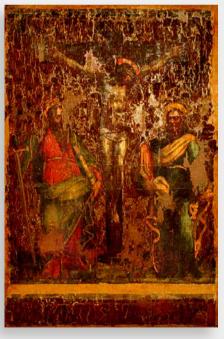


N. 6 2025

# Fascicolo 23. Luglio 2025 Storia Militare Moderna (6)





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Società Italiana di Storia Militare





Stendardo di Lepanto (1570), Lati A e B, Museo Diocesano di Gaeta. Wikimedia Commons. Lo stendardi fu dipinto a tempera su seta da Girolamo Siciolante da Sermoneta (1521-1575), su incarico del Cardinale Onorato Caetani. L'11 giugno 1570 fu benedetto da Papa Pio V nella Basilica di San Pietro e consegnato a Marcantonio II Colonna ponendolo al comando della flotta pontificia. Partito da Civitavecchia e giunto a Gaeta il 22 giugno 1571, Marcantonio Colonna, fece voto di consegnare lo stendardo al patrono della città qualora fosse tornato vincitore. Il 13 agosto Pio V fece consegnare un secondo stendardo della Lega a Don Giovanni d'Austria, comandante generale della flotta cristiana che, riunitasi a Messina, salpò il 24 agosto verso Lepanto. Durante la battaglia del 7 ottobre i due vessilli sventolarono rispettivamente sull'Ammiraglia e sulla Capitana pontificia e non furono mai centrati dal tiro nemico. Nelle stesse ore il papa ebbe la visione della vittoria e in ricordo rifinì l'Ave Maria nella forma attuale, aggiunse le Litanie lauretane alla recita del Rosario e l'appellativo mariano di Auxilium Christianorum e consacrò il 7 ottobre a Santa Maria delle Vittorie sull'Islam, celebrato con lo scampanio al mattino, a mezzogiorno e alla sera in ricordo della vittoria. Papa Gregorio XIII trasferì poi la festa alla prima domenica del mese di ottobre intitolandola alla Madonna del Rosario. Al ritorno da Lepanto, Marcantonio Colonna sciolse il voto consegnando lo stendardo al vescovo Pietro Lunello. Il vessillo fu poi conservato presso la cattedrale dei Santi Erasmo e Marciano.

## American War of Independence and British Imperialism in South Asia

by Kaushik Roy<sup>1</sup>

ABSTRACT. Eighteenth century India witnessed the rise of the British East India Company (EIC) and the consequent collapse of the precolonial indigenous polities. This was possible due to British success against both the indigenous powers and the competing European powers like France. The Anglo-French struggle for dominating South Asia and the Indian Ocean became enmeshed with the struggle between the Indian states and the European powers. The EIC supported by a few Indian powers fought against other indigenous polities which were allied with France. The global Anglo-French struggle during the American War of Independence (1775-1783) resulted in intense fighting between Mysore supported by France against the EIC and its indigenous allies. This war is known as the Second Anglo-Mysore War (1780-1784). This paper argues that the Second Anglo-Mysore War was the last chance for France to destroy British rule in India.

KEYWORDS. HAIDAR ALI, BUSSY, EYRE COOTE, EAST INDIA COMPANY, FRANCE, MY-SORE, TIPU SULTAN.

ighteenth century India witnessed the rise of the British East India Company (EIC/Company) and the consequent collapse of the precolonial indigenous polities. This was possible due to British success against both the indigenous powers (country powers) and the competing European powers like the French. The Anglo-French struggle for dominating South Asia and the Indian Ocean became enmeshed with the struggle between the Indian states and the European powers like France and Britain. The EIC supported a few Indian powers fought against other indigenous polities which were allied with France. Further, these Indian powers occasionally also fought amongst themselves. These wars were interrelated with the wider global struggle between Brit-

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ain and France. The global Anglo-French struggle during the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) resulted in the Three Carnatic Wars (First Carnatic War 1746-1748, Second Carnatic War 1749-1754, Third Carnatic War 1757-1763). The Carnatic Wars which occurred both on land and sea involved France and some South Indian country powers against a few Indian states allied with the EIC. The second round of global struggle between Britain and France during the American War of Independence (1775-1783) resulted in intense fighting between Mysore supported by France against the EIC and its indigenous allies.

In South India, the most persistent and dangerous opponent for the EIC was Mysore. The EIC fought four wars with the expanding Mysore Sultanate in the second half of the eighteenth century. Here we are concerned with the crucial Second Anglo-Mysore War (1780-1784) which occurred in tandem with the American War of Independence. In the 1760s, Mysore was a rising power under Haidar Ali. By 1799, with the death of Tipu Sultan, Mysore was annexed by the British. At the same time, France was temporarily down and out due to the outbreak of the French Revolution. So, the British rise in India was part and parcel of the global history of the British Empire.

Here, I attempt at a more balanced perspective by considering the opponents and allies of the EIC. These wars were not merely a bipolar tussle between the EIC and Mysore. Other Indian powers also joined the fray. The principal players in this drama were the Sultanate of Mysore (under Haidar Ali and his son Tipu Sultan) and the EIC. The EIC a joint stock company was an extension of the British state in Asia. France, the Maratha Confederacy, and the Nizam of Hyderabad played a secondary role in this struggle. The possessions of the EIC were organised in three presidencies: Bengal, Bombay and Madras respectively. Policy for the EIC was formulated by the Bengal Government (which ruled the Bengal Presidency from Calcutta [Kolkata]), Madras Government (based in Madras/ Chennai and in charge of the Madras Presidency) and the Bombay Government (which based in Bombay [Mumbai] administered the Bombay Presidency). The Maratha Confederacy was not a unitary actor. The Confederacy comprised of the Pune Government of the *Peshwa* (hereditary Prime Minister of the Maratha Confederacy), Sindhia of Gwalior, Holkar of Indore, Gaekwad of Baroda, and Bhonsle of Berar. The theatre of operation of the four Anglo-Mysore Wars was Deccan which means the region south of Vindhya Mountains and Sapura Range till the Cape of Comorin. On the eastern side, Deccan is bound by the Coroman-

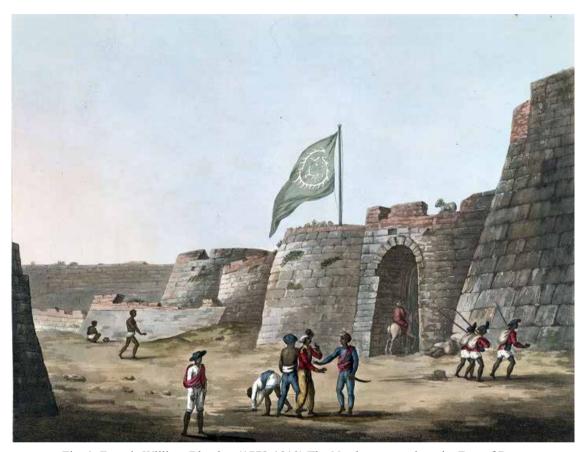


Fig. 1. Francis William Blagdon (1778-1819) The North entrance into the Fort of Bangalore (rebuilt in 1761) with the Tipu Sultan's flag, Plate 14 from *Picturesque Scenery in the Kingdom of Mysore*, 1804, based on a picture by James Hunter (1755-1792).

del Coast and the Eastern Ghats and in the west by the Malabar Coast and the Western Ghats.

Very few scholars have tried to embed British imperialism in eighteenth century South Asia against the wider background of global history of British imperialism. An exception is historian P.J. Marshall who in a book compares British success in India with failure in North America during the late eighteenth century. Marshall argues that this was because of Britain's success in acquiring indigenous collaborators in South Asia to sustain British imperialism and London's failure in the 'New World' to secure willing indigenous elites for making British

imperialism functional.<sup>2</sup> However, collaboration was possible also because of British military success in the Indian subcontinent. In fact, collaboration, and coercion, the two elements were intertwined with each other intimately like a DNA double helix. Then again, global factors and regional (considering South Asia as a region, i.e. subcontinental) considerations modulated the nature of the Second Anglo-Mysore War. In an attempt to globalise the Second Anglo-Mysore War, the naval struggle between France and Britain in the India Ocean, Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal have been included. Hence, besides the armies involved, the activities of the navies are also bought under the scanner. This essay argues that the Second Anglo-Mysore War was a probable turning point when Indian aka global history could have taken an alternative route but refused to take this turn. Let us see, how it all started.

## Rise of Mysore under Haidar Ali

Mysore emerged as a regional power under Chikka Deva Raya (1672-1704). The kingdom was shaped like a triangle with the Western and the Eastern Ghats forming two of its arms and they merge in the Nilgiri Hills which formed the apex. The Western Ghats is higher than the Eastern Ghats. Hence it was easier to invade Mysore from the eastern side. For this reason, the EIC sent its main force mainly through the Eastern Ghats. Mysore is an undulating tableland with a general altitude of about 2,000 feet above the sea level. The highest elevation in the kingdom was the central area which formed the watershed separating River Krishna in the north and Kaveri River in the south. Kirshna and Kaveri River Valleys were reputed for their agricultural fertility. The Western Ghats was covered with dense vegetation dotted with pepper plantations, areca, and coffee.<sup>3</sup>

Born in 1717 near Bangalore, Haidar Ali started his career in 1750 as a mercenary in Wadiyar Mysore, leading a troop of 50 mounted and 200 foot men armed with matchlocks. During a trip to Pondicherry, the seat of French East India Company, Haidar was impressed by the discipline and techniques of the French

<sup>2</sup> P.J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America c. 1750-1783*. 2005, reprint, Oxford University Press, New Delhi 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Nikhilesh Guha, *Pre-British State System in South India: Mysore, 1761-1799.* Calcutta: Ratna Prakashan 1985, pp. 3-4.

garrison<sup>4</sup>, and, appointed in 1755 as *faujdar* (military governor) of Dindigul, he set up the first European-style arsenal with the help of the French artificers acquired from Pondicherry.<sup>5</sup> In 1760, Haidar captured the South Kanara region. By marginalising the Hindu *raja*, and the Prime Minister Nanjaraj, he became the dictator of Mysore in 1761. Then, he started expanding the frontiers of Mysore.

The bustling harbours of Malabar and its flourishing overseas commerce attracted Haidar towards this region. In 1763, he captured the principality of Ikkeri with its capital at Bednore. The loot from Bednore came to about Rs 12 lakhs (1 lakh=100,000). The money was used to strengthen his military machine. The capture of Ikkeri gave him control over the Kanara Coast with all the seaports from Sadashivgad to Mangalore. Not only the rich port but also the shipping of this principality fell into the hands of Haidar. Haidar was a farsighted statesman. He understood the importance of coastal navy for protecting the Malabar Coast from the EIC's navy. Moreover, abundant timber for constructing ships was available in the forest of Malabar. So, he established a dockyard at Mangalore and appointed Latif Ali Beg as head of Mysore's Admiralty.

North Malabar comprised of principalities like Kottayam, Palakkad, Calicut (under the Zamorins) and Kolathanadu (under the Kolatiri Raja). The Mapillas (Moplahs) of Cannanore were ruled by Ali Raja who owed allegiance to the Kolatiri Raja. The Muslim Moplahs supported the invasion of Haidar against their Hindu overlord. Ali Raja had a fleet comprising three big ships (each between 200-300 tons), three galiots mounted with 19 cannons, two ghurabs with eight cannons and nine galivats, each with one cannon. These ships were used for trading with Muscat and Mocha. These ships were acquired by Haidar.<sup>8</sup> Ali Raja became an admiral of Haidar's fledgling navy.<sup>9</sup> In 1765, the Mysore Navy

<sup>4</sup> *The History of Hyder Shah... his Son Tippoo Sultaun* by MMDLT, Revised by Gholam Mohammed. 1855, reprint, Cosmo Publications, Delhi 1976, pp. 34-5.

<sup>5</sup> Lewin B. Bowring, *Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan... South.* 1899, reprint, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi 1997, p. 26.

<sup>6</sup> Leena More, *History of Kannur and North Malabar: Kolatiri, Arakkal and Mysore Sultans*. Manohar, New Delhi 2024, pp. 1-2.

<sup>7</sup> Praxy Fernandes, *Storm over Seringapatam: The Incredible Story of Hyder Ali & Tipu Sultan*. Thacker, Bombay 1969, pp. 30-34.

<sup>8</sup> More, *History of Kannur and North Malabar*, pp. 80-81.

<sup>9</sup> N. Rajendran, 'Background of the Mysorean Invasion of Malabar: 1765-66,' *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* Vol. 2 1978, p. 616.

comprised of 30 warships and several transport vessels. These were all coastal fighting ships which could be categorised as vessels belonging to a Brown Water Navy. Several French officers served in Haidar's navy. <sup>10</sup> Most of the warships of Mysore were manned by Muslim sailors whose seamanship was considered of higher calibre compared to the caste bound Hindus who became outcastes due to crossing of *kalapani* (sea). The Indian mariners were armed with muskets which were manufactured in Western India. <sup>11</sup>

In 1766, Haidar moved against the Kolatiri Raja with 40,000 infantry, 10,000 cavalry and four cannons. Haidar recruited his soldiers mainly from the Moplahs of Malabar, Bidar, Carnatic (the narrow coastal region of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh) and the Pathans (Deccani Muslims) who had migrated from Afghanistan via North India and settled in Deccan during the seventeenth century. The Hindus inhabited pockets in Malabar and extensively in Kanara (southwestern Konkan Coast). In 1767, Haider had 210 European mercenaries (mostly French) for Westernising his army. Haidar commanded 11,000 light cavalry, 12,000 regular infantry (disciplined by the French mercenaries and armed with European muskets) and 8,000 irregular infantry (equipped with matchlocks), but only 49 cannons 13

The cavalry under Haidar was organised in *dustas* (regiments) and each *dusta* comprised of 1,000 mounted men. Mysore maintained two types of cavalry: *paigah* (regular) and *siladari* (irregular). The regular cavalrymen were dressed and equipped and provided with mounts by the government. They were paid in cash. The *siladars* bought their own horses along with their arms and equipment. The *paigah* was motivated during combat with the promise of free plunder and the *siladars* with the incentive of compensation of Rs 100 for every horse killed in action. While the *siladari* cavalry was light cavalry (non-armoured horsemen),

<sup>10</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, 'Maritime Trade, Seapower, and the Anglo-Mysore Wars, 1767-1799,' Historian Vol. 73 2011, p. 29.

<sup>11</sup> Surendranath Sen, 'Historical Records at Goa,' in Surendranath Sen, *Studies in Indian History: Historical Records at Goa*. 1930, reprint, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi 1993, p. 67.

<sup>12</sup> Irfan Habib, 'Introduction,' and Jadunath Sarkar, 'Haidar Ali's Invasion of the Eastern Carnatic, 1780,' in Irfan Habib (ed.), *Confronting Colonialism: Resistance and Modernization under Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan*. Tulika, Delhi 1999, pp. xxii, 23.

<sup>13</sup> Colonel Mark Wilks, *History of Mysore...1799*, 2 vols. 1810, reprint, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi 1989, vol. 2, p. 21.

the *paigah* geared for shock action constituted heavy cavalry: the men wearing armour were mounted on bigger horses. The infantry was also of two types: regulars and irregulars. The regulars were organised in *resalas* (battalion) and were armed with muskets. They were provided with handguns by the government and were paid regular salaries in cash. The irregular footmen were indifferently equipped and armed. The irregular infantry due to their inferior firearms and lack of discipline had lower combat value compared to Haidar's regular infantry.<sup>14</sup>

Haidar disposed of 10,000 bullocks, 100 elephants and 800 camels in the supply and transport branch. 15 An young Hanoverian soldier in British pay observed that in Europe during campaigns, food and munitions for the armies were conveyed by boats sailing along the big rivers. However, in the Coromandel Coast, most of the rivers were not navigable and became dry during summer. South India was ecologically unsuitable for breeding good horses. Elephants required large amount of water and fresh green fodder. Camels were not natural to this region. The only recourse for transporting ammunition and rice for the soldiers was bullock which being very slow moving reduced the speed of march of an army. 16 Elephants were used by the Indian powers as command vehicles for the generals and for carrying baggage. The EIC used elephants mainly for pulling the siege guns. Elephants were acquired from Coorg, a region in the Malabar Coast. Coorg extended from the Western Ghats to the plains of Mysore. The region was full of mountains and forest where the elephants roamed free. <sup>17</sup> In addition, gold was mined from Coorg which facilitated Mysore's economy. 18 During war, Haidar raised money for meeting the military expenditure by taking loans from the sahukars (Indian moneylenders and moneychangers) at Bangalore. 19

<sup>14</sup> Mir Hussain Ali Khan Kirmani, *History of Tipu Sultan being a continuation of Neshani Hyduri*, tr. from Persian by Col. W. Miles. 1864, reprint, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi 1997, pp. 7-8.

<sup>15</sup> Narendra Krishna Sinha, Haidar Ali. 1941, reprint, A. Mukherjee, Calcutta 1969, p. 259.

<sup>16</sup> Carl August Schlegel, 'Essay of a Military Geography of the Carnatic in its Present State,' in Ravi Ahuja and Martin Christof-Fuchsle (eds.), *A Great War in South India: German Accounts of the Anglo-Mysore Wars, 1766-1799.* De Gruyter, Berlin 2020, p. 159.

<sup>17</sup> Anon, Narrative Sketches of the Conquest of the Mysore... Descriptive and Explanatory. W. Justins, London 1800, p. 20.

<sup>18</sup> Kaveh Yazdani, *India, Modernity and the Great Divergence: Mysore and Gujarat (17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> C.)*. Brill, Leiden: 2017, p. 174.

<sup>19</sup> Wilks, History of Mysore, vol. 1, p. 471.

However, the principal income of Haidar came from land revenue. Initially Mysore comprised of 84 *gulies* (districts). Haidar after expanding the boundaries of his sultanate divided Mysore into 144 *gulies*. Each district was administered by a subadar (governor) assisted by a deputy subadar and an amil (a Hindu revenue official).<sup>20</sup> When Haidar took control of Mysore, it yielded an annual revenue of 40 lakhs *varahas* (1 *varaha*=Rs 6). Just before his death in 1782, the revenue of Mysore rose to 1 crore (1 core=100 lakhs) and 10 lakh *varahas*.<sup>21</sup> This increase was possible due to annexations made by Haidar and also systematic taxation of the existing territories. Haidar attempted to pay his officials in cash regularly instead of assigning them *jagirs* (land grants for extracting revenue in lieu of their pay).<sup>22</sup> Now, we turn to the military assets of Haidar's opponent.

## Military Resources of the East India Company

Each of the EIC's presidency maintained its own army. The EIC had the Madras Army, Bombay Army, and the Bengal Army. Each of these armies comprised of sepoy (disciplined and drilled Indian infantry) regiments, EIC's European regiments and regiments from the British Army. The sepoys (Indian infantry) were recruited because they cost less than half of a European soldier. Further, in the Indian terrain and climate, the sepoys functioned better than the Europeans. The commissioned officers were all Europeans. The highest rank that a sepoy could attain was that of subedar and the latter was junior to the youngest European subaltern. Actually, the British in 1747 imitated the experiment first initiated by the *Compagnie des Indes* (French East India Company) in the 1740s of recruiting Moplah Muslims from Malabar and Hindu Nairs and training them in Western style infantry tactics and by arming them with firelocks. The Moplahs and the Nairs had some experiences of fighting with handguns under the Portuguese. Actually, both the British and the French lacked adequate number of males of their own country for fighting and garrisoning India. Perforce, they had to depend on

<sup>20</sup> Guha, Pre-British State System, p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> M.H. Krishna, 'The "Hyder-Nama" on the Administration of Hyder Ali,' *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* Vol. 3 1939, p. 1556.

<sup>22</sup> Francis Buchanan, 'Tipu Sultan as Modernizer: A Contemporary British Critic,' in Habib (ed.) *Confronting Colonialism*, p. 165.

<sup>23</sup> G.J. Bryant, 'Indigenous Mercenaries in the Service of European Imperialists: The Case of the Sepoys in the Early British Indian Army,' *War in History* Vol. 7 no. 1 2000, pp. 2-28.



Fig. 2. Samuel Davis, "The British Army encamped below the rock of Sholingarh, 28 September 1781," a watercolor. Wikimedia Commons

the Indian military manpower. In 1749, Robert Clive due to the pressure exerted by the French East India Company started recruiting, disciplining, and training Indian infantry known as sepoys in the Western style infantry tactics before sending them to the battlefield. These sepoys constituted the core of the newly emerging Madras, Bombay and the Bengal armies.<sup>24</sup> Regular pay and pension in cash and superior status associated with military service resulted in large number of Indian volunteers streaming towards the Company's armies.

In the EIC's military establishment, the Bengal Army was the largest which underwent a rapid expansion after the Battle of Plassey (23 June 1757). The backbone of the Bengal, Bombay and the Madras armies were the sepoy bat-

<sup>24</sup> H. Dodwell, *Sepoy Recruitment in the Old Madras Army*. Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta 1922, pp. 1-9.

talions. The establishment of an Indian battalion comprised of one captain, one lieutenant, one ensign and two subalterns. A battalion comprised of 10 companies and of them two were grenadier companies. Each infantry company comprised of a subedar, three jemadars, four naiks, two Indian drummers and 70 sepoys. In 1765, there were 20 Indian battalions, 24 companies of European infantry, four companies of artillery and 1,200 irregular Indian cavalry.<sup>25</sup>

From the 1750s, a sense of professionalism developed among the European officer cadre of the EIC's armies. Tactical skill, acumen for leadership and a sense of honour developed among them.<sup>26</sup> The crucial weaknesses of Mysore's army remained its commissioned officer corps. Even when the armies of the Indian rulers were modernising, the officer cadre was filled up with mercenary European officers of dubious loyalty. None of the Westernising Indian polities like Mysore and the Maratha Confederacy set up modern military academies where the nobles' sons seeped in aristocratic feudal ethos could be trained in modern military professional skill. Hence, the command fabric of the Westernised Indian princes' armies remained dependent on disloyal European mercenary officers.

The EIC also started constructing a burgeoning ordnance establishment in India. Each of the presidencies had an ordnance establishment where gunpowder was manufactured and guns were repaired. The twin victories at Plassey and Buxar (22-3 October 1764) enabled the Company to acquire control over Bengal and Bihar. These two provinces accounted for 70% of the world's saltpetre production <sup>27</sup>

The EIC had a well organised supply and transport department. The post of the Commissary General was created in 1760. His job was to audit and verify all the bills for military charges. Actual supply was in the hands of the contractors (who were private merchants) and agents (officials of the EIC). Many of the agents were pensioned British soldiers and officers. After retirement, they became victualling agents of the EIC. They bought goods from the peasants, *beoparis* (Indian merchants/grocers) and the zamindars and then sold these commodities to the

<sup>25</sup> Captain Williams, An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Bengal Native Infantry.... during that Period. John Murray, London 1817, pp. 3-9.

<sup>26</sup> Gerald Bryant, 'Officers of the East India Company's Army in the Days of Clive and Hastings,' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* Vol. 6 1978, pp. 203-37.

<sup>27</sup> James W. Frey, 'The Indian Saltpeter Trade the Military Revolution, and the Rise of Britain as a Global Superpower,' *Historian* Vol. 71 Issue 3 2009, p. 509.

commissariat at higher price. The European soldiers consumed meat (beef, mutton, and pork), flour, and rum provided by the commissariat. The scale of ration was 1.25 pounds of beef or 0.5 pound of mutton, 0.5 pounds of flour, 2 drams of alcohol and salt.<sup>28</sup> The commissariat in turn derived supplies through the agents and the contractors. Grain for the mounts in the cavalry and artillery branches were provided during campaigning. The Indian soldiers and non-combat followers bought their food items from the *bazaars* (Indian markets). The Madrassi soldiers (Tamils and Telugus in the Madras Army's infantry) mainly consumed rice and salt with some vegetables. Frequently, both the British and Indian soldiers bought arrack (country liquor) from the *bazaars*. The *bazaars* came under the Commissary of *Bazaars* (who reported to the Commissary General) whose duty was to see that these markets were well stocked with grain.<sup>29</sup>

The EIC's armies required large number of Indian followers (especially lascars, coolies, and pioneers) for sustaining military operations. The vast demographic resources of India, uncertain monsoon rainfall on which agriculture was dependent among other things enabled the EIC to recruit easily combatants and non-combatants in large numbers. The pioneers constructed roads and batteries for the guns and the lascars cleaned and pulled the guns and the coolies carried baggage and stores besides performing a host of other non-combatant tasks. Many of the non-combatants were regulars as they were recruited on a permanent basis and were on the pay roll of the army. In addition, the officers commanding in the field recruited on ad hoc basis large number of camp followers for performing non-combatant tasks on a temporary basis. Each Indian regiment's medical establishment comprised of one Indian doctor, one dresser, one compounder and two sweepers. The monthly pay of the various categories of non-combatants were as follows: Indian doctor Rs 20, compounder Rs 10, dhobi (washerman) Rs 10, a bullock driver who served with his bullock Rs 10, bullock driver serving without his bullock Rs 6, cook Rs 7, dooli bearer Rs 7, bhisti (water carrier) Rs 6, pioneer Rs 5, sweeper Rs 4.30 The Madras Army's sepoys moved with their families and

<sup>28</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel W.J. Wilson, *History of the Madras Army*, vol. 2. E. Key's Government Press, Madras 1882, p. 345.

<sup>29</sup> Henry Dodwell, *The Nabobs of Madras*. 1926, reprint, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi 1986, pp. 83, 88-9; Brigadier Humphry Bullock, *History of the Army Service Corps*, vol. 1, *1760-1857*. Sterling Publishers, New Delhi 1976, pp. 2-3.

<sup>30</sup> Wilson, *History of the Madras Army*, vol. 2, p. 344; *A Compilation of... Expenditure of the Bombay Army*. Gazette Press, Bombay 1801, Section 29, Medical Department, Section

many of their womenfolk functioned as irregular followers. In fact, many enlisted men's wives in George Washington's army during the American War of Independence were enrolled as camp followers.<sup>31</sup>

Besides the Royal Navy's ships which maintained sea control over the Indian Ocean, the EIC maintained the Bombay Marine and the East Indiamen which belonged to the Company's Marine Service. The Bombay Marine was in charge of policing the Western Coast of India and eliminating piracy in the Arabian Sea within the region stretching from Bombay to Muscat. Besides protection of trade, the Bombay Marine also transported troops and stores during war and conducted maritime surveys. The British naval captains understood that battleships and frigates were unable to operate in shallow coastal waters and in the creeks of the rivers. So, they adopted Indian ships for coastal service. The Bombay Marine maintained grabs of 300 tons each, having one to three masts and armed with 6, 9 and 10-pounder guns. The Bombay Marine also possessed galivats which were vessels of 70 tons each. Each galivat was armed with 2 or 4-pounders. In 1776, the Bombay Marine comprised of 17 vessels of various sizes from 20-guns ships to 6-8 gunned galivats. In total, the fleet had 196 guns on the ships and maintained 1,217 crew. The 20-gun ship was considered adequate to confront the Mysore warships.<sup>32</sup> Till 1776, small detachments of the Bombay Army were used as marines. In January 1777, a marine battalion was raised.<sup>33</sup> The East Indiamen were armed cargo ships which not only engaged in overseas commerce but also attacked the Company's Indian enemies in the sea. The East Indiamen operated both in the Arabian Sea and in the Bay of Bengal and during the Second Anglo-Mysore War carried animals, military stores, and soldiers from Bengal to the various ports of the Madras Presidency.<sup>34</sup>

One big advantage which the British had over the French as regards maritime

<sup>35,</sup> Pay and Allowances. This document is unpaginated and the matter is organised under various sections.

<sup>31</sup> Harry M. Ward, *The War for Independence and the Transformation of American Society*. UCL Press, London 1999, p. 89.

<sup>32</sup> Admiral Herbert Richmond, *The Navy in India: 1763-1783*. 1931, reprint, Life Span Publishers, New Delhi 2021, pp. 36-7.

<sup>33</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel W.B.P. Tugwell, *History of the Bombay Pioneers: 1777-1933*. 1938, reprint, The Naval & Military Press, Uckfield 2010, pp. 11-2.

<sup>34</sup> Evan Cotton, *East Indiamen: The East India Company's Maritime Service*, ed. by Charles Fawcett. Batchworth Press, London 1949, pp. 21-7.



Fig. 3. Jean Baptiste Morret, *Meeting of Pierre-André de Suffren de Saint Tropez (1729-1788) and Haider Ali (1728-1782)*, engraving, Wikimedia Commons

affair was that the latter lacked a proper base near the Indian subcontinent or in India for conducting sustained naval war. In 1775, a shipbuilding yard was constructed at Bombay where ships were constructed with teak as they lasted longer than those made of oak.<sup>35</sup> The Bombay dockyard under the EIC could dock or even build a 74-guns ship. Further, this dock had ample reserves of equipment for repairing and victualling the British ships. In contrast, the nearest French naval base for conducting maritime operation along the Indian coast was Mauritius. Mauritius was deficient in every kind of naval gears and supplies. In fact, Mauritius had to be fed by transporting provisions from the distant Cape of Good Hope.<sup>36</sup> Hence, the staying power of a French naval fleet along the waters of India unlike that of the Royal Navy was limited.

<sup>35</sup> Tugwell, *History of the Bombay Pioneers*, p. 11.

<sup>36</sup> Admiral G.A. Ballard, *Rulers of the Indian Ocean*. 1927, reprint, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi 1998, pp. 264-65.

#### Prelude

The First Anglo-Mysore War broke out in 1767 and ended in a draw in 1769. From the very beginning, Haidar aimed at what could be termed as 'logistics strategy.' It meant using his highly mobile forces (light cavalry) to destroy the logistical infrastructure (destroying the crops and carrying off the cattle) of the enemy in order to make the Company's force immobile. This sort of warfare was termed as predatory warfare by the contemporary British officers. During October 1767, the cost for maintaining the field army of the EIC against Haidar in the Carnatic (coastal regions of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh) was about Rs 5 lakhs per month which was beyond the financial capacity of the Madras Government even with sporadic assistance from the Bengal Government.<sup>37</sup>

In 1768, the Bombay Government launched an amphibious expedition against the western coastline of Mysore. A squadron of British ships with 400 European soldiers and sepoys attacked Haidar's seaports along the Malabar Coast. The expeditionary force first reached Onore (Honawar) where Haidar had stationed his fleet. Onore was captured and then the British-Indian expeditionary force sailed to Mangalore. In total, the EIC was able to capture 10 grabs and 30 galivats of Haidar. To sum up, while Haidar was strong on land, the EIC was supreme in the sea. Neither the Mysorean 'elephant' could defeat the British 'whale,' nor could the whale destroy the elephant. Both sides were exhausted after two years of war. The war ended in a draw and was formally closed with the signing of the Treaty of Madras on 4 April 1769.

Meanwhile, the Company was increasing the size of its army. Between 1763 and 1782, the size of the Bengal Army rose from 6,680 to 52,400. During the same period, the Madras Army's number rose from 9,000 to 48,000. The size of the Bombay Army during this period rose from 2,550 to 15,000 men.<sup>40</sup> In 1778, Britain had committed 50,000 soldiers in North America. According to one calculation, one in 16 of all British males of military age were involved in military ser-

<sup>37</sup> N.K. Sinha, 'First Anglo-Mysore War, 1767-69,' in Shripad P. Tikekar (ed.), *Sardesai Commemoration Volume*. Keshav Bhikaji Dhawale, Bombay 1938, p. 132.

<sup>38</sup> Surendranath Sen, 'Hyder Ali's Fleet,' in Sen, Studies in Indian History, pp. 147-48.

<sup>39</sup> Richmond, The Navy in India, p. 37.

<sup>40</sup> Raymond Callahan, *The East India Company and Army Reform, 1783-1798*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 1972, p. 6.

vice of one kind or another during the War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748). One in nine or 10 of all British males of military age were involved in military service during the Seven Years' War and one in seven or eight in the American War of Independence.<sup>41</sup>

The British also employed German mercenaries especially from Hanover and Hesse for fighting in India and North America. The presence of the German mercenaries was not unique to the military expansion of British Empire. They also fought in the Portuguese and Dutch imperial wars in Asia.<sup>42</sup> At the beginning of the Second Anglo-Mysore War, the King of Britain who was also the Elector of Hanover agreed to send the Hanover royal regiments which were leased to the EIC for a period of seven years. Two new regiments (15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>) were raised for service in India. Volunteers from other units joined these two regiments. Most of them joined with the aim of becoming rich and then returning to Germany for settling down. The Company agreed to pay for these two regiments. The 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> regiments were then sent to India and remained there till 1791.<sup>43</sup> However, mercenary Germans were available only in limited numbers. Hence, the EIC had no other option except to depend on Indian military manpower.

The expansion of the EIC's military establishment was possible because, by the mid-1780s, a large chunk of the erstwhile Mughal Empire had been captured by the EIC. Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa comprised 162,000 square miles with a population of 11,000,000. These three provinces were captured after Plassey (1757) and yielded an annual revenue of 20 crores of rupees, Carnatic Rs 3 crores and Gujarat with Surat (which was under the Maratha Gaekwad allied to the British) another Rs 3 crores. <sup>44</sup> Further, Awadh which was a British dependency had an area of 53,286 square miles with a population of 20,000,000 people yielded an annual revenue of 3,500,000 pounds. <sup>45</sup> So, financially, the Company was ready to

<sup>41</sup> Marshall, Making and Unmaking of Empires, p. 59.

<sup>42</sup> Ravi Ahuja and Martin Christof-Fuchsle, 'Introduction: A Great War in South India and its German Sources,' in Ahuja and Christof-Fuchsle (eds.), *Great War in South India*, p. 13.

<sup>43</sup> Dietmar Rothermund, 'Carl August Schelegel's Military Geography of the Carnatic,' and Martin Christof-Fuchsle, 'Two Hanoverian Lieutenants in the Tamil Plains: The Letters of Ferdinand Beymann and the Diary of Carl de Roques,' in Ahuja and Christof-Fuchsle (eds.), *Great War in South India*, pp. 80-82, 207.

<sup>44</sup> Kate Brittlebank, *Tiger: The Life of Tipu Sultan*. 2016, reprint, Juggernaut, New Delhi 2019, p. 141.

<sup>45</sup> William Fullarton of Fullarton, A View of the English Interests in India... and 1784. 1787,

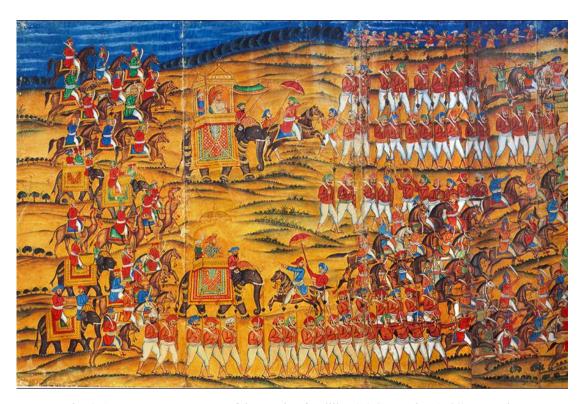


Fig. 4. A Mysorean Panorama of the Battle of Pollilur (10 September 1780), commissioned by Tipu Sultan for the Daria Daulat Bagh to monumentalize his victory. Gouache on paper, 10 sheets of paper on canvas, mounted on restoration fabric, 962 × 200 cm, private collection. Wikimedia Commons. 4 a): The Mysorean Regulars and Irregulars in march.

wage another war with Mysore.

In the world's oceans, Britain's position somewhat deteriorated which had repercussion in South Asia during the second round of global struggle between Britain and France. In 1763, Britain was the paramount naval power with 38% of the global naval tonnage. The Bourbon powers (France and Spain) accounted for 30%. The French naval restructuring started in October 1761 with the appointment of Duc de Choiseul as Minister of Marine in addition to his post as First Minister. Choiseul's policy was to inflict harm on Britain by attacking her colonial possessions instead of following a continental strategy geared for gaining

reprint, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi 2024, p. 38.

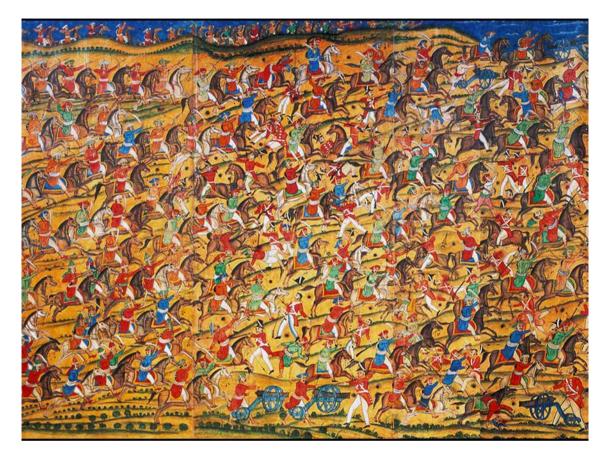


Fig. 4 b) The Mysorean cavalry and artillery attack on EIC quadrate

hegemony in Western Europe. He took steps to encourage science and nautical studies among the French naval officers to professionalise them. In 1773, a new naval school was established at Le Havre where the cadets acquired both practical seamanship through cruising and also theoretical knowledge. Though the French Fleet improved, some long-term deficiencies remained. The French Crown failed to expand its taxation base despite rising incomes and the traditional reliance on private financiers proved to be unsustainable. This would result in French naval victory over Britain during the American War of Independence in the short run but ultimately lead to the French Revolution which started in 1789. By 1775, the Bourbon fleets had 35% of the world's naval tonnage compared to Britain's 30%. In 1780, when Britain was at war with France, Spain, the United Provinces and

the 13 American colonies, Britain possessed 30% of the world tonnage and its enemies had 46%. Available tells only one part of the story. Seamanship, training, military technology, military doctrine, availability of sailors among other factors also chipped in to shape the nature of the naval struggle.

## France and the Second Anglo-Mysore War: 1780-1784

Jeremy Black has written that in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763): 'In Britain, the key change was a greater salience for imperial issues, which led to postwar attempts to make empire work. These, however, were the very attempts that led to the American Revolution.'<sup>47</sup> The Second Anglo-Mysore War occurred within the broader background of the American War of Independence (1775-1783). The latter war had inevitable repercussions on the Anglo-French struggle in India which influenced Mysore and the EIC. France was losing territories in the 'New World' continuously from the beginning of the eighteenth century. She ceded Newfoundland and Nova Scotia to Britain in 1713 and Canada in 1763. The rebellion of the 13 Colonies with a population slightly exceeding two million in North America gave her the chance to take revenge on Britain. According to one estimate, one-third of the Americans were loyalists, one-third rebels and the rest were fence sitters. The American reliance on France increased domestic support for war in Britain and destroyed sympathy if any for the 'Patriots.' Besides France, in 1779, Spain joined the fray against Britain.

In 1778, when France joined the war against Britain, her navy comprised of 75 ships of the line against 130 British. In addition, the Royal Navy had 12 more aged ships. However, the French ships in general were larger than the British and the bigger French ships had 36-pounders compared to the Royal Navy's

<sup>46</sup> Richard Harding, *Seapower and Naval Warfare: 1650-1830.* 1999, reprint, Routledge, London 2003, pp. 219, 227-29.

<sup>47</sup> Jeremy Black, 'Strategic Culture and the Seven Years' War,' in Williamson Murray, Richard Hart Sinnreich and James Lacey (eds.), *The Shaping of Grand Strategy: Policy, Diplomacy, and War.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2011, p. 78.

<sup>48</sup> Ward, The War for Independence and the Transformation of American Society, p. 35.

<sup>49</sup> Jeremy Black, The Britain and the "Long" Eighteenth Century, 1688-1815," in John Andreas Olsen and Colin S. Gray (eds.), The Practice of Strategy: From Alexander the Great to the Present. 2011, reprint, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2012, pp. 168-69; Peter Padfield, Maritime Supremacy and the Opening of the Western World: Naval Campaigns that shaped the Modern World, 1588-1782. 1999, reprint, Pimlico, London 2000, p. 216.

32-pounders. On the other hand, British gunnery and seamanship were superior to that of the French. Initially, the French Navy concentrated its energies in the Atlantic. The small French squadron stationed around Pondicherry which had been restored to the French after the Seven Years' War escaped to Mauritius. Thanks to logistical and firepower support provided by Edward Vernon's British squadron, the British were able to capture Pondicherry. In 1779, when Spain joined France with her 60 battleships, the odds improved for the French. Both Britain and France sent a squadron each to the Indian Ocean. Six British vessels sailed under Vice-Admiral Edward Hughes for Bombay and another six French vessels sailed for Mauritius under Count D'Orves.<sup>50</sup>

Haidar declared war against the EIC on 20 July 1780. The British capture of Mahe, a French settlement which was under Haidar's protection was one of the reasons behind Haidar's declaration of war. Through Mahe, Mysore used to receive military stores from the French. The second factor was EIC's negotiations with Basalat Jang (the brother of Nizam) about the cession of Adoni to the Company. A British force stationed at Adoni could prevent the eruption of Haidar's cavalry from Mysore into Carnatic and from Adoni a British force could easily invade Mysore.<sup>51</sup> Haidar sent his cavalry to ravage Nellore, Guntur, and Madurai. 52 The *Nawab* of Arcot was bankrupt due to exactions of the EIC. So, his troops at Tanjore (Thanjavur) joined Haidar.<sup>53</sup> Haidar demanded from the French some engineers, artillery and 10,000 French soldiers along with naval aid to neutralise British sea power in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. Initially, a small French expeditionary force of 400 soldiers served with Haidar's force.<sup>54</sup> However, Britain and the EIC were stretched to the maximum. Britain was engaged with France over North America. So, the EIC could not expect much help from the mother country in the immediate context. Further, the Bengal and Bombay governments were embroiled in the attrition oriented First Anglo-Maratha

<sup>50</sup> Ballard, Rulers of the Indian Ocean, p. 271.

<sup>51</sup> Fullarton, A View of the English Interests in India, pp. 19-20.

<sup>52</sup> G. Kaliamurthy, *Second Anglo-Mysore War (1780-1784)*. Mittal Publications, Delhi 1987, pp. 25-6.

<sup>53</sup> Karl Muller-Bahlke and Naima Tine, "But now they sit, from the race of the Bramans to the Pareier, compliantly on the graves": Social History in the Letters of the Danish-Halle Missionaries, in Ahuja and Christof-Fuchsle (eds.), *Great War in South India*, p. 365.

<sup>54</sup> Authentic Memoirs of Tippoo Sultan, written by an Officer in the East India Service, ed. with an Introduction by G.N. Dhar. 1799, reprint, Ajanta Books, Delhi 1979, pp. 8-9.



Fig. 4 c) The EIC quadrate

War (1775-1782) with the Maratha Confederacy in West and Central India.

In late August 1780, the British-Indian force under Hector Munro numbered 4,610 combatants with 30 pieces of field artillery and 20,000 camp followers. Besides carrying rations, military stores, and animal handlers, the camp followers included a vast multitude of servants. For instance, a captain took the field with the following retinue: *dubash* (interpreter of Indian languages), cook, boy servant, 20 coolies for carrying personal baggage (tent, furniture like folding table and bed, chairs, etc.), linen and bedding, etc., horse keeper, syces (grass cutter for feeding the horses), barber, *dhobi*, and ironer. <sup>55</sup> Such a huge baggage train was

<sup>55</sup> Major P. Begbie, History of the Services of the Madras Artillery, vol. 2. Christian Knowl-



Fig. 4 d) The Mysorean cavalry attack on the other side of the EIC quadrate

easy target for nimble light cavalry of Mysore. The Mysore cavalry like Maratha horse for achieving speed and surprise, marched without tents and baggage.<sup>56</sup>

On 10 September 1780, the First Battle of Pollilur resulted in the defeat of Colonel William Baillie who was taken prisoner. The stage for this battle was set on 7 September 1780, when at 9 PM, Colonel Fletcher marched with a detachment to join Baillie. Next day, Fletcher joined Baillie. Baillie then had 3,000 sepoys and 600 Europeans. On the evening of 9 September, Baillie started his

edge Society's Press, Madras 1852, p. 180.

<sup>56</sup> William Thomson, *Memoirs of the Late War in Asia with a ... Soldiers*, 2 vols. 1788, reprint, Forgotten Books, London 2018, vol. 2, pp. 5-6.

march towards Kanchipuram (Conjeveram). The Europeans constituted his advance guard, the four sepoy battalions with eight guns comprised the main body followed by two battalions with two guns forming the rearguard which covered the baggage. Tipu's (son of Haidar) infantry armed with *bans* (rockets) attacked but they were fired upon by the flanking parties. The attack by the skirmishers of Mysore Army continued during the night.<sup>57</sup>

On 10 September, Mir Sahib, the brother-in-law of Haidar with 8,000 cavalry and sometime later Tipu, jointly attacked the detachment of British and Indian troops with 10 guns under Baillie who was marching to meet Munro. Two explosions in Baillie's line due to the artillery fire of the Mysore troops destroyed the former's artillery. This somewhat dislocated Baillie's troops. At that critical juncture, taking advantage of the psychological disturbances among Baillie's soldiers, Tipu with his mass of cavalry made a sudden charge and broke the square formed by the British and Indian troops. Some four battalion of sepoys were cut to pieces by Tipu's cavalry.<sup>58</sup>

The Franco-Spanish alliance and the rebellion in North America resulted in overstretching of the Royal Navy. Nevertheless, in 1781, Britain was spending 9 million sterling annually on navy while the corresponding figure for France was 7 million sterling pounds.<sup>59</sup> Since France lacked Britain's wider taxation base, the Royal Navy could make a comeback in the Indian Ocean.

In January 1781, 10 battalions were ordered from Bengal to Madras under Colonel Pearse.<sup>60</sup> In the first two weeks of January 1781, Lieutenant-General Eyre Coote (Commander-in-Chief of the EIC) was unable to march due to lack of draught and carriage cattle. In fact, more than 40 oxen were required to pull a 12-pounder gun over uneven ground.<sup>61</sup> These animals could be acquired only with great difficulties as the whole Carnatic was ravaged by Haidar's cavalry.<sup>62</sup> Lord

<sup>57</sup> Alan Tritton, When the Tiger fought the Thistle: The Tragedy of Colonel William Baillie of the Madras Army. Radcliffe Press, London 2013, pp. 258-60.

<sup>58</sup> Tritton, When the Tiger fought the Thistle, pp. 254-56.

<sup>59</sup> Padfield, Maritime Supremacy and the Opening of the Western World, p. 257.

<sup>60</sup> Williams, An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Bengal Native Infantry, pp. 11-2.

<sup>61</sup> H. Dodwell, 'Transport and the Second Mysore War,' *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* Vol. 3 no. 14 1924, p. 267.

<sup>62</sup> Wilks, History of Mysore, vol. 2, p. 35.

George Macartney (Governor of Madras, 1781-1785) himself took the initiative and mobilised the civil administration for acquiring cattle for Coote's stranded force. On 6 January 1782, 1,700 bullocks from Pulicat were acquired.<sup>63</sup> However, this was not enough to sustain Coote's mobility.

Provision of military stores and food through small boats along the coast enabled Coote to start marching on 17 January 1782. Thanks to the sea control enjoyed by the Royal Navy and the Company's Marine Service, the EIC could make use of coastal shipping for sustaining Coote's umbilical cord. During February 1781, when Haidar Ali was besieging Eyre Coote's force at Cuddalore, Mysore's cavalry surrounded Coote's camp and prevented supplies from the countryside reaching the EIC's force. Mysore was allied with France. The French commander Chevalier d'Orves was blockading the Coromandel Coast. Coote was in dire straits. However, on 15 February D' Orves sailed away for Mauritius for refitting thus leaving the Bay of Bengal open for British shipping. Then supplies were sent from Madras to Cuddalore by sea which saved Coote. At Port Louis, D'Orves died and then Rear Admiral Pierre Andre de Suffren took command.

After the capture of Negapatam and Trincomalee in January 1782 by Edward Hughes, the French did not have any ports in India under their control. Suffren entered the Bay of Bengal with his French squadron and troop transports carrying 3,000 soldiers. His aim was to land his troops so that they could cooperate with Haidar Ali. This factor, hoped France, might encourage other Indian powers to challenge the British. Between February 1782 and June 1783, Hughes battled the French naval squadron under Suffren mainly in the Bay of Bengal and in the waters around Sri Lanka. Suffren had 10 battleships while Hughes had eight battleships. French tactics was based on gunnery doctrine which aimed not in causing casualties at close range but material damage at long range. Rather than aiming low for the hull, French gunners fired high, often using chain shot to bring down masts and yards. During the eighteenth century, France was most advanced as regards artillery. In a naval battle, the French fleet generally took the leeward position so that it could sail downward refusing close action but maintaining a

<sup>63</sup> Letter of Lord Macartney to Eyre Coote, Fort St. George, 6 Jan. 1782, Second Mysore War, H 245, India Office Records (IOR), British Library (BL), London.

<sup>64</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel P.R. Innes, *The History of the Bengal European Regiment... India.* 1885, reprint, Naval & Military Press, Uckfield n.d., pp. 257-59.

duel at long-range aiming to damage as many British ships as possible.65

On 17 February 1782, Suffren and Hughes fought an indecisive battle at Sadras. Suffren's transport vessels carrying the troops got scattered from his warships. Then Suffren decided to destroy Hughes' warships for gaining supremacy in the Bay of Bengal. The initial aim of Suffren was to attack the line of British battleships from both sides simultaneously. The rear of his line was supposed to break off and sail down the lee side of the British line. But this tactical formula did not work in practice. This was partly because Suffren's subordinates were not competent and he had failed to communicate his plan clearly to his subordinates. Further, the French technique of firing at masts and yards did not prove to be effective.<sup>66</sup>

On 23 February 1782, a great disaster befell on the EIC's forces. One hundred light cavalry of Mysore was able to carry away 209 draught bullocks, 2,947 carriage bullocks, 70 bullock carts, 2,306 drivers and 23 *mistrys* (leaders of bullock caravans). This was a considerable loss as the agents of the commissariat had collected them at great cost from Bengal and Madras presidencies. <sup>67</sup> Tipu defeated Colonel John Braithwaite at the Battle of Kumbakonam. This news reached Coote on 26 February 1782. Coote ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Harper to take a detachment of troops and occupy Tanjore and also to provide protection to Trichinopolly. Coercion was used by the British officers to acquire bullocks by hook or crook. On 2 March 1782, Lieutenant Crawford commanding at Carrangooley forcibly acquired 250 carriage bullocks from the villagers and sent them to Coote. On 3 March, Tipu and Lally in total with 5,000 men (including the French soldiers who were disembarked by Suffren) moved towards Tanjore where Lieutenant-Colonel Nixon was commanding. <sup>68</sup>

The EIC utilised its naval superiority both in the Indian Ocean and in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea to move troops and supplies in accordance with

<sup>65</sup> William Koenig, 'The Nile: 1798,' in Christopher Chant, Richard Holmes and William Koening, *Two Centuries of Warfare*. Octopus Books, London 1978, pp. 11-12.

<sup>66</sup> John D. Grainger, *The British Navy in Eastern Waters: The Indian and Pacific Oceans*. Boydell, Woodbridge 2022, pp. 119, 121-22.

<sup>67</sup> Return of Bullocks, Carts, etc. lost while coming from Chingleput, 25 Feb. 1782, Agent W.M. Ross; Letter from Coote to Macartney, 27 Feb. 1782, H 245, IOR, BL, London.

<sup>68</sup> Letter from Coote to Lieutenant-Colonel Harper, 26 Feb. 1782, Letter from Lieutenant Crawford to Coote, 2 March 1782, Letter from Coote to Macartney, 3 March 1782, H 245, IOR, BL, London.

the military exigencies. The Royal Navy's East India Squadron and the Bombay Marine in late 1780 transported 1,160 European and Indian soldiers from Calcutta to Madras. On 14 May 1782, three transport vessels transported 140 men of the 98th Regiment from Bombay to Fort Saint George in Madras. These transports were indeed lucky to escape the French Fleet around Trincomalee. May 1780, some Navy conducted operations sporadically. To give an example, in May 1780, some of the transport vessels of Mysore Navy transported troops and weapons to Porto Novo where it was planned that they should be used in conjunction with the French Expeditionary Corps.

On 5 July 1782, Colonel Lang from Vellore wrote to Coote and George Macartney: 'Our sepoys are five months in arrears and we have sunk our garrison stock of grain very considerable. The enemy is too strong in the valley that we are no longer able to attempt sending out for cattle, and a total stop put to grain coming in.'<sup>72</sup> Lang had a plan in mind to solve the logistical crisis. On 12 September 1781, he wrote to Coote that the Hindu poligar chieftains should be won over by the EIC by offering them internal autonomy. Since they were chaffing under the centralised administrative control of the Muslim Haidar, they would willingly join the EIC's service and not only prevent grain from reaching the Mysore force but would redirect the supply of provisions to the British forces.<sup>73</sup>

In 1782, Madras took steps to undergo a long siege if necessary. Rations for 20,000 people (soldiers and followers) for three months were stocked at Fort Saint George. This was done despite the fact that the region around Madras was suffering from famine and the price of rice had gone up. This was the direct result of Haidar's light cavalry ravaging Carnatic. Meanwhile the civil administration of the EIC made all possible attempts to encourage the peasants to resume cultivation. A detachment was sent under Richard Bickerton for protecting Tanjore and Masulipatnam (Machilipatnam). In total, at Tanjore, the EIC had 7,000 sol-

<sup>69</sup> Philip Macdougall, Naval Resistance to Britain's Growing Power in India: 1660-1800, The Saffron Banner and the Tiger of Mysore. Boydell, Woodbridge 2014, p. 142.

<sup>70</sup> Letter to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the EIC, 17 May 1782, Military Matters including the Second Mysore War, Treaty with Tipu Sultan and dealings with Nawab of Arcot H 247, IOR, BL, London.

<sup>71</sup> Macdougall, Naval Resistance to Britain's Growing Power in India, p. 143.

<sup>72</sup> Quoted from Colonel H.C. Wylly, *A Life of Lieutenant-General Sir Eyre Coote*. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1922, p. 451.

<sup>73</sup> Wylly, A Life of Lieutenant-General Sir Eyre Coote, p. 452.

diers (including 600 Europeans) and 11,000 men near Madras (including 2,500 Europeans). Further, for collecting land revenue, the EIC maintained 6,200 peons and sebundy troops (armed police) scattered at Tanjore, Machilipatnam, Ganjam and Visakhapatnam.<sup>74</sup>

In August 1782, on Haidar's request, a French officer named Hoffelize started training a section of Mysore's regular infantry in the French military system. 75 The Treaty of Salbai was signed on 17 May 1782 which established peace between the Maratha Confederacy and the EIC. The Maratha Confederacy remained intact except Gaekwad of Gujarat becoming a British ally. Haidar Ali died of cancer on 7 December 1782 and he was succeeded by his able son Tipu Sultan. Tipu continued the war with the EIC despite the Marathas withdrawing from the anti-British alliance. In 1782, Tipu marched towards Mangalore. While advancing towards Mangalore, Tipu came in contact with Colonel Campbell's force (1,200 European infantry, 4,000 sepoys and seven guns) which was advancing to the relief of Nagar. Tipu decided to attack the British force. The rocket men of Mysore along with Tipu's artillery continued bombarding the force for quite a long time. The irregular horsemen attacked the baggage and rear of the British force and caused confusion. However, the charge by the regular cavalry under Husain Ali Khan against the British infantry squares failed with heavy losses. 76 The Christians of Kanara sympathised with the EIC and gave the British troops a loan of Rs 33,000 for buying provisions. <sup>77</sup> Finally due to lack of ammunition and continuous harassment by Mysore light cavalry, Campbell surrendered on 29 January 1784.

On 15 January 1783 at the Coromandel Coast, the EIC deployed 2,945 European soldiers (2,375 infantry and the rest artillery personnel) and 9,817 sepoys, 828 sowars and 373 golandaz (Indian gunners). The whole force was backed up by 1,722 lascars and 282 pioneers. <sup>78</sup> On 17 March 1783, Bussy had arrived at Por-

<sup>74</sup> Letter to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the EIC, 17 May 1782, Abstract and Disposition of Troops on the Coromandel Coast, 15 Jan. 1783, H 247, IOR, BL, London.

<sup>75</sup> Jean-Marie Lafont, 'French Military Intervention in India compared to the French Intervention in North America, 1776-1785,' in Aniruddha Ray (ed.), *Tipu Sultan and his Age: A Collection of Seminar Papers*. Asiatic Society, Kolkata 2002, p. 82.

<sup>76</sup> Kirmani, History of Tipu Sultan being a continuation of Neshani Hyduri, pp. 7-8.

<sup>77</sup> George M. Moraes, 'Muslim Rulers of Mysore and their Christian Subjects,' in Habib (ed.), *Confronting Colonialism*, p. 135.

<sup>78</sup> Abstract and Disposition of Troops on the Coromandel Coast, 15 Jan. 1783, H 247, IOR, BL, London.

to Novo with 2,200 men (many of them sick after a long sea voyage from Cadiz). Bussy with an army (which included the troops under Hoffelize) comprising of 3,500 French, 400 Africans and 4,000 sepoys marched from Porto Novo towards Cuddalore. He was assisted by the Mysorean detachment left by Tipu at Carnatic under the command of Sayyid Sahib. The latter provided supplies to the French troops.<sup>79</sup>

On 13 May 1783, the Hanoverian troops were ordered to board transport ships at Madras. The transport ships carried them to Cuddalore where they disembarked on 4 June and joined the British troops camping at the southern side of the city. The city was held by the French troops. On 13 June, the attack on the outwork started as a prelude to the siege of the city. Du Platt's Hanoverian contingent was forced to retreat due to the intensity of French counterattack. The siege continued as Suffren was able to supply the French garrison. Finally with the signing of peace between France and Britain (Treaty of Paris, 3 September 1783), Cuddalore was handed back to the EIC.<sup>80</sup>

The EIC was forced to make peace with Tipu in 1784 because their capital-intensive infantry army as during the First Anglo-Mysore War, had no counter to the fast dispersed warfare practice by Mysore's light cavalry which followed predatory tactics. Predatory warfare by ruining the countryside bought agriculture, trade, and commerce to a standstill. This not only harmed the economic potential of the regions under EIC's control but also severed the umbilical cords attached to the field forces. Neither land revenue, nor toll taxes, grain and animals could be acquired from these devastated regions. Macartney noted the failure of the EIC's force structure to come to grip with Haidar's army in the following words: 'Nothing is indeed necessary to be added to our army as a corps of infantry, but when opposed to vast multitudes of regular and irregular Horse who can change their ground so rapidly and repeatedly it has little chance of giving them an effectual defeat or of driving them out of a country, the different parts of which they can successively abandon and repossess.'81

<sup>79</sup> Mohibbul Hasan, 'The French in the Second Anglo-Mysore War,' in Habib (ed.), *Confronting Colonialism*, pp. 39-41.

<sup>80</sup> Chen Tzoref-Ashkenazi, 'The Outsider's Perspective on Colonial Conflict: A Hanoverian Officer's Narrative of the Second Anglo-Mysore War, 1783-1784,' in Ahuja and Christof-Fuchsle (eds.), *Great War in South India*, p. 323.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted from Letter to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the EIC, 17 May 1782, H

The EIC already weakened due to the First Anglo-Maratha War lacked adequate finance to continue the war against Tipu. The Madras Government's attempt to raise money from the *Nawab* of Arcot and the *Raja* of Tanjore failed because these two regions were also completely ruined by Tipu's cavalry which followed harassing tactics. During peacetime, the Northern Circars and Tinnevelly provided 11 lakhs and 5 lakhs *pagodas* (1 sterling pound=2.5 *pagodas*; 1 *pagoda*=Rs 3.5) annually. The annual land revenue of the Madras Presidency was estimated at 28 lakhs *pagodas*. However, not a single penny was forthcoming due to the predatory warfare by light Mysore cavalry.<sup>82</sup>

Not only the EIC but Tipu was also eager for ending the war. Mahadhji Sindia, the Maratha ruler of Gwalior threatened Tipu that unless he made peace, a joint Maratha-EIC force would attack Mysore. The brief Maratha-Mysore alliance was off and would never be resuscitated in the future. War between Britain and France also ceased with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1784. These developments forced Tipu to come to the negotiating table with the British. The Second Anglo-Mysore War ended in a draw with the signing of the Treaty of Mangalore between Tipu Sultan and the EIC on 11 March 1784. Tipu had to return all the places that Mysore had seized during this war to the EIC. Since the British were also in dire straits, they were in no position to insist on Tipu returning the territories seized by his father Haidar.<sup>83</sup>

#### Conclusion

The Second Anglo-Mysore was a decisive campaign. The First Anglo-Mysore War ended in a draw. In these two wars, light Mysore cavalry ran roughshod causing economic dislocation of the Madras Presidency but could not destroy the gunpowder infantry of the EIC. However, the dice was loaded in favour of Mysore during the Second Anglo-Mysore War. France allied with Mysore deployed troops who could meet the gunpowder infantry of EIC in equal terms. Further, the presence of French naval units in the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal tem-

<sup>247,</sup> IOR, BL, London.

<sup>82</sup> Letter to the Committee of Secrecy of the Court of Directors, 19 Sept. 1784, To the Court of Directors from Fort Saint George, 14 Oct. 1784, H 247, IOR, BL, London.

<sup>83</sup> *Memoir of the Life of the Late Nana Farnavis*, by A. Macdonald, tr. by Lieutenant-Colonel John Briggs. 1927, reprint, Manohar, New Delhi 2021, pp. 57-9.



Fig. 5. Knave (Hyder Ali from Mysore, as a young sepoy) from *Court Game of Geography*, Engraving, etching, and hand coloring (watercolor) published by William and Henry Rock between 1838 and 1855. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Public Domain, Wikimedia Commons.

porarily neutralised the Royal Navy. In addition, the EIC was weakened due to the ongoing First Anglo-Maratha War. In 1780, it seemed that Haidar would carry everything before him. However, Goddess Fortuna intervened. After the defeat of Britain in the American War of Independence, French interest in confronting Britain in India waned. Had the French Navy continued to operate east of Suez in strength and if Paris had sent a larger contingent of French troops for cooperating with Mysore, the course of history might have taken a different turn. In such a hypothetical context, Haidar could have inflicted a decisive defeat on the Madras Presidency. This would have given fillip to the Maratha Confederacy to continue the war with the EIC with greater vigour. This in turn would have put the British in India in deep trouble. Such a scenario might have encouraged Awadh to throw off the British voke and resulted in an Afghan invasion of India across the Punjab. However, this scenario did not unfold in the Indian subcontinent. By late 1782, bulk of the French naval and ground elements had been withdrawn from South Asia and the Marathas made peace with the Company. Worse, towards the end of the Second Anglo-Mysore War, the Maratha-Mysore alliance was ruptured. In the long run, this proved to be dangerous for both these Indian powers.

The Third Anglo-Mysore War resulted in a serious defeat for Tipu. This occurred because the EIC was able to protect its logistical umbilical cord from Mysore's light cavalry thanks to Charles Cornwallis's alliance with the Marathas and the Nizam. Further, the Maratha and Nizam's light cavalry by ravaging Tipu's territories prevented him from drawing supplies from the countryside of Mysore. Tipu had no other option but to coop himself up in the fort of Srirangapatna which was breached by the British siege batteries. Thus, Maratha and Nizam's light cavalry neutralised Mysore's light cavalry while the EIC's gunpowder infantry-artillery smashed Tipu's regular infantry. In addition, there was no significant aid to Mysore from France after the Second Anglo-Mysore War. In 1788, Tipu sent a mission to Paris for getting naval and military help but at that juncture of history, Louis XVI and the French *ancien* regime was in deep trouble. After the Third Anglo-Mysore War, Tipu's final defeat was only a question of time.

In all the four Anglo-Mysore Wars, Mysore was hampered by lack of an effective navy. Only during the Second Anglo-Mysore War, occasional aid was provided to Mysorean ground operations by the French Navy in the Bay of Bengal and in the Indian Ocean. Due to naval superiority, not only could the EIC import men and military supplies from abroad but also transport men and money from

Bengal and Bombay to the Coromandel and Malabar Coasts. Tipu unlike his father failed to humour the Marathas. It was also a grave failure on part of Nana Farnavis to conclude an alliance with the EIC for destroying Tipu in 1792 and in 1799. After capturing Srirangapatna in 1799 during the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War, the British turned against the Marathas which resulted in the destruction of the Maratha Confederacy in the decisive Second Anglo-Maratha War in 1803. Finally, after 1781, Paris would never get an opportunity to turn the British out of India and the Indian Ocean. To conclude, after the Second Anglo-Mysore War, Britain was on the path of gaining paramountcy in India.

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