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Q2

Clarify how mid-eighteenth century India was beset with the spectre of a fragmented polity.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · GS I · 10 marks · World's Physical Geography

Salient features of world's physical geography.

Core demand of the question

- Clarify how mid-eighteenth century India was beset with the spectre of a fragmented polity
- Cover Mughal decline, **successor states**, Afghan-Maratha conflict, and European companies
- Keep the explanation within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

After 1707 the Mughal emperor lost the capacity to rule provinces in fact.

Nadir Shah and Abdali exposed Delhi's military hollowness.

Bengal, Awadh, Hyderabad, Marathas, Sikhs, and Mysore became separate armed powers.

Panipat 1761 showed even the Marathas were not a single state.

Company victories in the Carnatic and Bengal fitted into this broken order.

Flow diagram

Mughal centre weak -> Nawabs Nizam

Mughal centre weak -> Marathas Sikhs Mysore

Mughal centre weak -> Abdali raids

Nawabs Nizam -> Fragmented polity

Marathas Sikhs Mysore -> Fragmented polity

Abdali raids -> Fragmented polity

Company wars -> Fragmented polity

Conclusion

- Describe fragmentation as many sovereignties, not as an empty land, because **successor states** were often vigorous.
- **Link the spectre to security and trade:** no single power could guarantee the roads from Bengal to Delhi or from Surat to the Deccan.

Mid-eighteenth century India was beset by a fragmented polity because the Mughal centre had failed while Nawabs, Marathas, Afghans, and European companies all claimed pieces of the same realm. Unity of the map existed only as a fading imperial name.

Facts & figures

Aurangzeb's death, 1707

Conventional start of rapid Mughal succession crisis and provincial autonomy.

Nadir Shah, 1739

Persian sack of Delhi that stripped treasure and prestige from the empire.

Third Battle of Panipat, 1761

Abdali's defeat of the Marathas that checked their northern drive and deepened political split.

Plassey, 1757

Company victory that turned Bengal into a British fiscal base inside a fragmented India.

Successor states

Awadh, Bengal, Hyderabad, and others that kept Mughal forms but acted as independent courts.

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