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## Policies and the People

Since the mid-eighteenth century, the power of nawabs and rajas gradually declined under British East India Company rule. Their authority was reduced through the stationing of British residents in their courts, disbanding of armed forces, and annexation of territories and revenues. Attempts by rulers like Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi and Nana Saheb to protect their interests were rejected by the Company, confident in its military superiority.

Awadh was annexed in 1856 after being placed under a subsidiary alliance in 1801, with the British citing misgovernance as justification. The Mughal dynasty was also targeted; the emperor's name was removed from coins, and after Bahadur Shah Zafar's death, his descendants were denied royal recognition.

Peasants and zamindars faced high taxes and rigid revenue collection, leading many to lose their lands. Indian sepoys employed by the Company were discontented over pay, allowances, and service conditions, including rules that violated religious beliefs. For example, sepoys refused to travel overseas by sea due to religious concerns, leading to punishments and new laws mandating overseas service.

## Exam Question

**Q:** Why did the power of nawabs and rajas decline under British rule?

**A:** Their power declined due to British policies such as stationing residents in their courts, disbanding their armies, annexing territories, and rejecting their attempts to protect their interests.

## The 1857 Revolt: Causes and Early Events

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The Indian Rebellion of 1857, also called the First War of Indian Independence or the Sepoy Mutiny, began as a mutiny of Indian soldiers (sepoys) employed by the British East India Company. Key causes included discontent over pay, allowances, and service conditions, as well as religious concerns about new rifle cartridges rumored to be greased with cow and pig fat, offending Hindu and Muslim beliefs.

The revolt started in Meerut on 10 May 1857, when sepoy released imprisoned comrades, attacked British officers, seized arms, and declared war on the British. They marched to Delhi, where they proclaimed the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar as their leader, inspiring widespread rebellion.

## Exam Question

**Q:** What triggered the Indian Rebellion of 1857?

**A:** The immediate trigger was the introduction of new rifle cartridges rumored to be greased with cow and pig fat, which offended religious sentiments, combined with sepoy's discontent over pay and service conditions.

## Key Leaders and Regional Uprisings

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Several leaders emerged during the revolt, including Nana Saheb in Kanpur, Rani Lakshmibai in Jhansi, Begum Hazrat Mahal in Lucknow, Tantia Tope, Ahmadullah Shah, Bakht Khan, and Kunwar Singh. They rallied forces to fight the British and sought to restore Mughal authority.

The uprising spread across northern India, with towns and villages joining the rebellion. The British were initially defeated in many battles, leading to widespread belief that British rule had collapsed.

## Exam Question

**Q:** Name two prominent leaders of the 1857 revolt and their regions.

**A:** Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi and Nana Saheb of Kanpur were prominent leaders who led uprisings in their respective regions.

## British Response and Suppression of the Revolt

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The British responded by bringing reinforcements from England, passing laws to facilitate convicting rebels, and launching military campaigns to recapture key centers like Delhi and Lucknow. Delhi was recaptured in September 1857, and Bahadur Shah Zafar was tried and exiled. The British fought for two years to suppress the widespread uprising.

After the revolt, the British government took direct control of India, ending Company rule. Policies were changed to reduce Indian soldiers in the army, protect landlords, respect religious practices, and assure rulers of their territories under British sovereignty.

## Exam Question

**Q:** What changes did the British government make after the 1857 revolt?

**A:** The British government took direct control of India, reduced Indian soldiers in the army, protected landlords' rights, respected religious practices, and assured rulers of their territories under British sovereignty.

## The Khurda Uprising of 1817: A Case Study

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Before 1857, the Khurda uprising in Orissa in 1817 was an early armed resistance against British policies. The British annexed Khurda after deposing its king, Mukunda Dev II, and imposed harsh revenue demands and administrative changes. The Paiks, former militia, led by Buxi Jagabandhu, revolted against oppressive policies, supported by zamindars, ryots, and temple priests.

The uprising involved attacks on government establishments and a 'no-rent campaign.' Despite British military efforts, the rebellion persisted until 1825, leading to reforms such as reduced salt prices, police and justice system improvements, and restoration of lands to former holders.

### Exam Question

**Q:** What were the causes of the Khurda uprising in 1817?

**A:** Causes included British annexation, increased revenue demands, introduction of new currency, salt monopoly, corrupt administration, and loss of traditional rights.

### Solved Examples

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**Example 1:** Explain why the sepoys were unhappy with the British East India Company.

**Answer:** Sepoys were unhappy due to low pay, poor allowances, harsh service conditions, and new rules that violated their religious beliefs, such as the requirement to serve

overseas and the use of cartridges rumored to be greased with animal fat.

**Example 2:** Describe the significance of Bahadur Shah Zafar during the 1857 revolt.

**Answer:** Bahadur Shah Zafar was the last Mughal emperor and became the symbolic leader of the 1857 revolt. Though he had little real power, his acceptance of leadership inspired many rebels and symbolized resistance against British rule.

## Practice Set

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### Easy

- Who was Mangal Pandey?
- What was the immediate cause of the 1857 revolt?

### Moderate

- Explain the role of Rani Lakshmbai in the 1857 revolt.
- What changes did the British government make after the revolt?

### Challenging

- Analyze the impact of the Khurda uprising on British policies in Orissa.
- Discuss the reasons why the 1857 revolt spread rapidly across northern India.

## Answer Key

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### Easy

- Mangal Pandey was a sepoy who played a key role in the beginning of the 1857 revolt.
- The immediate cause was the introduction of new rifle cartridges rumored to be greased with cow and pig fat.

## Moderate

- Rani Lakshmi Bai was the queen of Jhansi who led her troops in battle against the British during the revolt.
- After the revolt, the British government took direct control of India, reduced Indian soldiers in the army, protected landlords, and respected religious practices.

## Challenging

- The Khurda uprising exposed the failures of British revenue and administrative policies, leading to reforms such as reduced salt prices and improved justice systems.
- The revolt spread rapidly due to widespread discontent among sepoys, peasants, and rulers, and the symbolic leadership of Bahadur Shah Zafar.

## Quick Reference

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- **Sepoys:** Indian soldiers employed by the British East India Company.
- **Mutiny:** When soldiers disobey their officers collectively.
- **Subsidiary Alliance:** A policy where Indian states accepted British protection and control.
- **Annexation:** The act of taking control of a territory.
- **Paiks:** Traditional militia soldiers in Orissa.
- **Martial Law:** Military control over civilian functions.

## Glossary

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## Annexation

The formal act of acquiring territory by a state.

## Mutiny

A rebellion by soldiers against their commanding officers.

## Subsidiary Alliance

A treaty where Indian rulers accepted British control in exchange for protection.

## Sepoy

An Indian soldier serving under British command.

## Paik

A member of the traditional militia in Orissa.

## Martial Law

Temporary military control over civilian administration.

## Chronology of Important Events

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Year	Event	Significance
1801	Subsidiary alliance imposed on Awadh	Beginning of British control over Awadh
1817	Khurda uprising in Orissa	Early armed resistance against British policies
1856	Annexation of Awadh	Increased resentment leading to revolt
1857	Start of Indian Rebellion (May)	Major uprising against British rule
1857	Recapture of Delhi by British (September)	Turning point in suppression of revolt
1858	British Crown takes over India	End of Company rule, start of direct British governance