CHAPTER IV

DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES IN UPPER INDIA

Diplomatic initiatives of Chevalier and the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam were an important development of the 1770s. It resulted in significant orientation in the policies of some of the north Indian states who responded to these diplomatic overtures and made serious efforts for the establishment of military alliance with the French government in the face of colonial threat in the form of the English company.

Jean Baptiste Chevalier1 who was the governor of Chandernagore took the initiative in the early years of 1770s and opened new channels of political diplomacy by motivating the French adventurers who were already present in Hindustan to negotiate with the Mughal Emperor for a military alliance with the French and also to garner the support of other rulers. He particularly approached Madec as by this time his military successes had made him influential in the politics of north India. He wrote a

1 Jean-Baptiste Chevalier was born in Blois either in 1729 or 1730. He left Lorient for India in February 1752 and arrived in Bengal in November 1752. In 1753 he was attached with Chevalier Courtin at Dhaka. In April 1755 the commandant at Chandernagore, Renault de Saint-Germain, deployed him on an important mission to Assam with the purpose to get a grant of land and establish a settlement there. Chevalier remained in Assam until May 1757 when the renewed hostilities with the English company led to his recall. In April 1763 he travelled to Hindustan and visited Pumia, Faizabad, Agra, and Allahabad. In Allahabad he met the Mughal emperor Shah Alam and his general Najaf Khan and established personal contacts with them which he utilized during his diplomatic activities. He returned from his voyage to Hindustan in November 1763. In July 1767, he was admitted in the Conseil des Indes and was installed as the governor of Chandernagore. Chevalier remained the governor of Chandernagore till 1778 when in the ensuing struggle with the English company he was captured and deported to France. Jean-Baptiste Chevalier, Les Aventures de Jean-Baptiste Chevalier dans l'Inde Oriental (1752-1763), (annotated by) Jean Deloche, Volume 140, Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO), Paris, 1984, pp. 5-6, 17.
number of letters to persuade Madec in Hindustan for this work and to the home authorities in France for its realization. Whereas Madec and Du Jarday did succeed in motivating the Indian states for the proposed alliance, but the French government which was busy in its own internal conflicts at home did not respond to Chevalier’s efforts.²

An important change came in the diplomatic exercise when the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam himself took the initiative in 1775 and offered the territory of Thatta in Sindh province to the French government in order to procure their military support.³ The ‘Thatta project’ as it came to be called, captured the attention of the French government who made enquiries regarding the feasibility of the project by sending emissaries to Thatta and Agra. The ‘Thatta project’ was an important political development of the latter half of 1770s in upper India. It not only kept the Mughal Empire engaged in it but also drew the French government to it. In addition to it, it also had a crucial bearing on the English company’s disposition towards the French adventurers in north India, who intensified their demand for the expulsion of the French adventurers from Hindustan.

The prevailing political conditions in upper India provided favourable circumstances for the launch of diplomatic initiatives in early 1770s. That is, by the early years of 1770s the European adventurers, who constituted the essential components of this entire exercise, had become very influential in the Indian courts. Apart from this, the

² Madec’s role was particularly recognized when the Mughal emperor designated Madec as his representative for the negotiation with the French government during the Thatta project. Du Jarday had concluded a treaty with the Maratha leader Mahadji Sindhia. Comte de Modave, op. cit., pp. 224-227.
³ The Mughal Emperor Shah Alam wrote a letter to the King of France for the alliance. His letters were drafted by Modave and Madec. Ibid.
growing English threat became a reality through General Barker's Delhi campaign, the defeat of the Rohelas through the English military help, and the British attempts to restrict the power of the Awadh state—all these developments acted as catalysts in generating anti-English sentiments among Indian rulers. It was due to this reason that the Maratha leader Mahadji Sindhia readily concluded a treaty in 1771 on the initiative of Du Jarday.

The entire diplomatic exercise can be divided into two phases based on the way the plan evolved over the years and took different shapes. The period from 1771 to 1775 can be classified as the first phase. During this phase the initiative for the alliance was taken by Chevalier who persuaded the French adventurers to carry out negotiations with north Indian rulers. In the proposal it was envisaged that 5000 French troops would be stationed in the Emperor's territory to enable him assert his authority over his powerful and virtually independent nobles. In return, the French would get trading rights in Hindustan and military support of the Mughals at the time of expedition against the English. It was stated that the alliance would serve in extending the Emperor's authority and would also help in controlling the anarchy the Mughal state was engulfed in.

However, in 1775, after being hopeful for long for the success of the initiatives of Chevalier and lack of response from the French government, the Emperor Shah Alam himself took the initiative and proposed the 'Thatta project' to the French government. The 'Thatta project' forms the second phase of the French-Mughal relationship. Modave and Madec played a prominent role in it. They drafted the Emperor's letter to the King of France. Madec's contribution was acknowledged by
the Emperor himself who even designated Madec as his representative for the diplomatic parleys with the French authorities.

The diplomatic initiatives which lasted nearly for the decade of the 1770s provides information on interesting facets of political and military developments that took place in the region in the face of English colonial threat. It also provides information on the role of the European adventurers in this enterprise. The letters of Chevalier, Madec, the Mughal Emperor, and the French Governors which forms the source of the diplomatic initiatives also throw valuable light on military developments in the region and the rulers' vigorous attempts to the adoption of European military culture.

4.1 The First Phase of the Diplomatic Initiative (1771-1775)

It was Chevalier who took the initiative to militarily unite north Indian states with the French to arrest the growing power of the English company. Chevalier was familiar with north Indian politics ever since his visit to Hindustan and his meetings with the Emperor Shah Alam and the general Najaf Khan. He began taking active interest in this from early 1770s. It was due to the reason that by this time the prospects for its success had become bright. Many French adventurers, who had entered Hindustan after the defeat of the Nawab of Awadh in the battle of Buxar, had acquired prominent positions at various courts. They had not only begun commanding army of their masters on war fronts but had also begun wielding influence in the politics of the region. Besides this, the political condition of the region had also changed. The

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4 Jean Baptiste Chevalier, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6, 17.
5 Apart from René Madec who had already been in Hindustan, Modave, Dieu, and Moncelet who had moved to Delhi after the death of the Nawab of Awadh acquired considerable prominence in the Mughal court. Comte de Modave, *op. cit.*, pp. 27, 205-207.
feelings of uncertainty that had gripped the Delhi region after the exile of Shah Alam had ended. Shah Alam was reinstalled at Delhi with the help of the Marathas, who had become a powerful force in the region. Chevalier had already established contacts with the Emperor and his noble Najaf Khan and he now saw an opportunity to forge an alliance with the Indian powers to check the English.

The initiative was taken by Chevalier on 2nd April 1771 when he wrote his first letter to Madec and persuaded him to work for the Nation. Chevalier assured Madec a commissioned rank as a mark of recognition of his services.

While Madec was still being approached, Du Jarday, another French adventurer, who during this time was present in north India, made a quick progress when he entered into negotiations with the Maratha leader Mahadji Sindhia and formed an alliance with him. In addition to it, functioning as a political negotiator on the behalf of Chevalier, he also formulated the terms and conditions for the treaty in his sole discretion. The terms and conditions of the treaty were mentioned by Chevalier in his letter to the French authorities on 10th Feb. 1772.

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6 The Emperor was installed on his throne in January 1772 by the Marathas under Mahadji Sindhia. S. P. Sen, op. cit., p. 6.
7 S. P. Sen gives one more date for Chevalier’s first letter as 20 January 1772 apart from the mentioned dated of 2 April 1771. He does not make clear which one of the two letters was the first letter by Chevalier. However, the letter with the date 2 April 1771 is obviously the first letter. Memoir of Madec, French Nouvelle Acquisition, Département des Manuscrits, 9368 (Microfilm), BN, Paris, p. 64; Letter by Chevalier to Madec dated 2 April 1771, pp. 65-66; S. P. Sen, op. cit., pp. 121, 129.
8 One finds error in S. P. Sen’s dating of letters here. He mentions the date of the letter as 10 February 1773, whereas the letter was written on 10 February 1772 and it was received by the authorities on 29 January 1773. Letter by Chevalier dated 10 February 1772, Fr. Nouv. Acq., Département des Manuscrits, 9366 (Microfilm), BN, Paris, p. 137; S. P. Sen, op. cit., p. 122. (All the letters are in
According to the treaty signed by Mahadji Sindhia and Du Jarday, in case of a war between the French and the English, any Indian ruler who would oppose the movement of the army sent from France would be regarded as the enemy both by the French and by the English. It was further stated that in case the Emperor did not fight the English even if the French were with him, then the Marathas and the French would jointly fight the English. As per another clause, it was stated that if the French expeditionary force landed on the Orissa or Gujrat coast, the Marathas would provide provisions and means of transport and if the English were driven out of Bengal, the Peshwa would get back all the possessions that legitimately belonged to him. It was agreed upon that both parties would remain allied irrespective of the prevailing circumstances. And lastly, it was stated that in order to validate the treaty, it had to be ratified by the respective sovereigns. It was informed that Mahadji Sindhia’s growing hatred for the English was a major factor behind the signing of the treaty with Du Jarday.

After the conclusion of the treaty with the Marathas through Du Jarday in 1772, Chevalier entered into negotiations with the Emperor Shah Alam. The Emperor French, the title of these letters is being given in English and the original title in French is in the bibliography).

9 In a letter dated 28 February 1773, Chevalier wrote that Mahadji Sindhia had as much hatred for the English as that of the French who had hated them for their politicking and territorial aggrandizement. Letter by Chevalier dated 28 February, 1773, Fr. Nouv. Acq., Département des Manuscrits, 9366 (Microfilm), BN, Paris, p. 138. (Hereafter the title of the letter, and only Fr. Nouv. Acq. op. cit. for the microfilm no. 9366 unless mentioned otherwise).

10 Chevalier had written about his alliance with the Mughal emperor in September 1772 to which he referred in his subsequent letter of 15 April 1773. Lettre by Chevalier dated 15 April 1773, Fr. Nouv. Acq., op. cit., p. 149. (The title of the letters in the microfilms are in French but they are being given here in English. However, in the bibliography they are in French).
demanded military support of 4000 to 5000 trained French troops as a part of the alliance. The Emperor also agreed to bear the transportation expenses of the French army during its movement from Bengal to Delhi. In return, the French were to receive all trading rights and freedom to trade in entire Hindustan. In addition to it, the French sought in the treaty concession of a territory where their army could be stationed. In that case, they would either pay annual revenue or lend their troops to the Emperor for his military operations. It was also agreed upon that if the land was granted for the French troops, then the French would pay 30 lakhs and 25 lakhs to the Emperor and the Marathas respectively from the revenue of the land as a mark of assurance for not to be troubled by them ever. Secondly, it was to prevent the Emperor and the Marathas from joining hands with the English. The treaty mentioned in French is as follows:

Le traité qui est envoyé est chargé de me proposer de la part du prince et des Marattes, est des plus complets et des plus avantageux pour nous, moyennement que ce nous fournissons les quatre à 5000 hommes qu'ils demandent, l'on nous offre de nous défayer de tous les frais et dépenses, de nous accorder la liberté entière de commerce sans en excepter aucune branche dans tout l'Indoustan et affranchi de tous droits, de nous concéder les possessions que nous pourrons demander raisonnablement, ou si nous l'aimons mieux de nous payer un revenu annuel dont il sera convenu, et si nous joignant en qualité d'auxiliaires pour chasser les anglais du Bengale.

L'on parvient a y réussir comme cela arrivé infailliblement avec tant de forces, l'on en laisse la possession au même titre... moyennement que nous nous engagerons payer annuellement 30 lakhs a l'empereur et 25 aux Marattes, en vertu de qu'ils s'obligeraient a ne venir jamais
The proposed French expeditionary force was to land at Chatgaon in Bengal once the treaty was approved by the home government. It was stated that there was no reason to fear the English opposition in Bengal, but if it happened, then the Mughals and the Marathas would keep the English army engaged. It was said that the English forces would be occupied in defending their frontiers against the combined Mughal and Maratha attack and the French troops would easily make their way into the interiors of Hindustan.\(^{12}\)

The copies of the treaties translated into French were sent to Paris for the ratification. Writing to the government about his decision of forming alliance in the capacity of the Governor of Chandernagore, Chevalier stated that alliance with the Mughals and the Marathas would be in the French interest. Highlighting the significance of the alliance with the Mughals and the Marathas, he wrote, "If the Mughals were a gigantic tree then the Marathas were its branches". He supported his decision by enunciating the advantages that lay in the alliance. It was argued that the alliance would provide the French unassailable superiority over the English who would afterwards be left isolated. Emphasizing on the importance of time, he wrote that it would be effective only if it was implemented at the earliest.\(^{13}\)

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\(^{12}\)Ibid., pp. 1-9.

\(^{13}\)Chevalier’s emphasis on the timing of the treaty also needs to be seen in the context of developments that were taking place in Awadh during this time where the Nawab was heavily militarizing his army with the French adventurers’ assistance. Chevalier who had earlier been interested in forming an alliance with the Nawab of Awadh saw the high time to enter into a treaty with the Mughals and the
Soon, Chevalier wrote a pressing letter seeking the government’s approval to add Indian sepoys to the proposed expeditionary force. He mentioned that if the proposed force of 4000 to 5000 French soldiers was further supplemented with the same number of Indian sepoys then their success would be guaranteed. He also mentioned about the growing awareness among the Indian rulers that the English company was a threat which could only be combated with the military reinforcements from the French who were its natural rivals. It was evident from the Mughal and the Maratha’s quick response to the proposed alliance and their anxious wait for the French government’s reply.\footnote{Letter by Chevalier dated 28 February 1773, Fr. Nouv. Acq., op. cit., p. 142.}

Apart from writing to Madec, Chevalier also sent emissaries not only to rally the support of the Mughals and the Marathas but also to persuade other powers to join the alliance. He issued recommendatory letters to these emissaries to facilitate their entry into the Indian courts and authorized them to negotiate with Indian potentates as his representatives. He also suggested to the home in France that to impart credence to the diplomacy, those involved with the project should be given the authority to deal with the ruling elites and write letters on the government’s behalf. To draw the attention of the home authorities in Paris towards the political developments that were taking place in Hindustan, he wrote that there had arisen a possibility of confrontation between the English and the Nawab of Awadh and the immediate approval of the government would benefit the nation.\footnote{Letter by Chevalier dated 15 April 1773, Ibid., p. 151.}
Monsieur Mottereau was one such emissary who was sent to Delhi in 1773 to carry out the negotiations. He was one of the officers of St. Gardé. Monsieur Mottereau was authorized by Chevalier to enter into negotiations with Indian rulers and inform him about the progress of his negotiations with them. Before sending him to Delhi, Chevalier personally met him and gave necessary letters of introduction which were essential to enter the Emperor's court. Chevalier also informed the French government about Monsieur Mottereau's mission. Monsieur Mottereau stayed in Hindustan for quite a long time to carry out the task assigned to him and also to induce other Frenchmen to join the imperial forces. As a mark of recognition to his efforts, Chevalier recommended his name to the authorities for the commissioned rank of captain.

St. Gardé was another Frenchmen who was to be sent to Delhi to reinforce the army of the Emperor. He had maintained an efficient and well-trained army. Gardé's army had consisted of 600 Europeans, 900 Topas or black Christians, 4000 'sepoys' all armed and trained on European line, and a train of artillery of 12 pieces in excellent condition. Chevalier had even recommended Gardé's and the names of four of his lieutenants for the commissioned rank of captain, for maintaining such an effective army. Chevalier had planned the reinforcement of the Emperor's forces with the combined troops of Gardé and Madec. Madec who had joined the Mughals in October 1772, had the troops slightly lesser than that of Gardé. Madec's force was constituted of 200 Europeans and 3000 'sepoys'. It was stated that the combined forces of Gardé

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16 St. Gardé was the commanding officer of French troops under the Hyderabad ruler Basalt Jang. Letter by Chevalier dated 9 October 1773, op. cit., pp. 165-166.

and Madec which would amount to 8000 men and the further supply of French contingents of 4000 as was demanded by Shah Alam would also make the French the strongest power in Indian subcontinent.\(^{18}\)

4.2 Indian Response to Chevalier’s Attempts for the Alliance

Unlike that of the French government, Indian response to Chevalier’s efforts was serious. In fact, the pursuit of the alliance turned out to be a major concern for Indian rulers. It was particularly evident in the case of the Mughal Empire and the Gohad state who displayed marked anxiety for the finalization of the treaty. The other states also expressed their interest in it but they largely waited for the French government’s approval.

The seriousness of the Mughals was borne out from the fact that when there was delay in French government’s response, the Emperor himself sent an envoy to Chandernagore to hasten the process and complete the negotiation at the earliest.\(^{19}\)

The Emperor had even ordered the envoy not to return until the treaty was finalized. The envoy had been sent secretly so as to avoid the spread of news to the English camp. In Chandernagore, he even lived in a Gujrati trader’s house disguised as a merchant to hide his identity. After the arrival of the envoy in Chandernagore, the response from Paris was awaited even more anxiously, and each vessel that arrived in Chandernagore was hoped to be carrying the news of government’s approval. But the government’s silence came as a huge disappointment to the Emperor’s envoy. Such a


\(^{19}\) The date given by S. P. Sen for the arrival of the envoy in Chanderangore as April 1773 is not supported by the evidence. S P Sen, op. cit., p. 123. Chevalier mentioned the arrival of the envoy in his letter dated 9 October 1773, Letter by Chevalier dated 9 October 1773, Ibid., pp. 165-166.
behaviour on the part of the French government created doubts in the mind of the envoy; and Chevalier always had to assure the envoy about the government's deep concern for the Mughal Emperor in order to dispel doubts.\textsuperscript{20}

When Chevalier again wrote to Paris on February 2, 1774, the Mughal representative was still staying in Chandernagore. The Emperor was hopeful but anxious also about the confirmation of the alliance, and therefore, asked his envoy to know about the French government's response. Chevalier assured the Mughal representative about the government's benevolent disposition towards the Emperor, but he said that the plan could only be executed if the Emperor paid a sufficient amount in advance for the expenses of the army. Such a response discouraged the envoy. Realizing that there was not much to gain by any prolonged stay, the envoy wished to return to Delhi. However, he assured Chevalier of soon following it up. Since the mission was a secret affair, the envoy, instead of going through the usual Bengal route, went via Masulipatnam and Pondicherry in the Pondicherry bound ship \textit{Roi la Seine}. Chevalier was doubtful that the envoy would be able to convince the Emperor for the advance payment. But he admitted that he had made such a proposal only to get more time till the orders from France reached India.\textsuperscript{21}


\textsuperscript{21} Letter by Chevalier (Titled: Political Affairs) dated 2 February 1774, Ibid., p. 193; S. P. Sen says that Chevalier in a letter written on 3 October 1773, had complained that while the Emperor repeatedly asked for French troops he made no advance money for the purpose, p. 124. But Chevalier had first proposed for a sufficient amount in advance for the expenses of the army only in his letter dated 2 February 1774. In any case, Chevalier had not meant it when he made such a proposal. He made it only to gain more time till the orders from France reached. Besides this, S. P. Sen also does not give the reason for the envoy's abrupt return to Delhi after having waited for the government's response for so long. S. P. Sen, op. cit.
Despite no clear response from Paris regarding the ratification of the treaty, the Emperor remained hopeful of the reinforcement of his army with the French troops. Chevalier continued pursuing the matter with the French authorities. In a letter written to Monsieur de Boynes, Minister of the Navy, only a month later on March 15, 1774, he beseeched the authorities that the political landscape in Hindustan was turning favourable and the French troops should immediately be sent. He wrote that the English had sent their contingent with the Nawab of Awadh to the Rohela principality.\(^{22}\) Thus, the departure of their army with the Nawab had militarily put them on the back foot. Chevalier pointed out that if the French troops would be sent during this time, the remaining English force would not be in a position to put up resistance to the combined army of the Mughals and the French. Chevalier stressed that it was one of the finest occasions for the Nation to make the diplomacy a success. He further suggested that it would not only elevate the French government’s status to the point of equality vis-à-vis the English company but it would also be able to control the anarchy that had been eroding the Mughal authority for so many years.\(^{23}\)

Chevalier in his next letter written in the same month dated March 26, 1774, reiterated about the growing friendly disposition of the native rulers towards the French. It was written that apart from the Mughals, other rulers had also begun seeking the French military support. The Rana of Gohad was one among such rulers who became the strongest votary of French alliance. The Rana had even written a letter to Chevalier for urgently sending a corps of 1000 Frenchmen for his state. He had even agreed to


\(^{23}\) Ibid.
pay a sum of 150,000 Rs to 375,000 per month to the contingent. But Chevalier did not commit to the Rana as he had not received any orders from Paris. Writing further to the French authorities, Chevalier stated that like Rana of Gohad there were many other rulers as well who had similar inclination but were only waiting for the government’s response.\(^{24}\)

Rana of Gohad further pursued the matter when he wrote another letter to Chevalier demanding not only 1000 Frenchmen but also a proportionate train of artillery. He offered to pay 100,000 to 250,000 Rs per month as the salary and maintenance expenses. The Rana even proposed to bear the transportation expenses of the army. Chevalier’s letter of May 12, 1774, further affirmed the Rana of Gohad’s growing inclination for French military support. In this letter, Chevalier also lamented the government’s inability to explain clearly the circumstances that had been holding them from offering support to the Rana. He wrote to the authorities that it would seriously damage the French reputation in north India particularly in Gohad for the Rana would assume that the French government was not concerned with his state.\(^{25}\)

The Rana’s wait for the French contingent entered well into another year. According to a letter dated June 23, 1775, the Rana also sent an envoy as had been sent by the Mughal Emperor earlier to Chandernagore for the procurement of the troops. The Rana reiterated his demand and once again assured Chevalier to bear all the expenses


\(^{25}\) Letter by Chevalier to Monsieur de Boynes, Minister of the Navy, dated 12 May, 1774, Ibid., p. 212.
of the troops.\textsuperscript{26} The Rana had remained inclined for the alliance till as late as 1778 and wrote to Chevalier for the French military support.\textsuperscript{27}

Apart from the Rana of Gohad, there were other Indian powers as well who showed their inclination for the alliance. But unlike the Mughals and the Rana of Gohad who displayed it openly, they waited for the conclusion of the treaty between the French government and the Mughals. These states included the Jat, the Rohela, and the Awadh. In a letter dated 13\textsuperscript{th} May 1774, Chevalier informed the authorities in Paris about the disposition of these entities by writing that if the proposed alliance would come into effect then even the Jats and the Rohelas would not miss the opportunity to stand up against the English. Regarding the Awadh state, it was written that although the Nawab was allied with the English, he was only waiting for the opportune moment, and if the alliance would be formed, then, even he would abandon the English. It was further written that the Nawab’s hatred and fear of the British were two important factors that would turn him against the British the moment he would be able to do it without risk.\textsuperscript{28}

Chevalier’s knowledge about the politics of north Indian states and their disposition for the alliance had definitely improved by 1774 due to his frequent correspondence

\textsuperscript{26} Letter by Chevalier to Monsieur de Boynes, Minister of the Navy, dated 23 June, 1775, \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 233-235.

\textsuperscript{27} Letter by Chevalier to Bellecombe, the governor-general, Pondicherry, dated 12 February 1778, 22 MIOM 42 (Microfilm), CAOM, Aix-en-Provence, France.

\textsuperscript{28} Ces mêmes Rohelas et ces Jats ne laisseront pas non plus perdre l’occasion de se relever, sitôt qu’elle se présentera. Enfin, j’assurerai presque aussi que le nabab Shuja-ud daula lui-même abandonnerait bientôt ses alliés s’il trouvait un parti formé contre eux, et sur lequel il peut compter, il les déteste et les craint ce sont deux grands mobiles pour le déterminer à se tourner contre eux dès le moment qu’il le pourra sans risque. Letter by Chevalier to Monsieur de Boynes, Minister of the Navy, dated 13 May, 1774, \textit{Fr. Nouv. Acq.}, op. cit., pp. 214-215.
with the adventurers in Hindustan, particularly with Madec, and also due to the arrival of the political representatives of the Mughal Emperor in Chandernagore by October 1773. It was due to this reason that by the middle of 1774 he could confidently write to the French authorities about the disposition of the Jat, the Rohela, and the Awadh state vis-a-vis the English company. This is borne out from his writings of early 1774 about the anti-English leanings of the Awadh state. In a letter written early on February 2, 1774, he said that “the Nawab who appears to be so strongly attached to the English, is more due to expediencies than due to his inclination. The Nawab is extremely miffed with the English on whose hands he had to face lot of confrontations in the past. The Nawab will always turn against them once any opportune moment comes”. He specifically mentioned that despite having the British army’s reinforcement, the Nawab had demanded from him canons and guns for his expedition to Kara. But Chevalier wrote that he turned down the Nawab’s demand till he remained attached to the English.29

Chevalier mentioned one more incident which was related to him by Gentil to show the Nawab’s reserved disposition towards the English from very early times. It was mentioned that once Lord Clive had proposed to the Nawab through Gentil to pay all the debts if he wanted a European contingent of 8000 men completely at his disposal for all his operations. But the Nawab replied that Clive had made such a proposal only knowing fully that he would not be in a position to accept that, and then, the Nawab

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further said that he himself would raise a European contingent of similar strength in six or seven years.\textsuperscript{30}

The anti-English feelings continued to prevail in 1775 also. Chevalier made it clear when he said that the Emperor and all the princes of Hindustan had implacable hatred for the English and those who had appeared attached to them were only due to compulsions and were only biding their time. He further wrote that these states were aware of their military weaknesses and also of the fact that they would not succeed until they had the support of a European force. It was further written that the Mughal Emperor's support for the French was due to the English colonial threat.\textsuperscript{31}

The other factor which had a bearing on such a development and anti-English sentiments was a sudden English campaign of General Barker to Delhi in early 1774 with a well-trained force of 1200 men. Barker would have caused quite a panic in Delhi, had his movement not been stopped by the Calcutta Council. The General was stopped because the Calcutta Council had feared that the departure of the efficient

\textsuperscript{30} Chevalier wrote, \textit{Gentil lui (to the Nawab) dit, ce qui est bien vrai, que ce général anglais avait proposé à sa cour de payer toutes les dettes nationales estimées dans ce temps a 150 million de livres sterling, si elle voulait lui fournir 8000 hommes de troupes entièrement à sa disposition, et le laisser maître de toutes ses opérations. Le nabab a répondu que Clives n’avait point promis cela plus qu’il n’aurait été en état de remplir, et qu’il se chargerait lui-même d’un pareil marché avec semblable nombre de troupes européennes en 6 ou 7 ans de temps. Letter by Chevalier (Titled: Political Affairs) dated 2 February, 1774, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 193.

\textsuperscript{31} Chevalier wrote, \textit{L’empereur et tous les princes de l’indoustan conservent dans leur cœur la haine la plus implacable contre les anglais, ceux-mêmes qui leur paraissent attaché ne suivent en cela que la loi de la nécessité, et ils sont prêts à s’élérer les premiers contre eux et n’en attendent que l’occasion, mais ils sentent leur faiblesse et qu’ils ne peuvent rien par eux seuls tant qu’ils ne seront pas soutenus puissamment par une nation européenne qui leur prêtera secours. Letter by Chevalier to Monsieur De Boynes, Minister of the Navy, dated 15 August, 1775, \textit{Fr. Nouv. Acq.}, op. cit., pp. 256, 261.
troops with Barker had stripped the English company of its vital force not only from Calcutta but also from entire Bengal.  

The Mughal's serious concern for the project was further made evident when the Emperor Shah Alam conferred on Chevalier the title of Mansoor-ul-Mulk Zair Abdoula Monsieur Chevalier Bahadur Haibbat Jang and the mansab of 7,000 zat. It was the highest honour which was reserved only for a select few and for the Emperor's best friends. The Emperor called Chevalier his best friend and even invited the French governor to write freely to him. The Emperor even offered Chevalier to be his political advisor and advise him to do that he thought was appropriate.  

The Emperor wrote to Chevalier that he had also been visited by Du Jarday. But he said that he did not know much about Du Jarday as the latter worked clandestinely. In the letter the Emperor further wrote that he was aware of the good intentions of the

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32 Chevalier wrote, *Qu'on fasse attention avec quelle rapidité le général Barker s'est avancé dernièrement jusqu'aux ports de Delhi avec un simple corps de 1200 prenait s'il n'eut pas été arrêté dans sa course par les ordres répétés du conseil de Calcutta. La raison de celui-ci était la crainte que toutes ses forces se trouvant transportées dans l'Indoustan ainsi que Bengale étant par la entièrem ent dégarnis*. Letter by Chevalier (Titled: Political Affairs) dated 2 February, 1774, *Ibid.*, p. 194.


34 Du Jarday was a Frenchman who was present in north India during this period. His time of arrival and departure is not known. He had established himself in the neighbourhood of Aligarh. He himself had written that he came all alone and began trading in indigo. He had also worked on Chevalier's project. Chevalier had written in 1771 that Du Jarday had to go to Delhi via Patna in the guise of a Mughal to avoid the British suspicion. He appeared to be present in north India as late as 1788. *Letter by Chevalier from Chandernagore dated 6 June, 1771, Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.
French nation and expressed his sincere desire for the alliance. He further expressed that its completion would only make him happy.\(^{35}\)

With the Emperor himself showing deep concern for the project, Chevalier waited for the government’s response till the middle of 1775. But when all his letters remained unanswered, he grew sceptical of the government’s will to execute the project. He even went to the extent of requesting the authorities that if they had thought of any other plans, that would also be acceptable to him.\(^{36}\) Change of guard in France and the appointment of Monsieur de Sartine as the Minister of the Navy and Colonies came as a ray of hope for Chevalier.

Chevalier wrote a pressing letter to De Sartine on 7\(^{th}\) February 1776 reporting about the changed political condition in Awadh after the death of Shuja-ud-daula in January 1775. He warned the authorities that the rule of Asaf-ud-daula, the son of Shuja-ud-daula, had provided the English an upper hand in the region. He continued that the chaotic political condition in Hindustan and nearly the complete control of the English company on Asaf-ud-daula, would induce the English to invade Hindustan. He cautioned that the defeat of the Mughal Emperor would make the English company supreme in India and once they would become the conquerors the French would not be allowed to stay.\(^{37}\)

\(^{35}\) Translation of the Letter from the Emperor Shah Alam to Monsieur Chevalier, Received 25 December, 1774, Ibid., p. 220. See appendix for more details.


\(^{37}\) Letter by Chevalier to Monsieur de Sartine, Minister of the Navy, dated 7 February, 1776, Ibid., pp. 273-274.
When the French government did not respond to Chevalier’s letters despite his repeated attempts, the Mughal Emperor who had till then sought Chevalier’s mediation for the alliance, decided to write directly to the French government. The Emperor’s initiative was an important break with the past. Hereafter, not only the Emperor directly involved himself in the negotiations but the proposal was also changed considerably to make it more feasible. He consulted Modave who was in Delhi and took suggestions from him for a speedy formation of the alliance. It was decided that the Emperor’s initiative would consist of the proposal of ceding the province of Thatta-Bhakar to France in return for their military support.  

Known as the Thatta project, it was the most important part of the entire diplomatic exercise. But before the Thatta project is dealt with, it is pertinent to examine the role of Madec in this entire episode, for it was Madec who emerged as the pivot of the entire diplomatic exercise. Madec’s role was important due to the fact that he had been involved with the project right from its inception and worked for it till there had remained even the least hope of accomplishing it.

4.3 Madec: The Pivot of the Grand Alliance

Madec played a crucial role in the diplomatic initiatives in north India. Although there are no conclusive evidence to say that Madec initially joined the Mughal Emperor solely to work for the alliance, but once engaged by the Mughals, he pursued it on the persuasion of Chevalier. In fact, it was Madec who induced the Emperor Shah Alam to open parleys with Chevalier for the alliance. Madec’s involvement in the project

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38 Comte de Modave, op. cit., pp. 224-225.
was also acknowledged by S. P. Sen who said that his role was in no way inferior to
that of Chevalier. 39

Chevalier wrote a series of letters to Madec persuading him not only to induce the
Mughal Emperor for the alliance but also to convince other powers to stand up against
the English—their common enemy. Chevalier wrote his first letter to Madec on 2nd
April 1771. Chevalier acknowledged the position and influence that Madec had
acquired in Hindustan and exhorted him to work for the nation. Mentioning about the
purpose of writing the letter, he stated that it was to establish direct contact with him
so that the plan could be worked out. To motivate him, Chevalier said that he (Madec)
would receive appropriate compensation from the French government. Madec was
assured that he would be taken in French government’s official roll and he (Chevalier)
himself would request the authorities to confer on Madec a commissioned rank.
Chevalier also assured Madec that his request would not be refused. 40

Madec was advised that he could send his letters through Jagat Seth or other rich
‘sarrafs’ of Bengal which would further be sent to France. Madec was also asked to
write about the political conditions in Hindustan. 41


40 The First Letter by Chevalier to Madec dated 2 April, 1771, Fr. Nouv. Acq., Département des

41 Chevalier wrote, J’en conclus que vous êtes en état de rendre de grands services, à notre nation et je
n’ai aucun doute que votre amour pour la patrie ne vous porte à entreprendre pour son service. C’est
en conséquence des cette opinion que j’entretien de vous, Mons. , que je désire de me lier étroitement
avec vous afin que nous puissions travailler mutuellement ou bien général notre position réciproque
nous en donne beaucoup de facilité, et...si vous êtes au porté moi à y contribuer. Je serai extrêmement
chargé de recevoir de vos lettres le plus fréquemment possibles et pour qu’elles me parviennent
surement. Je vous prie de les remettre à Mons. Visage. Je vous dirai obligé de m’y faire un détail
Madec, however, initially ignored Chevalier’s letters. But responded later more out of personal interests than due to patriotic zeal for he needed a passport to return to France. But he was persuaded by Chevalier not to leave the country when he was at the height of his career and could be of utmost use to the French nation. He was assured that he had nothing to lose in pursuing the project, and in order to induce him further, it was stated that even if he could not succeed completely his efforts would be richly rewarded.

Chevalier further encouraged Madec to work for the diplomatic enterprise by saying that he was not alone to carry out the operations in Hindustan. Expecting the favourable government’s response, he assured that soon a large contingent would reach for his support and would join him in his expeditions. Chevalier said that since the control of all establishments that France possessed in India was taken over by the King, therefore, the struggle was not for the French company; rather the venture was for the Nation’s cause. Chevalier continued that if he joined under the prevailing circumstances it would be advantageous for him as he would work for the French King. He once again assured Madec that he would recommend his name to the King for the best commission and would try to procure it for him. He even claimed that conferment of the honour of the Cross of St. Louis on Gentil was his work.

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historique sur la politique du pays. The First Letter by Chevalier to Madec dated 2 April, 1771, Ibid., pp. 65-66:

42 Letter by Madec to Chevalier, September 1771, Ibid., p. 67.
44 Ibid., pp. 68-71.
Madec intimated that one reason he was sceptical in working for Chevalier was due to the English retribution that he would face. He expressed that he was apprehensive and worried of the English company for abruptly quitting their service before entering in Hindustan. He informed Chevalier that he had even written to the Calcutta Council and also to Mr. Middleton for amnesty, and had requested not to be searched by the English government. Chevalier, on the other hand, in a bid to dispel all fears, assured Madec that he did not have to be scared of the English as it was his responsibility to protect him from the English. He advised Madec not to trust some Mr. Bourgeois who had written to Middleton and M. Roussel on his behalf. Chevalier also cautioned Madec not to discuss his plans and projects with Mr. Bourgeois as he doubted his French nationality. Chevalier also enquired about Sombre, another French adventurer, who was also present in Hindustan during that time. Chevalier asked Madec about Sombre’s political stature and asked him to engage Sombre in his group.

Madec was given all discretionary powers regarding the project. But he was asked by Chevalier to be informed of all political developments taking place in Hindustan.

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45 After the fall of Pondicherry to the English in 1761, Madec was imprisoned and sent to Bengal. There he was inducted in the English company services as a soldier. But constant humiliation in the English camp forced him to look for ways to set himself free. The involvement of the English company in the battles in Bengal provided Madec the opportunity. There, Madec along with 250 of his compatriots deserted the English camp and moved to Awadh, Guy Deleury, Les Indes Florissantes, op. cit., p. 37.


48 Ibid., pp. 67-73.
Madec was pressed even more by Chevalier to rally the support of Sombre through his next letter. By the time of this letter Chevalier’s knowledge about Sombre had definitely improved as he had come to know about the latter’s hatred for the English. He thought it could become an important factor in bringing Sombre to their side. Chevalier assured Madec French rank and recognition for Sombre if the latter agreed to work for the formation of the alliance. Madec was further assured by Chevalier about Sombre’s safety. It was stated by Chevalier that the French government would take all measures to protect him in whatever manner he wished to be protected.49

Madec was also assured that he was not alone in the venture and if he followed the plan he would be getting reinforcements of excellent cavalry and artillery forces. Monsieur Vesign and Du Jarday had been sent to Hindustan to give details of the plan to Madec and to make it work. Monsieur Vesign was stationed in Nagpur and Du Jarday had already left Patna for Delhi at the time of this letter. There were some other representatives too who were sent by Chevalier to Hindustan.50 Monsieur Vesign, Du Jarday, and Monsieur De Frais, were some of his important men who were assigned multiple tasks.51 They were not only entrusted with the task of passing

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51 Monsieur de Frais was one of Chevalier’s agents active in Hindustan. He had been asked by Chevalier to be in constant touch with Madec. Madec complained to Chevalier about de Frais who had not written to Madec. Chevalier asked Madec to ignore the reason why Mons de Frais did not write to him. Chevalier said that probably de Frais did not receive Madec’s letter. Dr. Visage was a surgeon by profession. He had been in the service of Shuja-ud-daula. He was sent to Janoji and was also entrusted with letters to Mir Qasim. Du Jarday was formerly employed in the French Company at Pondicherry. Later he was sent to Delhi in the guise of a Muslim by Chevalier to meet the Emperor and the Maratha chiefs and send information to Chandernagore. Letter by Chevalier to Madec dated 24 July 1771, Ibid., pp. 78, 81.
on information of the developments in Hindustan to Chevalier but were also authorized to negotiate with local Indian rulers to garner their support.\(^{52}\)

Despite Chevalier’s repeated efforts, Madec actually showed his interest in the project only from July 1772. But this was more for his personal reasons than for the cause of the Nation. Nevertheless, his replies indicate that he had begun thinking about it. For instance, when he was instructed to assemble all Frenchmen scattered in Hindustan to join the Mughal service, he replied, “the opportune time had still not come”. During this time he was in Jat’s service. The letter revealed that although he was serving the Jats, he was not interested in staying there as he was not being paid regularly and a large part of his salary was in arrears which had amounted to 20,000 Rs.\(^{53}\)

During this time i.e. in July 1772 when Madec began making up his mind to join the Mughal service, he received Chevalier’s fourth letter dated 16 August 1772 which again urged him to join the Mughals.\(^{54}\) Madec was also informed about the previous negotiations that Chevalier had with the Mughal Emperor where the latter had demanded a French army of 4000 to 5000 men. Madec was assured that the troops promised to the Emperor would be constituted of excellent cavalry and artillery officers. Chevalier stated that even the salary list of the officers of the proposed troops had been prepared which the Emperor was to pay from his exchequer. It was

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\(^{53}\) The Letter by Madec dated 8 July 1772, Fr. Nouv. Acq., op. cit., pp. 82-84.

\(^{54}\) S. P. Sen calls it as the third letter which is wrong as he has taken the second letter of Chevalier to Madec dated 20 January, 1772 as the first letter. S. P. Sen, op. cit., p. 121.
mentioned that it had been fixed between Rs. 400 to 500 for Captain, Rs 300 for Lieutenant, and Rs 200 for second-lieutenant.  

The long arrears of salary in the Jat service was a major factor behind Madec leaving the Jats. The Jat ruler had not paid him 200,000 Rs which was long overdue. His troops had not been paid for two months and there was no likelihood of it being paid even in the third month. With such ever rising arrears, it was becoming increasingly difficult for Madec to sustain his army. Therefore, Madec took the assistance of his friends and entered into negotiations with the Emperor. By the time he received Chevalier’s fifth letter dated 4th December 1772, he had already joined the Mughal service at a salary of 40,000 Rs per month.

But the very next year i.e. in 1773 Madec suddenly left the Mughal service and decided to quit India. He handed over the command of his army to Du Jarday and went over to Mahadji Sindhia. But Madec’s military exploits had made him an important figure in the Mughal service and as soon as the Emperor came to know about his decision, he persuaded him not to leave. The Emperor even offered him a

55 Letter by Chevalier to Madec dated 16 August 1772, Fr. Nouv. Acq., op cit., pp. 84-87. Chevalier proposed to send one of his family members Chevalier de la Saussaye to help Madec in the political affairs of Hindustan. It was said that he was capable enough to handle the task assigned to him. He was an officer at Chandernagore. He was an excellent cavalry officer who was trained in France. Chevalier urged Madec to keep him in Delhi. He suggested that he would render more useful service if he was attached to the Emperor as commandant of a cavalry force for in that case he would be able to train the Mughal forces in European discipline and arms-handling. Chevalier recommended a salary of at least Rs 2000 per month for him.

56 S. P. Sen argues that it was the patriotic feeling to serve the Nation that made Madec quit the Jats and join the Emperor. But the letter reveals that it was due to the long arrears of pay of the army that compelled Madec to join the Mughals. It was only in 1773 when Madec rejoined the Mughal emperor that he joined with clear nationalistic zeal as he himself admitted in his letter. Letter by Madec to Chevalier dated 11 October 1772, Ibid., p. 88; S. P. Sen, op. cit., p. 130.
huge sum to stay in Delhi for one more year. Besides the offer of a high sum, the Emperor also gave him the rank of a military general. On this occasion, Madec also confessed his attachment for the Emperor by saying that it was with great difficulty and emotional pain that he had left the Emperor. He said that even his army had developed deep attachment for the Emperor. Madec had definitely made a quick progress in raising a Europeanized army ever since his appointment in the Mughal service. As when it was handed over to Du Jarday it comprised artillery, arms, ammunitions, chariots, buffaloes, tents and other related accoutrements.

Citing the reason for terminating his services, Madec had said that he was not interested anymore in service in the country, and wanted to return to France. He joined the Sindhia camp only to finish his engagements in Hindustan before he could leave for France. He promised to the Maratha leader that if could not go to France; he would return and join him.

Madec was contented that he had handed over his army to a suitable Frenchman who was in a favourable position unlike him as he (Du Jarday) had been sent by Chevalier to the region. He wrote in his undated letter that by giving the charge to Du Jarday before leaving the country he had served his Nation. He continued that he was hopeful that his decision would be approved by the government and his efforts would be recognized.

58 Ibid., pp. 107-108.
59 Ibid.
When Madec was in Sindhia’s camp he received another letter by Chevalier dated 12th February 1773. To maintain secrecy of the plan, this particular letter was written in numeric code language. Through this letter, Chevalier frantically tried to prevent Madec’s departure and advised him not to leave the country. He pressurized Madec to stay attached to Sindhia who was the most powerful potentate in Hindustan, and whose power could prove extremely useful at an opportune time.61

Madec changed his mind and returned to Delhi. He wrote that he came back as he wanted to retain his credentials and do something useful for the Nation.62 It is important to point out that it was after this time onwards that he made up his mind to work for the proposed military union. After joining the Mughal service again, Madec increased the strength of his troops. By 1775, he had inducted 4000 natives in his army. As per the project, he also assembled French officers in Delhi by appointing them as the leaders of his contingent. Some of the important French officers inducted by him were Monsieur Baronet, Vincent, Dumée, and Monsieur de Kerascao. Acknowledging Madec’s work, Chevalier soon wrote to the authorities strongly recommending Madec’s name for a commissioned rank. Writing to the Minister in January, 1775, Chevalier referred to Madec in the following words, “We have at Delhi a Frenchman, named Madec, who deserves the attention of the Government. He enjoys the greatest influence over the Emperor in whose service he is presently, at the head of an army of nearly 10,000 men, both Infantry and Cavalry”.63

62 The Letter by Madec (undated), Ibid., p. 110. Unlike the previous occasion, it was when he joined the Mughal services again that he was driven by the nationalistic zeal.
Madec definitely played a crucial role in giving direction to the Mughal Emperor's military policy after rejoining his services in 1773. It was also acknowledged by the Emperor Shah Alam in his letters to the King of France which he wrote to propose to the latter the Thatta project.

The 'Thatta project' was significant on various counts. It was an important break with the past. Unlike the previous phase where the entire diplomatic exercise was carried out through the mediation of Chevalier, the project brought the Emperor Shah Alam centrestage in which the Frenchmen present in Delhi during this period played even more vital role. The second was that as this time the Emperor himself had taken the initiative, the French government took the proposal seriously. The project was an interesting development in the politics of north India as it swayed the political and military dynamics of the region for a considerable period of time.

4.4 The Thatta Project (1775-1778)

The 'Thatta project' was first proposed in 1775. During this time Madec was working with the Mughal general Najaf Khan. Another Frenchman, Modave, who had come

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64 One finds factual error in S. P. Sen's work when he says that Modave first came to India in 1773, S. P. Sen, op. cit., p. 143. He first came to India in the military entourage of Lally in 1757. Comte de Modave, op. cit., pp. 4-7.

Louis Laurent de Fédébre, Comte de Modave was born on 25th June 1725 in Grenoble in France. Since his father was Colonel in army, it was obvious for Modave to join army. He participated in nearly all French campaigns from 1743 to 1748 as the military subordinate of the Prince of Conti. He was honoured the Order of Saint Louis. He first came to India in the military entourage of Lally in 1757. Soon after, he was raised to the rank of Colonel. He was present in the siege of Madras and the capture of Fort Saint David. In 1758, he married the daughter of the governor Porcher des Oulches of Karikal. He was recalled in 1759. He returned and landed at the Coromandel Coast in April 1762. He could not stay in India for long and travelled back to Ile de France in 1764. In Madagascar he became a planter. But it brought financial ruins on him. The loss in the business motivated him to sail to India to make
to Delhi after the death of Shuja-ud-daula in January 1775, had also been employed by the Emperor at the recommendation of Madec. He was employed as the commander of the royal Palace and the personal guards of Shah Alam. The Emperor was highly impressed with Modave’s zeal to render himself useful to the Emperor.\footnote{Modave wrote that ever since he came to Delhi every day he would go out on his horse to see and understand the topography of the Mughal capital. He said that he would travel in the environs of Delhi for several hours. The Emperor and his ministers were highly pleased with such an interest shown by him. \textit{Comte de Modave, op. cit.,} p. 222.}

Thus, Shah Alam had two influential Frenchmen in Delhi, Madec and Modave. It was during this period when Madec and Modave were present in his court and the efforts of Chevalier were not meeting with any success that the Emperor Shah Alam decided to correspond directly with the French King. He had written to the King in the past also, but unfortunately the letter could not reach Paris. In the presence of Madec and aristocratic Modave, the Emperor found hope of getting friendly with the French King. The news of the death of Louis XV and coming to power of a new ruler further motivated the Emperor to open a fresh diplomatic channel for a friendly alliance. Modave with whose services the Emperor was particularly impressed suggested to the Emperor that writing merely a letter of friendship would not be sufficient and if he
could make an offer or promise something to the King that would give more desired results.\textsuperscript{66}

Modave suggested that the cession of the territory of Thatta in Sind to France would be the most suitable offer to enter into friendly alliance with the King. He reasoned that apart from the city of Thatta, the Mughals had nothing to offer in Surat, or on the Malabar Coast, or on the Coromandal coast, nor had they anything to offer in Bengal. But, if the Emperor could grant all rights that he had on Thatta, such an offer might motivate the King to enter into a direct union with him. In addition to it, Modave also emphasized that the proposal would be taken seriously in France only if it was initiated by someone in authority, as otherwise it would indicate lack of seriousness on the part of the Emperor. Therefore, it was advised that the Emperor should write directly to the King, and at the same time, his minister Abdullah Khan write to his counterpart, the Minister of the Navy.\textsuperscript{67}

Both the Emperor and the minister approved the proposal and Modave was given the responsibility of drafting their letters. While Modave drafted the letters of the Emperor and Abdullah Khan, it was translated into Persian by Madec. Modave also modelled the letter and memoir of Madec that the latter wanted to send to the Minister of the Navy, Monsieur De Sartine, in support of the Emperor's letter.\textsuperscript{68}

The proposal was that the Emperor would cede the city of Thatta in the Sind province to France in exchange for a body of French troops which would be in permanent

\textsuperscript{66} Comte de Modave, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 222-223.
\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 224.
\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 225; Letter by Modve to Bellecombe, the governor of Pondicherry, dated 28 January 1777, 22 MIOM 59 (Microfilm), Aix-en-Provence, France.
employment in the Mughal service. The French troops would enable the Emperor to
maintain peace in his country and militarily assist him in case of war with the English.
It was stated that as Thatta was far away from Bengal and other English possessions
in India, therefore, the French army could easily be sent and stationed there without
rousing much resentment and opposition from the English. Moreover, the possession
of Thatta could give the French a safe haven from where they could launch attack on
Bengal with the Mughal’s military support and retire in case of military reverses. It
was suggested that it was only from Thatta that the French army could render any
considerable military help to the Emperor in times of need. 69

The Emperor’s drafted letter made a voluntary offer of the city of Thatta to France as
a mark of his friendship to the King. 70 After that, it presented a short account of
Madec’s history. It mentioned Madec’s services to the Emperor; the latter’s full
confidence in Madec, his achievements and the high status he had attained in the
Mughal court. The letter dwelt on his military victories for the Emperor. It also
credited Madec for the idea of cession of Thatta to French army to form the alliance.
The Emperor strongly recommended his name to the King for the grant of high
honours and title. In the end, it was said that more details of the Thatta project would
be provided by Madec, as it was he who had suggested it, and secondly, it would be
he who would command the French army once it had reached Thatta. 71

69 S. P. Sen, op. cit., p. 134.
70 See appendix for the Emperor’s letter.
4.5 Madec’s Letter to the French Government in Support of the Project

Madec began his letter by an account of his own career. He explained the reason for not sending the Emperor’s proposal directly to the authorities as he had no official standing in France nor was he the government’s representative in Hindustan. He wrote that when he mentioned the same to the Emperor that he was not a government official to deal with such an important political negotiations, the Emperor had assured him that he would write to the French King informing that he had full confidence in him. Afterwards, Madec wrote that the Emperor expressed desire to draw some help from the French nation. He wrote that the Emperor had said that of late the French government had seemed to have lost interest in Indian affairs as they made little effort to re-establish themselves in their former possessions in India. He wrote that the Emperor had said that the English were not only the enemies of the French; they were his enemies as well. He further stated that the Emperor had expressed that once the King’s disposition was known to him he would propose things which would be mutually useful.

Madec continued that “it was now to the French authorities to decide if the Nation could draw any advantage from the Emperor’s disposition”. He wrote that the Emperor had proposed to cede the town of Thatta to France. About the topography of the province and the advantages it had, he wrote, it was a province situated at the mouth of the Sind towards 25 degree of the northern latitude. The province comprised four sarkars and fifty parganas with annual revenue of twenty four lakhs. The town’s location on a large river and the presence of a strong wall offered great advantages for commerce as well as defence. The presence of forests, desert lands, and mountains
with water bodies in the surroundings further imparted strength to the town’s defense. The access to the city through ships was also restricted only to small and medium-sized ships and big ships could not reach it. Writing about the high prospects for trade, Madec held that the place also offered considerable commercial possibilities for it had rich hinterland particularly the Punjab region. The other advantage was that the products could easily be exported.

Madec wrote that when the Emperor ceded the province he actually gave his own rights and not the possession of the territory. The country at that time was jointly shared by the King of Kandhar and the Sikhs. By granting his own rights, the Emperor had permitted the proposed French army at Thatta to wrest it from the control of the Afghans and the Sikhs. The Emperor had said that he would not be able to issue a *parwana* for the occupation of the province. But if the French troops wrested it from the control of these forces, he would immediately issue *parwana* within 20 days in the name of the commander-in-charge of the expedition. Madec wrote that it was not difficult to take it back from the Afghan King and the Sikhs as there was less likelihood of opposition from the people and the ruling elite. But if there was any, then it could easily be met by ‘a few canon shots’.

He wrote, “The nature of things will make Thatta and its suba the principal establishment of the French nation in India. It was a country completely new to Europeans. It had not been in the least devastated by the long succession of wars and calamities which have afflicted the Empire for thirty years. It is necessary to employ a corps of 3000 troops which will suffice for taking possession of the place and maintaining order there”. He suggested that out of the 3000 men to be sent to Thatta a
detachment of 1000 should stay with the Emperor. Knowing well the efficiency of native troops in wars, he also stressed on the need to raise sepoys to the strength of 12,000. It was said that to carry out an effective military operations a sepoy force of at least four times larger than the Europeanized contingent was required. Therefore, he demanded additional arms to equip this huge force. He requested that if the Minister accepted the proposal then he was to be given the command of the detachment as the Emperor had also chosen him to lead it.72

The letters of the Emperor and that of Madec were sent directly to the French authorities without the mediation of Chevalier. Kerscao was sent by Madec to Isle of France with the letters which were then to be sent to Paris. Writing that there was all likelihood of the proposal being considered, Kerscao said that Madec was in high esteem in Isle of France and the governor had also written appropriately to the Minister about him.73

While Madec waited for the French government's response, Monsieur le Chevalier de Montvert was sent as an official representative to Delhi in August 1776. But contrary to what Chevalier had thought, Montvert halted in Patna for a longer time. As a result, Madec received no news about the developments at the government's end. And by the time he heard from Chevalier in April 1777, he had made up his mind to leave Hindustan. He had already left the Mughal service in October 1776. But what is important to point out is that he had sincerely looked forward to the establishment of the alliance which was borne out from the fact that even after leaving the Mughal

72 S. P. Sen, op. cit., pp. 136-138
73 Ibid., pp. 139-140.
service he waited for the government’s response for another seven months. But due to lack of communication with Montvert, he remained unaware of the French government’s response and finally quit Hindustan in May 1777. He reached Pondicherry on 14th February 1778 where he stayed nearly for a year before embarking for France in January 1779. Lack of response from the French government and disappointment over not getting the commissioned rank of a captain which Chevalier had been promising him for a long time were the two crucial factors that had been responsible for his decision.

The Emperor’s initiative had definitely made an impact as the French government had soon sent Montvert to Delhi. Law de Lauriston who was the Governor of Pondicherry (1765-1776) permitted Chevalier to send Montvert as the official representative to carry out the negotiations at Delhi. Montvert was sent in August 1776 with letters both for Madec and the Emperor. He was authorized to negotiate with the Emperor and get confirmation on the proposed city. Unfortunately, due to lack of communication, Madec could not come to know about this development and Montvert’s mission could not make any headway. But the matter was not stopped here. The French government further pursued it through their emissary Montigny and by asking Chevalier to provide more details about Thatta.

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74 After quitting the Mughal service, Madec took up service with the Rana of Gohad. The purpose to stay on for some more time was to wait for the government’s response. The Rana of Gohad could not pay him enough salary and Madec had to spend his personal sum for the upkeep of the army. Comte de Modave, op. cit., pp. 446, 453.


76 Montvert was sent in August 1776 whereas Madec had resigned in October 1776. It indicates that Madec was definitely unaware of the new developments. Law de Lauriston, *Etat Politique de l’Inde*, op. cit., p. 125.
4.6 The French Government's Response to the Thatta Project

The French government continued to show interest in the 'Thatta project' even after the retirement of Law de Lauriston. Bellecombe who succeeded Law de Lauriston in 1777 pursued the project by asking for more information about the city of Thatta and its environs from Chevalier. In a letter dated January 22, 1777, he wrote to Chevalier that the government needed all relevant information about the region and its politics to take any decision. The government’s demands included the details about the sea near Gujarat, at what longitudes and latitudes it was situated from Thatta, could the ships of all sizes be anchored there, could one reach there via sea in all seasons or only during Monsoons, would it be practical and feasible to reach Thatta from there. The government also demanded information on, if there was any citadel or fortification near the port, how many armed men resided there and the nature of the arms they possessed. The information was also sought on if it was convenient to reach Thatta with a large train of artillery, what forces might oppose and what were other powerful states in the neighbourhood. Regarding the transportation of army and its accoutrements, the availability of sufficient number of horses and bullocks was enquired.77

Bellecombe made clear to Chevalier that for the proposal to be accepted by the government complete information was required on all the queries that he had made in his letter. He informed Chevalier that similar questions would also be asked by the ministers and the King’s council before taking any decision. He cautioned Chevalier that without adequate preparation the reverses in the project would not only seriously

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undermine the French prestige among Asian powers but would also bring irreparable loss to the Nation. He further added that the reverses would augment their humiliation in the eyes of the English who had constantly been watching their moves.\footnote{Bellecombe wrote, Je crois que vous sentez d'après toutes les observations que je vous fais et qui seront faites par le Ministre et par le Conseil du Roi qu'on ne pourra se déterminer à l'exécution de l'un ou l'autre de ces projets qu'après que l'on sera entièrement informé sur tous les points que je viens de poser en question. \textit{Ibid.}, p. 209.}

However, Bellecombe encouraged Chevalier not to abandon making efforts regarding the project and use his contacts in Hindustan to furnish the information demanded. He assured Chevalier of serious action on the part of the government once the information demanded was received. He also acknowledged the role played by Madec and informed Chevalier that he would write to the Minister for the grant of a commissioned rank to Madec.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 210.}

The French governor also looked for Sombre's support for the project who, like Madec, had also wielded considerable influence in the politics of Hindustan. He exhorted Chevalier for never mentioning anything about Sombre in his correspondence and suggested that his presence would also be beneficial for the project. Apart from writing to Chevalier, Bellecombe also wrote letters to Madec and the Emperor regarding the project.\footnote{Letter by Bellecombe to Chevalier dated 22 January 1777, \textit{Fr. Nouv. Acq.}, op. cit., p. 209-210.} Although the French authorities were not aware of Sombre's disposition for the project, Sombre had much earlier expressed his support for any such operation. Modave particularly mentioned about it when he wrote that Sombre had many times assured him of supporting the French nation with
his army, resources, and even with his life if the French would attack the English in Bengal.\textsuperscript{81}

In December 1777 Chevalier sent Monsieur de Blottières to Thatta to collect all relevant information about the city on the behalf of the French government. Monsieur de Blottières was then to report it to the minister in Paris. Along with Monsieur de Blotteires, Monsieur Soulier and a Mughal, acting as a negotiator, were also sent to the city. After their stay at Thatta, both Monsieur Soulier and the Waqil were to proceed to Delhi to meet the Emperor Shah Alam and his minister Najaf Khan. Monsieur Soulier had also been entrusted with the task to follow the route from Thatta to Delhi carefully, and make a detailed account of the itinerary, the details of which were to be sent to Paris.\textsuperscript{82}

De Blottieres’ mission was soon followed by that of Montigny. In 1778 the French government sent Col. Montigny to Thatta and Agra to report about the feasibility of the project. Col. Montigny was also instructed to work in concert with Madec to conclude negotiations with the Emperor. But the government’s decision to send Montigny was too late in coming. He reached Agra on 1\textsuperscript{st} August 1778. By that time, Madec with whom he had to act in consultation had already left Hindustan. He wrote a letter dated 25\textsuperscript{th} August 1778 to Madec expressing regrets that his late arrival led to his departure and persuaded him to return to the Emperor’s service.\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{81} Comte de Modave, op. cit., p. 424.
\textsuperscript{82} Letter by Chevalier to Monsieur de Sartine, Minister of Navy, dated 15 December 1777, Fr. Nouv. Acq., Département des Manuscrits, 9366 (Microfilm), BN, Paris, p. 287.
\textsuperscript{83} Letter by Montigny to Madec dated 25 August 1778, 22 MIOM 60 (Microfilm), CAOM, Aix-en-Provence, Letter no. 5316.
Despite the absence of Madec, Montigny carried out the work that was entrusted to him. Apart from the Mughal Emperor, he held meetings with other rulers also. He reported that they all were well-disposed towards the French nation. Writing about the Mughals, he informed that the Mughal noble Najaf Khan had assured that the French authorities could absolutely rely on them. Montigny wrote a letter to the Minister of the Navy about the rulers’ disposition and sent it to France through a French officer from Sombre’s troops. He wrote that the son and the wife of Sombre and the commander of their troops were also convinced by him to work for the French nation and they offered their sincerity and services for the same. Thus, it was reported by Montigny that the situation was very good in Hindustan for the project and all the rulers were ready to attack the English on the condition that they had the French military support.

Despite such a favourable condition prevailing in Hindustan for an alliance, Montigny did not recommend for the ‘Thatta project’. He informed the authorities that the project would not be feasible as the city of Thatta belonged to the Afghan ruler Taimur Shah and was not under the Mughal control. He even insisted that the French authorities should stop all arrangements concerning the project until his return to France.

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84 Montigny wrote, *J’ai mis dans nos intérêt le fils de Sombre, sa femme et le Commandant. Ils vous offrent leur zèle et leurs services pour les intérêt de la Nation.* Letter by Montigny to Baudouin, 12 June 1779, Letter no. 5325, Ibid.

85 Montigny wrote about what had been conveyed by the Indian rulers in the following words, *La réponse de tous les darbars est la même: Paraissez, disent les princes, nous sommes prêts de tomber sur les Anglais; ils s’entreprendront jamais rien sans cela (without the French government’s support).* The response from all the darbars is the same: Appear, say the princes, we are ready to fall on the English; they will never undertake anything (read expedition) without that (without the French support). (My Translation). Letter by Montigny to Baudouin, 12 June 1779, Letter no. 5325, 22 MIOM 60, (Microfilm), op. cit.
France.\textsuperscript{86} Giving credence to his work, he mentioned that he completed the mission in as satisfactory a manner as it could be in the given circumstances.\textsuperscript{87} Montigny's report only seconded to the reservations that had been expressed by Bellecombe earlier. Bellecombe in June 1777 had written about the obstacles that could be encountered in the pursuit of the project. He mentioned that the despatch of 4000 French soldiers would not go unnoticed from the eyes of the English who would immediately declare war with the French either on their own or with the alliance of some Indian state. Secondly, there were many independent principalities and the sending of so many troops to Delhi would cause apprehension among them which would lead them to turn hostile to the French troops. He reported that the only way of accomplishing the 'Thatta project' was by forming an alliance with the Marathas who were not only one of the strong forces during this period but were also influential all over India.\textsuperscript{88}

Indian rulers continued to express their support for the French even after the departure of Montigny. The Mughal Emperor wrote letter to Montigny expressing his good intentions for the French. He even invited Montigny to come back to his court.\textsuperscript{89} Despite the Indian rulers continued favour to the French nation, the 'Thatta project' was not revived by the French government. It was put off on account of Montigny's report. Moreover, in 1787 the French government formally made their stand clear when they wrote to the Governor of the French possessions beyond the Cape of Good Hope regarding their decision of withdrawing from the Thatta affair due to the weakening of the Mughal control over its provinces. It was stated that Thatta was not

\textsuperscript{86} Letter by Montigny to Baudouin, 12 June 1779, Letter no. 5325, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} Letter by Montigny from Ujjain, September 1778, Letter No. 5318, 22 MIOM 58 (Microfilm), op. cit.
\textsuperscript{88} Law de Lauriston, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 163-175.
\textsuperscript{89} Letter by Montigny to Bussy, 22 December 1782, Letter no. 5345, 22 MIOM 60 (Microfilm), \textit{op. cit.}
even a Mughal province.\textsuperscript{90} Thus, by the late 1780s, the French government completely withdrew from the Thatta affair.

The departure of Madec from Hindustan proved to be another major factor in influencing the decisions of the French authorities. Montigny had been directed to work in consultation with Madec for the finalization of the project. However, by the time Montigny reached Delhi Madec had already departed from Hindustan after having impatiently waited for the French government’s response.

Although the ‘Thatta project’ could not be launched, Madec’s dream to get an official recognition finally became a reality in 1780. In December 1780, he was honoured with the title of ‘Chevalier of Royal Military order’ and the rank of noble by the French King for his diplomatic efforts in Hindustan. He was accorded the rank of a noble. In a letter from the King Louis XVI, his unflinching loyalty and ceaseless devotion was recognized. It was acknowledged that apart from inspiring his own contingent, he had also motivated others attached to him to work for the cause of the Nation.\textsuperscript{91} But it needs to be pointed out that he received it only after his retirement from ‘Indian’ service and not during his career in India.

\textsuperscript{90} Letter by Maréchal de Castries to Viscount Souillac, the Governor-General of the French establishments beyond the Cape of Good Hope, 14 February 1787, Ibid.

\textsuperscript{91} A ces causes et autres considérations a ce nous mouvant nous avons de notre grâce spéciale pleine puissance et autorité Royale, ennobli et par ces présentes signées de notre main ennoblissons le dit Sieur René Madec et l’avons décoré et décorons du titre et qualité de noble. Lettres of nobility on Monsieur Madec (Conferred at Versailles, Décembre 1780), Fr. Nouv. Acq., Département des Manuscrits, 9368 (Microfilm), BN, Paris, pp. 121-124.
Unfortunately, the diplomatic initiatives of Chevalier and the Emperor Shah Alam could not materialize. While Chevalier’s plans failed due to the lack of response from the French government, that of the Emperor’s could not be finally put into effect despite the French interests in it due to political and geographical limitations of the region. Nevertheless, the French government made sincere efforts in this regard. What is important to note is that the diplomatic initiatives emerged as an interesting facet of the political and military developments of north India in the latter half of the eighteenth century. It aroused consciousness among the Indian rulers about the potential colonial threat in the form of the English company which gave shape to their political and military posture. The Maratha leader Mahadji Sindhia was the first to enter into such an alliance against the English when he formalized a treaty with Du Jarday. The continued support for the French nation was the result of this English threat which the Indian states, particularly the Mughals, wanted to counter with the French military support. The proactive measures taken by the Emperor who not only sent his emissary to Chandernagore for the French support but later also proposed the Thatta plan to the French, were glaring examples of the prevailing anti-English sentiments in the region. It is in this sense that the diplomatic initiatives taken by Chevalier and the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam appear important and throws light on the prevailing Indian politics during this period. Although the ‘Thatta project’ could not end in a successful manner, it highlighted the territorial significance of the region which later created English interests in Sind in the first half of the nineteenth century.