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Mains Practice Questions

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Q. The roots of the disintegration of the Mughal empire may be found in the Indian economy and external incursions. Discuss. (250 words)

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Approach

- Start by writing about the expanse of Mughal empire in the early 18th century.
- Discuss the various reasons behind the disintegration of Mughal empire giving special emphasis on - economy and external incursions.
- Conclude suitably by writing future implications of the disintegration.

Introduction

- Disintegration of the Mughal empire was a decisive event in the history of India which led to the rise of different regional powers as well as British rule for over 200 years.
- Beginning of the disintegration of Mughal empire can be traced to the strong rule of Aurangzeb.
- Aurangzeb inherited a large empire, yet he adopted a policy of extending it further to the farthest geographical limits in the south at the great expense of men and materials.

Body

Reasons for disintegration of Mughal empire:

- **Economic reasons:** The Mughal economy was affected by a number of reasons which in turn led to disintegration of the Mughal empire. Some of the factors are as following:
 - **War of succession:** Due to the absence of any fixed rule of succession, the Mughal dynasty often had to face civil wars between the princes.
These wars of succession became increasingly destructive and fierce during the 18th century which resulted in great loss of life and property.
 - **Jagirdars:** The economy of the empire deteriorated due to the Jagir crisis as many Jagirdars were contesting for a limited number of jagirs which in turn led to further political crisis between the nobles.
To increase profit with a limited number of jagirs, the Jagirdars started to maintain less than expected number of troops which weakened the army of the Mughal empire.
 - **Foreign invasion:** After the death of Aurangzeb, due to the weakness of later Mughals, many foreign invasions struck the empire. Such invasions resulted in plundering much of the wealth of the empire. It worsened the economy of an already declining power.
 - **Empty Treasury:** Shah Jahan's zeal for construction (eg Taj Mahal) had depleted the treasury. Aurangzeb's long wars in the south had further drained the exchequer.

- **External incursions:** A series of foreign invasions affected Mughal Empire terribly.
 - **Invasion by Nadir Shah:** The condition of Mughal empire with its incompetent rulers, weak administration and poor military strength attracted foreign invaders.

Nadir Shah, the ruler of Persia, attacked the empire in 1739. Nadir Shah's invasion gave a crushing blow to the already tottering Mughal Empire and hastened the process of its disintegration.
 - **Invasion by Ahmad Shah Abdali:** In 1761, during the reign of Shah Alam II, Ahmad Shah Abdali, the independent ruler of Afghanistan, invaded India. He conquered Punjab and marched towards Delhi. Ahmad Shah Abdali's invasion further weakened the Mughal Empire.
 - Further, the emergence of **British and other European powers** in the Indian subcontinent also posed as a challenge took away the last hope of the revival of the Mughal Empire.

Conclusion

- The disintegration of Mughal Empire made the soil fertile for the colonisation by the British.
- In 1857, Bahadur Shah II played an important symbolic role and with his death in 1862, the Mughal Empire came to an end.
- Thus, decline of economy and external incursions acted as termites in the strong wood of mughal empire.