

Hist 480  
Research essay

# The expansion of British India during the second Mahratta war

The strategic, logistic and political difficulties of the 2nd Anglo-Mahratta campaign of General Lake and Arthur Wellesley primarily against Dawlut Rao Scindia and Bhonsla Rajah of Berar

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This dissertation is the result of my own work. Material from the published or unpublished work of other historians used in the dissertation is credited to the author in the footnote references. The dissertation is approximately 10,000 words in length.'

## Abstract

The period of British colonialism and the expansion of British influence in India occurred over a number of years. This research paper focuses primarily on the period from 1798 to 1805, with particular reference to the period of conflict in 1803. While many aspects of this period are well known, a number of less well recognised influences have had considerable impact on the capacity for British expansionism.

This research paper examines the influence of the second Anglo-Mahratta wars, and in particular of the simultaneous campaigns of General Lake and Arthur Wellesley, primarily against Dawlut Rao Scindia and Bhonsla, Rajah of Berar. These campaigns have particular political and military significance, and mark a change in Anglo-Indian relations. The military strategies, intentions and outcomes of these are discussed, and recognition given to the innovations in regard to logistics and warfare. These elements were central to the expansion of British influence as they resulted in both the acceptance of the British as a great martial power, and helped to create a myth of the invincibility of British arms. From a political perspective these campaigns in particular also legitimised British power in India, as they defeated their rival powers, discredited the French, and brought the Moghul Emperor and his chief minister the Peshwa under British protection. The primary source material available for this research consisted of military despatches and documents of colonial government. These sources granted insight into the role of the British political and military bodies within India at a command level.

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## Glossary of terms

<b>Bazaar</b>	Market, often established within a military camp
<b>Berar</b>	A country of the Eastern Mahrattas, with a capital of Elichpoor
<b>Bhonsla/Bhoonslah</b>	The family name of the Rajah's of Berar, the full name and titles of the Rajah of Berar in 1803 were Semah Sahib Soubah Ragojee Bhoonslah
<b>Coolies</b>	Men and women of low caste who carry baggage with armies, porters and labourers
<b>Deccan</b>	South. Applied to the country South of the Nerbudda, and between that and the Kistna Rivers
<b>Escalade</b>	The scaling of fortified walls using ladders, as a form of military attack
<b>Havildar</b>	A non commissioned officer of native troops, equivalent rank of Sergeant
<b>Hindustan</b>	The country between the Indus, the Ganges and the Nerbudda with a boundary of the mountains of Thibet and Tartary
<b>Holkar</b>	The family name of one of the great Mahratta chiefs, whose territory was Malwa and whose capital was the city of Indore. The chief of which in 1803 was Jeswunt Rao Holkar
<b>Hyderbad</b>	The capital and seat of the Nizam
<b>Indore</b>	The Capital of Holkar in Malwa
<b>Jah</b>	The title of the Nizam and of Scindia
<b>Jemindar</b>	Junior rank of officer in the Native troops
<b>Malwa</b>	A country North of the Nerbudda, divided between Scindia and Holkar
<b>Mahratta Empire</b>	Founded in the seventeenth century, and nominally ruled by the Rajah of Sattarah, but in reality ruled through the body of the Peshwah, the chief magistrate of the Empire. The principle chiefs of which being in 1803, The Rajah of Sattarah, The Peshwa, The Rajah of Berar, Dowlut Rao Scindia, Jeswunt Rao Holkar and Anund Rao Guickwar

<b>Mogul</b>	The title of the Mahomedan emperors of Hindustan
<b>Mysore</b>	A country South of the Deccan, previously conquered from the Hindu Rajahs by Hyder Ali, conquered by the British and ostensibly restored to the ancient ruling family after the fall of Seringapatam
<b>Nizam</b>	The Soubahdar of the Deccan, reigning over a large portion of territory between the Wurda, Godavery, and Kistna Rivers. With a Capital at Hyderabad, the Nizam possessed in 1803 these names and titles, Nizam and Dowlut, Asoph Jah, Soubahdar of the Deccan, and was succeeded in 1803 by his son, Secundar Jah
<b>Killidar</b>	An Indian term for the governor of a fort
<b>Mahratta/Maratha</b>	A member of the princely and military castes of the former Hindu kingdom of Maharashtra in central India
<b>Peshwa/Peshwah/Peishwah</b>	Literally 'the first', the chief magistrate of the Mahratta Empire, whose capital and seat of government is at Poona
<b>Pettah</b>	A suburb or outwork of a fortified place with walls and a ditch
<b>Poona</b>	The capital and seat of government of the Peshwa
<b>Poonah</b>	The capital and seat of government of the Peshwa
<b>Rajah</b>	The Hindu title of a prince
<b>Scindia/Scindiah/Sindia</b>	The family name of the great Mahratta chief, jaghiridar of the empire, but afterwards independent. His territory was in Malwa, and his capital Ougein. His names and titles in 1803 were The Maharajah Ali Jah Dowlut Rao Scindia. Scindia had significantly increased his territories through conquest in Hindustan
<b>Sepoy</b>	Native troops

Definitions taken from the list of definitions of Indian terms provided in Colonel Gurdwood's account<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Dispatches of Field Marhsall the Duke of Wellington during his various campaigns in India, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, The Low Countries, and France, from 1799 – 1818*, Compiled from official and Authentic documents, by Lieut. Colonel Gurwood, First volume, London, John Murray, Albemarle Street 1837  
<https://archive.org/stream/dispatchesindex01welluoft#page/n7/mode/2up>

## Introduction

The second Mahratta war can be better described not as a single war, but as a series of actions between the East India Company (EIC) and Dawlut Rao Scindia, occasionally with the assistance of Bhonsla, Rajah of Berar, as well a separate campaign against Jeswant Rao Holkar. To call these varying stages a single war seems to only serve the purpose of making the Mahratta 'threat' appear more cohesive than indeed it was. The campaign against Scindia and Bhonsla was the most significant in terms of the forces committed by both the East India Company and Mahratta chiefs. This campaign resulted in the greatest loss of life and had the most significant lasting results. These simultaneous campaigns are the primary focus of this paper. Although the Mahrattas were at no point united, the concern that they may unite and repel British expansion was real. The political realities of the EIC and its relations with surrounding Indian states are central to an understanding of the Mahratta campaigns. The military aspects of these campaigns are of equal import and reveal how it was that a small number of British, with the assistance of a large number of sepoys, managed to defeat a larger number of native, often European trained, troops and armies in difficult terrain. These difficulties of terrain and supply, although significant, share an equal weight with the difficulties of actually engaging the enemy and bringing forces to battle. By understanding the complexities of military strategy and the intricacies of individual battles, their relevance to the construction of British influence becomes apparent. These, together with other military interventions including sieges reveal key aspects of the British approach in India, highlighting the impact not only of military supremacy, but the political benefits of demonstrable power. The actual campaigning itself together with the various battles fought illustrates the approach that culminated in the successful expansion of British India.

### **Historiography**

Most historiography relating to these campaigns has been either an almost hagiographical account of the life of public figures within British India, or broader accounts on either the military or political aspects of the campaign. However, of these accounts, many draw heavily from secondary sources, without using the available despatches. Within this paper secondary sources

are often compared with the despatches available, in order to further critique them. The military history of the campaign itself is placed alongside its political impact, in order to explore the relevance of military actions such as battles and sieges to the developing position and prestige of the British within India.

Interest in the topic has been sporadic, beginning from around forty years after the campaign itself was fought, often written by ex-civil-servants from the East India Company (EIC), and former officers. The accounts of Edward Thornton are an example of this. A diplomat, who wrote a comprehensive History of British India in 1842, provides insight into political intrigue which is often not included in the later sources.<sup>2</sup> Later historians can be seen to focus primarily on key figures and their individual influence. The majority of these focused on the characters of Arthur or Richard Wellesley. Arthur Wellesley was a particularly popular figure for a number of almost hagiographical texts, such as Arthur Bryant's, *The Great Duke or The Invincible General*<sup>3</sup> and Richard Holmes *Wellington, The Iron Duke*.<sup>4</sup> Bryant, in particular glorifies Arthur Wellesley and his British troops with quite colourful language, while neglecting to mention even the presence of sepoy troops at the battle of Assaye, apart from a brief reference to native cavalry.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, many accounts make light of the sepoy contribution, although more coherent attempts to understand the position and role of the native troops, have emerged in recent years, including the works of Douglas Peers who discusses the construction of the Bengal army<sup>6</sup>. A great number of secondary sources appear to draw where possible from the accounts of Lieut. Colonel Gurwood. Gurwood, having served with Arthur Wellesley, compiled a selection of Wellesley's very detailed despatches, the first and second volumes of which are from his time in India.<sup>7</sup> Information on other key figures from the campaign is less readily available. The campaigns of

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<sup>2</sup> Edward Thornton, *History of British Empire in India III*, (London, Wm. H. Allen and Co., 1842)

<sup>3</sup> Arthur Bryant, *The Great Duke or The Invincible General* (London, Collins, 1971)

<sup>4</sup> Richard Holmes, *Wellington, The Iron Duke*, (London, Harper Collins, 2003)

<sup>5</sup> Bryant, *The Great Duke or The Invincible General*, pp. 53 – 56.

<sup>6</sup> Douglas M. Peers, *The Habitual Nobility of Being: British Officers and the Social Construction of the Bengal Army in the Early Nineteenth Century*, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 25, No.3 1991, pp. 545-569

<sup>7</sup> *The Despatches of Field Marhsall the Duke of Wellington during his various campaigns in India, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, The Low Countries, and France, from 1799 – 1818*, Compiled by Lieut. Colonel Gurwood, vol 1, (London, John Murray, Albemarle Street 1837)

Lieut. General Lake lack the detailed compilation of despatches, and so the secondary sources have less to draw from, and are less prolific. Some of Lake's despatches are, however, available within collections of the despatches of Richard Wellesley.<sup>8</sup> The more recent research on the period often offers very detailed accounts, such as those of Jac Weller, who notes his own experiences of the terrain in its present state when discussing a battlefield, and reveals understanding gained from personal examination of battlefields.<sup>9</sup> However, in some cases these accounts can suffer from use of secondary sources. John Pemble, who provides excellent accounts and summations, mentions a critique of General Lake in which he mistakes Lake's actions at the Battle of Laswari for those of the Battle of Delhi.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, very few of these secondary sources are written from any perspective other than that of British public figures, or English speaking academics. As such, the scope of this research paper is limited by both an Anglo centric and analytical base of sources.

The available primary sources are similarly Anglo-centric. However, as they were in several cases written by the policy makers and the officers involved, they are still of exceptional value. The despatches of Arthur Wellesley<sup>11</sup> provide the bulk of the figures used within this research paper, as Arthur Wellesley kept meticulous count of his forces and supplies. In addition, Wellesley's despatches provide a first-hand account of the major battles he led, from a command perspective. Likewise the despatches, correspondence and formal documents of Richard Wellesley, are used within this research paper to provide insight into the political aspects of the conflict. These are particularly useful as they include both formal documents such as treaties and similar official papers, as well as the correspondence and perspective of the Governor General of British India. Richard Wellesley's correspondence<sup>12</sup> also provides some of the written accounts of

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<sup>8</sup> *A Selection of Despatches Treaties & Other Papers of the Marquess Wellesley*, Edited by Sidney J. Owen, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1877)

<sup>9</sup> Jac Weller, *Wellington in India*, (London, Longman group LTD, 1972)

<sup>10</sup> John Pemble, *Resources and Techniques in the Second Maratha War*, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 2 1976, p. 399.

<sup>11</sup> *The Dispatches of Field Marhsall the Duke of Wellington during his various campaigns in India, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, The Low Countries, and France, from 1799 – 1818*, Compiled by Lieut. Colonel Gurwood, vol 1, (London, John Murray, Albemarle Street 1837)

<sup>12</sup> *A Selection of Despatches Treaties & Other Papers of the Marquess Wellesley*, Edited by Sidney J. Owen, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1877)

others who served in the campaign, most notably the despatches sent by General Lake. Arthur Wellesley's introduction to the compilation of Richard Wellesley's correspondence provides insight into how some among the officer class viewed the actions of Richard Wellesley, and the judgements placed upon those actions. These primary sources offer several useful perspectives although they lack any significant detail regarding the lives of non-officers under his command; as they are compilations some information will have been omitted.

In light of the sources available, it can be expected that the views presented within this research paper may be somewhat skewed in favour of glorifying these key figures, as other historians have clearly done. However, that is not the intent of this research paper, the goal of which is to attempt to present the campaign from both the perspectives of its political causes and impacts, and its strategic trials and to reveal the impact of overcoming these various issues. In this manner the factors which culminated in the expansion of British India shall be revealed.

## Political issues and Ideologies

### **Political context**

The political climate in India at the beginning of the Mahratta campaign was a primary factor which led to the expansion of British influence within India. Of what had been the four major powers within India, the Mahrattas were the only remaining state which had the ability to oppose British expansion.<sup>13</sup> The state of Mysore had fallen to the EIC, with its ruler the Tippoo Sultan defeated and slain defending his capital city of Seringapatam.<sup>14</sup> The Nizam of Hyderabad had been weakened by previous encounters with the Mahrattas and had aligned himself with the EIC, and so was effectively under British dominion.<sup>15</sup> The Mahrattas themselves were not aligned as a cohesive front against the EIC. The Peshwa, who had nominal rule of the Mahrattas although in practice little power at all, had sought British aid in being returned to power, rather than risk being permanently supplanted by one of the stronger Mahrattas such as Scindia, or Holkar.<sup>16</sup> Dawlut Rao Scindia's relationship with the British was not a comfortable one, although he had agreed to assist the EIC against the rebel Dhoondiah Vagh in Mysore,<sup>17</sup> there was little trust between him and the EIC.<sup>18</sup> The Mahratta Jeswant Rao Holkar, being a Mahratta in the traditional sense, relied on the looting and raiding of his cavalry, an approach incompatible with British rule; Holkar, however, also had his own quarrels with Scindia.<sup>19</sup> Bhonsla, Rajah of Berar, at the beginning of the Mahratta conflict was not overtly hostile to the EIC's actions.<sup>20</sup> The fourth Mahratta Gaikwar of Baroda had previously suffered at the hands of Scindia and the Peshwa, and was not involved in the fighting against the EIC at any point.<sup>21</sup> The inability of the Mahrattas to

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<sup>13</sup> Wellesley, *Introduction, Memorandum on Marquess Wellesley's Government of India*, p. ci; Ramsay Muir, *The making of British India 1756 – 1858, Described in a series of Dispatches, Treaties, Statutes, and other documents, Selected and edited with introduction and notes*, (London, Manchester university press, 1915) pp. 199 – 203.

<sup>14</sup> Weller, *Wellington in India*, pp. 80 – 81.

<sup>15</sup> Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, p. 81.

<sup>16</sup> Griffiths, *The British Impact on India*, p. 91.

<sup>17</sup> Huw, J. Davies, *Wellington's First Command: The Political and Military Campaign Against Dhoondiah Vagh, February – September 1800*, *Modern Asian Studies*, 44, 5, 2010, 1087 – 1090

<sup>18</sup> Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, p. 73.

<sup>19</sup> Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, p. 27.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* p. 27.

form a cohesive front against the EIC played entirely into Richard Wellesley's policy of utilising Indian rulers to defeat one another.<sup>22</sup> Many of the minor Mahratta chieftains aided the EIC against Scindia.<sup>23</sup> The EIC as it was at the beginning of this period of conflict, would have been unable to combat a cohesive front from the native peoples of India.

British influence in India at the beginning of the period of expansion marked by Lord Mornington's appointment in 1798, was limited to three key areas. The British held Bengal, the largest and the most profitable of the British held territories, which they governed from Calcutta.<sup>24</sup> From 1796 Bengal possessed a standing army consisting of three battalions of European infantry, three regiments of European artillery, ten regiments of native cavalry and twenty-four battalions of native infantry.<sup>25</sup> The British also governed Madras from Fort George, although this was a much smaller territory on the Coromandel coast.<sup>26</sup> This territory possessed two battalions of European infantry, two regiments of European artillery, fifteen companies of native artillery, four regiments of native cavalry and twenty-two battalions of native infantry.<sup>27</sup> The third area of British influence was Bombay on the west coast of India, its influence limited to the city itself and the immediately surrounding area.<sup>28</sup> The army of Bombay was the smallest of the three British forces, consisting only of eight battalions of native infantry, and which relied on local allies to supply both cavalry and artillery.<sup>29</sup> These three territories each possessed a governor, with the governor of Bengal as Governor General.<sup>30</sup> These territories were held by the EIC from the Moghul Emperor, although by the Mahratta war this relationship was no longer relevant to either party.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, p. 46.

<sup>23</sup> Edwardes, *Glorious Sahibs, The romantic as empire-builder 1799 – 1838*, p. 39; J, Malcolm, *Major Malcolm to Lord Clive, Camp near Meritch, 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 1803, 'The Dispatches of Field Marhsall the Duke of Wellington during his various campaigns in India, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, The Low Countries, and France, from 1799 – 1818' Compiled by Lieut. Colonel Gurwood*, first volume, (London, John Murray, Albemarle Street 1837) pp. 462 – 466.  
<https://archive.org/stream/dispatchesindex01welluoft#page/n7/mode/2up>

<sup>24</sup> Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, p. 44.

<sup>25</sup> Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, p. 45.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p. 45.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. 45.

<sup>28</sup> Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, p. 45; Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, p. 22.

<sup>29</sup> Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, p. 45.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p. 45.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 44.

## Richard Wellesley, Lord Mornington

The character of Richard Wellesley, the Governor General of British India, Lord Mornington is central to any understanding of the political climate within India, and this period of British colonial expansion. Within this essay Richard Wellesley is referred to as the Governor General of British India, as opposed to Governor General of India, which, although often written as his title, is a presumption even by the end of his career. Richard Wellesley has often been referred to as India's first British imperialist,<sup>32</sup> and is responsible to a significant extent for the expansion of British influence in India.

Richard Wellesley was one of three Wellesley brothers to serve in India. He was the eldest, followed by Arthur Wellesley, later to become the Duke of Wellington and Henry Wellesley, who was to serve as Richard's personal secretary.<sup>33</sup> Richard having already held several prominent roles as a public figure, was appointed Governor General of British India in May of 1798.<sup>34</sup> During this time, the costs of maintaining the EIC expenses in administrating its Indian territories was strongly debated within Britain, and several viewpoints emerged in parliament and among the Company's directors.<sup>35</sup>

Relevant to these opinions was the extreme cost of governing and administering the EIC Indian territories. Arthur Wellesley relates these costs as having been 8,178,626£<sup>36</sup>, with a deficiency from the Indian revenues during times of peace of 332,530£. Arthur Wellesley also identifies the cost of maintaining the British garrisons as 1,996,487£ at Fort William, 1,868,498£ at Fort St George and 641,469£ in Bombay. Over half the cost of administering these Indian territories was that of maintaining standing forces, which, in spite of this significant cost, would still require

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<sup>32</sup>Sir Percival Griffiths, *The British Impact on India* (London, Macdonald and Co, 1952) p. 88.

<sup>33</sup> P.E. Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, (London, Bell and Sons LTD, 1929) pp. 15-16.

<sup>34</sup>Arthur Wellesley, *Introduction, Memorandum on Marquess Wellesley's Government of India*, in *A Selection of Despatches Treaties & Other Papers of the Marquess Wellesley*, ed. by Sidney J. Owen, (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1877) p. lxxiii.

<sup>35</sup> Thornton, *History of British Empire in India III*, pp. 2 – 4.

<sup>36</sup> Arthur Wellesley's account uses the lower case *l* as the pound symbol, I have updated it to its current usage.

around six months to ready for full service in an emergency<sup>37</sup>. As a result of this expense there was an opinion that the EIC should revert to their role as traders with China, and abandon attempts at Indian administration. Another view was that the EIC should continue to hold and administer the territories they already controlled, but expand no further.<sup>38</sup> These opinions were not solely based on economic justifications however, as there was also moral opposition to British colonial expansion.<sup>39</sup>

Despite these debates, Richard Wellesley remained a proponent of policy supporting the expansion of British rule within India.<sup>40</sup> Both Richard and Arthur Wellesley stress the threat of French colonialism. Richard Wellesley used this as justification for an expansionist policy and to justify not only the Mysore war<sup>41</sup> which granted the EIC a substantive increase in lands and influence, but also as a primary justification of his campaign against the Mahrattas,<sup>42</sup> and for demanding the Nizam of Hyderabad remove French officers from his army and replace them with British officers.<sup>43</sup> Whether or not this French threat was overstated is an issue of contention, as current historiography appears largely to support that by the ascendance of Richard Wellesley, the French were able to bring very little power to bear within India<sup>44</sup>. That is not to say that there were no French designs on Indian territories, but that they were not in a strong enough position to achieve their goals.<sup>45</sup> It is often stated that Richard Wellesley merely used fear of French Colonialism as a convenient excuse, this rather cynical view appears to do Richard Wellesley a disservice, as his correspondence provides evidence that he considered the French to be a

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<sup>37</sup> Wellesley, *Introduction, Memorandum on Marquess Wellesley's Government of India*, p. lxxiv.

<sup>38</sup> Gordon Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, (London Hambledon and London, 2001) p. 43.

<sup>39</sup> Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, pp. 37 – 40.

<sup>40</sup> Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, p. 43.

<sup>41</sup> Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, p. 44.

<sup>42</sup> Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, p. 212; Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, pp. 45 – 47.

<sup>43</sup> Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, p.69; Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, pp. 80 – 81.

<sup>44</sup> Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, p. 43.

<sup>45</sup> Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, pp. 30 - 31.

legitimate concern.<sup>46</sup> The views of Richard Wellesley can be seen as a driving force for the expansion of British Influence within India.<sup>47</sup>

### **British relationships with native rulers**

Although the British nominally held their power from the Moughul Emperor Shah Allam, it is clear that the position of the emperor was by this point almost entirely ceremonial.<sup>48</sup> Shah Allam had in fact been captured and blinded previously by Gholaum Kaudir Khan, a Rohilla Chief. Shah Allam had been in a sense rescued by Scindia, but his position was still in effect little more than a prisoner.<sup>49</sup> As a result the Peshwa ruled nominally in his stead, although his position was little better.<sup>50</sup> At the end of the wars against Scindia, Bhonsla and Holkar both the position of the Peshwa and that of Shah Hallam relied on British protection and support.<sup>51</sup> Shah Allam attempted, without success, to maintain his nominal role as overlord by granting General Lake the state titles of 'the Sword of the State, the Hero of the Land, the Lord of the Age, and Victorious in War'.<sup>52</sup> In this manner Shah Allam can be seen to be attempting to include the British conquerors as subjects of his empire, as the Moghuls had often done.<sup>53</sup> However, it was clear that as he accepted British protection, he was no longer an independent ruler, and any claim that the British held their territories from the Moghul Empire were effectively quashed.<sup>54</sup>

Power within the Mahratta confederacy was rarely stable, and this allowed the EIC to expand without facing unified opposition. The relationship between the EIC and the Peshwa, Baji Rao

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<sup>46</sup> Richard Wellesley, *'Minute of the Governor-General in the Secret Department'*, *Despatches of the Marquess Wellesley*, pp. 11 – 57; Richard Wellesley, *'The Earl of Mornington to Tippoo Sultan'*, *Despatches of the Marquess Wellesley*, pp. 57 – 59; Richard Wellesley, *'Treaty of Bassein'*, *Despatches of the Marquess Wellesley*, pp. 233 – 244; Richard Wellesley, *'The Earl of Mornington to the Honourable the Court of Directors'*, *Despatches of the Marquess Wellesley* pp. 96 – 105.

<sup>47</sup> Griffiths, *The British Impact on India*, p. 88.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 45.

<sup>49</sup> Edward Thornton, *History of British Empire in India III*, (London, Wm. H. Allen and Co., 1842) pp. 322 – 324.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p. 323.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p. 326.

<sup>52</sup> Michael Edwardes, *Glorious Sahibs, The romantic as empire-builder 1799 – 1838* (London, Eyre and Spottiswood, 1968) p. 39.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. p. 39.

<sup>54</sup> Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, p. 226.

was complex and had been controversial at points. On the fourteenth of October 1801<sup>55</sup> Scindia and Holkar fought in order to expand their control over the Peshwa, a contest which Scindia won, and which reduced Bajji Rao to little more than a figurehead, and in effect a prisoner.<sup>56</sup> However in October 1802, Holkar with forces often commanded by British officers, defeated both the armies of the Peshwa and of Scindia and placed Amrut Rao on the throne.<sup>57</sup> Bajji Rao applied for help from Lord Mornington, offering to accept any and all terms from the EIC for his protection and return to power.<sup>58</sup> Lord Mornington, in spite of advice from others to let the Mahrattas fight amongst themselves, or attempt to gain support of some of the other Mahrattas or even to decline support to Bajji Rao and instead support Amrut Rao, who was by all accounts a more competent man,<sup>59</sup> elected instead to assist Bajji Rao.<sup>60</sup> The Peshwa did not request British assistance entirely of his own volition. The reports of Major John Malcolm reveal that he advised waiting until the Peshwa feared for his life before offering assistance, to make the most political gain.<sup>61</sup> This culminated in the signing of the Treaty of Bassein on December 31<sup>st</sup> 1802.<sup>62</sup> Several sources, more likely to glorify the Wellesley brothers,<sup>63</sup> present a perspective, without any recognition that the Peshwa was under significant duress. Whether this was a deliberate omission on the part of those writing, or just not considered worthy of attention is unclear. However it seems entirely relevant that the plight of the Peshwa was in some part by the design of the EIC and its agents,<sup>64</sup> and that their support of the Peshwa was not as altruistic as some historians have suggested.<sup>65</sup> The terms of the treaty itself reveal exactly how altruistic were the motives of the EIC. The result of which being that the Peshwa would allow for and maintain six battalions of EIC soldiers within his territories, would accept British mediation, and would not

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<sup>55</sup> Weller, *Wellington in India*, p. 132.

<sup>56</sup> Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, p. 189.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* p. 189.

<sup>58</sup> Griffiths, *The British Impact on India*, p. 91.

<sup>59</sup> Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, pp. 189 – 190.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* p. 191.

<sup>61</sup> U.N. Chakravorty, *Anglo-Maratha Relations and Malcolm 1798 – 1830*, (New Delhi, Associated publishing house, 1937) pp. 20 – 23.

<sup>62</sup> Richard Wellesley, '*Treaty of Bassein*', *Despatches of the Marquess Wellesley* pp. 233 – 244.

<sup>63</sup> Arthur Bryant, *The Great Duke or The Invincible General*, (London, Collins, 1971) pp. 46 – 47.

<sup>64</sup> Chakravorty, *Anglo-Maratha Relations and Malcolm 1798 – 1830*, pp. 20 – 23.

<sup>65</sup> Bryant, *The Great Duke or The Invincible General*, pp. 46 – 47.

enter into diplomatic talks with other powers Native or otherwise, and that many of his rights would be transferred to the company.<sup>66</sup>

The political power of the British was further strengthened with the return of the Peshwa to power, by British force of arms under British protection. In 1803 it was agreed that the Peshwa, Bajji Rao, was to be restored to his seat of power at Poona, and Arthur Wellesley was tasked with leading an army through Mahratta territory in order to facilitate this.<sup>67</sup> The force, which is revealed by Wellesley's correspondence, consisted of 10,617 men.<sup>68</sup> Arthur Wellesley's force made it through the Deccan and reached Poona on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April, the Peshwa reached Poona on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May<sup>69</sup> after Arthur Wellesley declared it safe for him to arrive.<sup>70</sup> On returning the Peshwa to his position, he was declared as 'his Highness, Bajji Rao, Pandit Pradhan Bahadur.', the title of Peshwa conspicuous by its absence.<sup>71</sup> The size of Wellesley's force, and the fact that it was sent separately to the person of the Peshwa himself indicates that there was some concern that this move would be opposed. It was hoped that the other Mahratta leaders would accept the treaty of Bassein and not move to obstruct it, Wellesley was communicating with Holkar at the time by correspondence.<sup>72</sup> However Holkar, Scindia and Bhonsla all opposed this treaty, Scindia on the grounds that, as one of the signatories of the treaty of Salbai, which he claimed to still be in force, he had a right to be consulted.<sup>73</sup> Scindia and Bhonsla then combined their armies,

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<sup>66</sup> M.S. Narvane, *Battles of the Honourable East India Company: Making of the Raj* (New Delhi, A.P.H Publishing corporation, 2006) pp. 65 – 66.  
[http://books.google.co.in/books?id=bxsa3jtHoCEC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.co.in/books?id=bxsa3jtHoCEC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)

<sup>67</sup> Narvane, *Battles of the Honourable East India Company: Making of the Raj* pp. 66 – 67; Wellesley, *To Lieut. Colonel Close, Seringapatam, 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1803, Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, First volume, pp. 390 – 393.

<sup>68</sup> J. Stuart, *To Major General The Hon. A. Wellesley. Headquarters, Camp at Hurrayhur, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 1803, Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, First volume, pp. 421 – 426.

<sup>69</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To Lieut. General Stuart, Camp at Poonah, 14<sup>th</sup> may, 1803, Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol. 1, pp. 568 – 570.

<sup>70</sup> Narvane, *Battles of the Honourable East India Company: Making of the Raj*, p. 67.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 67 – 68.

<sup>72</sup> Wellesley, Arthur, *To Major Kirkpatrick, Camp at Poonah, 13<sup>th</sup> may, 1803, Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, First volume, p. 567.

<sup>73</sup> Narvane, *Battles of the Honourable East India Company: Making of the Raj* pp. 65 – 66.

and the British, after failing to convince Scindia, Bhonsla and Holkar to accept the treaty of Bassein, declared war.<sup>74</sup>

### **The threat of French colonialism in India**

The primary justification for the period of expansion which culminated in the Mahratta campaign was the perceived risk of French colonialism. As there had previously been significant contest in India between the French and British, this threat occupied a place of concern in the colonial British mind-set.<sup>75</sup> That this threat was taken seriously is made clear through the consistent demands of the EIC to the major powers in India to remove all French officers from their employ.<sup>76</sup> When this condition was not met it was often used as a justification for war, this was one of the factors inducing the British to go to war with Scindia, as there were voiced concerns that his infantry was trained by French officers<sup>77</sup>. The Mysore war against the Tippoo Sultan was influenced by claims that the Tippoo was seeking a French alliance, and that the French in Mauritius had offered this,<sup>78</sup> with details being publicly proclaimed.<sup>79</sup> Even those ostensibly allies of the EIC were viewed with suspicion until they removed French influence from their ranks. A notable example of this being the case of the Nizam of Hyderabad, although it is reported that he also was concerned about the growing power of his French officers, and desired their removal.<sup>80</sup> The fears of the Nizam, were based on the incompatibility of his rule with the ideals of many of the French officers. Some of these French officers marched the Nizam's troops under the Tricolour. Even the Nizam was concerned that the revolutionary ideals of liberty and equality may lead his French officers to turn his own soldiers against him.<sup>81</sup> It is commonly argued that this French threat was overplayed, and that even with Napoleon's plans to invade India from Egypt,

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<sup>74</sup> Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, pp. 209 – 212.

<sup>75</sup> Weller, *Wellington in India*, pp. 20 – 21; Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, p. 32.

<sup>76</sup> Sir Alfred Lyall, *The Rise and Expansion of the British Dominion in India* (London, John Murray, 1919) P. 250

<sup>77</sup> *Wellington at War 1794 – 1815, A Selection of his Wartime Letters Edited and Introduced by*, Antony Brett James, (London, Macmillan and Co LTD, 1961) pp 71 – 72

<sup>78</sup> Edwardes, *Glorious Sahibs, The romantic as empire-builder 1799 – 1838*, p. 21.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* p. 21.

<sup>80</sup> Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, pp. 45 – 47.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* p. 47.

the actual chance of French success was severely limited.<sup>82</sup> However, although the French threat came to nothing, this does not mean the threat itself was not significant, simply that the measures taken by the EIC were effective.<sup>83</sup> In the case of war, it is unwise to underestimate any foe, and the cost of underestimating the French, so successful in Europe, could have been devastating.<sup>84</sup>

### **Political controversies**

The EIC was also not wholly cohesive. As a result of what Lord Mornington considered to be a slight to his reputation, he attempted to resign and return to England in 1803<sup>85</sup>. This was the result of a scandal relating to the finances allotted to his brother Arthur Wellesley as a political officer. Lord Mornington replied rather tartly to suggestions that he cut some of the money from Arthur Wellesley's expenses that if it was believed that the Governor General of India could use his influence for the betterment of his family then they had best recall both himself and Arthur Wellesley immediately.<sup>86</sup> Although the matter was dropped Lord Mornington's actions were far from universally supported. After the effective rout of Monson's forces by Holkar<sup>87</sup>, the EIC's directors were able to force Lord Mornington's withdrawal from India in 1805.<sup>88</sup> Lord Mornington returned to England, where the directors of the EIC attempted to colour him as an uncontrollable despot, however, he was able to adequately defend himself and was victorious in parliament by majority.<sup>89</sup> Lord Mornington was not to return to India as Governor General, and his time in India can be seen as the height of his achievement, as he was instrumental to the expansion of British India.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid. p. 43.

<sup>83</sup> Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, p. 31.

<sup>84</sup> Lyall, *The Rise and Expansion of the British Dominion in India*, p. 253.

<sup>85</sup> Thornton, *History of British Empire in India III*, pp. 243 – 245.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. pp. 243 – 245.

<sup>87</sup> Edwardes, *Glorious Sahibs, The romantic as empire-builder 1799 – 1838* p. 49.

<sup>88</sup> Muir, *The making of British India 1756 – 1858*, pp. 204 – 205; Griffiths, *The British Impact on India* p. 91.

<sup>89</sup> Brian Gardner, *The East India Company* (London, Granada publishing, 1971) p. 156.

<sup>90</sup> Griffiths, *The British Impact on India* p. 91.

## Logistical difficulties faced by British forces campaigning in India

The logistical difficulties which an army styled in the European fashion faced campaigning in India were a significant hurdle to the expansion of British India. The greatest of these issues was the problem of supplying an army and all of its camp followers. There was a necessity for a significant number of bullocks to tow field guns and carry supplies, and also to carry fodder for the bullocks themselves. In the case of the war against the Mahrattas, there was the risk that the Mahrattas would fight as they always had, with an entire army mounted, cutting off supply lines and adopting a scorched earth policy as they withdrew. In this way, they avoided the need to maintain their own supply lines, and were able to utilise local resources then destroy these so that the enemy had no access to them. Added to this threat was the danger of campaigning too long, as to campaign in the monsoon season meant sickness and movement slowed and often halted, with many rivers as good as impassable.

### **Supply lines and Bullocks**

In order to maintain a campaign involving large bodies of infantry, a clear supply line is essential. The geographical features in the Indian setting made this particularly difficult. The campaigns led by the EIC and in particular by Arthur Wellesley in these conflicts attempted to overcome some of these limitations. The use of large numbers of bullocks to transport food, supplies and field guns, although not new, saw these utilised much more efficiently.<sup>91</sup> This has often been argued as a result of Arthur Wellesley's professionalisation of the bullock train and suppliers contracted to provide grain.<sup>92</sup> More recent historiography argues against the perception of Arthur Wellesley as 'The logistical architect of the British Indian army'.<sup>93</sup> This was in recognition that the actions of Arthur Wellesley, in attempting to impose stricter rules and penalties on suppliers and labourers, in many ways showed something of a lack of understanding relating to

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<sup>91</sup> Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, p. 65.

<sup>92</sup> Randolph G. S. Cooper, *Beyond Beasts and Bullion: Economic Considerations in Bombay's Military Logistics, 1803*, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Feb., 1999) 159.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* p. 159.

the business culture within the region.<sup>94</sup> This is evident when Wellesley's demands were met not with acceptance, but responses designed to make them practicable.<sup>95</sup> The arguments provided against the value of Arthur Wellesley's influence are opposed by a significant number of secondary sources, which attempt to paint Arthur Wellesley as a logistical and military genius.<sup>96</sup> It is unclear which are more compelling, as the British military within India was able to prepare for campaign more quickly under Arthur Wellesley than previously. Most dissent focuses on the period shortly before the Mahratta war in 1802. It can be argued that focus ought to be placed on Wellesley's first independent command against Dhoondia Singh in Mysore, where his theories on war and supply were largely developed and tested.<sup>97</sup>

Regardless of whether or not this system of supply was revolutionary or new, it was certainly effective. This allowed for the British forces to overcome a key difficulty regarding the expansion of British influence, through allowing for faster travel. This limited the concern of having supply lines cut and so lowered the risk of an embarrassing defeat. It is claimed that twelve of the heavier bullocks bred from the farms of the Tippoo Sultan were able to transport six pounder field guns faster than the infantry could march.<sup>98</sup> Wellesley's supply columns contained between six and eight thousand bullocks, each of which carried one hundred and twenty pounds of supplies which covering eight miles in a day.<sup>99</sup> These columns were well defended to deter raiding of the supply lines by Mahratta forces.<sup>100</sup> Wellesley also banned officer's baggage wagons so that officers would have to carry their supplies on more mobile pack animals, and chose not to bring the heavier siege artillery which would have slowed progress.<sup>101</sup> The result of these measures allowed Wellesley's forces to march at around twenty miles a day, a significant improvement on previous campaigns where British soldiers had only been able to manage five.<sup>102</sup> Wellesley's own

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid. p. 162.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. p. 160 – 164.

<sup>96</sup> Davies, *Wellington's First Command: The Political and Military Campaign Against Dhoondiah Vagh*, 1092 – 1113; Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, p. 71.

<sup>97</sup> Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, p. 65.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. p. 71.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. p. 70.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. p. 70.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p. 70.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. pp. 70 – 71.

notes relating to his provisions are very clear and detailed, including numbers of bullocks required with which supplies, as well as requests relating to the number of coolies to load and unload supplies.<sup>103</sup>

### **The problem of infantry**

A serious logistical concern was that, as the majority of the British led force was infantry, they would be entirely unable to confront the more agile forces of the Mahrattas.<sup>104</sup> The Mahrattas traditional method of warfare was large amounts of light cavalry, able to raid and withdraw at leisure.<sup>105</sup> Described as natural *guerrilla* fighters,<sup>106</sup> the forces of the Mahrattas were expected to take something of a scorched earth tactic, burning supplies and withdrawing all the while raiding and living off the terrain, and so fighting a war of attrition.<sup>107</sup> The Mahratta Holkar did indeed do this in the later conflict, and as a result gained a significant victory over the forces of Monson.<sup>108</sup> The British led forces were poorly suited to combat a traditional Mahratta army. The actions taken to counteract this by the army of Arthur Wellesley were to carry less in the way of supplies and baggage, and to only take comparatively light field guns.<sup>109</sup> The forces of General Lake, however, had less to be concerned about in this regard, as they were to march upon fortified cities, like Delhi, against a force primarily consisting of French trained infantry, and as such limited in the same manner.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To Lieut Colonel Close, Camp at Eroor, North bank of the Kistna 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1803*. *Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington* vol 1, pp. 459 – 460; Arthur Wellesley, *Memorandum for Captain Moor, Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington* vol 1, pp. 461 – 462.

<sup>104</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *'To Lieut -Colonel Thomas Munro, Camp, 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1803'*, *Wellington at War*, pp. 83 – 84.

<sup>105</sup> Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, p. 73.

<sup>106</sup> Edwardes, *Glorious Sahibs, The romantic as empire-builder 1799 – 1838*, p. 36.

<sup>107</sup> Pemble, *Resources and Techniques in the Second Maratha War*, pp. 375 – 404.

<sup>108</sup> Edwardes, *Glorious Sahibs, The romantic as empire-builder 1799 – 1838*, p. 49.

<sup>109</sup> Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, p. 70.

<sup>110</sup> Edwardes, *Glorious Sahibs, The romantic as empire-builder 1799 – 1838*, p. 37.

## Mahratta advantages

The cavalry of the Mahrattas had the reputation of being fierce and mobile. Not known for supply lines, Mahratta armies tended to live off the land, taking what they needed as they travelled<sup>111</sup>. It was considered remarkable by many of the native population that the British forces did not raid as they marched to fight the Mahrattas, but instead paid locally for supplies.<sup>112</sup> The traditional advantage of the Mahratta army, was its large number of cavalry; these forces were not bogged down by artillery and infantry, but were capable of advancing and withdrawing at speed.<sup>113</sup> In this manner, a Mahratta army could string out an invading army until it was weakened by the monsoon season, then harry it as it withdrew inflicting significant casualties. However, several of the Mahrattas had ceased to rely on this traditional method of fighting. Scindia and Bhonsla had adopted the use of large bodies of European trained infantry, and large numbers of heavy cannon.<sup>114</sup> Even Holkar, often considered to have fought in a more traditional manner, had significant numbers of infantry and artillery with which he inflicted the most damage on his weakened enemies.<sup>115</sup> This severely limited the Mahrattas ability to avoid the British forces and harry their supply lines, and indeed convinced the Mahrattas to meet the British led forces in battle.<sup>116</sup> Arthur Wellesley spoke highly of the Mahratta infantry, noting that he considered them to be the best he had seen in India, other than the British led forces. But De Boigne, the French officer who founded Scindia's infantry brigades, was noted to have advised Scindia to not attempt to meet the British led forces in battle in their own manner.<sup>117</sup> Many historians have claimed, that by improving their infantry, the Mahrattas severely weakened their cavalry and so lost their traditional advantage.<sup>118</sup> However, the Mahratta infantry, even that of Holkar, can be seen to have significantly outperformed their cavalry of the Mahrattas in the conflict.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid. p. 36.

<sup>112</sup> Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, p. 72.

<sup>113</sup> Pemble, *Resources and Techniques in the Second Maratha War*, pp. 375 – 376; Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, pp. 230 – 234.

<sup>114</sup> Edwardes, *Glorious Sahibs, The romantic as empire-builder 1799 – 1838* p. 36.

<sup>115</sup> Pemble, *Resources and Techniques in the Second Maratha War*, p. 377.

<sup>116</sup> Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, p. 232.

<sup>117</sup> Pemble, *Resources and Techniques in the Second Maratha War*, p. 377.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. P. 376.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. p. 378.

## Camp followers

A further problem of maintaining a campaign in the European style, was the issue of camp followers, which slowed a force and required supplies. Numerous accounts are given regarding camp followers and the veritable bazaar which they set up alongside the forces on campaign. This was particularly evident with the Mahratta forces, although similarly when British forces halted, merchants and suppliers would also set up.<sup>120</sup> It is stated that for every soldier, there were around ten non-combatant followers.<sup>121</sup> These camp followers included merchants, the wives of officers and soldiers, grooms and grass cutters for the cavalry and those who handled and led the bullocks.<sup>122</sup> However, with the strict measures imposed by Arthur Wellesley, these additional bodies did not prevent the British forces from making good time.

## The Monsoon

Any force campaigning in India during this time, had to be very aware of the monsoon season. With the monsoon came sickness, roads reduced to mud and flooding which made the fording of rivers next to impossible.<sup>123</sup> It was generally accepted that armies did not campaign in the monsoon season.<sup>124</sup> However, Arthur Wellesley ignored this; he mitigated the risks by maintaining supply and imposing strict orders regarding hygiene, and demanding that barracks, when they were available, be kept clean and be both well ventilated and spacious.<sup>125</sup> Although there was still little understanding of cholera, and its method of transmission, Wellesley seems to have understood the necessity of good drinking water.<sup>126</sup> The British led forces planned the route of their marches to be near rivers in order to ensure the supply of fresh water, and also

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<sup>120</sup> Edwardes, *Glorious Sahibs, The romantic as empire-builder 1799 – 1838* p. 36.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.* p. 35.

<sup>122</sup> Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, pp. 70 – 71; Edwardes, *Glorious Sahibs, The romantic as empire-builder 1799 – 1838*, pp. 35 – 36.

<sup>123</sup> Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, p. 64.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.* p. 64.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 70 – 71.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 70 – 71.

attempted to maintain boats on any river which was likely to require crossing.<sup>127</sup> An example of this being the preparation of the Godavari River; Wellesley had made several bridges from boats which he left strongly guarded so that his force could cross at will.<sup>128</sup> In this way several of the difficulties associated with travelling in the monsoon season were overcome.

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<sup>127</sup> J, Stuart, *To Lord Clive, Camp at Hurryhur, 10th March, 1803, Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 1, pp. 428 – 430.

<sup>128</sup> Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, p. 73.

## Strategic concerns of the campaign against Scindia and Bhonsla in the Deccan and its major battles

The strategic actions of the EIC's campaign against Scindia and Bhonsla, in the Deccan increased British influence and prestige within India. The defeat of numerically superior forces possessing greater artillery, added to a myth of British invincibility. This began with the capture of Ahmednuggur and culminated in several major battles. These major military actions were of paramount importance to expansion of British India. It was through months of campaigning that the power of the major Mahrattas was broken, after the Peshwa was restored to his seat at Poona. Although the two primary campaigns happened simultaneously, the campaign in the South led by Major General Arthur Wellesley was particularly significant, as it was fought against Scindia and Bhonsla in person. During this campaign Arthur Wellesley defeated the forces of Scindia and Bhonsla in several battles. These actions, coupled with General Lake's actions in the North, resulted in the capitulation of Scindia and Bhonsla, as the military might of these chiefs was broken.

### **Outline of forces**

Four armies were sent forth by the EIC of which two saw battle,<sup>129</sup> these were separated into two divisions.<sup>130</sup> The armies sent to Hindustan in the North were led by General Lake and the division sent to the Deccan was commanded by Arthur Wellesley.<sup>131</sup> The forces allotted to Arthur Wellesley were the same as those used to restore the Peshwa, with additional native forces supplied by the Peshwa. The EIC forces were described in detailed official correspondence received by Arthur Wellesley from Lieut. General Stuart. This correspondence states that Wellesley's division would contain a force of cavalry, infantry and artillery. This included 412 of H.M. 19<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons, of British cavalry, as well as 1297 troopers of the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Native cavalry's, leaving Wellesley with a total of 1709 troopers. In terms of infantry, Wellesley

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<sup>129</sup> Edwardes, *Glorious Sahibs, The romantic as empire-builder 1799 – 1838*, p. 35.

<sup>130</sup> Thornton, *History of British Empire in India III*, pp. 304 – 305.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 304 – 305.

commanded 1767 soldiers from H.M. 74<sup>th</sup> Regiment and the Scotch brigade and 6,123 Sepoys in terms of Native Infantry, from the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion's 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Regiments of Native Infantry, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion's 3<sup>rd</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> Regiments of Native Infantry. A total of 6,123 soldiers in the infantry. This force was supported with an additional 1,018 artillerymen, Pioneers and Gun Lascars. Wellesley's division at the outset of the conflict was 10,617 men.<sup>132</sup> These forces were supplemented as the campaign went on and lesser Mahrattas also fought alongside him, the overall number of Wellesley's forces in the Deccan is considered to have been around 21,000 divided between Wellesley and Colonel Stevenson.<sup>133</sup> The size of this army reveals the significant expense which the EIC was willing to commit in both manpower and money to expand their influence.

The forces of the Mahrattas have been noted as having been in all cases superior to the British led forces in numbers and artillery. Scindia's forces at Assaye are generally placed at around 16,000 to Wellesley's 4,500<sup>134</sup> although some sources argue the force more likely consisted of around 20,000 regular troops<sup>135</sup>. The whole of Scindia's army at the outbreak of war is generally considered to have been around 37,000 men and 330 field guns.<sup>136</sup> Bhonsla contributed between 10,000 and 12,000 men, although some sources list this as low as 6000; this force would have consisted of infantry artillery and cavalry.<sup>137</sup> The accounts given in Wellesley's despatches of the forces of Scindia and Bhonsla make the armies out to be significantly larger than this, with Scindia's force listed as containing over 20,000 cavalry, just over 8,000 infantry and 205 field guns of which 35 are listed as heavy field pieces.<sup>138</sup> The same piece of correspondence lists Bhonsala's forces as 20,000 cavalry, 6,000 infantry, thirty five field pieces, and 500 rockets.<sup>139</sup> This would place the forces of the Scindia and Bhonsla at over 54,000 in terms of infantry and cavalry and is

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<sup>132</sup> J. Stuart, *To Major General The Hon. A. Wellesley. Headquarters, Camp at Hurryhur, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 1803, The Despatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 1, pp. 421 – 426.

<sup>133</sup> Pemble, *Resources and Techniques in the Second Maratha War*, p. 383.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.* p. 384.

<sup>135</sup> Corrigan, *Wellington a Military Life*, p. 74.

<sup>136</sup> Pemble, *Resources and Techniques in the Second Maratha War*, pp. 382 – 383.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.* p. 383.

<sup>138</sup> J. Colins, *Colonel Colins to Major General the Hon. A. Wellesley. Camp near Julgong, 25<sup>th</sup> July, 1803, 'The Despatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 1, pp. 135 – 136.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 135 – 136.

likely an excessive figure, as it relies on all of the Mahrattas brigades and regiments being at full strength. It is noted in the letter that the exact number of the Mahratta forces is not clear.<sup>140</sup> In total the Mahrattas are likely to have fielded around 56,000 regular troops between 1803 and 1805 whereas the British led forces would have fielded around 37,000.<sup>141</sup> This rough outline of forces reveals that although the Mahrattas did field more than the EIC, the difference in numbers was not particularly exceptional.

### **The siege of Ahmednuggur**

The capture of Ahmednuggur was a significant moment in this campaign as it provided both a defensible position to protect supplies and deprived Scindia of a powerful position. This was of great logistical importance and the ease of its capture added to the myth of British invincibility. The initial attack on Scindia's fortress of Ahmednuggur, was undertaken on the eighth of August 1803, having been delayed a day by light monsoon rains.<sup>142</sup> Arthur Wellesley's own account provides details of the siege of Ahmednuggur, where upon arrival Wellesley requested that the *Killidar* in command surrender the fort.<sup>143</sup> This was refused, and the defenders were noted as having been 'a body of Arabs' and a battalion of Scindia's regular infantry.<sup>144</sup> These forces are elsewhere described as having been one thousand each of Arab mercenaries and white clad sepoy along with five small brass guns commanded by French officers.<sup>145</sup> The walls of the surrounding town, Wellesley carried by *escalade*, with three attacking forces, in this way taking advantage of the limited number of defenders who were attempting to hold a wall of around 4000 yards<sup>146</sup>, this led the defenders to retreat to houses from where they continued to fire upon

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid. pp. 135 – 136.

<sup>141</sup> Pemble, *Resources and Techniques in the Second Maratha War*, p. 384.

<sup>142</sup> Weller, *Wellington in India*, p. 153.

<sup>143</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To the Governor General. Camp at Ahmednuggur, 12<sup>th</sup> of August, 1803*, 'The Dispatches of Field Marhsall the Duke of Wellington during his various campaigns in India, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, The Low Countries, and France, from 1799 – 1818' Compiled by Lieut. Colonel Gurwood, second volume (London, John Murray, Albemarle Street 1837) pp. 193 – 196.

<https://archive.org/stream/dispatchesindex02welluoft#page/134/mode/2up>

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. pp. 193 – 196.

<sup>145</sup> Weller, *Wellington in India*, pp. 153 – 154.

<sup>146</sup> Weller, *Wellington in India*, p. 154.

Wellesley's force<sup>147</sup>. As the wall lacked a rampart, however, the initial assault left those who climbed ladder with nowhere to go once they reached the top, where they came under fire from the forts defenders.<sup>148</sup> The assault was then moved from the undefended wall to the bastions which covered it, which were quickly taken.<sup>149</sup> An oft repeated report of the siege from an officer of the Peshwa, who had attended the battle described the actions of the British

*"The English are a strange people, and their General a wonderful man. They came here in the morning, looked at the pettah wall, walked over it, killed the garrison, and returned to breakfast! What can withstand them?"*<sup>150</sup>

This quote in many ways reveals the audacity of the British assault, on a strong position, and the way in which this incident contributed to the legend of British invincibility.<sup>151</sup> The town was taken, the garrison cut off from the fortress, and the siege of the fort itself was to begin.

The walls of the fort of Ahmednuggur were higher and stronger than those of the surrounding city, however they were old, and had stood for almost three hundred years.<sup>152</sup> This made the conquest of the city even more significant, as it strengthened the identity of the British as a superior martial power. Wellesley's force set up a battery of four twelve pounder guns, which inflicted significant damage to the surrounding wall.<sup>153</sup> Wellesley's despatches state that his battery began firing on the 10<sup>th</sup>, and had such a great effect the forts *Killidar* sought a reprieve that same day, however, Wellesley refused to stop firing until the fort was surrendered or taken, and on the day of the 11<sup>th</sup> the defenders sent a message that they would surrender as long as

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<sup>147</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To the Governor General. Camp at Ahmednuggur, 12th of August, 1803, The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 193 – 196.

<sup>148</sup> Weller, *Wellington in India*, pp. 154 – 155.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 155 – 156.

<sup>150</sup> Richard Holmes, *Wellington, The Iron Duke*, (London, Harper Colins, 2003)

<sup>151</sup> Weller, *Wellington in India*, pp. 154 – 157.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.* p. 158.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.* p. 158.

the garrison was allowed to go free, which was accepted.<sup>154</sup> The detailed account offered by Weller, states that the defenders only surrendered after a breach was formed and Wellesley's troops prepared to storm it.<sup>155</sup> Wellesley states that the losses from his force were trifling, and that they were due to the spirit of their own attacks.<sup>156</sup> He gives the numbers of losses from his force as 18 Europeans killed including two captains, and 61 wounded, as well as 12 of his native troops killed and 50 wounded.<sup>157</sup> The capture of this fortress allowed Wellesley to have a secure base of operations for his campaign which could safely accumulate supplies and so limit the risks of having his lines of supply cut,<sup>158</sup> while depriving Scindia's forces of a significant resource. Wellesley sent a despatch the very day after taking the fort on the 13<sup>th</sup> immediately requesting significant supplies to be sent to provision the fortress, including 750 bullock loads of supplies to the fortress for immediate consumption, and instructions requesting additional troops to replace the wounded who he was to leave in Ahmednuggur under Captain Graham.<sup>159</sup>

### **The Battle of Assaye**

The next challenge faced was attempting to bring the Mahratta forces to battle. The forces of General Wellesley and Colonel Stevenson advanced, Colonel Stevenson succeeding in keeping the Mahratta forces from raiding in the territory of the Nizam and at one point cut the Mahratta supply lines all the while attempting to manoeuvre the Mahratta forces into a position that would require them to do battle.<sup>160</sup> Wellesley and Stevenson continued onwards via different routes and the two planned to connect and attack Scindia's forces at Borkardan around midmorning on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September.<sup>161</sup> Wellesley, arriving at Naulniah on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, received intelligence stating

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<sup>154</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To the Governor General. Camp at Ahmednuggur, 12th of August, 1803, The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 193 – 196.

<sup>155</sup> Weller, *Wellington in India*, p. 159.

<sup>156</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To the Governor General. Camp at Ahmednuggur, 12th of August, 1803, The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 193 – 196.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 193 – 196.

<sup>158</sup> Weller, *Wellington in India*, pp. 160 – 162.

<sup>159</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To Colonel Murray. Camp at Ahmednuggur, 13th of August, 1803, The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 198 – 199.

<sup>160</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To Colonel Stevenson, Camp, 26<sup>th</sup> August, 1803, The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, p. 243.

<sup>161</sup> Weller, *Wellington in India*, p. 170; Arthur Wellesley, *To the Governor General, Camp at Assye, 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1803, The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 323 – 327.

that the forces of Scindia and Bhonsla were preparing to depart and that their cavalry had already done so.<sup>162</sup> Wellesley, not wishing to let the infantry of these combined armies escape, set off in pursuit without waiting for Stevenson's forces to arrive intending to attack the Mahratta force.<sup>163</sup> After marching to this location, Wellesley's force located the entirety of Scindia and Bhonsla's combined army.<sup>164</sup> Wellesley, although arriving on the enemy's left, decided it would be better to attack upon the right, and so forded the Kaitna river<sup>165</sup> which his native scouts had declared to have no ford<sup>166</sup> in order to better position his force and prevent them from needing to attack an enemy arrayed behind a river with steep banks.<sup>167</sup> The Mahratta forces repositioned to face this assault and began to fire their heavy cannon, an early shot removing the head of one of Wellesley's gallopers.<sup>168</sup> By Wellesley's own account his forces formed a line to face that of the Mahratta's and attacked immediately into the fire of the Mahratta's heavy cannon.<sup>169</sup> This was the beginning of the Battle of Assaye, which is the most well recorded of any battles in the campaign. The battle was significant as not only did it result in the rout of the combined force of Scindia and Bhonsla, but the entire battle was fought with only half of Wellesley's army.

While Wellesley's force was forming up to attack, his fourteen field guns<sup>170</sup> engaged the Mahratta's artillery. Wellesley's artillery was reported to have suffered greatly from the overwhelming firepower of the Mahratta's more numerous and heavier artillery.<sup>171</sup> The Mahratta army was commanded by a European officer Colonel Pohlmann, and consisted of 13 regular

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<sup>162</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To the Governor General, Camp at Assye, 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1803. The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 323 – 327; Arthur Wellesley, *Memorandum on the battle of Assye, The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 329 – 332.

<sup>163</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To the Governor General, Camp at Assye, 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1803, The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 323 – 327.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 323 – 327.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 323 – 327.

<sup>166</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *Memorandum on the battle of Assye, The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 329 – 332; Weller, *Wellington in India*, p. 177.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.* p. 180.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.* p. 179.

<sup>169</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To the Governor General, Camp at Assye, 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1803. The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 323 – 327.

<sup>170</sup> Weller, *Wellington in India*, p. 179.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.* p. 181.

battalions of infantry and around 60 field guns.<sup>172</sup> By the time the British led force had begun to advance, not a single British field gun was firing and the force of the Mahratta artillery was focused on Wellesley's six battalions.<sup>173</sup> The Kings 78<sup>th</sup> Highlanders were the first to reach the Mahratta guns, where they are reputed to have stopped sixty yards from the guns, fired, reloaded and charged with fixed bayonets, all in an orderly and parade like fashion before moving on to repeat this action against the Mahratta infantry behind the guns.<sup>174</sup> This action, repeated by consecutive battalions of sepoy infantry, is considered to have been the leading cause of the Mahratta soldiers retreat and reveals the extreme discipline and training of the British force.<sup>175</sup> This action of the 78<sup>th</sup> is often glorified at the expense of the similar action taken by the sepoy battalions, who are often not mentioned.<sup>176</sup> However, without the well trained EIC sepoys the British would not have had significant forces to engage the Mahrattas. The discipline exhibited by the British led force in marching in good order into overwhelming fire then charging a force of superior numbers, would have had a significant psychological effect on the Mahratta forces, or indeed any other forces.<sup>177</sup> The 74<sup>th</sup> unfortunately did not fare as well, as their line of march drifted towards the fortified town of Assaye where they suffered heavy losses against a significant number of guns and matchlock muskets.<sup>178</sup> This battalion suffered serious casualties, up to ninety percent in the advance company and were unable to move closer to the position than around one hundred yards, at which point they withdrew to a short distance and formed a square to defend against the two battalions of infantry and the force of Mahratta cavalry which attacked them.<sup>179</sup> The 74<sup>th</sup> were saved by a charge of the 19<sup>th</sup> light dragoons and the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> native cavalry which cleared the Mahratta forces from Assaye.<sup>180</sup> Wellesley mentions in his dispatches that Lieut. Colonel Maxwell led this charge and was responsible for the rout of the

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid. pp. 181 – 182.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid. p. 179.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. p. 182.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. pp. 182 – 183.

<sup>176</sup> Bryant, *The Great Duke or The Invincible General*, pp. 53 – 56.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. p. 183.

<sup>178</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *Memorandum on the battle of Assye, The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 329 – 332; Weller, *Wellington in India*, p. 185.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid. p. 185.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid. p. 179.

Mahratta forces on this flank, although he was killed in the action.<sup>181</sup> Wellesley then re-formed his force, and returned to mop up the last of the Mahratta gunners who had returned to their weapons after the 78<sup>th</sup> and sepoy battalions had moved on.<sup>182</sup>

Wellesley also notes the ferocity of the battle by pointing out that nearly all the British officers had horses shot out from underneath them.<sup>183</sup> The British forces losses at the Battle of Assaye are given in detail by Wellesley; he lost 164 European troops killed, of which seven were ranked captain or above and 411 wounded and eight missing. From the native troops he lists 245 killed of which 21 were native officers, the wounded numbered at 1211 of which 67 were native officers.<sup>184</sup> Wellesley lists the guns captured from the Mahratta army as seven brass howitzers, 69 brass guns, and 22 iron guns. The iron guns Wellesley destroyed, and the brass guns moved to a place of safety.<sup>185</sup> Wellesley lists the Mahratta losses at 1200 killed and an unknown number wounded scattered about the country.<sup>186</sup> This was a decisive battle for the forces of Wellesley, as even without Stevenson's force, Wellesley routed the combined forces of Scindia and Bhonsla. Although the majority of their army survived, it can be argued that their morale never recovered from this significant defeat. Scindia's infantry was shattered and he made a truce with Wellesley which would have left his force largely out of the remainder of the conflict.<sup>187</sup> This defeat contributing to the concept of British invincibility.<sup>188</sup> Scindia later broke this truce to support Bhonsla with his cavalry at the battle of Argaum.<sup>189</sup> Additionally, the artillery lost by Scindia and Bhonsla's force represented significant cost, and allowed Wellesley to withdraw some of his

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<sup>181</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To the Governor General, Camp at Assye, 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1803, The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 323 – 327.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 323 – 327.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 323 – 327.

<sup>184</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To the Governor General, Camp, 30th September, 1803. The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 335 – 337.

<sup>185</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *Memorandum on the battle of Assye, The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 329 – 332.

<sup>186</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To the Governor General, Camp, 30th September, 1803. The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 335 – 337.

<sup>187</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To Colonel Stevenson, Camp, 22nd November, 1803, The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 528 – 529.

<sup>188</sup> Jac Weller, *Wellington in India*, pp. 192 – 197.

<sup>189</sup> Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, pp. 218 – 219.

infantry from Poona, as he believed it unlikely that any artillery would be able to threaten Poona after such a loss.<sup>190</sup>

### **The Battle of Argaum and culmination of the campaign**

The Battle of Assaye left the forces of Wellesley and Stevenson unable to pursue the defeated Mahratta force for several days, as they needed to stay and care for the wounded.<sup>191</sup> After eventually pursuing the armies of Scindia and Bhonsla, a treaty was signed with Scindia, in which it was made clear that Scindia's army and the EIC would not do battle as long as Scindia withdrew his armies to Ellichpoor.<sup>192</sup> Arthur Wellesley appears to have been certain that this agreement however did not include the forces of Bhonsla, and so continued to pursue Bhonsla's army.<sup>193</sup> Arthur Wellesley writes that he accepted this cessation of hostilities within the Deccan, but would not extend them into Hindustan. This was because he had no further power to injure Scindia, as he had already taken all that he had within the Deccan and that Scindia's army now only consisted of horse, which could cause some mischief if left to their own devices.<sup>194</sup> A further and more political reason for this being that in dealing only with Scindia, the interests of Scindia and Bhonsla would be separated.<sup>195</sup>

Wellesley then brought his forces against those of Bhonsla. The result of this was the destruction of any hostile Mahratta force in the Deccan, at very little cost to Wellesley's own force. On the 30<sup>th</sup> November, Arthur Wellesley reports that on the previous day he had attacked the forces of Scindia and Bhonsla, the Rajah of Berar on the plains of Argaum and that he has taken from them their artillery and killed many at little cost to his own forces.<sup>196</sup> Wellesley later reports that the

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<sup>190</sup> Arthur, Wellesley, *To Lieut. Colonel Close, Camp at Assye, 26<sup>th</sup> September, 1803*, from, *The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 342 – 343.

<sup>191</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To Lieut. Colonel Munro, Camp at Cheeskair, 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1803*, *The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 338 – 343.

<sup>192</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To Colonel Stevenson, Camp, 22nd November, 1803*, *The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 528 – 529.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 528 – 529.

<sup>194</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To Lieut. General Stuart, Camp at Rajoora, 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1803*, *The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 530 – 533.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 530 – 533.

<sup>196</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To the Governor General, Camp at Parterly, 30<sup>th</sup> November, 1803*, *The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 555 – 556.

forces of Bhonsla formed up in a line of about five miles, with their guns and infantry to the left of the armies centre and Scindia's cavalry occupying the right.<sup>197</sup> Wellesley formed his army into two lines, which met and despatched a force of cavalry after which the entire Mahratta line retired in disorder, leaving 38 cannon to be captured by the Wellesley's force.<sup>198</sup> Wellesley despatched his cavalry to pursue the beaten foe which chased them by moonlight as the battle had been fought late in the day.<sup>199</sup> Wellesley notes that his losses were minimal, consisting of only 15 European soldiers killed, 160 wounded and among his native troops, only 31 killed with 148 wounded.<sup>200</sup> With this battle the primary forces of Scindia and Bhonsla were routed with minimal losses, which allowed for the siege and capture of the fort of Gawilghur.<sup>201</sup> From this point on the war in the Deccan was in effect concluded.

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<sup>197</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To the Governor General, (second letter) Camp at Parterly, 30<sup>th</sup> November, 1803. The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 556 – 560.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 556 – 560.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 556 – 560.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 556 – 560.

<sup>201</sup> Arthur Wellesley, *To the Governor General, Camp at Deogaum, 15<sup>th</sup> December, 1803, The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol 2, pp. 583 – 589.

## General Lake's campaign against Scindia's forces in Hindustan

The campaign of General Lake, Commander in Chief of the British forces, was fought in Hindustan and had a significant bearing on the expansion of British India. There is less information available relating to this campaign as Lake has not been glorified to the same extent as Arthur Wellesley, and so less of his despatches are available. General Lake defeated the French led forces of Scindia at the battle of Delhi and as a result captured the city of Delhi and with that, the person of the Moghul Emperor Shah Hallam. Lake's second major battle, the battle of Laswari resulted in Scindia's powers in Hindustan being broken, and was a pivotal point in the eventual capitulation of Scindia to the EIC.

### **French forces in Hindustan**

General Lake's campaign and the actions of his French counterparts severely weakened the position of the French as a colonial power within India. Lake's campaign began well, his forces setting off from Cawnpore towards the fort of Aligarh on the 7th of August a day before Wellesley's force set off to capture Ahmednuggar.<sup>202</sup> Lake reached Mahratta territory by the 29<sup>th</sup> and captured the fort of Aligarh on the 4th of September.<sup>203</sup> The French Commandant of Aligarh opened up negotiations with Lake upon his arrival, but was arrested by his Mahratta second in command.<sup>204</sup> The weakening of French authority and the respect in which they were held becoming apparent at the very beginning of the campaign. This led to Lake's storming the fort with a loss of around 260 men killed or wounded, including 17 officers<sup>205</sup> compared to an estimated 2000 from the garrison<sup>206</sup> General Perron had some 15,000 men with which to oppose Lake, although he appeared reluctant to engage.<sup>207</sup> By the 7th of September Lake was informed that Perron had quit the service of Scindia and was requesting British protection and safe passage

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<sup>202</sup> Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, pp. 224 – 225.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 224 – 225.

<sup>204</sup> Edwardes, *Glorious Sahibs, The romantic as empire-builder 1799 – 1838*, p. 37.

<sup>205</sup> Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, pp. 224 – 225.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.* p. 37.

<sup>207</sup> Edwardes, *Glorious Sahibs, The romantic as empire-builder 1799 – 1838*, p. 37.

to Lucknow.<sup>208</sup> In this way Perron maintained the considerable wealth he had amassed in the service of Scindia,<sup>209</sup> by offering to resolve without further conflict this section of the campaign.<sup>210</sup> This action by Perron weakened the reputation of French officers in India considerably.<sup>211</sup>

## The Battle of Delhi

Lake's actions at the Battle of Delhi were to have lasting significance, as they again revealed British martial prowess and weakened the positions of the French as a colonial power by lowering their prestige significantly. This battle also resulted in British gaining the person of the Emperor Shah Hallam when the British captured Delhi, the titular ruler of the Mahratta's. Perron was replaced by another French officer, Louis Bourquin, an officer of some infamy, initially a cook and manufacturer of fireworks.<sup>212</sup> Lake engaged Bourquin's forces on the 11th of September, in a battle known as the battle of Delhi.<sup>213</sup> Lake's account of the battle reveals that the day was taken in the face of heavy cannon fire.

*"...such a fire of cannon as has seldom been seen if ever,"*<sup>214</sup>

Lake's soldiers marched into this heavy fire, fired a single volley and then charged and put the enemy to flight, after which point Lake's soldiers opened up and allowed the cavalry to charge through them. The cavalry pursued Bourquin's troops and inflicted heavy casualties.<sup>215</sup> Lake also notes in another letter that his cavalry pushed the fleeing forces into the Jumna River, where many drowned.<sup>216</sup> When offering the statistics of the battle to the Governor General, Lake states

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<sup>208</sup> Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, pp. 224 – 225.

<sup>209</sup> Edwardes, *Glorious Sahibs, The romantic as empire-builder 1799 – 1838* p. 37.

<sup>210</sup> Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, pp. 224 – 225.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 224 – 225.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 224 – 225.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 224 – 225.

<sup>214</sup> G. Lake, *Lieut. General Lake to the Marquess Wellesley, Battle of Delhi. Reasons for advance thither, September 12<sup>th</sup> 1803, Despatches of the Marquess Wellesley*, pp. 395 – 397.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 395 – 397.

<sup>216</sup> G. Lake, *Lieut. General Lake to the Marquess Wellesley, Battle of Delhi, Half -past Seven P.M September 11<sup>th</sup> 1803, received at Fort William, Sept, 23, 1803, Despatches of the Marquess Wellesley*, pp. 394 – 395.

that the losses to his force were very great. He explains these were the result of advancing into the fierce cannonade of Bourquin's artillery, and the number of foes arrayed against his own force.<sup>217</sup> Lake places the numbers involved at around 4,500 men all up in his force, and claims that Bourquin's force numbered at least four times that number.<sup>218</sup> Lake also cites a deficiency in his cavalry as a reason for such heavy losses, but goes on to commend the actions of all of his forces involved and states that the battle was won by the bravery of every man making up his force.<sup>219</sup> The result of this battle was that the French reputation within India was further damaged, and the reputation of the British undoubtedly strengthened. This was in part due to the fleeing force of Bourquin which plundered much of the country side, and after their defeat were in turn attacked by those they had plundered.<sup>220</sup> Additionally, this battle led to Lake's capture of Delhi, and as a result, the Moghul Emperor Shah Allam being taken under British protection.<sup>221</sup>

### **The Battle of Laswari**

After the battle of Delhi Lake's force consolidated their control of the surrounding region, in much the same manner as Wellesley's force to the South. Lake mentions in his dispatches the efforts made towards consolidation of the region.<sup>222</sup> Lake also mentions what he perceived to be the immense difficulty of rendering the vast province safe and productive with the limited force he possessed, and notes that a larger standing army would be required in the future to administer the area.<sup>223</sup> This reveals British intent to not only defeat the Mahratta forces, but also to conquer and administer their territories, and the long term view held by General Lake.

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<sup>217</sup> G. Lake, *Lieut. General Lake to the Marquess Wellesley, Statistics of the Battle of Delhi. Head Quarters, Camp, near Delhy Ghaut, , September 13<sup>th</sup> 1803, Received at Fort William, Sept. 25<sup>th</sup>, 1803, Despatches of the Marquess Wellesley*, p. 398.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.* p. 398.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.* p. 398.

<sup>220</sup> G. Lake, *Lieut. General Lake to the Marquess Wellesley, Battle of Delhi. Reasons for advance thither, September 12<sup>th</sup> 1803, Despatches of the Marquess Wellesley*, pp. 395 – 397.

<sup>221</sup> Edwardes, *Glorious Sahibs, The romantic as empire-builder 1799 – 1838*, p. 39.

<sup>222</sup> G. Lake, *Lieut. General Lake to the Marquess Wellesley. Military requirements in the conquest territory, Delhi, Sept. 17<sup>th</sup> 1803, Despatches of the Marquess Wellesley*, pp. 398 – 401.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 398 – 401.

Lake's next action of serious import, was the Battle of Laswari, at which Lake attacked and defeated 15 regular Battalions sent from the Deccan and two which had re-formed after the Battle of Delhi.<sup>224</sup> This battle spelled the end of French influence within India and the abilities of Scindia to withstand and repel British expansion. By Lake's account, he led his cavalry on a forced march of twenty five miles, where he encountered the forces of Scindia, which he believed to be in retreat.<sup>225</sup> Lake decided it wise to attack with his cavalry before his infantry could arrive. This action was slowed by a large reservoir of water which allowed the enemy time to form up to receive his cavalry. Having crossed the body of water, he claimed he did not see that the enemy had formed because of an excess of dust.<sup>226</sup> In attempting to prevent what he believed was the enemy's retreat, Lake attacked with unsupported cavalry,<sup>227</sup> an act which has earned him some derision. This is referenced by John Pemble, although he incorrectly attributes this cavalry action to the battle of Delhi.<sup>228</sup> Lake withdrew his cavalry after capturing some of Scindia's artillery, some of which he managed to take away in the face of heavy fire, while suffering significant casualties and losing several officers.<sup>229</sup> At 11am Lake's infantry arrived, but having made a long march Lake decided they needed to be rested before he set them against Scindia's force. After receiving a request from the enemy to allow them to withdraw and surrender their guns, Lake granted them an hour to do so, during which time he formed up his infantry into columns to attack.<sup>230</sup> However, after the hour was concluded and no more word was heard from Scindia's force, Lake attacked.<sup>231</sup>

Lake described this battle of one of the hardest fought he had ever encountered, remarking that

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<sup>224</sup> G. Lake, *Lieut. General Lake to the Marquess Wellesley. Battle of Lasswary, Head Quarters, Camp near Lasswary, Nov. 2, 1803, Despatches of the Marquess Wellesley*, pp. 404 – 407.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 404 – 407.

<sup>226</sup> G. Lake, *Lieut. General Lake to the Marquess Wellesley. Military requirements in the conquest territory, Delhi, Sept. 17<sup>th</sup> 1803, Despatches of the Marquess Wellesley*, pp. 398 – 401.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 398 – 401.

<sup>228</sup> Pemble, *Resources and Techniques in the Second Maratha War*, p. 399.

<sup>229</sup> G. Lake, *Lieut. General Lake to the Marquess Wellesley. Military requirements in the conquest territory, Delhi, Sept. 17<sup>th</sup> 1803, Despatches of the Marquess Wellesley*, pp. 398 – 401.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 398 – 401.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 398 – 401.

the enemies gunners were excellent and that his foe fought like demons or even heroes. Lake's attribution of heroic status to his Mahratta foes revealed a strong respect for the Mahratta soldiers in Hindustan. The overcoming of which was seen as a significant achievement. His forces took such heavy fire as they advanced, that Lake decided that it would be preferable to charge with whatever troops were immediately available and allow the remainder to follow suit.<sup>232</sup> Lake also notes that the enemy's force attempted to withdraw in good order only when they had lost their artillery, but that this withdrawal was thwarted by his cavalry, which broke the withdrawing columns.<sup>233</sup> The battle was undoubtedly Lake's greatest victory of the campaign, and one he professed no desire to see the like of again, as although a significant victory, it came at the cost of many of his own forces. However, as a result of this victory, Lake broke the power of Scindia's French led forces in Hindustan some nine days after Arthur Wellesley's victory at Assaye.

### **Culmination of Lake's campaign**

These significant victories led to two treaties being signed, the Treaty of Deogaum between the EIC and Bhonsla,<sup>234</sup> and the treaty of Surje Anjengaum between the EIC and Scindia.<sup>235</sup> The terms of these treaties significantly expanded the influence and authority of the EIC, and so contributed to the expansion of British India. These treaties were arranged by Arthur Wellesley, as Scindia and Bhonsla were within the Deccan opposing his force. It was the defeat of their forces in both the Deccan and Hindustan which led to their capitulation. These treaties set out harsh conditions for the two Mahratta chiefs, both beginning with an article relating to perpetual peace between the two sides and including declaring declaration that the Mahratta chiefs would never again employ Europeans whose country may be at war with Britain.<sup>236</sup> The Treaty of Deogaum requiring Bhonsla to cede to the company the province of Cuttack and many other territories from which he received revenue, and his right to mediate disputes was also granted to the EIC.<sup>237</sup> The Treaty

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<sup>232</sup> G. Lake, *Lieut. General Lake to the Marquess Wellesley. Military requirements in the conquest territory, Delhi, Sept. 17<sup>th</sup> 1803, Despatches of the Marquess Wellesley*, pp. 398 – 401.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 398 – 401.

<sup>234</sup> *Treaty of Deogaum, Despatches of the Marquess Wellesley*, pp. 417 – 419.

<sup>235</sup> *Treaty of Surje Anjengaum, Despatches of the Marquess Wellesley*, pp. 419 – 423.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 419 – 423; *Treaty of Deogaum, Despatches of the Marquess Wellesley*, pp. 417 – 419.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 417 – 419.

of Surje Anjengaum had similar articles, and included the ownership of several forts which were to be passed to the EIC and required Scindia to renounce all claims upon the person of Shah Hallam, and promise not to interfere in his concerns.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> *Treaty of Surje Anjengaum, Despatches of the Marquess Wellesley*, pp. 419 – 423.

## Conclusion

The ability of the EIC to overcome political, logistical and strategic issues within this period allowed for the expansion of British influence, and it is clear that this was a key period for the expansion of British India. Close examination of the conflict against Scindia and Bhonsla, in both the Deccan and Hindustan, reveal the importance of this period, during which several of the major powers of India were brought to heel by the EIC. Although this period of rapid expansion can be seen to begin with the arrival of Richard Wellesley and the annexation of Mysore, the Mahratta campaigns brought British primacy to an even greater level, with lasting gains for the EIC. The position of the EIC was legitimised by its changing status regarding the Emperor Shah Allam. Shah Allam, from this point onwards can be seen to rely on the EIC for his protection. As a result of this he was no longer seen to be the nominal overlord of the British in India, except on paper. This conflict strengthened the ties of the EIC to the Nizam of Hyderabad, British protection of his lands from the Mahrattas, and the territories awarded to him increased his reliance on British soldiery. Ties were also created with the Peshwa, Baji Rao, who now, like Shah Allam became in effect a subject ruler of the EIC. Also of key importance was the destruction of the major forces of military opposition in the forms of Dawlut Rao Scindia, and Bhonsla, the Rajah of Berar. The victories gained by British forces within this period of conflict strengthened the reputation of the British in India, as they can be seen to have won several major victories against superior numbers and so a myth of British invincibility began to take shape. This conflict weakened to the point of destruction the influence and prestige of the French within India, as in many cases, as well as losing battles, the French officers can be seen to have acted poorly, and often defected, especially evident in the case of Scindia's General Perron.<sup>239</sup> The period of conflict in 1803 between the Mahratta forces of Scindia and Bhonsla and the EIC were of singular importance regarding the expansion of British India.

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<sup>239</sup> Roberts, *India under Wellesley*, pp. 224 – 225.

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