In retrospect, it appears that by 1796 the army of the East India Company had become the strongest in India. The Commander-in-Chief had been given already in 1770, a place in the Council of each of the Presidencies, and his position was next only to the Governor General or the Governor. This status was enjoyed by the Commanders-in-Chief throughout our period. But the status granted to the Commander-in-Chief was to be reconciled to the principle of keeping "our military power in subordination to the Civil".\(^1\)

Though perhaps the most important department, the army was meant to be kept subordinate to the civil government. The army could not be given an equal authority with the civil government; and the entire period under study witnessed a series of contests, which often resulted in the resignation or dismissal of the Commander-in-Chief. It can be safely concluded that the subordination of the army to civil authority was always intended and actually obtained. Thus the ultimate military authority was vested in the Governor General who was made responsible for both civil and military affairs.

However, the military authority of the Governor General was decentralised in the hands of the Commanders-in-Chief, who used it largely and effectively within their respective Presidencies. They exercised command and control through the divisional and brigade commanders; each with a specified

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military area under him. The military authorities, with their various departments, exercised command and control effectively within each Presidency.

This system of the Presidency armies, each under a Commander-in-Chief, assisted by subordinate officers, was aimed at giving 'political safety' to the British in India. This safety was further ensured by maintaining in India a certain percentage of European troops on the Company's establishment and also by employing the Crown's troops. The system of the contingent and the subsidiary troops gave the Company an additional security. The command, at all stages, was vested in the hands of the Europeans, irrespective of the cost of their maintenance. By 1859 the army had grown to four times its strength in 1736; the horse artillery, the Stud Department and the Commissariat or the Supply Department were added to the army. The practice of raising and disbancing the Golconda and the Irregular Cavalry according to the exigencies of times is not noticeable from the time Lord C.T. Metcalfe acted as Governor General in 1836. It is not generally realized that the problem of finance exerted a greater influence on the constitution of the army. Not only the practice of retrenchment but also the position in which a majority of natives composed the army owed itself to this very problem, for the maintenance of Europeans was four to five times as costly as the maintenance of natives. The institutions of pay, allowances, retirements, pensions and leave too had a very intimate connection with finances, and for sometime the government excused itself from
the responsibility of some of those and some other benevolent institutions. It is noticeable that the military funds, which were only partially supported by the government, were mainly responsible for running some important institutions.

The finances, however, were not so dictating with respect to officers. Even though the cost of their maintenance and initial training was high, they could not be dispensed with. In fact the Company trained her cadets at the military academy at Woolwich at tremendous cost in 1809, when the Company started her own military Seminary at Addiscombe.

The cadets were taken by selection; they were generally well trained to conduct the affairs of the Company efficiently. The natives, who could only rise to be Junior Commissioned Officers, were well trained by virtue of having served for long years in the ranks; there was no direct recruitment to those ranks. The European part of the army was recruited in the United Kingdom and the system served well. The system of recruitment of natives was also very satisfactory as large bodies of men came forward to seek employment with the Company, out of which physically robust persons were selected after a medical examination; and their muster rolls were so elaborate, and the channels of recruitment so well specified, that deserters could not easily escape apprehension.

The Bengal Presidency provided a larger portion of soldiery than the other two Presidencies, for a larger number of warlike races resided in Northern India. Bombay and Madras who could not get suitable soldiers from within their Presidencies, resorted to recruitment from Bengal. Inspite of the
best efforts of the authorities, recruitment in Bengal by other Presidencies could not be stopped. But from the physical standards in Bengal, it appears that the Bengal Army had more robust troops than the other two Presidencies, which ultimately gave rise to a feeling of superiority among the Bengal troops. Since the more robust types could be found only among high castes, the lower castes were excluded from being recruited in Bengal. Thus the Bengal native army was a clanship of high caste sepoys. The fact that the majority of the Bengal troops were recruited from the higher castes appears to be extremely relevant to the military uprising in Bengal in 1857. Indeed, the caste distinction and certain other religious sentiments of Sepoys sparked off many a mutiny during the Company’s rule.

Clanship of higher castes, however, was not the only cause, for after 1824, we find that the authority of the Commanding Officers, partly from their incompetence, was greatly curtailed. In minor cases the Commanding Officers before 1824 exercised their authority and judgement with great liberty. But with the advancement of times, the Commanding Officer’s authority was taken away, and discipline could not be enforced as effectively as previously. This was a great underlying cause of the Mutiny.

Nevertheless, the system of discipline was quite good. Therefore throughout rules for dealing with mutiny and desertion, and with major offences. The system and method of trial by Court Martial was well laid down and the limit of punishment for each type of offence was also specified. There were, however, alterations made by the confirming authority in the amount of
among other punishments, award of Corporal Punishments was popular before the time of Lord William Bentinck, but subsequently, their award was considerably restricted, for it was considered desirable that soldiers should be given a humane treatment so long as they were soldiers or should be dismissed from service if they were as bad as to be dealt by Corporal Punishments. The system of discipline being satisfactory in the Company's army, backed by an efficient organisation and administration, the troops could take the field like a well disciplined force.

Nevertheless, there was an increasing need to employ good tactics and well considered plans for deployment of troops on the battle field. For example, Cavalry as a supporting arm was neglected for quite some time and it was not till the Maratha Wars that Cavalry took a place of importance, as a supporting arm, with Artillery. Artillery cannonade at the commencement of most battles at all stages of the period under study was a common feature and various types of fire could be provided for supporting infantry. But the time and place of employment of Cavalry in battle was often changed; it made use of both the old and new tactics. The Infantry, however, achieved major surprises mainly by strict fire discipline and by force of bayonets. Whatever the combination of force fitted out for war at various stages, with the advancement of times a well considered tactical plan for a battle, and not sound leadership and valour alone, came to be considered indispensable for a battle to be successful. This was true both of sieges and battles on open fields.
The strategy of the British in India throughout this period was displayed in obviating unnecessary conflicts, and their tactics improved with the advancement of times. Lord Wellesley was the first man who thought of ruling India by stationing large bodies of troops with the Native Princes. Throughout the period under study, there were buffers, both within and without to take shocks of attacks by alien powers. The North West Frontier was made safe by a system of alliances and counter alliances, and in doing all that, important principles of strategy were displayed, such as, economy of force, maintenance of objective, rapid mobility, concentration and co-ordination, rapid mobility and intrigue. The British were indeed good strategists.

The success of the British in India in all their wars and nearly in all their battles was not a series of coincidences but a result largely of the fighting machinery which they had skilfully evolved to meet the demands of an expanding dominion.