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Richard Wellesley and the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War

By Ryan Campbell

The British Empire in India was the final result of decades of expansion by the East India Company. The East India Company had been actively trading in the East Indies since the granting of its charter at the beginning of the seventeenth century.¹ Starting with the battle of Plassey in 1757, and followed by the defeat of the Marathas in 1818, the East India Company became the dominant power in the Indian subcontinent. The supremacy of the Company lasted until the Great Mutiny in 1857, and it was during its aftermath the Company lost control. During the initial phase of this period, famous individuals such as Robert Clive and Warren Hastings led the conquest of Bengal.² The person who is largely credited with expanding upon the initial gains of Clive and Hastings is Richard Wellesley. These gains included the Eastern Ghats, The Malabar Coast, and Rohilkhand.³

In addition to annexations by the East India Company, Wellesley also oversaw the initiation of many subsidiary alliances with local powers. The subsidiary alliance was “a satisfactory means of gaining control over the internal affairs of allied states, without being officially responsible for them.”⁴ Regions that Wellesley brought under control through this system include, Travancore, Hyderabad, Oudh, and Mysore.⁵ Wellesley was Governor-General of the Presidency of Fort William in Calcutta from May 18, 1798, to July 30, 1805. One scholar even described Wellesley as “the first of the governor generals to have an imperial vision.”⁶ During this time Wellesley enjoyed “power (that) was equal to that of a Roman Proconsul.”⁷ Throughout his tenure, Wellesley expanded Company territory in order to defend it from foreign and domestic enemies. It is the purpose of this study to prove that Richard Wellesley utilized the French threat in India to engage in an offensive war motivated by geopolitics against Tipu Sultan, which culminated in the Siege of Seringapatam.

The chief foreign adversary in India and globally for the British was France. This phase of the Anglo-French rivalry dated back to the late seventeenth century, and grew with intensity throughout the eighteenth century.⁸ In the Seven’s Years War (1756-1763), Britain scored decisive victories over the French in North America and India.⁹ The Anglo-

¹ East India Company, *The Register of Letters & C of the Governour and Company of Merchants of London Trading into the East Indies* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1893), 158-159.

² Philip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History* (Florence: Routledge, 1993), 91.

³ John Severn, *Architects of Empire: The Duke of Wellington and His Brothers* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 68.

⁴ Edward Ingram, *Two Views of British India: The Private Correspondence of Mr. Dundas and Lord Wellesley: 1798-1801* (Bath: Adams & Dart, 1970), 3.

⁵ Severn, *Architects of Empire: The Duke of Wellington and His Brothers*, 192.

⁶ Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 97.

⁷ Jac Weller, *Wellington in India*, (London: Greenhill Books, 2013), 20.

⁸ Jonathan I. Israel, “The Emerging Empire: The Continental Perspective, 1650-1713,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire Volume I: The Origins of Empire*, ed, Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 441.

⁹ Bruce P. Lenman, “Colonial Wars and Imperial Instability, 1688-1793,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire Volume II: The Eighteenth Century*, ed P.J. Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 163.

French rivalry flared up again and led to conflict with the outbreak of The French Revolutionary Wars 1782-1802, and the advent of Napoleon Bonaparte. As a result of this rivalry, France continued to seek out Indian allies to fight against the East India Company.

The Fourth Anglo-Mysore War combined both the foreign and domestic threats to British control in India. This was the final confrontation between the British East India Company and the Kingdom of Mysore, ruled by Tipu Sultan. Tipu ascended to the throne of Mysore in 1782 after the death of his father Hyder Ali.¹⁰ In the 1750s Hyder had become the de facto ruler of Mysore through his military acumen, and pushed aside the Wodeyar family during the chaos of the Mysore-Maratha Wars.¹¹ During the course of Tipu's rule 1782-1799, the Kingdom of Mysore became the biggest obstacle to British control of South India. Only eight years into his rule Tipu invaded Travancore, which led to the Third Anglo-Mysore War. The Third Anglo-Mysore War lasted from 1790-1792; this resulted in a resounding defeat for Mysore, but the British failed to seize his capital Seringapatam. The Fourth Anglo-Mysore War 1798-1799, however, ended with a second and successful siege of Seringapatam on April 5 – May 4, 1799, and the death of Tipu.¹² The foreign threat was French aid promised to the Kingdom of Mysore¹³ 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, on January 1798.¹⁴ This proclamation stated that Tipu desired to make an alliance with the French in order to drive the British out of India. Furthermore, it stated that Tipu would finance the war, and that he was only waiting for the French in order to declare war against the British. It also called for volunteer citizens, since the French army stationed there was stretched thin.¹⁵ It was after thirty-two years of intermittent warfare between Mysore and the British East India Company, that this obstacle would be removed.

But scholars have not always agreed as to what were Richard Wellesley's motivations were for the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War. Some have argued that Wellesley was motivated by economic factors. P.J. Marshall has argued that the East India Company was a "military-fiscal state."¹⁶ This meant that the expansion of Company territory was caught in a perpetual cycle, because every increase in territory required a larger military and administrative force. Which in turn required further conquests to fund the increase in personal.¹⁷ While others have stressed that Wellesley was motivated by geopolitical factors. C.A. Bayly has argued that for the British in India, "internal tranquility could only

¹⁰ Lewin B Bowring, *Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan and the Struggle with the Musalman Powers of the South* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899), 117-118.

¹¹ P.N. Chopra, *History of South India: Ancient, Medieval, Modern, Part III* (New Delhi: Sultan Chand and Sons, 2003), 71-76. As a result of this Tipu was often seen as a usurper to the British, for this see Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's Search for Legitimacy: Islam and Kingship in a Hindu Domain*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 2.

¹² M.S. Naravane, *Battles of the Honourable East India Company: Making of the Raj* (New Delhi: APH Publishing, 2006), 172-180.

¹³ Jac Weller, *Wellington in India*, 26-27.

¹⁴ J Whittle, "Original Criticism: A View of the Origin and Conduct of the War with Tippoo Sultaun Comprising a Narrative of the Operations of the Army under the Command of Lieutenant-General George Harris, and of the Siege of Seringapatam." *The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine* 7(1801), 120.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 120-121.

¹⁶ P.J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, America c. 1750-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 2

¹⁷ *ibid*, 224.

be guaranteed by absolute paramountcy in the sub-continent.”¹⁸ This meant the neutralization of the French threat and Mughal successor states in India.

Scholars have also argued over the nature of the war, whether the war was fought in either an offensive or defensive manner. Lawrence James argued that Wellesley was looking for “an excuse to invade Mysore.”¹⁹ On the other hand Jac Weller has portrayed Wellesley as defensive, and Tipu as the aggressor.²⁰ This work will first analyze the insufficient theories of economic and defensive motivations for the conflict in question. Secondly it will explore why the theories of geopolitical and offensive motivations are more accurate to explain why Wellesley’s war against Mysore. Third, it will explore how the reactions to the Siege of Seringapatam demonstrated the early nineteenth-century British attitudes towards empire. This period showed an embracement of the growing Empire, which was focused on peace and prosperity. However, the only way to ensure the safety of the Empire was through military conquest.

Perhaps the most important of evidence to support the economic theory was Tipu’s agenda as ruler. Tipu sought to develop “state management of commercial factories and banking establishments.”²¹ This policy of economic control was seen in many of the Mughal successor states, such as Awadh, Bengal, Hyderabad, and Mysore. These local regimes “sought to monopolise and protect trade, settle wandering groups and disperse armies, to re-establish the power to tax the countryside.”²² Tipu had also injured Company trade by establishing an embargo, cutting the British out of Mysore.²³ These economic practices are why the East India Company labeled Tipu as a “frivolous and capricious innovator; the mean and minute economist; the peddling trader; and even the retail shopkeeper.”²⁴ The “frivolous and capricious innovator” labels are referencing his changes in Mysore, to make it a stronger state. While the “peddling trader” and “retail shopkeeper” are referencing the embargo enacted against the British. While it is true that conquering Mysore would result in the British being able to trade in the region, there is insufficient evidence to indicate that this was Wellesley’s main motivation.

Furthermore Wellesley’s wars were devastating for the finances of the East India Company.²⁵ Wellesley did increase the potential revenue of the East India Company by £15 million, but he also dramatically increased its debts.²⁶ “Notwithstanding the despatch (sic) of nearly six millions sterling to Wellesley, the Indian debt between 1799 and 1807

¹⁸ C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830* (New York: Longman Inc, 1989), 106.

¹⁹ Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1997), 68.

²⁰ Weller, *Wellington in India*, 27.

²¹ Rajat Kanta Ray, “Indian Society and the Establishment of British Supremacy, 1765-1818,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire Volume II: The Eighteenth Century*, ed, P.J. Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 521

²² C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830*, 47.

²³ Ray, “Indian Society and the Establishment of British Supremacy, 1765-1818,” 551.

²⁴ William Kirkpatrick, *The Select Letters of Tippoo Sultan to Various Public Functionaries* (London, 1811), x.

²⁵ Philip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 135.

²⁶ Ray, “Indian Society and The Establishment of British Supremacy, 1765-1818,” 552. Quoting Elliot and Dowson VIII, 439.

increased from about £10,000,000 to over £26,000,000.”²⁷ This accounting has led to Wellesley being characterized as a “man bent on militaristic adventures”, whose governorship was a series of “military excursions...made without any regard to cost”.²⁸ As a result the economic motivation is at its best, is seen as a secondary motivation when compared to the geopolitical motivations.

Third, the most significant factor in determining Wellesley’s motivations in India are the geopolitical factors. The primary geopolitical factor that influenced Wellesley was the French menace, which he was able to use against another geopolitical threat Tipu Sultan. Wellesley reached India in 1798 in the middle of the French Revolutionary Wars. That same year in 1798 when Wellesley arrived in India, Napoleon invaded Egypt with the goals of acquiring grain for France, and disrupting British trade in the East.²⁹ Some scholars have even argued that Napoleon dreamed of marching on either Constantinople or India and joining forces with Tipu Sultan.³⁰ The invasion of Egypt and the Malartic Proclamation gave Wellesley the perfect opportunity to go to war with Tipu. There was the precedent of opposing France regardless of the cost. A prime example can be found in Wellesley’s predecessor Lord Cornwallis actions in 1785.

Cornwallis had been instructed to follow the Act of 1784, which was a neutrality act in the case of conflict between any of the powers in India. This act was tested just a year later when war broke out between Tipu Sultan and the Maratha Empire. The Board of Control advised Cornwallis that, “if any European power, in particular France, took one side in the war, the Company was automatically to take the other.”³¹

Furthermore, the suspicion that the French were planning to invade India can be found in a series of letters between Wellesley and William Eden. In a reply to one such letter Wellesley explained:

On October 18, we learnt the destination of the Toulon fleet and army to be towards India. Although I certainly did not expect that the French would attempt the route by Egypt, I have been convinced for a long time that their views were turned this way, and accordingly (thank God) I took my precautions as early as the month of June. We can now defy them³²

This excerpt is telling because it shows two things that Wellesley thought in regards to the French. First, Wellesley said that he “did not expect” the French to attack India via Egypt. This phrase leads one to believe that Wellesley would have dismissed any French attack from Egypt as improbable. Second, Wellesley said that he was “convinced that their views were turned this way”. This statement shows that Wellesley did not think that France would attack India directly from Egypt. Instead Wellesley was more concerned about France meddling in relations with Mysore and Hyderabad. This is a prime example of Wellesley at

²⁷ C.H. Philips, *The East India Company 1784-1834*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1940), 154.

²⁸ Philip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 134-135.

²⁹ Juan Cole, *Napoleon’s Egypt: Invading the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 130.

³⁰ William E. Watson, *Tricolor and Crescent: France and the Islamic World*, (Westport: Praeger, 2003), 13.

³¹ C.H. Philips, *The East India Company 1784-1834*, 66.

³² The author uses excerpts from various letters written by Wellesley to Baron Auckland to show his “susceptible, eager, inquisitive nature” but does not provide dates written. As quoted in William McCullagh Torrens, *The Marquess Wellesley: Architect of Empire*, (London: Spottiswoode and Co., 1880), 177.

the very least having down played the French threat. Further on in the letter Wellesley asked Eden:

I trust you will be of opinion that the blow which I have struck at Hyderabad was not unseasonable. It took place on October 22; and the intelligence reached me nearly at the same moment with the glorious news of the victory at Aboukir. Our accounts of the state of Bonaparte's army leave little doubt of its final destruction.³³

This portion of the letter covers Wellesley's effort to have the French forces removed from Hyderabad. The "blow which I have struck at Hyderabad" was to force the nizam to dispel the French troops there.³⁴ This effectively removed French influence from the kingdom and also ensured that they would come to the Company's aid in the war against Mysore. Furthermore Wellesley referenced Horatio Nelson's victory at the Battle of the Nile (Aboukir). Nelson's victory effectively ended France's ambitions of using Egypt as a base from which they could launch a seaborne invasion of India.³⁵ These two events resulted in the hindrance of France's ability to interfere in India.

These two statements show that Wellesley acknowledged that the French threat in India was in a state of decline. Despite the lack of France's capability to support the Malartic Proclamation, Wellesley was still preparing the Company to go to war against Tipu. At first glance, Wellesley's actions appeared to have contradicted his correspondence with Eden. In fact they revealed Wellesley's true intentions, that regardless of France's capacity to aid Tipu, he was going to war against him. This proves that Wellesley over-emphasized the French threat in India in order to have a justification for war against Tipu.

Ultimately the geopolitical situation was the biggest factor that led to the capture of Seringapatam. The proposed alliance between the French Republic and the Kingdom of Mysore ended up having the opposite effect for both parties. It did very little for the French in their geopolitical aims; at the best, it kept British troops busy in India. For Tipu it proved a death sentence. On the contrary, it was a boon for Richard Wellesley and the East India Company their aims. Wellesley was able to use the half-hearted promises of support from the French as an excuse to go to war with Mysore. Or in other words the threat of a Franco-Mysore alliance was a "godsend, for it gave him [Wellesley] an excuse to invade Mysore and deal once for and all with a persistent and dangerous adversary [Mysore]."³⁶ Prior to the Malartic Proclamation and the French Invasion of Egypt, the East India Company was reluctant to expand more. Wellesley used these developments as "lever" for him to pressure the Company to allow him to launch a preemptive strike against a "revival of French influence."³⁷

³³ The author uses excerpts from various letters written by Wellesley to Baron Auckland to show his "susceptible, eager, inquisitive nature" but does not provide dates written. As quoted in William McCullagh Torrens, *The Marquess Wellesley: Architect of Empire*, (London: Spottiswoode and Co., 1880), 177.

³⁴ Robert Montgomery Martin, *The Despatches, Minutes & Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley During His Administration in India*, (London: 1836), 672-675.

³⁵ Roy Adkins, Lesley Adkins, *The War for all of the Oceans: From Nelson at the Nile to Napoleon at Waterloo* (New York: Viking, 2006), 7.

³⁶ James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 68.

³⁷ Michael Duffy, "World-Wide War and British Expansion 1793-1815," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire Volume II: The Eighteenth Century*, ed, P.J. Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 198.

Furthermore, by leading an expansion of British power, one might argue that Wellesley was motivated by a potential increase in revenue that new territories would bring. But claiming that Wellesley was driven strictly by economic factors has been described by C.A. Bayly as “simple-minded economism.” Bayly describes Wellesley’s reasoning for expansion as wanting to “create in India a great counter weight to France in Europe. They were concerned that what the British already held in revenue and trade was at risk from further ‘tribal breakout’ of Afghan under Zaman Shah Durrani or, worse, from the revival of Maratha power within India.”³⁸ All of the aforementioned evidence leads one to doubt the validity of the economic theory behind Wellesley’s motivation for the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War. If Wellesley were motivated by annexing new lands in order to collect revenue, then why would he more than double the debt of the Company? The economic need for the annexation of Mysore is “difficult to establish.”³⁹ “In the India of militaristic belief and crumbling Mogul polities,” Philip Lawson explains, “Wellesley was provided with the ripest opportunity to achieve his ends”⁴⁰

While Wellesley’s actions make Tipu Sultan appear to be the victim in this game of geopolitics between two European empires, he was not completely innocent. In addition to being viewed as a usurper by the British, Tipu was seen as a major threat to British rule in India. Tipu was indicated as being “their (the British East India Company’s) most dangerous single enemy in India and the most likely to be active in future.”⁴¹ This fear of Tipu was not unfounded; in fact he had attacked an East India Company ally before Wellesley’s tenure as governor. In 1790, after receiving encouragement from the French government Tipu Sultan attacked Travancore beginning the Third Anglo-Mysore War. At the outset of the war the Company enjoyed initial success, until supply problems and Tipu forced the British commander Charles Cornwallis to retreat from Seringapatam.⁴² Tipu would not be able to replicate this success in his last war with the East India Company.

Second, the theory that Wellesley fought this war in a defensive manner is worth exploring. The best example of the Wellesley’s defensive posture is found in his answer to the Malartic Proclamation. Wellesley first learned about the infamous Malartic Proclamation on June 8 1798, after seeing that it was published in a Calcutta newspaper.⁴³ At first Wellesley doubted its authenticity but when he received two copies of the proclamation he took it seriously.⁴⁴ The first copy came from Lord Macartney at the Cape of Good Hope. Macartney obtained that copy from an American sailing vessel, which was ironically named the *Sultan*.⁴⁵

Wellesley then wrote to Tipu, “being anxious to afford you every proof in my power of my sincere wish to maintain the good understanding which had so long subsisted between

³⁸ Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830*, 106.

³⁹ P.J. Marshall, “Britain Without America – A Second Empire?” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire Volume II: The Eighteenth Century*, ed, P.J. Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 586.

⁴⁰ Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 135.

⁴¹ Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan’s Search for Legitimacy: Islam and Kingship in a Hindu Domain*, 2. And M.S. Naravane, *Battles of the Honourable East India Company: Making of the Raj*, 15.

⁴² Philips, *The East India Company 1784-1834*, 67.

⁴³ Denys Forrest, *Tiger of Mysore: The Life and Death of Tipu Sultan* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1970), 257.

⁴⁴ Ingram, *Two Views of British India: The Private Correspondence of Mr. Dundas and Lord Wellesley: 1798-1801*, 53.

⁴⁵ Forrest, *Tiger of Mysore: The Life and Death of Tipu Sultan*, 257-258.

your Highness and the Company... ”⁴⁶ This correspondence may appear to show Wellesley attempting to placate Tipu, but in fact it was a façade. The reason that Wellesley wrote to Tipu in such a cordial manner was to “buy time” from him in order to gather material for the war. Wellesley had initially wanted to go to war to neutralize the threat posed from Mysore as soon as possible, but was unable due to numerous factors. On July 6 1798 Wellesley wrote to Lord Dundas the Secretary of State for War, that he was calling off the attack because he “lacked of the necessary funds, because monsoon in the south would make the roads impassable, and because neither the nizam [of Hyderabad] nor peswha [Maratha] would provide any assistance.”⁴⁷ Edward Ingram maintains that “throughout 1798 and 1799 Wellesley had to write as if Tipu Sultan was about to attack the British: in fact the British were about to attack him.” The source of this strategy was the board of directors in Madras. They believed that although Tipu was antagonistic towards the British, his policies would always be defensive. The board also believed that he would only attack if they made their preparations “too obviously offensive.”⁴⁸

Wellesley also wanted support from the Kingdom of Hyderabad and the Maratha empire.⁴⁹ This support included getting the Kingdom of Hyderabad to disband the French units that were stationed there.⁵⁰ This move served the dual purpose of weakening the French influence in Southern India and denying Mysore a potential ally. The kingdom of Hyderabad and the Maratha Empire both aided the British East India Company and Wellesley in the Fourth Mysore War. This was due to the Treaty of Yadgir signed in 1784, which promised that Hyderabad and the Marathas would not go to war against one another. The two powers met again in 1790 and agreed to aid the British in future wars against Tipu.⁵¹

Therefore, what is perceived at first glance as a defensive posture taken by Wellesley was in fact an act of deception. Wellesley had to prepare the finances and gather troops and allies in order to wage a successful war. Dundas praised Wellesley in a private letter on March 18, 1799 that his decision to delay attacking Tipu until the proper resources were allocated allowed the Company forces to “enable you (Wellesley) to act with effect, if the humility of acknowledgements is not adequate to what our power, and the justice of our cause, entitle us to demand”⁵² If he was going to destroy the last obstacle to British control of Southern India, he had to make sure that he had the army and resources for it.

Fourth, the aggressive manner in which Wellesley pursued and carried out the war is seen in the tenacity Wellesley demonstrated throughout his correspondences. For example, in a series of letters to Henry Dundas, Wellesley portrayed his aggressive motives. Dundas on the other hand expressed a general reluctance to go to war; he simply

⁴⁶ As quoted in *Ibid*, 258.

⁴⁷ Ingram, *Two Views of British India: The Private Correspondence of Mr. Dundas and Lord Wellesley: 1798-1801*, 5.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 5.

⁴⁹ Forrest, *Tiger of Mysore: The Life and Death of Tipu Sultan* 262.

⁵⁰ Robert Montgomery Martin, *The Despatches, Minutes & Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley During His Administration in India*, (London: 1836), 672-675.

⁵¹ Sailendra Nath Sen, *Anglo-Maratha Relations: 1785-1796 vol. 2* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1974), 198.

⁵² Edward Ingram, *Two Views of British India: The Private Correspondence of Mr. Dundas and Lord Wellesley: 1798-1801*, (Bath: Adams & Dart, 1970), 128.

wanted to defend British interests.⁵³ One can trace Wellesley's determined effort to convince Dundas to allow him to go to war in a letter written on February 23, 1798, three months before he learned of the Malartic Proclamation.⁵⁴ Wellesley detailed the growing military strength of Hyderabad with an attachment of a survey taken by Lt. Col. William Kirkpatrick that showed

“The actual strength, but the original part of the nizam's military establishment, its rapid increase, the consequences to be expected from its continuance or further growth, as well as the means which either had been or might be suggested for averting any danger which those consequences might threaten to our interests in India.”⁵⁵

Although Hyderabad was a Company ally, Wellesley still used it as an example to claim that the British position in India was under threat. This was a clever strategy on Wellesley's part, because what better way to cause Dundas to become unsettled over the British possessions in India, than to portray their own allies as being superior in strength? Dundas' reluctance to go to war was untenable after he became aware of the Malartic Proclamation; in fact, on June 16, 1798 Dundas wrote in a private letter to Wellesley “the intelligence we have received from the Cape *must* have reached you either from the Mauritius itself or from the Cape of Good Hope, long before you can receive this.” So, Dundas assumed that Wellesley already was aware of the Malartic Proclamation, but in case Wellesley were not, Dundas provided a copy to him. Dundas also assumed that “we (British East India Company) are probably by this time at war with Tipu Sultan.”⁵⁶ Although Dundas was reluctant to become engaged in open warfare with Tipu, he has acquiesced to it. This was due to the Malartic Proclamation. Dundas' tone and attitude toward the war would change again in another note to Wellesley.

Dundas wrote to Wellesley and gave him a different command just three days later, on June 19, 1798: “If Tipu has made preparations of a hostile nature, or if the proclamation of Tipu inviting the French was his own, do not wait for actual hostilities on his part...attack him!”⁵⁷ This evidence supports the notion that Wellesley was encouraged to act aggressively in India. In fact Lord Dundas directed the annexation of parts of Mysore territory in order to connect the British territories in India.⁵⁸ The land that was desired the most was the Malabar Coast, by annexing this Mysore would be landlocked, and Company possessions would be contiguous.⁵⁹ This aggressive strategy was not limited to the Indian subcontinent and included other territories in the East Indies including Dutch possessions of Java, Batavia, and Surinam.⁶⁰ This action is in line with Dundas' strategy prior to the

⁵³ Ingram, *Two Views of British India: The Private Correspondence of Mr. Dundas and Lord Wellesley: 1798-1801*, 4.

⁵⁴ Forrest, *Tiger of Mysore: The Life and Death of Tipu Sultan*, 257.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 16.

⁵⁶ Ingram, *Two Views of British India: The Private Correspondence of Mr. Dundas and Lord Wellesley: 1798-1801*, 46.

⁵⁷ C.H. Philips, *The East India Company 1784-1834*, 102-103. Quoting from Board's Secret Drafts, 2, 18 Jun. 1798. Secret Board Minutes, 1, f. 87, 19 Jun. 1798.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 103.

⁵⁹ Ingram, *Two Views of British India: The Private Correspondence of Mr. Dundas and Lord Wellesley: 1798-1801*, 98.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 103. Quoting from Board's Secret Drafts, 2, 31 Oct. 1799.

Malartic Proclamation, which was to take European colonies in order “to deprive them of their colonial possessions”.⁶¹

There is also another piece of evidence proving Wellesley’s aggressive strategy towards Tipu. The article in question is a letter that came from the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, Selim III. It is worth noting that this letter was written prior to the invasion of Mysore. Selim wrote the following to Tipu in order to offer advice that also happened to be influenced by Ottoman geopolitics:

We make it our special requested that your Majesty will please to refrain from entering into any measures against the English, or lending any compliant ear to the French...we wish the connection above alluded to be exchanged in favour of Great Britain.⁶²

In this letter Selim advised Tipu to relinquish the hope that the French would come to his aid. Interestingly this letter represents an about-face of Franco-Ottoman diplomacy, where for centuries prior to the French invasion of Egypt the two countries enjoyed an alliance.⁶³ Napoleon’s invasion of Ottoman Egypt caused Selim to declare war on France in retaliation.⁶⁴ Selim has urged Tipu to “befriend” France’s oldest enemy, Great Britain. Napoleon’s invasion also resulted in the Ottomans signing alliances with the Russian Empire on January 9, 1799 and Great Britain on January 11, 1799.⁶⁵

Wellesley received this letter from the British minister in Istanbul, Spencer Smith. This occasion was not the first time that a document from the Sultan reached Tipu. When the Ottoman Empire declared war on the French in retaliation for their invasion of Egypt, the declaration was also sent to Tipu.⁶⁶ Wellesley forwarded this letter to Tipu. Tipu responded to Selim’s advice in a letter to Wellesley dated on 13 February 1799. Tipu thanked Wellesley for forwarding the letter to him, but declined to meet Selim’s wishes.⁶⁷ It is worth noting the date that Tipu responded to Selim, which was February 9, 1799. Wellesley had already ordered General Harris to invade Mysore two days before on February 11, 1799.⁶⁸ This leads to the conclusion that regardless of Tipu’s response to Selim the invasion was going to occur one way or the other.

The British reaction to the Siege of Seringapatam demonstrated changing attitudes towards the empire. This period showed an acceptance and celebration of the growing Empire. This Empire was centered on peace and prosperity, which was provided through military strength. This was evident in the positive reaction The Court of Directors issued on September 24, 1799:

⁶¹ Ingram, *Two Views of British India: The Private Correspondence of Mr. Dundas and Lord Wellesley: 1798-1801*, 4.

⁶² Forrest, *Tiger of Mysore: The Life and Death of Tipu Sultan*, 274.

⁶³ The Franco-Ottoman alliance dates back to 1536. This was the result of Francis I and Suleiman I the Magnificent’s mutual geopolitical struggle against the Habsburgs. For this see Roger Bigelow Merriman, *Suleiman the Magnificent 1520-1566* (Charleston: Nabu Press, 2011), 129.

⁶⁴ Cole, *Napoleon’s Egypt: Invading the Middle East, 152-157*.

⁶⁵ Efraim Karsh, Inari Karsh, *Empires of the Sand: The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East 1789-1923*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 10.

⁶⁶ Forrest, *Tiger of Mysore: The Life and Death of Tipu Sultan*, 273.

⁶⁷ Tipu’s response as quoted in *ibid*, 274.

⁶⁸ Naravane, *Battles of the Honourable East India Company: Making of the Raj*, 179.

Resolved unanimously that the thanks of this Court be given to the Earl of Mornington, Governor General, for the able and successful measures which he adopted, whereby the complete annihilation of French influence at the Court of Hyderabad was happily accomplished, for the ability, firmness and decision manifested by His Lordship in his conduct towards the late Tippoo Sultan, and for the previous measures which he pursued for enabling the army to take the field, whereby it was put in a situation to act with vigor against the enemy, and to effect the speedy conquest of the capital of the Mysore dominions, the happy presage of a lasting peace in India, and consequent increase of prosperity to the East India Company⁶⁹

This appreciative reaction would be repeated two months later on December 24, 1799.⁷⁰ This overwhelming positive reaction by the East India Company supports the idea that the Company valued Wellesley's actions in Mysore. Though the Company was initially reticent about the escalation of conflict and costs in India, seen in the tenuous strategy of neutrality in 1784, this changed due to French influence in Mysore. As soon as French influence was rumored in Mysore, both Tipu Sultan and his kingdom's independence were on borrowed time.

The reaction that Parliament issued on October 4, 1799, to the capture of Seringapatam is similar in tone to the one issued by the East India Company. Though there are some differences in the Parliamentary response in regard to the content. The House of Lords can see these differences in the following proclamation:

Resolved, *nemine dissentiente* (no one dissenting, unanimously), by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament assembled that the thanks of this House be given to the Right Honorable Richard Lord Wellesley, Earl of Mornington in the kingdom of Ireland, and Governor General of India, for the wisdom, decision and energy with which is discharged the arduous duties of his station, from the time of his taking upon him the said Government to the glorious termination of the late war by the capture of Seringapatam; during which period, by opposing to the perfidy of the late Sultaun(sic) of Mysore a uniform moderation, dignity and firmness, and by counteracting with equal promptitude and ability the dangerous intrigues and projects of the French, particularly by destroying their power and influence in the Decan(sic), he prepared the way for the rapid and brilliant operations carried on under his superintendance(sic) and direction, the result of which has finally disappointed all the designs of our enemies in that quarter, and has established, on a basis of permanent security, the tranquillity(sic) and prosperity of the British Empire in India.⁷¹

This proclamation was repeated in the House of Commons with only minor changes in word usage.⁷² In addition to the lofty praise from the Company and Parliament, Wellesley was awarded a pension of “£5,000 a year, granted for twenty years-a return for

⁶⁹ P.C. Gupta, *Fort William-India House Correspondence and Other Contemporary Papers Relating Thereto, Volume XIII: 1796-1800* (Delhi: Civil Lines, 1959), 131.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 28.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 132-133.

⁷² *Ibid*, 134-135

Mornington's having declined to take his share of the prize-money collected at Seringapatam."⁷³

These declarations of appreciation are worth analyzing because they reveal much about British attitudes toward their growing Empire. This shows the view that Wellesley and the British had of Tipu Sultan, that he was a treacherous enemy. In regards to the French, they are not viewed very highly either. The French activity in India is described as being a state of "dangerous intrigues. Now these "dangerous intrigues" most likely refer to the half-hearted overtures from the French to Tipu Sultan, or the call in the Isle-de-France calling for volunteers to fight for Tipu Sultan. Both of these entities threatened the peace and prosperity of the Empire in India. So, in order to deny France an Indian ally that could challenge Company rule, the imperial conquest of Mysore was deemed the necessary response to both dangers.

The conquest of Mysore is indicative of the predicament that the East India Company found itself in at the end of the eighteenth century. The Company was stuck in a position in India that in order to defend its territory, it had to wage war against the Mughal successor states. The Company would then either annex the state, or make its rulers sign a subsidiary alliance. This was done in order to maintain the peace and prosperity of British India. In other words, "only formal rule could provide stability for the Indian Empire."⁷⁴ This problem plagued the Company until the mid-nineteenth century.

Furthermore, it is worth noting the irony in the last part of the statement that Wellesley's actions "established, on a basis of permanent security, the tranquility and prosperity of the British Empire in India. Following the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War, the East India Company would be in an almost constant state of warfare until the Great Mutiny in 1857. This era of conflict includes the following wars: The Second Anglo-Maratha War 1803-1805, The Third Anglo-Maratha War 1817-1818,⁷⁵ The First Burma War 1824-1826, The First Afghan War 1839-1842, The Conquest of Sind 1843, Defeat of Gwalior 1844, The First Sikh War 1845-1846, The Second Sikh War 1848-1849, The Second Burma War 1852, Nagpur Annexed 1853, Oudh Annexed 1856."⁷⁶

The reaction to the capture of Seringapatam was not limited to 1799. During a debate in parliament in 1800, Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger delivered an address discussing the French threat. This commentary traced the growth of French power in Europe and the extension of that power outside of the Europe and how it spread to Egypt. An excerpt of Pitt's address is provided below:

The only plea which they have since held out to colour this atrocious invasion of a neutral and friendly territory, is, that it was the road to attack the English power in India. It is most unquestionably true, that this was one and a principal cause of this unparalleled outrage: but another, and an equally substantial cause (as appears by their own statements), was the division and partition of the territories of what they thought a falling power. It is impossible to dismiss this subject without observing that this attack against Egypt was accompanied by an

⁷³ Richard Wellesley, *The Wellesley Papers: The Life and Correspondence of Richard Colley Wellesley, Marquess Wellesley, 1760-1842, Volume 1* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1914), 119.

⁷⁴ Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830*, 106.

⁷⁵ M.S. Naravane, *Battles of the Honourable East India Company: Making of the Raj*, 64-66.

⁷⁶ Dennis Judd, *The Lion and the Tiger: The Rise and Fall of the British Raj 1600-1947* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 47.

attack upon the British possessions in India, made on true revolutionary principles. In Europe, the propagation of the principles of France had uniformly prepared the way for the progress of its arms. To India, the lovers of peace had sent the messengers of Jacobinism, for the purpose of inculcating war in those distant regions, on Jacobin principles, and of forming Jacobin clubs, which they actually succeeded in establishing, and which in most respects resembled the European model, but which were distinguished by this peculiarity, that they were required to swear in one breath, *hatred to tyranny, the love of liberty, and the destruction of all kings and sovereigns – except the good and faithful ally of the French relic Citizen Tippoo.*⁷⁷

Pitt's speech not only traced the growth of French power, it revealed the British view of Tipu. Tipu represented in Pitt's opinion, the monstrous combination of enemies for late eighteenth-early nineteenth century Britain. The first enemy was the "Jacobin principles" that France had brought to Mysore. Proof of the Jacobin presence in Mysore was found in reports that Tipu wore a liberty cap, and even referred to himself as "Citizen Tipu."⁷⁸ It is worth noting that the Jacobin threat was eliminated with the closing of the Jacobin Clubs in France in 1794.⁷⁹ Furthermore, Pitt referred to Tipu as a "relic". Use of the word relic showed that Pitt viewed him as one of the last vestiges of India prior to the British rise to power. Pitt combined the defeated Jacobin ideology with the tyrannical Tipu to show that the new power in India was the East India Company.

Furthermore, the change in the attitude toward empire is best observed when one looks at the treatment that previous Company administrators received upon their return to Great Britain. The previous Company leaders, Robert Clive and Warren Hastings, were both criticized for expanding Company territory. Clive was subject to hearings conducted against him by Parliament from 1772-1773, during which he was attacked for money he received in India. Clive was never fully charged for any offenses, and died shortly after his exoneration on November 22, 1774.⁸⁰ Hastings faced an impeachment trial throughout the 1780's and early 1790's, due having been accused of corruption.⁸¹

Edmund Burke was one parliamentarian who argued in favor of the impeachment of Hastings. Burke charged Hastings with "villany" which included the "wasting of the country and destruction of the land"⁸² Burke indicated to his colleagues in parliament that the East India Company received a portion of its power through its charter from the British government. It also derived another portion from the Mughals via the diwani rights of Bengal.⁸³ Burke interpreted that as a consequence of accepting the diwani rights "Great Britain made a virtual act of union with that country, by which they bound themselves as

⁷⁷ William Pitt, *The Speeches of the Right Honourable William Pitt, in the House of Commons, Volume IV* (London: Longman, 1806), 26-27.

⁷⁸ James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 68.

⁷⁹ Paul R. Hanson, *Contesting the French Revolution* (Wiley-Blackwell: Hoboken, 2009), 130-134.

⁸⁰ Mark Bence-Jones, *Clive of India* (London: Constable, 1988), 252.

⁸¹ Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 128. Quoting from P.J. Marshall, *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings*. 1965.

⁸² Mia Carter, "Edmund Burke on the Impeachment of Warren Hastings, 15-19 February 1788," in *Archives of Empire Volume I: From the East India Company to the Suez Canal*, ed. Barbara Harlow and Mia Carter (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 153.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 144-145.

securities for their subjects, to preserve the people in all rights.”⁸⁴ Burke charged Hastings with abusing that power, but maintained that they were responsible to “the high justice of the kingdom.”⁸⁵ Burke continued to argue on that it was the duty of the British to “teach men that they are to confirm their practices to principles.”⁸⁶ In other words, it was the duty of the British Empire to spread the rule of law to its subjects. Burke carried on with the impeachment in the name of the Commons of Great Britain, “whose parliamentary trust he betrayed”, and in the name of the Indian people.⁸⁷

Fortunately for Hastings he would be acquitted of all charges on April 24, 1795. Despite Hastings being found innocent, Burke’s testimony was indicative of the critical view that eighteenth century Britain had towards Empire building. Burke considered Hastings’s activities in India to have demonstrated “arbitrary power.”⁸⁸ Burke also considered empire building philosophically to be wrong. Towards the end of his indictment of Hastings, Burke stated that “it is not to be had by conquest; for by conquest, which is a more immediate designation of the hand of God, the conqueror only succeeds to all the painful duties and subordination to the power of God which belonged to the sovereign that held the country before.”⁸⁹

Ten years after Hastings’ acquittal, in 1805, Wellesley was recalled back to Britain. This was caused by two factors, first Dundas left the Board of Directors in 1801. As a result Wellesley lost the support of board when it came to further wars. Second, the Second Anglo-Maratha War had taken a turn for the worse.⁹⁰ Wellesley’s order to return back to Britain caused John Malcolm make a stunning claim in defense of Wellesley record of expansion:

It was a true statement which the great Lord Clive applied to the progress of the British Empire in India - ‘To stop is dangerous; to recede ruin.’ And if we do recede, either from our right pretensions and claims- nay, if we look as if we thought of receding- we shall have a host of enemies, and thousands who dare not harbour (sic) a thought of opposing the irresistible tide of our success, will hasten to attack a nation which shows by diffidence in its own power that it anticipates its downfall.⁹¹

This statement shows the transformation of how Britain viewed its Empire. In only ten years after Hastings’s trial the attitude toward empire changed dramatically. The view had initially viewed further expansion negatively, but in the last years of the eighteenth-century expansion started to be viewed as positive because of its perceived necessity. Malcolm’s statement is an example of the need for more expansion. What Malcolm essentially said in his speech is that the maintenance of the empire required further conquests, and that if conquest were to stop then the British Empire would end as a result.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 145

⁸⁵ Ibid, 144.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 151.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 154.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 151.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 152.

⁹⁰ Weller, *Wellington in India*, 254.

⁹¹ James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 63-64. Quoting from J.W. Kaye, *The Life and Correspondence of John Malcolm*, I, 320-1.

The Fourth Anglo-Mysore War was the penultimate event in first phase of the British Empire in India. The first phase started with the granting of the charter for the Company in 1601.⁹² The beginning phase concluded in 1818 with the defeat of the Maratha Empire, which resulted in the Company domination of the subcontinent. The second phase lasted from 1818 until the decolonization and partition of India in 1947. Throughout the first phase the Company was focused on trade and was hesitant to conquer regions in India. This mercantile focus was first subjugated to a geopolitical one in the mid-eighteenth century, when more ambitious Governor-Generals led the Company. With Robert Clive's victory at Plassey on 1757, the Company controlled the rich region of Bengal. After Clive, Warren Hastings consolidated Company rule in that region but did not expand beyond it. Cornwallis resisted expanding the Company and instead focused on the maintenance of the territory that it held.⁹³ These leaders ushered in an era of territorial expansion that lasted until the end of the Empire.

Richard Wellesley's career in India proved that territorial expansion was necessary for the maintenance of the British Empire. During the seven years Wellesley spent in India, he presided over the conquest of numerous regions, and brought others under control through subsidiary alliances.⁹⁴ This continuous expansion continued well beyond his career. Mysore was one of these regions that transitioned from being an enemy of the British, to being a subject.

Wellesley also represented the shift the Company went through, from a trading power to an imperial one. Wellesley's actions proved the importance of geopolitical factors, and that they would be given priority over economic ones. Wellesley's apparent disregard for the debts that the Company incurred in order to fuel his wars of expansion proved the primacy of geopolitical factors. Another example of the importance of geopolitical factors is how Richard Wellesley utilized the French threat in India to engage in an offensive war against Tipu Sultan.

Wellesley was able to use the fear of France because of the long running Anglo-France rivalry.⁹⁵ Wellesley exaggerated the severity of the danger that the French invasion and subsequent occupation of Egypt posed to Britain's empire in India. Wellesley also was given a great tool that further helped him when he overstated the French threat, the Malartic Proclamation. The proclamation showed France's intent to meddle in India via Mughal successor states. However, the document only showed France's weak willed desires to aid Tipu, it lacked concrete plans to. Ultimately the proclamation did not lead to a Franco-Mysore alliance; instead it made Tipu a casualty of Great Britain and France's geopolitical struggle.

Furthermore, Wellesley's time in India demonstrated a shift of how Britain viewed its empire. Starting in the middle of the eighteenth century the British viewed their empire with reluctance. Some parliamentarians argued that the Empire was supposed to be responsible for spreading rule of law and taking care of its subjects.⁹⁶ When Robert Clive

⁹² East India Company, *The Register of Letters & C of the Governour and Company of Merchants of London Trading into the East Indies*, 158-159.

⁹³ Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 91.

⁹⁴ Severn, *Architects of Empire: The Duke of Wellington and His Brothers*, 68&192.

⁹⁵ Israel, "The Emerging Empire: The Continental Perspective, 1650-1713," 441.

⁹⁶ Carter, "Edmund Burke on the Impeachment of Warren Hastings, 15-19 February 1788," 153.

and Warren Hastings returned to Britain after their time in India they were criticized by Parliament. Both men had impeachment trials held against them but were acquitted.⁹⁷ The opposite occurred with Wellesley, immediately after the capture of Seringapatam, Parliament praised him and the East India Company.⁹⁸ Wellesley continued the expansionist policies of Clive and Hastings, but the view of empire had changed. Now empire and the expansion of it were seen as necessary.

Ultimately during the period in question, Wellesley's "imperial vision" transformed the Company from a trading company into an imperial power.⁹⁹ When the Company lost control of India in the aftermath of the Great Mutiny in 1857, the state maintained this vision. But this imperial vision also exposed a major problem that plagued the British Empire until its end. This problem was that in order to keep the empire functioning and intact, the British would have to continuously engage in military conflicts. These military conflicts included both wars of expansion and of protection.¹⁰⁰ Eighty years after the end of the Fourth Anglo-Mysore war, in 1879, Queen Victoria took notice of the state of perpetual warfare. Victoria warned that, "If we are to maintain our position as a first-rate power we must be prepared for attacks and wars, somewhere or other, continually."¹⁰¹

In conclusion, Richard Wellesley's career in India showcased two major changes in how empire was viewed by Britain. After Wellesley's career the expansion of British territory via warfare was seen as a positive, but only as long as the British won the wars. Furthermore, when the centuries old Anglo-French rivalry flared again up during the French Revolutionary Wars and the Napoleonic Wars, it too altered the view of empire. From now on empire was seen as the best way to ensure peace and prosperity.¹⁰² These two factors reverberated throughout Pax Britannica, and shaped much of the modern world.

⁹⁷ Bence-Jones, *Clive of India*, 252 and Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 128. Quoting from P.J. Marshall, *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings*. 1965.

⁹⁸ Gupta, *Fort William-India House Correspondence and Other Contemporary Papers Relating Thereto, Volume XIII: 1796-1800*, 132-133.

⁹⁹ Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, 97.

¹⁰⁰ Judd, *The Lion and the Tiger: The Rise and Fall of the British Raj 1600-1947*, 47.

¹⁰¹ Elizabeth Longford, *Victoria R.I* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 426

¹⁰² Gupta, *Fort William-India House Correspondence and Other Contemporary Papers Relating Thereto, Volume XIII: 1796-1800*, 131.

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