Chapter One

Company State and the Problem of ‘Insecure Frontier’ c.1798-c.1804

Introduction

This chapter is an attempt to understand British practices of making territorial frontiers at the turn of the eighteenth century in north India. The main argument of this essay is built on a contested prevalent assertion of the time that trade and war went hand in hand, a proposition different from another popular idea that trade and commerce were basic to expansion. This chapter argues that East India Company's claim to new territories in a spurt of violent events between 1798 and 1804, resulted largely from the urge to control local economy justified by the official line of 'insecurity' which accrued from the hyperbole of foreign invasion from the northwest of Hindustan as well as from the growing military strength of local powers. I argue that by a forceful take over of the Indo-Gangetic doab from the Marathas, the Company initiated a relentless pursuit of its shifting frontiers further north and further west that was to continue through out the nineteenth century.

The area under review roughly covers territories of nineteenth century Rohelkhund, Bundelkund on the north, Delhi and Agra to the south, bound by region under the Rajput chieftains to the west. The most fertile part of this region was the Ganga-
Yamuna doab yielding a land revenue of about one crore and thirty five lacks of rupees annually.\(^1\) Its fertile soil allowed abundant of harvest of grains especially wheat and rice and other food crops. In the time of war, entire grain fields could be bought by the commissariat. Tax could be collected at regular intervals without having to use force, unlike the opium growing region of Bihar and desert regions of Rajasthan where Marathas often resorted to raids for extraction of *chauth* in either cash or grain.\(^2\)

Before the Marathas brought this region under their control in the late eighteenth century bringing it a semblance of political stability, the Gangetic plains were ruthlessly pursued by various warring groups. These included the Sikhs on the north, Rohilla pathans in the east, *Durrani* invaders in the north-west and Marathas to the south. Jos Gommans makes some interesting observation in this respect. He postulates that the inner frontier in north India should be understood as a zone- an ecological zone to be precise. The control of this arid zone was crucial for the Mughals to have agrarian surplus. The region in the Indo-Gangetic plain was the meeting points of two major traditional trade routes- the *uttapatha* following from Kabul in the north-west via Delhi, Agra to Rajmahal in the east and the *dakshinpatha* from Delhi, Agra to Malwa region in the west. There were certain historically proven advantages in controlling this region. First, Delhi, Agra and Lahore were major commercial centers along the Grand Trunk road and in addition to the revenue it generated, it gave entry to various parts of central and north India.\(^3\) Second, the region which we presently understand as Haryana, Punjab and that along the Sultej River had excellent pastures and healthy grass, allowing large stock breeding, dromedaries, horse breeding, up to the nineteenth century. This region also proliferated in large number of nomadic pastoralists such as the *bhattis*, who provided transport, animals and military labour during war or to an invading army from the north. On the other hand, to the south of

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\(^1\) See *Notes Relative to the Late Transactions in the Marhatta Empire with an Appendix of Official Documents, and also Six Engravings Illustrative of Several Battles from Drawings Taken on Spot* (London, 1804), p. 9. The statement of revenue collection from this region vary from source to source but tentatively, the figures hover around the above mentioned sum and in sterling it comes around two million, annually.


jungles of Punjab, were the fertile lands richly irrigated by Ganga and Yamuna with strong food crop economy. Thus, a control of this zone surrounding Delhi could be a key to the political domination in Hindustan, especially because active war practices were dependent on it.⁴

At the turn of the eighteenth century, the British territories extended only as far as the ceded provinces of Awadh going eastward to the whole of Bengal. This chapter will outline and engage with a set of reasoning offered by the administrators of the East India Company for extending their territory from Awadh to further west and north in the doab region under Marathas and see how much this rationale held itself. The Company state put forward this rationale in two parts. We will discuss both parts in order.

Franco-phobia and Wellesley's 'Insecure Frontier'

Richard Wellesley was sent to India towards the end of 1797, as the new governor-general after John shore retired beginning of the same year. From the reading of correspondences between Wellesley and the court of directors in London, the picture that appear before us of the prevalent situation in India on his arrival, is that of the high political imbalance in favour of the 'native states' under Marathas, Tipu Sultan and the Nizam of Hyderabad, whose independence and growing military strength was seen largely a result of the French and other Europeans who served as trainers to their army; partly it was seen as an outcome of John Shore’s passive policies, the underlying idea of which was that the British dominion in India had reached its limit, and maintained a policy of non-interference in the affairs of the local states.⁵ The correspondences also suggest quite emphatically that a strong connection between the local states in India and the foreign elements especially the French and the successor of the Durrani state- Zaman Shah, posed an immediate serious threat to the Company's interest but to their very presence in India.

We will try to explain here that Wellesley's policies of territorial expansion in north India had little to do with his justified fear of a ‘foreign invasion’, and in so doing, we will show that before coming to India, Wellesley’s mind was conditioned about the affairs of India in a way that later this pre-conditioned understanding went into the making of his political policies. It seems first ironical that Wellesley, who is very often eulogized in the official biographies and state papers for an unprecedented swift takeover of the regional powers in India, was in fact, an ardent supporter of Warren Hastings’s impeachment a decade before. Warren Hastings, the governor general had been indicted for the same measures which Wellesley practiced in the most emphatic manner, i.e. making war. In 1794, when the Parliament was convened at the House of Commons to decide the policy of war in alliance with other European states against France, Wellesley came out as one of the most fervent supporter of war. As we know during this time all Europe was ‘alarmed’, ‘dazzled’ and ‘disturbed’ by the impact of the French revolution and “the monarchy was trembling for its existence.” The sanctity of the private property, the established order and hierarchy of society had been challenged by a revolutionary upsurge in France and its avowed declaration offering “universal fraternity and assistance to aid and abet those citizens of foreign countries who had suffered in cause of liberty,” was seen as a case of open war. Wellesley was a product of this Franco-phobic time when France, England’s traditional rival in trade and in race for colonies in Asia and elsewhere had now become a subsuming force of social and political change threatening to spread all over Europe. Wellesley was convinced that “the fundamental article of the Revolutionary Government of France is the ruin and annihilation of the British Empire.”

In a speech made in Parliament the same year, Wellesley stated:

In India the French have been expelled from all their possessions except Pondichery, the capture of which could not be long delayed. The acquisition of the Port Mahe on the coast of Malabar is of the greatest advantage to our new territories on the coast, both with a view to the commerce and good government of those countries in a political view it is obviously of considerable importance that the French should not

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7 Ibid, major points of debate in the Parliament about the impact of revolutionary France on England are stated on pp. 60-127.
8 Malleson, Life, p. 8.
continue to hold a possession which offered them the means of so direct and easy an intercourse with Tipu Sultan.\textsuperscript{9}

It is clearly visible that Wellesley’s understanding and his opinion on the war with France in 1794, “most materially influenced the course of his policy when at the head of the government of India.”\textsuperscript{10} Before his appointment as a governor general, he served from 1793 as a commissioner for affairs for India under Pitt’s government which unequivocally supported his views. In this process he had regular news of the British interests in India. To this simultaneous development of a certain opinion of Indian affairs and a general abomination of France was also added an ‘unhappy’ event at personal front- his failed marriage at this time to a Parisian lady, Mademoiselle Hycinthe Gabrielle Roland. It would not be implausible to assume that this ‘failure’ at individual level furthered his aversion to the French.\textsuperscript{11}

Wellesley’s anxieties about Company’s frontiers in north India were increased by a small incident just before he landed in Calcutta in 1798. This happened on his journey on route to India, when he halted at Cape of Good Hope. A ship coming from Calcutta on its way to England stopped at the Cape and it carried a packet addressed to the secret committee of the court of directors about the affairs of Awadh. Quite deliberately so, Wellesley intercepted this packet and discovered from the ‘vague reports’ a general anxiety in Awadh as well as its neighboring Maratha territories, a looming fear of customary invasion from the North-West of Hindustan by the ruler of Durrani Empire, Zaman Shah. The memory of Zaman Shah’s predecessor, Ahmad Shah’s plundering assault in the plains of north India, beginning at Panipat in 1760, was still fresh. In this war, the Marathas lost around 50,000 fighting and non-fighting people; fleeing Marathas were pursued, thousands of livestock animals, horses were captured and bazaar was plundered.\textsuperscript{12} Shortly after Wellesley reached Bengal in May

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid, pp. 7-8
\textsuperscript{10} Pearce, \textit{Memoirs and Correspondence}, pp. 109-10.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid, Richard Wellesley married to the only daughter of Pierre Roland - a ‘Girondist minister of the Interior’ who lived in Paris, on 29\textsuperscript{th} November 1794, at St. George’s Hanover Square, England. Pierre Roland’s wife Manon Philipon also known as the Hyacinthe Gabrielle Daris had been guillotined by the Jacobins the previous year. The relation between Wellesley and his wife were ‘unhappy’ and Wellesley left for India in 1797, without Daris. On his return to England in 1805, too, they lived separately. See pp. 127-9.
1798, he wrote to Major General James Henry Craig* about quite distinctly stated objectives by Zaman Shah, that "he should consider our [i.e. the Company] not joining the royal standard, and our not assisting him restoration of Shah Allum, and in the total expulsion of the Marathas in the light of an act of disobedience and enmity." We will see later that the British made 'the restoration of the Mughal Badshah at Delhi' as one of their main reason for the expansion in north India. But at this moment, the Company frantically looked for a solution to oppose Zaman Shah's movement from Afghanistan towards to the plains of Hindustan. As an immediate response to the problem, alliance with a chain of local chieftains whose territories bordered the province of Awadh- the Sikhs, Rajputs and the Marathas was thought of. Most of these chiefs were in subordinate alliance with Maratha Chief Daulat Rao Sindia. Here the British faced a peculiar problem. This was to do with their understanding of the idea of 'frontier'. The frontiers of Maratha territories were not as fixed or as clear as they are neatly made out to be on the map. A continued faction fighting with in them ensured that raiding parties passed to and fro in a porous zone from one territory to another, the frontiers were rather fuzzy. A clear example of this was found in the Deccan where the Nizam's territory was intermixed with Maratha territory and several polygars within this zone paid tribute to both the Nizam and the Marathas. Like wise in the doab region of the north India too, a similar condition prevailed. Denzil Ibbetson while preparing the settlement report on Karnal wrote contemptuously of the ambiguous territory shared by the Marathas and the Sikhs before the British took it over in 1805:

The Sikhs never really established their grasp over the country south of Panipat, and they held what they did possess only as feudatories of the Marathas. But the whole period was a constant contest between the two powers, and the tract formed a sort of no-man's land between their territories, and coveted by both and protected by neither, was practically the prey of the strongest and most audacious freebooter of the day.14

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* James Henry Craig (1748-1812), was a British military officer sent to Madras in 1797, and was a participant in war in Bengal. In 1801, he was made Lieutenant General.


A basic problem which Craig outlined to Wellesley in the case of a defensive alliance with Marathas against Zaman Shah was this understanding which arose from a mosaic of intermixed frontiers. For the British, a military frontier was a precise line to which they confined themselves. One can say that 'confinement' was an important stress, for breaching this confinement meant moving across the frontier. Craig’s anxiety was visible when he asked Wellesley, whose frontiers they would defend at a time when alliances could be bought and frontiers of defense could change rapidly.\(^{15}\)

While Wellesley and company contemplated over the question- whether they should wait in the confines of their own territory for an attack from the north-west, or move across into the Maratha territory to face off Zaman Shah, a war with Tipu Sultan of Mysore was already underway. After the capture of the Srirangapatam fort and the defeat of Tipu which resulted in his death, the British discovered ‘voluminous correspondence’ between Tipu and the agents of the Shah going back to as early as 1792.\(^{16}\) The main discussion in these exchanges hovered around waging a collective ‘jehad’ against the ‘infidels’ (Marathas) who had the Mughal Emperor’s person in their custody. We also know from Tipu’s letter to the governor of Isle of France also known as Mauritius, that early in 1797, Zaman Shah had sent invitation to the nawab of Lucknow to seek an alliance against the Marathas.\(^{17}\)

In 1796, Tipu had sent two of his ambassadors to the court of Durrani ruler to encourage him to cooperate with him in annexing Delhi and to wage a war against the British. His whole plan was outlined in a memorandum to the Shah, the copy of which is reproduced here:

>The imbecility and ruinous condition of the kingdom of Delhi, are more obvious than the sun as, therefore, Delhi, which is one of the seats of government of the Mahomedan faith, has been reduced to this state of ruin, so that the infidels altogether prevail, it is become proper and incumbent upon the leaders of the faithful, that uniting together, they exterminate the infidels.

\(^{15}\) Owen (ed.), *A Selection from the Despatches*, see dispatch of J. H. Craig to the Earl of Morington, Cawnpore, 13\(^{th}\) October, 1798, pp. 602-9.


\(^{17}\) Martin (ed.), *Minutes and Correspondence*, pp. 6-7.
I am very desirous of engaging in this pursuit, but there are three sects of infidels in the way in the way of it; and although, when we are united, there is little ground for apprehension, yet the union of the followers of the faith is necessary. If that ornament of the throne, that conqueror of kingdoms, should adopt (one of) two plans for effecting this, it will tend to the glory of the faith. One of them is as follows:

That your Majesty should remain in your capital, and send one of your noblemen, in whom you have confidence, to Delhi, with the army; that this person, on his arrival there, should make the necessary arrangements, and, after deposing the infirm King, who has reduced the faith to this state of weakness, select from among the family some one properly qualified for the government: he should remain one year, for the purpose of settling the country; and, taking with him the chiefs of the country who are Rajpoots and others, direct his standard towards the Deccan, so that the Brahmins and others on the road may come forward and present themselves to him. Whilst I, from this quarter, with the aid of God, will raise the standard of holy war, and make the infidels how down under the sword of the faith; after these shall have been sacrificed to the sword, and no longer exist, the remaining infidels will be nothing; afterwards, the settlement of the Deccan may be concluded in any manner which shall be mutually agreed upon.

The second plan is this:

If none of your Majesty’s noblemen should be sufficiently in your confidence, or equal to the undertaking, and if your Majesty should be entirely at ease with respect to the state of your country and government, it is proposed that you should in person proceed to Delhi, and, having made the necessary arrangements there, establish one of your confidential servants in the office of the Vizier (or Minister) and return to your own capital. The person who may be selected for the office of Vizier, must be a man of address and enterprise; that, remaining a twelvemonth with his army at Delhi, he may be able to bring under subjection the chiefs of the neighbouring country. The second year your Majesty should also send from your capital a small army as reinforcement; so that the Vizier appointed by you, as above-mentioned, may proceed with the chiefs of Hindostan towards the Deccan. Should those infidel Brahmins direct their power to that quarter, by the grace of God the hands of the heroes of the faith in this part of the world shall be raised for their chastisement. After their extirpation, it will be proper to enjoin the Vizier acting on your Majesty’s part, to fix
upon a place of rendezvous, and there to meet me, that the proper means may be
adopted for the settlement of the country.\textsuperscript{18}

In this letter, the exactness of the words is lost in translation, by Brahmin, Tipu meant
the Marathas. No mention has been made of the English here though reference is
made to the ‘\textit{infidels}’ but again it is used for Marathas. Replying to Tipu’s
memorandum Zaman Shah expressed a sentiment of friendship with him and an
assurance of his army marching to support Tipu’s proposition in Delhi, but never
specified the timing of such an undertaking.\textsuperscript{19}

The defeat of Tipu in 1799, ensured the Company that a powerful ally of the Afghan
ruler was removed. Wellesley now directed his attention to the Afghan ruler itself. To
keep a check on Shah’s movement and to foil his ambitions in north India, Wellesley
prepared to send Captain John Malcolm to the court of the Persian king on diplomatic
mission. This mission had basically two objectives.

One: to prevent Zaman Shah from invading Hindustan; “or should he actually invade
it, to oblige him, by alarming him for the safety of his own dominions, to relinquish
the expedition.”\textsuperscript{20} Two: to remove all together the influence of the French at Persian
court to prevent any of their attempts to find a route to India through Persia. The
Company was to promise an annual cash subsidy of about three and a half lacks to the
king of Persia for his services. This mission was a very well thought out plan and
accomplished both its aims. A notable aspect of this mission was that the treaty to be
signed between the Company and Persia was meant to be only for three years whereas
the ‘commercial arrangements’ made where by trade was encouraged between
Bombay and Persian ports were of ‘permanent’ and ‘perpetual’ nature.\textsuperscript{21} The reason
for this was Wellesley’s pre-conceived expansionist plan of the Ganga-Yamuna doab.
From William Kirkpatrick’s* correspondence to John Malcolm, it becomes clear that
Wellesley wanted only a duration of three years for the Company’s cash subsidy to
Persia because he was convinced that in three years the Company would have secured

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, pp. 16-18.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, see translation of the original letter from Zaman Shah to Tipu Sultan, n.d., p. 21.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, for the details of the treaty between Persia and the East India Company see pp. 82-90.
\textsuperscript{21} For a brief account of the relation between the Persian court and Zaman Shah, see Percy Molesworth
the defenses of Awadh and for this purpose alone Kirkpatrick wrote to Malcolm that "Zaman Shah should be prevented from making any attempt upon Hindostan for three years longer." 22

In a similar diplomatic spirit, another mission was sent to Sind in 1798, under Abdul Hasan, a ‘native agent’ with ‘suitable presents’ in order to re-establish a factory at Sind. 23 The main objective of the mission in official terms was “to endeavor to settle a factory in Scinde- not so much with a view to commercial as to political advantages.” These political advantages were to be derived from the intelligence of Zaman Shah’s movements. There is, however, a considerable evidence to suggest that despite a general decline of trade and economy at Thatta in the eighteenth century, its revival was quite evident by the beginning of the nineteenth century. A growing interest in Sind which was partly responsible for its conquest in 1843, by the Company was due to its promising prospects of trade via Indus and its link to the maritime economy. 24

The Company was clearly in awe of the Shah’s cavalry which was understood to be superior to any of the native’s though they did not think highly of his artillery. Shah derived revenues from an extensive land in Afghanistan and his revenues from Jammu and Kashmir was about two to three million sterling annually. 25 Now with a diplomatic mission to Persia, the Company had ensured that the Persians were to continue their hostilities against Afghanistan, which eventually forced Shah to return to Peshawar from Lahore in order to repulse any assault made by his opponents. But

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22 Martin (ed.), Minutes and Correspondence, p. 86.
* William Kirkpatrick served as a British resident at the court of the Nizam of Hyderabad and Wellesley showed great faith in his opinion of the prevalent political situation.
23 British factories in Sind were first allowed to be established by the local ruler Ghulam Shah Kalhora in 1758, at Thatta and at Auranga Bandar. These were later ‘discouraged’ by his successor son and were abandoned in 1775. British interests in Sind were renewed partly to keep a check on the movements of the Afghan ruler Zaman Shah. For an official account of the British entry into Sind see, E. H. Aitken, Gazetteer of the Province of Sind. Reprint of 1907 (Karachi, 1986), pp. 119-153. A good analysis of the British relation with Sind for the concerned period is available in Robert A. Huttenback, British Relations with Sind 1799-1843: An Anatomy of Imperialism (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962).
24 See Huttenback, British Relations with Sind; also see S. P. Chablani, Economic Conditions in Sind 1592 to 1843 (Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, 1951).
25 Pearce, Memoirs and Correspondence, p. 235.
on his way back, he was captured and put to prison in the Kabul fort of Bala Hissar in 1800, thus finally ending Zaman Shah’s ambitions in North India.  

With the Afghan threat dying out, a part of the treaty with Persia seemed settled, but it was the second part concerned with the ‘French peril’ which Wellesley found to be visibly growing. A good reason for this was Wellesley’s understanding about the nature of war in India, which he perceived to be an extension of war in Europe with France. The governor general had every reason to be alarmed for just three weeks after his arrival in Calcutta, he found in a local newspaper, a copy of a proclamation issued by the governor of Mauritius (the Isle of France), promising material help from France to Tipu of Mysore in his ‘ambitions’ against the British. The precise content this proclamation is provided in the appendix. This proclamation stated explicitly Tipu’s ‘ardent desire to expel the British from India’; made a promise of advantageous rate pay, and provision of every necessity for the citizens of Mauritius willing to enroll in the assistance of Tipu’s plan. But what followed from Tipu’s attempts was an unwanted public declaration of his plans, which he wished to keep secret till the end. As a matter of fact, Tipu had sent his ambassadors dressed as merchants in a boat filled with black pepper and cargo in order to disguise the intention of his project.  

It was generally understood at this time by the British that Mauritius and Bourbon were great vantage point for the French to make ‘hostile operations’ against the Company by allying with Indian princes, and for preparing war. Since these places were not close to Indian territories, secrecy could be maintained. In addition, Isle of France was well provided with all kinds of military stores for combat. This seemingly prospective region of military and material support went a long way in eventually pushing Tipu in an uncalled war from the British side and ultimately ruining him. In reality, Malaritic, the governor of Mauritius could offer little help to Tipu. A team of two hundred odd volunteers that he sent in response to Tipu’s appeal,  

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26 A year previous to Malcolm’s mission, Wellesley had sent a ‘native agent’ Mehdi Ali Khan to Persia, he was also Company’s resident at Bushire. In the official sources, the success of the Malcolm’s mission is often attributed to the ground work done by Mehdi Khan. Partly, it was helped by the Persian ambitions in Afghanistan.  
27 For an account of journey made by Tipu’s embassy to the Isle of France, see S. P. Sen, The French in India 1763-1816 (New Delhi, 1971), pp. 533-98.  
28 Ibid.
were never enough against a well provided British force. However, Tipu received the Mauritis volunteers with kingly approbation. Probably, Tipu still harbored hopes of receiving a positive response from the government of France. He did receive intelligence of invasion of Egypt by the French from Constantinople.29 Informing Tipu of the French aggression in Egypt whose proximity to Mecca made it a ‘revered’ region for Muslims, Sultan Salim of Constantinople wrote that the French were sending troops from Egypt to ‘destroy settlements’ in Hindustan. He appealed in the name of faith and Muslim brotherhood, to restrain from helping the French against the British.30 In his long reply to this letter, Tipu intelligently restrained from commenting on the French position in India, instead he narrated the history of British aggression to the Ottoman prince.31 When Napoleon’s army invaded Egypt, he was well informed of the strength and weakness of the British in India and also the possible regional allies he could rely on. Bonaparte’s communication with Tipu immediately caught the Company’s attention, as he wrote to Tipu:

You have been already informed of my arrival on the borders of the Red Sea, with innumerable and invincible army, full of the desire of delivering you from the iron yoke of England... I would even wish you could send some intelligent person to Suez or Cairo possessing your confidence, with whom I may confer.32

At the same time Napoleon wrote to the Directory in France: “Mistress of Egypt, France will by and by be the mistress of India.”33 Egypt was almost equidistant from both India and England and army could reach from either of the places in few weeks. This applied to France as well. Occupation of Egypt was now seen by the British as a step towards India. There are documents to show that Bonaparte had a serious intention to march towards India. The formulation of this project is dated in February 1801.34 At a later date, he chalked out a plan with the Russian czar. It was proposed

29 Letter to Tipu Sultan from Constantinople, 20th September, 1798, see Owen (ed.), A Selection from the Despatches, pp. 70-74.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid, See Tipu Sultan’s formal acknowledgement of the receipt of the letter from Constantinople, 13th February, 1799, pp. 74-82.
32 A copy of this letter is reproduced in Pearce, Memoirs and Correspondence, pp. 228-9.
33 Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India Compiled in the Intelligence Branch, Army Headquarters, India. Volume III, reprint of 1907 (Delhi, 2004), p. 283.
34 David Hopkins, The Dangers of British India from French Invasion and Missionary Establishments to which are Alluded, Some Accounts of the Countries between the Caspian Sea and the Ganges; A Narrative of the Revolutions which they have Experienced Subsequent to the Expedition of Alexander
that united armies of Russia, France and Austria were to march to the banks of Indus, and another expedition to Egypt would sail from Corfu. But the death of the Russian emperor put a halt to this plan. The proposed land route to be taken by the joint forces towards the Indus included a giant stretch between the extreme south east of the Caspian sea to the town of Attock on the Indus river. Major land marks between Astrabad and Attock were the towns of Khorasan, Sejestan, Kandhar and Kabul. This was also a customary trading and military route that allowed forage, provisions and supply of water. But the previous experiences of the Russians attempting to march in the direction of the same route against the Persians showed that hostilities of terrain and climate could be the greatest obstacle. Alexander had reached Afghanistan in 480 B.C. but he did so while marching from Persepolis, the Persian capital with an added advantage of momentum gained by a series of victories in Asia Minor and the control over Egypt and the strategic eastern Mediterranean coast. In his memoirs which were compiled while he was in prison, Napoleon stated that he wanted to follow Alexander’s route to India from Persia. In fact, through his agents he had bought the Shah of Persia’s consent for the establishment of military magazine in his territory. But his plans took a set back after the defeat in a naval battle at Abu Bakr also known as the ‘Battle of Nile’ in 1799, by the British forces under Horatio Nelson and then again at Acre in the present day Israel where his army was fighting a besieged army of the Turkish ruler supported by the British army. His siege artillery and supplies were intercepted by the English and seeing a repulse of his attack on the fortress, Napoleon decided to abandon war and retreat to France.

It became quite clear to the Wellesley’s administration after 1799, that they had no fear of the French invasion of India either by land route or by sea. This outlook was now visible in their stop gap policy towards Persia, which was largely governed, as Ingram has suggested, by an intertwined British and European interests. While Persia was in need of British support against the Russian aggression on their territories, the British were wary that they were allies with the Russians in Europe against France.

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35 Frontier and Overseas Expedition, p. 283.
37 Pearce, Memoirs and Correspondence, pp. 62-80.
38 The British never obliged Persia during this period with military help against the Russians, despite the Persian Shah’s warnings of an alliance with the French. See Edward Ingram, ‘An Aspiring Buffer...
The phantom of Napoleonic invasion kept appearing even after Wellesley had ‘secured’ the Company’s north-west frontier in Hindustan, but the sensations that were produced by ‘Franco-phobia’ had galvanized the Company’s acquisition of territories in India with the most unprecedented ferocity, though by no means it was the chief cause of it.

Wellesley’s Policy: Practice and Justification

As we have seen in the first part, by 1800, the initial fervor of the ‘Napoleonic invasion’ was dying out. The ruler of Mysore, Tipu Sultan, a strong ally of the French, had been killed and his territories brought under Company’s control. If this was not enough, the Afghan threat from the north-west had been dispelled after Zaman Shah was deposed through Persian intervention. Thus in a period of two years (1798-1800), nearly a decade long turbulence on the frontiers of British territories in Hindustan seemed ‘pacified’ more or less. With these favorable events for the British, we may ask the question – what caused Wellesley to further Company’s frontiers in north India and under what justification?

The hypothesis that the Indo-Gangetic plains of Hindustan were in a way lynchpin to the flourishing trade and military labour market and on this largely depended the stability or the instability of the existing polities, this we have already mentioned above. Let us now move on to other relevant issues.

In the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, the directors of the East India Company were strongly of the view that peace was essential to trade and commerce and that war was an economic burden. But as John Gailbraith pointed out, the governors in India understood that “as long as there were rival military powers on its frontiers, commerce of India could not be secured.”

As a matter of fact, it was the aggressive policies of Warren Hastings that had brought about the governor general’s

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impeachment. Hastings war against the Rohillas came under scathing attack. After two years of Wellesley's administration in India, the court of directors were not any different to the new governor general. In criticizing his expansionist policy, the directors echoed the spirit of the Pitt India Parliament's act of 1793, according to which "to pursue schemes of conquest and extension of dominion in India," were measures repugnant to the wish, the honour, and the policy of this nation (Britain)." The direct fall out of this act was that it gave the court of directors and the secret committee overriding powers over the governor general who could not go to war against any of the Indian states with out the authority of the two above him. Moreover, in case the governor general made war in defense of aggression committed against British interest, he had to present a detailed explanation for the same.

Let us deliberate here a little on the court of directors's thesis- that "commerce required peace," since in essence this idea remained a major bone of contention between the British administrators in India and their counterpart at home, through out the nineteenth century. Wellesley followed the antithesis of the whole idea- according which trade and commerce depended on 'secure frontiers' for which war was needed. Writing to Lord Castlereagh in 1803, Wellesley wrote:

the extension of territory which followed the conquest of Mysor in 1799, might otherwise have been condemned on similar grounds (i.e. schemes of conquest and irregular ambition). That conquest as a result of just and necessary war, and the transfer of the enemy's dominions to our authority, although involving considerable extension of territory, was never deemed for that reason to be inconsistent with the policy of the act of 1793, but was declared to be justified by the same principles which had justified the commencement of the war...the acquisition of territory which have been accomplished in India during my administration, have proceeded either from successful prosecution of war, or from forfeiture in consequence of the violation


41 For a detailed announcement of the East India Company's Act of 1793, see H. W. C. Carnduff, *Military and Cantonment Law in India* (Calcutta, 1904), pp. 9-12.
of dependent alliances, or lastly from the improvement of existing, or the formation of new treaties of subsidy and guarantee.\textsuperscript{42}

Wellesley tried to justify territorial expansion by claiming that he merely responded to the hostile and unfriendly designs of native rulers against the British interests and that war was an extension of policies which were justified by the charter act of 1793, in case the alliances broke. The directors of the Company who were alarmed at the rising military expenditure of Wellesley’s administration and ambitious war projects tried to reduce Wellesley’s army at a time when he was preparing war against the Marathas. This provoked Wellesley to offer resignation- a tactic which he employed throughout his career in India against the orders of the Company’s directors.\textsuperscript{43}

Perhaps what may have been in favour of the Wellesley’s administration was the peculiar time in which he came to India. At this time, the military labour market in north India was booming.\textsuperscript{44} The rising successor states to the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century created a need for a well trained military force and while Europe was moving towards creation of professional armies supported by the state, war in India was increasingly sponsored by individuals. In the words of Jos Gomman’s, “war was indeed a well-oiled business which involved a great deal of market analysis.”\textsuperscript{45}

This business depended on supply of horses, and men from various war bands who chased military employment. This war had to be financed and money was generally borrowed by the employer from the rich \textit{sahukars} and merchants.\textsuperscript{46} Gommans also suggests that the distinction between war and peace during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was blurred. It could be difficult to differentiate between plundering and revenue collection, protection and highway robbery. In a similar way, war could just be an extension of trade by ‘other means’.\textsuperscript{47} I would add to this point my argument that war was not about savagery alone, it could often lose its austerity by creating spaces for pleasure, festivities and provided vocations to many. By way of

\textsuperscript{42}See letter from the Marquess Wellesley to Lord Castlereagh, Fort William, December 15\textsuperscript{th}, 1803, in Owen (ed.), \textit{A Selection from the Despatches}, pp. 668-75.

\textsuperscript{43}Gailbraith, ‘The “Turbulent Frontier”’, p. 155.

\textsuperscript{44}This is evident from D.H. A. Kolff’s work; see \textit{Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan 1450-1850} (Cambridge, 1990).


\textsuperscript{46}Ibid, pp. 136-7.

\textsuperscript{47}Ibid.
example let me quote from the memoir of Gerad Lake, who was leading the army against the Maratha war in 1803, where the spectacle of the encamped army is described in the following way:

The army encamped for the most part as it marched...the power of imagination can scarcely figure to itself the sudden transformation that takes place on these occasions, when an Indian camp exhibits, with the effect of an enchantment, the appearance of a lively and populous city amidst the wilds of solitude and on a dreary plain. In short space the rough visage of war is changed to the reciprocal offices of the confidence, and the fatigues of professional duty are forgotten amidst scenes of festivity. Throughout long and regular streets of shops, like the booths of an English fair, may be seen in every direction all the bustling variety of trade, the relaxation of enjoyment, and the pursuit of pleasure. Here sheriffs, or money changers, are ready with their coin to accommodate those who are unprovided with the currency necessary for the purchase of the necessities of luxuries of life. In such a situation, where nothing more could well be expected than what serves to alleviate the present cravings of nature, every kind of luxury abounds; and while some shops allure the hungry passenger with boiled or parched rice, others exhibit a profusion of rich viands with spices, curry materials and confectionery, for the indulgence of voluptuous appetite. European merchants, here called sadawkars, either by themselves or their native agents, are busily employed in vending wines, liquors, and groceries; while other traders exhibit for sale fine cloths, muslin, and rich cashmerian shawls. Here also are to be found goldsmiths and jewelers exercising their occupations and endeavouring to attract fancy by a display of elegant ornaments, as though war had been deprived of its austerity, or that victory had already been decided. Besides these and various other traffickers, the camp exhibits the singular spectacle of female quacks, who practice cupping, selling drugs, and profess to cure disorders by charms. Nearly allied to these are jugglers showing their dexterity by numerous arts of deception; and, to complete the motley assemblage, groups of dancing girls have their allotted station in the bazaar.48

It would not be implausible to surmise that the war could be a happy change of events for some and that some actually hoped for war to take place. At the dawn of the nineteenth century, the East India Company willing and sometimes unwillingly

became a part of the pervasive economic and military systems of north India, while competing with local powers for recruiting men and beast; and while making alliances against common foes.\textsuperscript{49} It is here we note that Wellesley had comprehended these basic principles concerning diplomacy, alliances and the benefits derived from it, quite well. It is also noteworthy that the governor general’s brother Arthur Wellesley who was serving in the capacity of a general to the British army was also a great proponent of war. We know from his correspondences and letters to his brother, that he paid great attention to the practical difficulties of supply and logistics- to the condition of roads, to the availability grains, bullocks and transport. This gave a decisive edge to the British army under Lord Lake against the well trained and numerically superior forces of the Marathas.\textsuperscript{50} After briefly discussing the nature of Wellesley’s policies and the tensions that prevailed between him and the Company’s directors in England, let us now go into the details of what exactly his justification was for acquiring the new frontier in the Indo-Gangetic doab.

It may be recalled that the Company’s precise reasons to bring Awadh under its control in 1801, was the rationale that the Nawab Sadat Ali Khan was incompetent to handle affairs of his administration which was progressively deteriorating. Rudragnshu Mukherjee in an essay in \textit{Past and Present}, pierces through the heart of this premise by showing that the British interests in trade were paramount to political expansion in Awadh.\textsuperscript{51} Building further on the understanding that the Company’s


\textsuperscript{50} Ibid. Kolff's main argument is this: the modernization of the Indian armies under the European officers was never complete because of the inherent contradiction that plagued the military culture of the ‘Ancien Regime’ which accrued from a reliance on the shifting loyalties and negotiation. For an excellent analysis of the causes of the British victory over the Marathas, see John Pemble, ‘Resources and Techniques in the Second Maratha War,’ and Randolf Cooper, ‘Wellington and the Marathas in 1803’ in Douglas M. Peers (ed.), \textit{Warfare and Empires: Contact and conflict between European and non-European Military and Maritime Forces and Cultures} (Variorum, 1997), pp. 275-312; also see ‘Indian Army Logistics 1757-1857: Arthur Wellesley’s Role Reconsidered’, in Alan J. Guy and Peter B. Boyden (eds.), \textit{Soldiers of the Raj: The Indian Army 1600-1947} (London, 1997), and by the same author, ‘Beyond Beast and Bullion: Economic Considerations in Bombay’s Military Logistics, 1803’, \textit{Modern Asian Studies}, 33, 1 (1999), pp. 159-183.

\textsuperscript{51} Rudrangshu Mukherjee, ‘Trade and Empire in Awadh 1765-1804’, \textit{Past and Present}, volume 94, no. 1 (1982), pp. 85-102. Mukherjee’s argument becomes even more compelling in the light of the contrast he poses between his work and that of P.J. Marshall who suggests that unlike the coastal areas of India, which offered an obvious reason for the Company’s conquest, Awadh’s conquest by the Company was political rather than economic in nature. See P. J. Marshall, ‘Economic and Political Expansion: The Case of Oudh,’ \textit{Modern Asian Studies}, volume 9, no. 4 (1975), pp. 465-82.
increasing demand of subsidy clearly led to the deterioration of the land revenue system and rebellions among the chiefs and zamindar, Mukherjee traces the British inroads into Awadh through economic expansion. It is already clear in unequivocal terms that the Company wanted to keep Awadh as a buffer state to protect its frontiers from the raids of the strong Maratha state as well as any other attempts from the north-west. For this purpose, the Company had permanently placed British troops in Awadh, after the battle of Baksar in 1764. The Company had also installed their resident in Lucknow, and the Nawab was bound to pay for them along with the subsidy, failing which the Company had the right to intervene. Soon after this event, as Mukherjee points out, we see an ever increasing presence of British traders from Bengal in Awadh buying chiefly cotton, saltpeter and indigo. Out of these three, cotton and indigo had a huge market in China and England, and towards the 1790s we see a progressive increase of export from the ceded parts of Awadh in particular of cotton and indigo, and other raw materials, so much so that between 1796 and 1798, two third of three fifth of total four million pounds of indigo exported to London, came from Awadh. Similarly, according to the Bengal commercial report of 1803-4, the export of cotton from the ceded region of Awadh and doab to China rose from 15 bales in 1800 to 60,000 bales in 1805.  

The Company clearly foresaw the importance of Awadh as a ‘colony’ for their interest in the global market. This shrewd understanding of commerce was responsible if not solely, then to a large extent for the extension of Company’s economic ‘frontier’ till Awadh.

In 1803, the Company’s frontier in Awadh, overlooked the Ganga-Yamuna doab which was under the control of Maratha chieftan Daulat Rao Sindia. Richard Wellesley was now preparing to extend this frontier further north and further west. As we know, the guarantee of economic returns in this region was overwhelming. The ‘insecure frontier’ rationale was now again brought into picture. After Zaman Shah, it was now the turn of the Marathas to be labeled as the new threat to the Company’s territories. Such scheme was always on cards, more so because, as long as the French were present in India, finding a cause for war was not difficult. Wellesley’s scheme

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52 Ibid, pp. 98 and 100.
was further supported by accidents of political events within their opponent's territories. Between 1795 and 1800, all Maratha administrative leaders had died including Nana Phadnavis, escalating factional fight for control of land. In 1802, Jeswant Roa Holkar, the Maharaja of Indore was pursuing military ambitions in the Deccan where he defeated a combined army of Peshwa Baji Roa II and Daulat Rao Sindia, the Maharaja Gwalior. This led the Peshwa to seek British help and signed with them a subsidiary alliance at Bassein.\(^{53}\) A direct fall out of this treaty was that the British took the much sought after region of Surat; they restored the Peshwa in the Deccan (Pune), but in return asked him to pay for British troops in his territory for his protection against "all hostility or aggression what so ever."\(^{54}\)

The treaty of Bassein broke up the Maratha confederacy and relieved the British of the danger of having to face united Maratha chiefs all over central India, northwestern provinces and parts of western India. Wellesley now pushed for similar subordinate alliances with Sindia and Raghuji Bhonsle of Berar (Nagpur), and declared war soon after Maratha chiefs' refusal to become party to the 'defensive' portion of the treaty.\(^{55}\) The official documents states the objectives of the war undertaken by Lord Lake on the north-west frontier of Awadh as thus:

First, the destruction of the power of the French adventurers established on the banks of the Jumna under monsieur Perron. Secondly, the extension of the British frontier to the Jumna, with the possession of Agra, Delhi, and a sufficient chain of posts on the right bank of Jumna for the protection of the navigation of the river. Thirdly, the protection of the person of the emperor Shah Allum. Fourthly, the establishment of an efficient system of alliance with the petty states beyond the right bank of the Jumna and Jeynagur to the province of Bundelcund. Fifthly, the annexation of Bundelcund to the Company's dominions; by which annexation great additional security would be derived to the rich province and city of Benaras, and an effectual check opposed to whatever power might remain to the Rajah of Berar, or to any other Marhatta chief in that quarter.\(^{56}\)

\(^{54}\) For a detailed discussion of the articles of treaty of Bassein, see Owen (ed.), A Selection from the Despatches, pp. 211-244.
\(^{55}\) For the developments leading up to the declaration of war by Wellesley on Daulat Rao Sindia, See Notes Relative to the Late Transactions, pp. 1-49.
\(^{56}\) Ibid, pp. 49-50.
The result of this offensive plan was supposed to destroy the influence of the French and the Marathas on the north-west frontier of Awadh in the northern districts of Hindustan. The outcome was also seen as a window of entry into the territories of the Sikhs, and the 'terra-incognita' regions of Punjab and Afghanistan and a base for 'frustrating any attempt of invasion from the north-west.'

Incidentally, in July 1803, in a secret correspondence to the commander-in-chief general Lord Lake, Wellesley goes on to state:

I not only concur entirely with you in deeming the destruction of M. Perron's force to be the primary object of the campaign, but that the most deliberate consideration of the actual state of affairs between his Majesty and France would have induced me to have undertaken the service even independently of any contest with Dowlut Rao Scindiah.

The whole tenor of Wellesley's correspondence shows an obsession with Perron but this had to do much more with immediate political and economic gains in North India than the actual state of affairs between France and Britain.

In an age where European adventurers came to India to make private fortunes rather than to serve imperial agendas of their respective countries, Perron succeeded his own countryman from France- De Boigne, as the commander-in-chief of Sindia's army in the doab. De Boigne was credited with completely reforming the economic and administrative support base for Sindia's army, maximizing revenue collection from land directly through his mercenary officers. This was a departure from the use of sardars by the Mughals and the Marathas who provided troops at the time of war in lieu of which they were given pieces of land called jagirs and jaidads, in the process often pocketing large shares of revenue themselves and supplying ill paid and inferior quality of troops.

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57 Ibid.
Thus, when Perron succeeded De Boigne, he inherited the *jaïdad* in the eastern doab that was given to Boigne by Sindia for upkeep of his army. This *jaïdad* was a considerable portion of the region lying between the Ganga and Yamuna rivers with mountains of Kumaon on its north and yielded a land revenue of over two million sterling annually. In addition to this material strength, Perron had under him a well trained body of about 40,000 troops, along with cavalry and artillery guns 'high even by British standards.' To Wellesley then, Perron’s presence in the heart of Hindustan was a standing menace.

If we are to go by John Pemble’s figures, then, in an event of war, apart from Perron’s force at his disposal, Sindia had a regular army of 37,000 men consisting of 29,000 infantry, 2,500 artillery and 4,500 men with 330 guns. To this could also be added forces of Begum Samru of Sardhana under Colonel Saleur and these figures do not include Sindia’s forces serving him in the Deccan. Strong fortresses of Delhi, Agra and Aligarh as important centres of defense were part of Sindia’s territory; in addition, they had magazines, foundries, arsenals with considerable supplies of ammunition and military stores. It can be safely concluded that such huge mass of military strength was never at Marathas disposal before and in an event of Afghan attack from the north-west frontier of Hindustan, the Marathas would have been placed in an unprecedented position of advantage. However, Wellesley did not choose to interpret this visibly strong position of a local polity as a barrier against ‘foreign invasion’ but as a threat to its own frontier.

Wellesley wrote complainingly to his general Lake, and later to the court of directors in London that, the vicinity of the regular army of M. Perron “constantly diminishes the population of the Company’s provinces, and dries up the resources of our

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60 Beresford Lovett, ‘When and Why Did We First Take Delhi?’, *Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, 29 (1900), pp. 43-84.

61 It is to be noted that at the time of second Anglo-Maratha war, Perron’s army was much less, around 24,500 men. The fatal impact of Maratha artillery guns is testified by Lake himself after the battle of Delhi in 1803, see Pemble, ‘Resources and Techniques’, pp. 382-84. Pemble’s main argument is this: Marathas lost the war against the British forces chiefly because of ‘political weakness’, ‘faults of detail’, and technical refinement that stemmed from disloyal officers, lack of political unity and undermining the use of the bayonet; and because of the often drawn conclusion that they lost because of abandoning of their traditional strength in warfare.

62 Ibid.

agriculture, our manufactures, our commerce, and our revenues, as well as the means of recruiting for the army in that country." 64 Unlike the Company’s customary justification of war and territorial expansion which emphasized a ‘native state’s’ incompetence and unjust administration, as in the case of Bengal and Awadh, here we have a situation where the governor general sought to justify ‘aggression’ not due to the frailty of the existing system. On the contrary, here it was the economic and military strength of a ‘native state’ that caused the ‘insecure frontier’ syndrome.

The allegation that appeared close to portraying Sindia’s incompetence as ruler in Wellesley’s correspondences was concerned with the Maratha chief allowing an independent status to his French general in handling the affairs of the doab. This was termed as a ‘decline of his authority’ and a ‘decay of his resources and power’. 65 Another fact held against Sindia was his war engagement in the Deccan and his political ambitions away from his territories in the north- a neglect which according to Wellesley administration left the most vulnerable part of Hindustan undefended. 66

As far as M. Perron was concerned, the most severe charge against him was that he was falsely making use of the nominal authority of the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam confined in the fortress of Delhi, ostensibly to further such designs which were helping the French to strengthen their presence in India. As we know, the Mughal Emperor’s sovereignty continued to be acknowledged by majority of the states in India despite him being deprived of his ‘real power, dominion and authority.’ Coins were struck in his name; robes of honour, titles to the nobility and persons and insignia of rank which were derived from the throne of Delhi and acknowledged by Shah Alam were still on display. A popular couplet of the time ran, at no point of his life had Shah Alam had been ruler of more than “from Delhi to Palam,” but he was

64 Extract of a letter from the Marquis Wellesley to the secret committee of the court of directors, dated 13th July 1804, originally written on 27th July 1803, as a secret letter to the commander-in chief, General Lake by Wellesley. See Appendix in Philip Francis, Speeches In The House Of Commons, On The War Against The Mahrattas (London, 1805), pp. 89-92, and Owen (ed.), A Selection from the Despatches, pp.303-16.

65 See Lovett, ‘When and Why Did We First Take Delhi?’, pp. 43-84.

66 Ibid. Till the 1750s, it was commonly stated by the Company that the Marathas had a corrupt land revenue system and an irresponsible administration. But at this time, doab region of north India was not under Maratha control. Gordon states that even this thesis was unqualified. See Gordon, The New Cambridge History of India, p. 139.
the representative of the great Mughal. Under these circumstance, the person and authority of Shah Alam was seen as a dangerous instrument in the hands of Perron whose state possessed “sufficient power, energy, and judgement, to employ it, in prosecuting views of aggrandizement and ambition.”

It is also known that Perron was promoting French officers over Englishmen in his administration where the civil, military interdependence that he inherited from De Boigne, continued to be well organized and efficient. This was attested by the British themselves, as one official towards the end of the nineteenth century writes:

administration of these districts was so admirably organized that, when our rule was introduced in these districts in the autumn of 1803, our civil officers found the system found by De Boigne, worked so well that it has formed the basis of our revenue and civil administration to the present time.

Wellesley’s plan to take over these rich revenue yielding regions were not suddenly aroused by Sindia’s non-compliance with the subsidiary treaty offered by the Company, rather the plan of its annexation had been prepared two years before the actual event. In the official correspondences, we find a formulation of such plan as early as 1801 by the governor general’s brother Arthur Wellesley who submits it to Wellesley’s office by the September of the same year.

On 12th September 1803, an army of around ten thousand men under Gerad Lake crossed the banks of Yamuna after the French-Maratha forces were defeated the previous day; and with in a week restored Shah Alam as the titular king of Delhi, thus transferring from the French, the benefits of the nominal authority of the Mughal Badshah to themselves. The fall of Sindia’s fortress at Aligarh, Agra, Mathura and Bundelkhand during the same period brought to the British control a chain of forts that held Sindia’s frontier in the Indo-Gangetic plains and now Company’s new northwest frontier. In addition, the British signed treaties of subordination with all previous allies to the Marathas who paid tribute to them- the states of Rohillas, Jats,

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69 See Lovett, ‘When and Why Did We First Take Delhi?’, p. 45.  
70 Ibid., p. 45.
Bundelkhand and the Rajput states north of the Malwa plateau. It also gave them the right to intervene in case of any ‘dispute’ between various Maratha factions, as well as a strict restriction on them to recruit any ‘European’ in their administration-civil or military.

The war that was made to full fill Company’s quest of a ‘secure’ north-west frontier, in reality gave them more reasons to feel insecure. Now, they had in their possession, the fertile tract of the Ganga-Yamuna doab along with the exclusive rights of its navigation and various centers of trade, economic transactions and revenue collection.

**Conclusion**

In a period of high territorial expansion under Richard Wellesley, the Company State lived with ephemeral frontier on the Indian soil. The life of this ‘frontier’ was short lived because needs of territorial expansion were inextricably intertwined with the Company’s growing economic interests that could be fed by a fertile land economy of the Ganga-Yamuna doab. But the need of a new frontier did not depend on the promise of lucrative fiscal returns alone; its creation was also compelled to support the Company’s military base and to expand the existing one.

The Company’s obsession with ‘insecurity’ remained paramount during this period. This ‘insecurity’ syndrome did not confine the Company to its territorial limits; rather it allowed the Company to break through new spaces in its literal sense. This ‘break through’ was achieved by war on local polities which were plagued by traditional maladies of disunity, faction fighting, lack of clear organization and by the perils of the chaotic military labour market of north India. Wellesley’s explanation of the ‘insecurity’ to the Company’s frontiers in Awadh was not original in its nature. We know that before the British annexation of north India from the Marathas, the doab region was marred by Durrani invaders from the north-west in the eighteenth century. By competing with local powers, the Company had merely become part of the vulnerabilities that constituted the establishing of a state in upper Hindustan. What distinguished the Company’s reasoning of territorial aggrandizement was the context and the time in which Wellesley’s administration was located. It was the idea of
seeing war against local polities as an extension of war in Europe. Franco-phobia was not merely imagined; the governor-general could put to practice his offensive schemes that resulted as a counter measure against it.

Wellesley’s supporters argued that ‘security’ was essential to peaceful pursuit of trade and commerce which was officially the sole reason for East India Company’s presence in India. In helping to pursue this objective, Wellesley, in principal, was no different from his predecessors nor from his successors, under whose governor-generalship, the British territories continued to expand. But his exclusivity lay in the rapidity with which the Company’s north-west frontier expanded in his time and the way he made use of the existing non-existent French fear.