

The Peacock Throne: The Mughal Empire

Background Guide

GWCIA XXXI

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Using technology is prohibited in GWCIA historical/specialized and crisis committees, unless a delegate has an approved accommodation. GWCIA will provide delegates with one white legal pad and a pen that they may use to write notes if they wish. Delegates are free to bring their own additional notepads, staplers, Post-Its, or other supplies, as these will not be provided.

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Awards Policy

While GWCIA recognizes that the core value of participating in any Model UN committee is education in international affairs and the development of related skills such as productive collaboration, public speaking, and critical thinking, we also recognize the value of rewarding delegates who are exceptionally prepared and proficient in these skills. At GWCIA, we value delegates who can leverage creativity, diplomacy, substantive knowledge, and critical thinking skills to debate effectively, lead negotiations and blocs, and write comprehensive clauses. We especially look favorably towards delegates who individually develop meaningful solutions to the committee's main issues while keeping in mind the realistic diplomatic dynamics of our world, as well as those delegates who are able to advocate for their solutions and ideas to be adopted. The dais encourages delegates to lead in a manner that uplifts and respects their competitors while also introducing strong, unique solutions that consistently anchor their group's directive or working paper. On the other hand, attempts to undermine the goals of the committee without reason or acting without detailed thought of consequences are discouraged. Any rude, disrespectful, or demeaning conduct towards other delegates' ideas will not be tolerated.

Letter from the Chair & Crisis Director

Dear Delegates,
Hi everyone!

My name is Pragya, and it is my honor to be your chair for The Peacock Throne: The Mughal Empire, 1640. A little bit about me: I'm a junior double-majoring in international affairs and history, minoring in public health, with a concentration on Asia. Through my studies, I've gotten the chance to focus very deeply on South Asia, which was the inspiration for this committee. Court and political drama is one of my favorite topics, so I'm really looking forward to exploring that with you all!

Outside of school, I'm also involved in a couple of extracurriculars here at GWU. I've been on the travel MUN team since my freshman year (and MUN in general since middle school), and I've gotten the chance to travel to many awesome places like Boston and Montreal. I've previously been on Secretariat for GWCIA and WAMUNC, our high school conference, so I'm really excited to continue being involved with our amazing conferences. I'm also on GW Garmi, a South Asian dance team.

My aim for this committee is for everyone to learn a lot. Whether it's your first conference or your 10th, I'm more than happy to answer any questions you have! I'm looking for delegates who are creative, can collaborate with others well, and can improve based on feedback throughout the day. Please don't hesitate to have your advisors reach out if you have any questions!

All the Best,

Pragya Shankar
pragya.shankar@gwu.edu

Reminder: Delegates must CC their advisor on any email sent to the Chair or Crisis Director.

Overview of Committee Procedure

Crisis Procedure

GWCIA XXXI utilizes a Loose Note crisis system, where students freely submit notes that will serve as a statement of intent and a brief justification for that action. Delegates will have the option to submit a page from their pad to take backroom actions. Rather than utilizing the extensive full page note, with fanciful language and a recipient of the note, students will submit notes at will. This can be done at any time during the course of the committee. The backroom will receive these notes as they come, approve or deny them, and take note of the arcs and actions of each respective delegate. Their actions will be noted in the following crisis update.

Example:
"Using my powers as Commander of the 506th Regime of the 101st Airborne Division, deploy troops in Indiana." Col. Strayer

Introduction to the Committee

The Court of Shah Jahan

Welcome to the Court of Shah Jahan Crisis Committee. Set in the Mughal Empire during the late 1650s, this committee places delegates at the center of a rapidly developing political and military crisis. The Mughal Empire is among the most powerful states in the early modern world, controlling much of the Indian subcontinent and presiding over a population of tens of millions.[1]Despite its immense wealth and territorial strength, however, the empire's political stability depends heavily upon the authority of the emperor and the cooperation of powerful princes, nobles, military commanders, and provincial governors.

The committee began during the final years of Emperor Shah Jahan's reign. Shah Jahan has ruled the empire since 1628 and has overseen both major military campaigns and an extraordinary period of imperial wealth and cultural production. By the late 1650s, however, the emperor's declining health had created uncertainty over the future of the Mughal throne. The Mughal system does not follow a straightforward system of primogeniture in which the eldest son automatically inherits the throne. Instead, succession has historically been determined through a combination of imperial legitimacy, military strength, political alliances, and the ability of individual princes to secure the support of powerful factions.[2]

As Shah Jahan's health deteriorates, his four sons—Dara Shikoh, Shah Shuja, Aurangzeb, and Murad Baksh—begin positioning themselves for a potential struggle over succession. Each prince possesses different sources of political and military power. Dara Shikoh has the support of his father and many members of the imperial court, while Aurangzeb has extensive military experience. Shah Shuja controls Bengal, one of the empire's wealthiest provinces, while Murad Baksh governs Gujarat, another economically and strategically significant region.

The committee therefore operates at a moment of extraordinary uncertainty. Delegates will represent figures connected to the Mughal imperial court and its wider political structure. They will be expected to negotiate alliances, manage military and political crises, protect their interests, and determine how the empire should respond to the impending succession struggle.

The decisions made within this committee will extend beyond the question of who occupies the Peacock Throne. The succession crisis has the potential to reshape the balance of power between the emperor, his sons, provincial governors, military commanders, and regional elites. Delegates must therefore consider not only who should rule the Mughal Empire, but also what kind of empire that ruler will inherit.

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[1] Michael H. Fisher, "The Mughal Empire," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History* (Oxford University Press, 2019), https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.357.
[2] John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, *The New Cambridge History of India*, vol. 1, no. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), introduction.

Background

A. The Founding of the Mughal Empire

The Mughal Empire was established in 1526 by Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babur, a Central Asian ruler of Timurid descent. Babur was born in 1483 in the Fergana Valley, in present-day Uzbekistan, and spent much of his early life attempting to establish and defend his position in Central Asia. After repeated struggles with rival rulers, Babur turned his attention toward northern India, where the Delhi Sultanate was experiencing significant political instability.[3]

In 1526, Babur invaded northern India and confronted Sultan Ibrahim Lodi, ruler of the Lodi dynasty, at the First Battle of Panipat. Although Babur's forces were significantly smaller than Lodi's army, Babur used disciplined cavalry, battlefield fortifications, and artillery to defeat the Delhi Sultan's forces. The victory gave Babur control over Delhi and Agra and provided the foundation for a new imperial dynasty in India.[4]

Babur's victory, however, did not immediately create a stable empire. He still faced powerful opponents, including Rajput rulers and Afghan nobles who resisted Mughal authority. Babur spent the remainder of his reign consolidating his position in northern India. His reign lasted only four years after the conquest of Delhi, and he died in 1530, leaving the still-fragile empire to his son, Humayun.[5]

B. Humayun and the Survival of the Empire

Humayun inherited an empire that was still in the process of being established. His reign was characterized by political instability and military setbacks. In particular, the Afghan ruler Sher Shah Suri successfully challenged Mughal authority and forced Humayun into exile in Persia in 1540.

Humayun eventually returned to India and regained Delhi in 1555, but he died only a year later after falling down the stairs of his library. His sudden death left the Mughal state in the hands of his thirteen-year-old son, Akbar.[6]

Although Humayun's reign was unsuccessful in many respects, his period of exile in the Persian court had lasting consequences for the Mughal dynasty. Persian political traditions, administrative practices, literature, and artistic styles became increasingly influential within the

[3] Fisher, “The Mughal Empire.”
[4] Stephen F. Dale, *The Garden of the Eight Paradises: Babur and the Culture of Empire in Central Asia, Afghanistan and India (1483–1530)* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).
[5] Fisher, “The Mughal Empire.”
[6] Richards, *The Mughal Empire*.

Mughal court. These traditions would become an important part of the imperial culture that flourished under Akbar and his successors.

C. Akbar and the Transformation of the Empire

Akbar became emperor in 1556 and would rule for nearly fifty years. His reign represented a major turning point in Mughal history. Whereas Babur had established the dynasty through conquest, Akbar transformed it into a durable imperial state.

Akbar initially faced serious threats to Mughal authority. Shortly after his accession, the Mughal army fought the forces of Hemu, a powerful military commander who had captured Delhi. The Second Battle of Panipat in 1556 ended in a Mughal victory and secured Akbar's position as emperor.[6]

Over the following decades, Akbar dramatically expanded Mughal territory. His armies conquered or brought under Mughal influence large portions of northern and western India, including Gujarat and Bengal, while Mughal forces also expanded into Rajasthan and the central Indian regions. By the end of Akbar's reign, the Mughal Empire controlled a territory vastly larger than the one inherited from his father.

Akbar's expansion was not based solely on military conquest. One of his greatest political achievements was his ability to incorporate powerful local elites into the Mughal political system. Rajput rulers, in particular, became important allies of the empire. Some Rajput kingdoms resisted Mughal expansion militarily, but others entered into alliances with Akbar, sometimes through marriage and political agreements. Rajput nobles could subsequently serve within the Mughal administration and military.[7]

This strategy allowed Akbar to transform potential enemies into participants in the imperial system. Rather than attempting to eliminate every existing political structure, the Mughals frequently incorporated local elites into the empire so long as they recognized imperial authority and contributed revenue or military service.

D. How Did the Mughal Empire Become So Large?

The extraordinary size of the Mughal Empire cannot be explained by military conquest alone. Its expansion depended upon the combination of military power, political alliances, administrative institutions, and economic resources.

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[7] Catherine B. Asher and Cynthia Talbot, *India Before Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Military Power

Mughal armies benefited from effective cavalry forces, artillery, firearms, and experienced commanders. Babur's use of field artillery at Panipat demonstrated the potential of gunpowder weapons in South Asian warfare. Under later emperors, the Mughal military became considerably larger and more sophisticated.[8]

Military conquest allowed the empire to seize strategically important cities, agricultural regions, trade routes, and sources of revenue. However, conquest was only the first step. The Mughals needed institutions capable of maintaining control over territories after they had been conquered.

Political Integration

Akbar's willingness to cooperate with local elites was particularly important. The Mughal Empire ruled over an extraordinarily diverse population, and attempting to govern the entire subcontinent through a relatively small foreign-born ruling class would have been impractical.

Instead, the Mughal state incorporated individuals from different ethnic, religious, and regional backgrounds into the imperial nobility. Central Asian, Persian, Indian Muslim, and Rajput elites could all rise within the imperial system.[9]

This made the empire more flexible and gave local elites incentives to cooperate with the Mughal state.

The Mansabdari System

Akbar also developed the mansabdari system, an administrative and military ranking system that connected imperial officials directly to the emperor. Mansabdars were assigned ranks that determined their position within the imperial hierarchy and their military responsibilities. In return for their service, officials received compensation and revenue assignments.

The system allowed the emperor to maintain control over a large and diverse body of officials and military commanders without having to create a completely centralized standing army. It also gave ambitious nobles a reason to compete for imperial favor rather than build entirely independent power bases.[10]

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[8] Richards, *The Mughal Empire*.
[9] Rajeev Kinra, "The Mughal Empire," in *The Oxford World History of Empire*, ed. Peter Fibiger Bang et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 751–788.
[10] Richards, *The Mughal Empire*

Revenue and Agriculture

The empire's enormous agricultural wealth provided the economic foundation for expansion. The Mughal state developed increasingly sophisticated systems for assessing and collecting land revenue. Under Akbar, officials worked to measure agricultural production and establish predictable revenue demands.

The resulting revenues financed the imperial army, bureaucracy, court, construction projects, and further military campaigns. As the empire expanded into some of the most agriculturally productive areas of the subcontinent, its economic resources expanded as well.[11]

A Flexible Imperial System

Ultimately, Mughal expansion succeeded because conquest was accompanied by incorporation. Military victories brought new territories into the empire, while taxation, administration, alliances, and imperial patronage helped keep those territories within it.

This combination allowed the Mughal state to expand from Babur's relatively limited holdings in northern India into a massive empire. By the seventeenth century, the Mughal Empire had become one of the largest and most populous states in the early modern world.[12]

E. From Akbar to Shah Jahan

Akbar died in 1605 and was succeeded by his son, Jahangir. Jahangir largely maintained the political and administrative structures established by his father while continuing Mughal expansion and strengthening the imperial court. His reign also saw continued development of Mughal painting, literature, and architecture.[13]

Jahangir's son, Shah Jahan, became emperor in 1628. Shah Jahan inherited an already powerful empire and continued expanding Mughal influence, particularly in the Deccan. His reign also became associated with enormous displays of imperial wealth and authority, including the construction of the Taj Mahal, the Red Fort in Delhi, and other major architectural projects.[14]

By the middle of the seventeenth century, the Mughal Empire had reached an extraordinary level of political, military, and economic power. Yet its enormous size also created vulnerabilities. The emperor had to balance competing princes, powerful nobles, provincial governors, military commanders, and regional elites across an immense territory.

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[11] Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556–1707*, 2nd rev. ed. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[12] Fisher, “The Mughal Empire.”
[13] Richards, *The Mughal Empire*.
[14] Ebba Koch, *Mughal Architecture: An Outline of Its History and Development (1526–1858)* (Munich: Prestel, 1991).

This tension between imperial unity and the competing ambitions of powerful individuals would become particularly important when Shah Jahan's health began to decline. With no simple system of automatic succession, the empire's greatest strength, its vast network of powerful political and military actors, could also become its greatest weakness.

Current Situation

When Shah Jahan ascended to the Mughal throne in 1628, he inherited one of the most powerful empires in South Asia. His reign is often remembered for its monumental architecture, particularly the Taj Mahal, but Shah Jahan was also an ambitious military ruler who sought to expand and consolidate Mughal power.[15]

Shah Jahan's reign was characterized by repeated military campaigns across the empire's frontiers. In the Deccan, Mughal armies continued the expansionist policies begun under Akbar and Jahangir, bringing additional territory and political authority under imperial control. Shah Jahan also attempted to restore Mughal influence in Central Asia, launching campaigns toward Balkh and Badakhshan. Although these Central Asian campaigns ultimately failed to produce lasting territorial gains, they demonstrated the emperor's ambitions beyond the Indian subcontinent.[16]

Shah Jahan's military ambitions were supported by the enormous economic resources of the Mughal Empire. The emperor presided over a state whose agricultural revenues, commercial networks, and major cities generated tremendous wealth. This wealth allowed the Mughal court to maintain large armies and an elaborate administrative system while also funding some of the most ambitious architectural projects of the early modern world.[17]

Yet the very scale of the Mughal Empire created a significant political problem. The emperor's authority extended across an enormous territory, but much of the empire was governed through powerful princes, nobles, and provincial officials. Mughal princes were frequently appointed to govern provinces and command armies, giving them firsthand experience managing territory and, importantly, access to military and financial resources.[18]

This system helped the Mughals govern their enormous empire, but it also meant that the emperor's sons could develop independent political bases. When the emperor became incapacitated, the same princes who had helped administer the empire could turn their resources against one another.

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[15] Richards, *The Mughal Empire*.
[16] Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals*.
[17] Richards, *The Mughal Empire*.
[18] Munis D. Faruqui, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504–1719* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

B. The Four Princes

Shah Jahan had four surviving adult sons who would ultimately become the principal contenders in the succession struggle: Dara Shikoh, Shah Shuja, Aurangzeb, and Murad Baksh. Each had accumulated his own political relationships and experience within the imperial system.[19]

Dara Shikoh

Dara Shikoh was Shah Jahan's eldest surviving son and the prince most favored by the emperor. Shah Jahan increasingly treated Dara as his preferred successor and gave him an increasingly prominent role at court. Unlike his brothers, Dara spent much of his career close to the imperial court rather than governing a major distant province.

Dara was also deeply interested in Sufism and comparative religious thought. His intellectual interests brought him into contact with Hindu religious thinkers and contributed to his reputation as a more religiously eclectic figure than his brother Aurangzeb.[20]

Dara's position therefore rested heavily on his father's patronage and his proximity to the imperial court. However, his lack of extensive independent military experience would become a significant disadvantage once the succession crisis transformed from a political dispute into a military conflict.

Shah Shuja

Shah Shuja, Shah Jahan's second surviving son, served as governor of Bengal. Bengal was among the wealthiest regions of the Mughal Empire, providing Shuja with substantial financial resources and a significant territorial base from which to pursue his claim to the throne.[21]

His distance from the imperial capital also gave him a degree of independence from the immediate politics of Shah Jahan's court. When news of the emperor's illness reached Bengal, Shuja was therefore in a strong position to mobilize his own forces and advance his claim.

Aurangzeb

Aurangzeb was perhaps the most experienced military and political figure among Shah Jahan's sons. He had served repeatedly as governor and military commander, particularly in the Deccan, and had developed relationships with influential nobles and military officers. He had also participated in campaigns beyond the Indian subcontinent.[22]

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[19] Faruqui, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire*.
[20] Sajida S. Alvi, "Dārā Shikōh," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, December 15, 1994, updated April 7, 2011, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/dara-sokoh.
[21] Richards, *The Mughal Empire*.
[22] Faruqui, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire*.

Aurangzeb's experience gave him a significant advantage when the succession crisis began. Unlike Dara, whose power was concentrated around the imperial court, Aurangzeb possessed substantial experience operating independently of the emperor and commanding armies in distant regions.

Murad Baksh and Gujarat

Murad Baksh, the youngest of Shah Jahan's four surviving sons, also possessed an important regional power base. He had served as governor of several provinces, including Gujarat and Malwa, and had experience managing Mughal territories and their revenues.

Gujarat was particularly valuable. Located on India's western coast, the province was connected to major commercial networks across the Indian Ocean and contained important ports and wealthy commercial centers. The region had been incorporated into the Mughal Empire under Akbar after the Mughal conquest of Gujarat in the sixteenth century.[23]

By the time of the succession crisis, Gujarat's economic and strategic significance made control of the province highly consequential. Its revenues could help sustain military operations, while its position on the western coast connected the Mughal Empire to wider international trade networks.

Murad's position in Gujarat therefore gave him access to resources that could potentially be converted into military and political power. His authority, however, was not absolute. Like other Mughal princes, he relied upon a network of imperial officials, nobles, revenue administrators, and local elites to exercise authority over the province. Contemporary documents demonstrate that Murad's administration interacted directly with local zamindars and revenue officials, illustrating how Mughal princes depended upon regional political structures to extract resources from their territories.[24]

[23] Aparna Kapadia, *In Praise of Kings: Rajputs, Sultans and Poets in Fifteenth-Century Gujarat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
[24] Bhavani Raman, *Negotiating Mughal Law: A Family of Landlords across Three Indian Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108623391.

The Emperor Falls Ill

The crisis that would transform these competing interests into an open struggle began in 1657, when Shah Jahan became seriously ill.

News of the emperor's illness immediately created uncertainty throughout the empire. Because there was no fixed rule guaranteeing that the eldest son would inherit the throne, each prince had reason to believe that he might need to secure the succession through his own political and military strength.[25]

Shah Jahan attempted to reinforce Dara Shikoh's position as his preferred successor. However, the emperor's actions did not eliminate the ambitions of his other sons. Instead, the princes began mobilizing their own forces.

The result was a four-sided succession struggle. Shuja moved from Bengal, Murad asserted his claim from Gujarat, and Aurangzeb began mobilizing his own military resources. Dara, backed by Shah Jahan, attempted to maintain control over the imperial center.

The crisis quickly became more than a dispute between brothers. Powerful nobles and military commanders had to determine which prince they would support, while provincial officials had to decide whether to continue obeying the emperor's government or align themselves with one of the competing princes.

Alliances and the Threat of Partition

The possibility that the Mughal Empire could actually be divided became a serious consideration during the succession crisis.

Aurangzeb and Murad Baksh formed an alliance against Dara. Their cooperation was not necessarily based on permanent political unity; rather, the two princes recognized that defeating Dara required cooperation between their military forces. In one agreement, the brothers discussed dividing territories between themselves after defeating Dara. Murad was promised territories in the north and northwest, while Aurangzeb would receive much of the remainder of the empire.

Other proposals for partition emerged during the crisis. Shah Jahan's daughter Jahanara Begum attempted to negotiate a settlement that would have distributed different regions of the empire among the competing princes. Under one proposal, Dara would receive the Punjab, Shuja would

[25] Faruqui, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire*.

retain Bengal, Murad would receive Gujarat, and Aurangzeb would control much of northern and central India.[26]

These proposals demonstrate the seriousness of the crisis. The question facing the Mughal court was no longer simply which prince would become emperor. There was a genuine possibility that the empire itself could be divided among competing branches of the royal family.

Gujarat and the Regional Balance of Power

Gujarat's importance in the succession crisis extended beyond Murad Baksh himself.

The province had been one of the most economically significant regions incorporated into the Mughal Empire. Its commercial connections to the Arabian Sea gave it access to long-distance trade, while its agricultural production and urban centers generated substantial revenue. Control over Gujarat therefore represented both political prestige and access to resources that could support a military campaign.[27]

The province also demonstrates the decentralized nature of Mughal political power. The emperor ultimately stood at the top of the imperial hierarchy, but his ability to govern distant provinces depended upon cooperation from governors, mansabdars, zamindars, revenue collectors, merchants, and other local actors.

For the competing princes, securing the loyalty of these groups could be just as important as winning a battlefield victory. A prince who controlled a province on paper but could not collect its revenues or mobilize its military resources would possess little practical power.

This makes the Gujarati political elite an important factor in the crisis. The loyalty of provincial officials, local rulers, zamindars, and commercial interests could determine which prince was able to transform a claim to the throne into actual political and military power.

[26] Stephen F. Dale, "Jahānārā Begum," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, December 15, 2008, updated April 10, 2012, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/jahanara-begum.
[27] Kapadia, *In Praise of Kings*; Richards, *The Mughal Empire*.

The Crisis Before the Committee

By the beginning of the succession crisis, the Mughal Empire remained extraordinarily powerful. Its armies, bureaucracy, wealth, and territorial reach were unmatched by most contemporary states in South Asia. Yet the illness of a single emperor exposed the fragility of a system heavily dependent upon imperial authority.

The four princes now faced a choice: negotiate a settlement, divide the empire, or fight for exclusive control of the Mughal throne.

For the members of the imperial court, this crisis presents an equally important question. Supporting the wrong prince could result in the loss of political influence, property, or even one's life. Supporting the right prince could provide enormous rewards.

The empire therefore enters the committee at a critical crossroads. The Mughal state is not yet collapsing, nor is its future predetermined. Its enormous resources remain intact, but those resources are now being mobilized by competing factions. The decisions made by the court, provincial officials, military commanders, and princes will determine whether the Mughal Empire emerges from the crisis stronger than before—or whether its unity begins to fracture.

Questions to Consider

1. How can the Mughal Empire prevent a civil war between the princes?
2. How can the princes reach a peaceful agreement about who should rule?
3. What should happen if multiple princes claim the throne?
4. How can the Mughal Empire keep its provinces loyal during the succession crisis?
5. What role should nobles and military leaders play in choosing the next emperor?
6. How should the empire handle princes who refuse to accept the new emperor?
7. How can the empire make sure Gujarat and other wealthy provinces continue supporting the Mughal government?
8. What can be done to prevent provinces from becoming independent?
9. How can the next emperor keep the Mughal Empire united and stable?
10. What changes could prevent another succession crisis in the future?

Character List

*Disclaimer: The characters represented in this list may have been altered or modified from their real life counterparts, as well as entirely made up. This is to ensure that all delegates have a fun, engaging and enjoyable experience no matter their position. If you find outside information related to your character that contradicts that of your character description, please use the provided description and the final authority on the character's portfolio.

Character Name- Character blurbs

Royal Family

1. Dara Shikoh – Eldest son and heir apparent
2. Aurangzeb – Ambitious third son and military commander
3. Shah Shuja – Second son, governor of Bengal
4. Murad Baksh – Youngest son and governor of Gujarat
5. Jahanara Begum – Powerful eldest daughter and Padshah Begum
6. Roshanara Begum – Politically influential daughter allied with Aurangzeb
7. Gauhar Ara Begum – Youngest daughter of the emperor

Key Mughal Nobles / Officials

8. Asaf Khan – Former grand vizier and father of Mumtaz Mahal
9. Saadullah Khan – Chief minister during Shah Jahan's reign
10. Ali Mardan Khan – Governor and major architect of canals and forts
11. Shaista Khan – Powerful noble and later viceroy of Bengal
12. Islam Khan Mashhadi – Influential court official
13. Khalilullah Khan – Military commander under Shah Jahan

Regional Rulers / Military Figures

14. Raja Jai Singh I – Important Rajput ally and general
15. Raja Jaswant Singh – Major Rajput noble in the Mughal court
16. Shivaji – Rising regional power challenging Mughal authority
17. Abdullah Qutb Shah – Deccan ruler interacting with the Mughal empire

Foreign / Diplomatic Actors

18. Shah Abbas II – Ruler of Persia and rival over Kandahar
19. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier – European merchant with Mughal connections
20. Niccolao Manucci – European observer who later served in Mughal territories

Sources to Consider

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