

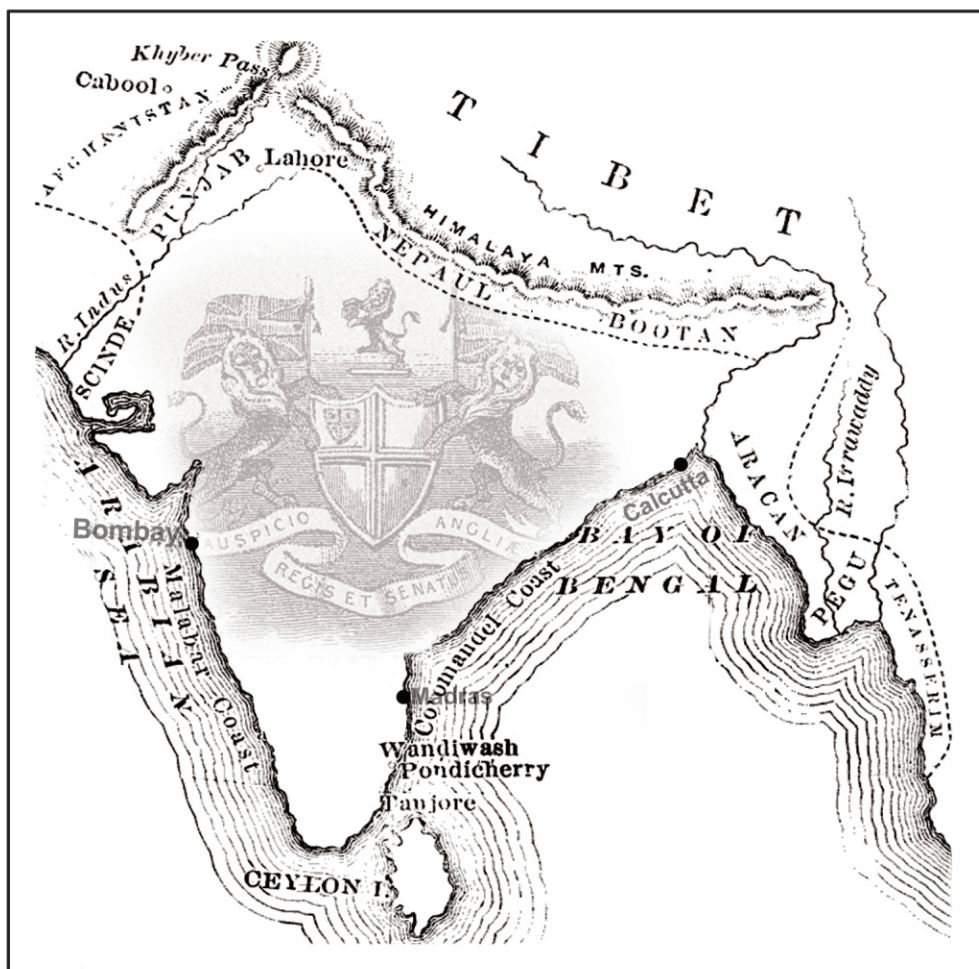


Historical Monograph Series
Army Institute of Military History
Pakistan

East India Company

Traders turned Rulers

By
Brigadier Ghulam Jilani, retired



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On the Cover: Map of India under East India Company rule
(Source: etc.usf.edu/maps)

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PREFACE

The East India Company (EIC) is an enigma for Pakistani youth. Since the Mughal Empire was replaced by the EIC, the narrative constructed through all these years, after independence, is that the British came as traders but reached the corridors of power through their conspiracies and divisive policies. It is true that the EIC engineered control and power in the Subcontinent through its devious policies, but this is half the truth. The other half is that the EIC capitalised on the fragilities in our social behaviour, lack of method and organisation in governance, and failure to bring modernity in every field including the army, as was happening in other parts of the world, especially Europe of that time. The meteoric rise of the EIC, and details of its overarching victories, have not been documented, nor dispassionately analysed by authors of military history in Pakistan, to satiate the intellectual requirements of our youth. Most research and books on the events of history after the EIC's arrival in the Subcontinent have been documented by British historians, who have mostly viewed the events as colonisers. The reason that EIC is not much reflected upon in Pakistan, is perhaps because historically, it set foot on those coasts of the Subcontinent, which are now either part of present day India or Bangladesh, thus of not much concern. Delving into the details, of stepping in and eventually gaining complete control of the Subcontinent by the EIC, gives ample evidence that those events are still relevant to Pakistan, and therefore must be read and analysed to identify weaknesses and apply self-correction.

This monograph is not an effort to rewrite history, not interpretive in nature, but to unfold the period and identify the environment and reasons which allowed the EIC to strengthen its control over the better part of India, to draw pertinent lessons. It gives an insight into how the EIC anchored

its ship on the shores of India as traders, and then went on to subdue the whole Subcontinent, and became virtual rulers. The story is full of local incompetence coupled with treachery for petty gains and self-interest, over the larger good of the subjects. These cumulative effects erupted into chaos and anarchy, aptly exploited by the EIC. As the company gained strength, internal fissures in the governance and administration of the nawabs were exploited to strengthen its hold, followed by brazen wars against all those who challenged EIC authority.

A poor state of governance, desire to seize power and internecine rivalries, always invite regional powers to dominate the polity of the target countries, in the modern era too. There may be a few lessons for us in going through the environment and methodology adopted by the EIC to establish its authority.

Brigadier Ghulam Jilani
(retired)

East India Company—Traders turned Rulers

Birth of the East India Company (EIC)

In the 16th century, Britain was embarking upon voyages to the west, looking for new territories and trading partners. To counter the European rivals and further establish



Routes of European voyages (inset: Queen Elizabeth I)
(Source: brainly.in)

its trading links beyond Europe, Britain required a strong expertise in shipbuilding, navigation and warfare, which was achieved by the middle of the 16th century. Spain and Portugal, at that time, held a monopoly on trade in the Far East owing to their maritime proficiency. British seized the ships of the defeated Spanish Armada in 1588, which paved the way for the monarchy to become a serious naval power.¹ Virtual control over the seas enabled British companies to undertake trading with the rest of the world.

History's most splendid accomplishments sometimes have the most trivial origins. Five shillings had set Great Britain on the road to the great colonial adventure. They represented the increase in the price of a pound of pepper, proclaimed by the Dutch privateers who controlled the spice trade², which was unacceptable to the British. Throughout 1599 and 1600, a group of London merchants petitioned Queen Elizabeth I to let them create a company that could exclude rivals from trade with Asia, and then use force to defend English interests there, if need be.³ A charter was granted by Queen Elizabeth I, giving EIC a monopoly to undertake trading expeditions to the East Indies⁴ on December 31, 1600.⁵ The royal charter meant that when the EIC acted it did so with the command of the English state.⁶ The EIC grew to control virtually half of the world's trade, and became the most powerful corporation in history.

The story of the EIC is about trade, spices, silk, tea, conquest, profit and exploitation. It is a tale of how a group of people in London organised, financed and carried out sea voyages, long distance trade, military conquest and governance of large parts of the

- 1 Erin Blackmore, "How the East India Company became the world's most powerful business", National Geographic, Culture & History, accessed January 2, 2022, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/british-east-india-trading-company-most-powerful-business>.
- 2 Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *Freedom at Midnight* (New York: Avon Books, 1976), 11.
- 3 Jon Wilson, *Britain's Raj and the Chaos of Empire India Conquered* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2016), 32.
- 4 "East India Company Timeline", Brick Lane Circle, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://bricklanecircle.org/east-india-company-time-line/>.
- 5 Dave Roos, "How the East India Company Became the World's Most Powerful Monopoly", *History*, accessed December 18, 2021, <https://www.history.com/news/east-india-company-england-trade>.
- 6 Wilson, *Britain's Raj and the Chaos*, 33.

world, the biggest of which was India. Trade, colonies and the navy thus formed a *virtuous triangle* reciprocally interacting, to Britain's long-term advantage.⁷

EIC Anchored its Ships on Indian Shores as Traders

At the turn of the seventeenth century, England was a relatively impoverished, largely agricultural country at war with itself over the most divisive subjects of religion and polity. The EIC therefore moved on for trade, and on 24 August 1608 Captain William Hawkins anchored his ship, the *Hector*, off the coast of Surat north of Bombay.⁸

He became the first commander of an EIC vessel to set foot on Indian soil. In 1615 Sir Thomas Roe, as ambassador from the English King to the Emperor Jahangir's court,



Sir Thomas Roe in the emperor Jahangir's court
(Source: aiic.org)

was given permission to set up trading posts not only at the port of Surat in Gujrat, but inland as well, at a number of towns including Agra and Patna.⁹

India became one of the world's largest economic and military powers under the Mughals. Trading with India was a profitable and rewarding venture. India at that time had a population of 150 million—a fifth of the world's total—and was producing about a quarter of global manufactured goods.¹⁰ India was the manufacturing powerhouse of the world, and a leader in manufactured textiles. The mega cities of India were thriving, with cultural and business activities.

By the early seventeenth century, Europeans had become used to easy military victories over other people of the world. But as Captain Hawkins soon realised, there was no question of any European nation attempting to do this with the Great Mughals, not least because the Mughals kept a staggering 4 million men under arms.¹¹ When in 1632 the emperor learnt that the Portuguese had been building unauthorised fortifications, as well as flouting Mughal rules, he commanded that the Portuguese settlement be attacked, and the Portuguese were expelled.¹² Goa fell to the Mughal army within days.

In the early days of the EIC's arrival, due to strong Mughal administrative and military dominance over entire India, any

7 Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1989), 96.

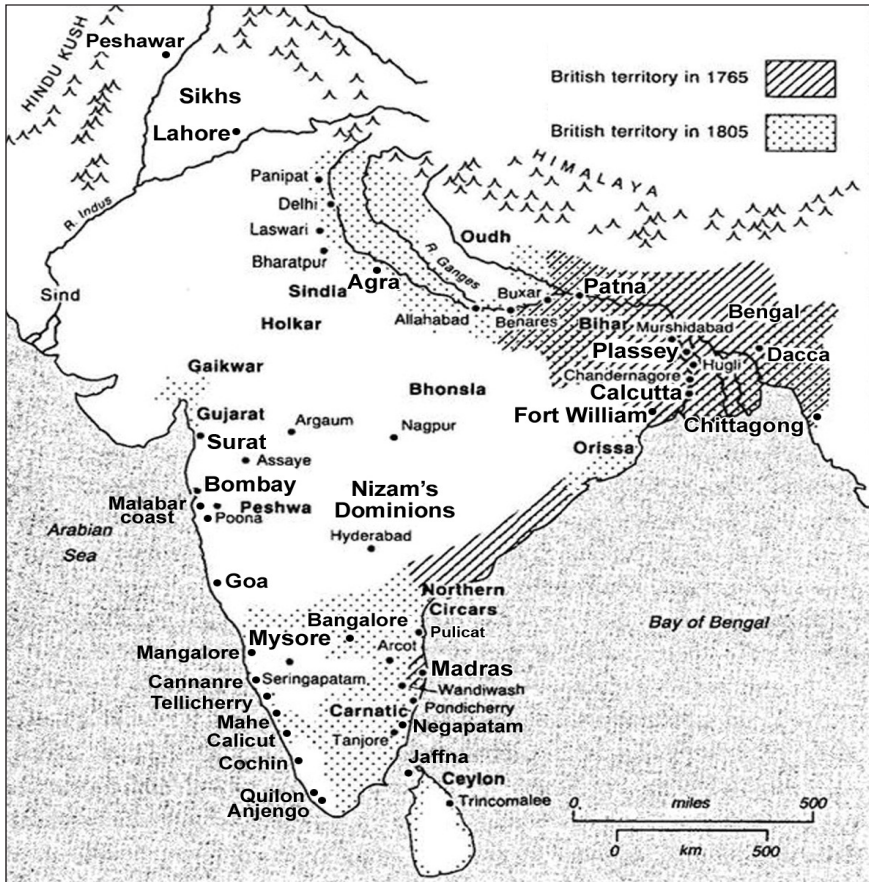
8 Collins and Lapierre, *Freedom at Midnight*, 11.

9 Ainslie Thomas Embree, "British East India Company Raj", Encyclopedia.com, accessed January 25, 2022, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/international/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/british-east-india-company-raj>.

10 William Dalrymple, *The Anarchy: The Relentless Rise Of East India Company* (London: Bloomsbury publishing, 2019), 14.

11 Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500-1800* (London: Oxford, 1988), 135.

12 Dalrymple, *The Anarchy*, 15.



Map: India in 18th & 19th Century

(Source: quora.com)

option other than trade was considered incomprehensible. With this in mind, the Company realised that trading was only possible with the Mughals within the precincts of conditions applied by their administration. It was only in 1626 that the EIC had its first fortified Indian base, at Armagon, north of Pulicat, on the central Coromandel Coast.¹³ Madras became the first English colonial town in India. Bombay archipelago was the best natural harbour in South Asia, thus it quickly became the Company's major

naval base in Asia, eclipsing Surat as the main centre of EIC operations on the west coast. Within 30 years, Bombay had grown to 60,000 colonial population, with a network of factories, law courts and an Anglican church.¹⁴

EIC continued to expand its trading links in other parts of the Subcontinent. In 1640, the East India Company built a trading centre in Madras called Fort St George. By 1668, it had established factories in Goa, Chittagong, Bombay, Madras and

13 Dalrymple, *The Anarchy*, 21.

14 Dalrymple, *The Anarchy*, 23.

three small villages in the east of India, called Sutanati, Gobindapore and Kalikata (renamed Calcutta in 1690). In 1680s, the EIC was only concerned with making money, and that it was doing. But it wanted it limited to itself and for that it was possessive and pugnacious, desperate to exercise control on everything that threatened its existence and favourable outcome. It did not want its position to change due to the vagaries of local politics and administration. It was felt by the British that the trade of Bengal could never be carried on to the advantage of EIC till it fell out with government. The Company needed to achieve some kind of permanent, tax free security. 'No good was to be done with these people without compulsion'.¹⁵ The best way to protect interests of the EIC was considered to construct forts. The major factories became the walled forts of Fort William in Calcutta, Fort St George in Madras and Bombay castle.¹⁶

With more financial power, the arrogance of the EIC constituents grew sharply, and their officers felt that insignificant local officers were stymieing the rise of the company. The company decided to use force for the first time in 1693. The empire was under the firm control of Aurangzeb, thus the timing of the venture, and assessment of the ability of one of the richest and most powerful kingdoms on the planet, were absolutely wrong.

The Mughal war machine overran English landing parties easily. English officers and troops were paraded in chains on the streets of Dhaka and Surat. Representatives of the company begged for mercy from the Emperor Alamgir, in a kneeling position, with their hands tied behind their backs. It was a moment of humiliation and commercial loss for the English.¹⁷ The first attempt to challenge the Mughals ended in disaster. Soon the English factories were seized and plundered, and the factory at Bombay was blockaded. The EIC had no option but to sue for peace.¹⁸

The death of Emperor Aurangzeb in 1707 had a cataclysmic effect on the fortunes of the Company. Successors of Aurangzeb did not possess administrative prowess like him. As their reign progressed, power ebbed. Succession disputes eroded authority, the empire went into tatters and the regional nawabs began to take their own decisions on all important matters due to a weak Mughal ruler in Delhi. Nadir Shah's invasion of Delhi in 1739¹⁹ further eroded the authority, power and wealth of the Mughals. In the absence of firm Mughal control at the centre, the EIC also realised that it could enforce its will in a way that would have been impossible a generation earlier. In Bengal, the then Nawab Murshid Quli Khan (Subedar of Bengal and Orissa from 1717–1727)²⁰,

15 Wilson, *Britain's Raj and the Chaos*, 44.

16 "East India Company Timeline", Brick Lane Circle, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://bricklanecircle.org/east-india-company-time-line/>.

17 Wilson, *Britain's Raj and the Chaos*, 51.

18 Dalrymple, *The Anarchy*, 24-25.

19 "Nadir Shah's Invasion of India", Maps of India, last modified on December 30, 2014, <https://www.mapsofindia.com/history/battles/nadir-shah-invasion-of-india.htm>.

20 "Murshid Quli Khan", Banglapedia, last modified on June 18, 2021, https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Murshid_Quli_Khan.

was disgusted by the shenanigans of the EIC, and wrote to Delhi “When they first came to this country they petitioned the then government in a humble manner for the purchase of a spot of ground to build a factory house upon, which was no sooner granted but they ran up a strong fort, surrounded it with a ditch which has communication with the river, and mounted a great number of guns upon the walls. They have enticed several merchants and others to go under their protection and collect revenue. They rob, plunder and carry great number of the king’s subjects of both sexes into slavery.”²¹

On the other hand the French-archrivals of the British in Europe-had also developed their business interests



Joseph Francois Dupleix
(Source: britannica.com)

in India through the French East India Company. In 1742 Joseph F r a n c o i s Dupleix was appointed the governor general of all French establishments in India.²² Dupleix saw in the constant succession disputes among the princes of India, an opportunity to advance the interests of the French. He built an army of native troops, who were trained as infantrymen in his service. This resulted in more ingress of the French in trade and governance affairs of India, especially in Madras. For the EIC it was ominous. The British EIC never

wanted the French EIC to establish a foothold in India.

Clarion Call to Raise EIC’s Armies

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the concept of standing armies under state control gained currency due to the requirements of discipline and emerging organisational changes. Hard training and drill therefore became extremely important to instill discipline and method in the rank and file of these modern armies. Europeans during the 17th century, the period of industrialisation and subsequent colonisation, decided to raise regular armies and achieved a turnaround.

After the death of Aurangzeb, military and administrative prowess of the Mughals waned in the Subcontinent. It was precisely the time when the French and British were competing to gain and consolidate their control in the trade war in India. Dupleix, as the governor general of the *Compagnie Française pour le commerce des Indes Orientales* (French East India Company) in India, formed, drilled, uniformed, armed and paid in French manner, two regiments of *cypahes*-(sepoys) in 1746.²³ Dupleix started subletting his sepoy regiments to his client nawabs. In order to hold back further influence of the French in India, the EIC was forced to organise a military establishment. The two rivals engaged in Carnatic Wars,

21 Dalrymple, *The Anarchy*, 36.

22 “Who among the following is the governor-general of French-India from 1 January 1697 to 11 November 1763?”, Toppr, accessed January 18, 2022, www.toppr.com/ask/question/who-among-the-following-is-the-governorgeneral-of-frenchindia-from-1-january-169710-november-1763/.

23 Dalrymple, *The Anarchy*, 49.



EIC flag
(Source: fotw.info)

supported the two opposing nawabs fighting for succession of throne, authority and territory. The Battle of Adyar, waged on October 24, 1746, proved a turning point in Indian history. For the first time the techniques of 18th century European warfare, developed in Prussia and tested on the battlefields of France and Flanders, had been tried out in India.²⁴

It was during the attack on, and conquest of Madras by the French in the Carnatic Wars, that Robert Clive's



Robert Clive
(Source: pinterest.com)

talent became apparent, who knew nothing about the politics of Mughals but in his childhood dreamt of making good money in India. Stringer Lawrence was the first to spot Clive's potential. The two of them worked well together and began to imitate French initiatives, and for the first time started training their own sepoys. This was the foundation of the Madras Army also known as the Coast Army.

Lawrence was the first commander-in-chief²⁵ of the Army

of the Madras Presidency. He is also known as father of the Indian Army. He inspired sepoys and would instill confidence in them through his personal touch. (The British soldier was kept as the leading example during the raising process). Sepoys were required to be paid regularly, and work incessantly, while maintaining strict discipline. And with all this the commander must cherish an amiable feeling for the men, which was expressed by not only taking care of their comfort, but acts of personal kindness as well. Lawrence understood that the inspiring influence of one leader could not last forever; therefore a framework of a permanent organisation was required to carry the passion forward, for which he worked gradually, and laid the foundation of a strong and organised army.



Stringer Lawrence
(Source: fotw.info)

The Company began recruiting its own Indian troops. The first employed Indian troops were watchmen in each of the EIC presidencies, to defend their trading stations.²⁶ The first step had been to form the sepoys into companies, with a regular establishment and regular

24 B. Kolappan, "The Battle of Adyar, a turning point in Indian history", review of *The Anarchy: The East India Company, Corporate Violence, and the Pillage of an Empire* by William Dalrymple, *The Hindu*, August 23, 2019, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/the-battle-of-adyar-a-turning-point-in-indian-history/article29225859.ece>.

25 Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army its Officers and Men* (England: Penguin Books, 1974), 61.

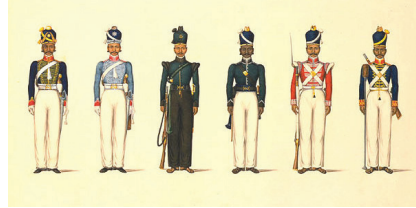
26 Gorkemedede, "Organizational structure and army of the East India Company", *Shrimp Among Whales*, January 7, 2018, <https://shrimpamongwhales.com/2018/01/07/organizational-structure-and-army-of-the-east-india-company/>.

pay. Each man knew that he served the Company and was paid by the Company. Since the ways of locals were incomprehensible to the British, it was decided that they must be commanded by their own officers (subedars and jemadars). The first order prescribing the strength of a company is dated November 1755²⁷, and it laid down that there should be one subedar, four jemadars, eight havildars or sergeants, eight naiks or corporals, two men to carry colours, two drummers, one trumpeter or *conicoply*, and eighty four sepoy or privates.

The establishment changed slightly from time to time but for about a hundred years the strength of the company was generally a hundred, or a hundred and twenty men. The subedar was not a *captain*, nor jemadar a *lieutenant*, but men of these ranks did command a number of men we now regard as the command of a captain and a lieutenant. The sergeant played an instrumental role in those conditions. He was responsible to instill discipline through drill. This brought not only discipline but a soldierly outlook and method in the newly recruited sepoy.

In April 1756 for the first time an order was given to wear uniforms of European cloth. It was thought that it would give them a good martial appearance.²⁸

The dress that British soldiers would wear was not suited to the climate of the Subcontinent, but the British wanted to distinguish themselves from the lethargy and poverty surrounding them. They did not want to give way to the relaxed easy ways of the country, so they stuck to thick woolen clothes,



Uniforms of EIC Soldiers (Source: wikiwand.com)

high stiff collars, leather stocks and tight breeches. The essence of the sepoy was that he had to acquire the rock-like steadiness of British infantry.²⁹

In 1758 it was resolved to form battalions from existing companies, and two were actually raised.³⁰ Of these earliest battalions, the senior one to survive till 1947, was originally the 3rd Battalion Coast Sepoys, which after various changes is now the 1st Battalion of the Punjab Regiment³¹ Pakistan Army. In each battalion there were, nine companies, each comprising of 120 men, one being a grenadier company. There were fewer company officers now-one subedar, two jemadars and six havildars to each.³² Establishment of native infantry regiments embodied twenty-six British officers and two British warrant officers.³³ The appointment of

27 Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, 62.

28 Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, 59.

29 Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, 62-63.

30 Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, 63.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Gorkemedede, "Organizational structure and army of the East India Company", Shrimp Among Whales, January 7, 2018, accessed January 5, 2022, <https://shrimpongwhales.com/2018/01/07/organizational-structure-and-army-of-the-east-india-company/>.

a subedar major in a unit was essential, as the British required an interlocutor to convey orders and receive feedback, and for a firm hold over the natives through their own superiors. He was given a title of the *black commandant*; which made him a good deal more than subedar major of a later generation.³⁴ The sergeant-majors were the successors of the sergeants who had drilled the original companies.

A sepoy's pay at that time was six rupees a month, which was not substantially more than the sum offered by Indian princes. But the princes sometimes paid for eight months in a year, and were usually heavily in arrears.³⁵ The most important step of all was the reorganisation of 1766, which included a code of rules and form of oath to be sworn when a sepoy was enlisted.³⁶ Three presidencies—Madras, Bombay and Calcutta—had



Bengal, Madras & Bombay presidencies army
(Source: quora.com)

their own armies. Each presidency army was formed from three elements: native Indian troops, European units, and royal regiments including artillery, cavalry, and infantry regiments. No

Indian in the three armies could rise higher than the rank of subedar-major in regular infantry units, or risaldar-major in cavalry units, and equivalent in other units.

An empire of commerce quickly became an empire of forts and armies, comfortably capable of engaging in acts of conquest. Even then violence was rarely driven by any clear purpose. Most of the time it was instigated when British profit and authority seemed under challenge.³⁷

Fault Lines in the Mughal Empire—The Low Hanging Fruit

Mughals started their rule in 1526 and united the Subcontinent as one empire. The empire reached its pinnacle during the reign of Akbar the Great. The sun shone high on the empire till the death of Emperor Aurangzeb



Akbar the Great
(Source: pinterest.com)

Alamgir and thereafter the decline started. The rise and fall of powers, is an essential lesson of history, there are always logical reasons for the decline of any power, and the Mughals were no exception. Apparent cracks in the governance system of the Mughals were cleverly exploited by the EIC to its advantage and to establish its rule in India.

34 Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, 64.

35 Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, 67.

36 Ibid.

37 Wilson, *Britain's Raj and the Chaos*, 5.

Internecline rivalries for the throne started after the death of Akbar, and his successors ascended to the Peacock throne over the corpses of their brothers, and through palace intrigues. Aurangzeb killed his brothers and jailed his father, to ultimately become the emperor, and ruled the Subcontinent with an iron fist for 49 years, from 1658 to 1707.³⁸ His death brought great turmoil as his eldest son Moazzam Shah had to slay his two younger brothers, Azam and Kam Bakhsh, to assume the title of Bahadur Shah, and the Peacock throne. His death in 1712 resulted in another fight among the contenders, which eventually led Muhammad Shah Rangela to ascend the throne in 1719.³⁹ The contest for the Peacock throne among its contenders continued till it was virtually degraded and the last King was virtually restricted to the palace in Delhi and finally was sent to *Kala Pani* (exile in Rangoon) by the EIC after the War of Independence (aka Indian Mutiny) in 1857.

Mughal rule, like all other absolute monarchies of the world, thrived on extravagance and ostentation. The Mughals were seen spending lavishly on their lifestyle and marriages. The Peacock throne was adorned with gold and expensive stones worth six million rupees.⁴⁰ Surplus money, whenever generated from the poor of the country, was spent on construction of tombs and mosques. Their rule was marked by support to



Taj Mahal Agra (1632–53)
(Source: rivieratravel.co.uk)

art, culture and construction only. The whole of India is interspersed with the architectural marvels of tombs and mosques, but one fails to find even a single institute of learning, excelling in any type of research. The Mughals also failed to learn and apply modern trends in military training, an essential ingredient to secure their huge empire. The Mughals drowned themselves in the hangover of ostentation, without securing the future of the empire through institution building. It was precisely the time when Europe, especially Britain, was marching on their way to modern education and military training, through Oxford and Cambridge universities and Royal Military Academy Woolwich.⁴¹ Progress achieved in the steam



Royal Military Academy Woolwich
(Source: prabook.com)

38 “Aurangzeb—Mughal emperor”, Politics, Law & Government, World Leaders, Emperors & Empresses, Britannica, last updated on February 27, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aurangzeb>.

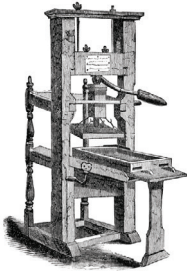
39 Aitzaz Ahsan, *Indus Saga and the Making of Pakistan* (USA: Oxford University Press, 1996), 179.

40 Ahsan, *Indus Saga*, 189.

41 “Sandhurst, Officers and Role of History”, National Army Museum, accessed February 3, 2022, <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/sandhurst-officers-and-role-history>.

engine and machine-made tools also contributed towards modernisation of personal weapons and artillery pieces of the EIC. This proved instrumental in its battles against local armies.

The Subcontinent was an economic and military power in the pre-industrial era, but in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, when Europe was bracing herself for an industrial and military revolution based on research and innovation, the Mughals at that time failed to comprehend the virtues of modern education grounded on the quest of difference of opinion and innovation. With all the



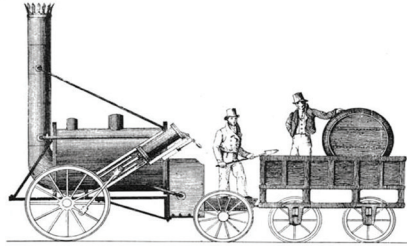
Early printing press
(Source: sciencephoto.com)

magnificence and grandeur at the high point of their rule, the Mughals could not develop a printing press. In 1582 Akbar was presented a copy of the Bible printed in four languages, by Portuguese missionaries. He saw it with great reverence and delight, kissed it and asked about printing. But he was proud of his calligraphers who according to him, did a much better job by hand.⁴² Seats of learning like Oxford



University of Cambridge (Source: timetoast.com)

and Cambridge, and development of the printing press subsequently led to knowledge-based inventions of the 18th century like Watt's steam engine (1765), powered cotton, paper and flour mills. The steam locomotive made a maiden run in 1825.⁴³



Early steam locomotive (Source: scihi.org)

Speed, quality and shared knowledge outpaced handmade manufacturing of the Subcontinent. In Bengal, makers of the finest quality muslin (*malmal*, a forty-yard piece of which could pass through a finger ring), kept the secret of its manufacturing restricted to family circles only. If art and knowledge are a guarded secret, how could intellectual development take root for further innovation?

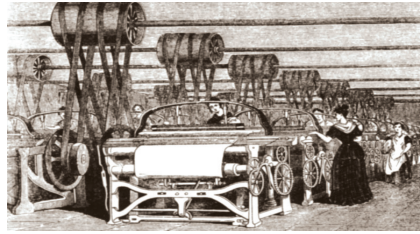
The Indian army under Mughal rule was still thriving on ostentation to put the fear of God in the hearts of their enemies. Sir Thomas Roe, ambassador of James I of England, observed that a city of tents was created when Emperor Jahangir, stopped for rest during a march for war. It was twenty English miles in compass, in the middle there were properly aligned streets with shops and marketplaces, the plan and placement of tents was the same at each stop.

42 Ahsan, *Indus Saga*, 166.

43 Brian Duignan, "Inventors and Inventions of Industrial Revolution", Britannica, accessed January 19, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/list/inventors-and-inventions-of-the-industrial-revolution>.

The emperor's tent was a mini-palace with many rooms.⁴⁴ Shahjahan, in a similar fashion had an army in more numbers, but its fighting potential was inferior.⁴⁵ With such extravagance even in the battlefield, armies are hardly trained and equipped for a speedy manoeuvre, which was the hallmark of the EIC and European armies. In what is called a *military revolution*, standing armies were raised in Europe, under state control due to the requirements of discipline, emerging modernity in weapon systems and organisational changes. According to Philip Mason, Mughal armies combined almost every military vice.⁴⁶ They were without discipline, they could not move swiftly or manoeuvre in the face of an enemy. Weapon systems especially artillery pieces of the Mughal armies, were heavy and of a higher calibre in contrast to those used by the Europeans which were small, thus could be moved quickly for their manoeuvre with cavalry. Europeans rationally sacrificed some firepower, for a substantial increase in speed and mobility.⁴⁷ EIC armies and that of the French East India Company were organised on the structure of companies and battalions. The Mughal and local sovereigns' armies were based on the standing of local *mansabdars*, who could muster a force of few thousand men to fight, based on their status. EIC armies were well paid and trained, whereas Mughal armies were neither trained, nor regularly paid.

In the pre-industrial era, agriculture was the mainstay of the economy of both European and Asian nations. India was endowed with fertile land and flowing rivers. Its industrious population, like always, was growing fast, thus more hands to work and more production, consequently India was an economic giant of that time. The industrial revolution tilted the balance in favour of much less populous Europe. With the steam engine and power loom, its productivity increased



Early English textile factories (Source: thoughtco.com)

manifold. Indian markets were flooded with cheaper goods from Lancashire textile factories imported by the EIC. Indian craftsmen were producing goods much slower and costlier, this affected their real-time economy. The total Indian share in world output in 1750 was 24.5 percent whereas United Kingdom had only 1.9 percent share in the world manufacturing output. The equation in 1860 was reversed, the Indian share was reduced to 8.6 percent and Britain was producing 53.2 percent of international manufacturing output.⁴⁸ Economic downturn among locals caused disarray and affected the income of local artisans. The population from arable and mountainous region where

44 Ahsan, *Indus Saga*, 203.

45 Ibid.

46 Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, 49.

47 Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, 145.

48 Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, 149.

there was little scope of agricultural economy, became breeding grounds for the British Indian Army. *Loyalty serves economy and vice versa.*

Mughals and Ottomans both descended from Central Asia, and saw their respective climax in the 16th century. The Ottomans developed their navy on modern lines, which allowed them to master the seas for conquests under their naval commander, Khairuddin Barbarossa. The Mughals' failure to develop a navy despite modern ship building capacity, cost them their empire. The unhindered use of the sea gave the EIC speed and mobility altogether unknown to India. Even if Bombay, Madras and Calcutta were separated by vast tracts of land in control of intermediate suzerains, the sea provided them a free route. The absence of Indian sea power implied that no hostile armies, no difficult or alien terrain lay in the EIC's way, as its ships sailed upon the sea.⁴⁹

Mughal rule of India was non-central, a kind of nomadic culture prevailed, and continued. According to Jon Wilson, Mughal political leaders recognised India as a society of societies, cut through with social cultural and religious, differences; there could be no such thing as Mughal nationalism.⁵⁰ Mughals continued with the same old traditions of leaving rule to local leaders, as long as they submitted to the personal authority of the emperor. Although this served the Mughals till their highnoon, but

when central authority showed signs of crumbling, allegiance of the local leaders also changed and they became more independent. This lack of a unified approach to deal foreigners, allowed the EIC to deal with local authorities and defeat them one by one, piecemeal, to establish its sway.

According to Paul Kennedy, technically the Mughal Empire had to decline because it became increasingly difficult to maintain itself against the Marhattas in the south, the Afghans in the north, and finally the EIC. In reality, the causes of its decay were much more internal than external.⁵¹

Battle of Plassey—Traders Changed Their Guise

As the EIC became increasingly involved in politics during the second half of the eighteenth century, the nature of British Rule in India gradually assumed all the trappings of a sovereign power.⁵² In Madras the British and French continued to contest for supremacy. The EIC, besides the French, had to deal with the Nawab of the Carnatic as well as Nizam of Hyderabad. In Bengal the contest was not with the French East India Company directly, but the EIC had to deal with the Nawab of Bengal who, in view of the EIC hierarchy, was following pro-French policies. The EIC was focused on trading, and for that it was competing with the French for space, even if it meant the use of arms, as happened in the Carnatic wars till 1756. Bengal was run from

49 Ahsan, *Indus Saga*, 202.

50 Wilson, *Britain's Raj and the Chaos*, 17.

51 Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, 13.

52 Kim A. Wagner, *The skull of Alum Bheg, The Life and Death of a Rebel of 1857* (London: C. Hurst & Co, 2017), 17.

1741 till 1756⁵³ by a competent Nawab Alivardi Khan, who was an astute administrator. The Nawab of Bengal was by then virtually independent of the Emperor of Delhi. He maintained good relations with the EIC and dealt with it in an amicable manner. When Alivardi Khan died in 1756, he was succeeded by his grandson, Siraj ud Daula. Nawab Siraj ud Daula



Nawab Siraj ud Daula
(Source: wikiwand.com)

remained wary of the EIC's overtures, especially expansion and fortification of Fort William without his permission. He was also unhappy with the Company for misusing trade concessions granted

to it by the Mughals, whereas the EIC thought that the Nawab was eyeing the wealth of the EIC, and colluding with the French. Despite his warnings, the EIC continued to strengthen Fort William, which earned his ire. In June 1756 the forces of Siraj ud Daula overran Calcutta and gave the EIC a bloody nose. After taking over Fort William, Siraj ud-Daula had the captives confined in a small prison, which came to be known as the *Black Hole of Calcutta*. According to one of the prisoners named John Zephaniah Holwell, the prison in which 64 prisoners were held captive, was so small that 43 out of the 64 held, died of suffocation and heat exhaustion.⁵⁴ However, the British chose to strike a peace deal with Siraj ud Daula,



Map: EIC Bengal (Source: quora.com)

who agreed to pardon many officials belonging to the EIC.⁵⁵ The British ignominiously fled from Calcutta, but next year they were back. Siraj ud Daula and his overtures made the EIC uncomfortable, and thus it was ready to deal with him. In 1756 the sepoys were yet not organised into battalions, but they were drilled and disciplined. They were commanded by Clive, who was considered an inspiring commander of men.

The EIC and the Nawab of Bengal were at cross purposes, because the latter wanted French help against the Marhattas and Afghans, perhaps against his overlord the Emperor, and most importantly stop the extension of the EIC fortifications in Calcutta. Clive on the other hand, wanted to deal with the French as well as the Nawab, after Siraj ud Daula's attack on Fort William. Clive planned events well and decided to gnaw at the Nawab from within, in connivance with Jagat Seths (Hindu

53 Upendra Thakur, "Alivardi Khan and Afghans of Tirhut", *Indian History Congress* 21 (1958): 376-392, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44145227>.

54 "Sirajud Daulah", *Cultural India*, accessed January 13, 2022, <https://learn.culturalindia.net/siraj-ud-daulah.html>.

55 Ibid.

bankers who financially supported the EIC). The famous Battle of Plassey was reckoned as one of the decisive battles of the Subcontinent that opened the gates to British rule in India. It is known more for the treachery and conspiracy of Mir Jaffar, commander of Nawab Siraj Ud Daula's forces, who colluded with Clive based on the promise that he would replace Siraj ud Daula after his defeat. But it was not the only reason.

The Battle of Plassey was not of much significance from a military point of view. The Bengal Army comprised of 50,000 men, whereas there were only 3000 sepoys under the leadership of Clive.⁵⁶ On the morning of 23rd June 1757, Clive's forces reached the banks of River Hooghly near Plassey. Artillery from both sides opened up, and a third of the Bengal Army led by Mir Jaffar did not respond. When it seemed that the battle would run into stalemate, a heavy downpour came to the rescue of Clive's forces. Gunpowder of the Bengali Army was soaked, whereas EIC forces had brought tarpaulins to keep their gunpowder dry. The nawab ordered his cavalry to charge, thinking that the enemy's guns were as ineffective as his own. However, the British guns opened fire and slaughtered many of the cavalry, killing their commander Mir Madan Khan. The nawab panicked at the loss of his valued general, and ordered his forces to fall back, exposing the French artillery contingent. This was rushed by the British and captured. With the French cannons taken, the British

bombarded the nawab's positions, with no response, and the tide of the battle turned. Bengal and the French East India Company suffered 1,500 casualties, whereas the EIC, fewer than 100.⁵⁷



Clive meeting Mir Jaffar
(Source: historiamag.com)

The EIC installed Nawab Mir Jaffar as the Nawab of Bengal. Mir Jaffar gave £ 1,238,575 to the company and its servants which included £ 170,000 personally for Clive.⁵⁸ The English were also allowed to trade duty-free, while native traders paid taxes. Ultimately the people of Bengal were to pay this amount, which they did as a huge burden, and got further impoverished. Palace intrigues and the EIC's shenanigans did not end here, and the ruler was again changed. The son-in-law of Mir Jaffar, Mir Qasim, was installed as the Nawab of Bengal, who subsequently paid Rupees 20,000,000 in the first instance, and Rupees 100,000,000 towards the salaries of the Company's troops. He further paid Rupees 500,000 towards the Company's wars with the French, in southern India.⁵⁹

56 "Sirajud Daulah", *Cultural India*, accessed January 13, 2022, <https://learn.culturalindia.net/siraj-ud-daulah.html>.

57 Tony Bunting, "Battle of Plassey - Indian history [1757]", *Britannica*, accessed January 13, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Plassey>.

58 Dalrymple. *The Anarchy*, 134.

59 Ahsan, *Indus Saga*, 270.

The Indian army which was created under the EIC, reflected the rivalry of the French and English. The sepoys enlisted and trained by the British were found generally better than those of the French. The EIC plundered enormous wealth from the coffers of Bengal, and firmly set its eyes on further expansion.

Clive was subject to hearings for money he received in India, conducted against him by the British Parliament from 1772-1773⁶⁰, and later was exonerated. On 21st May 1773, he thundered in one of his famous speeches “After Plassey a great prince was dependent on my pleasure; an opulent city lay at my mercy; the richest bankers bid against each other for my smiles; I walked through vaults which were thrown open to me alone, piled on either hand with Gold and Jewels.”⁶¹

Battle of Buxar—The Consolidation of Power with a Legal Stamp

After consolidating gains made at the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the EIC assembled an army consisting mainly of Indian sepoys and cavalry, and sought to assert its control of Bengal against the Mughal Empire. Three confederates of the Mughal Empire joined hands for their own particular reasons, to reclaim their space, and decided to fight against the EIC. They were the Nawab of Avadh Shuja ud Daula, the ruler of Bengal Qasim Khan (who with the

connivance of the Company took the reins of Bengal, by stripping the title from his father-in-law Mir Jaffar, but was also disposed of by the EIC), and Shah Alam, the designated king of the Mughal Empire (who was dethroned by Imad ud Din, a clever Vizier of the Mughal Court). In October 1764, the combined Indian force of the three confederates confronted the British near the town of Buxar, and were thoroughly defeated by the sepoys of the Company.



Battle of Buxar (Source: timetoast.com)

The battle resulted in the Treaty of Allahabad on 12th August 1765⁶², in which the Mughal Emperor surrendered sovereignty of Bengal to the British. Lord Robert Clive, the victor at Plassey, became the first governor of Bengal.⁶³ This not only gave a semblance and *facade* of Mughal legitimacy for the Company’s conquests, it also potentially gave the EIC the right to tax 20 million people. Shah Alam agreed to retain the sham designation of *emperor*. After an agreement, Shah Alam was enthroned with a pension of Rs 2.6 million, and Clive promised, on behalf of the Company, to the Islamic

60 Ryan Campbell, “Richard Wellesley and the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War”, *The Histories* 15, no. 1 (2019), Article 9, https://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1057&context=the_histories.

61 Dalrymple. *The Anarchy*, 232.

62 “Treaty of Allahabad”, GK Today, June 1, 2011, accessed January 11, 2022, <https://www.gktoday.in/topic/treaty-of-allahabad/>.

63 Tony Bunting, “Battle of Buxar - British-Mughal conflict [1764]”, accessed February 8, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Buxar>.

law and the law of the Empire. The emperor agreed to recognise all the Company's conquests, and hand over to it, the financial control of all north-eastern India. Henceforth, 250 EIC clerks, backed by a military force of 20,000 Indian sepoys, would now run the finances of India's three richest provinces. A trading corporation had become both colonial proprietor and corporate state.⁶⁴ Shuja ud Daula, Nawab of Avudh, who had also lost the battle against the EIC, was required to pay 53 lakh rupees as war indemnity, to hold his original title as a puppet, but this time under the tutelage and keen eye of the EIC. The Nawab of Bengal retained the judicial functions, but the Company had the power to collect revenue.⁶⁵

Drought in Bengal—Failure of Administration and Exploitation by the EIC

Due to the scarcity of rains during monsoons of 1768/69, severe drought struck the rich and fertile land of Bengal, which continued till 1773. It killed approximately 10 million people.⁶⁶ With virtual control of finances and administration shifted to the hands of the EIC, there was no body to ameliorate the condition of the locals. The sepoys of the EIC got

enough to feed themselves and their wards. The EIC went on to make the best of this catastrophe, to earn more. In 1770-71, at the height of the Bengal famine, an astounding 1,086,255 pounds sterling were transferred to London by Company executives.⁶⁷ When all this was happening, the council of the EIC decided to spend 44% of their total budget of 22 million pounds on increasing sepoy regiments and building fortifications.⁶⁸ The only rice that was stockpiled, was for the sepoys. There were no cuts in the military budget when the drought wiped out almost one third population of Bengal.⁶⁹ It is for this reason that Arthur Young, in a pamphlet widely circulated in London at that time, wrote "Trade and the sword ought not to be managed by the same people. Barter and exchange is the business of merchants, not fighting of battles and dethroning princes".⁷⁰

As a consequence of this catastrophe caused by the famine, and failure of the EIC to effectively manage it, Prime Minister Lord North got the India Bill of June 1773 approved from parliament, which would bring the EIC under greater parliamentary scrutiny.⁷¹ Parliament would also get to appoint a governor-general who

64 Dalrymple, *The Anarchy*, 208.

65 "Treaty of Allahabad", GK Today, June 1, 2011, accessed January 11, 2022, <https://www.gktoday.in/topic/treaty-of-allahabad/>.

66 Rakhi Chakraborty, "The Bengal Famine: How the British engineered the worst genocide in human history for profit", August 15, 2014 <https://yourstory.com/2014/08/bengal-famine-genocide/amp>.

67 Dalrymple, *The Anarchy*, 221.

68 Dalrymple, *The Anarchy*, 220.

69 Rakhi Chakraborty, "The Bengal Famine: How the British engineered the worst genocide in human history for profit", August 15, 2014 <https://yourstory.com/2014/08/bengal-famine-genocide/amp>.

70 Dalrymple, *The Anarchy*, 225.

71 Dalrymple, *The Anarchy*, 233.

would now oversee not just the Bengal presidency, but those of Madras and Bombay as well. The EIC would still remain a semi-autonomous imperial power in its own right. It marked the beginning of state involvement in the Company, that would ultimately end in its nationalisation eighty years later. In 1774 Warren Hastings was



Lord Hastings
(Source: stringfixer.com)

appointed the first governor-general.⁷² Hastings detached the machinery of the central government from the nawab's court and brought it to the British settlement in Calcutta under direct British control, and remodeled the administration of justice throughout Bengal.⁷³ He quickly got to work, started the process of turning the EIC into an administrative service, and introduced wide ranging judicial, revenue and trade reforms, including abolition of dual government. He unified currency systems, ordered the codification of Hindu laws and a digest of Muslim law books, reformed the tax and customs system, fixed land revenue, and stopped the worst oppression being carried out on behalf of private traders, by the local agents. He created an efficient postal service, backed a proper cartographical survey of India, and built a series of public granaries, to avoid the recurrence of the famine-like situation of 1770-71⁷⁴.

Anglo–Mysore Wars—Tipu was the Last Bulwark against EIC's Expansionist Designs

The EIC became more stronger and started flexing its muscles after back to back triumphs at Plassey and then at Buxar. It continued its march towards subjugation of India for complete control of trade and total power. Haider

Ali and his state of Mysore, was a big stumbling block for the EIC. Haider Ali started his career as a soldier in the Mysore Army, and rose to become



Haider Ali
(Source: wikipedia.org)

its commander-in-chief. A sharp administrator and skillful leader, he became *de facto* ruler of the state of Mysore. Haider Ali developed and managed a strong and modern army of around 50,000 men on European lines, with French help. Of these troops 2300 were cavalry and 28,000 were very well trained and disciplined infantry.⁷⁵ Rifles and cannons were based on latest French designs.⁷⁶ They had mastered the art of firing rockets from their camel cavalry.⁷⁷

Haider and Tipu had also developed an excellent logistic service through special breeding of horses and cattle, to allow them to rapidly deploy infantry and their supplies. The

72 P.J. Marshall, "Warren Hastings: British colonial administrator", *Britannica*, accessed January 17, 2022 <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Warren-Hastings>.

73 *ibid.*

74 Dalrymple, *The Anarchy*, 238.

75 Dalrymple, *The Anarchy*, 243.

76 *ibid.*

77 *ibid.*



Map: Hyderabad & Mysore (South India)
(Source: pinterest.com)

EIC were wary of Mysore's proximity with the French. Marhattas and the Nizam were also concerned about the expansionist designs of Haider Ali. His control over the rich trade of the **Malabar Coast**, threatened the political and commercial interests of the English and their control over Madras.⁷⁸ The British, after their success in the **Battle of Buxar** with the Nawab of Bengal, signed a treaty with the **Nizam of Hyderabad**, persuading him to give them the **Northern Circars**, (the northern districts of the Nizam's dominion, the French were ousted from there with British help), **for protecting the Nizam from Haider Ali**, who already had disputes with the **Marhattas**.⁷⁹

The company declared war on Haider Ali with Marhattas and the Nizam in 1767. Haider Ali through

skillful diplomacy and administrative management weaned Marhattas and the Nizam away from the EIC. The Company was thoroughly defeated by Haider Ali at Bangalore, by way of a masterly manoeuvre of his 17 year-old son Tipu. When the company tried a venture on Puna, they had to surrender to the Marhattas. This resulted in a considerable decline in the reputation of the Company as a formidable force.

Haider Ali found the French more resourceful in terms of fulfilling the army's requirements of guns, saltpeter and lead. Consequently, he started importing French war materials to Mysore through Mahe, a French possession on the Malabar Coast. The increasing friendship between the two raised concerns for the British. Consequently the British tried to capture Mahe which was under Haider Ali's protection.⁸⁰ The Second-Anglo Mysore War started in 1780, the EIC was again methodically defeated by the troops of Haider Ali in the Battle of Pollilur. Tipu captured a considerable number of prisoners. The Company managed to keep its toehold in the south only due to the lack of confidence and initiative shown by the forces of Haider Ali, and the quick supply of reinforcements. Sir Eyre Coot led EIC forces against Mysore's army and defeated Haider Ali at the battle of Porto Nova.⁸¹ He rose to fame after this battle. This battle effectively stemmed the Kingdom of Mysore's further expansion. After an inconclusive war,

78 "Anglo-Mysore Wars", Drishti, accessed January 19, 2022, <https://www.drishtias.com/to-the-points/paper1/anglo-mysore-wars>.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

81 "Battle of Porto Novo", History Analyst, accessed December 30, 2021, <https://historyanalyst.in/battle-of-porto-novo/>.

both sides opted for peace, negotiating the **Treaty of Mangalore (March, 1784)** under which both the parties gave back the territories they had taken from each other, and decided to return each other's prisoners.⁸²

Haider Ali of Mysore died in 1783, and was succeeded by his youthful and spirited son Tipu. On his deathbed, Haider Ali told his son Tipu that the EIC and the English were the biggest threat to his rule, and therefore wanted him to pit Europeans against Europeans. Tipu



Tipu Sultan
(Source: livelaw.in)

was nurtured and groomed by his father to be able, brave, methodical, hardworking and innovative. He was determined to acquire a European arsenal, their skills and knowledge, and find ways to use them against his enemies. Since his youth he was the most dreaded and venerated military commander in India. From the moment of Tipu's accession to the throne, until the day of his death, he never ceased to ponder on the means of subverting British power in India, and no method seemed as feasible as that of uniting himself in strict alliance with the French.⁸³ Mysore reached such

military significance under Tipu that it became almost a military science for others. The British were so frightened, they were alarmed that Tipu's horses almost had wings to fly over their force.⁸⁴ Tipu Sultan is revered as a pioneer in the use of rocket artillery. Sultan's rockets were the first iron-cased rockets successfully deployed for military use. He deployed the rockets



Rocket artillery of Tipu Sultan
(Source: historyofislam.com)

against the advance of British forces and their allies, during the Anglo-Mysore Wars.⁸⁵ Tipu was an excellent and determined leader who was adored by his subjects. He was valued not only by Muslims, but equally by his Hindu subjects. The editor of Mysore Gazetteer, Prof. Srikantaiah, has listed 156 temples to which Tipu regularly paid annual grants, and his progressive measures in the administration were equally commendable.⁸⁶

In August 1786, Cornwallis replaced Hastings in Calcutta. The economy of Bengal, which included three provinces viz Bengal, Orissa

82 Kenneth Pletcher, "Treaty of Mangalore: Great Britain-India [1784]", Britannica, accessed January 10, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Treaty-of-Mangalore>.

83 Charles Stuart, "Catalogue and Memoirs of Tipu Sultan", Pakistan Administrative Staff College, (Lahore, 1964): 10, accessed January 15, 2022.

84 Sheikh Ali, "How Tipu Sultan Defeated British at the Battle of Pollilur in 1780", History of Islam: An encyclopedia of Islamic history, accessed January 30, 2022, <https://historyofislam.com/how-tipu-sultan-defeated-the-british-at-the-battle-of-pollilur-in-1780/>.

85 Irshad Ayub, "To live like a TIGER for a day is far better than to live like a jackal for a hundred years—Tipu Sultan", *Heritage Times*, November 10, 2018, accessed January 1, 2022, <https://heritagetimes.in/tipu-sultan/>.

86 Ibid.

and Bihar, was flourishing after the havoc wrought by the famine. Finances became healthier. In fact revenues far exceeded the expenditures of the EIC. All this meant that the EIC was able to continue building its army, and allocate over 3 million pounds annually for military expenditures⁸⁷ (finances are the most vital requirement to build a strong army, and an army is essentially required to maintain sovereignty. This has been a lesson of military history, except for 100 years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), wherein the ragtag Muslim armies won a third of the globe based on an ideology alone). The Company had the pick of best soldiers, since it paid its sepoys significantly more and on a regular basis. The Bengal Army sepoys, classed as *gentlemen troopers*, earned around Rs 300 a year as compared to their rivals in Mysore who earned only Rs 192. As Burton Stein put it, *the colonial conquest of India was as much bought as fought*.⁸⁸ Economic condition is directly proportional to military power, thus, the EIC wanted to outspend and outgun Mysore's Army, and it actually did it.

The EIC sensed that defeating Tipu was essential to realising their

ambitions in the Subcontinent. The British regarded Tipu as their arch enemy in the Subcontinent, just as they looked upon Napoleon as their most inveterate foe in Europe.⁸⁹ Tipu Sultan wrote to the French and Turkey for assistance, but in vain. Mysore, failed to put up a united front with Marhattas, and the Nizam against the EIC, despite profound efforts of Tipu. To achieve his objective, Cornwallis, who was endowed with deft handling of British diplomacy, very cleverly exploited the schism between the Marhattas and Tipu, and weaned away crucial allies from Tipu, to save the day for the EIC.

Cornwallis took all safeguards before declaring war against Tipu, who according to the British had refused to return prisoners taken during the Second Anglo-Mysore War. Negotiations were held with Marhattas and the Nizam of Hyderabad, both agreed to support the EIC in its war against Tipu, and it was also decided to distribute conquered territory among the three allies. The other reason for the EIC to declare the third Anglo-Mysore War, was that Tipu had declared war on Travancore in 1789, and Travancore⁹⁰ was a state friendly to the British.

87 Dalrymple, *The Anarchy*, 316.

88 Dalrymple, *The Anarchy*, 317.

89 Sheikh Ali, "How Tipu Sultan Defeated British at the Battle of Pollilur in 1780", History of Islam: An encyclopedia of Islamic history, accessed January 30, 2022, <https://historyofislam.com/how-tipu-sultan-defeated-the-british-at-the-battle-of-pollilur-in-1780/>.

90 Mandar Oak and Anand Swamy, "Commitment and Conquest: The Case of British Rule in India", (July 16, 2010): 20, <https://web.williams.edu/Economics/wp/OakSwamyCommitmentAndConquest.pdf>.

Article 1 of the Treaty of Mangalore began as follows: "Peace & friendship shall immediately take place between the said Company, the Nabob Tippoo Sultan Bahadur & their friends, and allies, particularly including therein the Rajahs of Tanjore & Travencore, who are friends & allies to the English and the Carnatic Payen Ghaut, also Tippoo Sultan's friends & allies, the Biby of Cannanore, and the Rajahs or Zemindars of the Malabar coast, are included in this treaty, the English will not directly or indirectly assist the enemies of the Nabob Tippoo Sultan Bahadur nor make war upon his friends or allies, and the Nabob Tippoo Sultan Bahadur will not directly or indirectly assist the enemies, nor make war upon the friends or allies of the English".

In 1790 Lord Cornwallis opened hostilities against Tipu, captured Bangalore and defeated him in the first phase of the war. Tipu fought bravely and forced the EIC army to retreat in the rainy season. The EIC forces came back again to exhaust Tipu's army. The war ended in 1792, and the defeat of Tipu Sultan became a turning point in the fortunes for the EIC in India. At the end of the war, Tipu had to give two sons into the custody of the EIC, till he paid a war indemnity of Rs 3 crore, and was also required to cede almost half of his kingdom.

Before this victory, the EIC was often on the defensive and insecure, but now it was a dominant force. In terms of land the EIC was controlling 3,88,500 out of 4.17 million square kilometers, about 9.3% of Indian land but after this victory, the EIC was on its way to becoming a major territorial as well as military and economic power.⁹¹

Cornwallis was replaced by the clever, sharp and ambitious Wellesley as governor-general. Under Wellesley's rule, the Company's resources and army expanded very quickly. Tipu was seen as the major threat to further expansion of British rule in India⁹² and its consequent economic advantages for the Company. The fourth Anglo-Mysore war, was a consequence of a combination of threats, both foreign and domestic, to

the British rule in India. The foreign threat was French aid promised to the kingdom of Mysore in the shape of the Malartic Proclamation issued by the French Commander of the Isle-de-France, Anne Joseph Hyppolyte de Maures Comte De Malartic.⁹³ The proclamation included Tipu's desire to throw the British out of India. Tipu had also injured the Company's trade by establishing an embargo, cutting the British out of Mysore. The geopolitical connivance of the French and Tipu actually worked against them. The EIC decided to give a final blow to its arch rival Tipu Sultan, and halfhearted promises of the French were used by Wellesley, as an excuse to attack Seringapatam.

In April and May of 1799, along with the forces of the Marhattas and the Nizam, Mysore was besieged and attacked from four directions, by the army of the EIC. Tipu's forces were outnumbered by four to one. Tipu was finally defeated and he embraced martyrdom on 4th May 1799. Tipu was the only sovereign nawab of India who laid down his life fighting against the EIC and British forces. The EIC had labeled Tipu as a "frivolous and capricious innovator; the mean and minute economist; the peddling trader; and even the retail shopkeeper".⁹⁴ Conquering Mysore enabled the EIC to conduct trade in the region and beyond. When news of Tipu's death

91 Dalrymple, *The Anarchy*, 327.

92 Ryan Campbell, "Richard Wellesley and the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War", *The Histories* 15, no. 1 (2019), Article 9, https://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1057&context=the_histories.

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid.



Finding body of Tipu Sutan (shaheed) by EIC soldiers (4 May 1799)
(Source: thoughtco.com)

was brought to governor-general Wellesley, he raised his glass and said “I drink to the Corps of India”.⁹⁵ It took the EIC 32 years of sporadic contests to overpower the kingdom of Mysore.

After the death of Tipu, Mysore was restored to the Wodeyar Dynasty, who were the rulers of the state before Haider Ali. (The Kingdom of Mysore remained a princely state till 1947, when it joined India).

The Abolition of the Company

The EIC army, by the year 1800, comprised some 200,000 soldiers, more than twice the membership of the British Army at that time.⁹⁶ The Company was thus transformed from primarily a trading venture to a colonial state in its own right,



EIC coat of arms
(Source: wshc.org.uk)

which by 1818 derived most of its income from land revenue rather than trade.⁹⁷ To maintain and further expand, the EIC needed local Indian soldiers, who of course were trained well by the British. The sepoy army served the EIC well to defeat Marhattas and later Sikhs.

The EIC after the defeat of Tipu, continued to move on for complete control of the Subcontinent. Wellesley then turned his focus towards the Marhattas, both on the field against their army, triggering fissures between their Holkar and Scindia factions, and finally defeated them. Three conflicts between the British and the Marhatta confederacy took place from 1775–82, 1803–05 and 1817–18⁹⁸, resulted in the destruction of the confederacy.

Ranjit Singh ruled Punjab (including present day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) from 1801 to 1839. He was a strong ruler and within few years of his death the state began to fragment.

By the year 1849, the Second Anglo-Sikh War ended in the defeat of the Sikh Empire, and their surrender on 12th March 1849



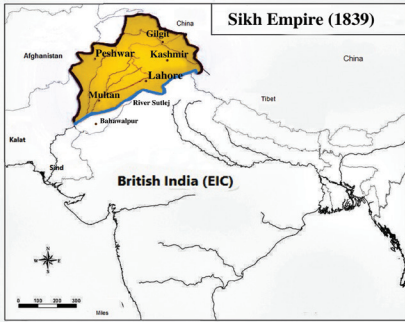
Ranjit Singh
(Source: pinterest.com)

⁹⁵ Dalrymple, *The Anarchy*, 354.

⁹⁶ Brian Duignan, “5 Fast Facts about the East India Company”, Britannica, accessed January 5, 2022 <https://www.britannica.com/story/5-fast-facts-about-the-east-india-company>.

⁹⁷ Wagner, *The skull of Alum Bheg*, 17.

⁹⁸ Maren Goldberg, “Maratha Wars”, Britannica, accessed January 28, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Maratha-Wars>.



Map: Sikh Empire (Punjab)
(Source: en.wikipedia.org)

resulted in Punjab's annexation to the EIC territory.⁹⁹

Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, tensions increased between the Company and the Indian population. In addition to acquisitions of land by the British causing widespread resentment, there were many problems centred on issues of religion. A number of Christian missionaries had been allowed into India by the EIC and the native population started to become convinced that the British intended to convert the entire Indian Subcontinent to Christianity.¹⁰⁰

In the late 1850s, a new type of cartridge for the Enfield rifle was



Enfield rifle (Source: pinterest.com)

introduced, and it became a matter of widespread discontent among the

soldiers of the EIC. It was rumoured that the grease used in manufacturing the cartridges was made from cows' and pigs' fat so as to make it easier to slide the cartridge down a rifle barrel. Those animals were either sacrosanct, or forbidden to Hindus and Muslims. It was presumed that the British purposely intended to undermine the religious values of the Indian population. Refusal to use the new rifle cartridges led to the bloody *Sepoy Mutiny* in the spring and summer of 1857, which subsequently turned into a War of Independence.

In the wake of the uprising of 1857 (often referred to in Britain as the *Indian Mutiny*, and in India as the *First War of Independence*) observers in Britain were quick to critique the mistakes of the East India Company. Once the uprising had been suppressed—with great brutality and loss of life—control of India passed from the East India Company to the Crown, ushering in the period of *high imperialism* in India, epitomised by the *Raj*.¹⁰¹ Queen Victoria was the ruling monarch at the time, thus became the first monarch to use the title *Empress of India*.



Queen Victoria (1837-1901)
(Source: imgur.com)

99 Kenneth Pletcher, "Sutlej River", Britannica, accessed February 1, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Sutlej-River>.

100 Robert McNamara, "East India Company: A Private British Company With Its Own Powerful Army Dominated India", Thought Co., January 29, 2020, accessed January 23, 2022, <https://www.thoughtco.com/east-india-company-1773314>.

101 "The East India Company: how a trading corporation became an imperial ruler", History Extra, accessed January 16, 2022, <https://www.historyextra.com/period/tudor/the-east-india-company-how-a-trading-corporation-became-an-imperial-ruler/>.

Noteworthy Inferences

1. Private armies, even for self-defence should never be allowed. They always stand in the way of the state and its rules.
2. Central authority of a state is ensured by a strong administrative and military service. A strong army is essentially required to maintain the writ and federal structure of the state.
3. A well-organised, trained and equipped army with a modern outlook, and well-fed populace can thwart aggressive designs of the enemy. Thus a strong economy is an essential prerequisite for security.
4. A strong economy is only possible if a country produces more than its requirements, with innovative ideas to attract others to buy these products. Modernity and future planning is a prerequisite to statecraft.
5. Trading activity, whether by locals or foreigners, should always be regulated.
6. The Mughals though united the Subcontinent but failed to create nationalism. Nationalism on the basis of a unified language, culture and even religion, is vital to put up a united effort against external enemies, and a barrier against sub-nationalism.
7. A balance must be maintained while devolving power from the federal level to regions and states. Sometimes strong rulers at state level may defy the federal structure. It weakens central authority and response to external challenges.
8. Intrigues and conspiracies from within can result in the fall of superior and strong armies and/or states.
9. When nations fail to unite against external enemies, for petty local or personal interests, the enemy defeats them piecemeal, thoroughly and completely.
10. A leader's strength of character and physical presence will raise the morale of his troops. Tipu Sultan, Clive, Cornwallis and Wellesley, all led their troops from the front, and were admired for their leadership, irrespective of the outcome of the battle.
11. It is wise to find a convergence of ideas with the enemy of the enemy, but a strategic plan must be based on one's own resources only. Tipu's expectation of French support did not materialise due to their own commitments elsewhere.
12. Ostensibly due to weak military and civil administration, and internecine wars for influence among the courtiers of the emperor and regional nawabs, India was hanging like a ripe fruit, to be colonised. If not by the British, it would have fallen to France.
13. Response to an external threat is always different by rulers and the ruled. Muslims, though in a minority, fought against the EIC to maintain their sovereignty. Hindus who were

in a majority, manifested a different mindset:-

- a. Always supported the dominant force, or stayed quiet till the final outcome (except for Marhattas).
- b. Hindu money lenders continued to support the dominant force.
- c. A divisive attitude and nurturing conspiracies, seemed like second nature. Marhattas conspired and did not support Tipu to defeat the EIC, later they were also vanquished by the British.

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