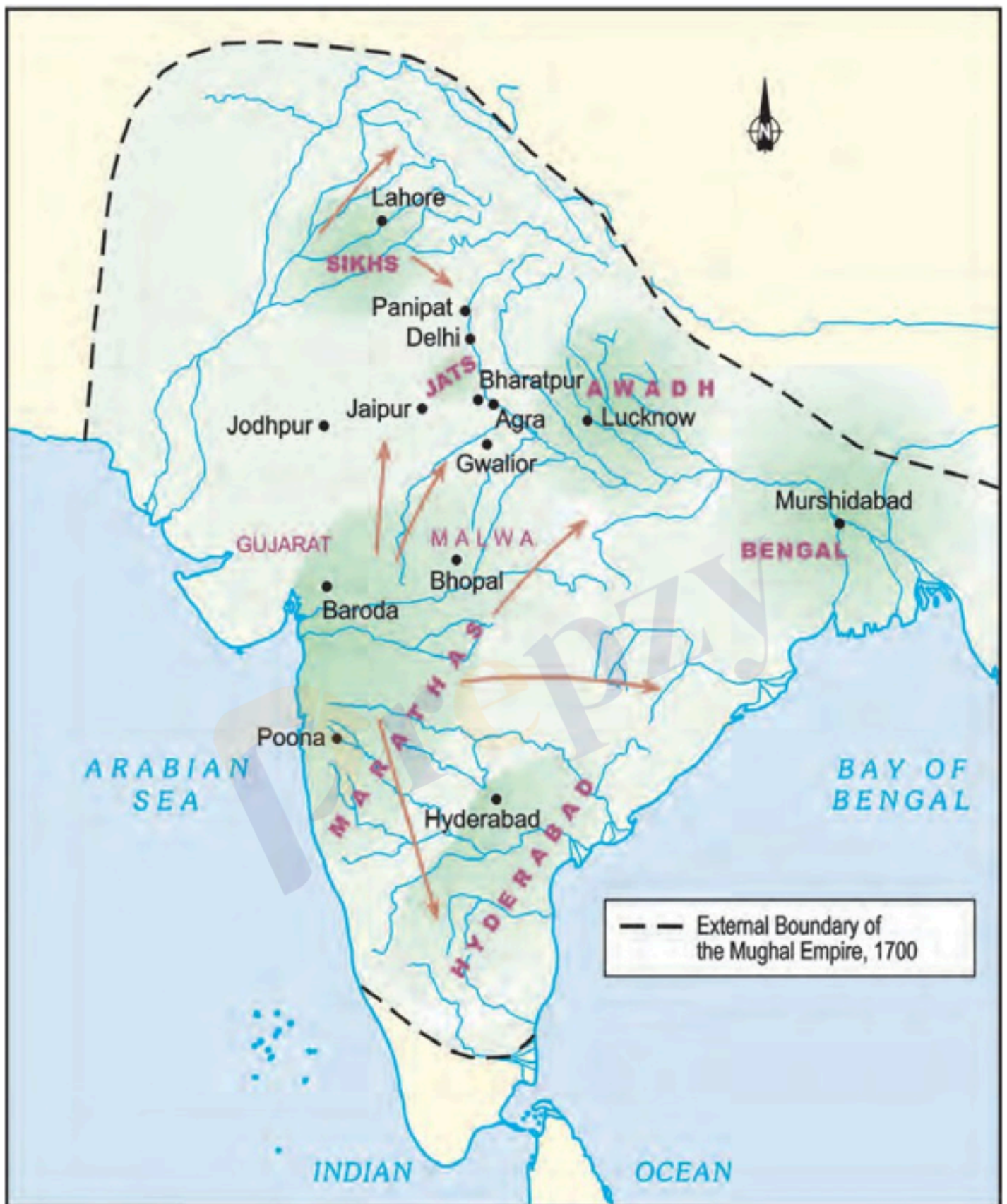


- Political Conditions in Eighteenth-Century India
- British Territories in Mid-Eighteenth Century India
- Crisis of the Mughal Empire and the Later Mughals
- Nadir Shah's Invasion of Delhi
- Factionalism and Decline of Mughal Authority
- Rajput States and Fortifications
- Raja Jai Singh and Jantar Mantar
- Sikh Political Organisation and Expansion
- Maratha Kingdom and Expansion
- Jat State and Consolidation
- Solved Examples
- Practice Set
- Answer Key
- Quick Reference
- Glossary
- Chronology of Key Events

Political Conditions in Eighteenth-Century India

During the first half of the eighteenth century, the political landscape of the Indian subcontinent underwent significant changes. The once vast Mughal Empire began to fragment, giving rise to several independent kingdoms. By 1765, the British had established control over major parts of eastern India, marking the beginning of colonial expansion.

The Mughal Empire's boundaries were reshaped as regional powers such as the Sikhs, Jats, Awadh, Bengal, Gujarat, Malwa, Marathas, and Hyderabad asserted their influence. This period was marked by political complexity and the emergence of new state formations that laid the foundation for modern Indian political boundaries.



Map 1
State formations in the eighteenth century.

Exam Questions

Q1: What major political change occurred in India during the first half of the eighteenth century?

A1: The Mughal Empire began to decline, and several independent kingdoms emerged, while the British started gaining territory in eastern India.

Q2: Name three regional powers that emerged during this period.

A2: Sikhs, Marathas, and Jats.

British Territories in Mid-Eighteenth Century India

By the mid-eighteenth century, British control in India was limited to certain coastal cities and river valleys, mainly in Bengal, Madras, and Bombay. The British territories were strategically located along important rivers and seas, facilitating trade and military advantage.

Other European powers such as the French and Portuguese also controlled smaller territories like Pondicherry and Goa. The rest of India was divided among powerful kingdoms including the Rajputs, Awadh, Bengal, Marathas, Hyderabad, Mysore, and Orissa.



Map 2
British territories in the mid-eighteenth century.

Exam Questions

Q1: Which areas were under British control in the mid-eighteenth century?

A1: Coastal cities and river valleys in Bengal, Madras, and Bombay.

Q2: Name two other European powers present in India during this period.

A2: The French and the Portuguese.

Crisis of the Mughal Empire and the Later Mughals

After Aurangzeb's death in 1707, the Mughal Empire faced severe crises. Military and financial resources were depleted due to prolonged wars, especially in the Deccan. The imperial administration weakened, and provincial governors (subadars) gained extraordinary powers, often controlling revenue and military administration.

Peasant and zamindari rebellions increased due to heavy taxation and power struggles. The empire's authority declined as local chieftains and governors consolidated control over regions like Awadh, Bengal, and Hyderabad.

Exam Questions

Q1: What were the main causes of the Mughal Empire's decline after Aurangzeb?

A1: Depletion of military and financial resources, weak administration, and rise of powerful provincial governors.

Q2: How did rebellions affect the Mughal Empire?

A2: They challenged Mughal authority and allowed local powers to strengthen.

Nadir Shah's Invasion of Delhi

In 1739, Nadir Shah, the ruler of Iran, invaded and plundered Delhi, taking immense wealth including the Peacock Throne. This invasion devastated the city, turning the wealthy into beggars and destroying much of the urban landscape.

Following Nadir Shah, Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded northern India multiple times, further weakening the Mughal Empire.

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Fig. 1

A 1779 portrait of Nadir Shah

Exam Questions

Q1: What was the impact of Nadir Shah's invasion on Delhi?

A1: Massive plundering of wealth, destruction of the city, and decline of Mughal power.

Q2: Who invaded northern India after Nadir Shah?

A2: Ahmad Shah Abdali.

Factionalism and Decline of Mughal Authority

The Mughal court was divided between two major noble factions: the Iranis and the Turanis. Later emperors became puppets of these groups. Several emperors were assassinated or blinded by nobles, further weakening imperial authority.

Provincial governors and zamindars gained autonomy, consolidating power in regions such as Awadh, Bengal, and Hyderabad.



Fig. 2

Levassila Sivara vacchivina a mahla in

COURT LIFE IN THE MUGHAL COURT.

Exam Questions

Q1: What were the two major noble factions in the Mughal court?

A1: The Iranis and the Turanis.

Q2: How did factionalism affect the Mughal emperors?

A2: Emperors became puppets, with some being assassinated or blinded.

Rajput States and Fortifications

Rajput kings, especially from Amber and Jodhpur, served the Mughals but enjoyed autonomy in their watan jagirs. In the eighteenth century, they expanded their territories and held governorships in Gujarat and Malwa.

Mewar was unique in defying Mughal authority under Rana Pratap. Rajput chieftains built forts on hilltops, which served as centers of power, defense, and administration. The Chittorgarh Fort is a prime example, featuring extensive water harvesting structures and fortifications.



Fig. 3
Chittorgarh Fort, Rajasthan

Exam Questions

Q1: Which Rajput state defied Mughal authority?

A1: Mewar under Rana Pratap.

Q2: What was the significance of Rajput forts?

A2: They served as centers of power, defense, and included water harvesting systems.

Raja Jai Singh and Jantar Mantar

Raja Jai Singh of Amber was a powerful Rajput ruler and governor of Agra and Malwa. He built the Jantar Mantar observatories in five cities, including Jaipur and Delhi, to study astronomy using large architectural instruments.

These observatories helped measure time, track celestial bodies, and predict eclipses using principles of geometry and trigonometry. The Samrat Yantra, a giant sundial, was a key instrument.



Fig. 4
Jantar Mantar in Jaipur

Q1: What was the purpose of Jantar Mantar?

A1: To study astronomy, measure time, and predict celestial events.

Q2: Name one key instrument at Jantar Mantar.

A2: Samrat Yantra (giant sundial).

Sikh Political Organisation and Expansion

The Sikhs organised themselves into political and military groups called jathas and misls, collectively known as the Dal Khalsa. They met at Amritsar to make collective decisions (gurmata) and introduced a protection system called rakhi, collecting taxes from cultivators.

After Guru Gobind Singh's death, the Khalsa revolted against Mughal authority under Banda Bahadur, establishing sovereign rule and striking coins in the names of Sikh Gurus. Maharaja Ranjit Singh later united the Sikh territories and established his capital at Lahore in 1799.





Fig. 6

Sword of Maharaja

ਸ੍ਰੀ ਮੁਕਤੀ ਸਿੰਘ Ranjit Singh.

Exam Questions

Q1: What was the Dal Khalsa?

A1: The combined forces of Sikh jathas and misls.

Q2: Who united the Sikh territories in the late eighteenth century?

A2: Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Maratha Kingdom and Expansion

The Maratha kingdom was founded by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in the seventeenth century. Shivaji established a stable kingdom with the support of warrior families and peasant-pastoralists, using guerrilla warfare against the Mughals.

After Shivaji, the Peshwas led the Marathas to expand their empire across large parts of India, collecting taxes called chauth and sardeshmukhi. The Marathas raided Delhi in 1737 and extended influence into Rajasthan, Punjab, Bengal, Orissa, Karnataka, and the Tamil and Telugu regions.

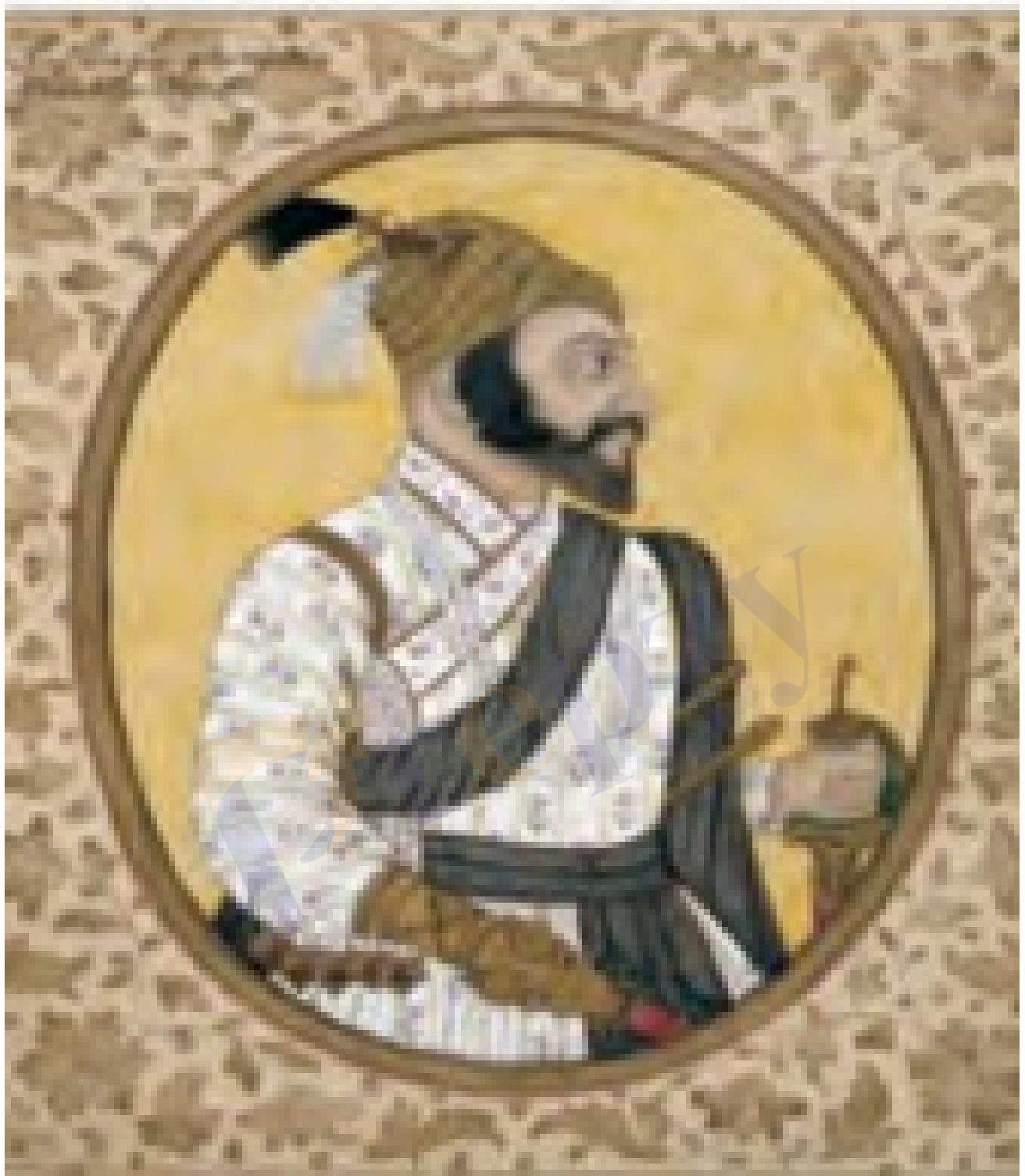


Fig. 7

Portrait of Shivaji

Exam Questions

Q1: Who founded the Maratha kingdom?

A1: Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

Q2: What were chauth and sardeshmukhi?

A2: Taxes collected by the Marathas; chauth was 25% and sardeshmukhi was 9–10% of land revenue.

Jat State and Consolidation

The Jats consolidated power in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries under leaders like Churaman and Suraj Mal. They controlled territories west of Delhi and dominated the region between Delhi and Agra.

Suraj Mal established the kingdom of Bharatpur, building forts and palaces such as the Lohagarh Fort. The Jats were prosperous agriculturists and controlled important trading centers like Panipat and Ballabgarh.



Fig. 8

Eighteenth-century palace complex at Dig. Note the “Bangla dome” on the assembly hall on the roof of the building.

Exam Questions

Q1: Who was Suraj Mal?

A1: A Jat leader who consolidated the kingdom of Bharatpur.

Q2: What is the significance of the Lohagarh Fort?

A2: It is one of the strongest forts built in the region by the Jats.

Solved Examples

Example 1: Explain the reasons for the decline of the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century.

Answer: The decline was due to Aurangzeb's prolonged wars depleting resources, weak

administration under later emperors, rise of powerful provincial governors, peasant and zamindari rebellions, and invasions by Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali.

Example 2: Describe the role of the Marathas in eighteenth-century India.

Answer: The Marathas, founded by Shivaji, expanded their kingdom through military campaigns and tax collection, challenging Mughal authority and extending influence across large parts of India.

Practice Set

Easy

- What was the boundary of the Mughal Empire around 1700?
- Name two major cities under British control in the mid-eighteenth century.

Moderate

- Explain the impact of Nadir Shah's invasion on the Mughal Empire.
- Describe the administrative system introduced by Shivaji in the Maratha kingdom.

Challenging

- Discuss the role of factionalism in the decline of the Mughal Empire.
- Analyze the significance of the Sikh Dal Khalsa in regional politics during the eighteenth century.

Answer Key

- **Easy 1:** The Mughal Empire's boundary was extensive, covering most of the Indian subcontinent as indicated by the black dashed line on the map.

- **Easy 2:** Calcutta and Madras.
- **Moderate 1:** Nadir Shah's invasion led to massive plundering, destruction of Delhi, and weakened Mughal authority.
- **Moderate 2:** Shivaji introduced an efficient administrative system with revenue collection methods like chauth and sardeshmukhi.
- **Challenging 1:** Factionalism divided nobles into Iranis and Turanis, weakening emperors who became puppets, leading to assassinations and loss of control.
- **Challenging 2:** The Dal Khalsa united Sikh misls, enabling them to resist Mughal and Afghan rulers and establish sovereign rule.

Quick Reference

- **Mughal Decline:** Aurangzeb's wars, weak administration, rebellions, invasions.
- **British Territories:** Coastal cities in Bengal, Madras, Bombay.
- **Rajputs:** Autonomous rulers, forts like Chittorgarh.
- **Marathas:** Founded by Shivaji, expanded through military and taxation.
- **Sikhs:** Organized as Dal Khalsa, established rule under Ranjit Singh.
- **Jats:** Consolidated Bharatpur under Suraj Mal.

Glossary

Chauth

25% land revenue tax collected by Marathas.

Sardeshmukhi

9-10% land revenue tax paid to the head revenue collector in the Deccan.

Dal Khalsa

The combined military forces of Sikh jathas and misls.

Jathas

Groups or bands of Sikh warriors.

Khalsa

The collective body of initiated Sikhs established by Guru Gobind Singh.

Subadar

Provincial governor in the Mughal administration.

Watan Jagir

Hereditary land grant enjoyed by Rajput rulers.

Gurmata

Collective decisions made by the Sikh community.

Chronology of Key Events

Year	Event	Significance
1707	Death of Aurangzeb	Start of Mughal decline and rise of regional powers
1739	Nadir Shah invades Delhi	Massive plundering and weakening of Mughal Empire
1761	Third Battle of Panipat	Maratha defeat, affecting their expansion
1765	British gain major territories in eastern India	Beginning of British colonial expansion
1799	Maharaja Ranjit Singh establishes capital at Lahore	Unification of Sikh territories