties.

The Mughal Empire had a sophisticated financial system that played a vital role in its economic prosperity and political stability. The empire's taxation system, monetary system, banking system, and trade policies provided the foundation for a thriving economy and a strong government. The legacy of the Mughal financial system continues to influence the economic development of India today.

The Mughal Empire, a dynasty of Turkic-Mongol origin, ruled over much of the Indian subcontinent from the 16th to the 18th centuries. Its rise was a remarkable tale of conquest, cultural synthesis, and enduring legacy. This article will delve into the key factors that

contributed to the Mughal Empire's ascendancy and its impact on the region's history and culture.<sup>5</sup>

The Mughal Empire's expansion was also facilitated by its military might. The Mughals possessed a well-trained and equipped army, including cavalry, infantry, and artillery. Their military strategies and tactics, often adapted from Persian and Central Asian traditions, proved effective in conquering new territories. The Mughals' ability to maintain a strong military presence ensured their dominance over the region.

Another crucial factor in the Mughal Empire's success was its economic prosperity. The Mughals implemented policies that encouraged trade and agricultural development. They promoted the cultivation of cash crops, such as cotton and indigo, and established a robust network of trade routes. The empire's economic growth provided the resources necessary for maintaining a large and powerful military.

Mughal Emperors	Description
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<sup>5</sup> The Tabaqat-i-Akbari, Vol. 1, Tr. by Brajendranath De, Rev. and Ed. by Bains Prashad, Rpt. Delhi, 2020

<p>Bahadur Shah I (1707-1712)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●</li> <li>● He initially attempted to appease the Sikhs by granting high mansabs to Guru Gobind Singh.</li> <li>● However, subsequently, he quelled a revolt led by Banda Bahadur, who succeeded Guru Gobind Singh.</li> <li>●</li> </ul>
<p>Jahandar Shah (1712-1713)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ascended the throne with the help of Zulfikar Khan</li> <li>●</li> </ul>
<p>Farrukhsiyar (1713-1719)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ascended the throne after killing Jahandar Shah</li> </ul>

Rafi Ul-Darjat (1719)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Brief reign, died of illness.</li> </ul>
Rafi-ud-Daula or Shah Jahan II (June 6-September 17, 1719)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The new emperor was an opium addict.</li> <li>● Extremely brief reign, ruled for a few months.</li> </ul>
Muhammad Shah (1719-1748)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● He was named 'Rangeela' because of his lavish lifestyle.</li> <li>● Ascended the throne with the help of Sayyid Brothers.</li> <li>● Reign marked by administrative decay, weakening of central authority, and emergence of regional powers.</li> <li>●</li> </ul>
Ahmad Shah Bahadur (1748- 1754)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ascended after Muhammad Shah's death.</li> <li>● .</li> </ul>

<p>Alamgir II (1754-1759)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ascended after a period of political instability.</li> <li>● Limited power due to influence of Marathas and other regional powers.</li> <li>●</li> </ul>
<p>Shah Jahan III (ruled 1759-60)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Also known as Muhi-ul-millat,</li> </ul>
<p>Shah Alam II (ruled October 1760-July 1788; October 1788-November 1806)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Two decisive battles- the Third Battle of Panipat (1761)</li> </ul>
<p>Akbar Shah II (1806-1837)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Symbolic ruler under British suzerainty.</li> <li>●</li> </ul>



<p>Bahadur Shah II (1837-1858)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Last Mughal Emperor.</li> <li>● Faced the Indian Rebellion of 1857, after which the British deposed him, marking the official end of the Mughal Empire.</li> <li>●</li> </ul>
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Table 1: Mughal Emperor

The Mughal Empire's legacy extends beyond its political and military achievements. The Mughals played a significant role in fostering cultural exchange and synthesis. They patronized the arts, literature, and architecture, resulting in the creation of magnificent monuments such as the Taj Mahal and the Red Fort. The Mughal court was a cosmopolitan center that attracted scholars, artists, and artisans from various parts of Asia and Europe.

Through a combination of military conquest, cultural adaptation, and administrative reforms, the Mughals established a vast and prosperous empire. While their rule eventually came to an end, the Mughals left an indelible mark on the subcontinent, influencing its art, architecture, literature, and society for centuries to come. Despite Aurangzeb's efforts to consolidate Mughal power, the empire was gradually declining. The growing influence of regional powers, economic problems, and the increasing cost of maintaining a vast empire contributed to its decline. The Battle of Karnal in 1739, a defeat against the Persian invader Nadir Shah, marked a turning point in the Mughal Empire's fortunes. While the Mughal emperors continued to rule nominally, their authority was increasingly eroded.

### The Fall of the Mughal Empire

The Mughal Empire, once a vast and prosperous realm spanning much of the Indian subcontinent, ultimately succumbed to a complex interplay of internal and external factors. One of the primary causes of the Mughal decline was the weakening of the central authority due to a succession crisis. Following the death of Aurangzeb, the empire faced a period of intense internal strife as various claimants vied for the throne. This power vacuum led to the emergence of regional strongmen who asserted their independence, gradually chipping away at the Mughal authority.

Furthermore, the empire's economic foundations began to crumble under the weight of a number of factors. The long and costly wars fought by Aurangzeb, particularly against the Marathas, depleted the empire's treasury and disrupted its trade routes. Additionally, the rise of European colonial powers, such as the British and the French, posed a significant threat to Mughal economic dominance. These colonial powers established trading posts and gradually gained influence within the empire, undermining its economic self-sufficiency.

The Mughal Empire also faced challenges from external threats. The Maratha Confederacy, under the leadership of Shivaji Maharaj, emerged as a formidable force and challenged Mughal authority in western India. The Marathas successfully resisted Mughal expansion and inflicted significant defeats on the empire's armies. This ongoing conflict drained the Mughal resources and weakened its military capabilities.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, the empire's social and cultural fabric began to unravel. The rigid social hierarchy imposed by the Mughals, combined with their religious intolerance, alienated various sections of the population. This led to social unrest and the emergence of opposition movements. Additionally, the decline of Mughal patronage for art and culture contributed to the erosion of the empire's cultural vitality.

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<sup>6</sup> Ain-i-Akbari, Vol. 3, Tr. by Col. H. S. Jarrett, Rpt. Low Price Publications Delhi, 2019

The fall of the Mughal Empire was a gradual process influenced by a complex interplay of internal and external factors. The weakening of central authority, economic decline, external threats, and social unrest all contributed to the empire's demise. While the Mughals once ruled over a vast and prosperous empire, their legacy ultimately succumbed to the challenges of the times.

#### Internal Factors:

- **Economic Decline:** The Mughal Empire's economy was heavily dependent on trade, but the rise of European colonial powers disrupted traditional trade routes and reduced the empire's economic prosperity. This weakened its ability to fund military and administrative activities.

#### External Factors:

- **European Colonialism:** The rise of European colonial powers, particularly the British, posed a significant threat to the Mughal Empire. The British East India Company gradually gained control over parts of India, undermining the Mughal Emperor's authority and eventually leading to the empire's downfall.
- **Maratha Confederacy:** The Maratha Confederacy, a powerful Hindu alliance, emerged as a major challenge to the Mughal Empire. The Marathas successfully challenged Mughal authority in many parts of India, weakening the empire's control over its territories.
- **Regional Rebellions:** The Mughal Empire faced numerous regional rebellions and uprisings, further weakening its authority and contributing to its decline. These rebellions were often fueled by religious, economic, or political grievances.

The company's shrewd trading practices, military prowess, and political alliances enabled it to gradually undermine the Mughal Empire's authority and establish its own dominion over India.

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The Battle of Plassey in 1757 marked a turning point, as the British decisively defeated the Nawab of Bengal, a key ally of the Mughal Emperor. This victory paved the way for the British East India Company's expansion and eventual control over large swathes of Indian territory.

## **Conclusion**

The rise of the Mughal Empire was a remarkable historical event shaped by a confluence of factors. The leadership of capable emperors, military prowess, economic prosperity, and cultural patronage were key elements that contributed to the empire's ascendancy. The Mughals' legacy continues to be celebrated for their contributions to Indian history, culture, and architecture. The decline and fall of the Mughal Empire were the result of a complex interplay of internal and external factors. Weak leadership, religious intolerance, corruption, economic decline, European colonialism, and regional rebellions all contributed to the empire's eventual demise. Understanding these factors is essential to appreciating the historical context of the Mughal Empire and its legacy.

## **Suggestion**

The Mughal rulers' extravagant spending and costly military campaigns further depleted the empire's treasury. Additionally, the rise of European trading companies, such as the British East India Company, disrupted the Mughal Empire's traditional trade routes and undermined its economic self-sufficiency. The empire's religious policies, particularly Aurangzeb's imposition of Islamic orthodoxy, alienated many non-Muslim subjects and fostered religious tensions. The growing influence of regional cultures and languages also eroded the empire's cultural unity. Furthermore, the rise of new social groups, such as the Marathas and the Sikhs, challenged the Mughal Empire's legitimacy and authority.

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