



History of the Emergence and Impact of British Imperialism in the Mughal Empire (1610–1858)

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Abstract

This article aims to examine the history, process, and impact of imperialism carried out by the British Government through the East India Company (EIC) on the existence of the Mughal Empire in India. This study uses a historical research methodology that includes four main stages, namely, heuristic (source collection), criticism (source verification), interpretation (source interpretation), and historiography (historical writing). The results of the study show that British imperialism had a significant impact on the sustainability of the Mughal Empire, both in terms of politics, economy, and society. Some of the important findings include the loss of the kingdom's political sovereignty, the shrinking of the territory, the weakening of military power, and the increasing economic burden on the community due to the exploitative tax system. These findings suggest that British colonialism not only changed the political structure of the Mughal Empire, but also brought about fundamental changes in the social and economic order of Indian society. Thus, this research makes an important contribution in enriching the literature on British colonialism in India by presenting an in-depth analysis of the transition of power and the legacy of imperialism.

Keywords: Mughal Empire; Imperialism; British Government

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menelaah sejarah kemunculan, proses, serta dampak imperialisme yang dilakukan oleh Pemerintah Inggris melalui East India Company (EIC) terhadap eksistensi Kerajaan Mughal di India. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi penelitian sejarah yang meliputi empat tahapan utama, yaitu, heuristik (pengumpulan sumber), kritik (verifikasi sumber), interpretasi (penafsiran sumber), dan historiografi (penulisan sejarah). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa imperialisme Inggris memberikan dampak signifikan terhadap keberlangsungan Kerajaan Mughal, baik dari segi politik, ekonomi, maupun sosial. Beberapa temuan penting meliputi hilangnya kedaulatan politik kerajaan, penyusutan wilayah kekuasaan, melemahnya kekuatan militer, serta meningkatnya beban ekonomi masyarakat akibat sistem perpajakan yang eksploitatif. Temuan-temuan tersebut menunjukkan bahwa kolonialisme Inggris tidak hanya mengubah struktur politik Kerajaan Mughal, tetapi juga menimbulkan perubahan mendasar dalam tatanan sosial dan ekonomi masyarakat India. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi penting dalam memperkaya literatur mengenai kolonialisme Inggris di India dengan menghadirkan analisis mendalam tentang transisi kekuasaan dan warisan imperialisme.

Kata Kunci: Kerajaan Mughal; Imperialisme; Pemerintahan Inggris

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INTRODUCTION

The background of this research is rooted in the historical dynamics between the British colonial power and the Mughal Empire which was once one of the largest empires in the Islamic world.¹ In the 17th to 19th centuries, the British through the East India Company (EIC) not only came as a trading partner, but gradually transformed into an intervening political force and eventually took control of the Mughal government structure.² The process of imperialism did not occur suddenly, but was the result of a combination of economic interests, military expansion, and systematic colonial policies.³ The main problem that arose was the loss of political and economic sovereignty of the Mughal Empire due to the increasingly strong British dominance.⁴ This condition causes power imbalances that harm indigenous people and shake the social order that has been built for a long time.

The impact of imperialism can be seen from the weakening of traditional government structures, the marginalization of the nobility and clerics, and the emergence of an exploitative economic system that oppresses society through taxes and trade monopolies.⁵ In addition, British imperialism also brought about a cultural and educational transformation that shifted the Islamic values that had previously been the basis of Mughal society towards a more secular and pragmatic orientation.⁶ The multidimensional crisis that occurred during this period showed that imperialism was not just a territorial expansion, but also a form of ideological domination that changed the direction of the development of Islamic civilization in the Indian subcontinent.⁷ However, studies that highlight specifically the relationship between Britain and the Mughal Empire are limited, as most studies focus more on British colonialism towards India in general.

The study of British imperialism in India has been widely discussed by historians, both from colonial and postcolonial perspectives. However, most research still places the Mughal Empire as only a backdrop or a small part of the grand narrative of colonialism in India. In fact, the relationship between Britain and the Mughal Empire has its own characteristics that are

¹ AKM Ahsan Ullah, "Empire, Colonialism, and Religious Mobility in Transnational History," *Religions* 16, no. 4 (2025): 403.

² Michael Aldous, "European Merchants in Colonial India," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History* (2024), <https://oxfordre.com/asianhistory/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277727-e-607>.

³ Patrick Bond, "Transcending Imperialist/Sub-Imperialist Partnerships," in *Global Partnerships and Neocolonialism*, ed. Aram Ziai et al. (Springer Nature Switzerland, 2025), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-87005-7_7.

⁴ Gurminder K. Bhambra, "Empires, Famine, and the Significance of the Political Economy of Colonialism: From the Mughal Empire to British Colonial Rule in India," *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, Cambridge University Press, 2025, 1–24.

⁵ Bhambra, "Empires, Famine, and the Significance of the Political Economy of Colonialism."

⁶ Kevin Hewison and Jim Glassman, "Class, Economy, and Politics in Southeast Asia," *Center for Integrative and Development Studies, University of the Philippines*, 2024, <https://cids.up.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Class-in-SEA-Monograph-04222025.pdf>.

⁷ Aman Jaswal, "The Changing Image of Insurgency in Kashmir" (PhD Thesis, Staffordshire University, 2024), <https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/8588/>.

important to understand in the context of the political and social transformation of the Islamic world in the early modern period. One of the contemporary works that is often used as a reference is Sangaralingam Ramesh, which comprehensively describes the political and administrative developments of the Mughals before its fall. Sangaralingam Ramesh highlights that the kingdom's internal setbacks, such as succession conflicts and weak bureaucratic structures, were major factors that opened up opportunities for British expansion through the East India Company.⁸ Meanwhile, Mohammad Bilal Hossain emphasizes how British rule in Bengal became the starting point of a major change that extended colonial dominance to all parts of India, including areas of Mughal rule.⁹

Another study by Robert Johnson highlights that British imperialism was not only political and economic, but also epistemological in which the British used a system of knowledge, administration, and education to control Indian society.¹⁰ This approach shows that colonialism is a hegemonic process that influences people's perceptions of power and culture. In a more specific context, Ranjan K. Ghosh and Satish Y. Deodhar traces the economic impact of British colonial policies on the Mughal agrarian structure, showing that land control and taxes were the main instruments in weakening the kingdom's economy.¹¹ In addition, postcolonial historians such as Alexandra Paulin-Booth provide an important theoretical framework for understanding imperialism as an ideological project that placed the Eastern world, including Mughal India, in a position subordinate to the West. Alexandra Paulin-Booth emphasized that the colonial narrative has always been shaped by power, where Britain built moral legitimacy to rule under the pretext of civilization and modernization.¹²

This research differs from previous studies on British colonialism in India. Most previous research, however, has placed more emphasis on the macro aspects of India's history as a whole or highlighted specific regions such as Bengal as the center of British expansion. These studies tend to see the Mughal Empire only as a historical background to the process of colonialism without elaborating in depth on how the mutual relationship between Britain and the Mughals shaped the new socio-political structure in the Indian subcontinent. In contrast to these studies, this study specifically focuses attention on the Mughal Empire as the main subject, rather than merely a supporting context in the narrative of British colonialism. This research not only traces the process of the emergence of British imperialism from a political

⁸ Sangaralingam Ramesh, *The Political Economy of India's Economic Development: 5000BC to 2024AD, Volume II: The Gupta Empire to an Independent India and Beyond*, Palgrave Studies in Economic History (Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-67004-6>.

⁹ Mohammad Bilal Hossain, "Transformation of Bengal after Arrival of Muslims," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Humanities* 69, no. 2 (2024): 175–201.

¹⁰ Robert Johnson, *British Imperialism* (Macmillan Education UK, 2003), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4039-4031-5>.

¹¹ Ranjan K. Ghosh and Satish Y. Deodhar, "In the Name of Eminent Domain": *A Historical and Colonial Perspective to Land Governance and Land Struggles in India* (Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, Research and Publication Department, 2025), <https://www.iima.ac.in/hindi/sites/default/files/2025-06/WP-No-2025-06-02.pdf>.

¹² Alexandra Paulin-Booth, "Modernity, Empire, Progress," *The Liberal Script at the Beginning of the 21st Century: Conceptions, Components, and Tensions*, Oxford University Press, 2024, 150.

and economic perspective, but also examines the multidimensional impact that includes changes in the structure of government, economic system, social life, and cultural and religious transformation of Mughal society. This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of how British imperialism changed the socio-political landscape of the Islamic world in India. In addition, its novelty lies in the use of colonial primary sources that are rarely utilized in academic research in Indonesia, such as EIC archives, British colonial administrative reports, and diplomatic records directly related to relations between Britain and the Mughals. These sources allow researchers to more accurately reconstruct the political and economic dynamics that occurred during the period 1610–1858.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses the historical research method, because the focus of the study is on past events related to the emergence, process, and impact of British imperialism on the Mughal Empire. As a historical research, the method used includes four main stages, namely, heuristic, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography.¹³ The first stage, heuristic, is carried out by collecting various primary and secondary sources relevant to the research topic. Primary sources include British colonial archives, official documents of the East India Company (EIC), government administrative reports, travel records, and diplomatic correspondence directly related to the Mughal Empire. Meanwhile, secondary sources are books, academic journals, and scientific papers that discuss the history of colonialism, the theory of imperialism, and postcolonial studies.

The second stage, namely source criticism, is carried out to assess the authenticity, credibility, and reliability of the sources that have been obtained. External criticism is used to ascertain the physical authenticity and origin of the document, while internal criticism is carried out to assess the content of the source, relevance, as well as possible ideological biases contained in it.¹⁴ This stage is important to maintain the objectivity of the research and avoid unfounded historical generalizations. The third stage, interpretation, is carried out by interpreting historical data and facts that have been verified through a relevant theoretical framework. In this study, researchers use classical imperialism theory and postcolonial perspectives to understand how British colonialism operated not only through military and economic power, but also through mechanisms of cultural and knowledge domination. Through this process of interpretation, the relationship between Britain and the Mughal Empire was understood as a multidimensional phenomenon involving political, economic, social, and ideological aspects.¹⁵ The last stage is historiography, which is the process of writing history based on the results of the interpretation that has been carried out. At this stage, the researcher compiles an analytical and argumentative historical narrative, not just

¹³ Dudung Abdurrahman, *Metodologi Penelitian Sejarah Islam* (Penerbit Ombak, 2011), <https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/40455/>.

¹⁴ Astri Yogatama, "Penelitian Sejarah Relasi Publik: Konsep Dan Metodologi," *Scriptura* 8, no. 1 (2018): 1–6.

¹⁵ Dudung Abdurrahman, *Metode Penelitian Sejarah*, pt logos wacana lmu, 1999, https://lib.unwas.ac.id/index.php?p=show_detail&id=94312.

chronological. The aim was to present a comprehensive understanding of how British imperialism emerged, developed, and impacted the power structure and life of Mughal society. The historiography in this study also serves as a form of critical reflection on how colonial history is written and interpreted in a modern perspective.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Imperialism in the East India Company (EIC)

In the 1830s, the term imperialism was introduced by British writers to describe the basics of the expansion of power carried out by the British empire. At that time, Britain felt that its country was the most powerful (greater Britain). This is because they have controlled many areas in Asia and Africa and obtained very abundant wealth from the results of their colonization so that they are able to build and finance armies, both land and sea. The word Imperialism first appeared in England at the end of the XIX century. Disraeli, the prime minister of Britain, at that time embodied a policy aimed at expanding the British empire to an "empire" that encompassed the whole world.

Disraeli's politics received strong opposition. The opposition feared that Disraeli's policies would lead to international crises. Therefore, they want the government's focus on domestic development rather than focusing on foreign issues. The emergence of the word imperialist or imperialism, at first only to distinguish the Disraeli faction from the opposition, then received other content to contain the meaning as we know it today. The British considered that the colonization they carried out was to build a colonized society that was considered to be still underdeveloped.¹⁶ Imperialism refers to the system of government as well as the economic and political relations of rich countries that rule, guard and control other countries that are still backward and poor with the aim of exploiting the resources available in the country to increase the wealth and power of their colonial countries.

Imperialism emphasizes the qualities of superiority by one nation over another. The main goal of imperialism is to increase economic output. Imperialist countries want to profit from the countries they control because their country's economic resources are insufficient. In addition to economic factors, there is also a belief that a nation is more noble than another nation, such as Germany and Italy. The basis of imperialism was originally aimed at spreading Western ideas and culture throughout the world. Therefore, imperialism is not only seen as an oppression of the colonies but can be a driving factor for reforms that can contribute to the development of a nation, such as education, health, legislation and the government system as a real example that happened in the Indonesian state whose system of government followed the system during colonialism as well as some of its laws.

Like two sides of a coin, imperialism and colonialism cannot be separated, because where there is a practice of colonialism, there is also imperialism. And vice versa. Colonialism is the leg of imperialism. All forms of colonialism will culminate in Imperialism.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the

¹⁶ Wahjudi Djaja, *Sejarah Eropa: Dari Eropa Kuno Hingga Eropa Modern* (Penerbit Ombak, 2018).

¹⁷ Nuratikah Nuratikah and Wiyatmi Wiyatmi, "The West Hegemony and the East Resistance in Fictions Entitled 'Semua Untuk Hindia' and 'The Dan Pengkhianat' By Iksaka Banu," *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation* 4, no. 5 (2021): 206–12.

basis of imperialism does refer to the effort to spread Western ideas, ideas and culture throughout the world, under the pretext of community development. Imperialism, therefore, should not be seen merely as oppression, but should also be seen as an effort to encourage a nation through reforms towards the construction of a "backward" society.¹⁸ Through this coaching, several things can be deviated, such as; education, health and government systems as well as laws and regulations. Practically, colonialism also contributed in various fields. Just look at the legal system and schooling system left over from the Dutch colonial government in Indonesia, the community empowerment system in Australia by the British, and other colonial legacies.

Western historians divide Imperialism into two categories: Ancient/Classical Imperialism and Modern Imperialism. Classical Imperialism is countries that have succeeded in controlling other countries, or that have an Empire in that country, such as for example the Roman, Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, British, and French Empires each of which had colonies in the Asian, African and American regions before 1870, the purpose of this imperialism is not only because of economic factors, which is to control the abundant resources in the colonies, also has another motive, namely to spread Christianity and the glory of the country. The goal of Classical imperialism is 3G, namely Gold, Glory, and Gospel.

Modern Imperialism began after the Industrial Revolution in Britain in the 1870s. The driving factor is the existence of excess capital and goods in the industries of Western countries. So exploration was carried out to market these industrial goods in order to obtain maximum profits and obtain raw materials.¹⁹ Unfortunately, this ended with colonialism (imperialism). Because before the expedition took place, the explorers were entrusted with a holy mission to save mankind from all kinds of injustice as well as ignorance, and the motive for expanding the king's power. then, Western countries competed to find colonies in Asia, the Americas and Africa. They were looking for colonies to supply raw materials and as a marketing area for their industrial materials. The basis of imperialism is carried out for the sake of religion, they consider that it is a sacred duty of religion to save people from all kinds of oppression and injustice, especially to countries that are considered backward.²⁰ Christian missionaries considered this rescue mission to be *the White Man's Burden*.

The East India Company (EIC) was a British trading company established by royal charter by Queen Elizabeth I in 1600. Initially, EIC operated as a commercial entity that aimed to acquire commodities from the East, especially spices. But in India, the company has grown into a dominant political and military force. In the early 17th century, the EIC obtained permission from the Mughal powers to establish trading centers in several important cities

¹⁸ Nigel Harris, "Imperialism Today," in *World Crisis* (Routledge, 2021), <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003194194-4/imperialism-today-nigel-harris>.

¹⁹ Risno Tampilang, "Meta-Capitalism and Ecological Threats in Indonesia: A Postcolonial Study of the Indonesia Emas 2045 Discourse," *SERUNAI* 5, no. 1 (2025): 1–15.

²⁰ Maurianne Adams et al., "Religious Oppression," in *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* (Routledge, 2022), <https://www.taylorfrancis.com>.

such as Surat, Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta.²¹ The agreement marked the beginning of formal relations between the British and the local rulers of India within an economic and diplomatic framework.

The transformation of the EIC from merchant to ruler began in earnest after the Battle of Plassey in 1757. The British forces under Robert Clive managed to defeat the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj ud-Daulah. This victory allowed the EIC to instill direct influence in political and fiscal affairs in Bengal. This was reinforced through the Allahabad Treaty of 1765, which gave the EIC the right to collect taxes (*diwani*) in the regions of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. In practice, the EIC runs a *dual government system*, where symbolic power remains with the Nawab, but administrative and fiscal control is held entirely by the company. The development of this EIC was tried to be resisted by the Mughal Empire which had been established for a long time in India.²² But through a combination of diplomatic strategy and effective military force the EIC succeeded in driving it out, strengthening its position, and expanding control over Indian territories as the Mughals weakened into the 18th century.

By the end of the 18th and early 19th centuries, the EIC had taken over the government of large areas of India. They established a colonial bureaucratic system, printed currency, built infrastructure, and established a standing army. In fact, some experts refer to the EIC as the first form of "colonial corporation" that functioned like a modern state but was managed by private companies. The de facto rule of the EIC ended after the Indian Rebellion of 1857, which forced the British government to revoke the company's privileges and take over the Mughal empire directly as a colony under the British Empire through the Government of India Act 1858.²³

Background of the British entry into the Indian subcontinent

The history of British Imperialism in the Indian peninsula is inseparable from the history of European nations who have long carried out ocean expeditions in search of new places inhabited by humans. Powerful and established kingdoms from Europe such as Britain, Portugal, France, Spain and the Netherlands competed to find several new territories in the world that could be used for both natural and human resources. Britain as one of the kingdoms from Europe that did not stay silent in the expedition, one of the territories that the British managed to conquer was India. India experienced progress during the Mughal empire which was rich in agricultural products. At the same time, Europe is also progressing and looking for 3G (Gold, Glory and Gospel). The British came to trade to India and spread the 3G. In the 17th century, the British began to come to India to trade and search for spices. In 1611, the British obtained permission to invest in India.²⁴

²¹ Peter James Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America c. 1750-1783* (OUP Oxford, 2005), <https://books.google.com>.

²² Rosmaida Sinaga et al., "Kongsi Dagang Inggris (EIC) Dan Belanda (VOC): Pengaruhnya Dalam Jaringan Perdagangan Antar Benua," *AR-RUMMAN: Journal of Education and Learning Evaluation* 1, no. 2 (2024): 521–28.

²³ Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires*.

²⁴ Badri Yatim, "History of Islamic Civilization," *Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada*, 1997.

The imperialism carried out by the British against India during the Mughal Empire was a type of semi-monopoly imperialism. The imperialists exercised a monopoly to meet the needs of the spice trade that was very rare in Europe at that time. Likewise, Britain also carried out a monopoly for the sake of spices to trade. India became a target of the British because of advances in agriculture. At first, in 1608 AD, the arrival of the British came to India and began to ask the rulers of the Mughal Empire for permission to live in India. The request of the British was rejected raw by the Mughal Empire. The British were successfully allowed by the Mughal Empire in 1610 AD. Since then, the British established factories, lodges and formed a small army to guard the factories and lodges.²⁵ The east coast of India was also controlled and defended by the British, since then, the British continued to arrive and settle in the east of India with their families.

The trigger for British imperialism in India was the advancement of science in Europe. Technological and industrial advances to control the area. When Britain occupied its power in India. The progress of western civilization began to be felt by the Indian people, both Hindus and Muslims.²⁶ Especially Hindus who opened up the breadth of western civilization. As time went by, the British built an EIC (East India Company) which tried to control the eastern Indian territory. At that time, the British already felt able to control India through its monopoly. The local rulers also defended their power and resisted the British in 1761 AD. However, they failed to defeat the British, due to different military technological factors. As a result of the defeat to the British, they lost several territories – the territories of Oudh, Bengal, and Orissa fell to British rule.²⁷ The arrival of Britain to India was partly due to the lack of cash flow of European kingdoms due to defeats after the crusades. Likewise, the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Empire, which closed trade routes to Europe. Finally, they seized the spice-producing regions to meet the needs in Europe, especially during the winter. India is one of the spice producing areas controlled by the British. India is also a transit of trade commodities before being shipped to Europe.

Another factor was when the Suez canal in Egypt was opened by Ferdinand de Lessep. It is easy to sail to Asia. Before the Suez Canal was established, Europeans heading to Asia had to sail through the African continent. The existence of the Suez Canal no longer requires sailing around the African continent. The Suez Canal was used by the British to sail to India. Another reason the British came to India was because of the influence of the industrial revolution, where Britain had an industry that needed raw material sources or needed natural resources. At that time, Britain needed cotton and made India a cotton plantation. In addition, the UK needs markets to supplement a huge amount of income. This was the beginning of development and industrialization in India that continues to this day.

²⁵ Ading Kusdiana et al., "Western Imperialism and the Emergence of the Resurrection Phenomenon in the Islamic World in the XIX Century AD," *Methodology* 7, no. 02 (2024), <http://ijlrhss.com/paper/volume-7-issue-2/12-HSS-2566.pdf>.

²⁶ Fulki Ainur Rafi, *History of Modern Islamic Civilization: Western Imperialism, The Struggle for Independence and The Problems of Muslim Countries* (Blurb Incorporated, 2021), <https://books.google.com>.

²⁷ Yatim, "History of Islamic Civilization."

The Process of British Imperialism

The process of British occupation of the Indian Subcontinent began with the annexation of Bengal in 1757, when the power of Siraj al-Daula could easily be defeated in the Battle of Plassey.²⁸ Despite resistance from the local authorities, the resistance was soon resolved with a victory on the British side. This victory was very important for the growth of British power in India because it was with that victory that the British established themselves as *the de facto* undefeated ruler of Bengal. Then it became the beginning of British rule in the Indian peninsula which continued to be developed to other regions of the Indian peninsula.

According to the military strategy of the British, the power in India that should be taken into account was the Mughal Islamic Empire whose territory was only around Delhi and whose army strength was already known.²⁹ For this reason, the strategies that need to be carried out are as follows. *First*, let this kingdom go first, while looking at the situation on the right and left. *Second*, according to the military strategy, the existence of the Marathas whose purpose was inseparable from wealth and its key positions were also known by the British. Therefore, the British held a meeting with the leaders of the Maratha group at Najpurdan in Gujarat in 1780 AD. It was at that time that the British gave bribery tactics in the hope of weakening Maratha power. It was in these ways that the Maratha power became more and more slack, and even changed places, if the British really needed it. *Third*, in dealing with the Sikhs, the British were soft, even half-allowing, because the Sikhs at that time had joined the Gurkhas, the natives of Nepal and the British also allowed them to take the location of the Punjab area. However, in 1849 the British were forced to attack the Sikhs in Kashmir, raiding and defeating them, but not ending its history. Since then, Kashmir has been ruled by the British so only one has not been controlled, namely Delhi. Delhi has not been controlled because it is still controlled by the Mughal royal army which then the British slowly strategize to control Delhi.

The Indian Peninsula was under British rule from the 18th century to the 20th century. Although in the eighteenth century until later, the Mughal Dynasty remained in power, the real political and economic power holders after that were the British.³⁰ The British colonization of India was marked by the decline of the Mughal rulers and the rise of British rule in India. This process reached its peak in 1857 when there was a Mutini or Sepoy revolt against the British colonialists. At that time, the Mughal Dynasty which became a symbol of Islamic rule in India began to end, and officially, Britain began to rule. This also signifies British rule over almost all areas of the Indian peninsula.

After the defeat of the Mughal Dynasty, in 1857 AD India came under British rule which established its rule there. Lord Canning became the first viceroy and governor-general. One of

²⁸ Michael H. Fisher, "Contrasting Indian and British Concepts of Race and Authority in the East India Company Armies," in *Chinese and Indian Warfare-From the Classical Age to 1870* (Routledge, 2014), <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315742762-23/contrasting-indian-british-concepts-race-authority-east-india-company-armies-michael-fisher>.

²⁹ Major General GD Bakshi, *The Rise of Indian Military Power: Evolution of an Indian Strategic Culture: Evolution of an Indian Strategic Culture* (KW Publishers Pvt Ltd, 2015), <https://books.google.com>.

³⁰ Irfan Habib, "The Eighteenth Century in Indian Economic History," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 56 (1995): 358–78, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44158638>.

the most important things that the British did after successfully suppressing the rebellion was to carry out a reorganization of military power in India: This was done to unite the Indian forces into the British armed forces while under the nominal rule of the crown. Such a condition would be a guarantee that the Indian armed forces would become an imperial force. So that there is no longer a distance between the Indian community and British colonialism.

The British officially abolished the empire of the Mughal Dynasty and consolidated the regime in India. The British began to perfect the enactment of several law books such as the Criminal Code of 1860, the Criminal Law and Civil Procedure of 1861. and reorganizing the judicial administration system. Over the period of 1871-1882, they created a modern financial system, forming several provinces that accounted for their income and expenditure. The military forces were reorganized with the proportion between the British and the army from one to five to one to two. An ambitious step taken by British colonialists from a socio-cultural aspect was that the British began to introduce English and the Western education system. Britain also began to intervene in the issues of polygamy, slavery, women's freedom, the caste system, and some of the religious practices of Muslim and Hindu communities. Strictly speaking, the British imperial government has intervened a lot in the implementation of Muslim law and practiced Christianization.³¹ British rule in India lasted for more than 200 years until the end of the 2nd world war which ended British colonialism and began to give up independence for the Indian nation.

The Impact of Imperialism on the Mughal Empire

British imperialism spearheaded by the East India Company (EIC) had a profound impact on the political structure of the Mughal Empire. The Mughal Empire experienced a profound disintegration of the power structure due to British intervention. The East India Company's (EIC) dominance of the administrative and military structures gradually reduced the role of the Mughal emperor to a symbol with no real power. The Delhi palace, which was once the center of political legitimacy, has turned into a nostalgic symbol of glory that no longer has any influence over the Indian territories that are increasingly directly controlled by the British.³² As a result, in the early 18th century, the power of the emperor began to be only symbolic, while real power passed into the hands of the British officials and military.³³ One example is the dual system of government in Bengal which shows that although the Nawab of Bengal is still formally in power, all economic and security policies are determined by the British Council in Calcutta.

This shows that the royal institutions that for centuries were the center of political legitimacy in the Indian subcontinent were slowly being weakened. The symbolic power of the emperor continued to be maintained only as a tool of the ratification of British policy, so that by the middle of the 19th century, the Mughal Emperor's power in Delhi was already limited to

³¹ Ajid Thohir, *Islam Di Asia Selatan* (Humaniora, 2006), <https://digilib.uinsgd.ac.id/4231/>.

³² Christopher Alan Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*, vol. 1 (Cambridge University Press, 1987), <https://books.google.com>.

³³ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton University Press, 2020, <https://www.torrossa.com>.

a palace ritual and nothing more than a shadow of the past.³⁴ In addition, the British deliberately strengthened the local rulers or pro-British zamindars in order to create a new patronage network. The feudal structure that was once loyal to the Mughals changed the direction of loyalty for security and financial gain. This change led to political fragmentation and hampered the kingdom's ability to reform itself. British imperialism also had an impact on the fragmentation of Mughal domination. Areas such as Awadh, Hyderabad, and Mysore that once recognized symbolic Mughal power began to establish direct relations with the British, either through treaties or military annexations. This process gradually reduced the power of the Mughal dynasty to purely symbolic in the region of Delhi and its surroundings.

During the 1857 uprising, the last emperor, Bahadur Shah II, was used by the rebels as a symbol of anti-British unity. However, the British were able to crush the resistance easily because they had the support of several local Hindu and Muslim rulers. After the rebellion failed, he was arrested, tried, and exiled to Burma. The British government then officially abolished the Mughal Dynasty and established India as a colony under the direct control of the British Empire. This void of political authority makes society lose the cultural and spiritual references that have been represented by imperial institutions. Britain replaced it with a modern colonial bureaucratic system that was very different in terms of structure, values, and power relations. This process, according to Indonesian historians such as Taufik Abdullah, is a form of decontextualization of local politics in the colonial power structure.³⁵

The economic impact of British imperialism on the Mughal Empire was complex and multidimensional. One of the biggest transformations occurred in the agrarian structure. After gaining diwani rights in 1765, the East India Company gradually implemented new agrarian policies such as the Permanent Settlement in 1793. This policy introduced permanent land ownership for the zamindars, which in turn weakened the Mughal mansabdari system based on the distribution of land by the state.³⁶ The result of this policy was the centralization of land ownership in the hands of a handful of zamindar elites, while peasants lost their traditional rights to their land. The kingdom's revenues, which had previously relied on a loyalty-based farming system and distribution, were disrupted. The Mughal court no longer had a stable source of income as most of the territory was already controlled by the colonial tax system. The tax policies carried out by the East India Company also had a direct impact on the weakening of people's purchasing power and the reduction of the empire's fiscal resources. Records from the 1790 India Office Records (IOR) archives show that most of the revenue from the Bengal region was diverted to fund British administrative and military interests outside India, including in the Napoleonic Wars.³⁷

³⁴ Taymiya R. Zaman, "William Dalrymple. *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty*; Delhi, 1857. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007. Pp. 534. \$30.00 (Cloth).," *Journal of British Studies* 47, no. 1 (2008): 220–21.

³⁵ Taufik Abdullah, "Islam Dan Masyarakat: Pantulan Sejarah Indonesia," (*No Title*), 1987, <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1130282270336101376>.

³⁶ Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*, 1989, <https://philpapers.org/rec/STOTEU>.

³⁷ William Wilson Hunter, *Bengal Ms. Records: A Selected List of 14,136 Letters in the Board of Revenue, Calcutta, 1782-1807, with an Historical Dissertation and Analytical Index*, vol. 1 (WH Allen & Company, 1894), <https://books.google.com>.

The production of traditional crafts such as textiles and precious metals, which were once important economic sources for the empire and Indian society, also declined drastically. Indian textiles, once famous in the global market, were no longer able to compete after the British imposed high tariffs on imports to Europe, and flooded the Indian market with products resulting from the Industrial Revolution from Manchester and Birmingham. This condition caused many craftsmen to go out of business and move to farm laborers or manual labor. Sources from *the Report on Indian Industries* of 1832 note that the number of textile artisans in the Awadh region declined by more than 40% within 30 years due to competition from imported products. Similarly, the irrigation and agricultural systems, which had previously been managed with the support of the Mughal power center, suffered a setback due to the colonial government. With this policy, the lives of a number of indigenous peoples, lowly employees, small traders, artisans, and workers suffered greatly.³⁸ Along with the large level of demand for raw materials for industrial needs, the British government began to enforce the policy that the fulfillment of these raw materials must be supplied from India.³⁹ Finally many sources of raw materials were actually exploited by the British.

A report from an EIC official in Bihar in 1810 stated that the productive lands were converted into opium plantations whose results were monopolized by the colonial government for export to China. The result of this agricultural conversion is the instability of the supply of staple foods, which then triggers various food crises and famine. One of the worst disasters was the Bengal famine of 1770 which caused the deaths of about 10 million people. An official report from the EIC Board of Directors states that commercial policies and logistical failures are the main factors that exacerbate hunger. The abolition of the local trade monopoly previously owned by the kingdom also made the Mughal state's income plummet. The collapse of the local economy after the British intervention was a form of disappearance of the traditional fiscal capacity that underpinned the kingdom's autonomy. This condition exacerbated the dependence of the kingdom and local elites on the British, both for funding and security. In some cases, the palace in Delhi even relied on food and security assistance from the British command at Fort William.⁴⁰ This dependence symbolically indicates the destruction of Mughal economic and political sovereignty by 1857.

British imperialism brought profound social changes to the people of the Mughal domain. One of the most striking impacts was the formation of a new pro-colonial social class. Local elites, such as zamindars and bureaucrats who worked closely with the East India Company, were granted certain privileges, including land ownership rights and administrative positions. This created a sharp social inequality between them and the common people who had previously been protected by the royal patronage system.⁴¹ The changes in the education

³⁸ Zaahidah Aufaa Ahdillah et al., "Heritage of Islamic Civilization in Persia Era of Shah Abbas I (1588-1629 CE)," *Tarikh: Journal of Islamic History and Civilization* 1, no. 2 (2025): 84–99.

³⁹ Ira M. Lapidus and Ghufon A. Masadi, *Sejarah Sosial Ummat Islam: Bagian Kesatu Dan Dua/Ira. M. Lapidus*, RajaGrafindonesia Persada, 2000, <https://senayan.iain-palangkaraya.ac.id>.

⁴⁰ Abdullah, "Islam Dan Masyarakat."

⁴¹ Barbara D. Metcalf and Thomas R. Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), <https://books.google.com>.

system pushed by the British also replaced the traditional Islamic madrassas and education systems that had long been the intellectual foundation of Mughal society. British-style educational institutions such as Calcutta Madrasa (1781) and Fort William College (1800) were introduced to educate the Indian elite to understand and support the colonial system. This led to cultural alienation from the previously dominant Islamic intellectual tradition.⁴² The modernization of the law through the colonial courts also replaced Islamic law (*sharia*) with the British legal system. In the report of the India Law Commission (1835), it was stated that the main aim of the legal reform was to establish a "more rational and secular" legal structure to support modern governance. However, this also weakens the authority of the ulama and the religious-based social structure.

The penetration of Western culture through literature, architecture, and lifestyle also changed the identity of urban communities in the centers of Mughal power. The emergence of the Anglo-Indian lifestyle became a symbol of a new modernity that was contrary to traditional norms. This led to an identity crisis for most of the Muslim population who saw Western culture as a threat to the legacy of Islamic civilization. Changes in the agrarian structure led to forced urbanization and rural poverty. Many farmers lost their land due to the system of fixed and high taxes (*permanent settlement*), while cities grew rapidly without adequate infrastructure. This created pockets of poverty in urban areas such as Calcutta and Lucknow, as noted in *the Colonial Urbanization Reports*. In addition, the psychological impact of British domination also gave rise to resistance in the form of rebellions and renewal movements. The 1857 uprising was a form of accumulated anger against social, economic, and religious changes that were perceived as an insult to the identity and dignity of the local community.⁴³ Thus, the impact of imperialism on Mughal society was not only material but also cultural and symbolic, resulting in a major transformation in the patterns of social relations, identities, and knowledge systems.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the emergence and development of British imperialism in the Mughal Empire was a complex historical process, involving the interaction between internal and external factors. Internally, the weakening of the political structure of the Mughal Empire due to succession conflicts, administrative disintegration, and a decline in military power were the main factors that opened up opportunities for British power through the East India Company (EIC). Meanwhile, from the external side, the British economic interest in the trade in Indian spices and produce became the main driver of colonial expansion which ultimately transformed into political and military domination. The process of British imperialism in India did not take place instantaneously, but through a gradual strategy that began from economic domination to political and administrative control. The British took advantage of the internal weaknesses of

⁴² Francis Robinson, *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia* (Oxford University Press New Delhi, 2000), https://www.colleenluggent.com/exams/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/11/islam_history_south_asia.pdf.

⁴³ Rudrangshu Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt, 1857-1858: A Study of Popular Resistance* (Orient Blackswan, 2002), <https://books.google>.

the Mughal Empire to expand its influence, until finally in 1858 the formal rule of the kingdom ended and was replaced by direct British colonial rule. This phenomenon shows that imperialism is not only a form of territorial expansion, but also a hegemonic instrument that transforms the social, economic, and cultural systems of local communities.

The impact of British imperialism on the Mughal Empire was vast and multidimensional. Politically, there is a loss of royal sovereignty and the marginalization of local elites from the government system. Economically, the implementation of the tax system and trade monopolies has led to massive exploitation of resources and a decline in people's welfare. From a social and cultural point of view, British imperialism brought about changes in values, education, and social structure that led to a shift in the orientation of society from an Islamic basis to a secular and materialistic colonial order. This impact slowly eroded the ideological and spiritual power of the Mughal Empire which for centuries had been a symbol of the splendor of Islamic civilization in South Asia. The study also confirms that British imperialism towards the Mughal Empire cannot be understood in a purely political and economic framework, but must be seen as part of a global ideological project that asserts the dominance of the West over the East. By combining historical perspectives and theories of imperialism, this study shows that colonialism has created fundamental changes in the patterns of power, knowledge, and identity of Indian society.

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