

British Expansion in India

Chapter 2: Reshaping India's Political Map · Topic 1

Key Concept

The British East India Company initially came to India for trade but gradually gained political power, especially after victories like the Battle of Plassey in 1757.

The British used a policy of alliances and treaties, like the Subsidiary Alliance, where Indian rulers accepted British protection but lost independent control over their armies and foreign policy.

The Doctrine of Lapse was another policy, allowing the British to annex a kingdom if its ruler died without a natural heir, further expanding British territory.

Through a combination of military conquest, diplomacy, and administrative control, the British East India Company eventually controlled most of the Indian subcontinent by the mid-19th century.

Quick Revision Notes

- The British East India Company initially came for trade.
- The Battle of Plassey (1757) was a key turning point.
- The Subsidiary Alliance gave rulers protection but reduced independence.
- Rulers under this alliance lost control of armies and foreign policy.
- The Doctrine of Lapse allowed annexation without a natural heir.
- These policies expanded British territory significantly.
- The British used military conquest and diplomacy together.
- By the mid-19th century, the British controlled most of India.

Practice Questions

- 1 Research the Battle of Plassey and its outcome.
- 2 Explain the Subsidiary Alliance in your own words.
- 3 Research one kingdom annexed under the Doctrine of Lapse.
- 4 Discuss how trade turned into political control.
- 5 Create a timeline of British expansion in India.
- 6 Discuss why these policies caused resentment among Indian rulers.