CHAPTER 6

The Company and the State

The East India Company, which found itself the master of Bengal in 1757, was the result of the fusion, in 1702 (completed in 1708), of the rival ‘old’ and ‘new’ Companies, which had for a time disputed the English trade with India, each with the backing of a royal charter. ‘The United Company of Merchants of England trading with the East Indies’ was henceforth the only body of English merchants entitled to carry on the English trade. It was governed in London by a court of twenty-four directors, who were elected annually by the body of shareholders, known as the Court of Proprietors. The working capital of the Company known as East India stock was provided by the proprietors as shareholders on the joint-stock plan. The profits were steady and the annual dividend declared between 1711 and 1755 varied between 8 and 10 per cent. The day-to-day administration was carried on by the directors, usually referred to as ‘the Court’, which for this purpose was divided into a number of committees.

In India the Company was essentially a commercial concern, and any political activities were incidental to its commerce. The Company administered the solitary British possession of Bombay and held its other factories and settlements under grants from the local powers. The three main settlements of Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay were administered separately by local councils dealing direct with the home authorities. In each settlement there was a hierarchy of merchants rising through the grades of writer and factor to those of junior and senior merchants. The council consisted of senior merchants and had as its head a president who was also governor of the settlement. These councils controlled all the commercial operations, which consisted mainly in selling English goods in the local markets and with the proceeds and the help of bullion exported from England making up the ‘investment’ of goods for dispatch to England. The salaries paid were nominal,1 it being understood that the Company’s servants were free to augment them by engaging in the internal trade in India or in the external trade to the Far East. The one thing which they were forbidden was to infringe the Company’s monopoly by engaging in the trade with England. The method of appointment was nomination by the directors, writers usually going to India at the age of fifteen.

The even tenor of the Company’s merchants’ way was first disturbed

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1 The annual salary of a writer was £5, of a factor £15, and of a junior merchant £30. The chief of Dacca in 1744 received £40. L. S. S. O’Malley, The Indian Civil Service, p. 9.
by the French wars which began in 1744. It is obvious that such a system was bound to be shaken to its roots by the sudden acquisition of political power in Bengal. This brought with it previously undreamt of opportunities of making fortunes. Having the whole weight of political power within the state at their back, and often themselves holding important political positions, these men found easy roads to fortune in three ways. They received presents and considerations for favours public and private, past, present, and to come, they held lucrative contracts, such as the salt monopoly or the supply of clothing to the troops, and they enjoyed unfair competition with the local merchants as a result of the dastak system started by Mir Jafar and confirmed by Vansittart’s Council at the cost of war with Mir Kasim. Parliamentary reports showed that between 1757 and 1766, £2,169,665 had been given to the Company’s servants in the form of presents (without counting Clive’s jagir) and £3,770,833 paid in compensation for losses incurred.1

This sudden affluence of the Company’s Bengal servants had a variety of results. It started a stream of returned ‘Indians’ to England who became the ‘Nabobs’ of eighteenth-century England, scandalizing society by their ostentation and creating jealousy by their wealth. Their influence began to be felt by 1760 and they were a parliamentary force by 1767. The dramatist Foote guyed them in his play The Nabob in 1770. Politicians did not see why the state should not share in this new-found wealth and moralists began to doubt the means by which it was acquired; Burke was later to become their spokesman (while dipping the family finger into the Indian dish). At the same time the cost of frequent campaigns raised expenses and the maladministration reduced revenue. The Company therefore found itself not nearly so well off as its servants. But when retrenchment was proposed it met two obstacles within the Company itself. There was a reluctance on the part of directors to take strong action since those concerned in irregularities were their own nominees, often their own relations or connexions, or the clients of highly placed persons in England whom they did not wish to offend. The directors were therefore bold in exhortation but hesitant of action. Similarly, while firm in deprecating the assumption of further political responsibility they were apt to condone the accomplished fact if it promised an increase of resources. There was, secondly, an eagerness on the part of the proprietors (or shareholders) to share in the new prosperity, which took the form of a demand for increased dividends. In 1766 the dividend was raised to 10 per cent., and the next year to 12½ per cent.

The total effect of these influences was to produce the financial crisis which led to the passing of the Regulating Act in 1773. In 1766 Parliament first concerned itself with Indian questions and the demand was voiced that the Crown should take over the Company’s possessions. This opposition was bought off in 1767 by an undertaking to pay

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1 Reports of the House of Commons 1772, vol. iii, pp. 311-12.
£400,000 a year to the state in return for the continued enjoyment of
the Company's new possessions and revenues. This extra burden
proved too great in the then condition of the Company. The directors
in vain endeavoured to avert disaster. Their first attempt was the
dispatch of Vansittart to Bengal from Madras in 1760, but he was over-
borne by the majority of the council. The next measure was the dis-
patch of Clive for his second term in 1765, but the effort died away
with his return in 1767. In 1769 three 'supervisors', Vansittart, Forde,
and Scrafton, were dispatched with plenary powers, but their ship was
never heard of after leaving the Cape of Good Hope. In 1772 Hastings
was appointed Governor of Bengal with a mandate for reform, but
a financial crisis had already arrived. The court was compelled to
ask Lord North for a loan of a million pounds to avert bankruptcy.
The mounting public criticism now found vent in the appointment
of select and secret parliamentary committees which produced be-
tween them eighteen hostile reports. These were the prelude to the
assertion of parliamentary control over the Company's affairs, which
led on, step by step, to the assumption of full sovereignty by the
Crown in 1858. We can trace three broad themes in this process; the
separation of trade from administration within the Company itself,
the gradual assertion of state control over the political affairs of the
Company itself in India, and a similar process in the control of the Com-
pany in London. The main steps of these processes can be followed in
a series of great parliamentary enactments, which commence with the
Regulating Act of 1773, continue with Pitt's India Act of 1784 and the
periodical Charter Acts of 1793, 1813, 1833, and 1853, and end with
the final Act of 1858. We shall consider the first two of these measures
in turn and then trace the three themes mentioned above to their
conclusions.

In 1773 two Acts were passed. The first relieved the financial em-
 bargasses of the Company by granting a loan of £1,400,000 at
4 per cent. interest. The second was the Regulating Act, so called
because it was an Act 'to regulate' the affairs of the Company in India.
The Act first dealt with the affairs of the Company in England. The
tumultuous proceedings of the Court of Proprietors were restrained.
Rival factions made and unmade directors at the annual elections, and
shares were bought in order to obtain voting power; Indian policy
was influenced and sometimes determined by the intrigues of city
groups wholly devoid of responsibility. The qualification for a vote in
the Proprietors' Court was raised from £500 to £1,000. Annual elec-
tions of directors were replaced by the election of six directors a year
for a four-year term with a disqualification for a year before election

1 Clive believed that the grant of the diwani of Bengal to the Company in 1765
would bring £2 million a year to the Company as revenue surplus.
2 The practice of dividing holdings of East India stock in order to increase the
number of votes in the Court of Proprietors was known as 'splitting votes'. See L.
Sutherland, E. India Co. and the State.
for a second term. This ended the scandal by which a body of commercial shareholders had dictated policy in a great country. The Act then dealt with the Bengal government. A Governor-General of Fort William in Bengal was appointed for five years, together with four councillors who were all named in the Act. Future appointments were to be made by the Company. The Governor-General was given supervisory authority over the other two presidencies and thus the first step towards unitary control was taken. Finally, a Supreme Court consisting of a chief justice and three puisne judges was set up.

The importance of the Regulating Act is that it marks the first assertion of parliamentary control over the Company and registers the first concern of Parliament for the welfare of the people of India. But in itself it was a temporizing measure full of defects which contributed much to the difficulties of Warren Hastings as the first Governor-General. The Governor-General had no casting vote and so could be overruled by his council as Philip Francis and his friends succeeded in doing for two years. The general superintendence of the other presidencies was vague and no provision was made for its enforcement. The Supreme Court was neither given any definition of the law it was to administer or of those to whom it was to apply. Once the machine had been set going the government in England could only intervene again by further legislation. Apart from the assertion of the principle of responsibility the best thing that can be said of the Act was that it increased contact with India and knowledge of its affairs by the dispatch of mature judges and councillors to the East.

The Regulating Act was the first measure passed in a period of more than twenty years during which Indian affairs were a major topic in the British Parliament. Its defects were soon manifest, but remedial measures were delayed by the crisis of the American War of Independence. In 1780 the Company’s privileges ran out under the Act of 1744, but the government of Lord North, still reeling under the shock of Saratoga, was unwilling to bring forward any radical proposal. Instead the Company’s privileges were extended to 1791 with three years’ notice from that date. The Company’s dividend was at the same time limited to 8 per cent. But Parliament was not now to be thus put off. In 1781 two parliamentary committees were appointed, one presided over by Burke, to examine the administration of justice, and one by Dundas, to consider the causes of the wars in the Carnatic. The prophet of reform and its practical manager both found congenial subjects for their labours. At the same time Lord North’s ministry was tottering to its fall, ushering in a period of political instability which only ended with Pitt’s victory at the general election of 1784. For the first time India became a dominant issue of English politics. It provided a main political issue during the Fox-North coalition in 1783 and provided King George III with an excuse for dismissing the ministry at the end of the year. It formed the subject-matter of the first measure of Pitt’s long ministry and made his reputation both as
an administrator and legislator. It continued to agitate Parliament through the years of Warren Hastings's impeachment, providing opportunities for the assertion of moral principle and the expression of political idealism. England inoculated herself with Indian wealth to develop within her the anti-body of political integrity.

Three constructive proposals emerged from this period. The first was Dundas's Bill, a centralizing measure which never received serious discussion. The second was Fox's India Bill, the occasion of the fall of the Fox-North coalition. Fox proposed to supersede both the proprietors and the directors with seven commissioners appointed by the Crown and irremovable except by an address from either House of Parliament; the leading shareholders were to be represented by nine assistant directors. The solid objection to this proposal was that it would have transferred the whole patronage as well as the direction of policy to seven persons knowing nothing of India, owing their appointment to political influence, and subject to political pressure. Political patronage would have replaced the personal jobbery of the directors and India might well have become the scene of greater corruption than before.

The third measure was Pitt's India Bill which actually passed into law in August 1784. Pitt rejected the outright taking over of the management of the Company's Indian possessions by the Crown, which had first been proposed by Clive in 1759. He equally rejected the crude subordination of Company to Parliament proposed by Fox. He left open the question of the sovereignty of the Company's possessions in India. At the same time it was clear that the Company was incapable of meeting its new responsibilities without assistance and supervision. Pitt's remedy was a double or joint government of Company and Crown. The directors themselves were left in being and retained control of commerce and patronage. But the Court of Proprietors lost the power of modifying or rescinding any proceeding of the directors which had been approved by the new Board of Control. This meant in effect that their power to influence political decisions in India was ended; the proprietors thus passed unhonoured from the Indian political scene. It was in the political sphere that the new dual system was effective. The directors themselves, unhindered by the Court of Proprietors except in the matter of their election, formed one-half of the partnership and the new Board of Control the other. This body consisted of six unpaid privy councillors, one of whom was the president with a casting vote. In fact, under the masterful direction of Dundas and with the backing of Pitt, the president soon became in effect minister for the affairs of the East India Company. The board had no patronage and did not interfere in commercial matters, but it had power 'to superintend, direct and control all acts, operations and concerns which in anywise relate to the civil or military government or the revenues of the British territorial possessions in the East Indies'. The board approved all dispatches (which it could modify or reject) and
could even insist on its own orders being transmitted without the directors’ consent. In matters of secrecy the board dealt with a secret committee of three directors whose proceedings were unknown to the rest of the Court.

In India the same system of indirect control was applied and there was a similar tightening up. The Governor-General was appointed by the directors but could be recalled by the Crown as well as the Court. The experiment of appointing English public men to the governor-general’s council was abandoned, and the council itself reduced to three of whom the commander-in-chief was to be one. The control of Calcutta over the subordinate presidencies in matters of war, revenue, and diplomacy was tightened, and the local councils were in their turn reduced to three members each. At the same time the Act declared that ‘to pursue schemes of conquest and extension of dominion in India are measures repugnant to the wish, honour and policy of this nation’. The Governor-General and Council were expressly forbidden to declare war or enter into aggressive designs without the explicit authority of the Court or the secret committee. Pitt’s India Act was rounded off by amending acts of which the most important gave the governor-general power to override his council and also made it possible for the offices of governor-general and commander-in-chief to be united in the same person. The first of these measures was made a condition by Lord Cornwallis of his acceptance of the office of Governor-General. It made the governor-general the effective ruler of British India under the authority of the board and the Court, and prevented any repetition of the embarrassments from which Hastings had suffered. The Governor-General and Council now became the Governor-General in Council and as such he remained until 1947.

The dual system thus set up lasted until the Mutiny in 1857. The apparent weakness of duality proved in practice to be the secret of its success. The home government at the time lacked the means for providing an efficient civil service in India. At the same time the Company unaided lacked the strength for enforcing probity and efficiency in its servants. The dual system left the administration in the hands of those who were familiar with it, but provided a supervisor at home with parliamentary backing in the shape of the Board of Control, and another in India in the person of the Governor-General whose authority was above local influence and beyond local challenge. Disputes there were, but the directors had the good sense to realize that the last word lay with the ministry of the day. Compromise was therefore the usual outcome of disagreement. Despite theoretical appearances, the partnership worked. But as the British stake in India grew, the government’s influence increased and the directors’ political power correspondingly declined. There were frequent compromises on appointments to the governor-generalship. The directors could block an unwanted candidate as in the case of Metcalfe. But it was only with difficulty that they secured the recall of Wellesley, and their recall of
Ellenborough in 1844 was only successful because Peel’s ministry had already lost confidence in him. We can say that the essential result was to give the home government a continuous influence on, and ultimate control of, Indian policy. The days of the irresponsible exploitation of India were over; in its place the responsibility of Parliament for the government of India and the welfare of the people of India was not only clearly defined but also made possible of enforcement. The planning genius of Pitt and the practical management of Dundas were more effective than the generous rhetoric of Fox in making effective the professed idealism of Burke.

The assertion of the moral responsibility of Parliament for the welfare of India was the essential theme of the impeachment of Warren Hastings. The motives of its managers were mixed from the personal spite of Sir Philip Francis to the crusading zest of Burke, and even Burke was not free from personal rancour. Yet behind the invective and passion which accompanied it lay the conviction that moral principles must prevail in Indian as much as in British public life, and that what was wrong in the West could not be right in the East. It was this feeling which caused Pitt to withdraw that support of Hastings in the case of Chait Singh of Benares which he had given on the issue of the Rohilla war. Hastings was arraigned before the House of Lords on twenty-three charges. The proceedings opened amidst great excitement at Westminster Hall in 1787. They dragged on for six years and ended with Hastings’s acquittal on all the counts. By that time the country had entered on the long French revolutionary wars and public interest had long since flagged. Though acquitted Hastings was financially crippled and debarred from further employment or public honours. He spent the rest of his long life in retirement at his beloved Daylesford, emerging finally to receive the spontaneous tribute of the Commons which rose in his honour when he finished giving evidence at its bar in connexion with the charter discussions of 1813. It must be admitted that only very rough and rather brutal justice was done, but justice of a kind there was. Though the faults of many lesser men transcended those of Hastings as his ability exceeded theirs, it was fitting that the responsibility for misgovernment and acts of high-handedness should be fixed upon the head rather than on lesser men. At the same time the greatness of his services as well as the gravity of his shortcomings required recognition. It would have been as unjust roundly to condemn him as wholly to absolve him for all the acts of his government. Justice required that he should be both blamed and praised and this was in fact what occurred though the prosecution was tainted with vindictiveness and the length of the trial imposed cruel hardship. As a form of justice the proceedings were discreditable and rang the death knell of impeachment as a legal form. But the arraignment of Hastings and the ending of all his further prospects gave warning to the Company’s servants in general that no lesser man could expect his actions to go without scrutiny or his faults without reproof;
his acquittal and the parliamentary esteem which later came to him demonstrated that merit and ability in serving the state, even though speckled with wayward actions, would not go unnoticed either.

The Company's existing charter ran out in 1794 with a warning three years earlier. Consideration of the terms for the renewal of the charter involved the focusing of attention on Indian affairs in a way not known in later times. Parliamentary committees took evidence and made reports to the Houses and the subsequent debates which took place occupied much time and attracted much attention. For the rest of the Company's existence the charter was regularly renewed for twenty-year periods. What amounted to a grand inquest on Indian affairs and the conduct of the Indian government thus took place periodically. It formed the preliminary for legislative changes which can thus be conveniently distinguished and the discussions provided ample and convenient evidence of the gradually changing climate of opinion in Britain and its effect upon Indian policy. We may now pass the subsequent Charter Acts in brief review before distinguishing their effect upon the several strands of government. The Act of 1793 was passed when Pitt was at the height of his power, when Britain was just embarking upon the French revolutionary wars and when Cornwallis had just completed his first successful governor-generalship. It was in effect a vote of confidence in the new system, and in consequence the changes made were few. Consolidation, not innovation, was the keyword. The advocates of free trade and Wilberforce's plea for the countenance of Christian missionaries were both repulsed, and the Company was confirmed in its commercial privileges.

In 1813 the French wars still continued but the end was in sight. There had been alarm at Wellesley's aggressive policy with its financial repercussions and concern at the administrative shortcomings in the administrative and judicial spheres. Inquiry began in 1808, and was more prolonged and exhaustive than before. But the reports produced were more informed, and the discussions they provoked were less passionate than previously. The Fifth Report of 1812 on the revenue and judicial system of Bengal became a classic of Indian administration. The Act of 1813 showed how much the climate had changed in twenty years in spite of the deadening influence of war conditions. The Company obtained another twenty years lease of life. But the advocates of free trade succeeded in breaking the Company's monopoly of Indian trade, thereby opening a new chapter in Indian economic history. The immediate effect was not apparently very great, but from this change flowed the later commercial and industrial developments which have placed India in the forefront of industrial countries. The apostles of welfare, led again by William Wilberforce, secured the admission of Christian missionaries, a church establishment of a bishop and three archdeacons, and a resolution 'that it is the duty of this country to promote the interest and happiness of the native inhabitants of the British dominions in India and that such measures ought to be adopted
as may tend to the introduction amongst them of useful knowledge and of religious and moral improvement'. Here again the immediate effect was small, but the way was pointed to developments of the utmost importance.

The discussions which led to the Act of 1833 again began in an atmosphere of financial stringency caused by the expenses of the first Burman war. But the success of Bentinck's economies blunted the weapons of the Company's critics and perhaps helped to prolong its life. Before the Act was passed the Whigs had come to power and opened a new era in British politics. The great Reform Bill became law in 1832 and liberal and Benthamite ideas were in the ascendancy. The Company disappeared as a commercial agency in India, remaining only as a political agent for the Crown. Their possessions were to be held 'in trust for His Majesty, his heirs and successors, for the service of the Government of India'. Centralization advanced another step. The new ideas of law bore fruit in the conferment of definite legislative powers and the establishment of a Law Commission, of which Macaulay was the most prominent member, to codify in a single system the five existing systems of law. The eventual fruit of this commission was the Indian Penal Code, which came into force in 1860, and the Codes of Civil and Criminal Procedure. Thus the Act formed the starting-point for the development of Indian public law as known today. Similarly, the legislative powers conferred on the Governor-General and his council sitting with a fourth or legislative member (Macaulay was the first of these) formed the starting-point of the legislative development which lead straight to the sovereign parliaments of the Indian union and the Pakistan republic. The final Act (before the Mutiny) of 1853 was passed in the hey-day of Dalhousie's rule and involved only one or two changes. It continued the Company as a government agency. It arranged for the completion of the Law Commission's work. The most important departure was the abolition of the Company's patronage by the introduction of open competition for entry into the covenanted service. Thus the Indian Civil Service, the creation of Cornwallis in its general character, assumed its modern form. The tree of the Company had now clearly lost its sap; its political fruit of the government of India hung overripe from the branches ready to drop into the lap of the Crown as soon as a passing breeze of crisis should shake them.

We can now turn to the broad themes mentioned previously. As the Company was organized as a commercial hierarchy, the early adminis-

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1 The thirteenth and last resolution which was the basis of the Act of 1813.
2 C. P. Ilbert, The Government of India, pp. 83-84. These systems were (1) the body of English statute law as far as applicable, introduced by the charter of George I; (2) all later English Acts expressly extended to any part of India; (3) the regulations of the Governor-General's council, 1793-1834 (for Bengal only); (4) Madras Regulations; (5) Bombay Regulations.
3 By appointing British commissioners to codify the work of the Indian commissions.
trators were simply merchants seconded to political duties. Many performed both at once and few suffered their commercial interests to atrophy. A decisive step was taken by Cornwallis when he separated the commercial and revenue departments. Thereafter men opted for either the commercial or revenue branch and became either merchants or administrators, but not both. The goal of the merchant was a commercial residency, which lasted until the end of the Company’s Indian trade in 1834.¹ These stately merchant princes, possessing the dignity without the rapacity of the old ‘Nabobs’, were a picturesque by-product of the Company’s evolution. The Company as a whole retained its monopoly of both the Indian and China trades until 1813 with some minor encroachments by private traders after 1793. In 1813 it lost the Indian monopoly but retained that of China, whose tea trade had long provided the bulk of its profits.² In 1833 it lost the Indian trade altogether and the monopoly of the China trade; in 1853 this also ceased, leaving the Company a political husk which hardly concealed the actual control of the Crown.

The state’s control of the Company’s political affairs steadily increased after 1783. The first factor was the personality of Dundas himself, whose diligence and skill in managing men firmly established the Board of Control as the final arbiter of political decisions. The withdrawal of the Crown’s right to consent to the appointment of the Governor-General in 1786 did not in practice affect the steady growth of the board’s power and the right was in any case restored in 1813. The superior political experience and greater breadth of view of the presidents gradually overbore the more extensive local knowledge of the directors. Their power of appointment soon came to be that of objecting to men they disliked rather than insisting on men they wanted. The breaking of the commercial monopoly in 1813 and the extinction of the Indian trade in 1833 cut the ground from beneath the directors’ feet by depriving them of any independent body of support. When in 1853 six of the twenty-four directors were nominated by the Crown they were further undermined from within and it was clear that the end was near. The Crown was the effective ruler of India in all but name from 1834,³ the Company being its local managing agency.

The control by the state of the Company’s affairs in India itself was initially effected by its control of the Governor-General. The first step was the reduction of the council to three including the commander-in-chief, and the rule that the other two members should be Company’s servants. The next was the appointment of a man high in British public life to the supreme office and the power given to him (by the

¹ For an account of the latter-day commercial resident see W. W. Hunter, *Annals of Rural Bengal*.
³ The Act of 1833 came into force in 1834.
Amending Act of 1786) of overriding his colleagues. The Governor-General was thus raised above local controversy and prejudice and elevated above his colleagues both in dignity and legal authority. The relation of Warren Hastings to his councillors was exactly reversed; the former colleagues became in effect subordinates. When the Governor-General was also commander-in-chief, as was the case with Cornwallis, Lord Hastings, and Bentinck (from 1833), his position was indeed formidable. The power of the governor-general was gradually enlarged by increasing his authority over the two subordinate presidencies. In 1793 his superintending powers were underlined and further defined, and he automatically superseded a governor on visiting another presidency. An example of this was Wellesley's sojourn in Madras in 1798–9. In 1834 his paramount authority was emphasized by the change in his title form from Governor-General of Fort William in Bengal to that of Governor-General of India. His power of making 'regulations' for the presidency of Bengal was extended to formal law-making powers by means of legislative Acts for the whole of British India in 1834. A governor-general was virtually impregnable so long as he was supported by the London cabinet and behaved with reasonable prudence. Even Ellenborough would not have been recalled had he not lost the confidence of his former colleagues in Peel's ministry.

AUTHORITIES

For the preliminary period and an outline to 1861 the masterly work of Sir C. Ilbert, The Government of India (1922), may be consulted. See also chaps. x, xviii, and xxxii in the Cambridge History of India, vol. v. For the relations of the British with the Mughuls see Percival Spear, Twilight of the Mughuls (1951). A. Berriedale Keith, Constitutional History of India (1936) is a good constitutional history.

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P. Aubier, Analysis of the Constitution of the E. India Co. (1826), is useful. L. S. S. O'Malley, The Indian Civil Service 1601–1930 (1931), is careful and accurate; P. Woodruff, The Founders (1953) is more personal and colourful. Sir W. W. Hunter, Annals of Rural Bengal (1868), gives a good picture of the Company's commercial establishments in their later days.

For the Nabobs in Britain see J. M. Holtzman, The Nabobs in England 1760–65 (1926).

1 The cases of those Company's servants (Shore and Barlow) who became governor-generals (apart from acting appointments) on the whole served as exceptions to prove the rule. They lacked something of authority and tended to see the situation through local spectacles.
CHAPTER 7

Cornwallis

The rule of Lord Cornwallis marks an epoch in the history of the British enterprise in India. Not only is there a change of persons and of method, but also a change of outlook and of atmosphere. Internally the commercial colour of the Company’s government faded from this time forward, and with it went the grosser forms of corruption which had stained its servants and the accompanying connivance and collusion which had existed in the courts both of directors and proprietors. Sound government in the interests of the inhabitants was henceforth the touchstone of policy rather than an enlargement of the Company’s investment or an increase in territorial revenues. That sound government, it is true, was conceived along traditional lines of an administration which collected the taxes and left the people as much as possible to themselves. But if not yet a conscious ‘welfare state’, the Company’s internal government from this time forward can fairly be described as a justice state, whose ideal was defined by an unknown eulogist who thus addressed Shahjahan when in public procession—‘Hail, O King, thou owest a thanksgiving to God. The King is just, the ministers are able and the secretaries honest. The country is prosperous and the people contented.’ Externally the Cornwallis régime also marked a change. The change proved to be a stopping-place rather than a change of direction but it was nevertheless effective and significant. The haphazard expansionism of the preceding thirty years was replaced by a steady determination of the home authorities, now seconded by the men on the spot, to limit commitments and eschew imperialism. For the next twelve years policy was self-consciously unaggressive. The old directorial urge for revenue which led to the condonation of the seizure of Tanjore, which urged Bombay to take Bassein as well as Salsette whenever practicable, which condemned the Rohilla war because it was waged by Hastings rather than because it was aggressive, was now replaced by the settled policy of the British government itself working both through its Board of Control and the remodelled directorate. The Cornwallis period saw the replacement of financial and commercial by political motives within and of makeshift imperialism by planned isolationism without the Company’s dominions. With the advent of Cornwallis a fresher air began to blow through Government House. His appointment was the result of the long series of discussions and debates which began in 1781 as soon as public.

1 Ibn-i Hasan, Central Structure of the Mughul Empire, p. 360
attention ceased to be focused on the American problem. The culminating points were the debates on the two India Bills and practical results were registered in Pitt’s India Act of 1784. For our purpose we may say that this Act marked the determination of the British Parliament to assume responsibility for the Company’s dominions,¹ and defined the means by which this was to be accomplished. An essential part of the plan was the appointment to the governor-generalship of a British public servant who would be independent of local interests, and vested with adequate authority. The post was twice offered to Cornwallis before he finally accepted it,² and for his benefit a special Act was passed permitting him to be governor-general and commander-in-chief at the same time and allowing him when necessary to override a majority in his council. Cornwallis was forty-eight at the time of his arrival in India. He had already a distinguished military career behind him. He was a man of such solid and accepted ability that his reputation survived the surrender of Yorktown in America in 1781. Above all, he possessed a massive integrity before which corruption and small-mindedness withered, and he was the personal friend of Pitt, the Prime Minister, and of Dundas, the President of the Board of Control. He was incorruptible without being sour and clear headed without being brilliant. His rule of bluff common sense and of genial simplicity was neither faultless nor always wise, but it imported a new spirit into British Indian affairs which was never again wholly lost.

During the eighteen months which passed between Hastings’s departure and the arrival of Cornwallis the government was carried on by Sir John Macpherson. He was an official of the old school, and his rule was described by the studiously moderate Cornwallis as a ‘system of the dirtiest jobbing’.³ Cornwallis never spoke a word in criticism of Warren Hastings, but more damaging than the rhetoric of Burke were the measures which he found it necessary to take. In his cleansing and reformatory work he found able assistants from the Company’s servants. There was John Shore, his chief lieutenant in revenue matters, and Jonathan Duncan, later Governor of Bombay, who came second in Cornwallis’s estimation. There were the cousins Charles and James Grant, the former of whom became Chairman of the Directors and his son a President of the Board of Control, and Charles Stuart the commercial expert. But in the main he had to rely on his own judgement and strength in carrying through measures which necessarily affected long-established vested interests. That he did so much at the cost of so little friction is witness as much to his personality as to the powers with which he had been vested. A less vigorous man would have been

¹ The sovereignty of the Crown over the Company’s dominions in India was explicitly declared by the Charter Act of 1813.
² The explicit offer to Cornwallis was made after Lord Macartney had made unacceptable conditions for acceptance.
³ Correspondence of Charles, first Marquess Cornwallis, ed. C. Ross, 3 vols., vol. i, p. 371.
baffled by obstruction; a more imperious one like Ellenborough would have made confusion worse confounded.

The instructions with which Cornwallis was armed covered three main heads in internal affairs. He was to settle the administration on a regular basis, cutting down extravagance and suppressing corruption; he was to settle the system of revenue collection moderately and permanently; and he was to reform the judiciary, retaining the Indian framework while informing it with the spirit of British justice, and securing even-handed justice between Indian and European.

His first task was purification. Within a few months of his arrival the whole Board of Trade was suspended and most of the members subsequently dismissed for irregularities. A regiment was discovered for which full pay had been drawn for several years, but which only existed on paper. Almost all the thirty-five collectors were, he believed he had good reason for thinking, deeply engaged in the forbidden private trade, 'and by their influence as collectors and judges of Adalat became the most dangerous enemies to the Company's interest'. The Governor-General was pressed by influential men in England, including the Prince of Wales, to sanction 'infamous and unjustifiable jobs'. Hickey records in his journal how offices were bought and sold. Cornwallis had the integrity to reprobate and the strength of mind and weight of dignity to resist such importunities, and they were never so unashamed again. The rule against private trade in the public branch of the service was sternly enforced, offenders being sent home. These cleansing acts would only have had a temporary effect had not Cornwallis gone to the root of the evil by regularizing the emoluments of the Company's servants. In pre-Plasscy times the Company had paid nominal salaries and expected their servants to support themselves by private trade which did not interfere with the Company's investment. The first attempt to find a substitute for private trade in the new conditions was Clive's Society of Trade. This was superseded by a somewhat larger scale of salary with commissions at a fixed rate on the revenue. The salaries were too low and the commissions too high, and the possible abuses which this system might encourage are obvious. It must also be remembered that no pensions were paid on retirement; in consequence many servants did not retire when they should, because they were too indebted to afford to do so, while everyone wished to amass capital sufficient to support themselves in dignity and ease in England. The temptation to make haste by illicit means was inevitably strong. Cornwallis was strong enough to induce a reluctant Company to abolish the commissions and to substitute for them generous fixed salaries. These salaries were attached to posts for which minimum

1 Ibid.
2 H. Beveridge, *Comprehensive History of India*, vol. ii, p. 575.
3 *Cornwallis Correspondence*, vol. ii, p. 51.
4 The outstanding case was that of the resident of Benares. His salary was Rs. 1,000 a month (£1,350 a year); his commission £40,000 a year, with, according to Cornwallis, other perquisites as well.
terms of service were prescribed. Thus the old evil of great offices held by junior servants was ended. With this basis he was able to take a strong line on the already forbidden but still extensively practised private trade. Thus were laid the foundations of a civil service generously paid, imbued with a high sense of public duty, and possessed of an impressive integrity, which governed India during the nineteenth century. Its work was done on the whole with notable efficiency and its standard of conduct was one of the highest in its contemporary world.

The reformation of the public service had, however, other facets which proved to be less pleasing. The day of public selection of public servants had not yet dawned. Nomination by the directors therefore continued to be the avenue of entry. The worst jobbery was prevented by the higher standards of service exacted in India with home support. A real misfit was not any longer able to make a fortune and return quickly, and would soon be returned without one. But the limited method of choice tended to produce a caste and family spirit within the service. Its strength may be gauged from the jealousy which greeted the appearance of the ‘competition-wallah’ after 1853. The hereditary traditions of Indian service produced some splendid examples of family service; it also produced a strongly exclusive and obstinately conservative outlook. It was this spirit which obstructed the admission of Indians to the higher services and which prevented the service as a whole from reading the signs of the new nationalist times in the late nineteenth century. Another unfortunate consequence of Cornwallis’s measures was the exclusion of Indians from all higher government posts. Cornwallis had as poor an opinion of Indian probity as of British. ‘Every native of Hindustan, I verily believe, is corrupt’, he wrote. But while he had the means of improving the standards of European officials, he saw no way in the case of their Indian counterparts. Therefore he refrained from appointing them to responsible posts, or removed them when possible with the shining exception of Ali Ibrahim Khan, the incorruptible judge of Benares. This policy received legislative sanction in the Charter Act of 1793 which limited the tenure of all posts worth more than £500 a year to covenanted servants of the presidency concerned. Since no Indians were members of the covenanted service, they were not eligible for appointment. Subsequent admission to higher offices was the result of special enactments until admission to the covenanted services became a limited reality as well as a theory after 1853. The exclusion of Indians had certain important effects. The large ministerial Indian class, both Hindu and Muslim, found themselves excluded from public life in the Company’s dominions. Public ability ceased to bloom when denied the sun of opportunity. Thus grew the legend that public ability did not and never had existed in India, that proficiency in commerce and the law were the summit of modern Indian achievement. Secondly, European and Indian gradually ceased to rub shoulders in public
affairs. Within the Company's territories personal relations, outside the sphere of commerce, tended more and more to be that of master and servant, the governor and the governed. Up-country equality of status continued and with it good fellowship and mutual respect. When status becomes unequal opinion grows unbalanced. So developed that contempt for things and persons Indian which was already prevalent in Calcutta in the time of Lord Hastings, and which produced the shallow half-truths of Mill and Macaulay and the downright contempt of lesser men.

In order to follow the administrative reforms of Cornwallis some idea of the state of affairs as he found it on his arrival is necessary. The administration was divided into the commercial and revenue branches. The commercial branch was responsible for the Company's annual commercial investment. This originally took the form of silk, wool, cotton goods, and indigo. Later saltpetre was added and, from 1770, raw cotton. Until 1756 this was partly paid for by specie sent from England; thereafter it was met by the revenue of Bengal. The investment was controlled by the Board of Trade and was actually made by a number of commercial residents by means of contracts. The revenue or general branch controlled the civil administration, which in practice meant the collection of revenue and the administration of civil justice (criminal justice still being managed by the nawab through his deputy Muhammad Reza Khan). Revenue control was exercised by a Board of Revenue at Calcutta, and the work of collecting land and local customs dues performed by British collectors. The opium trade was a government monopoly let out on contract to Indians while the salt trade had since 1780 been controlled directly from Calcutta, the price being fixed every year by the Supreme Council. European officials had now become familiar figures in the districts, most of which had a collector and a judge, and some a commercial resident besides.

Hitherto service in both branches of the government had been interchangeable. It is easy to see how habits and outlooks legitimately acquired in the commercial field might prejudice good administration in the political. Cornwallis's first care was to separate the two. In 1789 all the Company's servants were allowed to opt for one or other branch and there remained. The Company's commercial system took the form it retained until the abolition of its trade in 1834. A reformed Board of Trade directed operations. The annual investment remained in the hands of the commercial residents, who had no political powers and worked on the agency system. They were remunerated by commissions on the value of the investment (the money annually entrusted to them) and they were allowed private trade. This was a recognition of the fact that in their case it was a practice impossible to stop. But this practice ceased to be a serious evil because they were deprived of political power, not only while holding a particular office, but throughout their careers. To adapt Macaulay's phrase about Impey, they became rich and quiet, leaving it to their political colleagues to become
famous. The public half of the government was now divided into the
general (civil and military matters) and the revenue departments,
which also included civil justice. We can now consider Cornwallis's
successive reformation of the revenue and judicial systems.

As in all mainly agricultural communities, the chief source of the
public revenue in India was land. The system of landholding, the
methods of assessment, and collection of land revenue were therefore
of fundamental importance both to the administration and to the
people themselves. In India the systems of land tenure were regulated
by age-old custom and it was their methods of assessment which were
subject to change and regulation. The people looked for lenient assess-
ments and honest collection, the government for accurate information
and reliable collection. The interests of the cultivator and of good
government in fact largely coincided, but if government were pressed
for money or distracted by internal dissension, long-term maxims of
justice would be put aside; superintendence would become lax; the
agents of collection would be pressed or allowed to do their own
pressing on the cultivators of the soil, with the inevitable results of
harsh demands, punitive measures of collection, and rural misery.

The system in vogue when the British were granted the diwani of
Bengal in 1765 was that known as the zamindari. The peasant paid a
fixed share of his produce (in cash or kind) to tax-collectors known as
zamindars (landholders). The share was traditionally one-third of the
gross produce, and might be more or less. The zamindar paid over
nine-tenths of what he received to the state, retaining a tenth as re-
numeration for his exertions. By custom the zamindar had acquired an
hereditary right. He paid a fine or fee on his succession, but could only
dispose of his holding by state permission. Failure to pay the full jama
or assessment was visited by fines, imprisonment, or floggings but
not by confiscation. In addition to his revenue rights and duties, the
zamindar regulated the occasional taxes imposed by the provincial
government and was responsible for public order in his district. The
zamindars of Bengal thus formed a provincial aristocracy. They were
revenue collectors, magistrates, local magnates, and men of substance.
But they were not landowners or a landed aristocracy in the British
sense. They were an official aristocracy of hereditary rent-collecting
and magisterial magnates. Their estates resembled those of British
landlords in appearance, but were essentially different in texture.
This system had its own checks and balances. The zamindar was too
close to the peasant to be deceived about his capacity to pay. If the
zamindar was too rapacious the peasant could leave his estate for
another's or band together against extortion. The zamindar had only
his own levies to rely upon, and severe repression therefore defeated
its own object by ruining the zamindar.

At first the British acted through Indian agency and the system
went on undisturbed. When Hastings took over the management in
1772 a series of experiments began, which proved the least successful
part of his administration. A quinquennial settlement was tried, farming the revenues to the highest bidder, though the great famine was only two years past. Then annual settlements were tried with resulting unsettlement, loss of confidence, and rural stagnation. Revenue farming became a matter of speculation amongst Calcutta financiers and the ancient personal connexion between tax-collector and cultivator was broken in the anxiety to increase receipts and preoccupation with revenue returns. The whole rural life of the Bengal Presidency was disturbed by the regulation of demand by people ignorant of conditions and by the displacement of the old hereditary agents. Nor did the appearance of British collectors improve matters. They lacked both knowledge of and interest in the countryside; they were bewitched with the dream of fortune-making; they were, taken as a whole, the unfeeling agents of the impersonal calculating machine at Calcutta.

The Parliament which turned its attention to this problem was an assembly of landlords. They felt an affinity with the zamindars and they too easily assumed them to be tropical replicas of themselves. It was therefore natural that Pitt's Act of 1784 should insist on the abandonment of annual leases and direct the preparation of "permanent rules" for revenue collectors. Cornwallis was himself a great landowner of the better type. The solution of the problem was thus in a sense predetermined before the facts were studied. But the facts were studied. Hastings himself set on foot the first inquiries and it was under his aegis that John Shore and Charles Grant acquired their knowledge. Cornwallis intensified this process, and contributed himself, with his instinct for the land, a far more understanding spirit than that of his great predecessor. In 1789, as a result of Shore's researches, a settlement for ten years was made. In 1793, at the end of his term, Cornwallis urged Dundas to sanction the permanence of the settlement. Shore opposed this step, but the famous ten-days' study of Pitt and Dundas at Wimbledon decided against him. On 22 March 1793 the Permanent Settlement was decreed. The zamindars were regarded as landowners; they were to pay, as previously, nine-tenths of the revenue collection to government through the collectors and the lesser holders, or taluqdar, direct through the sub-collectors. The cultivators or ryots were to be protected from oppression by the British collectors.

This settlement has been variously praised and blamed; it is for us to assess its results on the life of the three provinces. The first result was a further period of unsettlement caused by the fact that the new assessment was too high for the existing state of cultivation. Many old-established zamindars could not meet their obligations. Instead of being imprisoned or flogged they were more humanely but ruthlessly sold up, and their places taken by moneyed men from Calcutta. Thus the character of the zamindar body suffered a large change; the body which emerged into permanence about 1800 was a very different set of families to those who had existed in 1765. The personal tie between zamindar and peasant was in many cases broken, and the absentee
landlord became common. The subsequent result was the re-establish-
ment of stability in the Bengal countryside. The class of zamindars was
largely a new one, but it was a stable class. It was bound by strong ties
of interest to the ruling power. The settlement was made when there
was still a large margin of cultivable land lying waste. Security led to
this land being taken up, with an increase of population and of cultiva-
tion. The increased rents went to swell the coffers of the new zamindars’
families, since the government assessment was fixed. The nine-
teenth-century zamindar thus reaped the whole agricultural increment
of Bengal and became wealthy as well as secure. Some, like the Tagores
and the Laws, used their wealth for the public good and the promotion
of the arts. Others preferred the Irish model of absentee landlordism.
As the zamindars gained in status, the peasants sank, for they were now
legally regarded as rent-paying tenants and as such subject to eviction.
Their customary occupational rights were forgotten and they shared
little in the new prosperity. Not till 1859 did the Bengal Land Act do
something to protect their interests. As the personal link with the
zamindar was broken by the break up of the old families, so the func-
tional link was impaired by the withdrawal of the zamindar’s police and
revenue powers. Henceforth the zamindar was a revenue collector only
and the peasant a rent-payer only. The Permanent Settlement restored
rural order in Bengal and provided the conditions of agricultural
development, but it replaced the organic ties between the two classes
of rural society by an impersonal cash-nexus. The two classes were
henceforth unrelated and hostile. Order and progress were secured but
social justice was not done. If annual settlements were too flexible, a
permanent settlement was too rigid; between the two it took forty
years to find the mean of a long-term settlement for thirty years.

The Permanent Settlement was set into the frame of Cornwallis’s
reorganization of the district and judicial administration of Bengal.
Cornwallis found the foundations of the district administration laid
by the reforms of 1786, which set up thirty-five districts headed by
British collectors and supervised by a Board of Revenue, and he pro-
cceeded to build thereon. The Board of Revenue was reorganized; the
thirty-five districts were reduced to twenty-three; each collector was
provided with two European assistants. The collector’s former stipend
of Rs. 1,200 a month, which in fact he supplemented by private trade,1
was raised to a subsistence salary of Rs. 1,500. In addition he was given
a commission ‘in the nature of reward’ of 1 per cent. on the revenue
collected. In the case of the largest district, Burdwan, this was reckoned
at Rs. 27,500 a year. At the same time he was strictly forbidden to
engage in private trade of any kind and this rule was vigorously en-
forced. The commission system might have led to abuse if the collec-
tors had continued to be responsible for making annual assessments as

1 Private trade by collectors and other specified officers had been forbidden along
with the reception of presents by the Regulating Act of 1773. See Sir C. Ilbert, The:
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well as collecting revenue, but as soon as the demand was fixed the
collectors’ expectations were regularized, and the last great bar to
integrity was removed. Thus the framework of the typical British
district administration was laid.

The collector was given magisterial powers, and at first presided
over the old civil and new revenue courts as well. But this apotheosis
did not last. By a system of trial and error Cornwallis reformed the
whole system of civil and criminal justice. For civil justice district or
sillah courts were instituted which dealt with both civil and revenue
matters. Above them were four provincial courts at Calcutta, Murshidabad, Dacca, and Patna, with a final appeal in important cases to the
Supreme Council sitting as the Sadr Diwani Adalat. At the same time
the system of criminal justice was brought into line. Hitherto this had
been in the hands of the nawab, whose deputy, Muhammad Reza Khan, presided over the Sadr Nizamat Adalat at Murshidabad and
whose local agents or darogas held local courts in the districts. Corn-
wallis solved the problem of dual authority by causing the dismissal
of Muhammad Reza Khan and himself assuming the criminal judicial
functions of the deputy nawab. The court was brought from Mursh-
idabad to Calcutta, where the Governor-General and council sat with
Indian advisers. In the districts the darogas were superseded by four
courts of circuit stationed at the four provincial capitals. Over each
two civil servants presided assisted by Indian advisers, and they made
circuits through their divisions twice a year. Under these arrangements
the collector was limited to his magisterial and collecting duties. The
civil courts were administered by district judges and the criminal
courts by the judges of the courts of circuit. Thus a beginning was
made in separating the Company’s judicial from its revenue service,
as its revenue service had already been separated from the commercial.
The Bengal district pattern with its twin luminaries of collector and
judge emerged, which was to remain substantially unchanged through
the British period. The separation between the judicial and administra-
tive classes was complete; though it was later modified in other areas
and even in Bengal itself, it always remained substantial.

The system was completed by two further measures. The rule of
law was expressed in unmistakable terms.

The collectors of revenue and their officers, and indeed all the officers of
Government, shall be amenable to the courts for acts done in their official
capacities, and Government itself, in cases in which it may be a party with its
subjects in matters of property shall submit its rights to be tried in these
courts under the existing laws and regulations.¹

This rule, which was never departed from, laid the foundation of the
civil liberty of the subject which was the essential basis for the later
addition of the political liberty of self-government. At this point, more
than at any other, did new British diverge from old Mughul India, and
the seeds of the future were planted amid the still flourishing crop of

¹ Cornwallis Correspondence, vol. ii, p. 558.
past practice. The second measure was the establishment of police. First in Calcutta and then in the districts police were established for the maintenance of order. As a consequence the zamindars were relieved of their police duties. Salutary for the towns, it was less obviously beneficial in the districts where it separated the zamindars still farther from the people and tended to make government more distant and more Olympian. Law remained largely unaltered, the civil code being customary and the criminal continuing to be the Islamic code shorn of those penalties such as mutilation, which offended the more humane instincts of the age. Finally the whole system as it stood was embodied in May 1793 in a single set of regulations, known as the Cornwallis Code.

The constructive work of Cornwallis was one of which any man might have been proud. Though the Permanent Settlement had serious defects, it gave tranquillity to the countryside and stability to the government; though the reorganization of the services was marred by the exclusion of senior Indians, it established a service distinguished for both efficiency and integrity; though the courts were blocked before long by massive arrears of business, they were capable of improvement and embodied the great principles of the separation of powers and the rule of law. Taking it all in all, Cornwallis had set the Company’s ship of state on a new course, and had brought in justice and integrity to redress corruption and power politics.

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CHAPTER 8

The South, 1780–1801

The south has always been in some degree isolated from the north; it pursues its individual way and maintains its distinctive character even in the days of the telegraph, the railway, and the aircraft. It has always had a power situation of its own, albeit ultimately subordinate to that of the north, and its peculiar features have always required, even if they have not always received, separate and considered treatment. It is therefore desirable to see the south through its own spectacles during the formative years of the British dominion.

At the time of the break-up of the Tughluq empire in the fourteenth century the south established its own power system. It was based upon a balance between the Hindu empire of Vijayanagar to the south of the river Kistna and the Muslim Bahmanî kingdom, and later its successors, to the north. This lasted for two centuries until the collapse of Vijayanagar on the field of Talikota in 1565. Thereafter the two Muslim kingdoms of Bijapur and Golkonda divided most of the Deccan between them, leaving a fringe of Hindu chiefs in the extreme south and along the Malabar and Konkan coasts. The Hindu chiefs were saved by Mughul encroachments from the north and Maratha emergence to the west, and in the late seventeenth century the whole system was overthrown by one of the periodic assertions of northern authority. Aurangzeb’s conquest of the Deccan kingdoms was more thorough than ‘Alâ-ud-dîn’s, but it was hardly more lasting. From the beginning Mughul power in the Deccan was drained by the running sore of Maratha activity in the Western Ghats, and it was soon to be paralysed by wars of succession, by Maratha advances northwards, and by foreign incursions from the north-west. From 1720 the Mughul garrisons were in effect left to their own devices, and there emerged a revised version of the balance of power of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This time it was a triple instead of a twin balance, the new and disturbing element being the Maratha power to the west. The Muslim power in the Deccan redeployed itself under the first Nizam and last Mughul governor to form the virtually independent state of Hyderabad, the Peshwas of Poona grew formidable in the west and the Hindu power in the south emerged once more as the state of Mysore. Hyderabad, including the whole coastline from Orissa to Tanjore, was the largest and the Peshwa’s the most powerful state. The development of the new geopolitical pattern in the south was interrupted by the Anglo-French struggle in the mid-century which left at its close a fourth power controlling the western seaboard and the Carnatic plain.
At the same time the Hindu state of Mysore was transmuted into a Muslim power by the adventurer Haidar Ali, being made formidable by his talents. The wars of the next twenty years served to emphasize the power of the four by securing the eclipse of lesser states. The Nawab of the Carnatic sank to be an ingenious but helpless debtor in the hands of the Company; Tanjore was equally dependent. The ancient Malabar rulers including the Zamorin of Calicut, whose ancestors had warred with the Portuguese, were absorbed by Mysore and only Travancore maintained a precarious independence.

At the close of the second Mysore war in 1784 the leading power in the south, apart from the Company, was Mysore itself. It owed this position partly to the genius of its late ruler Haidar Ali, and partly to its central position on the Deccan plateau which enabled its rulers to move on interior lines to threaten the Company in Madras, the Nizam in Hyderabad, and the Peshwa in Poona by turns. The Marathas would indeed have been stronger if they had been united. But since the thirties much of their energy had been diverted by the glittering prospect of northern empire. The Marathas might have had northern empire or southern dominion but their strength was insufficient for both. Further, they were no longer a united people, but rapidly splitting into five states nearly as jealous of each other as they were aggressive towards others. The fame of Mysore was maintained by Haidar’s son Tipu, who inherited most of the talents of his father without his judicious and cautious temper. Restless and erratic but brilliant in tactics and fertile in expedients, he kept the south in continual alarm and was regarded, until the day of his death, as the most formidable power with which the Company had to deal. Against his personal defects, his intolerance, and his maltreatment of prisoners must be set his incessant activity, his military genius which frequently baffled British generalship by the speed of his movements and the rapidity of his changes of front, and his skill as an administrator which kept his territories loyal under the severest tests and was acknowledged by their British invaders. His name dominates the writings of the time; his destruction gave to Wellesley a resounding prestige which carried him through six more years of wars and of mounting expense and criticism.

Cornwallis came to India forbidden, under Pitt’s India Act, to declare war on country powers or conclude treaties for that purpose without the consent of London. No man was more anxious than Cornwallis to obey these injunctions, but he could not evade the commitments which his predecessors had entered into. In the south he found himself the victim of the divided control of pre-Regulating Act days, when Madras was a law unto itself and often a singularly injudicious one. In 1765 the district of Guntur in the northern Sarkars had been assigned to Basalat Jung, a brother of the Nizam, as a jagir or fief for his life. Its resumption by the Madras government in 1779 was one of several factors which prompted the Nizam to join Haidar Ali and the Marathas in a triple attack on Madras in that year. Hastings
secured the Nizam’s neutrality by handing back Guntur. Basalat Jung died in 1782, but the Nizam evaded the surrender of the district. It was Cornwallis’s demand, under the treaty of 1765, for the return of Guntur, which led to war with Tipu Sultan. The Nizam complied but made a counter-demand under the treaty of Masulipatam of 1768, for troops for the reduction of the district of Balaghat. This district was now in the possession of Mysore, and had been recognized as such by a treaty made by the same Madras government only a year after its treaty of Masulipatam with the Nizam. Further, Mysore’s possession of Balaghat had been confirmed by the treaty of Mangalore which ended the war with Tipu (the second Mysore war) in 1784. Madras had double-crossed itself and made it impossible for Calcutta to behave with honour to all parties. In this dilemma, which sorely vexed him, Cornwallis chose the friendship of the party he judged least dangerous to the Company. He recognized the treaty of 1768 with the Nizam as binding as being prior to those of 1769 and 1784. In a letter he promised to hand over Balaghat should it ever come into the possession of the Company; he undertook to supply troops to the Nizam provided that they were not used against any power in alliance with the Company; and he supplied a list of such powers from which the name of Tipu Sultan was excluded. Cornwallis comforted himself with the reflection that war with Tipu was bound to come and that his action was only hastening the inevitable. War with Tipu may indeed have been inevitable, and not merely on account of Tipu’s bad faith. His restless and ambitious temper was bound to see in the Company the principal threat to his power, and his previous experience of the Madras government could have fostered in him no great opinion of European good faith. Further, he lacked his father’s insight into the depth of the Company’s reserves of power or the restraint to bide his time until a more convenient season. But the action of Cornwallis lowered the diplomacy of the Company to the level of the contemporary country powers; its boasted integrity was no better than the duplicity of the Nizam or the shifts of the Marathas. The misfortune was not that the Company fell below the diplomatic standard of the day but that it did not rise any higher. It sank below the level which it claimed to maintain and which, from the time of Warren Hastings, it had in some measure achieved. If Cornwallis had declined to lend troops to the Nizam in time of peace, or had retained the name of Tipu in the list of the Company’s friends, his action might not have been wholly consistent and might not have prevented eventual war, but it would have been an honourable attempt at compromise between conflicting obligations. As it was, Tipu, in the manner of the time, regarded the omission of his name as a signal that an attack was being prepared and took care to strike the first blow.

Tipu precipitated the war by an attack on Travancore, which was in alliance with the Company, at the end of 1789. Cornwallis countered by forming a league with the willing but ineffective Nizam and the
ever-ready Marathas. At first Tipu’s agility in manœuvres and skill in cutting off supplies was too great for the slow-moving and heavily cumbered Madras army under General Medows. At the end of 1790 Cornwallis himself took command. He took Bangalore, but though he defeated Tipu in the field and arrived within sight of Seringapatam, his agile adversary was able to compel a second retreat by cutting off supplies. A third advance brought final success and Cornwallis was able to dictate peace terms under the walls of Seringapatam in March 1792. One-half of Tipu’s territories were annexed, and indemnity of over £3 million (330 lakhs) was exacted, all prisoners were released, and two of Tipu’s sons were handed over as hostages. Wisdom after the event suggested that it would have been better to have annexed the whole state whereby another war would have been prevented, or, as an alternative, to have restored the ancient Hindu dynasty. But the political horizon did not present the same perspective to the observer of 1793 as to the historian of 1956, or even the statesman of 1800. Tipu had run even Cornwallis close. Cornwallis was in an exposed situation, with sickness in his camp, treachery suspected among his allies, and the hot weather upon him. A single check on the walls of Seringapatam would have made his position critical. The man of Yorktown had no mind to add a Saratoga to his record. Half-annexation was accepted as a prudent measure of safeguard, but full annexation would have disturbed the Indian allies and aroused public opinion at home. Pitt’s India Act still forbade the acquisition of fresh territories. Further, the territory was too large to be administered with any prospect of efficiency. Madras had not impressed with its handling of the Carnatic and full annexation might well have left the last state of Mysore worse than the first. The alternative of restoring the Hindu dynasty was proposed by Medows. But there could be no certainty that a discredited family, even with the aid of the minister Purnea, could maintain itself in so large an area against Marathas and the Nizam without, and the discontented elements which would remain within. Cornwallis adopted what seemed to be the sensible compromise of drawing the dragon’s teeth while leaving him his lair.

The effect of the annexation was virtually to surround Mysore with British territory, except on the north-west and north-east, where the Marathas and the Nizam made gains. The taking of Malabar and Coorg cut Tipu off from the western sea, the retention of Baramahal deprived him of the passes through which his father had descended to devastate the Carnatic. Tipu was confined and shut in, and for all his will for revenge might have remained quiet if events in Europe had not raised false hopes in his restless mind.

Peace continued for five years during the administration of Sir John Shore. Cornwallis’s last act in the south was to propose a mutual guarantee between Peshwa and Nizam against attack from Tipu. When the Marathas demurred the Nizam turned to Cornwallis for security. Cornwallis would give no more than general assurances of
support, which were esteemed even less in India than in the Europe of that time, or since. When Shore explicitly declined any definite commitment, the Nizam turned to an able French officer, Raymond, for the training of his army. The Nizam was not deceived as to the intentions of the Marathas. The Maratha confederacy had long since developed from a co-operative enterprise to a permanent family quarrel. In 1795, by a sudden twist in the bewildering maze of Maratha politics, the five units united for the purpose of plundering the Nizam. Although the Nizam was as much an ally as Travancore had been when succoured by Cornwallis in 1789, Shore refused all help. Such were the shifts to which a faithful observance of the non-interference policy drove honest men. As a result the Nizam was heavily defeated at Kharda in March 1795. A state of virtual vassalage was only avoided by a renewal of Maratha disputes which caused the Poona minister Nana Fadnavis to buy the Nizam’s support in a disputed succession to the Peshwaship at the price of most of the fruits of Kharda.

The curtain was rung down on the struggle for power in the south by Lord Mornington, soon to become the Marquis Wellesley. Apart from the weakness of the Nizam, the restlessness of the Marathas, and the implacability of Tipu, a new factor in the situation had appeared in the form of the French Revolution. Since 1793 Britain had been at war with France and since 1797 alone in the struggle. France was known to have designs on the East; as Wellesley set sail for India Bonaparte was preparing his expedition to Egypt. To forestall France in all quarters was even more important than to counteract the Afghans in the north-west. When, therefore, Wellesley learned that Tipu in his anxious search for allies had sent agents to the French island of Mauritius, that the governor there had rashly proclaimed a French alliance with Mysore, that Tipu had planted a tree of liberty at Seringapatam, and that a handful of French troops had landed on the Malabar coast, he thought that instant and drastic action was called for. He removed to Madras and made characteristically thorough preparations while seeking to isolate his foe. The Nizam was the first object of his attention. Knowing himself to be weaker than Tipu and the Marathas as well as the Company Nizam Ali proved willing to conclude the first of Wellesley’s subsidiary treaties. In September 1798, after delicate negotiations skilfully conducted by Malcolm and Kilpatrick, the Nizam agreed to dismiss Raymond and his French officers, to receive in their stead four battalions of Company’s troops, and to increase the subsidy for their support from ½ to 2 lakhs of rupees a month. He gained security but he lost control of foreign relations. The Peshwa was next approached. Too wily to fall into the trap of a subsidiary treaty and too suspicious to co-operate fully with the British, he remained aloof but neutral. When preparations were complete Tipu was called upon for an explanation of the Governor of Mauritius’s proceedings and his reply was duly interpreted as a signal for war. A double attack was launched from Madras and Bombay;
within two months Seringapatam was besieged. After Tipu had refused
a demand for the cession of half his territory and the payment of
£2 million as an indemnity, the city was stormed on 6 May 1799 and
Tipu killed, fighting bravely in the breach. Though as determined
upon war as any twentieth-century dictator Wellesley was surprized
at the completeness of his success. His real object was the removal of
the French menace to India which he exaggerated but in which he
sincerely believed, and the establishment of British hegemony in the
south. He was prepared for some annexation, but now found himself
with the whole of Tipu’s still extensive dominions at his disposal. His
dilemma was that of Cornwallis, for where were the British administra-
tors for such an area to come from? In addition the Nizam was entitled
to half the territory annexed and this would unduly aggrandize him.
The solution was to restore the Hindu royal family still living in
seclusion in Mysore, whose heir was a child five years of age. An area
rather larger than the old dominions of Mysore was allotted to the child
raja, with Tipu’s Brahman minister Purnia as the de facto ruler. The
arrangement was sealed by a subsidiary treaty on the new model,
which, in addition to the usual provisions, enabled the Governor-
General to interfere in the internal administration of the country and
even to take over its direct management in the interests of good gov-
ernment. This was to prove important later. The Company annexed
Kanara in the west, thus completely encircling Mysore with British
territory, Coimbatore in the south, and Seringapatam with other land
in the east. The Nizam received land adjacent to his state, but soon
surrendered it in settlement for the support of his subsidiary force.
Under Purnia the new Mysore state enjoyed a continuity of administra-
tion until 1811, while the districts transferred to the British were soon
to receive the attention of the humane and industrious Munro.

British supremacy in the south was now established and it only
remained to tidy up, as it were, the loose ends. The Carnatic was still
under the nominal control of its nawab, with the proviso that the
British could assume the administration in time of war. The plausible
and pliable but none the less tenacious Walajah had died in 1795, to
be succeeded by his less able son, Umdut-ul-Umara. It was irksome
to Wellesley to give up anything, let alone the most fertile province of
the south; on Umdut’s death in 1801 he revealed correspondence with
Tipu which he considered had placed him and his father ‘in the condi-
tion of public enemies of the British Government in India’. He
selected Azam-ud-daula, a grandson of Muhammad Ali, as titular
nawab and took over the actual administration. At almost the same
time a disputed succession in the Maratha principality of Tanjore\(^1\)

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\(^1\) In 1853 Dalhousie abolished the title of Nawab of the Carnatic. The head of the
family has since been designated the Prince of Arcot and accepted as the premier
noble of the Madras Presidency.

\(^2\) The Tanjore dynasty was a survival of the Maratha wars of Aurangzeb’s time.
The raja descended from Sivâji’s father, Shâhji. The pension lapsed in 1855 on the
failure of heirs.
enabled Wellesley to take over that administration in return for a pension of 4 lakhs of rupees (£40,000) a year. The British dominion south of the Kistna was now complete.

It remains to note something of the internal history of the Madras Presidency during the previous twenty years. The presidency never fully recovered during this period from the results of the Anglo-French wars. The Company's servants were demoralized, first on the model of Bengal, by the corrupting influence of the princes whose fortunes depended upon European aid, secondly by the opportunities for quick returns provided by wars with its relaxing of supervision and stimulation of spending, and thirdly by the presence of the greatest single centre of corruption in the Nawab of the Carnatic. The Anglo-French wars had left Muhammad Ali with formal independence and the title of Nawab Walajah, but they had been waged in his name largely with Company's funds, with the result that he was deep in debt. During the sixties the Company's debt had been reduced but a fresh one was contracted with the servants of the Company themselves. Then came the Mysore and Maratha wars, with the result that the nawab plunged deeper still into debt while his embarrassments were aggravated by persistent maladministration. Official pressure to reform the administration and private demands for arrears of interest steadily mounted, but the nawab soon detected the possibilities of playing off creditors and Company against each other, well knowing that in many cases they were the same persons. It was the official interest of the Company to reform the Carnatic administration and this pointed to the taking over of the state and the funding of the public and private debts on reasonable terms. But this was against the interest of the private creditors, who would lose their exorbitant rates of interest, and against the private interests of many officials themselves who were also private creditors. It was to the interest of these men to keep the question of the nawab's debts simmering, as it were, but never to allow it to come to the boil when drastic action would be necessary; or to change the metaphor, to top the nettle from time to time by such measures as the reduction of interest, rather than to grasp it firmly at the root. The nawab showed much address and persistence in using private interest to influence public causes and thus exercised an influence in the Company's affairs which was as unhealthy as it was tenacious. The leader of the private creditors was the Company's merchant Paul Benfield, who, if not necessarily the most unscrupulous, was certainly the most successful and notorious. He and his friends did not neglect to maintain an interest both with the Company and in public life in England. Benfield himself was a member of Parliament for many years and the Indian interest was a force to be reckoned with in England as well as in India. The nawab was the sworn enemy of the Raja of

1 By the treaty of Allahabad, 1765.
2 The internal interest on the private debt was reduced by stages from 36 per cent. to 10 per cent., but as fast as one set of debts were regularized, a fresh crop appeared.
Tanjore and his influence reached its height in 1776 when Lord Pigot on attempting the restitution of Tanjore to its Hindu raja was deposed and imprisoned by a group of Benfield’s friends.

The affairs of Madras reached their nadir in 1780 when Haidar Ali’s irruption into the Carnatic found the Madras government entirely unprepared and quite unable to deal with the crisis. With the arrival of Lord Macartney as governor in that year there began a steady improvement. Macartney was able and upright but he was handicapped by the dispatch from Bengal, before his arrival, of an agent to watch over the implementing of a treaty negotiated between Hastings and Muhammad Ali in Calcutta. Macartney went to Madras as a supporter of Hastings, but the fluctuations of the Company’s London politics lead to misunderstandings which bred distrust between the two. Macartney rejected the Calcutta treaty but imposed one on the same lines upon the nawab in 1781. The nawab assigned the revenue to Macartney in person for five years. But the actual transmission of the revenue was successfully obstructed by the nawab’s agents. Macartney then himself assumed the power of appointing renters, and introduced considerable reforms. His work was first threatened by a change in Hastings’s attitude and then undone in 1785 by orders from home cancelling the assignment of the nawab’s revenues to the Company. These changes were not unconnected with the activities of Benfield’s friends in London. Macartney resigned and went home to argue his case but the Madras interest was for the moment too strong.

But such a state of affairs was too unsatisfactory to last for long even in Madras. In 1787 a fresh treaty was concluded with the nawab, by which he was to pay four-sevenths of his revenue to the creditors, and to place the sole military power with the Company. During Tipu’s war Cornwallis went a step further. In 1790 he took over the Carnatic and found control so conducive to the conduct of the war that by a fresh treaty in 1792 it was arranged that the Company should take over the whole administration in time of war. Still scope was left for the nawab’s ingenuity and the creditors’ activities. It was left to Wellesley, helped by the welcome occasion of the last Mysore war, to retain the administration which he had taken over, to select a new nawab who agreed to accept a pensionary status, and to arrange for the liquidation of the debt. Only then was the official air cleared from the taint of corruption and the ground cleared for serious civil administration.

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CHAPTER 9

Shore and Wellesley

Lord Cornwallis had been appointed governor-general because it was considered that only a personality from British public life high above local jealousies and ambitions could control the Company's servants in Bengal. He himself hoped that such public men would always be found, but when the time came no 'very proper man of distinction', in George III's words, could be found to undertake the task. Dundas, the President of the Board of Control, for a time thought of going out himself, but in the end the choice fell upon Sir John Shore. Shore had been collaborator of Cornwallis in his work of reform and reorganization, and the esteem in which he was held was such that Cornwallis thought that an exception might be made in his favour. Shore justified every estimate of his ability and integrity, but like a too faithful chief-of-staff, felt embarrassed when entrusted with supreme authority. His handling of affairs showed a caution which verged on irresolution and a faithfulness to non-intervention which verged upon disregard for obligations.

Shore succeeded in 1793 during the high noon of the non-intervention, non-aggressive policy laid down by Pitt's India Act in 1784. At the time the Act was passed it was believed that many Indian wars had been the result of the ambition and cupidity of the Company's own servants. Therefore any declaration of war or annexation had been forbidden without the consent of Parliament. This firm directive was supported by other considerations. It was believed that the Indian powers were not in themselves aggressive and if left to themselves they would, as it were, sort themselves out and thereafter strike a balance with the British power in India. Mysore, the Nizam, and Madras would divide the south; the Marathas would settle their own disputes and then be balanced by Afghans and Sikhs in the north and by Bengal to the east. Thus tranquillity of a sort would be restored to India and trade would proceed. There was the further consideration that all danger from France or other European powers had now been removed. A trading company had no business to rule for the sake of ruling provided that it could make its profits without it. Parliament from concern for the Indian people and the directors from concern for their profits were determined to curb the high-spirited instincts of the men on the spot.

This system worked well enough under Cornwallis for the reason that the assumptions upon which it was based held good. Danger from France remained in abeyance and in the first years of the revolution
SIR JOHN SHORE

seemed likely to be suspended for many years. The Maratha disputes continued and seemed likely to result in the supremacy of their ablest and most judicious leader, Mahadjii Sindia. The Sikhs were growing in power in the distracted Panjab, with the Afghans in uncertain but not threatening strength beyond. Only in the south did Cornwallis find himself involved in war and there the exception could be explained on the ground of Tipu’s well-known restlessness and of the clumsiness of Cornwallis’s attempt to reconcile two mutually contradictory obligations.

It is now easy to see that the continued success of non-intervention depended upon the continued validity of these assumptions. The French must continue to be remote and the Maratha disputes evolve into an hegemony which would be constructive and non-aggressive. But when Shore assumed office in 1793 the facts of politics had already begun to upset the logic of politicians. It was Shore’s misfortune to strive to maintain a policy whose bases were being steadily shorn away by unexpected political events. It was his weakness not to perceive the new forces which were developing and to adapt the accepted policy to meet them. The changes were broadly two. In Europe during these years a distracted France apparently in dissolution was becoming a dynamic revolutionary France with a leader of genius about to show his interest in the East by an expedition to Egypt. In India the expected Maratha evolution was cut short by the death of Mahadjii Sindia in the prime of life in 1794. Thereafter fresh dissensions destroyed all prospects of stability in central India and gave rise to renewed aggression in order to divert attention from internal stress. The hope of Indian tranquillity was seen to be vain and non-intervention a blindness to the facts.

On Sindia’s death Nana Fadnavis regained his influence in Poona and thought to cement it by an attack on the Nizam. The Nizam had already sought a defined guarantee of security from Cornwallis and later from Shore, but though these had been refused he was listed as a friend of the Company and was as much an ally as the Raja of Travancore had been when Cornwallis came to his rescue against Tipu in 1790. He had, moreover, earned this friendship by the cession of Guntur and by his help in the war against Tipu. In spite of this Shore held aloof and thus gave colour to the belief that his real motive was fear of the Marathas. Indian confidence in British good faith was shaken, and the unease was increased by the Nizam’s resounding defeat at Kharda in 1795. Had the Marathas remained united the position would indeed have been serious, but they immediately dissolved into contending factions and the Nizam himself shortly recovered much of his lost ground as the price of support for Nana at Poona. The immediate effect was the Nizam’s employment of Raymond and other French officers to train a body of disciplined troops.

In Oudh Shore was more successful. The state was already under the Company’s protection with troops stationed within its borders. He
could therefore afford to be vigorous without fear of parliamentary censure. In 1797 the Nawab Asaf-ud-daula died and a reputed son, Wazir Ali, was recognized as his successor. On realizing that Wazir Ali was both illegitimate and incapable, Shore intervened to replace him by a brother of Asaf, the capable but unfortunate Saadat Ali. A new treaty was enacted, which included the cession of the fort of Allahabad, the complete control of foreign relations, and the raising of the annual subsidy to 76 lakhs of rupees in return for a guarantee of all the nawab’s dominions. The presence of the Afghans under Zaman Shah at Lahore, of whom the Company had been unduly sensitive since the days of Ahmad Shah Durrānī, possibly contributed to this stiffness. It was a presage of Wellesley’s own later policy.

Shore’s Indian career was ended by one of the periodic combinations of the Bengal officers at the end of 1795. They had been angered by Cornwallis’s reductions of inflated allowances and now took action against his gentler and less influential successor. The news of his concessions determined the directors upon his recall. Cornwallis was persuaded to return but withdrew on learning that Dundas in his turn had made concessions he deemed inadmissible. Thereupon Lord Mornington was appointed Governor-General.

The new governor-general at the time of his appointment was thirty-seven years of age. He was small of stature but keen of face, imperious in temper, talented, energetic, and of boundless ambition. A classical scholar in his youth, he had been a M.P. for several years and one of the East India commissioners since 1795. He had the rare political insight which detects changes in political balance at the times of their occurrence but lacked the final political virtue of nicely balancing means with ends, of knowing the limit to which one’s resources will stretch. His insight encouraged him to attempt and his ability accomplished a series of dazzling triumphs, but his lack of self-limitation in dealing with both foes and colleagues led first to a series of checks and then to recall. With an imaginative sweep greater than his illustrious brother Arthur, he fell short in the quality of judicious poise. He was well fitted to impress the authority of the home government upon the Company’s servants, ‘repelling all approaches to familiarity with a degree of vigour amounting to severity’, but quite unwilling to be controlled in his turn by his directorial and ministerial colleagues.

The changes brought about during the seven years of Wellesley’s leadership were so great that they are rightly considered to mark an epoch in the development of the British power in India. But Mornington’s appointment marked no conscious revolution in the policy of the British in India. There was rather a change of political climate and a change of emphasis; both suited the ardent and enterprising temper of the new ruler, who was able to effect a revolution before the realization of what he was doing resulted in his recall. A change of political climate had occurred both in India and Europe. It was becoming clear
that the Indian powers would not of themselves develop a pattern of power politics which would produce a balanced international system. A concert of Indian powers would never match the eighteenth-century concert of Europe. Commerce demanded tranquillity for its conduct and the maintenance of permanent armaments eat into profits. Those who had looked to balance began therefore to consider supremacy as the political aim of the British in India; and even within the Company itself there were those who defended a forward policy on the ground that it would be more economical in the long run. Even more marked was the change of climate with regard to Europe. The days were past when the French Revolution was believed to have heralded the beginning of a new era, and when Pitt had clung to peace till the last possible moment. Revolutionary France was now believed to menace liberty in England and the established order everywhere. The first coalition had come to an inglorious end with the treaty of Campo Formio in October 1797, and young General Bonaparte was known to be preparing a large expedition for an unknown destination. The British governing class were nervous with apprehension and tense with resolution. After the Italian campaign of 1796 no move by the French was incredible and every measure to forestall them welcome. Wellesley's first measures evoked a warm response from all who were disillusioned by the continuance of Indian anarchy and alarmed by the phenomenal growth of French power. And these included both Pitt and Dundas.

It was in this favourable atmosphere that Wellesley was able to pursue his own policy without apparent disharmony with the home authorities. His personal policy was simple; all traces of French influence must be swept from India in order to allow no foothold to an invading army, and since Indian anarchy encouraged such footholds, on this and on general grounds non-intervention and balance must be replaced by British supremacy in India. At first his ideas of the practicable went no farther than 'forward against the French'; it was the dazzling success of his first move which encouraged him to proceed towards the larger aim.

Wellesley's (for by this name we shall henceforth know him) two main instruments of policy were war and diplomacy leading to the subsidiary treaty. In practice the subsidiary treaty was often but the prelude to war, but this was a reversal of intended procedure which he never failed to accept. These were supplemented by diktats by which feeble princes were bowd off the masnad into well-pensioned retirements. Wellesley himself never had any doubts as to the legality or morality of his proceedings because he was convinced that in the large view British supremacy was in the interests of the people of India as a

1 e.g. David Scott of the directorate.
3 Mornington was created Marquess Wellesley on the defeat of Tipu.
whole. With a curious blindness to its democratic implications, he sacrificed princes for the good of the people. On each issue as it arose he was comforted by a generous talent for convincing himself that his opponents were wholly in the wrong. The most striking of these instruments was the subsidiary treaty. As with most of Wellesley’s measures it was not in itself wholly novel. The originality lay in the use he made of it. Clive concluded the first subsidiary treaty with Shuja-ud-daula of Oudh in 1765, and Hastings and Cornwallis had developed it. But whereas these men concluded their treaties for a limited purpose with a particular prince, Wellesley regarded them as part of the technique of supremacy. The treaties with Oudh were defensive, treating Oudh as an outwork of Bengal against the Marathas and Afghans; the treaties of Wellesley were offensive, placing advanced posts of British troops in the heart of purely Indian territory. They were the prelude to British control of non-Company India and they provided vantage-points for winning the wars which they provoked.

The nature of the subsidiary treaty was simple and it proved as effective as it was simple. A prince in danger from his neighbours was encouraged to turn to the British for help. The British guaranteed his independence against all comers, and to make the guarantee effective, stationed a detachment of Company’s troops within the state, which was pledged to march against any invader. The prince undertook to pay and supply these troops either in cash or by alienating a portion of his territory to British control. In the primary purpose of giving a prince security these treaties proved completely successful, but they also had secondary effects. The prince was secure against his Indian enemies but also irrevocably attached to his British friends. The princely fly was firmly enmeshed in the British political web, and any hope of escape was idle. The people for their part were spared recurrent invasions and the harrowing scenes which accompanied armies on the march at this period, but they had no resource against the vagaries of the ruler himself. The efficiency of these treaties in undermining the independence of their beneficiaries was such that one is prompted to ask why any ruler was ever induced to agree to them. The answer is that some (like the Peshwa Baji Rao) were too short-sighted or distressed to consider ultimate consequences when concluding them, while others (like the Nizam) preferred certain dependence with a treaty to certain extinction without one. Opportunism was universal at this time, and while most princes realized the strength of the British at the moment, few had much conception of the secret springs of power which would make that strength still greater. The most distressed still hoped that some turn in events might yet restore their fortunes.

We can now turn to the actual conduct of affairs by Wellesley. Wellesley arrived in May 1798 and within a few weeks heard of the proceedings of Tipu’s agents on the Isle de France (Mauritius). With a mind brimming with anti-Jacobinism and fearful of Bonaparte’s designs his first impulse was to levy instant war. But the proverbial
unreadiness of the Madras government proved a much more effective hindrance than their customary counsels of caution. Wellesley then proceeded to prepare armies in Madras and Bombay with characteristic thoroughness, himself moving to Madras at the end of the year. The delay thus incurred was turned to good account by the diplomatic isolation of Tipu. In September 1798, as already described, the first of Wellesley’s subsidiary treaties was concluded with the Nizam. Attempts also made to secure the Peshwa secured his neutrality if not his signature. The success of the war which followed surpassed Wellesley’s expectations and left him with the whole of Mysore at his disposal. In this predicament he showed good sense in restoring half of Tipu’s state to the heir of the dispossessed Hindu Rajas of Mysore. This first success, complete and resounding as it was, echoed through India and Britain alike. At a stroke the prestige of the Company in India was restored and elevated to a fresh peak; in Britain this success, following Nelson’s victory of the Nile, provided a much-needed tonic. It was in a way even more effective than Nelson’s fleet, for the British were accustomed to victory at sea but had become sadly unused to it by land. The extravagant language used both about Wellesley and his achievement revealed not only the over-estimation in which Tipu had been held, but the depression of spirits into which the British had fallen.

The prestige thus gained by Wellesley sustained him against all criticism until his armies were checked by Holkar. He was now master of the south with the Nizam in his train and had no Indian power of substance to deal with except the distracted Maratha confederacy. There followed a series of diktais whose manner even the most convinced admirers have found difficult to justify. There was first the Carnatic itself. Amongst the papers captured at Seringapatam was correspondence with both Muhammad Ali and Umdut-ul-Umara. Wellesley was convinced that the Carnatic should be under British control and it did not require a very detailed scrutiny to convince him that he had now been given just cause for seizure. On the death of Umdut-ul-Umara in 1801 his eldest son was set aside in favour of a grandson of Muhammad Ali who was recognized as nawab on condition that he resigned the administration to the Company. One-fifth of the net revenue was set aside for his support and the whole of his debts taken over by the Company. This liquidation of the double government was both overdue and salutary, making sound administration possible for the first time, but it would have been better if Wellesley had based his actions on the people’s needs rather than on their princes’ pretended crimes. Shortly before, a disputed succession in Tanjore provided a pretext for taking over this state from the descendant of Siváji’s brother. The justification of misgovernment here was lacking but that of insignificance was greater. In the same year, 1799, on the death of the Nawab of Surat, the successor of the Mughul governors of the chief Mughul port, he pensioned the new nawab and assumed the
government. Surat’s value as a fort and as a strategic point between the Deccan and Gujarat was here the justification.

Wellesley now turned his attention to Oudh. Since 1765 this most prosperous of Mughul provinces had been regarded as a buffer state between Bengal on the one hand and the Marathas and Afghans on the other. Hastings had stationed one brigade in Oudh and Cornwallis had increased it to two. But the more efficiently Oudh was protected the less able it became to take care of itself. Under the listless though cultured sway of Asaf-ud-daula, the army fell into disarray and the finances into confusion, while the state became the happy hunting ground of European concession hunters and adventurers. At the end of the century a series of events again focused attention on Oudh. While the Maratha menace had receded owing to the struggle for supremacy in the Deccan, the Afghan menace was revived by the two visits of Zaman Shah to the Panjab in 1796 and 1798. He never proceeded farther than Lahore and his force was moderate; but it consisted almost wholly of cavalry, and there was no organized force to meet it between the Sutlej and the Ganges. The fact of mobility and the memory of Ahmad Shah gave Zaman Shah a disproportionate importance in the eyes of contemporary politicians and Wellesley was not slow to take advantage of the fact. At this time Asaf had died and the ephemeral Wazir Ali had been replaced by the careful and cautious Saadat Ali at the price of a fresh treaty dictated by Sir John Shore. But the Afghan provided a pretext for interference which the murder of the resident Cherry by Wazir Ali and his short-lived revolt strengthened. Saadat Ali was unable to deal with his rival and showed hesitation and nervousness. Wellesley demanded disbandment of his troops and an increase in the subsidiary force. An offer by the nawab to abdicate ‘could not, in his Lordship’s opinion be too much encouraged’. When the offer was withdrawn on the knowledge that the succession would go not to the nawab’s son but to the Company, this action was made an excuse for further demands. Eventually, on the new plan (first tried out on the Nizam in 1800) of exacting territory in lieu of payment for a subsidiary force, the nawab was deprived of the broad and fertile belt of land between the Ganges and the Jumna and in Rohilkhand which amounted to one-half of his territory. The state of Oudh re-remained compact, prosperous, and disorderly, but it was now, except along the northern Himalayan border, entirely surrounded by British territory. It became a domestic problem of the Company and ceased to be a factor in Indian high politics. The nawab, with the encouragement of Lord Hastings, proclaimed himself king in 1819 to the dismay of most Muslim opinion which regarded the act as one of disloyalty to the emperor at Delhi. Thenceforward the rhythm of disorder, remonstrance, and promised reform continued until the final annexation of

1 Asaf was a great builder, his major achievement being the great Imambara of Lucknow.
1856. The ceded districts were settled by the governor-general’s brother Henry, later Lord Cowley.

So far Wellesley had been carried along on the momentum of the destruction of Tipu with its assumed assurance against French attack. The doubts of the directors were stifled by the support of the ministry and the acclaim of the public. He now approached the decisive phase of his grand design. So long as the Marathas were outside his system there could be no British supremacy in India; so long as British desired or Marathas feared such supremacy, there could neither be peace on the principle of balance, nor armed neutrality on the principle of mutual fear. At first events seemed once again to play into Wellesley’s hands. The Maratha coalition which defeated the Nizam at Kharda dissolved at the moment of victory. The suicide of the young Peshwa Madhu Rao Narayan in October 1795 opened the way to fresh dissensions. In the confusion which followed the ablest politician was Nana Fadnavis. But he had no troops of his own and died in 1800. The new Peshwa Baji Rao II, the son of the ill-fated Raganath Rao or Rhagoba, possessed all his father’s irresolution with none of his charm and few of his talents. Incapable of firm leadership or of inspiring devotion he stumbled from shift to shift and was a congenial subject for Wellesley’s technique. The two strongest Maratha leaders were Sindia and Holkar. Daulat Rao Sindia had inherited his uncle’s French-trained and led army under Perron, but lacked his ability and was almost as irresolute as Baji Rao himself. In the house of Holkar the successor to the politic Tukoji and the saintly Ahalya Bai was the brilliant but erratic Jaswant Rao, a man cast in the mould of an Italian condottiere. He could lead and he could dare and until his reason gave way he moved across the north Indian scene like a blazing and erratic comet. But he had no disciplined army behind him and the day of the light-armed, lean-limbed horsemen who had baffled Aurangzeb were gone. There was no time for these contending forces to sort themselves out before a collision took place with the waiting British power.

After the death of Nana in 1800 ‘with whom’, said the resident, ‘departed all the wisdom and moderation of the Maratha government’, Maratha politics resolved themselves into a struggle between Sindia and Holkar for the control of the Peshwa Baji Rao. That hapless and vicious prince joined Sindia against Jaswant. The murder of Jaswant’s brother made compromise impossible. In October 1802 he defeated Sindia and Baji Rao at Poona and raised to the Peshwaship Amrit Rao, brother by adoption to Baji Rao. Baji Rao was now in dire straits. He fled to Bassein and there accepted in desperation a subsidiary treaty at Wellesley’s hands. He accepted a subsidiary force of six battalions, resigned his claims on Surat, accepted British arrangements with the Gaekwar, and promised to abstain from war or relations with foreign powers without British knowledge and consent. He was forthwith restored by Arthur Wellesley to Poona.

The treaty of Bassein was Wellesley’s master stroke. It gave the
British the supremacy of the Deccan as Seringapatam had given them south India. If it did not yet convert the British empire in India to the empire of India, it brought the issue close to decision, for the remaining Maratha powers had lost the key position of their system, the control of the Maratha homeland. By implication it made war with these powers inevitable since they could not accept the new situation without accepting the ultimate supremacy of the Company. The shock of being face to face with the British power produced a momentary movement to unity. But the Peshwa’s hands were tied. The Gaekwar was neutral and Holkar, unready and jealous, retired to Malwa. This left Sindia and the Raja of Berar who had joined forces and crossed the Narbada. This gave Wellesley his chance to demand their withdrawal and on their refusal to declare war in August 1803. The campaign was planned in two parts; in the Deccan to defeat and separate the combined forces and in Hindustan to break up Sindia’s disciplined troops under General Perron at Aligarh. Arthur Wellesley’s victories of Assaye and Argaon broke the power of the Bhonsla raja and Lake’s capture of Delhi and defeat of Perron’s army at Delhi and Laswari subdued Sindia.

The treaties of Deogaon with the Bhonsla and of Surji Arjungaon with Sindia ended the war before the end of the year and marked the summit of Wellesley’s success. Both states received residents at their courts, recognized the treaty of Bassein, and banished Europeans other than the British from their service. The Company gained Cuttack from the Bhonsla, thus joining in a continuous belt of territory Bengal with Madras. From Sindia the gains were even greater. The Doab or river plain between the Jumna and the Ganges, which had supported Perron’s army, together with Delhi and Agra, passed to the British, and the Doab became the ‘conquered province’ of the Bengal Presidency. The Emperor Shah Alam was taken under protection, though Wellesley was careful to make no formal treaty or recognize imperial claims. All Sindia’s lands in the Deccan and Gujarath were annexed and his control in Rajputana loosened. The map of modern India was taking shape.

But Wellesley’s position was not so strong as it looked. Holkar was unsubdued, and the two subsidiary treaties did not include subsidiary forces; above all vast distances faced small forces set to control numbers of embittered but not yet hopeless men. Wellesley had buried his fangs in the Maratha prey and could not now withdraw them. The attempt to negotiate with Holkar soon broke down and war broke out in April 1804. Monson’s defeat near Kotah and retreat to Agra, the siege of Delhi, and above all Lake’s failure to storm Bharatpur broke the spell of Wellesley’s magic. The Maratha chiefs began to stir again. His enemies in the Company at last obtained the consent of the ministry for his recall. The race for empire was halted in the last lap.

Thus ended in gloom and frustration the most brilliant period in Anglo-Indian annals to that time. Wellesley had shown what a man of
vigour, decision, and clear purpose could affect in a world of dissen-
sions, doubts, and fears. He had divined the weakness of the Indian
powers and had applied an effective remedy with great skill as well
as great resolution. Throughout, his acts showed vigour and clear-
sightedness; in the case of the Marathas he displayed virtuosity in
planning and co-ordination as well as great skill in threading his way
through the tortuous maze of Indian diplomacy. He had the defects of
his virtues, an impatience with all that stood in his way, of public
rights as well as of public vices, a vigour which ran to high-handedness,
a pride which verged on insolence, a tendency to underrate genuine
difficulties, a subordination of means to ends. He must be judged in
terms of power rather than of rights or public morality. He believed
that India was ripe for unification and that this great end made
irrelevant all minor wrongs. In fact, he was so nearly right that he may
almost be excused his error. But it may be questioned whether the
attempt to hustle history really benefited the people of India. His final
campaign broke down authority in central India without putting any-
thing in its place; to that extent he must share with others more usually
blamed the responsibility for the Pindari scourge.

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RECENT PUBLICATION

Iren Butler's The Eldast Brother (1973) is a fascinating re-appraisal of Lord Wellesley,
in both his public and private lives, based on new material.
CHAPTER 10

Interlude: Barlow and Minto

In assessing the reasons for change in Indian policy regard must always be had to conditions in Europe and Britain as well as in India. The directors were subject to commercial and parliamentary opinion as well as mindful of profits abroad; the ministers of the day were sensitive to public opinion and the changes in the international scene. Many factors contributed to the recall of Wellesley and they operated as much in Britain as in India. A section of the directors had supported, or at least acquiesced, in the early stages of the forward policy because they believed that supremacy was the surest way to peace and revival of trade. But their tolerance turned to opposition as expenses grew, nearly doubling the Company’s debt in seven years. They were affronted by Wellesley’s failure to keep them informed and outraged by his unconcealed contempt. The majority objected to his advocacy of private trade. But it was the ministry not the Company which took the decisive step. Pitt and Dundas at first sustained Wellesley because they believed that the French threat to India was real. Ministers grew lukewarm when wars continued after that threat had been clearly removed. When the French war was renewed in 1804 and England was threatened with invasion Pitt and Dundas (back in office) grew fearful that Wellesley was attempting a task beyond his own strength and beyond British capacity to maintain. The checks of Kotah and Bharatpur confirmed this fear, which explains the promptness of the recall which followed. Britain could not afford an indefinite Indian war in the year of Trafalgar and Austerlitz.

The eight years of marking time which followed should not be regarded as a mere return to the non-intervention principles of Pitt’s India Act. It was now generally agreed that there could be no stable Indian balance of power and no decorous concert of Indian powers. Supremacy in some form was the only solution, but the time was not ripe. Napoleon was a more pressing danger than Marathas or Pindaris. The Indian problem was ‘put on ice’ until the French problem should have been solved. The ardent followers of Wellesley on the spot saw only the devastation of uncontrolled India, and their impatience was both marked and natural. This tension underlay much of the literature and controversy of the period. It was a conflict between what was desirable to British minds in India and what was possible in view of British commitments in Europe. It was an interlude in rather than a

1 From £17 to 31 million between 1799 and 1805.
reversal of the forward policy. The fort must be held until the final sortie could be made.

Wellesley's successor was Cornwallis, now in his sixty-seventh year. His aim was to replace the Company's dominions within the limits of the practicable, but by no means to restore the status quo. This meant in practice withdrawal from entanglements with Sindia and Holkar but no disturbance of the position at Hyderabad, Lucknow, or Poona. The measures he proposed erred in one direction as Wellesley had erred in another, but he died at Ghazipur on 5 October while on his way to enforce his views. His successor was Sir John Barlow, a Company's servant and the right-hand man of Wellesley, who showed, like Shore before and Lawrence after him, the permanent official's tendency to caution when vested with supreme responsibility. To him fell the task of drawing in, as it were, the Company's horns, and this work he performed faithfully. In November 1805 Sindia's treaty was revised. Gwalior and Gohad were restored to him and his northern boundary fixed at the river Chambal. He was given a free hand throughout the non-British Deccan and in Rajputana. Holkar, who had been pursued to the Panjab by Lake, was similarly confined to the south of the Chambal but he also had a free hand beyond these bounds. The British retained the Jumna doab with Agra and Delhi and its territory where the British stood in a vague but undefined relationship to the Mughul emperor and professed to rule in his name. Elsewhere Barlow maintained the status quo, suppressing a nascent intrigue of the Nizam with the Marathas and resisting an attempt by the directors to annul the treaty of Bassein. The south was ruffled by the mutiny of Indian troops at Vellore, fostered by changes in regulations which were thought to reflect upon religion and encouraged by the vicinity of the exiled Mysore princes. It was not comparable to the later Mutiny because the discontent was wholly military, but it cost Lord William Bentinck his governorship of Madras. This was perhaps its most significant result, because that influential nobleman never rested from demanding reparation until he attained the governor-generalship in 1827.

On the whole Barlow did his work efficiently and well. It was no light thing to rein in troops in full career and to control a bevy of politicals flushed with annexations. The value of his work was to reduce the Company's commitments at a time when they could not be indefinitely extended or even maintained at their existing limits, and to do it without provoking a counter-attack from the still independent powers or encouraging those under the Company's control to make a fresh bid for independence. The weak side was the abandonment of commitments to many Rajput states and in particular Jaipur, which in consequence suffered much from renewed Maratha depredations in

1 He was the oldest governor-general to take office and shared with Curzon a second appointment.

2 Lord W. Bentinck was a younger son of the 3rd Duke of Portland, Prime Minister from 1807 to 1809.
the next few years. But if it is accepted that, because of the European situation the strength to protect them was not available, it is difficult to see what else could have been done. The Rajput states were so far gone in decay that they could only have proved a liability which at that time the Company could not afford to meet. But Barlow suffered from the pens of those who served him grudgingly and who themselves, as in the case of Charles Metcalfe, came to much the same conservative views when they attained to age and responsibility.

Barlow was recalled on the morrow of his confirmation as Governor-General as the result of a ministerial reshuffle in London. His successor was Lord Minto, who had been one of the managers of Warren Hastings's impeachment and so could be supposed to eschew aggressive designs. He went with genuine reluctance as a believer in marking time but he was too intelligent not to realize quickly that non-intervention could now at best be but watching and waiting. His period of office coincided with the height of the Napoleonic struggle; events in Europe forbade any diversion of strength for a forward move in India; events in India forbade any backward one. His first and principal care was the revived French menace. His arrival in India coincided with the final collapse of the Third Coalition with the defeat of Russia and the treaty of Tilsit. Together Russia and France controlled all Europe and threatened Asia. Napoleon had never given up the dream of Eastern conquest. He toyed with the project of a Franco-Russian expedition through Persia until diverted to Spain and Austria. In addition France still held the Île de France and the Île de Bourbon in the southern Indian Ocean, and controlled the Dutch East Indies through her supremacy in Holland. Minto set out to cement the cracks in the Company's north-western front and then to attack the remaining centres of French power. With much patience and skill and greater discretion than Wellesley he sought to achieve the first of these ends by a series of embassies. Sir John Malcolm was sent on two embassies to Persia to counteract French influence. There he clashed with a royal embassy under Sir Harford Jones. The upshot of much undignified wrangling was a Crown treaty pledging the Shah to resist the French which Minto was feign to accept with what grace he could muster.¹ Mountstuart Elphinstone went to the Afghan Shah Shuja at Peshawar but the treaty concluded proved abortive because the Shah was shortly overthrown. The third and most successful of these embassies was that of the young Charles Metcalfe to the Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh of Lahore.² Ranjit had recently established his rule west of the Sutlej and was casting his eyes on the Sikh states to the east, of which Patiala was the chief. The temporary decline of the French menace enabled Minto to take a stronger line than he had originally intended; by the treaty of Amritsar in April 1809 Ranjit Singh obtained a free hand west of the Sutlej in return for undertaking not to interfere to

¹ From these journeys Malcolm obtained the materials for his History of Persia.
² For an account of the rise of the Sikh power see Book VIII, Chapter 4.
the east. This was the most important event of the period. This treaty lasted until the first Sikh war in 1845, bringing stability to the whole Panjab; Sikh energies were directed westwards and southwards against Afghans and Sindhis instead of east against the Company; the Delhi territory was secured and Charles Metcalfe’s reputation made.

This diplomacy was skilful, and in the case of the Sikhs far-reaching in importance. But the danger it was designed to meet was averted by European events which took Napoleon first to Spain, then to Vienna, and finally to Moscow. The recession of the danger enabled Minto to deal with the remaining strongholds of French power in the East. The Dutch colony of the Cape of Good Hope had been finally taken in 1806. When the French seized Portugal the British occupied Goa, and in 1809 Macao in China. In 1810 strong expeditions were sent to the southern French isles, whence the ill-fated proclamation of the Mysore alliance had emanated and which were now nests of skilful French privateers. Both were captured, Bourbon to be returned in 1815 and renamed Réunion, and the Île de France to be retained under its early Dutch name of Mauritius. Minto then turned his attention to the Dutch possessions in the East Indies. In 1810 Amboyna and the Moluccas were seized; in 1811 an expedition under Sir Samuel Auchmuty, with which Minto himself sailed, wrested Java from the French-controlled Dutch after severe fighting. Minto left Stamford Raffles in charge of the government and thus opened a chapter which was brief though lively in the case of Java itself, but led on to the great adventure of Singapore and so to a new phase of British expansion in the East. The seed of the British empire in south-east Asia was carried on Minto’s Java-bound transports.

In India itself the Marathas showed no sign of recovery and indeed sank deeper in distress. The desire of every prince to regain or to retain independence was balanced by their financial plight which now threatened bankruptcy. The only other Hindu states were the Rajputs, who were quite incapable of combination, and Ranjit Singh’s new Sikh kingdom in Lahore, which had renounced its interest in affairs east and south of the Sutlej. In order to supplement the meagre collections in their own territories, the Maratha chiefs turned their arms against one another and against the Rajput chiefs; the result was increased misery and greater financial stringency. The natural leader of the Marathas was the Peshwa, but while he never ceased to intrigue industriously, the confidence he inspired was so slight and the distaste for his harsh treatment of his own people so great that there was no general move in his favour. Raghوجi Bhonsla lay inert at Nagpur, and the Gaekwar had admitted a subsidiary force in 1805. Daulat Rao Sindia was in financial straits and lacked the energy or ability to take the heroic measures needed to restore his fortunes. There remained the brilliant if wayward Jaswant Rao Holkar who alone had the ability to revive the Maratha cause. But he was struck down by insanity in 1808 and died three years later leaving his state in greater disorder than the rest.
Jaswant’s incapacity removed the last restraint on the Pindaris; they now emerged as a positive factor in Indian power-politics as well as an ingredient in the mounting misery of central India. According to Malcolm, they were known as early as the latter part of Aurangzeb’s reign as auxiliaries to the Marathas. They started their career as adventurers who attached themselves to Maratha chiefs, themselves pursuing predatory warfare against the Mughul power. They were more elusive, less coherent, and even more ruthless than the Marathas themselves. They were the jackals to the Maratha leopards. They differed from the Marathas in having no bonds of caste or creed, no homeland, and no national pride. They came from all communities and latterly were matched by bands of Pathan freebooters. Their only tie was the leader, their only object plunder, and their means of increase recruits from the population which they had themselves plundered and disrupted. They fed on social and political disintegration; they arose, in Malcolm’s words, ‘like masses of putrefaction in animal matter, out of the corruption of weak and expiring states’. When the Maratha chiefs were strong, they were the jackals of the chase, limited in numbers and kept in some sort of subordination; when the great chiefs were weak their leaders like Chithu, Wazir Khan, and Karim Khan turned their estates into states, recruited their numbers from landless men and disbanded soldiers who roamed the country, and became an independent force in politics. They can be compared to the ‘Free Companies’ who scourged Italy in the later Middle Ages.

The Pindaris were neither encumbered by tents nor baggage; each horseman carried a few cakes of bread for his horse. The party which usually consisted of two or three thousand good horse with a proportion of mounted followers, advanced at the rapid rate of forty or fifty miles a day, neither turning to the right nor left till they arrived at their place of destination. They then divided, and made a sweep of all the cattle and property they could find; committing at the same time the most horrid atrocities, and destroying what they could not carry away. They trusted to the secrecy and suddenness of the irruption for avoiding those who guarded the frontiers of the countries they invaded; and before a force could be brought against them, they were on their return. Their chief strength lay in their being intangible. If pursued, they made marches of extraordinary length (sometimes upwards of sixty miles) by roads almost impracticable for regular troops. If overtaken, they dispersed, and reassembled at an appointed rendezvous; if followed to the country from which they issued, they broke into small parties. Their wealth, their booty and their families, were scattered over a wide region, in which they found protection amid the mountains, and in the fastnesses belonging to themselves and to those with whom they were either openly or secretly connected; but nowhere did they present any point of attack; and the defeat of a party, the destruction of one of their cantonments, or the temporary occupation of some of their strongholds, produced no effect, beyond the ruin of an individual freebooter, whose place was instantly supplied by another, generally of more desperate fortune, and therefore more eager for enterprise.¹

A word should be added of the parallel bands of Pathans, whose most noted leader was Amir Khan. They were an equal terror to the countryside, but, unlike the Pindaris, they had regular infantry, organized horse and artillery. Nominally in the service of Holkar, they formed a peripatetic military state. They were more formidable in battle, but being more encumbered were less swift in their movements. They were the special scourge of Rajputana as the Pindaris were of the Deccan.

Thus the shadows lengthened over independent India, and the way was prepared for the passive acceptance of the hated foreign rule, because every form of Indian alternative had become insupportable. Minto’s six years of watching and waiting made it clear that while the situation might still be watched it would not wait much longer.

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CHAPTER 11

Hastings and Hegemony

Events now moved swiftly to the final act of the drama. India was about to be united under the British because every alternative had been tried and found wanting. The process was quicker than in the case of the Mughuls because the British had greater resources than they and because the local powers were weaker. It involved more dislocation, though it was quicker in evolution, because there was a more complete breakdown of authority in India and there was a greater gulf between the habits and ideas of British and Indians than there was between Mughuls and Indians. So far as the process had gone it appeared to observers, and certainly to Indian observers, to be but a new exercise in power politics, the seizure of the Indian raj by one more alien people who in their turn would have their day of glory, their decline and fall. The eight years which had just passed had served, in Indian eyes, as a filling up of the cup of misery until it was ready to overflow.

It was at this juncture that Lord Moira, who will for convenience be designated by his later title of Lord Hastings from the start,1 appeared in India. Lord Minto had never sat secure in the governor-general’s seat because he lacked that essential of strength, the firm support of one party in the state.2 Cornwallis had been strong in the support of Pitt and Dundas, and Wellesley could safely defy the directors as long as the ministry supported him; Shore and Barlow had been weak because only the directors supported them cordially and not even they consistently. Minto was a Whig appointed to office as a part of a political bargain during the short-lived Ministry of All the Talents. Neither Tory ministry, Whig opposition, nor the Company were strongly in his favour. He kept his place by avoiding too great a divergence from the non-intervention policy, by his successful moves against the French, and by his skill in the conduct of Indian diplomacy. He was not the client of any group; he satisfied and displeased each in turn but not to the extent of recall. Minto’s conduct in office represented among other things a very skilful feat of political balance, which should be remembered when considering the tendency to minimize his merits. But by 1812 his term was run. The intrigues which surrounded the formation of the Liverpool ministry on the assassination of Spencer Perceval found the Prince Regent seeking a lucrative

1 He was the 2nd Earl of Moira, and was created Marquess of Hastings in 1817 for his success in the Nepal war.
place for his elderly friend Lord Hastings and the directors anxious to remove Sir George Barlow from Madras. Some sort of bargain was struck; Minto was recalled to an earldom and died on his way to rejoin his wife in Scotland.

Lord Hastings was in his fifty-ninth year. He was a soldier who had risen to the rank of general, but his chief claims to fame had been his friendship with the Prince Regent and his reputation for prodigal expenditure. He had opposed Lord Wellesley's policy and he now found himself called upon by circumstances to complete it. Something in the Indian air seemed to suit this fashionable bon viveur. The not very successful soldier showed himself to be a strategist of outstanding talent (he was his own commander-in-chief), the ex-courtier became a statesman of large and generous views; the one-time gambler proved a careful steward of the Company's affairs and the man of fashion revealed a real concern for the welfare of the people.

On his arrival Hastings complained that his predecessor had left him with seven quarrels on his hands, 'each likely to demand the decision of arms'. The most serious of these was the Pindari menace, with its intricate connexion with the still independent and distracted Maratha states. But the solution of the problem was postponed by the emergence of a new and more urgent one, that of the Gurkhas of Nepal. It was perhaps well that this was so, for the delay gave Hastings time to survey the situation and to prepare a comprehensive plan which embraced in one wide sweep the whole problem of Indian disorder. He thus settled at one stroke a question which might have required several unco-ordinated campaigns. The only part played by the hills during the eighteenth century had been to provide a refuge for the Sikhs after they had been crushed by the Mughuls in 1717. Through most of their length ancient little kingdoms continued in self-sufficing simplicity and with fluctuating fortunes. The only visitors were pilgrims to the Hindu shrines and the chief article of commerce was ice for the courts. The eastern portion of these hills, stretching 700 miles from Sikkim to the Sutlej, and running back about 100 miles from the plains to the great snowy range, now marched with the Company's lands except for the surviving portion of Oudh. The original Mongolian inhabitants had been conquered by a Hindu race in the fourteenth century and had to some extent intermarried. In 1768 the Gurkha tribe had secured the valley of Khatmandu and from this central position had steadily encroached both east and west. Kumaon, Garwhal, and the Simla hills had fallen to them in the first years of the nineteenth century, but at the Sutlej their farther advances were blocked by the new Sikh power. The Gurkhas then turned their attention to the plains and at once clashed with the British. The Company now had to pay for Wellesley's Oudh annexations, for it was in the ceded Gorakhpur and Basti Districts that the main aggressions took place. The Gurkhas were ejected

1 Ibid., pp. 177–8.
from the posts they had occupied, but a fresh attack in Butwal in 1814 determined Hastings on a regular campaign.

A four-pronged attack was organized along the extended frontier; 34,000 men were employed against 12,000 Gurkhas. In addition negotiations were opened with the dispossessed hill-rajases to the west. The result was sensational; at the end of 1814 three of the forces were thrown back with heavy loss and only Sir David Ochterloney in the west made any progress. All India held its breath, watching intently; and envoys hurried to and fro between the Maratha courts. With remarkable coolness Hastings reinforced his mountain troops while relaxing no precaution in the plains. Though the British were again checked in the centre and east Ochterloney took Jaitak and Gardner Almora in April 1815, thus liberating the whole region from the Sutlej to the Kali river. The Gurkhas then opened negotiations which dragged on all through the summer rains when operations were impossible. A treaty was concluded but not ratified, and operations reopened at the beginning of 1816. This time Ochterloney, now in supreme command, penetrated the deadly Terai and marched directly on Kathmandu. A month's operations convinced the Gurkhas that they could not hope to withstand the Company's troops when properly handled. In March they accepted the treaty of Sargauli which they had formerly repudiated and which Hastings was glad to confirm without further penalty. The clouds were gathering to the south and he was anxious to free his hands. By this treaty the Gurkhas accepted a British resident at Kathmandu; they surrendered most of their claims to the Terai or forest belt along the southern border. They also surrendered their recent gains between the Gogra and the Sutlej, where they had appeared as the unwelcome conquerors of ancient principalities, whose harshness was still a living memory in recent times. Thus Kumaon, Garwal, and the Simla hill states passed to the British and the way was prepared for that unique feature of British India, the hill station. Kennedy, the agent for the Simla hill states, set up his headquarters at Sabathu, and from there discovered the beauties and fresh breezes of the Simla ridge.  

Charles Metcalfe sang the praises of Kasauli in 1827 and Bentinck's residence in Simla on medical advice during the summers of his great northern tour fairly set development in motion. When Auckland followed his example the career of 'the Hills' as providing sanatoria for invalids, places of recreation for the weary and the idle, and summer seats for governments, was assured. India was won in the sweltering plains of Bengal and the Carnatic; it was administered for nearly a century with the help of the air of the pine-scented breezes of the Himalayas.

This clash was enough to convince the Gurkha people of the strength of the British power. It also left both sides with a lively appreciation of each other's qualities. Their mutual respect was the foundation for the

1 Lieut. Ross built a thatched wooden cottage in 1819 and Kennedy the first permanent house in 1822.
friendly relations which persisted throughout the British period. The Gurkhas were now confined to their own homeland. For many years they were absorbed in internal dissensions which led to the rise of the Rajput Rana family and their seizure of the premiership of the state in 1846. From that time the king remained a cipher until his re-emergence into the political limelight in 1949. Their land remained closed to Europeans with few exceptions; trade contacts with India were severely restricted and there was little internal development until the twentieth century. But the Gurkha found an outlet for their enterprise in service with the British. The Gurkha contingent became a regular feature of the British Indian army and distinguished itself in every campaign from the Mutiny onwards. Their military lustre never shone more brightly than during the Burma campaign against the Japanese. The tactical skill of Ochterloney, the planning and judicious moderation of Lord Hastings reaped a rich harvest in the permanent security of the Himalayan frontier and the addition of a devoted corps of hardy and courageous soldiers to the British power in India.

Lord Hastings was now free to deal with central India. We get a very different impression of his methods compared with those of Lord Wellesley. No longer does the eager imperialist seek to force the hand of history by precipitate aggressions, treating the weak with a rigour deserved by the strong, to a voluble commentary of explanation and reproach. Instead we observe a statesman devising means to meet a dangerous situation adequate in range, planning, and resources, but always related to the scale of the problem before him, never pushing beyond the range of the possible or far beyond the bounds of the just; as anxious to conserve as to destroy and never seeking to strike before the moment was ripe. He enjoyed the wisdom of age without its loss of vigour, and an imperial vision without the haste or the ruthlessness which so often goes with it. With unhurried deliberation he planned each move, leaving the door of co-operation as well as of war open at each step. It is for this reason that it can be said that if it had been possible for the Maratha confederacy to enter into a working relationship with the British, it would have been done in the time of Lord Hastings. The Maratha power finally fell under the weight of its own ineptitude.

The situation in central India was never more confusing than in 1814. The one factor common to all parties was a dislike and distrust of the British. Sindia was restless and hostile but fearful and slow moving; the Peshwa scheming but irresolute; Holkar still torn with internal feuds; between them all roamed Amir Khan and his Pathans, while from within issued, like wild dogs from between the feet of their nominal masters, the Pindaris to slay, to burn, to plunder, and to disappear. In 1812 they raided the Mirzapur District and they were now, in their cantonments at Nemawar on the Narbada river, planning still more extensive expeditions. In the cold weather of 1814–15 they twice traversed the Nizam’s dominions from end to end, plundered portions of the Madras Presidency and returned unscathed with £100,000
worth of booty, leaving a trail of devastation in their wake. By turning on British or British-protected territories they converted a distant nuisance and source of confusion into an active menace, and thus made counter-measures inevitable. They reckoned on their mobility to elude the slow-moving disciplined troops of the Company, but they left out of account the factor of combination. One disciplined force would have been as useless as Aurangzeb’s army against the Marathas; several acting in isolation would have been little better. But the British were now able to organize a net of co-ordinated strong points, so that the Pindaris’ success in eluding one force provided information for their interception by another. Their lack of fighting ability enabled very small forces to scatter any Pindaris intercepted, and the hostility of the countryside enabled these forces to be thinly spread. In the season of 1816–17 the net was more widely cast; the Pindari luhburs were harried and cut up and returned crestfallen to Nemawar. The scene was now laid for their final extinction. The news of the Madras raids converted London to the necessity of action and Hastings could plan a comprehensive drive for the cold weather of 1817–18.

Meanwhile the Marathas had not been idle. A threat by Sindia against Bhopal in early 1815 was called off on a demonstration of British support, and an attack by Amir Khan on Jaipur in 1816 withdrawn for the same reason. But the real centre of interest was at Poona. In July 1815, while the Gurkha war still remained undecided, the envoy of the Gaekwar of Baroda, Gangadhar Sashti, was murdered at the temple of Pandurpur. It was clear that the murder had been planned by Trimbakji the Peshwa’s favourite who held Ahmadabad from the Peshwa and was much concerned in the disputes which the Sashti had come to settle under a safe conduct. The resident at Poona was Mountstuart Elphinstone, who conducted the British case with faultless skill even when he had to divine the Governor-General’s wishes owing to the pressure of events and delays in the official post. He insisted on the arrest of Trimbakji and his transfer to the British for detention in Salsette. This was accomplished in September by a nicely calculated mixture of conciliation, understanding, and pressure. By the following spring the Nepal war was over and Hastings received a political windfall which perhaps proved the decisive factor in the whole complicated Maratha-Pindari affair. In March 1816 Raghjui Bhonsla II of Nagpur died and his nephew Appa Sahib, in order to secure his position as regent for Raghjui’s imbecile son Parsaji, proposed a subsidiary treaty which had been declined by his uncle only two years before. Hastings was well served by his ‘politicals’; Jenkins at Nagpur made a worthy third to Elphinstone at Poona and Metcalfe at Delhi. The treaty was ratified in July whereby a subsidiary force was introduced into Nagpur and a Maratha contingent organized under British advice. The net was tightening, and Hastings could proceed to his grand designs for ensnaring the whole Pindari group while intimidating the remaining Maratha powers in a single operation.
During the early months of 1817 the design took shape. More than 100,000 troops were employed, arranged in two great groups. To the north in Hindustan four divisions were stretched along the Ganges-Jumna line from Rewari in the west (under Ochterloney) through Agra and Etawah to Kalinjar nearly due south of Cawnpore. Each of these was a self-contained army, capable of acting on its own and fending for itself. In addition there were two observation corps at Rewa and in south Bihar. Hastings himself took command of this group, taking station with the Etawah force. To the south in the Deccan there were also four divisions under the command of Sir Thomas Hislop. They were stationed at Hushangabad on the Narbada, at Hindia on the same river to the west, in Berar and Khandesh. There was a reserve at Adoni in the Madras Presidency under Sir Thomas Munro. Sir John Malcolm was placed under Hislop as his political adviser. In Gujarat a further division was prepared whose function was to cut off bands which might retreat thither from the east or north-west. In addition there were the subsidiary forces at Poona and Nagpur, strong points, as it were, in areas of doubtful allegiance.

The campaign was to open at the end of the rains of 1817. The various forces were to advance south, west, and north, driving the Pindari bands before them from their haunts in the Narbada valley. The co-operation of the various bodies would make forays between them into British territory difficult and a return to their own country hazardous. Even Pindaris could not subsist permanently without a refuge for their families and a retreat for recuperation. At the same time the powers of central India, Sindia, Holkar, Bhopal, and lesser states were to be invited to co-operate with the alternative of war. Amir Khan was to be offered the lands he occupied as the price of disbandment and disarmament. The Peshwa and the Bhonsla would be saved from the temptation to intervene, it was hoped, by the presence of their resourceful residents with subsidiary forces at their backs. Such a plan, with its widely scattered forces, isolated posts, and distant reserve, might seem foolhardy in the face of a resolute and active opponent, enjoying the advantage of interior lines. The young Bonaparte with troops to match would have made short work of such a scheme. But there was no young Bonaparte, or any sign of one, nor was there the troops to match. Those that could move could not fight and those that could fight would not move. Among the leaders there was irresolution alternating with exasperation and despair. They shared no fixed common purpose, they had no common feeling save dislike of the British and only titulously was the Maratha portion of them moved by feelings of national pride. The plan was in fact nicely calculated to the purpose in view and adapted to the conditions it had to meet. Hastings knew that he had to deal with a large number of disparate units whose suspicion of each other was nearly as great as their dislike of the British, who could be overawed or defeated in detail if dealt with simultaneously by a concerted movement, but who would, on
account of their mobility and variety, be capable of re-forming and regrouping indefinitely if dealt with one by one. There was no real danger in separation of forces provided co-ordination existed, and this Hastings was able to maintain with the help of the singularly able group of officers he had gathered round him.

Hastings was an adaptable as well as a comprehensive planner, and it was this quality which ensured the success of the plan. While it was still being revolved a new turn was given to events by the romantic escape of Trimbakji from his prison at Thana in Salsette in October 1816.\(^1\) By the spring he was raising troops while the Peshwa was denying the fact and protesting his inability to secure him by turns. Elphinstone demanded his arrest and the conclusion of a more drastic treaty in place of that of Bassein. After weeks of tension Baji Rao again faltered and the treaty of Poona was concluded in July 1817. Trimbakji was renounced, his territory was surrendered to support the Peshwa's contingent provided for by the treaty of Bassein but never yet formed, and foreign agents were dismissed from the Peshwa's court. Above all, the Peshwa formally renounced the headship of the Maratha confederacy. This condition undoubtedly exasperated Baji Rao, but it was judged that the disadvantage of this was outweighed by the discredit it would bring him among the surviving and more formidable Maratha princes. While these events were proceeding the imbecile Bhonsla Parsaji was murdered in February 1817. Appa Sahib, now ruler beyond dispute, no longer felt the need of British support and began to chafe against the bonds of the subsidiary treaty in his turn.

In October 1817 Hastings began to move. Sindia was given the option of co-operation against the Pindaris and of abrogating the stipulation in the treaty of Surji-arjangaon for non-interference in the affairs of the Rajput states or of war. After the usual agonized hesitations he agreed on 5 November. As a result the way was cleared for relations with the Rajput states which they eagerly embraced. Within a few months Metcalfe at Delhi made treaties with nineteen of them, including Jaipur, Udaipur, and Jodhpur. At the same time Bhopal accepted a subsidiary treaty and Amir Khan agreed to disarm in return for confirmation in his existing territories as Nawab of Tonk. So far success had been brilliant. But on the day that Sindia signed his treaty the wavering Peshwa finally decided to strike. Elphinstone behaved with the utmost coolness. An attack on the Poona force was beaten off at Kirki and in face of a counter-attack the Peshwa retreated southwards. Within a few days Appa Sahib in his turn attacked his subsidiary force and met defeat on the Sitabaldi hills.\(^2\) It was now the turn of Holkar. The Regency was inclined to accept terms similar to those

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1 Trimbakji was guarded by British troops for greater security. The escape was arranged by a Maratha sycophant or groom who wove directions into Marathi songs sung outside the prisoner's window.

2 He was restored and then deposed again at the instance of Hastings. For some time he conducted a guerilla campaign and finally found asylum and obscurity at the court of Ranjit Singh.
offered to Sindia, but the Pathan war party gained control. The Regent Tulsi Bai was murdered and the army joined battle at Mahidpur, only to be defeated like the rest on 21 December. By the end of the year the whole Maratha confederacy was in ruins, the chiefs defeated or in subordination. There only remained the mopping up of the Pindaris and the remnants of the Maratha forces. After two defeats at Ashti and Koregaon and many twists and turns the Peshwa surrendered to Sir John Malcolm on 2 June. The Pindaris moved hither and thither with their usual speed, but though some slipped through the tightening net, the bands were dispersed for ever. The game had become too dangerous to play any longer. Chithu, the most daring of their leaders, fell to a tiger in the jungle to which he had fled. The campaign ended with the fall of Asirgarh in March 1819.

We can now describe the settlement of 1818. The breach with the Peshwa was beyond recall. His dominions were annexed and he himself, through the generosity of Malcolm, much regretted by Hastings, settled at Bithur on the Ganges with a pension of 8 lakhs of rupees a year. There he survived until 1851, leaving his claims and his grievances to his adopted son, the Nana Sahib. The nominal head of the Marathas, and descendant of Sivaji, was restored to the principality of Satara. With this exception the Peshwa’s dominions became part of the presidency of Bombay. This now ceased to be a seaport district and became the province of Marathas and Gujaratis (with the Sindhis to follow). Bombay city itself began its career as the port of western India, to be successively helped by the increasing size of shipping which made Surat less accessible, by the development of railways, which overcame the obstacle of the Western Ghats, and by the development of the modern cotton industry. While Marathi pundits mused in Poona, Gujarati and Parsi merchants flocked to the developing emporium. Commerce came into its own in the west, as it had already done in the east, but in this case European and Indian were on equal terms. In becoming the gateway of the east Bombay was also to become the outpost of the west. Farther east the child Raghují III, grandson of Raghují II, was substituted for the injudicious Appa Sahib in Nagpur. Berar was attached to Hyderabad in reward for the assistance of the Nizam’s contingent and Saugor was detached to become the Saugor and Nerbada territory, soon to be the centre of the campaign against the thags. Amir Khan settled down to respectability as the Nawab of Tonk while adjacent Bhopal was relieved of fears from Sindia and the Pindaris. Sindia preserved his state at the price of his supremacy in Rajputana and lands around Ajmir. With enough intelligence to understand the strength of the British power, but not enough to co-operate or the energy to oppose in time, Daulat Rao Sindia saved his state and his family fortunes by a hair’s breadth. The Holkar state, shorn of Tonk and all influence, was suffered to remain, and under the able ministry of Tantia Jog began to revive. The Rajput states were happy

1 Kaye, Mutiny, ed. 1897, vol. i, p. 73.
in their relief from Marathas and Pathans. They were not required to entertain subsidiary forces, but watch was maintained by British posts at Ajmir in the centre, at Delhi to the east, and in Gujarat to the south. Alone of the Maratha princes the Gaekwar gained territory as a reward for his fidelity.

It is incorrect to say that the Maratha confederacy was crushed, because it had been in dissolution since 1802 and largely by its own act. What really happened in 1818 was the substitution of British authority in central India for no authority at all, and the extension of paramountcy over the ancient Rajput states. The pages of Malcolm’s report on central India at this time are eloquent of the devastation which prevailed and the exhaustion which the British discovered. A seat of anarchy was removed and in the course of it several disorderly states brushed aside. The larger consequence of the whole episode was the establishment of the hegemony of the Company throughout India up to the Sutlej river. To the east and north its frontiers had reached their natural limits in the Assam hills and the Himalayas, with only Nepal separating them in parts from the snowy range itself. To the west the Thar desert and the Rann of Cutch provided another natural barrier. Only in the Panjab could the frontier be said to be open, and there the human barrier of Ranjit Singh’s Sikh kingdom stood firm and friendly. Elsewhere the principal surviving Indian states were islands in a sea of British territory, either surrounded completely as in the case of Oudh and Mysore, or so fenced in, as in the case of Hyderbad and Sindia’s state, as to make concerted action impossible. Apart from these states the only large blocks of Indian-rulled territory were the tracts of central India from Nagpur to Orissa and Rajputana. At Nagpur itself was a subsidiary force, and the rest of the tract was so full of hill and jungle as to constitute no danger. The Rajputs were rendered harmless by their temporary exhaustion and permanent jealousies, and were effectively watched by the British posts as already described. The settlement of 1818 restored the unity of India to a degree more effective than had existed under the great Mughuls, the main difference being that whereas the British power was firm in the south but stopped short at the Sutlej, the Mughul had been firm in the north-west as far as Kabul, but had faltered in the Deccan. As the Mughul power wrecked itself in trying to stretch to Cape Comorin the British power was to strain itself in trying to reach Kabul. Henceforth India was a unit again and we can divide our attention between domestic and foreign developments.

Lord Hastings was fortunate in possessing a band of loyal and skilful lieutenants both military and political. In Elphinstone, Malcolm, Metcalfe, Munro, and Jenkins he had officers of real distinction who would have graced any service, and who had the gifts both of harmonious co-operation and independent command. But the major credit for this success must be given to Hastings himself. His political insight and strategical grasp were nicely matched; his gift for spacious planning
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was balanced by a faculty for vigorous action, and in all his arrangements he showed the flexibility which is the mark of distinguished leadership. The observer cannot fail to notice another quality that stamps his work with greatness. Never dazzled by the extent of his resources or the brilliance of his prospects, he always sought to proportion his means to his end. His treatment of Nepal, the Marathas, and the Rajputs showed that he was no lover of annexation for its own sake, even though he was better equipped to undertake it than Wellesley had been. His conduct was determined but not minatory; conciliation mingled with his firmness. He was as conciliatory as Cornwallis without his occasional muddle-headedness; if he was severe in holding princes to their engagements, he was also strict in observing them himself. It is difficult to see what alternative there was to the policy he pursued because the Marathas themselves ruled out the possibility of an Indo-British partnership in central India, on the analogy of the Nepal settlement of the Himalayas. Hastings enhanced the British reputation for vigour and ability by the success of his comprehensive measures. But even more valuable to the stability of the British power was his practice of the virtues of public justice and conciliation. It was this which removed the memory of Wellesley’s aggressive and bullying tactics and did much to strengthen belief in British justice and good faith.

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