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Unit Four, Section Three: British Imperialism in India

British economic interest in India began in the 1600s , when the British East India Company set up trading posts in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. At first, India’s ruling Mughal Dynasty kept European traders under control. By 1707, the Mughal Empire was collapsing. Dozens of small states, each headed by a separate ruler, broke away from Mughal control.

The East India Company quickly took advantage of the growing weakness of the Mughals. In 1757, Robert Clive led company troops in a decisive victory over Indian forces at the Battle of Plassey. From then on, the East India Company was the leading power in India. The area controlled by the company grew over time. Eventually, it governed directly or indirectly an area that included modern Bangladesh, most of southern India, and nearly all territory along the Ganges River in the north.