



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Administrative Policies Under Aurangzeb

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Abstract:

Aurangzeb was the sixth Mughal emperor (1658-1707) and had one of the most complex and longest rules in Indian history. His administration was characterized by a strong centralized government with strict adherence to Islamic law, and military expansion/wars/conflicts. Aurangzeb sought to strengthen the imperial authority and maintain law and order over his vast empire with rich diversity. However, his various policies resulted in the resistance and conflict with his people and neighbouring kingdoms. Aurangzeb's administration was highly centralized and the emperor himself would exercise direct control over state functions, including revenue and military affairs and even judicial matters. This made him distinct from previous emperors who were not as deeply involved directly in day-to-day governance, personally reviewed petitions and issued orders. He emphasized efficiency, discipline, and moral accountability and thus dismissed corrupt or inefficient administrators more often than previous Mughal rulers.

Aurangzeb's administration was also strongly influenced by Islamic principles and he also reinforced the use of Sharia law and compiled a comprehensive series of Islamic jurisprudence that guided the judicial and administrative decisions during his rule called the "Fatawa-i-Alamgiri". Aurangzeb's policies however had negative effects on the empire as it became more and more divided because of the focus of Muslim laws. The reimplementing of Jizya (a tax on non Muslims) in 1679 only added to this as this was a jump from former Mughal ruler, Akbar's policies which abolished this tax. Aurangzeb's vision of an Islamic state while legitimizing his rule alienated large sections of the non-Muslim population. Aurangzeb also retained much of the Mughal mansabdari and jagirdari system but he enforced stricter supervision. This was because he launched or wanted to launch multiple military campaigns as well as to defend and retake territory. This economic policy was effective on bringing in wealth on the short term as it strained on the populace. Many people were unhappy with the heavy taxes and Aurangzeb's military campaigns were unsuccessful on bringing on more wealth. This only highlights Aurangzeb's reign without tackling in the details as to the why and how.

Intro

The reign of Aurangzeb (1658–1707) marks a crucial phase in the political and administrative history of the Mughal Empire, one that continues to generate extensive scholarly debate. Historians differ on whether Aurangzeb's administration represented a continuation of established Mughal governing traditions or a decisive shift toward centralization, militarization, and ideological statecraft. Scholars such as Ali (1997) and Husain (2002) emphasize that Aurangzeb inherited a complex administrative framework built around the mansabdari–jagirdari system, elite integration, and negotiated relationships between the imperial centre and provincial authorities. This institutional structure enabled the empire to sustain territorial expansion and political authority, yet during Aurangzeb's reign its internal strains became increasingly visible, especially as prolonged warfare and imperial overstretch tested the limits of revenue and administrative cohesion (Richards, 1993). The Mughal administrative order retained many of the institutional continuities developed under earlier emperors, including the graded ranking of nobles, revenue assignments, and a hierarchical provincial bureaucracy staffed by subahdars, diwans, faujdars, and local revenue officials (Sarkar, 1920). However, the context in which these institutions operated transformed significantly during Aurangzeb's rule. Chandra (2007) and Habib (2016) argue that prolonged military campaigns — particularly in the Deccan — intensified fiscal pressure and heightened competition among nobles for jagirs, creating conditions that contributed to what historians later described as a “jagirdari crisis.” This imbalance between military expansion, revenue capacity, and administrative resources weakened elite cohesion and exposed structural vulnerabilities within the imperial system. Aurangzeb's personal governing style further shaped the character of Mughal administration. He is often portrayed as an austere ruler committed to moral discipline, administrative oversight, and legal-religious legitimacy. Earlier colonial historiography tended to interpret these traits as rigid and authoritarian, suggesting that his policies accelerated imperial decline. However, more recent scholarship presents a more nuanced interpretation. Hasan (2004) and Alam (1986) demonstrate that Mughal authority under Aurangzeb continued to rely on negotiated relationships with regional elites and local power structures, indicating that governance remained flexible, adaptive, and context-dependent rather than uniformly centralized. Administrative tensions nevertheless intensified during the late seventeenth century. The expansion of imperial military commitments in the Deccan, coupled with limited fiscal elasticity, generated rivalry within the mansabdari elite and created competition for revenue assignments (Ali, 1997; Husain, 2002). In many provinces, particularly in western India and newly incorporated Deccan territories, imperial rule functioned through negotiation rather than direct bureaucratic command. Habib's (2016) regional study illustrates how local economic, religious, and social contexts shaped administrative practice, revealing significant variation in how imperial policies were implemented across different regions. Historians also situate Aurangzeb's administrative experience within the broader framework of early modern state formation. Richards (2004) and Mukhia (2004) interpret the Mughal Empire as a military-fiscal state comparable to other early modern polities that confronted pressures arising from continuous warfare, reliance on agrarian revenue, and the political management of aristocratic warrior elites.

The administrative dilemmas of Aurangzeb's reign reflect not merely individual policy failures, but deeper structural limitations inherent within the Mughal imperial system. This paper examines political administration under Aurangzeb through three interrelated dimensions: the functioning of the mansabdari–jagirdari framework, the dynamics of centre province relations, and the administrative consequences of militarization and fiscal stress. Drawing on foundational works such as Ali's (1997) analysis of the Mughal nobility, Husain's (2002) examination of political structure, Sarkar's (1920) institutional account, and more recent regional and structural studies by Habib (2016), Hasan (2004), and Richards (1993, 2004), the study seeks to present a balanced interpretation that moves beyond simplistic narratives of decline or absolutism. Instead, it demonstrates how Aurangzeb's administration combined institutional continuity with evolving political pressures, revealing both the strengths and inherent constraints of Mughal imperial governance. The subsequent sections will develop this inquiry in a structured manner. WPR5 (Main Content-1) analyzes the structure and functioning of the administrative system under Aurangzeb, focusing on the mansabdari–jagirdari institutions and elite politics. WPR6 (Main Content-2) examines centre–province relations, highlighting how imperial authority was negotiated across diverse regional contexts. WPR7 (Main Content-3) explores the administrative consequences of prolonged

warfare, fiscal pressures, and elite competition during Aurangzeb's later reign. Finally, WPR8 (Conclusion) synthesizes these findings to assess how Aurangzeb's administrative policies reflected both the resilience and the structural limits of the Mughal state.

Structure and Functioning of the Mughal Administrative System under Aurangzeb:

The administrative system of the Mughal Empire under Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707) represents one of the most complex and intensively tested phases in the history of pre-modern imperial governance in South Asia. Rather than introducing fundamentally new institutions, Aurangzeb inherited a mature administrative structure whose foundations had been laid during the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan. This structure was based on the interlinked institutions of the mansabdari system, the jagirdari revenue assignment, and a hierarchically organized central and provincial bureaucracy. What distinguished Aurangzeb's reign was the unprecedented scale at which these institutions were required to function, as territorial expansion, prolonged warfare, and ideological governance placed extraordinary demands on administrative capacity (Ali, 1997, pp. 1–6; Richards, 1993, pp. 110–118). Scholars increasingly agree that the administrative difficulties of Aurangzeb's reign cannot be explained solely through personal policy choices or religious orientation. Instead, they reflect deeper structural tensions within the Mughal system itself, which became increasingly visible as imperial ambition expanded faster than fiscal and administrative resources (Chandra, 2007, pp. 228–231). This section analyzes the structure and functioning of Mughal administration under Aurangzeb by examining its elite organization, fiscal foundations, bureaucratic mechanisms, provincial governance, judicial administration, and local-level functioning.

The Mansabdari System: Hierarchy, Integration, and Control

The mansabdari system was the cornerstone of Mughal political administration. It organized imperial service through ranked offices known as mansabs, which combined military, administrative, and ceremonial functions. Each mansab was defined by two numerical ranks: *zat*, indicating personal status and proximity to the emperor, and *sawar*, denoting the number of cavalry a noble was required to maintain (Sarkar, 1920, pp. 45–52). This dual ranking allowed the emperor to regulate both the political prestige and military obligations of his officials. Under Aurangzeb, the mansabdari system continued to perform its integrative role by incorporating a remarkably diverse elite. Athar Ali's statistical analysis demonstrates that the Mughal nobility during Aurangzeb's reign included Turanis and Iranis of Central Asian and Persian origin, as well as Rajputs, Afghans, Marathas, and Deccani Muslims (Ali, 1997, pp. 31–38). This diversity reflected the empire's territorial expansion and its reliance on political inclusion as a strategy of governance. By assigning mansabs to elites from conquered regions, Aurangzeb sought to transform potential opponents into imperial stakeholders. At the same time, the mansabdari system functioned as a mechanism of imperial control. Promotions, demotions, and transfers were exercised at the emperor's discretion, ensuring that no noble could claim hereditary or autonomous authority (Ali, 1997, pp. 67–72). Frequent transfers of officials prevented the consolidation of local power bases but also undermined administrative continuity. However, the political effectiveness of the mansabdari system increasingly depended on fiscal sustainability. As military commitments expanded, Aurangzeb raised the number and rank of mansabdars to meet operational needs. Chandra notes that this expansion placed severe pressure on the system, as the number of high-ranking mansabdars grew without a corresponding expansion in revenue resources (Chandra, 2007, pp. 231–235). Competition within the elite intensified, contributing to factional rivalries and weakening administrative cohesion.

Jagirdari System:

Fiscal Foundations and Structural Strain The jagirdari system constituted the fiscal backbone of Mughal administration. Rather than paying officials in cash, the state assigned them jagirs—territorial units from which they were authorized to collect land revenue equivalent to their sanctioned salary (Sarkar, 1920, pp. 79–85). These assignments were transferable and non-hereditary, reinforcing imperial authority while limiting elite autonomy. In theory, the jagirdari system ensured fiscal efficiency and political control. In practice, under Aurangzeb, it became a major source of administrative tension. Prolonged warfare dramatically increased military expenditure and compelled the state to extract higher revenues from agrarian society (Richards, 1993, pp. 185–190). This intensified pressure on cultivators and intermediaries, leading to declining productivity and resistance in several regions. This situation was an emerging jagirdari crisis, marked by a widening gap between the revenue claims of the ruling class and the productive capacity of the countryside (Chandra, 2007, pp. 236–240). Many jagirs were officially over-assessed, yielding far less revenue than expected. Mansabdars frequently complained of arrears, while revenue officials faced growing difficulties in enforcement. Aurangzeb attempted to address these problems through stricter revenue assessment, tighter supervision of jagirdars, and punitive action against corruption. However, such measures often exacerbated local tensions rather than resolving underlying structural issues.

Central Administration and the Personalization of Power:

At the centre of Mughal administration was the imperial court, which functioned as both the political and administrative nucleus of the empire. Key offices included the wazir (diwan-i ala), responsible for revenue and finance; the mir Bakhshi, in charge of military appointments and pay; the sadr-us-sudur, overseeing judicial and religious matters; and the khan-i-saman, managing the imperial household (Sarkar, 1920, pp. 19–28). Aurangzeb retained this institutional framework but exercised an unusually high degree of personal oversight. Aurangzeb's governance was shaped by a strong moral and legal conception of kingship, emphasizing personal accountability and discipline (Husain, 2002, pp. 112–118). The emperor scrutinized financial accounts, reviewed appointments, and intervened directly in administrative disputes, reflecting his desire to maintain ethical governance and imperial control. Yet, Mughal administration under Aurangzeb remained fundamentally personalized rather than bureaucratic. Patronage networks, court factions, and informal negotiations continued to shape administrative outcomes (Ali, 1997, pp. 95–101). The emperor's authority rested not only on institutions but also on his ability to manage elite relationships—a task that became increasingly difficult as administrative burdens multiplied. This personalization was further complicated by Aurangzeb's prolonged absence from the imperial heartland after he relocated the court to the Deccan in 1681. Geographic displacement weakened central supervision over northern provinces and disrupted established channels of communication (Richards, 1993, pp. 200–204). Thus, while central authority remained theoretically intact, its practical effectiveness declined.

Provincial Administration:

Structure and Constraints Below the central administration, the Mughal Empire was divided into subahs, each governed by a subahdar responsible for military and executive authority. Financial administration was entrusted to a diwan, who reported directly to the central treasury, while faujdars handled law and order and qazis oversaw judicial matters (Sarkar, 1920, pp. 103–110). This separation of powers was intended to prevent the emergence of provincial autonomy. In practice, provincial administration depended heavily on negotiation and cooperation.

Mughal officials adapted imperial regulations to local political, economic, and social conditions (Hasan, 2004, pp. 143–149). Merchants, zamindars, and religious institutions played a crucial role in mediating imperial authority, ensuring administrative continuity even when central supervision weakened. The Deccan posed particularly severe challenges. Newly conquered territories lacked stable revenue structures and faced persistent resistance from local powers (Husain, 2002, pp. 201–207). Provincial officials were often forced to prioritize

military security and revenue extraction over long-term administrative consolidation, undermining governance effectiveness.

Judicial and Religious Administration

Aurangzeb placed increased emphasis on judicial and religious administration as part of his conception of ethical kingship. The *sadr-us-sudur* supervised waqf endowments, madrasas, and judicial appointments, ensuring conformity with Islamic legal norms (Sarkar, 1920, pp. 29–33). This emphasis reinforced legal order but also introduced ideological considerations into administrative practice. Judicial authority was often negotiated at the local level, shaped by customary law and social norms rather than imperial decree alone (Habib, 2016, pp. 154–158). This flexibility allowed governance to function but limited the uniform application of imperial policy.

Local Administration and Agrarian Mediation:

At the grassroots level, Mughal administration relied heavily on zamindars and village officials. Despite imperial efforts to regulate them, zamindars remained indispensable intermediaries between the state and agrarian society (Chandra, 2007, pp. 242–245). Their cooperation was essential for revenue collection, policing, and dispute resolution. Habib's micro-study of Braj illustrates how local administration was embedded within regional social and religious structures (Habib, 2016, pp. 156–160). Imperial authority was exercised through negotiation, compromise, and selective coercion rather than uniform enforcement, underscoring the practical limits of Mughal governance.

Overall Assessment of Administrative Functioning

Taken together, the Mughal administrative system under Aurangzeb remained structurally coherent but functionally strained. The *mansabdari* and *jagirdari* systems continued to organize imperial authority, yet their effectiveness declined under the combined pressures of military expansion, fiscal exhaustion, and elite competition. Developments within the broader constraints of early modern military-fiscal states, emphasizing that such tensions were systemic rather than exceptional (Richards, 2004, pp. 401–405). Aurangzeb's administration thus embodied both the resilience and fragility of Mughal governance: capable of sustaining imperial authority over vast territories, yet increasingly unable to reconcile imperial ambition with administrative sustainability.

The Centre-Province Relations and Regional Governance

The relation between the center and the provinces formed the axis of governance during Aurangzeb's reign. Though the empire had a complex administrative system, a more lenient approach was required to make sure rules were effective through negotiations with elites, intermediaries, and local powers. It can be defined as being "layered and mediated" rather than a central uniform rule (Hasan, 2004, pp.12-15) This system of rule's stability would constantly be tested during Aurangzeb's rule.

Framework of Provincial Administration

The Mughal empire was divided into different provinces known as subahs, and each one was under the administration of a subahdar or governor. The subahdar exercised executive and military control while financial administration was looked after and entrusted to the diwan, who directly reported to the royal treasury. Law and order were maintained by the faujdar, and judicial matters were supervised by the Qazi (Sarkar, 1920, pp. 103-107). This long and complex chain of command was implemented so that the emperor could focus more centrally and expansion while the states or provinces could remain autonomous.

Despite the freedom, the states were never fully bureaucratic, as in western India imperial officers routinely relied on merchants, bankers, zamindars, and religious institutions to implement state directives (Hasan, 2004, pp. 143-147). Revenue assessment and collection, enforcement of laws and even military provisioning were conducted through the local network administration. As such, Mughal rule can be said to have been a partnership between the central and state administration which both strengthened and restrained the imperial power.

Local Elites and the Authority

As mentioned previously, under the rule of Aurangzeb, the local elites had a major role in taking part in the empire. As the Mughal empire expanded to the Deccan and Maratha territories, the states already had a system of administration and as such the imperial officers were forced to accommodate to them (Alam, 1986, pp. 28-32). Instead of direct rule, it was easier to just negotiate with the existing local powers to rule in the name of the Mughal emperor. Revenue, offices and military obligations were often bargained over.

One example of this was in Gujarat where imperial orders were passed and filtered through the local brokers who interpreted them according to the regional interests (Hasan, 2004, pp. 156-160). The subahdars often would rely on the rich and influential merchant families for credit and logistics and these arrangements blurred the boundary between state and society as well as diluted central authority.

Fiscal Pressure and Provincial Autonomy

The increasing fiscal pressure from Aurangzeb had a significant impact on the state-province relationship. Because Aurangzeb wanted to expand his rule, military costs went up and so he had to demand higher remittances from provinces, often without considering the local conditions (Chandra, 2007, pp. 236-238) and the diwans were instructed to enforce strict collection, leading to conflicts with the zamindars and cultivators.

Such pressures inadvertently strengthened local powers instead of as they positioned themselves as the protectors of local interests against the imperial exactions (Alam, 1986, pp. 44-47). It became so bad that by the late 18th century, many provincial governors and revenue collectors developed semi-autonomous bases which slowly chipped away power from the central imperial state.

Communication Surveillance and Limits of Centralization

State powers were slowly becoming more independent and stronger did not go unnoticed, and it was anticipated that the state might try to break away from imperial rule. To control this the Mughal state employed elaborate systems of correspondence, inspections, and overlapping jurisdictions. Imperial news-writers (waqia-navis) reported on provincial affairs, while auditors reviewed accounts to prevent embezzlement (Sarkar, 1920, pp. 115-118). Aurangzeb personally issued detailed farmans to regulate appointments and revenue practices.

Such mechanisms did help but it could not fully compensate for such a vast empire and its infrastructural limits (Richards, 1993, pp. 210-212). Travel time was too long, and information took its time to be received and was often unreliable. Thus, centralization was more of an ideal system of governance than a consistent practice.

Regional Variation in Administrative Practice

One primary feature of Aurangzeb's reign of the Mughal empire was that it was a regional diversity of administration. Long settled provinces like Bengal or Gujarat collaborated with Mughal institutions with relative stability and commercial success with the existing elites (Hasan, 2004, pp. 170-173). This contrasted with the Deccan where constant military intervention was required to keep peace and uphold fragile administrative structures (Husain, 2002, pp. 204-207).

The difference and variation of administration across different areas prove that Mughal rule was not monolithic. The same laws and regulations established in each of the regions were all received differently depending on the local ecology, social composition, and political history. Thus centre-province relations were dynamic and shaped by negotiations rather than direct command.

Assessment

The centre-province relations tested the adaptability of the Mughal administrative system to its limits and proved that in the end it eventually failed to hold such weight. The hierarchy of subahdars, diwans, and faujdars did make it seem like authority was centralized and lied with the imperial throne. In reality however it was thanks to the cooperation of the local elites and local institutions, be it due to fear or support of the Mughal empire that the system was effective. In areas like the Deccan, military power was used over negotiations. By the end of Aurangzeb's rule, the heavy fiscal taxes and prolonged warfare took its toll and weakened the imperial centre (Chandra, 2007, pp. 236-240; Richards, 1993, pp. 200-203). The provincial powers slowly gained more authority and asserted their interests over the imperial throne and slowly the Mughal emperor lost the hold of power over the vast empire due to lack of resources and dislike.

Militarization, Fiscal Pressure, and Administrative Consequences

The later years of Aurangzeb's reign were marked and defined by an unprecedented level of militarization that shook his rule and administration. While it is true that conflicts and disputes over power and territories were conducted through warfare, diplomacy, etc., the campaigns during Aurangzeb's rule proved to be too expensive with very little results. His Deccan Campaign is one such example. It had placed immense pressure on finances, administrative institutions, and cohesion. Thus historians argue that the strains of Aurangzeb's reign must be understood within the context of a military-fiscal empire whose governing structures were stretched to their limits (Richards, 1993, pp. 185-190)

Expansion of Military Commitments

Aurangzeb's reign, in Mughal history is recorded to be the longest in their history. After the consolidation of North India, Aurangzeb dedicated much of the resources to expand the kingdom i.e., campaigns in the Deccan, which was against the Sultanates of Bijapur and Golconda and subsequently the Marathas. These campaigns transformed the Deccan into a permanent theatre of war rather than a zone of temporary conquest (Husain, 2002, pp. 190-194). Maintaining large standing armies across vast the vast stretches of the empire required enormous logistic and strategic coordination, including provisioning, transport and constant mobilization of manpower

(Richards, 1993, pp. 187-189). The Mughal army did succeed in expanding their establishment and the number of mansabdars rose accordingly. But there was a crucial issue and that was the administrative system established by Aurangzeb, though efficient could not keep up as it was never designed to sustain a prolonged militarization without corresponding to fiscal expansion, leading to strain on imperial resources.

Fiscal Pressures and Revenue Collection

The strains of militarization without much success took its toll and strained the empire. The expenditure on military campaigns took a huge chunk of imperial revenue, which in turn compelled or forced the state to increase its intensity on revenue extraction from the agrarian society. The Mughal revenue system, which depended heavily on land revenue, lacked the flexibility to accommodate sustained military expansion (Chandra, 2007, pp. 236-239). The heavy taxation resulted in the jagirs being over-assessed, and revenue officials being pressured to meet unrealistic targets. This led to widespread debt, conflicts with zamindars, and a decline in agricultural activity and productivity in several regions. The burden of tax fell most heavily on the cultivators, contributing to rural distress and in some areas, open resistance (Chandra, 2007, pp. 240-242).

Jagirdari Crisis and Elite Discontent

The increase in fiscal demands of war only worsened an already existing problem that emerged earlier in Aurangzeb's reign called the jagirdari crisis. Mansabdars were dependent on jagirs for their income and many assignments failed to yield sufficient revenue due to war, flight of cultivators, or administrative inefficiency (Ali, 1997, pp. 105-108). There was also an increasing dissatisfaction among the nobles in the Mughal empire as delays in payment and declining income undermined loyalty and morale (Ali, 1997, pp. 110-114). Competition for productive Jagirs intensified factional rivalries within the ruling elites, weakening administrative cohesion. Adding to this, the constant mobilization of troops also strained the system that was designed to sustain imperial authority.

Overstretching Administration and Challenges to Governance

The prolonged warfare that Aurangzeb had hoped to have ended quickly resulted in thinning out or overstretching of his administration. Aurangzeb's decision to remain in the Deccan for extended periods weakened the routine supervision over northern provinces and disrupted channels of governance (Richards, 1993, pp. 200-203). The provincial rulers in the north became bold and exercised more autonomy in the absence of Aurangzeb's routine supervision. This overstretch forced administrators to prioritize immediate military and fiscal concerns over long term governance (Richards, 1993, pp. 200-203). Civil administration, judicial oversight, and infrastructural maintenance suffered as all profits and resources were sent to support sustaining the war effort.

Impact on Provincial and Local Administration

The consequences of administration were perhaps most impactful at the provincial and local levels. This was seen in the conflict torn areas such as the Deccan area where the Mughal rule could not get a strong foothold. This resulted in the political and administrative institutions being fragile and with heavy military presence. Revenue collection was irregular, and officials relied on coercive methods to meet with the imperial demands (Husain, 2002, pp. 206-207). Even in relatively politically stable areas, the intensified demands of the state altered local administrative practice (Habib, 2016, pp. 156-160). There was an increase in conflicts over revenue, land, and military requisitions.

Strengthening of Local and Regional Power Holders

One issue the Mughal administration is that in their attempt to strengthen central administration by means of military force, it inadvertently strengthened the local power holders. The Zamindars and provincial elites increasingly positioned themselves as intermediaries between the state and society, extracting concessions for cooperation (Alam, 1986, pp. 44-47). In many of the provinces, those that held power began to accumulate military resources and political influence, laying the framework to break away from the Mughal empire after Aurangzeb's death. Thus, it can be said that militarization not only contributed to the administrative strain but also the gradual decentralization of imperial authority.

Military Fiscal State

Aurangzeb's administrative challenges were within a broader framework. The Mughal empire's system shared the characteristics with other early modern military fiscal states that struggled to reconcile continuous warfare with agrarian revenue systems (Richards, 2004, pp. 401-405). This proves that Aurangzeb's reign was with problems that were not exceptional but indicative of systemic constraints. Though Mughal administration was incredibly sophisticated, it lacked the mechanisms that were required for a sustained fiscal expansion beyond agrarian extraction and prolonged military campaigns only exposed the latent weaknesses faster.

Conclusion

The political administration of the Mughal empire under Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707) displays a complex image that resists simplistic judgments, either administrative collapse or authoritarian rigidity. Looking back at WPRs 5-7, we can see that Aurangzeb governed the empire through a highly developed and complex imperial system, like the ones used by his predecessors like Akbar, like combining the mansabdari-jagirdari framework, centralization of institutions, and provincial governments. However, despite the complex system, it was subjected to various pressures that arose from prolonged militarization, fiscal or economic strain, and overextension of territories. These pressures tested the administrative and structural constraints of the Mughal empire and exposed its limits but at the same time displayed its resilience.

The main thing that this paper finds is that administrative continuity better defines Aurangzeb's rule than abrupt change. The core institutions of Mughal governance- the mansabdari hierarchy, jagirdari revenue assignments, and the separation of military and fiscal authority at the provincial level- remained largely intact throughout Aurangzeb's rule (Sarkar, 1920, pp. 45-52; Ali, 1997, pp. 1-6). Aurangzeb did not dismantle the imperial system but he instead made changes to the system to make it so that he could govern it with more personal oversight and moral discipline. This shifts the narrative that older historiographical narratives that portray Aurangzeb as a disruptor whose policies singlehandedly caused the decline. The functioning of the institutions was significantly changed by the political and military circumstances. The expansion of the empire into the Deccan changed Mughal administration that was created for conquest into one that needed to hold out for sustained warfare because of the volatility of the region. The empire, under Aurangzeb increasingly resembled a military-fiscal state, in which administrative priorities were subordinated to the demands of war (Richards, 1993, pp. 185-190). This placed intense pressure and strain on revenue systems, elite cohesion, and provincial governance, revealing the weaknesses and vulnerabilities that did not show under a stable reign within the administrative framework.

The mansabdari and jagirdari systems which had served as the instruments of control were both the empire's strength and weakness. On one hand, it allowed Aurangzeb to command a vast empire incorporating the Rajputs, Marathas, Deccanis and central Asian nobles into imperial service (Ali, 1997, pp. 31-38). The expansion of the mansabdari system without a proportional increase in revenue and resources contributed to the jagirdari crisis. Jagirs failed to yield the delusional amounts of revenue, elite dissatisfaction grew, weakening the administrative cohesion. The centre-province relations also soured as Aurangzeb depended on cooperation with the provincial elites =, zamindars, merchants and religious institutions (Hasan, 2004, pp. 12-15). This reliance did not exactly signify a weakness but it reflected the pragmatic mode of rule that allowed the emperor to govern such vast and diverse territories. But fiscal demands and military pressures increased and it became increasingly more favourable for the regional powers to accumulate power, influence and autonomy (Alam, 1986, pp. 44-47).

One of the reasons why provincial powers became so bold was because of the Deccan region. Despite Aurangzeb's presence and military commitment there, the region could not have a stable administration. The provincial governance at the Deccan remained heavily militarized, fiscally unstable, and administratively fragmented (Husain, 2002, pp. 201-207). Aurangzeb had to prolong his presence away from the north which further weakened the routine supervision and disrupted established administrative rhythms (Richards, 1993, pp. 200-203).

The militarization of the state can be said to have reshaped the priorities and outcomes of Mughal administration. The continuous warfare diverted resources away from civil administration, infrastructure, and judicial oversight, which resulted in administrative overstretch (Husain, 2002, pp. 201-205). The economic pressure also incited and intensified conflicts between revenue officials and the people, which contributed to agrarian distress and resistance (Chandra, 2007, pp. 240-242). Ironically, the efforts to strengthen imperial control often produced the opposite effect by empowering local and provincial actors who negotiated concessions in exchange for cooperation (Alam, 1986, pp. 44-47). However, it would be wrong to simply state that these led to immediate collapse as even in the later years of Aurangzeb's rule, he managed to put together and move armies from one location to another, collect revenue, and exercise authority across the vast empire. The challenges faced by the Mughal empire were comparable to those confronting other early modern empires that relied on agrarian revenue to sustain continuous warfare (Richards, 2004, pp. 401-405). As such, these difficulties reflect the systematic constraints of an early imperial government rather than individual failure. Even though the policies did not lead to instant collapse, the long-term effects of Aurangzeb's administration exhausted the empire of its resources and wealth, weakened cohesion and created the conditions that led to fragmentation in the early eighteenth century.

Aurangzeb's government shows an empire that stayed strong but faced growing limits. Officials kept departments running by bargaining, adjusting orders and using force but they failed to match far reaching goals with the longterm cost of routine administration. The Mughal record under this ruler therefore gives clear evidence on how early modern states worked, proving that solid day-to-day management plus deep flaws appear side by side

inside one imperial structure. Grasping this balance sharpens knowledge of Aurangzeb's period and feeds wider discussion on how empires form but also govern in the early modern era.

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