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ANGLO-FRENCH RIVALRY IN INDIA AND THE EASTERN SEAS 1763 - 1793:
A STUDY OF ANGLO-FRENCH TENSIONS, AND OF THEIR IMPACT ON THE
CONSOLIDATION OF BRITISH POWER IN THE REGION

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B.E. Kennedy
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B.E.K.
Since the eastern conflict was essentially part of a wider contest to unseat the British from their position of commercial and maritime preponderance throughout the world, the problem of Anglo-French rivalry in India in the late eighteenth century will be introduced within its global setting. As a consequence of the French threat and French ambitions, most nearly realised during the American War, the defence of the Company's possessions in India became closely linked with an imperial maritime strategy embracing the Cape, Trincomalee and naval bases to the east of the Bay of Bengal. Accordingly, this study will be concerned with metropolitan and imperial factors as well as local conditions in the expansion of European influence throughout Asia. An important task will be to determine how far the fear of the French precipitated British involvement in Indian politics, and whether that intervention was conditioned more by local, on the spot considerations than by European reactions and policies.

British responses to the French are examined closely within three different types of situation. First, in Bengal where the British had acquired a large measure of control over the local ruler. Secondly, in the Carnatic and the South of India where the French were still political rivals with the English
for control over the Nawabs, and thirdly, in the Eastern Seas and countries beyond India, areas where the factor of sea-power rather than military might or diplomatic skill was crucial.

These case-studies demonstrate that the French continued to exert a significant influence on British policies in India after 1763, the date of the Peace of Paris which is usually chosen as the end of the French chapter in the East. Fears of a French invasion of the sub-continent, exacerbated by various crises in Europe and India, ensured that the British would be as concerned with matters of security and defence as they were with trade, the original raison d'être of the Company. Furthermore, the intrigues of the French at the courts of the Indian princes encouraged the British to take a more active interest in native diplomacy. The Subsidiary Alliance system, for instance, was primarily devised to eradicate clandestine French influence from Hyderabad and Mysore. Finally, the decision to establish bases outside India was not unaffected by French activity elsewhere in Asia. For throughout this period the British were eager to anticipate or counter French moves.
GLOSSARY OF INDIAN WORDS

Aumil – a farmer of the revenue, invested with chief authority in his district.

Aurung – place or district where native piecegoods were manufactured and purchased on advances from the Company's agents.

Diwani – the right of receiving as Diwan the revenue of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, conferred upon the East India Company by the Moghul Emperor, Shah Alam II, in 1765.

Diwani Adalat – civil court of justice.

Durbar – court.

Dustuck – a pass or permit which exempted goods of the Company's servants or agents from duties.

Firman – diploma, patent, or deed of grant by the government (usually the Moghul Emperor) of office, privilege, or right.

Fouzdar – a governor of a district.

Fouzdar of Hooghly – the governor in whose territories the Dutch and French settlements at Chinsurah and Chandernagore respectively were situated. Hence, he was responsible for deciding 'complaints in which the foreign companies or the subjects of their nations' were concerned.

Fouzdari Adalat – criminal court of justice.

Gomastah – a native agent or factor.

Havildar – a sepoy non-commissioned officer corresponding to a sergeant.

Hircarrah – messenger, courier, an emissary.

Jemitdar – leader of a body of individuals.

Lac, Lakh – one hundred thousand.

Mofussil – rural localities as opposed to presidencies.
Moonshee - a secretary, a reader, an interpreter, a writer.

Naib Diwan - the head financial minister, charged with the collection of the revenue, the remittance of it to the imperial treasury, and invested with extensive judicial powers in all civil and financial causes. The Naib Diwan for Bengal resided at Murshidabad until 1772, while the Naib Diwan for Bihar resided at Patna.

Naib Nazim - an officer, subordinate to the Nawab, responsible for the executive and military authority of the Nawab, and the administration of criminal justice.

Nawab - the chief governor of a province under the Moghul Emperor.

Perwannah - decree or permit.

Rowannah - pass or permit.

Sanad, Sunnud - patent, charter, or written authority for holding either land or office.

Talook - tract of proprietary land, sometimes not easily distinguished from zemindaries, and sometimes subordinate to or dependent on zemindars.

Talookdar - the holder of a talook.

Vakeel - an attorney, an authorised representative.

Zemindar - one holding land on which he pays revenue to the government direct, and not to any intermediate superior.
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GLOSSARY OF INDIAN WORDS

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MAIN TRADE ROUTES TO THE EAST
CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM

During the latter part of the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth centuries the most striking development in the relationship between Europe and the East was the extension of British control over large tracts of the Indian sub-continent. An Asian territorial empire was acquired before the age of imperialism, even before the passing of the First Reform Bill. Such a development was not only unprecedented in the experience of eighteenth century Englishmen; it was equally foreign and novel to the experience of all Europeans. The East India Company's original intrusion in the Carnatic wars of the 1740's and 1750's initiated this process of expansion, which gained added impetus from Robert Clive's defeat of Siraj-ud-Daula at the battle of Plassey. British supremacy over the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was further confirmed and strengthened in 1764 by Munro's victory at Buxar over the combined forces of the erstwhile Nawab, Mir Kasim, the Nawab of Oudh and the Moghul Emperor. Soon after, Clive, now a newly-arrived reforming governor from
home, extorted the maximum political advantages from this success by acquiring from Shah Alam II the diwani of the three provinces.¹ With control of this fertile and productive area secured, one might have expected the rise to Raj to be short, sharp and decisive.

And yet the thirty years intervening between these events in Bengal and the capture of the French Indian establishments in 1793 witnessed surprisingly few cessions of territory to the East India Company. In fact, the meteoric rise of the British power in India occurred later, during the vice-regal tenures of Wellesley and the Marquess of Hastings. For only then did the Company become the principal power in the Indian state-system and not simply one of the many contending powers. Consolidation and maintenance of rule rather than expansion was the dominant theme for the British in the East between the Peace of Paris and the outbreak of the French Revolutionary wars. Nevertheless, British influence continued to spread, if only slowly and indirectly; witness, for example, the occupation of the Northern Circars, Tanjore and parts of Mysore by the Madras Council and its

¹ H.H. Dodwell (ed.), The Cambridge History of India, vol. V, 'British India 1497-1858', second Indian reprint (Delhi, 1963), pp. 175-6. For a more detailed treatment of these changes in Bengal see chapter 3, pp. 84-6.
rol faineant, the Nawab Wazirjah. Warren Hastings, too, was instrumental in establishing a real measure of control over the buffer states to the north-west of Bengal - Oudh and Rohillakhand - while the Bombay Council after a protracted struggle with the Marathas secured Bassein and Salsette Island. In spite of this, however, it remains broadly true that the period 1763 - 1793 was a relatively tranquil one in which the only open struggle against the French and their Indian allies was waged to preserve and not to extend the Company's dominion.

Historians who have dealt with the question of Anglo-French rivalry in the East have taken this lull in the military activities of the British as evidence for the disappearance of the French as a military and political threat from the area. The machinations and intrigues of Dumas and Dupleix first compelled the British to enter the labyrinthine maze of Indian

1 These extensions of British control are dealt with in Chapter 5, pp. 203-9, 242-3.
2 See Chapter 5, pp. 230-5.
politics. But with the brilliant generalship of Clive, which effectively thwarted French schemes in the South, and later with the defeat of Lally at Wandewash and the capture of Pondicherry, the influence of the French rapidly declined. The Peace of Paris recognised this situation and with the one exception of the abortive Bussy expedition of 1782 the French acquiesced in the triumph of British arms in the East. Thus, according to one recent historian, the defeat at Wandewash in January 1760 destroyed 'the dream of a French empire in India...as it proved for ever'.

This view, although a simple one, is not entirely without merit; its prevalence, especially amongst the general historians of the British in India, helps to explain why so little detailed work has been done on French activities in the East after 1763.

1 Some of the standard works on French policy in this earlier period are: A. Martineau, 'Dupleix and Bussy', in The Cambridge History of India, vol. V, pp.125-40; H.H. Dodwell, Dupleix and Clive: The Beginning of Empire (London, 1920), which presents Dupleix as a pragmatist exploiting political opportunities as they arose; and G. Jouveau-Dubreuil, Dupleix ou L'Inde Conquise (Paris, 1942), which argues that Dupleix conceived the idea of expansion - 'nababisme' - before the crucial events in the Carnatic.

Certainly the French were never again in as militarily advantageous a situation as they had been in 1746, when a shrewd use of military and naval power gave Dupleix mastery over the defenceless factory of Madras. Since then the British had made some memorable gains which greatly enhanced their strength. But the assumption that the French abjured their political ambitions, considerable and varied as they were, after 1763 is hardly borne out by a scrutiny of the evidence - the activities and correspondence of the French governors and administrators in India and at the Ile de France. General studies of Anglo-French diplomacy in the latter half of the eighteenth century, such as that of Vincent Harlow, suggest that there was no abatement in the worldwide rivalry between the English and the Bourbon powers.¹ The

foreign policies of Choiseul and Vergennes marked a renewal and not a renunciation of colonial and maritime ambitions. On prima facie grounds at least, then, one would expect the fear of the French to remain a continuing and significant influence on British policy, for the French were the natural enemies of the British. As blunt General Smith confided to Robert Orme: 'I hate Frenchmen from the same reason that they don't love us. Our interests are incompatible, and it's as much impossible for a Monsieur to have views of Honor towards the English nation as it is for a Dutchman to give up the Spice Islands'. And with such able and seasoned administrator-diplomats as Jean Law de Lauriston and the marquis de Bussy there was considerable justification for these fears of the British.

Moreover, there are anomalies which the accepted view - that French interest and activity in the East virtually disappeared after 1763 - does nothing, or very little, to explain. The annexationist policies of Wellesley, for instance, were inspired by a phobia of the French. Yet if the French had ceased to be an active political force in India after 1763 these fears were

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essentially chimerical. In order to account for this discrepancy historians have either explained Wellesley's fears as a response to Napoleon's Egyptian campaign, or they have dismissed them out of hand as figments of his imagination.\footnote{See G.S. Misra, \textit{British Foreign Policy and Indian Affairs 1783-1815} (New York, 1963) for a recent attempt to relate Wellesley's Indian policies to British foreign policy. In fact, Misra considers that Wellesley's fear of the French was justified.} The former view recognises the existence of a real, if generalised, French threat to the Company's possessions, but the latter assumes with the complacent assurance of hindsight that, since the French failed to achieve any of their ambitions in the East, they must have been throughout of negligible importance. God may well be on the side of the big battalions, to use the dictum of Voltaire, but this of course should not deter the historian from inspecting the lesser companies and platoons, who often determine the tactics and the strategy of the larger force. To under-rate the French is also to under-rate the precariousness of the British position in India and the East. Wellesley believed quite simply, as had Warren Hastings and Cornwallis before him, that the Company's possessions were acutely vulnerable to French attack, and his anxieties were immediately aroused by Tipu Sultan's flagrant association with the revolutionary government at Port Louis.

At least one eminent nineteenth century historian argued
that the French continued to influence the growth of the British Raj after the Peace of Paris and that the fears of Wellesley were real enough. Sir John Seeley, in a course of lectures which he delivered at the University of Cambridge and which he later published in 1883 as *The Expansion of England*, developed one of the first general explanations for the rise of British power in India.¹ To some extent Seeley was reacting against the then prevalent view that the British empire in India was 'a standing miracle in politics, only to be explained by the heroic qualities of the English race and their natural genius for government'.² By contrast, Seeley, who was something of an iconoclast, asserted that the growth of the Indian empire was an accidental development, the result of the endeavours of ambitious Company men on the spot, and largely caused by the need to anticipate or counter French moves in the region. Relying on the standard Company histories of the time, Seeley presented a number of valuable insights as to how the

² Seeley, p. 252.
British had acquired India.\(^1\)

In the Carnatic and later in Bengal the British found it necessary to intervene in the affairs of the Nawabs through fear of French designs and activities. Such fears, Seeley believed, were characteristic of 'an age of gigantic rivalry between England and France, a kind of second Hundred Years' War'.\(^2\)

During this conflict, which logically extended from the wars against Louis XIV until the defeat of Napoleon, the British were able to exploit the unique possibilities thrown up in eighteenth century India by the dissolution of the Moghul empire.

Seeley perceived that the fundamental weakness of the Indian political system was the absence of any clear idea of national unity. The term 'Hindostan' was little more than a geographical expression in the eighteenth century, a euphemism that concealed intractable political problems. For the subcontinent was simply a congeries of competing regional and cultural groups. The most recent experience of political unity which India had enjoyed had been imposed from above by a foreign dynasty

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1 Seeley appears to have made only the most cursory survey of the documentary evidence then available, though he does refer to the work of James Mill, Lord Macaulay and Colonel G.B. Malleson whose *History of the French in India* first appeared in 1869, and his *Final French Struggles in India and on the Indian Seas* in 1878.

2 Seeley, pp.28-9.
committed with increasing intransigence to an alien religion and culture. Even this domination by the Moghuls was less than a century and a half old, during which time its authority had been constantly disputed at the periphery by the recalcitrant and infidel Marathas among others. With the death of Aurangzebe in 1707 the authority of the Moghuls seriously declined, while rival claimants fought for the spoils of empire. ¹ To the French, more adept at the wiles of native diplomacy than the British, it soon became apparent that the European companies could extract with ease lavish trading concessions and territorial revenues from the local rulers in return for military and diplomatic assistance. Benefiting from this lesson, the British soon emulated the French in their manipulation of local politics in the South, and in time learnt how to exploit the political and cultural divisions endemic within India to their own advantage. Seeley noticed, moreover, that the resources of both these European powers were greatly strengthened by the availability and relative cheapness of large

¹ The classic political study of India in the eighteenth century is Sir J. Sarkar, Fall of the Mughal Empire (4 vols. - I, 1739-54 (Calcutta, 1932); II, 1754-71 (Calcutta, 1934); III, 1771-88 (Calcutta, 1938); IV, 1789-1803 (Calcutta, 1950)). See also K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, History of India: Part III - Modern India, second ed. (Madras, 1964), and Chapter XXIII, "Rivalries in India", by C.C. Davies, in The New Cambridge Modern History, (vol. VII, Cambridge, 1963), pp. 541-65.
sepoy armies.¹

Consequently the British had not conquered India. By chance they found themselves thrown into positions of power by internal revolutions which they had assisted in fomenting. Seeley described the process of expansion thus:

certain traders inhabiting certain seaport towns in India, were induced, almost forced, in the anarchy caused by the fall of the Mogul Empire, to give themselves a military character and employ troops, that by means of these troops they acquired territory and at last almost all the territory of India, and that these traders happened to be Englishmen, and to employ a certain, though not a large, proportion of English troops in their army.²

Such a view held that there was nothing inexorable or manifest about the destiny of the British in the East. Expansion was simply one adventitious thing after another. In fact, Seeley went so far as to suggest that if a similar group of Indian merchants, for example the Parsees of Bombay, had been endowed with the resources of the English company, they would have been able to accomplish the same ends.³ Seeley's wildly idiosyncratic

¹Observe that Mill's summary explanation of the conquest of India says nothing of any natural superiority on the part of the English. "The two important discoveries for conquering India were: 1st, the weakness of the native armies against European discipline; 2ndly, the facility of imparting that discipline to natives in the European service". He adds: "Both discoveries were made by the French". Seeley, p. 233.

²Seeley, pp. 240-1.

³Seeley, p. 244.
views about the extension of British power in India were directed at the 'bombastic' imperialists, who were 'lost in wonder and ecstasy' at the empire's 'immense dimensions, and at the energy and heroism which presumably have gone to the making of it'.

Because Seeley believed that the main strength of Greater Britain lay in its connection with the colonies of settlement in the new worlds of North America and Australasia, he felt that the Indian adventure had been a highly expensive and unnecessary diversion from the task of extending the English nation-state overseas. Although he recognised that the British government could not now abdicate its Indian responsibilities, he certainly deprecated his countrymen's excessive concern with the tropical dependencies of the empire.

The English merchants in India were able to draw freely

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1 Seeley, p.340. For a fuller discussion of Seeley's contribution to the late nineteenth century debate about the empire see C.A. Bodelsen, Studies in Mid-Victorian Imperialism (London, 1960), pp.149-76.

2 'And thus we founded our Empire, partly it may be out of an empty ambition of conquest and partly out of a philanthropic desire to put an end to enormous evils. But, whatever our motives might be, we incurred vast responsibilities, which were compensated by no advantages....Thus a review of the history of British India leaves on the mind an impression quite different from that which our Colonial Empire produces. The latter has grown up naturally, out of the operation of the plainest causes; the former seems to have sprung from a romantic adventure;...We may hope that it will lead to good, but hitherto we have not ourselves reaped directly much good from it.' Seeley, p.353.
on the resources of the English state because the wars fought in India 'wore the appearance before the English public of a war between England and France'. Seeley tended to discount the factor of European support and control in his explanation of the British successes in India. He recognised, nonetheless, that Britain could concentrate all her efforts on the maritime and commercial struggle whereas the French were divided between a policy of colonial expansion and one of continental aggrandisement. Except for the American War, France chose to fight her wars primarily in Europe rather than on the seas, or in the colonies, so that British naval superiority enabled resources of man-power and armaments to flow without interruption between England and India. Thus the French position in the East during war-time was a great deal more precarious than the British.

Paradoxically, in spite of the many victories won by the British in India, the territorial revenues obtained by the Company hardly repaid the expenses incurred in war and in the administration of a vast new empire. The acquisition of these territories, according to Seeley, was made in a 'fit of absence of mind', and though the need to protect the eastern trade was the principal justification offered it was soon clouded over by the

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1 Seeley, pp. 245-6.
Seeley's explanation is probably one of the most comprehensive and illuminating ever offered since it incorporates explanations of eighteenth century imperialism at the local and metropolitan level, and emphasises as well the disintegration of the indigenous political system. The conflict in Europe provoked the companies in India to take up arms against one another and in so doing they became inextricably involved in the politics of the sub-continent. In time the victors of the Anglo-French contest found themselves, almost unwittingly, occupying the power vacuum left by the Moghuls.

The real initiatives in this expansionist process were taken by the enterprising men on the spot - the Clives and the Wellesleys, untrammelled by external authority. The controls exerted by the metropolitan government were seriously limited by a cumbersome and decentralised administrative system, and by a lengthy communication delay with Europe. Ambitious governors at Madras, Bombay, or Calcutta found themselves with the time in which to promote their own particular policies, which they prosecuted even when they had received no clear endorsement from the

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1 Seeley, p.10.
Court of Directors or the India Board. If the particular venture they were engaged in were successful it was invariably sanctioned by the Company and the state, but if the difficulties encountered were of too formidable a nature the Company's servants could withdraw their support without committing their government to any one course of action. Seeley believed that expansion, which, in his view, was a blind process, resulted from pressures at the periphery of control. It was not a process initiated and directed by European governments.

Two recent writers who reveal a considerable debt to these Seeleyite arguments have claimed that it was the man on the spot who made the Indian empire. The authorities in London frowned on the acquisitions made in India and gently admonished the Governor Generals when they embarked on forward policies. But the proconsuls at the frontier were

beguiled by the old dream of Indian conquerors, an India under one sovereign. The Governor General conquered India as Ashoka had, or Akbar, as the most powerful of Indian princes before whom no rival could stand. His masters in London might exhort and forbid; he had no need to worry; it took them two years to disagree with him, and in two years much could be settled. He needed them to guarantee his debts and to hold off the French... but it was he, not they, who made India the brightest jewel in the British Crown.1

1
The thesis that expansion arose from pressures at the frontier, and not from the conscious selection and pursuit of a global strategy by a central government, stressed the fortuitous nature of the rise of British power in India. 'Nothing great', Seeley declared, 'that has ever been done by Englishmen was done so unintentionally, so accidentally, as the conquest of India'.

Englishmen first sailed to the East for profits and trade, and for almost a century and a half were content with maintaining their footholds on the coast. When at last they became entangled in wars with the native states, their intention was to protect and further their trade, not to establish a political preponderance. Only in the time of Wellesley did the English deliberately choose to establish a paramountcy over the other Indian states and this policy was dictated as much by fear of their European rivals as by mercenary considerations of trade.

However brilliant this view of expansion, it did not long remain unchallenged. It was after all an age of great enthusiasm for empire. In 1894 Sir Alfred Lyall, an administrator-historian who had spent many years in India, set out to rebuff Seeley's arguments in *The Rise and Expansion of the British*

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1 Seeley, p.207.
Dominion in India. Unlike Seeley, Lyall did not produce a coherent theory of expansion. Instead he wrote a detailed narrative of British activities in India, embellished here and there with reflections on the process of empire-building.

Since the arrival of the European powers in Asia, late in the fifteenth century, a protracted and hazardous struggle had been waged for mastery of the extremely lucrative eastern trade. The English triumphed over their rivals, the Dutch and the French, because England's whole policy was 'directed towards the increase of her sea-power and the enlargement of her foreign commerce'. Expansion, according to this view, was not the fruit of accidental developments - of limited battles fought and won in the Carnatic and Bengal - but the inexorable outcome of maritime and military supremacy. The imperial successes of the British, therefore, were the natural result of the Englishman's concern with sea-power and colonial aggrandisement.

From their fortified factory-settlements along the Indian coast, the various European companies finally and irrevocably embroiled themselves and their respective countries in the

2 Lyall, p.1.
political vicissitudes of the sub-continent. Lyall claimed that the English East India Company foresaw its role as the successor to the Moghul empire quite early in its trading career. Commenting on the policies adopted during Aurangzebe's reign by the Company's servants in India, Lyall wrote; 'Their purpose was now...to establish "such a Politie of civil and military power, and create and secure such a large revenue, as may be the foundation of a large, well-grounded, sure English dominion in India for all time to come"' 1 However, such ambitions in the late seventeenth century were inevitably doomed to failure because local conditions were not yet ripe for the overthrow of the Moghul and Maratha powers.

Thus the emergence of the British as the unrivalled masters of India was due to the overall co-ordination by the government in London. Although Lyall recognised that Dupleix's brilliant diplomatic gambits were important in revealing to the British the path to dominion, he considered that the Carnatic wars with their limited effects had been over-estimated by other historians. He did not believe 'that extensive political changes may hang on the event of a small battle, or on the behaviour at some critical moment of a provincial general or

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1 Lyall, p.49. In this connection the unsuccessful policies of the two Childs, John at Bombay and Josia at Leadenhall Street, are discussed in The Cambridge History of India, vol. V, pp.102-3.
The early successes of Dupleix, which enabled the French temporarily to establish satrap states and spheres of influence in the South and the Deccan, were made possible by the British failure to mobilise and exploit their overwhelming naval superiority. When the British were in a position to do this effectively during the Seven Years' War, the French were defeated in India since their lines of supply with Europe were quickly and easily cut. The 'sure and swift support, in times of need, from the mother country' was an indispensable condition for success in the eastern theatre of war. Believing that the struggle with the French in India came to a close after the capture of Pondicherry in January 1761, Lyall focussed most of his attention on the conflict in the Carnatic. In this region, the British had the inestimable advantages of 'strong points d'appui on the coast' and a powerful naval force that could keep open communications with Europe. The French failure was not due to 'the ill-luck or incapacity of individuals...but in the wider combination of circumstances that decided against France her greatest contest with England at that period'.

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1 Lyall, pp.99-100.
2 Lyall, p.117.
3 Lyall, p.116.
In Europe the Compagnie des Indes Orientales was insolvent and maladministered while colonial and mercantile interests were continually sacrificed by the French government 'to a disastrous war-policy on the continent'. Above all, the naval strength of France was exhausted so that all the transmarine possessions of France were left defenceless against the overwhelming superiority of England whereas the English nation was deeply and ardently interested in the struggle; the lead and direction was in supremely able hands. The whole unfettered energy of a free and fierce people had been wielded by Pitt, the ablest war-minister that England has ever seen, against the careless incapacity of courtiers and the ill-supported efforts of one or two able but irresponsible officials, under such an autocrat as Louis XV. The French were not able to provide their settlements in India with the sustained support and direction which Lyall considered such a valuable and necessary factor in the triumph of the British.

Lyall, therefore, specifically attacked Seeley's view that the British empire in India was an accidental and unpremeditated development. Rather he asserted that the 'idea that India might be easily conquered and governed, with a very small force, by a race superior in warlike capacity or in civilisation, was no novelty at all'. The opinions of travellers to Moghul India, in

1 Lyall, p.118.
2 Lyall, p.118.
3 Lyall, p.125
particular Bernier and Tavernier, were quoted to demonstrate that the conquest of India was recognised as a practicable possibility long before the involvement of the French and the English in the Carnatic wars. Bernier had discerned with characteristic perception the prime cause of India's permanent weakness - 'her political instability within, and her sea-coast exposed and undefended externally'. To the individual on the spot, intimately acquainted with Indian politics and society, the growth of European hegemony over the Indian states was not a fortuitous development, but the inevitable outcome of power at sea. The victories at Plassey and Buxar and the defeat of the French in the South meant that it was only a matter of time before the British, by a policy of relentless expansion, would extend their sway over the moribund Indian states from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas.

1 Lyall, p.127.
2 Lyall, of course, made much of Clive's famous despatch of 1765 in which he stated: 'We have at last arrived at that critical period which I have long foreseen, that period which renders it necessary to determine whether we can or shall take the whole to ourselves...it is scarcely hyperbole to say that tomorrow the whole Moghul empire is in our power'. Lyall took this 'to show how accurately the possibilities of expansion had been calculated by cool and intelligent observers'. Lyall, pp.159-60.
Both the panache and span of Lyall's explanation were characteristic of the late nineteenth century imperialist. The British Raj was seen as the culmination of powerful historic forces palpably anticipated by the Company long before the first steps to empire were taken. In stately periods Lyall traced the rise and fall of the great eastern empires and suggested, furthermore, that the history of Europe ought to be examined in the light of its changing and multifarious relationships with Asia. Conflict rather than harmony had been the outstanding characteristic of this relationship since the expansion of Hellenistic culture in the wake of Alexander's whirlwind conquests. The spread of Islam marked a further stage in this confrontation, the resurgence of the East after the decline of Graeco-Roman civilisation. It is not surprising that Lyall should see the British dominion in India as 'the latest and most powerful wave in the tide of European expansion which since the sixteenth century had been steadily overwhelming Asia, by sea-power in the

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Lyall's work is restricted to his collected magazine articles, Asiatic Studies (first series 1882, second series 1889), The Rise and Expansion of the British Dominion in India, and a chapter 'The Moghul Empire' in The Cambridge Modern History (vol.VI, Cambridge, 1909), Chapter XV, pp.506-29. It is in the latter two works that he examines the rise of British power as a function of a more general tendency - the resurgence and expansion of Europe and the decay of the indigenous political systems of Asia. See E.T. Stokes, 'The Administrators and Historical Writing on India' in C.H. Philips (ed.), Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon (London, 1962), pp.385-403.
South and by Russian land-power in the North'.

No doubt Lyall's faith in the inevitability of empire was confirmed and sanctioned by the steady and persistent growth of British control over the entire sub-continent during the nineteenth century. Moreover, the tightening of control by the London authorities over their subordinate governments in the East, a development immensely facilitated in the late nineteenth century by the opening of the Suez Canal and the establishment of telegraphic communications with India, certainly predisposed Lyall to stress the factor of metropolitan direction and support in the rise of the British empire in the East.

These two kinds of interpretation have had a significant influence on the study of Anglo-French rivalry in the East and the consolidation of British power in India. Seeley's view that expansion was essentially a blind process, not chosen by the authorities in Europe but willed and executed by ambitious men on the spot, has been described as a 'peripheral' explanation of imperialism. This explanation places primary emphasis on developments at the frontier, and it claims that the distant metropolitan authorities remained throughout distrustful, and indeed critical, of the forward policies prosecuted by their

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1 Philips, Historians of India, p.399.
over-enthusiastic appointees. On the other hand, Lyall's argument made much more of the element of European co-ordination of effort in the growth of the Indian empire, though he did attribute a marginal importance to local events. Such a view has been classified as a 'eurocentric' view of expansion in the sense that Europe was the power-house behind the imperial activity. It goes without saying, of course, that neither view is a mutually exclusive description of the process. In fact, the most accurate and satisfying explanation would link insights from both schools, the 'peripheral' and the 'eurocentric'. Attention would be focussed on both local and metropolitan factors in the development of British influence and power in the East.

It is undisputed that the competition between the English and the French in India emerged within the context of global rivalry. Nevertheless, with the outstanding exception of Vincent Harlow, virtually all historians who have examined Anglo-French rivalry in India - from Dodwell to the most recent French historian, Roger Glachant - have treated the eastern

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1 The term has been used in yet another sense by the Dutch historian, J.C. Van Leur, to denote the writing of Southeast Asian history in European terms. For a discussion of this usage see J.D. Legge, Indonesia (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1964), pp. 20-3, 63-6.
struggle in isolation from other areas of commercial and maritime competition. Harlow goes so far as to argue that Britain's 'drang nach Osten' was largely a response to the frustrations arising from the loss of the American colonies. Irritation and disillusionment with a formal empire of settlement led to a new enthusiasm for an informal empire of trade. However this may be, it is certain that Anglo-French tensions in the East must be examined within a geo-political framework of European and imperial rivalries. Throughout this study of Anglo-French relations in the East, therefore, a consistent effort will be made to relate British and French disagreements and crises on the spot to the changing policies of their governments in Europe.

But while this study will be concerned with mother countries as well as with colonial possessions, any realistic

2 'The post-1783 generation was not anti-imperialist. If they were disappointed imperialists, it was that one particular pattern of empire - that of settlement - had proved inconvenient. The denouement of a colonial empire at Yorktown might indeed be inevitable; but, whether it were so or not, it liberated them to pursue, with relief perhaps and certainly with more single-minded enthusiasm, that alternate pattern which had been developing, with such rich variety of expedient, and opportunity, during the previous decades: the empire of commerce in Indian and Pacific Oceans'. V.T. Harlow, The Founding of the Second British Empire 1763-1793 (vol.II, London, 1964), p.786. For a critical treatment of Harlow's main arguments see Peter Marshall, 'The First and Second British Empires: A Question of Demarcation', History, XLIX (1964), pp.13-23.
assessment of the activities of Europeans in the East must also recognise that the problem of control by a metropolitan government was crucial. Men on the spot did have quite unprecedented opportunities to initiate policies even though the distant authorities tried assiduously to restrain them. In this situation an obvious response to the intractable problem of distance - 'opposuit natura' Burke termed it - was the concentration of authority in one regional government: a local government would be endowed with powers of control over lesser centres in India and the East. During the thirty years after the Peace of Paris this administrative expedient was adopted by both the French and the British governments, but in the case of the British the constitutional settlement was greatly complicated by the permanent vested interest of the East India Company. All the same, Calcutta or Fort William became the undisputed capital of British India while Port Louis in the Ile de France became the capital of French India. The establishment of the Fort William Council as the supreme government, together with the further centralising of power in the office of the Governor General, was the indispensable basis for rapid expansion in the age of Wellesley and Hastings. Relationships between the English and the French naturally were affected by the devolution of power and responsibility to local centres in the East, and the repercussions of disputes in Bengal, the Carnatic and the
Eastern Seas need to be closely studied at the regional level, the wider Asian level and the metropolitan level.

In spite of the varying emphases which Seeley and Lyall placed on metropolitan and local conditions in the emergence of the Indian empire, both were agreed that the spectre of French schemes and activity had precipitated the Company's entanglement in Indian politics. Lyall turned his attention to the early struggles in the South, believing that the French threat dissipated itself after the Peace of Paris. He conceded that the French made a bold effort to recoup their losses during the American War and that they continued to enter into alliances with the larger Indian states; but to all intents and purposes their strength in the East quickly withered away after 1761. Thereafter, the French threat became a convenient political fiction to vindicate the wars fought against the Indian states themselves. In this view Lyall has had a considerable influence. The standard works of reference on the British in India, The Cambridge History of the British Empire and P.E. Roberts' History of British India, clearly dismiss the French as a threat to the Company's power after the Peace of Paris. French historians, too, have concentrated on the earlier, more colourful struggle in the Carnatic.
Seeley, however, was more perceptive in noting that the French government and French officials did not give up their schemes for the overthrow of British rule immediately after the 1763 peace. Until the end of the Napoleonic wars at least, the British remained obsessed with the threat posed by the French. Seeley affirmed that

I find, when I study the English conquest of India, that we were actuated neither by ambition nor yet by mere desire to advance our trade, but that from first to last - that is, from the first efforts of Clive to the time when Lord Wellesley, Lord Minto and Lord Hastings established our authority over the whole vast peninsula - we were actuated by fear of the French. Behind every movement of the native Powers we saw French intrigue, French gold, French ambition, and never, until we were masters of the whole country, got rid of that feeling that the French were driving us out of it, which had descended from the days of Dupleix and Labourdonnais.  

How, then, did the French threat operate to cause this train of events? Assuming that the fear of the French was one of the fundamental attitudes of the eighteenth century Englishman, derived as it was from persistent French efforts to upset the delicate equipoise of the European balance of power, it is not surprising that these alarms should be transferred to the East, where for a time the French did constitute an effective menace. In order to counter French moves the Indian presidencies usually felt compelled to respond in certain ways, either to

1 Seeley, pp. 35-6.
form subsidiary alliances with the native states, or to intervene directly in establishing 'points d'appui' and spheres of influence. Alternatively, on the basis of rumours of intended French moves the British were occasionally panicked into taking action so as to anticipate French expansion. There is need to concentrate on this much neglected period when Anglo-French rivalry in the East was supposed to be at a minimum, even nonexistent – the period between the Peace of Paris and the outbreak of the Revolutionary wars. The central hypothesis of this study is that the fear of the French remained to affect British policy throughout this period.

On the other hand, there are interpretations which explain the expansionist policies of the British in terms other than the French threat. According to such a view, Britain would have acquired India without the goad of rival French ambitions because the amorphous and disorderly mass of Indian states that batten on the declining Moghul empire were no match for the East India Company, whose resources by contrast were 'concentrated, relatively well-organised and expansive'. The idea of the balance of power was alien to the experience of the Indian polity. Instead, the warring and divided powers of India

naturally gravitated towards a strong central power which could establish by force its claim to supremacy.¹ Until the disastrous defeat at Panipat it seemed as if the Marathas might emerge as the dominant political force in India, but in the latter half of the eighteenth century this rôle passed to the East India Company and since there were no counterweights the Company's authority proved irresistible. In spite of the attractions of this explanation, it is not altogether convincing, for without French efforts at 'nababisme' - the vying with native princes for control of extensive territories - it is difficult to imagine the British entering with such enthusiasm the contest for power and profits. Jouveau-Dubreuil, for instance, argues that it was the French who first adapted themselves to the milieu of Indian politics.² The mastery of the arts of war and diplomacy that they as a nation had

¹ cf. 'It is necessary to understand that there were no restraints or self-limitations in the Indian political system which might have served as a basis for order and balance. There was no common code of behaviour or international law. There was no alternative, for pausing on middle ground, between complete supremacy and utter subjugation'. R.E. Frykenberg, Guntur District 1788–1848: A History of Local Influence and Central Authority in South India (Oxford, 1965), p. 29.

² 'Les Européens n'ont conquis ni la Perse, ni la Chine, ni le Japon; mais ils ont conquis l'Inde; pourquoi? Parce que dans l'Inde, il y a eu Dupleix. L'Inde fut conquise non point par les armes mais par le 'Nababisme' c'est-à-dire par le génie d'un homme. La conquête de l'Inde, événement d'importance mondiale, s'explique par l'étude d'un caractère', G. Jouveau-Dubreuil, Dupleix ou L'Inde Conquise (Paris, 1942), p. 132.
acquired in Europe since the intervention of Charles VIII and Francis I in the Italian wars was of considerable value in enabling them to outwit local Indian rulers. Company historians like Mill also emphasised that the British first learnt from the French the military advantages of large European-trained sepoy forces.\(^1\) And it was only with the greatest reluctance that governments in Europe sanctioned the actions of their servants in India primarily, as Seeley claimed, because the wars fought in India appeared to be wars against French power.

In explaining why governments in Europe came to endorse, no matter how reluctantly, the actions of their agents in remote and distant areas, Robinson and Gallagher in another context and a later period have stressed 'the official mind of imperialism' as a determinant of empire-building. 'England's rulers had inherited not only a world empire but the experience gained in bringing it together, and the assumptions and prejudices accumulated from past successes and failures inevitably influenced their behaviour.\(^2\) In all probability this development was well under way by the late eighteenth century, when considerations of defence


and security began to dominate imperial thinking.\textsuperscript{1} It is at least certain that the need to forestall or counter French moves was genuinely felt, and used time and again to justify British actions. And there was substance to this threat, for the French had come near to dislodging the British from their eastern trade in the 1740's and the 1750's, while the schemes of successive French governments in Europe - whether Bourbon or Jacobin - did little to allay the suspicions of the home government. It would appear, then, that the phobia of the French was an active force in promoting the growth of the Indian empire, as well as cementing the alliance between the British cabinet and the Company's servants in India. Successive British ministries became convinced that any threat to the Company's trade or to the defences of India would \textit{ipso facto} imperil the prestige and influence of Great Britain herself.

However, in order to establish in detail that the French continued to exert a significant influence on British policies in the East after 1763 it is, of course, necessary to investigate the complex pattern of Anglo-French relationships in India as they developed over the last thirty or so years of the

\textsuperscript{1} For a recent discussion of the relative importance of 'trade' and 'defence' in British imperial policy at this time see D.K. Fieldhouse, 'British imperialism in the late eighteenth century', in K. Robinson and F. Madden (ed.), \textit{Essays in Imperial Government} (Oxford, 1963), pp.23-45.
eighteenth century.

In India after 1765 the French found themselves in broadly two situations - either in areas such as Bengal, Bihar and Orissa where the British had established a large measure of political control over the native state, or in areas like the Carnatic and the Deccan where the question of European political control was still unresolved. In both cases the major factor in the rivalry between the English and the French was military strength or land-power. But Anglo-French rivalry was not solely limited to the sub-continent, and during the second half of the century the rivalry grew to embrace a third type of situation involving the factor of sea-power. Commercial and strategic pressures resulted in the spread of British, and to a lesser extent French, power around the littoral of the Indian Ocean from the Cape to Penang. In this third situation naval supremacy was clearly of major importance. It is hoped, therefore, that a careful and systematic examination of relations between the English and the French in these three situations will reveal the nature, extent and impact of the French threat, if such a thing existed at all. The conclusions of this study may well cast doubts on the prevalent view that the French virtually disappeared from India and the East after 1763, and may suggest instead a real and important thread of continuity between the eastern
ambitions of Choiseul and the oriental schemes of Napoleon, between the anxieties and fears of Robert Clive and those of the Marquess Wellesley.

The early chapters will examine in considerable detail Anglo-French dealings in Bengal, the most striking example of the first type of situation. By skilfully manipulating a number of palace revolutions the Fort William Council was able to establish its right to the territorial revenues and the inland trade of Bengal, together with a preponderant influence over the local ruler. The French were almost eliminated as a direct political threat from the region by the terms of the Peace of Paris which forbade them to erect fortifications, or introduce troops into the Soubah's territories. Hence the central problem of Anglo-French relations in Bengal was the reconciliation of the French claim to a freedom of trade with the Calcutta Council's fears for its future profits and safety. By contrast, the Company's other great commercial rivals, the Dutch, were treated much more sympathetically, because, with the exception of Vernet's abortive expedition of 1759, they had never constituted a political and military threat to the East India Company's prodigious power. They were content with retaining control over their

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1 For a more detailed treatment of the projected Dutch invasion see *The Cambridge History of India*, vol. V, pp.154-5.
extensive holdings in the East Indian Archipelago and cherished no designs for dominion in India.

In the South, the next case-study as it were, the French were still a political threat. Unlike their colleagues in Bengal, the Company's servants in Madras refused to take charge of the revenues or the administration of the Nawab of the Carnatic. Moreover, the Madras Council was confronted with a greatly more complicated political system than existed in Bengal, and this provided the French at Pondicherry with countless opportunities for intrigue with the native princes. Commercial competition between the two powers was less acute than in Bengal partly because the trading operations of each company were not so lucrative or as extensive, and partly because the British were not in the invidious position of being rulers as well as merchants. Nonetheless, the very precariousness of the British foothold at Madras made the fear of the French a more active force in the policies of the Madras Council than elsewhere. And since the Fort William Council became in time responsible for the safety of the Madras and Bombay Councils, it eventually drew the more secure northern presidency into expansionist wars against Mysore and the Marathas.

British military and commercial supremacy in Bengal,
the South and the West ensured that the French threat would never reach serious proportions. Frustrated in their Indian ambitions, the French hoped to compensate for their losses by extending their influence elsewhere in Asia, especially in Cochin China where their missionary orders had been active for well over a century. Commercially, the region was of great value not least because of its proximity to Canton, but any French incursions there immediately aroused the suspicions of the British. For the rapidly growing trade with China, now dominated by British country traders, would be threatened by fortified French settlements in Cochin China or Annam.

Thus the corollary of British naval power - control of the keys to India and the Eastern Seas - was rendered indispensable by this potential threat in Southeast Asia and by the challenge of French corsairs based on the Ile de France, strategically located half-way between the Cape and India. The Dutch with their valuable possessions in the East Indies were also an uncertain ally, wavering in their loyalties between the English and the French. Britain emerged from this lengthy period of Anglo-French and Anglo-Dutch conflict with the Cape, Trincomalee, Penang and Singapore, while yet a further outcome of this struggle was the recognition on the part of the British government of the strategic needs of the newly acquired Eastern empire.
Thereafter the securing of the oceanic and land defences of India became a dominant consideration in British foreign and imperial policy.

Indeed, some historians have seen in this spread of maritime power the most distinctive and important characteristic of Western dominance in the East. As K.M. Panikkar says, 'the control of the sea made it possible for the European nations to bring their strengths to bear on any point in Asia, especially after the economic and political strength of the great empires had been undermined by the European monopoly of the maritime trade'.\footnote{1} Certainly the influence of the Europeans in Asia was quite unique in its dependence on sea-power. India was now to be invaded from the sea and not as before from distant lands to the north and the west of the Himalayas.

While our study of Anglo-French relations may reveal that for a variety of reasons the French were rarely a serious threat to British power in India, it may suggest that the British remained preoccupied with the activities of the French. To a considerable extent the threat posed by the French depended on the type of situation in which the two competing powers found

themselves. In Bengal, for example, the French were essentially trading competitors with the result that the British carefully controlled their trading activities. But for much of the time the British also feared that French agents might stir up trouble in the northern areas - in Bihar, Oudh and Rohillakhand - where British influence was still indirect and tenuous. Together with their colleagues on the Coromandel, they seriously anticipated an invasion from the French Islands. In the South and in the West the French intrigued directly with the native powers independent of the Madras and Bombay Councils. In order to thwart these efforts the councils sent their own emissaries to the durbars of the princes, where, if successful, they concluded subsidiary alliances.

However, in the Indian Ocean, the Bay of Bengal and the Eastern Seas the faintest hint of a French move was usually sufficient to spark off a British response. Naval expeditions were despatched to investigate French activity at the Seychelles in the 1770's and at Diego Garcia in the 1780's, and these islands were occupied for short periods of time in order to forestall or counter French claims. Various missions were also sent to examine the extent of French activities in Cochin China, while the Company's agents at Basra and Suez anxiously watched French manoeuvres.
And yet the threat provided by the French in the East was also affected by changing developments in Europe. This study, therefore, will not only be concerned with the relations between the English and the French in the three types of situation already outlined, but with the relationships between the men on the spot, the councils and governments in India, and the more remote metropolitan authorities. An examination of these connections should indicate the relative importance of local and metropolitan factors in policy making in the East and reveal how European crises and diplomacy affected, or failed to affect, changes in British and French policies in the East. The standard works which have dealt with this phase of Anglo-French rivalry in the East, the most notable and recent being S.P. Sen's *The French in India 1763-1815*, have concentrated on the military and naval campaigns of Bussy and Suffren in India during the American War, and the political designs which the French harboured for the area.¹ Professor Sen has studied with meticulous attention the schemes advocated by French administrators and mercenaries in India for the subversion of British rule, but valuable though this work is, he has not seriously attempted to assess the response they provoked from the French government. Nor has he assessed the repercussions of French activity on British policy

in India and at home. Almost invariably historians of eighteenth century French and British activity in Asia have treated the French and the British in isolation; they have rarely attempted to relate the activities and interests of these two European powers in the East except in the most general way. Although it is true that the scholars of Anglo-French rivalry at the time of the Carnatic wars have attempted to link up policies, for the most part they have been mesmerised by the figures of Clive and Dupleix.¹ The focus of these studies has also been restricted to the struggle in India and the Indian Ocean despite the fact that the ramifications of the global struggle extended throughout the Asian region from the east coast of Africa to the China Sea. An important theme, examined in Vincent Harlow's impressive study of the rise of the Second British Empire, concerns the interrelation between English and French policies both in India and Europe and the widening of the rivalry to areas east of the Bay of Bengal.² Some of his arguments and theories will be assessed

¹ This is largely true of Dodwell's work as it is of French writing from the eulogistic biographies of Tibulle Hamont and A. Deloffre, published in the 1880's, to the more perceptive study of Jouveau-Dubreuil. Alfred Martineau's Dupleix et L'Inde Francaise (5 vols., Paris, 1920-30) is perhaps an exception in its comprehensive treatment of French policy in India during the earlier half of the century. See S.P. Sen, 'French Historical Writing on European Activities in India, in Philips (ed.), Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, pp.183-208.

and further elaborated in this thesis.

The classic studies of European trade with Asia in the late eighteenth century, Holden Furber's *John Company at Work* and Louis Dermigny's *La Chine et L'Occident*, have concerned themselves with the intricate and multifarious trading operations of the companies and the private merchants or the interlopers. They have not been greatly interested in the foreign and military policies of the European governments and companies, and perhaps as a consequence have overlooked the factors of defence and security in the growth of British commercial preponderance in the East. While any treatment of European commercial and maritime expansion in the eighteenth century must recognise the interlocking nature of trade and politics, this study will be mainly concerned with the political objectives of the French and the British.

To complete the introduction to the detailed examination of Anglo-French relations in the three situations already outlined over the period from 1763 to 1793 the next chapter will consider the means by which Anglo-French dealings were regulated in India and at home, and examine the general diplomatic background to the struggle in the East.

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CHAPTER 2: THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND DIPLOMATIC CONTEXT

i. THE FRAMEWORK OF CONTROL

How, then, were Anglo-French relations conducted in the East in the latter half of the eighteenth century? The answer to this question ought to suggest whether policy was in some sense co-ordinated and planned, or simply a drifting from one expedient to another; it should also cast some light on the processes by which the Company gradually extended its control over Indian territories.

In India relations between the English and the French were regulated through the administration of the companies. Until the passing of the Regulating Act in 1773 the presidencies of the East India Company - Bombay, Madras or Fort St George, and Calcutta or Fort William - conducted their foreign policies through their councils meeting as select or secret committees. In 1756, for instance, a Select Committee was constituted at Fort William comprising the President, the Commander-in-Chief and three senior
members of the Council

to transact affairs with the Country Government and Neighbouring Powers, also with ye French, Dutch and other Europeans, and in general to take such measures as shall best conduce to the Protection and Preservation of the Company's Estate, Rights and Privileges in Bengal.¹

The Select or the Secret Committee at Fort William corresponded directly with the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors, who in turn kept in close touch with the Secretary of State for the Southern Department.

The administrative links between the Compagnie des Indes Orientales and the French state were more close-knit than those between the powerful and relatively autonomous East India Company and the British Crown. In 1770, soon after the abolition of the Compagnie's 'exclusif', the administration of the Compagnie's establishments was assumed by the French government. The Governor at Pondicherry, who until then had been responsible to the syndics of the Compagnie although appointed by the King,

¹ Despatch from Court of Directors, 11 February 1756. In a further letter of 24 January 1767 the Board delineated the responsibilities of the Council and the Select Committee. The Select Committee was empowered to carry on 'whatever business may affect the Government or the Political and Military Interest of our Honourable Employers'. The Select Committee, suspended from May until August 1768, was dissolved in 1774 when the Regulating Act became operative. For further details see introduction to the Index to the Foreign and Political Department Records (New Delhi, 1957), vol. 1.
became in 1773 directly responsible to the Ministry of Marine for the conduct of political and military matters. By legislation enacted in 1773 the powers of the Conseil Supérieur were substantially reduced in order that the Governors at Pondicherry and Chandernagore might have complete and unfettered control over political and diplomatic affairs. While Pondicherry continued as the capital of the French possessions in India, at least until 1785, its precise relationship with the subordinate settlement of Chandernagore remained ambiguous.

At the same time as the French government was remoulding its colonial administrations the British government strove, and not without considerable opposition from the 'Bengal squad', to introduce reforms in the administration of the Company's settlements. The Regulating Act increased, if only nominally, the powers of supervision of the Fort William Council over the

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1 After 1773 the French government divided the functions of government in the Indian settlements between the Governor and the Intendant, 'each supreme in his own sphere and not dependent on the other. The former was entrusted with political and military affairs... The Intendant was entrusted with the whole civil administration, including finance, police, justice, shipping and commerce'. This brought the government of the Indian settlements in line with the traditional form of administration in the other colonies. Sen, *The French in India*, p.67.

2 The intervention of parliament into the affairs of the Company is examined in exhaustive detail in L.S. Sutherland, *The East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Politics* (Oxford, 1952), particularly Chapters VI-IX.
subordinate settlements in the matters of war and peace. In spite of this, the Governor General was given no powers to override his council of four with the inevitable result that these reforming measures were vitiated by factional strife and in-fighting. The Company's government in India, unlike that of the French, remained of a conciliar and civilian form until Pitt's famous legislation of 1784 and 1786.

The bitter and humbling experience of the American War and the loss of the First British Empire resulted in a further tightening of the Company's administration both in India and at home. Pitt's India Act was one of the many measures intended to cleanse the state and prepare it for a national revival, but for the moment let us consider the Act's provisions for the government of the settlements in India. It extended and defined the powers of the Fort William Council, which was now reduced in size to include the Governor General and three Councillors, one of whom was to be the Commander-in-Chief. While the Governor General was given a casting vote his powers were yet further increased by the Amending Act of 1786, the terms of which empowered him to 'override the decision of his Council and act without its concurrence in extraordinary cases involving in his judgement the

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1 For the provisions of this Act see The Cambridge History of India, vol.V, pp.188-90.
interests of the Company or the safety and tranquility of British possessions in India. Furthermore, the Supreme Government at Fort William was endowed by the India Act with power and authority to superintend, control and direct the several Presidencies and governments in the East Indies 'in all such points as relate to any transactions with the country powers, or to war, or peace...'. As suggested before, the British government sought to control the actions of its soldiers, administrators and merchants in India by concentrating authority and power in a central government which, in principle, would act as a restraint on the lesser centres and councils. Another method, rendered possible by these constitutional changes, was the appointment to positions of high importance in India by the British cabinet of officials from the ruling elite who would presumably act by and large as the government itself wished them to act. Cornwallis, Wellesley and the Marquess of Hastings were all men with considerable administrative experience who had not come up through the ranks of the Company's service. Nonetheless, the traditional and ingrained suspicion for the man on the spot still continued to plague relations between the Imperial parliament and the Supreme Government of India.

2 Misra, p.31.
Such attempts to consolidate and centralise control at Fort William were paralleled in the administration of the French settlements by the royal edict of May 1785 which united all the French possessions east of the Cape of Good Hope under the Governor General at Port Louis in the Ile de France. Two dependent administrations were created, one at the Ile de Bourbon and the other at Pondicherry, and the three Governors, appointed by the Ministry of Marine, were held responsible to the Crown.¹ To reinforce this change in 1789 almost all the military forces were evacuated from India to Port Louis.

Consequently disputes and contretemps between the servants of the two companies in India usually involved the higher officials at Chandernagore or Pondicherry, such men as Chevalier and de Lauriston, and the Company's officials at Madras or Calcutta, Verelst, Cartier and Hastings for instance.² In time, of course, complaints would reach the ears of the Ministry in Paris and the Court of Directors in London, who were quick to inform the Secretary of State of the particular grievance. If a crisis developed in India or Europe, all these channels were employed so that in spite of the unconscionable delay in communications there developed over the thirty year

¹ Sen, French in India, p.430.
² These disputes will be dealt with in Chapters 3-5.
period a considerable interaction between Anglo-French frictions in India and in Europe.

Relations between the two powers in Europe were simplified during the latter half of the eighteenth century by the successful efforts of the French and British governments to exert greater supervisory control over the affairs of the companies. However, because of the historically close liaison between the Compagnie and the state there was no parallel in France to the involved and tortuous attempts to bring the East India Company within the ambit of the British parliament. Indeed, it is a mark of the tenacious strength of chartered rights in the eighteenth century that even after the passing of the India Act the Company retained control over its patronage and commercial operations. Though the British cabinet appointed the Governor General and the Governors of Madras and Bombay, it normally preferred to work with the Company through the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors. The French state, on the other hand, appointed its administrators to the East Indies, subsidised the Compagnie when it was in financial straits, and negotiated on its behalf with other European governments.

On matters of foreign policy, therefore, the Governors at Pondicherry and Chandernagore corresponded directly with the
Ministries of Marine, War and Foreign Affairs. Naturally friction between the ministries could and on occasions did impede the formulation and execution of foreign policy in Paris. While a Choiseul or a Vergennes presided as 'first minister' over the government of France inter-ministerial tensions were held in check, but in the periods when the Bourbon monarchs preferred to dispense with their more energetic and able ministers administrative stagnation followed.\(^1\) Without the controlling guidance of a senior minister each department of state became intent on promoting its own set of interests to the detriment of any wider 'national interest', and a state of great confusion and disorder invariably prevailed. Historians of the ancien régime have usually stressed these conditions of government, but it is important to note that changes in administration were also reflected in French policies in the East.\(^2\) Whereas Louis XV's replacement of Choiseul by d'Aiguillon in 1770 signified the triumph of one court faction over another, it also implied the King's renunciation

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\(^1\) The official title 'first minister' lapsed after the Regency crisis until it was revived in 1787-8. Nonetheless, Cardinal Fleury, Choiseul and Vergennes exercised many of the supervisory functions of a chief minister, though they were, of course, directly and personally responsible to the King. See M. Beloff, *The Age of Absolutism 1660-1815* (London, 1963), pp.63-71.

of a vigorous and co-ordinated revangist policy in favour of the safer system of European alliances - the traditional diplomacy of the Bourbons. And such an upheaval had serious repercussions in the East Indies, as we shall later see. The French were most feared in the East when they had a formidable and efficient government at home.

The intrigues and faction-fighting of the politicians, though hardly negligible in the England of George III, had a less perceptible effect on the everyday affairs of Englishmen in the East, for the officials and servants of the various presidencies corresponded with the Company and not with the state; despatches were sent from India to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors. Although the origins of this committee go back to the seventeenth century, as Professor Philips has shown, its importance increased greatly in the second half of the eighteenth century.

1 Louis XV promoted his own foreign policy, known as le secret du roi, which was aimed at consolidating the traditional alliances with Poland, Turkey, Sweden and Prussia. For details surrounding the dismissal of Choiseul see M.J. Anderson, 'European Diplomatic Relations, 1763-1790, in The New Cambridge Modern History, vol.VIII, particularly pp.256-7.

2 For details about the origin and workings of the Secret Committee see C.H. Philips, The East India Company 1784-1824 (Manchester, 1961), pp.9-11.
Between 1754 and 1781 the Secret Committee exercised various powers; in time of war it directed the Company's naval and military operations, conducted negotiations with the Indian powers, and represented the Court of Directors in its dealings with Ministers; for example, it took charge of the negotiations for the Treaty of Paris, 1763, in so far as the Company was concerned.¹

Throughout the 1770's fairly intimate relations developed between the Committee, usually composed of three Directors, and the Ministry. In fact, by the terms of the Regulating Act the Secret Committee was obliged to place before the Secretary of State all correspondence from the presidencies that related to civil and military affairs in India. The great crisis of the American War, which also imperilled the Company's possessions in the East, further reinforced this association and the relationship was formalised in the India Act. The Secret Committee became the channel through which secret despatches passed between the Board of Control and the presidencies in India.

Until 1782 the Secretary of State for the Southern Department was the minister responsible for East Indian affairs as well as for the conduct of external relations with France, Spain, Italy, Turkey and the Barbary States.² Thus, by way of the Secret Committee, the formation of foreign policy in Europe

¹ Philips, *The East India Company*, p. 10.
might also involve the Company in India. In 1782, however, the Northern Department was converted into the Foreign Office, and two years later the Company was brought into a much closer relationship with the state. Pitt's legislation 'empowered a Board of Commissioners, appointed by the King and consisting of one of the Secretaries of State, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and four other members of the Privy Council, to supervise the civil and military government of the Company'. With the ascendancy of Henry Dundas, who virtually became a Secretary of State for India, a close bond was cemented between the Company and cabinet.

Hence the relationship between the East India Company and the state was of a subtler and less direct kind than the administrative subordination of France Outre-Mer to the French state. This rather cumbersome system of supervision, which was evolved during the eighteenth century, was rendered necessary by the intransigence of the Company, intent on the preservation of its traditional rights and liberties, and the exigencies of

2 Philips, The East India Company, p.33.
the situation confronting its servants in India. It is salutary to remember that, in spite of the attempts by the French and British governments to impose more stringent controls, both powers were faced with the enormous problem of distance and they were usually forced to concur in arrangements made on the spot. Communications with Europe still remained fragmentary and spasmodic so that despatches from England might, and often did, take anything up to a year to reach India. As Burke appreciated, 'no contrivance can prevent the effect of this distance in weakening government. Seas roll and months pass between the order and the execution'.

And as late as 1829 the Board defended its complex Indian administration in almost identical terms:

In the ordinary course of Indian administration much must always be left to the discretion of the local governments and...it rarely occurs that instructions from hence can reach India before the time for acting upon them is gone by. This is a necessary consequence of the great distance between the two countries, the rapid succession of events in India which are seldom long foreseen even by those who are on the spot, and the importance of the ruling authorities there acting with promptitude and decision and adapting their measures on their own responsibility to the varying emergencies of the hour.

1 Quoted in Robinson and Madden, Essays in Imperial Government, p.2

2 A despatch from the Chairman to Ellenborough, 27 August 1829, quoted from Philips, The East India Company, p.22.
Although the next four chapters will be primarily focussed on the operation of Anglo-French relations at the local level in the East, some more general assessment of the policies of the French and British governments towards India is necessary since the struggle in India and the Eastern Seas was manifestly part of a wider global contest. One of the paradoxes which soon emerges from a study of Anglo-French rivalry in late eighteenth century India is the considerable disparity between the alarm felt by the British about the French menace, and the vulnerability of the French establishments in the East. In no way could the Compagnie des Indes compare with the East India Company, certainly not in the number, extent and wealth of its possessions. While the French were restricted to some half-dozen factories and Pondicherry, the British held the seemingly inexhaustible revenues of Bengal. In peace time the Compagnie depended increasingly on British credit, insurance, and shipping facilities,¹ and in war time the settlements were indefensible. And yet the administrators of British policy in India revealed, on occasions, an almost pathological dread of the French. Assuming the sincerity of these fears, any evaluation of this phase of

¹ See Furber, John Company at Work, pp.32-65.
Anglo-French rivalry must offer some adequate explanation for the discrepancy between the threat and the alarms aroused by the threat.

British fears about the French in India, as has already been suggested, were compounded of disparate elements. Their origins are to be located in the earlier fierce trading struggles along the Coromandel coast. Later they grew as a consequence of the hard-fought campaigns against Lally and de Bussy, and the ease with which French military agents could insinuate themselves into the confidence of the Indian princes. Undoubtedly these fears were exaggerated because of their association in the minds of the British with anxieties produced by the precarious and turbulent political situation in the sub-continent, but the fear of the French was only conditioned in part by the Indian situation. The dread of a French invasion of the Carnatic or Bengal was, at times, a simple transposition of the basic European threat. These factors have been usually emphasised in explanations of Anglo-French conflict in India. The commercial and strategic threat which took on a global dimension in the 1760's, the 1770's and the 1780's has been least emphasised although it was woven into the entire diplomacy of Choiseul and Vergennes. Vincent Harlow has cogently argued that the concerted efforts of the Bourbon powers to dislodge the British from their
pre-eminent position in global trade does much to explain the strategy of the Second British Empire.\textsuperscript{1} Choiseul and Vergennes hoped to compensate for earlier French losses by building up French trade and power overseas. French commerce was to be rehabilitated partly by means of a sweeping commercial alliance with the sister power of Spain, and partly through trade with the Americas, the West Indies and the East.

Although chastened by the experience of the Seven Years' War, France emerged from the Peace of Paris with the most commercially valuable of her overseas possessions intact. Under the able leadership of the duc de Choiseul, who succeeded Bernis to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1758, France disentangled herself from the traditional continental diplomacy of her rulers and began to concentrate her attention on the colonial and maritime struggle with Britain.\textsuperscript{2} The Family Compact, concluded with Spain in August 1761, was one of the earliest fruits of this

\textsuperscript{1} See, for example, Chapter IV, 'Commercial Strategy in the Eastern Seas 1780-83', in The Founding of the Second British Empire, vol. I, pp. 103-45, and Harlow's detailed exposition of the Falkland Islands' crisis in the same volume, pp. 22-32.

\textsuperscript{2} Étienne François de Choiseul-Stainville, duc de Choiseul (1719-1785) occupied the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the periods 1758-61 and 1766-70, relinquishing control of the office to his cousin, Choiseul-Praslin, from October 1761 until 1766. He also held the War Ministry from 1761 to 1770, and the Naval Ministry between 1761 and 1766.
'revanche' policy and the alliance was consummated by Spain's entry into the war in the following year. For the next thirty years the Franco-Spanish alliance was to be the pivot of French foreign policy. Its raison d'être was clearly expressed in a letter written by Ossun, the French ambassador at Madrid, to Choiseul in 1765.

England is the common enemy of both crowns; she derives her forces and the means of her growth from her commerce, and from the advantages which she has been able to procure over the other nations, from Spain, and in other lands; it is, then, of pressing importance to the two crowns to attack the source and riches of the English power as aggressively as possible, and at the same time to obtain reciprocally from each other all possible advantages. The diminution of the enemy power and the augmentation of the allies must necessarily result.

The most substantial of Choiseul's achievements, however, was the re-invigoration of the French navy. This was the corollary of Choiseul's new found faith in maritime and commercial expansion, and though the navy languished for a time after Choiseul's fall in 1770 his policies were continued by Sartine and de Castries under the guidance of Vergennes.

Intended to destroy the British mastery of the seas and open the

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1 Ossun to Choiseul, 20 June 1765. Quoted in J.F. Ramsey, Anglo-French Relations 1763-1770: A Study of Choiseul's Foreign Policy (California, 1939).

2 Charles Gravier comte de Vergennes (1717-1787) acquired his diplomatic experience as ambassador at Constantinople and later as ambassador to Sweden; he became Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1774, soon after the accession of Louis XVI, and retained that post until his death early in 1787.
sea routes to the Americas and the Indies, the French navy almost succeeded in these aims during the American War.

Strategies emerge out of the struggle for some piece of territory which takes on importance because of its contribution to a wider pattern of trade and security. The logical and necessary steps in a strategy of empire, therefore, are perceived in the attempt to exclude rivals and establish control over such areas. In response to French schemes, which were clearly exposed during the American War, the British developed an alternate maritime strategy. As a consequence the defence of India became linked to an imperial system of defence. By the early 1780's the British government had become convinced that the Company's position in India depended as much on the possession of the Cape, Trincomalee and bases to the east of the Bay of Bengal as it did on the defeat of Tipu Sultan of Mysore.

Moreover, the conscious selection and pursuit of a global defence plan by a sovereign government in accord with its beliefs about national security is implicit in the notion of an imperial strategy. Co-ordinated direction from a centre of government, as distinct from piecemeal acquisitions by men on the spot, is an essential condition for the development of regional and global strategies. In the twenty-five years or so after the Peace of Paris, as we have seen, the settlements in India came
increasingly under the supervision of European governments. The Regulating and India Acts brought the administration of the Company under the indirect control of parliament and in spite of the caution of the Board of Control these changes provided the British with more room for initiative in the East. Fort William pursued a policy responsive to the needs of defence and security at the periphery of British power; Whitehall, on the other hand, advised caution until it was convinced that the strategic or commercial need was imperative.

A more detailed study of French and British objectives in the East during the critical years of the American War is useful in showing these various tendencies at work. It was not until the entry of the Bourbon powers into the war that the British cabinet first seriously turned its attention to the eastern theatre. In June 1780 Lord North outlined before cabinet a plan to foment insurrection in the Spanish American colonies in order to divert the efforts of France and Spain from North America. North's ploy was a simple one. A force of 1,500 British troops and 2,000 sepoys would sail from Madras in May 1781 for the Pacific coast of South America, where they would

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encourage the spread of revolution in the Spanish colonies. The British could also call in the New World to redress the balance of the Old, or so hoped the prime minister. But for success in this venture the advice and support of the Company was essential, and the negotiations which followed between the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors and the cabinet marked a further stage in the growing partnership between the Company and the state.

When Devaynes and Sullivan, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Court who also constituted the Secret Committee 'with powers to give Orders and Instructions for conducting the Company's Military and Naval Affairs', were informed of this scheme they were reluctant to embroil the Company. They believed that it would be a very difficult task 'to sustain, direct and control' upheavals in 'Peru, Mexico, or Chili,...against the forces of Spain', and expressed their fear that the Company's support of the venture might entail an

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1 Minutes of 18 July 1780, No. 7 Proposal of an Expedition to South America by India, dated June 3rd 1780, laid before the Cabinet by Lord North, Minutes of the Secret Committee, vol. 3, p. 23.

2 The resolution to appoint the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman a Secret Committee was taken on 31 May 1780. Minutes of the Secret Committee, 31 May 1780, vol. 3.
infringement of the South Seas Company's charter. Instead they pressed on the government a scheme much closer to their hearts, an expedition against Mindanao and the Celebes. The prospects of trade and plunder were more enticing to the Company than the geo-political reflections of the politicians.

Further discussions ensued between Lord Hillsborough, the Secretary of State for the Southern Department, and the Secret Committee. Although the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman duly acquiesced in the 'Proposition that the Company should aid Government in an Expedition to the South Seas', they showed much greater enthusiasm for the plan of attacking the settlements of the Dutch and the Spanish in the East 'and ruining their Commerce'. They contended that establishments at Mindanao and the Celebes would enable the British 'to obstruct the Spanish commerce', as well as eliminate the threat to British shipping from the French and Spanish privateers in the China Sea. The settlement at the Celebes, they also argued, would be of 'great and permanent' commercial advantage. On 19 August 1780 the Directors expressed their alarm lest the Dutch 'join the French

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1 Minutes of 18 July 1780, No. 9 Sketch of an Expedition to the South Seas, Minutes of the Secret Committee, vol. 3, p. 30.
2 Minute of 8 August 1780, Minutes of the Secret Committee, vol. 3, p. 43.
and Spaniards in India'. If, as they feared, the Dutch were 'sending a considerable Force thither', and should the 'Presidencies find themselves justified in attacking the Dutch', the Directors entreated that the Dutch 'Capital Spice Settlements may be the first object of this intended Armament'.

The Secret Committee further commended this enterprise by producing the offers of assistance given by the Sultan of Mindanao to Captain Thomas Forrest in 1775 and by the King of the Bugis to Captain Carteret in 1767. At first Hillsborough was cautious in his reaction to the Celebes proposal because the States General were still at peace with Britain. However, the Chairmen felt that the commercial benefits accruing from a settlement in the Celebes would more than compensate for the expense and risk of an establishment at Mindanao, which naturally would be more vulnerable to attack from Manila; and permission to found a settlement at the Celebes became the sine qua non for the Company's participation in the South Seas expedition. The Company readily offered the services of Forrest, who had 'explored New Guinea' and was 'perfectly acquainted with the

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1 The Directors to Lord Hillsborough, 19 August 1780, Proposed expedition to the South Seas and formation of Establishments in Mindanao and Celebes, Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.146, p.134.

2 See Chapter 6 for the background to these ventures.
customs, manners, and Language of the Malays', as an intermediary with the native powers.¹

The agreement finally concluded between the Company, represented by Devaynes and Sullivan, and Hillsborough on 30 September 1780 bore witness to the new relationship between the Company and the state, and to the commercial and strategic pressures which were moulding the Second British Empire.² The formation of establishments at Mindanao and the Celebes and the securing of the Indian presidencies from French attack were to be the principal objectives of the expedition, and not the liberation of the Spanish American colonies. The Company promised to convey 800 men in their own ships to Madras at the expense of the government while in India the Company agreed to furnish the expedition


² Agreement between the Right Honorable the Earl of Hillsborough, One of His Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, on the part of the Crown, and William Devaynes, Esquire, Chairman, and Laurence Sullivan, Esquire, Deputy Chairman of the Court of Directors of the East India Company, on the part of the said Company, relative to an Expedition to the South Seas, 30 September 1780, Minutes of the Secret Committee, vol.3, pp.94-9.
with 2,000 'disciplined Sepoys' and two ships of forty guns and one of twenty 'if possible'. Although the Company was to 'make all the advances required in India during this Expedition', the government arranged to defray all expenses with the exception of the proposed establishment at the Celebes. It was also agreed 'that if any new Settlement or Settlements shall be made and given to the Company, a sufficient Military Force shall be left' for their protection, and to facilitate the extension of British influence and trade throughout the East Indies 'His Majesty's Commanding Officer' was 'at liberty to open an intercourse on the part of the Company, and in their name, with the King of the Bugguese'. Finally, it was decided that in case of 'an actual attack from any European Enemy whatever' the expedition would supplement the defence forces of the Company in India 'until all dangers from such attacks shall be removed'.

Two days later the Secret Committee described in a confidential letter to the councils in India the 'motives and views' that had persuaded them to support the expedition. The increase in the Company's force in India by 'two thousand Infantry, with a Ship of the Line, Frigates, and several Armed Transports' was a major consideration in their decision, especially at a time when the Madras and Bombay Councils were fully committed in an
arduous struggle with Mysore and the Marathas. But 'Another important benefit' they expected from the expedition was the safeguarding of the China trade,

an object of the first magnitude to the Company; for as we have too much reason to fear, that both French and Spaniards will endeavour to block up every avenue from the China Seas, few of our Ships might escape the vigilance of their Cruizers; and if assisted by the Dutch, it would be almost impossible. They hoped that the new 'Armament' would 'obviate the imminent danger, and force our Enemies to attend to their own safety'.

Furthermore, the Directors dwelt at length on the extension of the Company's commerce and influence throughout the Eastern Seas. Despite the earlier and costly failures at establishing entrepots in Borneo, the Sulu Sea, Northern Sumatra and Malaya, they were now convinced that the presence of military support from the Crown would 'render an Establishment for the Company at Mindanao rather advantageous than burthensome'. They

1 'and if upon their arrival in India, any of our Settlements should be found in danger, the Expedition was to be suspended, and this powerful Armament to be added to our present strength, and employed in our defence and protection, until all dangers were removed'. Confidential letter from the Committee of Secrecy to the Governor General and Council of Bengal, and to the Presidents and Select Committees at Fort St George and Bombay, dated 2 October 1780, with a Postscript dated the same day, Minutes of the Secret Committee, vol.3, p.116. For details about the political situation in the South and the West at this time see Chapter 5.

2 Letter from the Committee of Secrecy, 2 October 1780, Minutes of the Secret Committee, vol.3, pp.116-17.
declared:

Our ideas respecting Mindanao...are, that it's situation is favorable for obtaining the produce of Borneo; that it's distance from the Spice Islands is not so great, but that we might have reasonable hopes of procuring Cloves and Nutmegs; that the shortness of the passage from China, might tempt the Junks to visit Mindanao; and which we think very probable, especially if Commodities proper for Exchange be regularly provided and lodged in Warehouses for that purpose. That when the Monsoon hinders our Ships, or in case of War, if an Enemy render it unsafe and imprudent to pursue the usual track to China, we might always have a passage open by way of Mindanao, which would be a convenient Port for shelter and refreshment; and should it become a respectable Settlement, it's vicinity to Manilha, might also, in time of War, be a severe check upon Spain, and greatly facilitate Attacks planned for the South Seas.1

In this way the Directors frankly acknowledged those basic pressures which were to determine the Company's policies in the East for the next half-century. The quest for commercial establishments in the Eastern Seas resulted from both the Company's desire to participate more fully in the growing China trade and its realisation, sharpened by the experience of war, that its eastern possessions were vulnerable to French naval attack. A naval base to the east of the Bay of Bengal was essential if the French were not to dominate the Madras and Balasore roadsteads during the winter monsoon. Alexander Dalrymple had

1 Letter from the Committee of Secrecy, 2 October 1780, Minutes of the Secret Committee, vol.3, pp.119-20.
ably expounded the commercial arguments in the 1760's but it was the threat to the Company's eastern trade which had goaded the North Ministry to support the Company in these efforts to form entrepot-bases in the Eastern Seas.¹

On 20 December 1780, however, Britain declared war against Holland and the preparations for the South Seas expedition were hastily dropped in favour of an expedition to take the Cape. The war was fast approaching its most critical stage; in the War of the Austrian Succession and the Seven Years' War Britain had been able, through a skilful use of European alliances, to concentrate her main efforts on the colonial front while France had been tied up in the continental struggles, but now Britain stood weakened and alone, confounded by the intractable opposition of her former subjects in America, against the combined might of France, Spain and Holland. And France was prepared to take the offensive on the high seas and in the colonies.

It is hardly surprising, then, that in a crisis of these global dimensions the protection of the Indian settlements should become an important part of an imperial defence system, and that the Ministry should assume a more active role in the direction of Indian affairs.

¹ See Chapter 6.
Cabinet decided on 29 December to send Commodore Johnstone with a force of 3,000 troops as a garrison to occupy the Cape. If the attack proved successful, Johnstone was instructed to despatch the East India ships and a large part of his naval force to assist Admiral Sir Edward Hughes in the Indian Ocean.

The crucial significance of the Cape as a naval base in the struggle between England and France was clearly revealed in the plans which each power devised early in 1781. French strategy was conditioned by the dependence of their islands in the Indian Ocean on the Cape for provisions and naval supplies. According to de Lozier Bouvet, who had been the Governor at the Ile de France and the Ile de Bourbon (at different times) from 1754 to 1764, the Cape was 'le magazin de nos îles de France et de Bourbon, et il nous serait bien difficile de les conserver sans le secours qu'elles en tirent'. The speedy despatch of Bailli de Suffren's squadron with 1,200 soldiers to race the English to the Cape reflected a renewal of interest by the French government in the Indian theatre of war. De Castries, the energetic Minister of Marine, explained to Hamilton in January

1781 that the French hoped to take both the Cape and St Helena, and thereby 'intercept the English ships' and 'cut the neck of their India trade and expeditions'.¹ From the Cape the French would extend their influence to Ceylon and Java, where they intended to despoil the Company's trade with China.

Although Commodore Johnstone sailed from Spithead on 13 March 1781, nine days before Suffren's departure from Brest, he lost the race to the Cape. Suffren surprised and attacked the English squadron at Porto Praya in the Cape Verde Islands and then proceeded to the Cape and the Ile de France to menace British sea power in the Indian Ocean.

When the Chairmen of the Court of Directors who constituted the Secret Committee were informed in October 1781 of the failure of the Johnstone-Medows expedition, they re-doubled their efforts to persuade the government to send a further expedition to capture the Cape. They were painfully aware that the French might easily sever Britain's tenuous connection with India by capturing St Helena. And even if the Company remained

¹ De Castries to Hamilton, January 1781, Mesures que nous avons à prendre de concert avec la hollande contre les Anglais dans l'Inde et en Europe, Correspondance Politique, Angleterre, vol.534, p.20. 'La Déclaration de Guerre faite par l'Angleterre à la Hollande, si celle-oy la soutient avec vigueur et veut unir ses efforts à ceux de la France est un Événement qui doit entraîner la ruine entière des Anglais dans l'Inde'. Mémoires et Documents, Asie, vol.7, p.261.
in possession of this island-base they knew that it was 'not capable of affording supplies of provisions to the Company's homeward bound Ships, much less to His Majesty's Fleets'.

The Chairmen suggested that the 5,000 men already under orders for India should attempt to take the Cape, and in case of success, they urged that 2,500 to 3,000 men should 'be spared to garrison the place'.

If the measure succeed, the obvious consequences must be, the cutting off from the French and Dutch those resources of supply, without which they must be reduced to the utmost distress for the means of support to their Islands, and for the maintenance of their Fleets in India; and the certain acquisition to Britain, and consequently to the East India Company of every requisite furnished at present from the Cape of Good Hope to our Enemies.

Hillsborough was concerned lest the French from the Ile de France and the Dutch from Batavia counter-attack the British force at the Cape, but the Chairmen were confident that 'a Garrison of 3,000 men will be fully sufficient to keep possession of the Cape'. They also offered the assistance of a sepoy force from India and reaffirmed their original argument that the Cape was indispensable to the British as a 'place of refreshment

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and supply for the King's and Company's homeward-bound Ships'.

While such an active and enterprising enemy as the French held the Cape the route to and from India would remain in extreme danger.

That the Power possessing the Cape of Good Hope has the Key to and from the East-Indies, appears to us self-evident and unquestionable; Indeed we must consider the Cape of Good Hope, as the Gibraltar of India. This circumstance, My Lord, has not been felt during the long peace subsisting between Great Britain and the States General; but the present rupture with the Dutch, has totally changed the scene, and rendered the possession of the Cape of the last importance.

They pointed out that Madagascar and St Helena were quite inadequate as supply bases; Madagascar was 'uncertain and dangerous, from Storms, climate and the disposition of the Natives', and St Helena was too small and not self-sufficient.

The darkest fears of the Company appeared to materialise when the Directors were informed on 31 October 1781 that the old Indian veteran, de Bussy, had been commissioned to return

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2 Charles Patissier, marquis de Bussy (1720-1785) first went to India in 1741. Dupleix commissioned him in 1751 to accompany Muzaffar Jang back to Hyderabad and from this time until his recall to the Carnatic by Lally-Tollendal in 1758 he was the effective power behind Salabat Jang, the Soubah of the Deccan. Eventually he was captured by the British in 1760, returning to France soon after.
to India 'with a great Naval and Military Force'. 'This information', asserted the Chairmen, 'renders the proposed Expedition for attacking the Cape of Good Hope...infinitely more necessary'.

For Cornwallis' dramatic surrender at Yorktown in October virtually closed hostilities in America itself and signified a resurgence of the Anglo-French struggle in the East. Both powers were now able to concentrate their unfettered attention on the naval and military campaigns in India. The French government realised that the attainment of its political and commercial ambitions in India, which were still considerable, depended upon some striking military success. A number of victories there would enable Vergennes to negotiate from a position of strength and induce the humiliated British to sue for peace. Bussy and Chevalier had repeatedly stressed the importance India played in providing the British with wealth and trade, and they warned that British efforts would be increasingly directed towards the preservation and defence of their possessions in India. Despite these cautionary words, they both agreed that the time was ripe for a widespread Indian revolt against the oppressive rule of the Company. 'Tous les princes de l'Inde ont les regards tournés du côté de la France, dont la cause est

commune avec la leur....Jamais il n'y eut d'occasion plus favorable que celle qui se présente aujourd'hui, si nous savons en profiter'. Hopefully, then, the French government decided to sponsor an expeditionary force to the East, de Bussy receiving his commission and instructions on 11 November.

In the same month Hillsborough held discussions with the Directors personally to consider once more the future of the Cape. The Directors were anxious that Bussy's expedition should not render French occupation of the Cape permanent since there were no alternatives to the Cape as a half-way provisioning base on the route to India. 'If the French are suffered to hold possession of the Cape of Good Hope, they will thereby most certainly acquire the means of possessing the territorial revenues in India; and cannot fail to become the controlling European Power in that part of the World'. Although the Ministry had come to appreciate the overwhelming importance of the Cape, they were

2. For a detailed discussion of these instructions in the context of South India see Chapter 5, pp.236-9.
3. Chairman and Deputy Chairman to the Earl of Hillsborough, 8 November 1781, Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.155, p.121.
able to do very little, and the Cape remained in enemy hands until the end of the war.¹

The granting of independence to the thirteen American colonies freed the British government from the distraction of a formal empire of settlement. It could now direct its efforts to the matter of domestic reform and the development of an 'empire of commerce in Indian and Pacific Oceans',² a trend in imperial interest and organisation that has been explored in enormous detail by Vincent Harlow. In fact, he has discerned in the dynamic expansion of British trade and influence eastwards the major feature of the Second British Empire, and while some doubts have been raised as to the overall economic importance of this swing, few historians would question the growing political strength of the settlements established in India.

Notwithstanding, the fear of the French still lingered on in the minds of the British, who were increasingly concerned about the future of the strategically important Dutch possessions in the East Indies. The Dutch entry into the American War had

seriously jeopardised the security of British interests in India and from the Peace of Versailles until the war against Revolutionary France the British tried desperately to bring Holland back within the fold of the traditional Anglo-Dutch alliance.¹ Underlying all such efforts was the belief that an accommodation of interests between the two powers in the East could be managed. According to the British point of view:

The two Countries have each one original great object in view, and which do not clash in the smallest degree: That of Great Britain is to maintain and preserve the Empire which she has acquired, in comparison of which even trade is a subordinate or collateral consideration.

The great object of Holland is, in the first instance, to secure to herself the monopoly of the Spice Islands; and secondly, to extend her general trade by every means in her power.²

Britain, of course, was particularly anxious to secure the neutrality of the Cape in time of war and to exchange Negapatam, which she had gained at the peace, for Trincomalee.

Conversely France wanted the Dutch possessions left

¹ In his study Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in the Malay World 1780-1824 (Brisbane, 1962), Nicholas Tarling has treated the problem of Dutch power in the East after 1780 in close relation to the problem of the Dutch in Europe. The repercussions of the Stadholderate crisis will also be examined in Chapter 7.

² Considerations on the subject of a Treaty between Great Britain and Holland, relative to their Interests in India, P.R.O. 30/8, 360 part 2, p.179.
intact so that she could take advantage of them in case of another global war. Until the Prussian crisis of 1787 the French were assisted in their aims by the success of the patriot party within the United Provinces. But the crisis was averted by Prussian intervention whereupon the strengthened Stadholderate formed a defensive alliance with Britain and Prussia. In spite of this volte face, the Dutch Company was quite unprepared to make any concessions to the British in the East Indies, and with the flight of the Prince of Orange to England in 1795 the British government declared war on the francophile Batavian Republic and took the Cape and Trincomalee. The ramifications of this crisis will be examined in Chapter 7.

Hence the French strategic threat which grew out of the European diplomacy of Choiseul and Vergennes contributed to that general suspicion and fear of French intentions in India and the Eastern Seas, probably the outstanding characteristic of relations between the English and the French during this thirty year period. In turn it provoked the emergence of a competing strategy - 'of ocean trade routes, protected by naval bases and nourished by commercial depots or factories'.¹ This fear, of course, did not abate until the defeat of Napoleonic France. While French diplomacy was not unimpressive in the

latter half of the eighteenth century, the actual performance of the French in the East fluctuated considerably.

Throughout this study, therefore, a sustained attempt will be made to relate the eastern conflict to the manoeuvres and counter-manoeuvres of the diplomats in Europe. A later chapter will examine the extent to which the English and French governments overcame the problem of control in India and were able to exert a guiding influence over their affairs in the East. It will also examine the impact of local Asian disputes on the pattern of Anglo-French diplomacy in Europe. However, the earlier chapters which follow will investigate the nature, growth and outcome of Anglo-French relations in the three types of situation already outlined over the period from 1763 to 1793: in Bengal, where the British were effectively established as the ruling power; in the South, where the question of supremacy was still undecided; and in the Eastern Seas, where British commerce and influence were steadily expanding but where a French and a Dutch challenge still existed. In what ways did the French affect the consolidation and extension of British influence in these three areas? And did the pressures for expansion originate at the metropolitan centre, or at the periphery of empire? These two questions and their answers comprise the core of this thesis.
CHAPTER 3: ANGLO-FRENCH RELATIONS IN BENGAL 1763-1778

1. THE BENGAL REVOLUTION AND ITS POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

In March 1763 the Court of Directors despatched to the presidencies in India copies of the definitive treaty of peace concluded at Paris on 10 February. Accordingly the Presidents and Councils at Fort William and Fort St George were directed to restore to the French, 'pursuant to the true intention and spirit of the 11th article', the comptoirs which the French King possessed at the beginning of 1749, 'in the condition in which these factories respectively were at the time of signing the said treaty'.¹ More detailed instructions were issued on

¹ These details are given in a letter from the Court of Directors to the Presidents and Councils at Fort William, Fort St George and Bombay, dated 23 March 1764. Fort William - India House Correspondence (Delhi, 1962), vol. IV, Public Series, p. 36.

The eleventh article of the Peace of Paris prescribed that Britain would 'restore to France, in the condition they are now in, the different factories which that Crown possessed' in Bengal, Orissa, Malabar and along the Coromandel coast 'at the beginning of the year 1749'. France also agreed 'not to erect fortifications, or to keep troops in any part of the dominions of the Subah of Bengal'. During these negotiations the British government accepted responsibility for the first time for concluding an East Indian settlement. See L. Sutherland, 'The East India Company and the Peace of Paris', English Historical Review LXII (1947), p. 179, and for a more general treatment of the role of East Indian affairs in the peace, Z.E. Rashed, The Peace of Paris 1763 (Liverpool, 1951).
23 March 1764. The Councils were urged to deliver up to the French commissary 'all the papers, letters, documents and archives' in their custody, and the Fort William Council was further requested to oblige in the return of the Compagnie's 'richaund' from the Nabob', which the French alleged had been seized by the English at Murshidabad.¹

Jean Law de Lauriston, the commissary appointed by the French government, had earlier played an important role in the French resistance to Clive's intrigues in Bengal.² Until Clive's capture of Chandernagore in 1757 de Lauriston had been the chief of the French factory at Kasimbazar, situated close to the Nawab's capital of Murshidabad. During the next four years he had schemed assiduously with Shuja-ud-Daula, the Nawab of Oudh, and Prince Ali Gauhar, later to become Shah Alam II. In 1761 he was captured by the British and in the next year repatriated to France, where he was created a Chevalier of St Louis and a colonel. His familiarity with the politics of Bengal and North

¹ Court of Directors to the Councils at Fort William, Fort St George and Bombay, 23 March 1764. Fort William - India House Correspondence, vol.IV, p.36.
² De Lauriston was incidentally a nephew of the famous Regency financier. See S.C. Hill, Three Frenchmen in Bengal or The Commercial Ruin of the French Settlements in 1757 (London, 1903), and de Lauriston's own interesting Mémoire sur quelques affaires de L'Empire Mogol, published by Alfred Martineau at Paris in 1913.
India was no doubt a major asset in the eyes of his government and in 1764 he was appointed Governor of the French settlements in India. De Lauriston stepped ashore to face once again the steamy and enervating heat of Madras in January 1765.

The new governor soon visited and reclaimed Karikal and Pondicherry, and sent deputies to take possession of Mahé on the Malabar coast, Yanam and the factory at Masulipatam. Anticipating de Lauriston's early arrival in Bengal, the Fort William Council 'procured from the Nabob the necessary orders' for the restitution of the comptoirs at Chandernagore, Patna, Sydabad, Dacca and Jugdea. But the Council had to inform the Court that the search for the French papers and firmans had been 'entirely ineffectual', and though the Councillors protested their good intentions to live 'in future harmony' with the French, they were quite determined to prevent the French 'obtaining any undue influence in the country'.

After receiving back the principal French settlements on the Coromandel, de Lauriston proceeded to Bengal, where on 15 June 1765 he took possession of Chandernagore from George Vansittart, the British commissary. The subordinate factories

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1 Fort William Council to the Court of Directors, 11 March 1765, *Fort William - India House Correspondence*, vol. IV, p. 316.
and settlements were restored soon after. On surveying the once prosperous centre of French trade and influence in Bengal, de Lauriston must have been sorely distressed. He had known Chandernagore in the palmy days when Dupleix had been the chief, but now the fortifications were crumbling and grown over by the prolific, lush vegetation of Bengal while the warehouses stood abandoned and disused. He had often witnessed the depredations of roving Maratha bands and Bengali thugs, and now he clearly appreciated how vulnerable the settlement would be to native attack. With that mixture of charm and tenacity so characteristic of his nation de Lauriston pleaded with the Fort William Council that the French be permitted 'a small number of Armed Europeans and Seapoys with a few Pieces of Cannon and a proper Lodgement to which they might retire in case of any surprize from the Country People'.

Although the peace treaty forbade the French to erect fortifications or keep troops in Bengal, de Lauriston assured the Fort William Council that 'he meant not to elude in the least, by this application, the effect of the Conditions of the Treaty'.

The Council were moved, or so it seemed. After due consideration the Council agreed to de Lauriston's request 'with

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1 Extract of the General Letter from the President and Council at Bengal to the Court of Directors, 30 September 1765, Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.98, p.135.
a right of withdrawing the Terms if ever they should 'have reason to apprehend an improper use of them'. The French were permitted 'One officer and twenty European Infantry, with one hundred Seapoys' at Chandernagore, and fifty sepoys at each of the subordinate factories. Furthermore, they were allowed a Wall at Chandernagore, such as they formerly had at Cossimbazar, and twenty pieces of Cannon, not of a heavier Weight than six Pounders, for the purpose of Salutes on the usual Occasions, which would at the same time fully answer the end of imposing a proper Respect on the Country People.

As a final mark of beneficence, the Council conceded them 'Five Artillery men for working these Guns'. The French were duly grateful.

But when the Court of Directors received news of these gentlemanly transactions in April 1766 they reacted with surprise and mild irritation. They desired that 'the concession with respect to the Artillery could have been avoided' because 'past Experience has too sensibly evinced the little dependance (sic) there can be had upon their Moderation'. Consequently the Council were urged to maintain a close surveillance over 'the proceedings of the French Agents, to prevent their extending the Liberty you have granted them, and to remind them...that they are to look

upon it as a meer matter of Favour conferred on them.\footnote{1} It was not until 20 November 1767, however, that the Earl of Shelburne, His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Southern Department, was informed of these novel arrangements with the French in Bengal. His tart reply of 27 January 1768 to the Court's appeal for the King's instructions in the matter showed even more surprise and irritation at the independent and unauthorised action of the Fort William Council. 'To soften the strong prohibitory Letter and Spirit of a Treaty', he wrote, 'and to carry \textit{Indulgence} so very far as to allow them 20 Pieces of Cannon, were Measures so important in their Consequences, both to the Company and to the Publick, as to require not only the Wisdom of His Majesty to consider, but also the Power of the Crown to confirm'. He now felt that the matter was of too great a delicacy to permit the withdrawal of the privileges, though he expressed His Majesty's command that the Company

\begin{quote}
shall keep a most watchful Eye on the Conduct and Proceedings of the French in Bengal, so that, upon the slightest Appearance of any Insidious Machination in Consequence of the Permission granted to them, you and your Servants in Bengal shall be ready to assert your Right of withdrawing it.\footnote{2}
\end{quote}

\footnotetext{1}{Extract of the General Letter to Bengal dated 17 May 1766, \textit{Home Miscellaneous Series}, vol.98, p.213.}

\footnotetext{2}{Shelburne to the Court of Directors, 27 January 1768, \textit{Home Miscellaneous Series}, vol.99, pp.1-5.}
Almost immediately these instructions were despatched to the Presidency at Fort William and doubtless they played no small part in the change of heart of that council.

These early manoeuvres soon showed the French, if they had ever doubted it, that they were only allowed to return to Bengal on sufferance. The victories at Plassey and Buxar had guaranteed for the East India Company a position of overwhelming commercial and political predominance in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, provinces which Robert Orme effusively described as 'the most fertile of any in the universe, more so than Egypt, and with greater certainty'.¹ Content to play the 'nice and important game' of extracting trading concessions and lavish douceurs from the Nawabs of Bengal until Mir Kasim began to promote policies of his own inimical to its interest, the Company accepted from its servant, Robert Clive, in 1765 the diwani of the three provinces. By this arrangement the Moghul Emperor 'divested the nawab of his powers as diwan, and conferred that office on the British East India Company to hold as a free gift and royal grant

in perpetuity'. 1 In this way the Company acquired control over the collection and disposal of the revenues of Bengal although the territorial jurisdiction continued to be exercised through the zamindars and the 'chiefs of the country', responsible to both the Nawab and the Presidency. The resident of the Company at the court of the Nawab at Murshidabad was assisted in the supervision of the revenue collections by 'Muhammad Reza Khan who exercised as naib diwan the Company's civil jurisdiction and represented as naib nazim the Nawab's executive and military authority'. 2 This dual system of control was chosen by the Company because its agents were ignorant of the intricacies of Moghul law and administration and hopeful that the Bengal revenues would immediately offset their needs. Clive confided to the Court that

We were under the necessity of drawing the earliest advantages from our acquisition of the Duanne. Our army was to be paid, our investment to be made, and the China market to be supplied. To trust these collections therefore, upon which our credit and security depended, to the management of the Company's servants, totally unacquainted with the business, would have been a dangerous, and at this time would have been termed a criminal, experiment. 3

3 Clive to Court of Directors, 29 September 1765, Misra, pp. 109-10.
But the Council's reluctance to assume completely the administration of the revenue collection was also due to its fears that the foreign companies would appeal to their governments in Europe with consequences unfavourable to the East India Company. Clive advised

The power of supervising the provinces though lodged in us, should not, in my opinion be exerted. By this means also, the abuses inevitably springing from the exercise of territorial authority, will be effectually obviated; there will still be a Nabob with an allowance suitable to his dignity, and the territorial jurisdiction will still be in the chiefs of the country acting under him and the Presidency in conjunction, though the revenues will belong to the Company. Besides, were the Company's officers to be the collectors, foreign nations would immediately take umbrage, and complaints preferred to the British Court might be attended with very embarrassing consequences. Nor can it be supposed, that either the French, Dutch or Danes will acknowledge the English Company - Nabob of Bengal, and pay into the hands of their servants the duties upon trade, or the quit-rents of those districts which they have for many years possessed by virtue of the royal phirmaunds or by grants from former Nabobs.¹

On the face of it, then, the French were at an enormous disadvantage in Bengal since political power had been virtually transferred into the hands of the British. The French were only permitted to return for purposes of trade. And yet they had certain advantages which enhanced their bargaining position, not the least of which was the sheer defencelessness of their

¹ Clive to the Court of Directors, 30 September 1765, Fort William - India House Correspondence, vol. IV, p.337.
comptoirs. Though their usual role was that of humble suppliants for the favours of the Company, they could occasionally embarrass the Fort William Council in its dealings with the Nawab, the Court of Directors and the Crown. At first the Council hoped that the French would oblige in a policy of peaceful co-existence and it hesitated to embroil itself in disputes with French agents and officials. Clearly this was a policy of expediency, since the Council believed that, if the Company did not intervene too directly in the native administration, the foreign companies would continue to pay their land rents and customs duties to the Nawab's officials.

In spite of these hopes, however, the traditional mistrust between the two nations was too deep seated for this modus vivendi to last, especially after the aged Renault de Saint-Germain relinquished the Governorship of Chandernagore to the younger and more ambitious Jean-Baptiste Chevalier in July 1767. Chevalier, who had served at the factory of Dacca before the onset of the Seven Years' War, was a man after de Lauriston's own heart. His intricate understanding of the political situation in northern India, together with his passionate attachment to France, made him an opponent worthy of a Clive or a Hastings.

Apart from this new and unpredictable element, the Fort
William Council inclined to a tougher line with the French after 1767 because it saw the Company's economic interests threatened. Verelst, the President at Calcutta, believed that the French were profiting from the clandestine trade carried on by the Company's agents in the interior. Since the regulations of May 1765 the Company's servants – both civil and military – were proscribed from accepting any presents or gifts of land, rent, or revenue without the consent of the Court of Directors. No longer could illegally acquired fortunes and profits be remitted through the official channels. Instead, they swelled 'the Treasuries of Foreign Nations, in exchange for Bills on their respective Companies'.

It was at this time, therefore, that the Fort William Council became alarmed about the rumoured drain of bullion from Bengal. Remittances of private fortunes through the foreign companies, it was claimed, greatly facilitated this drain and the not unexpected solution advocated was the opening of official channels to these financial transactions.

Verelst further alleged that the weavers in the outlying districts were fleeing to the service of the French or Dutch Companies 'who leave no means untried to seduce the weavers from

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1 Verelst to the Court of Directors, 5 April 1769, Fort William – India House Correspondence (Delhi, 1949), vol.V, (Public Series), p.548.
This practice had depleted the ranks of the weavers 'at all the factories and Aurungs'.

Such acrimonious disputes increasingly characterised the trading relations between the English, the French and the Dutch after 1767. In large measure they flowed from the Company's assumption of the diwani and they showed that commercial interests by themselves were sufficient to turn the English against both the Dutch and the French. After 1765 the influence of the Company over the Nawab and his administration was clear and undisputed; Chevalier and de Lauriston, for example, often referred to the Nawab as a 'phantome' and a 'veritable esclave' of the British. Whereas the Company refused to interfere with the civil administration of the Naib Diwan or the criminal jurisdiction of the Naib Nazim until 1772, the agents of the Company and private merchants in the 'mofussil' exerted to the uttermost their influence and privileges. They were particularly ruthless in their exploitation of the trade in commodities produced and consumed within Bengal - salt, betel-nut, tobacco and grain. And

1 Verelst to the Court of Directors, 17 March 1767, Fort William - India House Correspondence, vol.V, p.303.

2 Introduction to Fort William - India House Correspondence, vol.IV, p.XXIX. For a recent and comprehensive account of the inland trade of mid-eighteenth century Bengal see N.K. Sinha, The Economic History of Bengal: From Plassey to the Permanent Settlement (Calcutta, 1956), vol.I.
they did not scruple to abuse the Company's dustuck privileges, which were originally granted for imported and exported goods only, to exempt the inland trade from local imposts and duties. The French quite naturally resented these injustices and corresponded bitterly and at length with their authorities at home.

Critical of the widespread abuse of dustuck and inland trade privileges, the Court of Directors sought to bring their servants under the control of the Calcutta authorities. On this question the native officials supported the Court since they were eager to exclude European merchants from a lucrative trade that had once been the preserve of Indian traders. Clive had attempted in 1765 to prevent the exploitation of the inland trade by making it a monopoly of the senior servants of the Company in Bengal. Later in 1767, on the instructions of the Court of Directors, the Select Committee at Fort William, the inner cabinet of the Council, recommended that 'all the Company's Servants and other Europeans residing under Protection of the British Flag' be excluded from 'all share and Participation in the Trade of Salt, Beetlenut and Tobacco'.¹ The resident at Murshidabad was accordingly instructed to reassure the Nawab that the Company aimed 'at diffusing this Traffic in the most extensive and equitable Manner amongst the

¹ Bengal Select Proceedings, 1767. Neither the date of the proceedings nor the page is indicated.
Natives themselves, so as to prevent a Monopoly of it in the Hands of Ministers, Favorites and Dependents (sic) of the Government, to the Injury and Oppression of the industrious Merchant Labourers. He was also encouraged to persuade the Nawab to exclude 'the French, Dutch and Danes equally with the English, from all share and Concern in the Trade of Salt, Betlenut and Tobacco'. The Nawab was only too anxious to oblige and on 7 October the chiefs of the French, Dutch and Danish factories were informed in a perwannah 'that none but Natives and Merchants of this Country shall be permitted in future to traffic in those Articles'.

For the most part, however, the attempts to regulate the inland trade by the Calcutta Council and the Nawab's chief minister, Muhammad Reza Khan, were ineffectual. Sykes, the Company's resident at the durbar, complained continually of Chevalier's clandestine trading activities throughout Bengal. He claimed, for instance, that Chevalier had 'established Gomastahs at many Places for the Purchase of Rice, Grain and other Articles, which they never before dealt in', and Sykes encouraged the Nawab's officials to obstruct the French trade. On 10 November

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1 Bengal Select Proceedings, 1767.
2 Bengal Select Proceedings, 13 October 1767. The perwannah from the Nawab to the aumils and zemindars of Bengal is also included in this minute, and strongly suggests the subordinate and dependent status of the Nawab after 1765.
3 Sykes to Fort William Council, 9 November 1767, Bengal Select Proceedings, 17 November 1767.
he cited the dealings of Chevalier at Benares as evidence of the 'encroaching Disposition of the French', and argued prophetically that 'these Practices if put a Stop to at first may be quelled with little noise or Difficulty, but if once they are established into a Custom, the French will be too ready to found Pretensions which may bring on troublesome and disagreeable Disputes'.

Distrust stemming from half a century of conflict marred Anglo-French relations in Bengal almost from the return of the French settlements in 1765. Relations with the Dutch were more amicable even though similar disagreements and disputes arose. They engendered considerably less acerbity because the Dutch were not political rivals with the British in Bengal. For always the Company feared that any augmentation in French trade would ultimately be used to undermine its influence and in spite of the private merchant's willingness to use French channels for remittances home, this overriding political concern remained to

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1 Sykes to Fort William Council, 10 November 1767, *Bengal Select Proceedings*, 17 November 1767.

2 The French themselves were well aware of this as the following remark from de Lauriston shows. 'Le but des anglais est certainement de nous forcer d'abandonner le Bengale par la quantité de difficultés qu'ils suscitent à notre commerce; ils attaquent aussi il est vrai les hollandais, mais c'est pour nous porter de plus durs coups'. Mémoire of Law de Lauriston, 1768, *Françaises Nouvelles Acquisitions*, vol.9365, p.118.
distort and embitter the Council's dealings with the French. And with as wily and tenacious an enemy as Chevalier these alarms were not entirely imaginary.

Throughout 1768 a steady stream of complaints about the French continued to reach the Fort William Council. In its letter to the Court of Directors of 14 March 1768, the Council expressed alarm at French interference with the purchase of cloths at Dacca.¹ It was the practice of the companies to advance the weavers in the aurungs, or the districts where cloths were commissioned, sums for the payment of their labour and equipment. English agents claimed that when the cloths were woven the French and the Dutch secretly purchased them from weavers already commissioned by the East India Company. Not surprisingly, the French made similar allegations about the Company's agents.

On 28 March 1768 Verelst bitterly complained of the flow of specie to the foreign companies, a development which enabled them to compete with the English in the salt and inland trade. Three days later he placed before the Select Committee intelligence 'that the French at Chandernagore have taken up

¹ Fort William Council to the Court of Directors, 14 March 1768, Fort William - India House Correspondence, vol.V, p.390.
large sums of Money in Silver Specie; and transmitted the same to Pondicherry, for the service of that Presidency.\footnote{Bengal Select Proceedings, 31 March 1768.} The Committee was seriously concerned and ordered 'that an effectual stop be put to such a growing Evil'. It proposed that the Nawab's government 'prohibit all Exportation of Silver from these Provinces, and issue the necessary Orders to all the European Nations, as well as others trading in Bengal imposing such a Penalty on Disobedience, as they may think proper'.\footnote{Bengal Select Proceedings, 31 March 1768.} On 23 July the Secret Committee drafted a firman which it fervently urged the Nawab to issue. In this order the Committee alleged that the French, Dutch and other European nations had brought little silver into the country and had carried on their trade by remitting home the illegally acquired private fortunes of English merchants. 'By this means the Country has been greatly impoverished, and the Circulation of Cash is at present almost entirely stagnated'. To prevent this harmful practice the Council insisted that the French and other foreign companies should only be permitted to export goods to the value of the merchandise and bullion they imported.\footnote{Bengal Select Proceedings, 23 July 1768.}

Towards the end of the 1760's the great concern of the
Bengal Council was for the diminution of the Bengal revenues and it quite naturally sought to control the exportation of bullion. A further and related anxiety of the English was that the profits that the French derived from the Indian trade would be employed eventually to undermine the Company's political influence in Bengal. They suspected that the 'very large sums of Money' supplied to the French at Chandernagore and Pondicherry were being reserved in India 'for some future occasion'. Although the French at this stage were hardly a military threat in Bengal, the Council believed that the French might soon be in a position to launch an invasion from the Islands against the Company's possessions.

Recently the Fort William Council had been informed that ten French ships had sailed for India 'this Season' and that the French 'have already about four thousand of his Christian Majesty's troops at the Island', meaning of course the Ile de France. The Council continued:

It requires no great depth of Judgement to foresee that the assembling such a number of Forces at the French Islands can bode no good to your Settlements in India - nor are we without our Apprehensions that whenever the French are in a condition to cope with our Nation in Europe they will make some attempt in India: & even this may happen previous to a declaration of War - And as from the situation of the Islands, they are Sole Masters of their own time and operations, it is more than probable
that the first intelligence of their intention, will be the appearance of a French Fleet in Ballasore Road.¹ Hence the Council's fears arose out of a generalised threat which clearly emerged towards the end of the decade. This extended crisis in Anglo-French relations, lasting from the annexation of Corsica early in 1768 until the resolution of the Falkland Islands' affair in January 1771, was mainly a product of Choiseul's revenge policy. Its ramifications, however, were felt in India. Reports of the massing of French forces, though for the most part exaggerated, were common and the Fort William Council took the necessary precaution of putting the 'new Fort in a posture of Defence as expeditiously as possible'.

But Anglo-French tensions in India were to have their effect, too, on the manoeuvres of statesmen in Europe. A serious crisis arose in Bengal and the French attempted to use it to bring the East India Company and its servants to heel. In this endeavour Choiseul initially met with some sympathy from the British government, anxious now to impose restraints on the Company's political and diplomatic activities in India. Nevertheless, when confronted by French machinations and intrigue the Company and the state closed ranks and consolidated their naval and military position in the East. The Chandernagore ditch affair, while inconsequential

¹ Fort William Council to the Court of Directors, 13 September 1768, *Fort William - India House Correspondence*, vol. V, p. 421.
enough in its details, is worthy of close attention since it was the first really serious breach in Anglo-French relations in the East after the peace. It began essentially as a local dispute but it emerged by May 1770 into a European issue involving the entire question of British power in India. Its importance grew from the context of Franco-Spanish attempts to rehabilitate their commercial and political influence overseas, and it contributed to that crisis of confidence which so affected relations between the Company and parliament between 1766 and 1773. Its repercussions were not inconsiderable. The dual threat posed by a French inspired native revolution and an invasion from the Indian Ocean islands goaded the British, both at home and in India, into a greater appreciation of the strategic problems involved in the defence of their Indian empire. It also contributed to the drawing together of the separate presidencies in order to evolve a more consistent and reasoned policy towards the Indian states. It forced the British Crown to intervene more energetically, if not at first successfully, in the affairs of the Company, and it effectively defined the French response to British power in the East until the final eclipse of Napoleon.

II. THE DITCH INCIDENT 1767-1769

In November 1767, soon after his arrival at Chandernagore as Governor of the French possessions in Bengal, Chevalier
approached Verelst for permission to build a drain to carry off the stagnant waters from the little Ganges (apparently a contemporary name for the Hooghly). In his letter to Verelst Chevalier contended that large pools of water remained about Chandernagore after the inundations of the monsoon and contributed greatly to the unhealthiness of the comptoir. Later Chevalier claimed that Verelst gave his verbal consent to the proposal although Verelst did not consult the Council. The work was begun on 26 November but soon afterwards the suspicions of the Nawab were aroused. While the Nawab informed the authorities at Calcutta of his doubts concerning the ditch, the Fouzdar of Hooghly's coolies obstructed the French in their efforts. Chevalier then appealed to Verelst to use his influence with the Nawab to allow the work to continue. In his reply of 27 December Verelst assured Chevalier that he was satisfied that the work was 'only a drain to carry the waters off from the town, and thereby preserve the health of the inhabitants'; and he hurriedly proposed that the Chief Engineer of Calcutta should examine the work. His report, presumably, would propitiate the Nawab. Chevalier eagerly

1 Chevalier to Verelst, 5 November 1767, Mémoires et Documents, Asie, vol.17, p.350ff.
2 This date is given in the 'Réplique de la Compagnie des Indes de France : Article 4, fossé de Chandernagor', F.O. 27/7, p.126.
concurred in this arrangement.

Captain Fleming Martin, the Chief Engineer, concluded his report on 28 January 1768 and gave as his opinion that the ditch was not a fortification. There were no flanks and so, according to the tenets of the great Vauban, 'no Defence can be proposed in the Construction'.

On 27 April 1769, more than a year later, Colonel Campbell, Martin's successor, informed John Cartier and the Bengal Council of certain alarming developments. Three thousand five hundred coolies were busily at work on the excavation the size and character of which were such as to render the French position in Bengal quite 'formidable'. Campbell was convinced that the ditch was 'capable of being made a good Field Work in a very few days' and, moreover, he believed that it constituted a clear infraction of 'the last Articles of Peace'. Impressed indeed with the duty it owed 'to the Nation in general, and the Company in particular', the Board decided on 2 May 'to put a stop to a Work of so insidious (sic) and hostile an Appearance as this is reported to be, carried on in violation of the Eleventh Article of the Treaty of Peace', and it immediately despatched Campbell

1 Martin's report is incorporated in the Bengal Select Proceedings, 10 February 1768.
2 Campbell's letter to Cartier is found in the Proceedings of the Bengal Council, Public Department, 2 May 1769, F.O. 27/15, pp.41-2.
to make a thorough survey of the ominous ditch at Chandernagore.

Campbell visited Chandernagore on 15 May and completed his report on 26 May. In its conclusions it differed radically from the earlier report by Martin. Campbell argued that the ditch failed in its original purpose to carry off surplus waters. It seemed to him 'extremely unreasonable, and absolutely unnecessary, to cut a deep wide Drain across the top of a rising Ground to carry off Water which from the Nature of the Country can never lodge thereon'. Furthermore, he noticed that the drain made 'many extraordinary Angles and windings' and these, he had reason to suspect, were nothing more than redans, bastions and crenailliere works. Finally, the engineer cited the construction of earthen ramparts and the planting of bamboos on the exterior talus as evidence of its defensive nature. He concluded: 'I am of opinion it may one day or other be render'd a very formidable work to the Field if these Bamboes are cut and pointed in the Stile of Pallisades'.

Since he predicted that the ditch would be ready by late June he urged the Council to take immediate action to prevent its completion. Its destruction would be a necessary safeguard against any French naval or military threat. He feared that in case of a

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1 Campbell's report is included in the Bengal Secret Proceedings, 30 May 1769.
rupture with France 'the French Fleet might pass our Fort, their troops sack Calcutta, and easily retreat to their Works at Chandernagore from which it would, in his Opinion, be a very serious affair to dislodge them'.

On 6 June the Secret Committee, stirred by the report, unanimously agreed to put into execution their resolution to destroy the work at Chandernagore. Saved the embarrassment of Verelst's presence, the Board also rescinded those privileges which had earlier been granted to Law de Lauriston. The alarms of the Board were further aroused by intelligence that the French at Chandernagore were engaged in making gun carriages and thatched sheds within the old fort. The latter were presumed to be for the accommodation of troops.

At first Chevalier threatened to resist by force any attempt to fill in the ditch, but on 11 June Campbell began the demolition of the works at Chandernagore unopposed. On 23 June Campbell submitted to the Council a revised plan of the ditch which was intended to serve the original purpose of discharging floodwaters into the little Ganges, and by 27 June the ditch had

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1 'Abstract of Proceedings relative to a Ditch dug by the French at Chandernagore and destroyed by order of the Governor and Council of Bengal', Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.102, p.421.
2 Bengal Secret Proceedings, 6 June 1769.
3 Bengal Select Proceedings, 8 June 1769.
been rendered defenceless. Campbell remained at Chandernagore during early July to ensure the effective destruction of the work so that 'the French may not be able to convert it into a state of defence on any future occasion when it may not possibly be so much in our power to prevent them'.

In January 1768, when Martin visited Chandernagore, only 500 yards of the ditch had been excavated, while in May 1769 Campbell found the circuit of the ditch, 'including its projections and turnings', was 6 3/4 miles. Martin discovered no ramparts and was assured by Chevalier that the earth removed from the ditch would be used for a road to encircle the settlement; Campbell encountered formidable earthen ramparts which in the finished parts were from 40 to 67 feet in breadth, six to eight feet above the level of the country, and from 16 to 23 feet above the bottom of the ditch. Campbell also reported that bamboos were planted around the walls and believed they were almost certainly intended as palisades. Clearly the size of the ditch changed considerably

1 Bengal Secret Proceedings, 3 July 1769.
2 Martin had informed the Council that the proposed length of the ditch was 'about three french leagues' (six to eight miles). A mémoire, submitted to the British ambassador in June 1770, claimed that the ditch was over a mile in length (900 toises) when Martin examined it. 'L'ouvrage aient été continué sur les mêmes plans, sur les mêmes devis et les mêmes conditions dont le marché existe, n'avoir pas pu changer de nature'. S.P. 78/281, pp.46-7.
within the 15 months which elapsed after Martin's tour of inspection although the French persisted in denying this. Martin found that the width of the ditch at the base was 18 feet while Campbell measured the breadth of the excavation as between 40 and 50 feet. Because there were no flanks, an essential condition for fortifications in the eighteenth century, Martin concluded that the ditch was harmless. But Campbell encountered an extraordinary number of angles in the walls which he believed could be employed for defensive purposes. By May 1769, according to Campbell, the French had completed four of the proposed six bridges across the ditch.

On the other hand, the French contended that there had been no great changes in the construction or the design of the ditch since Martin's report and with this, interestingly enough, Martin later agreed. However, Martin's claims can be largely disregarded because he was at this time living in London. The French insisted on an adequate explanation for the apparent arbitrariness of the Council's decision. They asserted that the breaks and retreats in the walls were made necessary by the Fouzdar's refusal to sell lands surrounding Chandernagore. Because the comptoir was still left exposed for three miles along the Hooghly and since there were no arms or artillery to defend the

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1 Martin's reply to Campbell's report, written on 10 May 1770, is in the Home Miscellaneous Series, vol. 102, pp. 317-22.
old fort, the French concluded that the ditch would be quite useless as a fortification. Martin reiterated these sentiments when he claimed that 'nothing less than the most sinister Motives' could have influenced the Company's agents in Bengal.¹

In spite of the vehement and continued protestations by the French that the sole purpose of the ditch was to carry off stagnant waters, it is abundantly clear that they intended eventually to employ it for defensive purposes as well. Whether it was intended to defend them against native attacks or against the British remains an open question, but considering the highly unstable nature of Anglo-French relations in Bengal in this decade it does appear probable that the Fort William Council was justified in its anxiety. In the consultations of the Chandernagore Council of 23 November 1767 mention is made of 'un fossé qui doit encloître l'Aldée de Chandernagor', which, significantly, would be employed 'pour la mettre à couvre des incursions des Maures et Maraties, et pour la garantir des Inondations'.² Ditches and tanks were a common means of fortification in eighteenth century India and it appears obvious that Chevalier hoped he would be able to use the ditch as such a fortification in case of attack from the country

¹ Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.102, p.317.
powers. Furthermore, there are details in the consultation about the construction and size of the raised walls which coincide with Campbell's specifications. De Lauriston mentioned the ditch in a despatch from Pondicherry in February 1768. He stressed its defensive possibilities: 'c'est la seule sûreté qu'elle puisse avoir contre les incursions dans un pays aussi sujet à des révolutions'. He also mentioned that bamboos would be planted on the side of the ditch and de Lauriston suspected that the English might hinder the work because it 'n'entre point dans l'esprit du traité de paix'. In such an exigency he felt it would be advisable to discontinue the work. He then confided to the Minister his basic reason for sanctioning the scheme:

Je vous avouerai cependant, Monseigneur, que ma principale idée en y donnant la main a été d'en tirer parti dans la suite, en cas qu'on voulut exécuter quelque entreprise dans le Bengale, les terres du fossé fournissaient un rempart qui moyennant cette haie épaisse de bambous nous mettraient en état de nous défendre même contre une attaque Européenne.

Such comments take on a wider and more sinister significance when they are examined against the background of French plans for the destruction of British power in Bengal and India. Throughout 1768 and 1769 Chevalier complained to de Lauriston at

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1 Law de Lauriston to the Minister of Marine, 29 February 1768, Françaises Nouvelles Acquisitions, vol.9365, p.120.
2 Françaises Nouvelles Acquisitions, vol.9365, p.121.
Pondicherry and Choiseul at Paris of the innumerable insults and humiliations heaped on the French name and honour by the East India Company. He attacked the specious legality of the Company's regime in Bengal, which was provided by the 'phantom Nawab', believing that the English intended to deprive his countrymen of their commerce and drive them from the country. To the Governor at Pondicherry and the Minister at Paris he despatched a number of elaborately devised plans of attack against Calcutta. The French were to land a large force at Chatigan, a mountainous and inaccessible spot in eastern Bengal, and from this stronghold the French would extend their trade and influence and recruit a large sepoy army.\(^1\) In a further and more detailed plan of 15 March 1769 he argued that a surprise attack by 5,000 men against Calcutta would be sufficient to spark off a general native revolution against the power of the British. The Marathas, the Emperor and the Nawab of Oudh, he noted, 'n'attendent qu'une occasion favorable pour faire éclater leurs sentiments et c'est dans les français seuls qu'ils mettent toute leur principale confiance pour leur

\(^1\) This plan was included in Chevalier's despatch to Choiseul-Praslin of 10 January 1769: Chevalier believed that 1,200 - 1,500 men would be sufficient to establish French influence in the eastern part of Bengal as a precursor to the final assault against British power at Calcutta. 'Chatigan' probably refers to present day Chittagong. *Françaises Nouvelles Acquisitions*, vol.9366, pp.1-10.
délivrance'. Chevalier was convinced, and with good reason, of the inevitability of a native revolution to overthrow British rule, and he urged the French Government to exploit such an opportunity once it arose.

The Fort William Council evidently suspected the intentions and activities of the French. Campbell's report bluntly stated the French threat to Calcutta and Bengal. 'Let it be supposed', Campbell argued,

that a French Army of 3 or 4,000 Men embraces the earliest part of the Season and arrives at the Mouth of the Ganges unexpected, and there is no manner of doubt, if they are properly equipped with Pilots they may proceed immediately up the river and that when the Tide of Flood sets in, their Shipping may even pass Fort William in its present State without much Risk or damage, particularly if their Troops are landed below the Town, and a brisk attempt practised against the Fort itself.  

1 Apart from this scheme, Chevalier outlined a less ambitious strategy which involved the despatch of 1,500 Frenchmen and 1,000 Caffres from the Ile de France to attack the Company's settlements in Bengal. In both cases Chevalier stressed the need for a French leader familiar with the intricacies of Bengal politics and above all the Indian languages. 'Plan d'attaque dans l'Inde, en cas d'une guerre offensive', 15 March 1769, Francaises Nouvelles Acquisitions, vol.9366, pp.10-24. Further plans are included in Chevalier's despatch to the Ministry of Marine, 6 January 1771, pp.77-118; 'Mémoires et réflexions sur l'état présent du Royaume de Bengale et les moyens d'opérer une révolution', 25 April 1772, pp.118-37; and Chevalier's despatch to de Boynes, 28 February 1773, pp.138-49.

2 Bengal Secret Proceedings, 30 May 1769.
Many of the Councillors must have anxiously recalled the capture and sack of Calcutta in 1756 by Siraj-ud-Daula's forces, who were greatly assisted by a French artillery company. They must also have recalled the difficult siege of Chandernagore in March 1757, when Clive was forced to call on Admiral Watson to bombard Fort d'Orléans from the river. Without the assistance of the navy and the King's troops, many, including Sir Eyre Coote, felt that the French would have withstood the siege. After these transactions the French continued to be a thorn in the side of the British until de Lauriston's capture in 1761. Such fears, derived as they were from a decade of bitter fighting, were exacerbated by news of the arrival of considerable reinforcements at the French Islands and the precariousness of the Company's balance of power in the north and north-west of Bengal. The

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2 Sir Eyre Coote's opinion is given in the report of the Committee of the House of Commons appointed to enquire into the nature, state and condition of the East India Company and of the British affairs in the East Indies. Coote also stated that losses were greater at the siege of Chandernagore, when the Company's forces were of course acting against European troops, than at the more famous and spectacular battle of Plassey. The report, dated 26 May 1772, is included in vol.4 of the Reports from Committees of the House of Commons.

3 Letter from Brigadier General Richard Smith to the Select Committee, sent 14 June 1769, Bengal Select Proceedings, 20 June 1769.
Marathas were once more a disruptive and menacing force in the north-west, and the French might easily upset the game which the British had played so successfully with the Nawabs of Bengal and Oudh. 'To avoid a blow levelled against the very Root of the Honble Company's power in Asia, and which one day or other might even affect the British Constitution itself', the Council chose to demolish the ditch.

iii. THE REACTION IN EUROPE 1769-1771

However, statesmen and diplomats in Europe were less inclined to view the incident in such dramatic terms. Viscount Weymouth, the Secretary of State for the Southern Department, first received news about the ditch incident in December 1769 when Anglo-French relations were in a perilous state largely as a result of the recent annexation of Corsica by the French. On 19 December he instructed Harcourt, the British ambassador in Paris, to lay the entire circumstances of the ditch affair before the duc de Choiseul 'in full Confidence that He will disavow the Fact and give an Order for erasing any Fortifications which may have been erected at Chandernagore contrary to Treaty'.¹ Weymouth agreed with the Fort William Council that the ditch, if it were of the nature and specifications the Council alleged, would be a

flagrant breach of the eleventh article. And he added that 'to support or not to disavow a direct Infraction of Treaty would be so little short of a Declaration of War that We will not suppose there can be Hesitation on this Head'.

On 26 December Harcourt told Choiseul that his government had received undoubted Intelligence, that the French had not only begun to erect Fortifications at Chandernagore, but that they were actually going on with their Works, notwithstanding the strongest Remonstrances had been made to such Proceedings, on the Part of the English East India Company.

In turn Choiseul vigorously denied that any such orders had been sent and evinced considerable surprise that there could be any fortifications in Bengal, 'car il est constaté qu'il n'a été ordonné aucune somme d'argent pour des fortifications dans ce comptoir et de plus qu'il n'existe ni troupes ni artillerie dans

1 Weymouth to Harcourt, 19 December 1769, S.P. 78/279, p.207. Weymouth's suspicions about French activity in India were strengthened by Harcourt's intelligence that some 900 soldiers were being sent to the Ile de France, 'From the large and frequent Reinforcements that have, within these few years, been sent to Mauritius, and from the great Attention which the French Ministry have lately paid to that Island, ever since the Dissolution of their India Company, I am inclined to think, that, whenever we have the Misfortune to see a new war rekindled between the two Nations, the first and most vigorous Efforts of this Country will be made in India'. Harcourt to Weymouth, 13 December 1769, S.P. 78/279, p.202-3.

2 Harcourt to Weymouth, 26 December 1769, S.P. 78/279, p.222. It is significant in the light of the communications time-lag and the difficulties in controlling the man on the spot that this exchange, occurring almost six months after the demolition of the ditch, revealed no knowledge of that event.
le Bengale. Certainement sans ces deux moyens de défense, des fortifications seraient assés inutiles'. While conceding that he knew of a ditch to carry off surplus waters which Chevalier was supervising, Choiseul remained throughout sceptical of British claims that this was a defence work. Instead he protested about the East India Company's numerous violations of French trading privileges and raised the very same objections which Chevalier had made to the Calcutta Council's decision to demolish the ditch.2

On 5 January 1770 the French ambassador in London, Chatelet, suggested that the commissioners who had been sent to India by the Court of Directors in October 1769 to reform the Company's administration there,3 be authorised to terminate with de Lauriston at Pondicherry the many disputes that had arisen between the English and the French in Bengal. The French government desired a general settlement of outstanding commercial disputes in Bengal in accordance with the stipulations of the peace treaty. 'Sa Mte. a pensé que ce moyen étoit en effet, le

2 The main objections were, of course, that neither orders nor funds had been sent to build a fortification; that the French had no troops or artillery in Bengal; and that the English, who were situated only twenty miles away, waited eighteen months before denouncing the ditch.
3 The details surrounding the appointment of the commission are discussed in chapter 5, pp. 209-11.
plus propre à faire cesser les plaintes multiplies,... et à 
etablir d'après les stipulations du dernier Traité de Paix, des 
Regles qui puissent maintenir l'union entre les deux nations...\(^1\)

This was the first occasion on which the French claimed officially 
the right to a freedom of trade and their insistence on its 
application to individual private merchants resulted from the 
suspension of the 'exclusif' in the preceding year.

Later, in March, Chatelet passed on to the British 
ministry a long list of grievances which the French alleged had 
been inflicted upon them in Bengal by the Company. Again the

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\(^1\) Copie de la lettre de Mr le Duc de Praslin à Mr le Duc de Choiseul 
du 19 février, 1770, S.P. 78/280, p.117.

An interesting mémoire in the Asie series suggests the likely 
views of the French government on a general agreement in the East. 
The author was highly critical of the East India Company, whose 
officials and merchants, 'revêtus d'une autorité despotique, ont 
causé la perte de plus de vingt milles sujets de leurs rois, ont 
ruiné une multitude de leurs compatriotes, ont fait périr plus 
d'un million d'Indiens'. The memorialist advised a treaty between 
the two Crowns which would incorporate a partition of revenues and 
territory between the English and French in India, a treaty of 
perpetual peace to include all territories east of the Cape, an 
offensive and defensive league of the two European powers against 
the Indian princes, involving an equal division of the number of 
troops in India (5-6,000 European troops and 10,000 Sepoys). In 
fact, this was a revival of earlier schemes to de-militarise the 
eastern sphere in case of a war in Europe, and closely paralleled 
the Godeheu-Saunders Convention of 1754. See 'Projet Politique 
d'arrangement dans l'Inde entre la française et la Anglois 
avantageux aux deux Nations', 1770, Mémoires et Documents. Asie, 
vol.VII, pp.22-43, and also 'Projet d'une Ligue Offensive et 
Defensive, entre les françois et les Anglais, au de la Cap de 
Bonne Esperance et d'un traité de partage entre les deux Nations, 
pour les Côtes Coromandel, D'Orixa, et le Bengal', Janvier, 1773, 
Asie, vol.IV, p.82.
French ambassador disavowed the construction of fortifications in the province and charged that these accusations were a veil to conceal the Company's numerous infringements of the treaty. He urged that de Lauriston and the commissioners, 'avec une entière connaissance de cause', settle the outstanding disputes and he required the prompt appointment of a suitable counterpart to the French commissary.¹ Weymouth, however, was reluctant to grant these plenipotentiary powers to the commissioners. Rather he confided to the ambassador that Admiral Sir John Lindsay, the Commander-in-Chief of the East Indies fleet, who had sailed for India in September 1769, had been instructed to examine closely into the conduct of the Company's employees in Bengal.² The French, however, were not placated.

On 13 April Weymouth informed Harcourt that the King had selected Colonel Monson to proceed to India to settle any matters of dispute with de Lauriston. It was suggested to Choiseul that Monson call at Port Louis and allay any fears the Company had about French naval and military activities at the Ile de France, but Choiseul, peppery as ever, rejected this idea out of hand. The matter was further complicated by Monson's declining the

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¹ Chatelet to Weymouth, 15 March 1770, S.P. 78/280, pp.131-6. Chatelet included in this correspondence the commission proposed for Law de Lauriston. See Appendix A for a copy of this commission.
² See chapter 5, pp.213-18.
commission on 29 April because he was refused the command of the royal troops in India, and on 11 June Sir John Lindsay was appointed plenipotentiary to negotiate with the French governor. Accordingly the Fort William Council was instructed to provide the admiral with 'the necessary information and assistance for the discussion of the points in dispute between our servants and the subjects of the Crown of France in India, whereby he may be enabled to answer the complaints of the French plenipotentiary'.

By June, when both governments had acquired more detailed information about the circumstances of the 'ditch affair', Choiseul's resistance to the British demands had stiffened considerably. On 27 June Choiseul submitted a substantial mémoire to the British ambassador in which he condemned the Calcutta Council's action as arbitrary and unjustified. He further claimed that the councils in India had no power to interpret the treaty of peace. 'Ce conseil n'est pas le juge des traités entre les deux nations. Les Rois ont traité seuls, et eux seuls doivent maintenir les loix qu'ils se sont imposées. Il n'est pas permis aux sujets de se faire justice'. If the Company's servants were given these powers, he feared the result would be perpetual anarchy. Choiseul

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1 Court of Directors to Fort William Council, 27 June 1770, Fort William - India House Correspondence, vol.VI, p.56.
2 Mémoire presented in June 1770, S.P. 78/281, p.50.
demanded financial compensation for the damage inflicted on the comptoir at Chandernagore and the right to build a new ditch according to Chevalier's original plan. Discussions ensued during which the long-standing matter of the costs of the French prisoners of war was raised, but no satisfactory settlement was reached.

It was during this month that Choiseul, in accord with the stipulations of the Pacte Famille, enquired about the Spanish attitude to the crisis. He hoped, of course, that France's traditional and dynastic ally would stand by her in this crisis. On 6 August, however, Grimaldi communicated Charles III's refusal to assist the French in case of war.1 By September the Falkland Islands' crisis had emerged to consume the interests of the courts of London, Paris and Madrid,2 whereas the Chandernagore affair receded into the general background of Anglo-French suspicion and mistrust. Nevertheless, the French threat still remained in the East and naval and military measures and countermeasures continued long after the Spanish disavowal of their expedition from Buenos Aires.

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This date is given in J. Goebel, The Struggle for the Falkland Islands: A Study in Legal and Diplomatic History (London, 1927), p.281.

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For the details of this crisis see Goebel, The Struggle for the Falkland Islands, especially chapters 6-8, and Harlow, The Founding of the Second British Empire, vol.1, pp.22-32.
Although Choiseul's tactics during the Chandernagore crisis were part of a wider strategy to reverse the terms of the Peace of Paris, it is abundantly clear that he was not ready for war in the summer of 1770. There can be no doubt that the Spanish refusal to support France over the affair was an important factor in the Foreign Minister's decision, but the notable victory of the Russians over the Turkish fleet in July 1770 ended any hopes he might still have had for a Franco-Turkish alliance and made him genuinely reluctant to embroil himself in a new war with Britain. Moreover, his position at court was under attack from the now influential faction identified with Madame du Barry, and his involvement in the Anglo-Spanish crisis became the occasion for, if not the cause of, his downfall. In spite of these domestic upheavals, it was principally because of his moderation during the Falkland Islands' crisis that the Spanish were eventually prepared to accommodate themselves to the British demands. All the same most governments anticipated war throughout 1770 and the Indian settlements were encouraged to make every preparation for it.

iv. THE NATURE OF THE CRISIS

As this crisis developed and reached its climax it was compounded of both Indian and European tensions. In Bengal, where the French particularly resented the privileged and powerful
position of the East India Company, there was a complicated background of disputes and disturbances between the two European powers. Chevalier, for one, firmly believed that the British were continually exploiting their special relationship with the Nawab to humble the Compagnie and its servants, and in vivid terms he described the liabilities inflicted on the French trade:

> nos vaisseaux sont attaqués à main armée, notre pavillon insulté sur tout le gange, déchiré par morceaux et foulé aux pieds. Voilà les excès horribles auxquels les anglais ne craignent plus de se porter sous le nom du Nabab qu'ils prennent toujours pour le voile de leur tyrannie et de leurs violences.¹

If he acquiesced in these measures he felt the French name in India would be degraded, and yet if he protested the trade of the French would be ruined.

> Les anglais non contents d'être les souverains du pays, de jouir de tous ses immenses revenus qui se montent à 75 millions par an à Bengale seulement sans comprendre le Decan, et le Côte Coromandel voyant encore avec peine des nations Européennes associées à en partager le commerce, ils visent en conséquence à leur tirer d'abord tous leurs privilèges et leurs franchises pour ensuite les accabler de tant de chaînes que d'elles-mêmes voyant qu'il leur est impossible de continuer à exister dans un pays où il ne resterait que de la honte et de la perte en partage, elles prennent le parti d'y renoncer et de l'abandonner tout à fait aux Anglais qui veulent parvenir à en jouir eux seuls et sans concurrent.²

¹ Chevalier to duc de Choiseul-Praslin, 10 January 1769, Françaises Nouvelles Acquisitions, vol. 9366, p. 1.
² Chevalier to Praslin, 10 January 1769, Françaises Nouvelles Acquisitions, vol. 9366, p. 6.
Chevalier appreciated that the Bengal revenues provided the British with the source of their strength in the East ("En effet c'est Bengale qui est le métropole, c'est la mère nourrice, c'est la source des trésors, et des ressources enfin")¹ and clearly realised the importance that Indian revenues might play in expanding the French country trade if once the British could be ousted from Bengal. As a consequence various stratagems were devised to drive the British from these provinces, or at the very least, seriously to disrupt their commercial and political influence. The most ambitious of Chevalier's plans advocated the sending of a force of 4,000 to 5,000 men to invest Calcutta. The French would proclaim themselves as liberators sent to deliver the native population from the English tyranny. Other schemes envisaged a smaller force of 1,000 to 1,500 Frenchmen, supplemented with caffre regiments from the Ile de France. Chevalier stressed the overriding importance of intrigue with the native princes as a means to divide the efforts of the Fort William Council. The Nawabs, he believed, would seize upon any opportunity to rid themselves of the British yoke, while the Marathas, who had only just recovered from the unmitigated disaster of Panipat, and the northern princes should be encouraged to drain the British forces from Calcutta. The Moghul Emperor, at this

¹ Chevalier to Praslin, 10 January 1769, *Françaises Nouvelles Acquisitions*, vol.9366, p.7.
time wavering in his loyalty between the Marathas and the Company, figured prominently in all such plans for a widespread native revolution.

L'empereur même, ce Prince du Rang duquel l'on abuse si indignement, ne prononce le nom des francois qu'avec respect et admiration, en même temps qu'il les plaint de toute son âme, il les regarde comme devant être les rédempteurs de sa captivité et sous les Princes de l'Indoustan font les mêmes voeux que lui. Je puis vous assurer, Monseigneur, avec toute la vérité que je dois à tant ce que je vous écris, qu'il n'y en a pas un seul d'eux qu'il ne soit prêt à Employer ses forces et son argent en notre faveur du moment qu'ils nous verront déclarer, je n'en excepte pas même ceux qui sont les alliés des anglais.  

Choiseul was, of course, keenly interested in these schemes. In his efforts to re-establish French commerce and influence in the East he encouraged the Crown to assume the administration of the French Islands in 1767 and to reinforce the detachments at Port Louis. Under the dual control of the Ministry of Marine and the enlightened governor, Pierre Poivre, 'the Mascarenes experienced a genuine renaissance between the years 1767 and 1778', so that the islands were able to support over one thousand French troops during 1769 and 1770.

In an exchange with Harcourt, the British ambassador, on 18 January 1769 Choiseul expressed his impatience with the

1 Chevalier to Praslin, 10 January 1769, Francaises Nouvelles Acquisitions, vol. 9366, p. 6.
clandestine support given by the British to the Corsican rebels, and blandly stated that 'he would open a Subscription in Favour of the People of New York',\(^1\) meaning the troublesome Bostonians, or so supposed the ambassador. When Harcourt, on instructions from the Secretary of State, protested Choiseul stung the ambassador by retorting that he would retract his support for 'the King my Master's Refractory subjects in America,...in favour of the Prince who is now at War with our East India Company'\(^2\) — a pointed reference to the Madras Council's embarrassments in its war with Hyder Ali. Such a contretemps indicates the strained relations between the English and the French at the end of the decade and the warm determination of the French to rattle their national enemies wherever they could.

Fearing a French invasion from the Ile de France in conjunction with yet another native revolution, the Calcutta Council had become seriously alarmed by Chevalier's activities early in 1769. These fears were heightened by reports of the growing concentration of French forces at the Islands and the changing political situation in the north-west of Bengal. The Emperor, to all intents and purposes a vassal of the Company since his humiliating defeat at Buxar, joined with the Marathas after

\(^{1}\) Harcourt to Weymouth, 18 January 1769, \textit{S.P.} 78/277, p.67.

their offer to restore him to the Peacock Throne at Delhi. The threats posed by the resurgent Marathas and the envious and embittered French were also magnified by the fragmentary and uncertain nature of communications with Europe. Despairingly the Council believed that their first intimation of the outbreak of hostilities in Europe would be the appearance of a French expeditionary force off the Balasore roads. On 1 April 1769 the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors despatched to the Governor and the Select Committee

undoubted Intelligence, that in addition to the Strength the French already have at their Islands and Settlements in the East Indies, they are now sending out a very large Body of Troops consisting of near Two Thousand Men well Officered, and that they have other Measures in agitation, from whence it may be apprehended they have Designs inconsistent with the Tranquility We wish to maintain in India.¹

The Select Committee was recommended 'to be most vigilantly on your guard, against any Designs the French may have in Contemplation against Our Possessions, and to take every possible Precaution to render them ineffectual'. Such admonitions were common between 1768 and 1773.

When the Council was apprised of the defensive possibilities of the ditch early in May 1769 it instructed Lieutenant Colonel Grant at Monghyr 'to hold the Troops under his Command...'

¹ Secret Despatch from the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors to the President and Select Committee at Fort William, 1 April 1769, Secret Despatches to Bengal 1756-1771.
in readiness to march at a moment's warning' and Mr. Grahame, the resident at Burdwan, to provide 'one Battalion of the best Sepoys under his Command' in case the French resisted. As an indication of the seriousness with which the Council viewed the crisis the third brigade was also recalled from Allahabad, the base for the Company's operations in the north against the Marathas and the Rohillas. Various other manoeuvres were made throughout May and June.

In this case, however, the communication lag with Europe worked to the advantage of the Fort William Council. Largely freed from outside control it was able to present the Court of Directors and the British government with a fait accompli. But the Council's actions also entailed that an atmosphere of tension continued to characterise relations between the English and the French in Bengal long after this particular incident. The demolition of the ditch did nothing to resolve the wider issues of friction and discord which carried on into the 1770's.

When Sir John Lindsay arrived at Madras in August 1770 the Council refused to recognise his special plenipotentiary powers. In March 1771 Sir Robert Harland was chosen to succeed Lindsay and

1 Bengal Select Proceedings, 13 May 1769.
2 Bengal Select Proceedings, 8 and 20 June 1769.
3 See chapter 5, pp. 219-21.
although empowered to treat with de Lauriston over the Chandernagore affair, he was advised not 'to take any Steps to enter into a Discussion with Mr. Law, till called upon by Him'.

A year later, on 7 April 1772, Lord Rochford, the new Secretary of State, suggested 'that as the french Ministry in Europe seem in a manner to have forgot that Affair and look upon it as concluded, it is by no means desireable to renew the subject in India'. The French did not forget the incident, however, and when the peace negotiations opened at Versailles after the American War they persistently demanded 'the restitution of Chandernagore with an acknowledgement of their right to fortify that settlement as they shall think fit'.

Certain conditions underlying the relationship between the English and the French in Bengal are revealed by this incident. One of the most significant is that the fundamental suspicion and mistrust between the representatives of the two powers in the East were still too acute to permit a mutual accommodation of commercial interests. The Dutch, by contrast, could be accommodated to the Company's Bengal system because they

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1 Additional Instructions for Sir Robert Harland with regard to Chandernagore, 19 March 1771, C.O. 77/53, p.17.
3 Fitzherbert to Grantham, 17 August 1782, F.O. 27/3, p.68.
harboured no overweening political ambitions. But the French under the guise of preserving their time-honoured rights and privileges were busily at work eroding the power of the Company. Henceforth the French were to be treated not simply as commercial competitors, but as political rivals too, and the spectre of a French inspired native uprising lingered on to poison Anglo-French relations in Bengal for the next decade. On 27 June 1770, not long after the crisis, General Robert Barker presented a detailed set of regulations for the defence of Calcutta against an expected French attack,¹ while Lockhart Russell was commissioned by the Fort William Council to investigate the strength of the French at the Ile de France. After his visit Russell contended that the Ile de France, capable of producing '20 thousand men fit to bear arms including Blacks and Whites', constituted a mortal threat to the British in Bengal and India. He then proceeded to expound Choiseul's 'deep laid Schemes for wresting' from the British their possessions in the East.

The General rendezvous was Port Louis upon the Island of Mauritius from thence to have proceeded to Pondicherry. The objects of Attack were Madras and Bengal. The Troops were to have been Commanded by a Lieutenant General from France....The Marine was to have been commanded by the Chevalier de Roche Governor of the French Islands....France was to have sent 7 Ships of the Line Spain 5 or 3 in addition. Each Nation was to have sent several Frigates and not less than Ten Thousand as good Militia

¹ These regulations are located in the Bengal Select Proceedings, 27 June 1770.
as any in the World was to have been added to the Armament... The Whole Armament would have consisted of 17 Ships of the Line 12 or 14 Frigates, besides Transports the Land Forces would have been nearly Twenty to Twenty five thousand Regular Troops besides the Militia from the Islands and their Country Allies.

Was there any substance to these charges? There is little doubt that Frenchmen like Chevalier and de Lauriston were intriguing for a revival of French power in India and that they received ample encouragement from the ministry at Paris. Throughout this period the French authorities corresponded with numerous mercenaries and agents who were a veritable hornets' nest at the courts of the Indian princes. Most of these condottieri-diplomats had originally fought under Dupleix, de Bussy and Lally against the English in the Seven Years' War, and after the peace dispersed themselves all over the sub-continent. Renée Madec, to take one, arrived in India during the time of Dupleix and fought in the Carnatic wars, after which he joined the Nawab of Oudh's forces at the battle of Buxar. Later he took service with the Rohillas and Jats and in 1772 entered the army of Shah Alam II. Until his departure for France in 1777 he acted as an intermediary in Chevalier's various schemes to form an alliance with the Moghul

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Emperor. The activities of Madec and Gentil at the durbars of the northern princes, which are described in detail in Professor Sen's study, were paralleled in the South by the missions of Saint Lubin and Montigny to the Marathas, and Modave to Hyderabad.

It is, I think, also certain that if Chevalier had been able to complete the notorious ditch, and if he had received assistance from Pondicherry, the Ile de France, or metropolitan France, the French would have greatly enhanced their military position in Bengal. Almost certainly they could have withstood a long siege, held up large British forces and incited troubles along the exposed north-western frontier. But Choiseul's government was not yet determined on a global war of revenge so that Frenchmen in India had to wait another ten years before a substantial expeditionary force was despatched to India.

Despite the protests and posturings of European governments, the decisive action in this crisis was taken in India. Perhaps the most significant fact revealed by the ditch incident

1 The fascinating details of Madec's career and his correspondence with Chevalier are located in 'Memoire de Mons Madec, Nabob dans l'Empire du Mogol, commandant d'un parti français au Service de l'Empereur', Francaises Nouvelles Acquisitions, vol. 9368, pp. 1-127.

2 See S.P. Sen, The French in India, particularly chapters 5, 6 and 7 for a detailed exposition of these schemes.
was the enormous power held by the authorities at the periphery, largely unhampered by external control. Although this situation was to change in the next few years, the initiatives in future crises were still to be taken in India. The widening rift in Anglo-French relations in Europe predisposed European governments to support their nationals in India; European tensions also inclined the councils to take the French threat more seriously. But it was after all a local and immediate threat to their self-interest, profits and security that steeled them into acting. This sequence of French challenge, whether imaginary or real, and British response was to repeat itself many times before the century had ebbed and the British had established themselves as the paramount power in India. Such fears and reactions were not derived from a belief in the providential destiny of British rule in India, or from a belief in the inexorability of territorial expansion, but from the salutary realisation that the basis of British power in the East was acutely vulnerable to native revolution, particularly when sponsored by a rival European power. A sense of the transience and the precariousness of their rule was only gradually being supplanted by a mood of greater confidence and assurance. For the most part a garrison mentality characterised the psychology of the British outposts in India during this period.
The Chandernagore ditch incident, which was protracted by Chevalier's protests well into 1772, acted as a climacteric in Anglo-French relations in Bengal. The British became increasingly distrustful of French intentions both in India and Europe after 1769. News of the successful conclusion of the Falkland Islands' crisis did not reach Fort William until mid-1771 with the result that war was anticipated during most of 1770 and 1771. Apart from its concern with a French invasion from the Islands, the Council also sought to eliminate the threat from French agents provocateurs and mercenaries in the 'mofussil'. On 29 October 1770 the Council was directed by the Court of Directors 'to suffer no Persons of any Nations whatsoever to trespass upon the rights and Dominion of the Country, of which we declare ourselves the guardians and Conservators'.

The attempts to regulate and supervise the movements of French merchants by the Council's agents provided the occasion for a great variety of disputes during the next five years. While the details of this skirmishing are seemingly trivial, they are presented here as illustrations of the mounting friction and

1
Extract of a General Letter to Bengal, 29 October 1770, French in India, vol.IV.
suspicion between the two European powers in Bengal.

Chevalier complained on 13 May 1771 of the extortionate duties imposed on cloths purchased by the French at Balasore. He further protested on 20 May that the Company was using the Nawab's authority to vex and injure the French. For the Nawab had objected to the action of the French in obtaining land at Chandelah (in eastern Bengal) as a substitute for their factory at Jugdea, which, they claimed, 'was on the Eve of being led into the waters of the sea'.

The Calcutta Council refused to intercede with the Nawab, disclaiming any special rights or 'power over the Country Government'. In this case it does appear that the Nawab acted independently of the Council 'in return for the indignity offered to him'.

In July of that year, Chevalier claimed the right to deal with the Compagnie's debtors 'according to the custom of the Country', and in a series of letters to the Fort William Council accused the Company's servants at 'Keepoy, Midnapour, Carricola and in Beelbook' of thwarting French attempts to recover their debts. His legalistic defence of French rights became

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1 Bengal Secret Proceedings, 23 May 1771.
2 Fort William Council to Chevalier, 9 May 1771, Bengal Secret Proceedings.
3 Council to Lindsay, 25 May 1771, Bengal Secret Proceedings.
something of a stock manoeuvre. He appealed to the privileges 'accorded to the French in their Firmanus and Perwannahs to pursue their Debtors, to seize and oblige them to pay without the Government having the power to oppose it'.¹ A speedy resolution of the Chandelah dispute was also insisted upon by the French, and though the Nawab eventually agreed to provide an exchange for the factory at Jugdea, he demanded that the French select a site closer to the original factory.² This, however, proved an unsatisfactory arrangement, and the issue remained unsettled until after the American War.

On 11 December the commanding officer at Budge Budge, a fort on the Hooghly some fifteen miles below Calcutta, ordered that a French sloop be fired at after it refused to move from its mooring position 'immediately before' the fortifications. Earlier, in November, the Bengal Council had referred the question of the examination of French ships to the newly arrived Sir Robert Harland, the successor to Lindsay as naval Commander-in-Chief and special plenipotentiary to settle disputes with the French. The Council asked him 'how far we could have a right to send on board of and examine any foreign, particularly French, ships which

¹ Bengal Secret Proceedings, 10 July 1771.
² Bengal Secret Proceedings, 17 December 1771.
should pass by our forts and batteries... The Councillors feared that a relaxation of the practice might enable the French to bring in 'any number of troops without our being able to detect them'.

By contrast, the French claimed the right to anchor their vessels in any part of the river, even below the batteries at Budge Budge, and strenuously resisted the efforts of the Company's officials to board and search their vessels. Harland's considered opinion was that the Council had no 'right to stop or to require the ships of France or any other nation to give an account of themselves in passing our forts or batteries' since the 'navigation of the Ganges was as free to them as to us, and that until troops were actually landed it could not be said that there was any breach of the treaty in that respect'. An officer of the Crown was attempting to restrain the Council from actions which might further provoke the French and the other companies. But the Council was dissatisfied with the admiral's answer and informed the Court of Directors of the dangerous consequences

1 Secret letter from Fort William to the Court of Directors, 15 November 1771, *Fort William - India House Correspondence* (Delhi, 1960), vol.VI (Public, Select and Secret), p.333.
which would arise 'if the French have the right of anchoring their vessels in what part of the river they may think proper'. By this means the French would acquire 'a perfect knowledge of the nature of' the fortifications at Budge Budge.

If also their ships are to pass without any inquiry or hindrance on our part and the opinion of Admiral Harland is literally to be followed, the consequence must be that we can have no power of opposing a French fleet until it has passed all our forts and batteries, and we should thereby lose the advantage which the dangerous navigation of the river gives us, as well as the benefit expected from our fortifications in annoying and stopping an enemy in his passage up to Calcutta.¹

To preserve its possessions from the twin perils of insurrection and invasion was the basic concern of the Fort William Council, and it would brook no interference from royal officials in this matter.

In the dispute between Chambon and Cotes, which flared up in March 1772, Chevalier formulated the classic arguments he was to employ on this and subsequent occasions to try and establish French immunity from English control. The French agents at Keerpoys, Chambon and Delozier, complained of the protection afforded by the English agents to the native merchants and agents indebted to the French. Chevalier also claimed that the country court was an agency manipulated by the Company's resident, Cotes, ¹

¹ Secret letter from Fort William to the Court of Directors, 10 January 1772, Fort William - India House Correspondence, vol. VI, p. 354.
against the French and their native servants. The French agents had advised Chevalier 'that under the name of the Raja of Burdewan there has been lately erected a Tribunal at the head of which there is a sort of Peon dressed up to be Judge without appeal in all the Affairs of our Nation'.

Attacking all such spurious innovations, Chevalier appealed to privileges sanctioned by usage and custom and claimed 'in all times the different Nations have enjoyed the right of prosecuting their Debtors and of putting Peons upon them and even of imprisoning them in their own Factories'. The French stated their conviction that 'the veil is long ago fallen off, that we acknowledge no Nabob of Bengal, no particular Government, or Fouzdar, but in short the English Nation', and they were afraid lest the Company's regime degenerate into a rapacious tyranny.

Chevalier then proceeded to describe the many and flourishing rights the French enjoyed 'under the Moorish government' before the ascendency of the English Company. It was truly a golden age.

We sent our Money into the Aurungs with security. It was distributed among the Pykars, Dulolls and Weavers who gave us a good Account of it. They did not oppose our pursuing Dulol's Debtors of bad Credit nor our forcing

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2. Chevalier to Board, 14 February 1774, French in India, VI, p.73.
them to pay them. They did not prevent the Weavers from furnishing Cloths to our Gomastahs and Agents....
They did not take from us by a despotic Authority our Silk Winders at Cossambuzar....

All abuses of dustuck privileges, all extortionate duties and regulations governing the export of bullion were innovations imposed on the French by the Company. Once the French flag was respected by the Nawab's government - 'It is only latterly that it has been seen to be treated with the utmost indignity - torn to pieces and trampled underfoot'.

The Council, of course, repudiated these claims and defended the Company's recently acquired powers as beneficial to all the foreign companies trading in Bengal. The revolutions that unseated Siraj-ud-Daula and Mir Kasim, it assured the French, had enabled the other companies 'under our protection to carry on their commerce in peace and Security unencumbered with high expenses and Military Establishments'. Historically at least, the French claims were exaggerated. Surman's embassy to the Emperor Farrukhsiyar in 1717 had secured for the East India Company in Bengal a general exemption from customs duties in return for an annual sum of 3,000 rupees, and after this concession the

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1 Chevalier to Fort William Council, 22 June 1772, Bengal Secret Proceedings, 30 June 1772.
2 Draft of President's letter to the Chandernagore Council, Bengal Secret Proceedings, 4 June 1772.
French were unable to compete effectively with the Company's trade. Their somewhat idealised portrait of early eighteenth century trade in Bengal distorted both the conditions of commerce as well as the mildness of the Nawab's regime.

One of the results of the disastrous famine which ravaged Bengal during 1770 was a growing dissatisfaction with the revenue administration of the Naib Diwan, Muhammad Reza Khan. On 28 August 1771 the Court of Directors decided that the Company's servants in Bengal should 'stand forth as Duan' and take upon themselves 'the entire care and management of the revenues'.

On receipt of these instructions in May 1772, the Fort William Council abolished the office of the Naib Diwan, while in a general proclamation the Council announced its determination to bring the territorial revenues under the direct management of its own servants. These important changes involved the Company more deeply in the civil and criminal jurisdiction of Bengal together with the administration of the revenue collection. And from this time on disputes involving the question of legal rights became as prolific as the earlier trading disputes with the French.

It was at this time that an incident occurred at

Courygong in northern Bengal, where Speke, a junior official of
the Company, intercepted some boats that had been hired by a
French merchant. Finally the matter was referred to the
Fouzdari Adalat, the country court of justice, which Chevalier
was later to disparage as a 'form of inquisitorial control over
our book keeping, and which thereby would have been at the Dis­
cretion and Mercy of the first Blackman which you might think fit
to clothe with Authority and choose for the Judge between Nations'.

The Calcutta Council further enraged the French by
supporting the action of the Fouzdar of Hooghly in detaining some
French boats until Chevalier paid the rents of the land occupied
by the French merchants at Chandernagore. Usually the Fouzdar,
who was the zemindar of the lands adjoining Chandernagore, acted
on the instructions received from the English resident at Hooghly,
William Lushington, though the Bengal Council was at pains to deny
the existence of any such relationship. On occasions, however, the
Fouzdar acted independently of the English as in this case when
he released the French boats 'without having previously obtained
the Payment of the Demands of Government'.

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1 For further details see Bengal Secret Proceedings, 23 June and
31 December 1772.
2 Chevalier to Fort William Council, 6 May 1773, Bengal Secret
Proceedings, 21 June 1773.
3 21 August 1772, Bengal Secret Proceedings. For mention of disputes
involving the Fouzdar see Bengal Secret, 15, 23 June, 11 July,
3, 21 August 1772.
The spate of disputes with the French at Chandernagore and throughout the outlying districts forced the Council to define more precisely the powers it now exercised as Naib Diwan. In January 1773 the Council raised the 'General Point' of 'how far in quality of Dewan our Government is entitled to Control the Commercial operations of the foreign Companies in the Internal parts of the Country'.\(^1\) After careful consideration, the Board decided that the French 'have no Right by treaty to send European Agents or appoint Residents to any part of the three Provinces exclusive of the Factories specified in the article of the peace treaty 'without Authority from the Government of the Country unless such a privilege (sic) should have been specially granted them by Firmauns from the Court of Delhi'.\(^2\) Therefore, all relations with the foreign companies should be exercised 'through the channel of the Nazim and his Ministers in conformity to the Company orders'.

Such general powers of supervision were almost immediately challenged by the French. The Council complained to Chevalier on 8 April 1773 of 'the independant (sic) Authority claimed and exercised by your European Agents...against the Authorized Courts

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of Justice'. 1 In his reply of 6 May, Chevalier justified the French refusal 'to acknowledge the authority of the Courts of Justice' by asserting that 'contrary to our rights and privileges (sic) as well as to custom' the English had employed the country courts 'for taking cognizance of our affairs, for examining our books and accounts'. 2 To emphasise his point he declared the French would never acknowledge those Tribunals. That they knew of no Jurisdiction or Power to tyrannise or impose Laws on the French Nation in Bengal or elsewhere, that France was, and would remain independent, in every quarter of the Globe. That she would reject all Innovations contrary to her liberties, and to the Emperor's Phirmaunds, and That, being Independent, as well as the English, in Bengal, her Subjects did not reside there under their protection, but under that of their own Sovereign, and only Master, and that in respect of their Jurisdiction to arrest the Natives in their Debt, and to take cognizance of Matters in their own Settlements, he said they had ever done it, as we likewise had, by virtue of Grants and Sunnuds. 3

The Board replied on 21 June to these claims, which, it believed, could only contribute to 'Anarchy and Confusion'. It countered the French propositions by stressing that 'the

3 From 'A List of Claims to Rights and Privileges in Bengal made by the French Nation, and collected from the Proceedings of the Supreme Government of Bengal betwixt the years 1772 and 1776', French in India, vol. VI, p. 23.
English East India Company have at all times possessed greater Priviledges (sic) than the French or any other Commercial People in Bengal: yet even they had no such Right as you Assert\(^1\). The Board insisted that the firmans cited by the French failed to establish their claims since the appeal to custom or prescription was now irrelevant.

Chevalier's next move was to state as precisely as possible the chief rights he believed his countrymen entitled to in Bengal. In essentials the French insisted upon a complete and unimpeded freedom to trade, and by this Chevalier meant a number of specific conditions and rights - the right to establish factories and to send agents wherever the French chose 'throughout the Provinces'; a complete immunity for 'their European Residents, Agents and Servants from the Jurisdiction of the Country Courts of Justice', together with their own jurisdiction over French nationals and natives 'under their employment or protection'; an exemption from all duties after the payment of $2\frac{1}{2}\% ad valorem$ on 'Articles of Commerce only'; 'the privilege of issuing Dustucks' to cover their merchandise from 'all Duties and Impediments'; a free and uninterrupted trade in 'Cloth, Sugar, Wax, Raw Silk, Salt', Saltpetre and Opium; 'a free Navigation

of the Ganges' so that their boats would not be stopped and searched; 'a Privilege of anchoring their Vessels in any Part of the Ganges between Pipley and Houghley'; and 'the Assistance of Government in the recovery of their just debts'.

Meanwhile the British were taking up a definite position. A dispute involving Hastings' personal friend and protégé, Richard Barwell, provided the Council with the opportunity to answer the French pretensions. In October 1773, Desgranges, the French chief at Dacca, protested against Barwell's action in forcing the French to pay duties at Dacca 'contre les usages établies depuis un terme immemorial'. The French could hardly have been surprised when the Council endorsed the action of its agent at Dacca and justified this power in terms of 'the first principles of Government, which authorise us the representatives of the English East India Company, the Dewan of these Provinces', to require a 'literal Obedience' to ordinances and general regulations. The Council, in a provocative gesture, invited the French to send it their authorities - 'formal and authentic Sunnuds, Perwannahs or other Charters' - for inspection.

1 From 'Reports by Francis Russell Esq. Solicitor to the Rt. Hon. The Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India on the Claims of the French, Dutch and Danes to exclusive Privileges in the East Indies', French in India, vol.VI, pp.3-5.
Barwell was involved in yet another dispute at Dacca towards the end of October. Desgranges alleged that a jemidtar of his factory, whose son had been 'cruelly beaten by an unknown Native', turned on the offender 'with a little Rattan'. This man, a bricklayer in the service of Barwell, took out a summons for the jemidtar's arrest. When 'Six Hircarrahs with an Order from Mr. Barwell... appeared at the Gate of our Factory', Desgranges wrote, 'they attempted to enter by force in order to seize (sic) our Jemidar'.¹ Madame Desgranges valiantly interposed and refused to surrender the native whereupon the hircarrahs retired and reported to Barwell. 'Shortly after', according to Desgranges, 'four Sepoys and a Havildar appeared at the Gate of our Factory Armed with Musquets and Bayonets, ready to Seize the Jemidar, but without any order in Writing'.² Desgranges then deputed the aged Renault de Saint-Germain to complain to Barwell of this 'extreme outrage', and to his protests Barwell explained that 'there were now two Courts Established - The one called Fouzdarry - the other Dewanny, where every Native was obliged to appear at the first Summons he received in the Bengal Language',³ and that the jemidtar must immediately be delivered up by the

¹ Desgrange's letter to Chevalier, 10 November 1773, French in India, vol.VII, p.169.
French. Eventually this unfortunate native was arrested, tried and punished, but to compound error with insult the French asserted that

on the 21 November he was led with great Ceremony, and under an Escort of fifty armed Sepoys thro' all the Streets of the Town, in which he was whipt at different Places, and during the continuation of this dreadful Ceremony, a Man proclaimed with a loud Voice, that every Person who should enter into Disputes with the People attached to the Service of the English Company, and should take Advantage of the Protection of the French Nation, should receive the like treatment.¹

Naturally Barwell explained his action to the Fort William Council as a defence of the civil order against unwarranted and 'improper' encroachments on the part of the French. After an involved discussion of the dispute on 21 December 1773, the Council issued more specific instructions to Barwell. The practice of issuing summonses from the Fouzdari Adalat was to be discontinued, and 'Sempoys, Peons or Burgundasses' were not to be employed 'in executing the Summonses'. Barwell was also cautioned 'not to publish any proclamations...which may in any Shape affect our Intercourse with Foreign Nations'. He was to avoid in future 'every Subject which may cause disputes with the Foreign Nations, leaving them suspended untill you have informed us of the Nature

¹ Chevalier to the Bengal Council, 9 February 1774, Bengal Secret Proceedings, 14 February 1774.
of such disputes...¹

Chevalier had long claimed the authority of the firmans and sunnuds, originally conferred on the Compagnie des Indes by the Nawabs of Bengal and the Moghuls, to support his opposition to the 'innovations' of the East India Company, and on 9 December 1773 he forwarded copies of them to the Fort William Council.²

The Board informed Chevalier of its reception of the copies on 21 January 1774, but it requested permission from the Chandernagore Council 'to examine and scrutinise the originals'. To this proposal the French agreed and on 9 May John Stewart and a Persian translator, William Redfearn, were deputed to inspect the originals. In their report of 22 May, Stewart and Redfearn

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¹ Fort William Council to Barwell, 21 December 1773, French in India, vol.VII, pp.253-5. This affair was once again raised by Chevalier during February 1774; he insisted that Barwell's proclamation should be repealed and that Barwell should be recalled from Dacca. Eventually the French themselves decided to abandon their factory at Dacca on 25 March 1774. See Bengal Secret Proceedings, 7, 14 and 17 February, 18 April 1774, and French in India, vol.VII, pp.457-9.

² Chevalier to Calcutta, 9 December 1773, French in India, vol.IV, p.3. The following sunnuds were transcribed by the French and sent to Calcutta: sunnud under the seal of Nabob Sharaf-ud-din Husain; sunnud under the seal of Sayyid Izzat Khan; perwannah from Mirza Kershabit; perwannah under the seal of Nabob Millumen-ul-Mulk, Sujah-ul-Dowlah, Sujah-ul-Din, Mahomed Khan, Bahadur Asad Jang; sunnud under Ibrahim Khan and Kifayat Khan; dustuck under Mahomed Khan; sunnud under Nabob Muhammed Askar; firman under the seal of the Emperor Aurangzebe; and firman granted under the seal of the Emperor Farrukhsiyar. See French in India, vol.IV, pp.4-44.
concluded that 'the papers appeared to us as far as we can rely upon our own judgement and that of the Mounshees to carry every mark of being genuine and original as far as is expressed in the titles to them. How far they may be valid in substance and effect is in judgement with you'. The Board did not immediately take up this question, and when it did its views were somewhat affected by intervening disputes.

In March 1775 Chevalier laid claim to participate with the East India Company 'and the other European nations in the saltpetre and opium trade'. Since the acquisition of the diwani the Company's servants had virtually monopolised the trade in these two profitable commodities at Patna, and this arrangement was systematised by Hastings' reforms of 1773. As a placatory gesture, the French were conceded 18,000 maunds of saltpetre and 100 chests of opium annually. The Dutch, however, were treated much more liberally in the matter of opium contracts.

The Fort William Council replied in full to the issues raised by the French firmans on 16 June. First, it denied the right claimed by the French to establish new factories, or to

1 Bengal Secret Proceedings, 3 June 1774, French in India, vol. IV, p. 84.
possess any land in the provinces apart from 'places specifically restored to the late French Company under the 11th Article of the Treaty of 1763'. The gomastahs and agents of the French were responsible to the 'Government and Courts of Justice', while the trade they were granted in saltpetre and opium was no more than an 'indulgence'. Finally, the Council was unanimous that it 'could not admit the validity of their Firmaund and sunnuds to entitle them to any further rights or privileges than those which they derived and actually possessed' from the English in 1749.¹

The last important incident to occur before the outbreak of the American War involved the firing on French ships at Budge Budge on 4 August 1776. Three French ships 'attempted to pass our Forts without answering the Enquiries which we had ordered to be made concerning their Forces, Burthen, Number of Men, and Destination'.² Although de Lauriston supported the stand taken by Chevalier, and claimed that 'the Ganges is a River whose Navigation is free to all Nations established in India',³ his protests were to no avail. Less than two years later, all the French factories in Bengal were captured by the Company's forces.

³ Bengal Secret Proceedings, 31 March 1777.
During the 1770's the French in Bengal under the able and vigorous leadership of Chevalier sustained an involved and bitter diplomatic struggle to ascertain and safeguard their customary rights. In this contest the French displayed many of the characteristics of a beleaguered minority, notably a vivid sense of oppression and acute vulnerability, and they appealed to a past golden age when their privileges were securely established. Moreover, they attributed to their views a certain historical authenticity, a claim which, in fact, was quite unfounded. Whereas the French laid claim to ancient and extensive liberties, reminiscent in some ways of the conservative appeals of the common lawyers to Magna Carta and the ancient Anglo-Saxon constitution in the early seventeenth century, their freedoms were whittled away by the Company Diwan. After the granting of the diwani to the Company, the Fort William Council was anxious to regulate relations with the foreign companies through the offices of the Naib Diwan and the Fouzdar of Hooghly. In most cases, as we have seen, the Naib Diwan and the Fouzdar complied with the requests made by the Company's residents at the durbar of the Nawab and at Hooghly, but these native officials could, and on occasions did, assert their independence to the embarrassed consternation of the Calcutta authorities. When the Court of Directors decided that their servants should 'stand forth as Diwan' in 1771, the fiction of the Nawab's government was exposed with the result that French
resistance hardened. 'Who is this Nazim?', de Lauriston conjectured in 1776, and answered. 'It is a Native of the Country placed by yourselves, who is without Forces who has no others than those which you are pleased to lend him, whom you can kick down whenever you please from the high Rank to which you have raised him'. Chevalier refused to recognise the native courts and was opposed to all efforts to settle disputes there. The Company's officials were no less obdurate in their refusal to concede to individual French merchants those rights which the Compagnie claimed to have enjoyed before its suspension in 1770. In retrospect, then, the conflict of the 1760's and the 1770's appears as a desperate rear-guard action on the part of the French to retain the vestiges of their national self-respect. Their intransigence, however, remained and after the American War they attempted to induce the Company to recognise their special legal and trading rights.

The inveterate opponents of the French on the Calcutta Council were opposed to surrendering any concessions to Chevalier because they were firmly convinced that any benefit to French trade would inevitably be used to subvert the Company's own trade and influence. The Chandernagore ditch affair appeared to confirm their fears. Other members of the Council distinguished between

1 Law de Lauriston to the Bengal Council, 6 May 1776, French in India, vol. VI, p. 94.
simple trading concessions which would in no way endanger the Company's position, and rights such as the exportation of salt-petre, an essential commodity in the manufacture of gunpowder, which would provide the French with the sinews of war. Nevertheless, most Councillors were convinced that sooner or later the French would attempt to re-establish their influence and trade, and when war seemed imminent in Europe, as it did throughout 1769 and 1770, they favoured a general tightening of controls over the French. The visiting and searching of French ships at Budge Budge, for example, was intended as much to prevent the French smuggling arms and men into the provinces as to limit the import of salt, while the Council's refusal to permit the French to establish factories and agents indiscriminately throughout Bengal was prompted more by considerations of defence than by the profit motive. By the mid-1770's the Council was unanimous 'that it is no longer in our power to temporize, or veil the real Power of this Government by the Assumed Authority of the Nabob'. ¹ In the next phase of Anglo-French friction in Bengal, which succeeded the return of the French possessions in 1785, the Company came close to formulating a doctrine of sovereignty for its power in the area.

CHAPTER 4: ANGLO-FRENCH RELATIONS IN BENGAL 1785-1793

i. WAR AND PEACE: THE AFTERMATH OF THE AMERICAN WAR

Chandernagore was captured without any great difficulty in July 1778, but the French capital in India withheld a siege for over two months before capitulating on 18 October. For the greater part of the American War the French government was so absorbed in the American struggle that it was unable to despatch an expeditionary force to India until December 1781, by which time the imposing coalition of Hyder Ali, the Nizam, and the Marathas, which had been formed to destroy the British power, had dissolved.¹ Suffren's squadron, arriving at the Cape in June 1781, contested five actions with the East Indian fleet under Admiral Sir Edward Hughes. In August 1782 Suffren also succeeded in capturing Trincomalee from the English after they had taken it from the Dutch. The Madras army was hard pressed before Cuddalore by the combined forces of Tipu Sultan and Bussy, newly arrived from the Islands, when news reached India of the conclusion of peace

¹ See chapter 5, pp.229-38.
preliminaries in Europe.¹

Negotiations for these preliminaries began in the spring of 1782 when Fox, the Foreign Secretary, appointed Thomas Grenville to commence discussions with Vergennes. In his recent and highly intricate study of the negotiations, Vincent Harlow has lucidly described the nature of French ambitions for the overthrow of the Company's power in India.² It is indisputable that French policy under Choiseul and Vergennes was directed to the reversal of the galling terms of the Peace of Paris, and Vergennes now expected substantial territorial gains in the East. To Grenville's offer of a settlement that would recognise the independence of the American colonies for a 'general and reciprocal restitution' of territories on the basis of the 1763 peace, Vergennes replied menacingly that

he could not allow the independance (sic) of America to be the only cause of war, for that France had found and not made America independant;...he said we had checked and constrained the French in all the quarters of the world, that he wished for a treaty of peace more just and durable than the last....³

In broaching the matter of the East Indies Vergennes

¹ The campaigns of Suffren and Bussy have been most recently examined in Sen, The French in India, chapters 9-13.
³ Grenville to Fox, 10 May 1782, F.0. 27/2, p.60.
'asked why we should not content ourselves with Bengal'. He said it was a great and rich province, that our arms were grown too long for our body, that the French had experienced from us in India every sort of indignity, and that chiefly owing to the terms of the last peace, that for his part he could not read the last peace without shuddering, (sans frémir) and that in making a new treaty they must be relieved from every circumstance in which their dignity had been hurt.1

The French Minister realised that the securing of 'very extensive surrenders of commerce and territory in the East Indies' was contingent upon military successes in India, and during these negotiations he hoped for news of Bussy's expected victories in the Carnatic. If the French campaign had been successful in extirpating the British from the South, there is every evidence that the French government would have insisted on the retention of vast territories in the Circars, Orissa and the Coromandel. However, since there were no spectacular victories and since there appeared little likelihood of dislodging the British from their superior position, the French Minister strove to establish for his countrymen a position of wealth and power comparable to that of the East India Company without incurring any of the responsibilities of territorial sovereignty. Ironically, it had long been a French criticism of the Company that its servants had confused their roles as traders and rulers. As the administration of these territories devolved more and more on the British, the Company's

1 Grenville to Fox, 10 May 1782, F.O. 27/2, p.62.
expenses increased out of all proportion to the profits derived
from the Indian trade. And the sympathies of their Indian
subjects were alienated by the efforts to impose on them foreign
systems of government and law. The French would show a still more
excellent way. 'C'est par la clémence, la justice, la modération
et la bonne discipline que nous devons chercher à les subjuguer et
à leur faire connaître la différence entre notre gouvernement et
celui que les anglais exercent avec tant de tyrannie'. Though
the French avowed that they were only interested in extending
their trade, this did not inhibit Vergennes from eventually
demanding the revenues of large territories in the Carnatic and
the Four Circars to defray the military and administrative
expenses of French establishments in India.

Chevalier, who had returned to France soon after the
capture of Chandernagore, submitted a mémoire to the Ministry
on 26 May 1780, in which he advocated the cession to France of
large districts adjoining Pondicherry, Karikal and Masulipatam.
The Pondicherry districts were calculated to produce a revenue
of 30 lakhs annually, and the territories surrounding Masulipatam
and Yanam 200,000 rupees a year.²

1 'Plan d'attaque dans l'Inde' sent by Chevalier, 15 March 1769,
2 Mémoire pour servir au traité de paix, 26 Mai 1780, Correspondance
Politique, Angleterre, vol. 533, p. 121.
Chevalier, de Lauriston, Picot de Motte, Moracin and Bussy, all of whom had spent long sojourns in India, exerted considerable influence on the policies of the French government during the war and at the negotiations, and not unexpectedly, their ideas and ambitions were coloured by their experience of the East India Company's rule. They were convinced that the French could only hold their own in the East if they were given parity of wealth and influence with the Company. In his mémoire Chevalier insisted upon a complete restitution of French trading rights in Bengal; the French merchants were to have a fair choice and selection of silks and cloths from the weavers; French vessels and agents would have a free and uninterrupted access to the Ganges and all parts of the English territories; the jurisdiction of French courts over French nationals was to be recognised and permitted throughout Bengal; and they were to be free to establish factories and agencies wherever they chose. Moreover, French territorial claims along the Orissa Coast were to be recognised, while French merchants were to enjoy a freedom to trade in the articles of salt, saltpetre, opium, arrack and tobacco, without the imposition of any quotas. Finally, the British would make amends for the Chandernagore ditch affair, which was still regarded by Chevalier as the crowning insult inflicted on the French name and honour in Bengal.
After the fall of Rockingham's Ministry and the resignation of Grenville in July 1782, Alleyne Fitzherbert was transferred from Brussels to Paris to carry through the negotiations. In the first weeks of August Fitzherbert gained an impression of what the French claims would be, although he believed the French government would temporize until 'they shall be acquainted with the issue of the campaign of the last Spring in the East Indies, a campaign from which it seems they have formed the most sanguine expectations'. Fitzherbert was convinced that the French would demand the restitution of Chandernagore with an acknowledgement of their right to fortify that settlement as they shall think fit, and of Pondicherry, with a considerable addition to its Territory, as also both in Bengal and the Carnatick, such new arrangements in regard to trade, as shall put the two nations in that respect upon a footing of perfect equality. If anything, Fitzherbert had underrated the extent of the French demands.

As the discussions progressed, Vergennes was gradually forced to yield on the issue of large territorial cessions in the Carnatic and the Northern Circars. While Gerard de Rayneval, Vergennes' special envoy who twice visited London at critical periods during the negotiations, assured Shelburne, the Prime

1 Fitzherbert to Grantham, from Brussels, 31 July 1782, F.O. 27/3, p.47.
2 Fitzherbert to Grantham, from Paris, 17 August 1782, F.O. 27/3, p.68.
Minister, that France 'ne prétend pas acquérir des territoires dans l'Inde; Elle demande seulement un arrondissement qui puisse assurer la Tranquilité de ses comptoirs et fournir à leurs dépenses', he still insisted (with considerable insouciance it would appear) that French possessions in the East be restored 'sur le pied de 1754', when the influence of Dupleix in the Carnatic and Bussy in the Deccan had reached its zenith.¹ In response to these claims the Foreign Secretary, Grantham, stressed the absolute necessity of 'abiding by the Treaty of Paris on the Subject of Bengal'. Opposed to the 'Admission of fortifying Chandernagore' and Masulipatam, he contended that the freedom of trade and security given to the French 'must not be that Safety which results from Fortification on their Side, but from good Policy, Regulation and Justice on ours'. And he also informed Fitzherbert that 'the French Proposal of naming a past Period as a model for a future Arrangement is quite inaplicable (sic) to the present State of India, and the Tenure upon which our Possessions there are now held'.²

By mid-November Vergennes had, with the greatest reluctance, abandoned his earlier claim to the 'full possession

of the Northern Circars and Masulipatam' upon the footing of 1754. Consequently the issues had narrowed down to the definition of the freedom and safety the French were to enjoy in India and the amounts of territory to be ceded around Pondicherry and Karikal. Rayneval, who after his first visit to London had become convinced of the value of an early settlement with Shelburne, managed to persuade Vergennes to forgo his claim for the fortification of the French possessions in Bengal. He argued that since 'le soubah et l'Empereur ne sont plus que des phantomes' and 'la souveraineté est entre les mains des Anglais', a small garrison would be no protection against the might of the Company. Fortifications would merely provoke the English to commit further acts of oppression. The French were eventually conceded the right 'd'entourer Chandernagore d'un Fossé pour l'écoulement des Eaux', and to a 'commerce sur, libre et independant, tel que l'a fait l'ancienne Compagnie Francoise des Indes Orientales, soit qu'ils le fassent individuellement ou en corps de Compagnie'.

Early in January 1783 Vergennes finally renounced French claims to a privileged position at Masulipatam and to half the province of Arcot, and agreed on 5 January to a territorial

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2 Project of Preliminaries between Great Britain and France, 1 January 1783, F.O. 27/5, p. 69.
readjustment by which Pondicherry with 80 villages, 'the Two Districts of Valanour and Bahour', and Karikal with 81 villages, 'the Four contiguous Magans', would be given to the French. ¹ The preliminary articles of peace were signed on 20 January 1783, and on 3 September the definitive treaty of peace with France was concluded at Versailles.

Detailed instructions concerning the implementation of the preliminaries were despatched to the Indian presidencies on 6 March 1783. The French factories were to be restored immediately after the ratification of the definitive treaty in Europe. It was also explained that the permission given to the French to surround Chandernagore 'by a Ditch' did not alter their status in Bengal since they were still forbidden to erect fortifications and to introduce arms and military forces into the provinces. In the Carnatic, the Fort St George Council was urged to use its 'good offices to procure' the cession of the districts of Villenour and Bahour from Mohammad Ali, the Nawab of the Carnatic, and the four

¹ Fitzherbert to Grantham, 5 January 1783, F.O. 27/5, p.328. The Secret Committee of the Court of Directors was frequently consulted by the Ministry after October 1782, and on 23 December it reluctantly consented to the 'engagement that the East India Company shall employ their best offices with the Nabob of Arcot, to cede to France the eighty Villages possessed by the French near Pondicherry in 1754. And likewise with the Rajah of Tanjore to obtain a cession of the eighty one villages possessed by the French at the same period near Carrical'. (F.O. 27/15, p.55.)

The Committee, however, insisted that France withdraw 'her assistance from all other native Princes' who were at war with the Company, and Fitzherbert finally succeeded in reducing the provisional armistice in India from twelve to four months on 9 January. (Fitzherbert to Grantham, 9 January 1783, F.O. 27/5, p.347.)
magans around Karikal from the King of Tanjore. A further important task entrusted to the councils in India was the pacification of the Carnatic, for both England and France had bound themselves to disengage their forces from all native alliances and to use their influence to end the war between Hyder Ali, Mohammad Ali and the King of Tanjore. In fact, the English had insisted at the peace negotiations that the withdrawal of French troops from the service of Hyder Ali be a necessary condition for the restoration of the French Indian settlements.¹

These instructions were supplemented with further orders after the conclusion of the definitive peace treaty in Europe. The British government demanded that since 'the capture of Trincomalay by the French was not known in Europe at the time of signing the Preliminary Articles' the French should restore the harbour to the British representatives before its final restoration to the Dutch.² This stipulation became another sine qua non for the restitution of the French comptoirs with the result that Bussy's refusal to surrender Trincomalee to the British delayed the return of the French factories and territories until February 1785. After Bussy's sudden death at Pondicherry on 7 January 1785

¹ Secret Committee of the Court of Directors to Fort William Council, 6 March 1783, Secret Despatches from the Secret Committee, Series A (1778-1786).
² Copy of Instructions relative to the Definitive Treaty of Peace with France, 3 October 1783, F.O. 27/7, p. 336.
the administration passed to Brigadier-General Coutenceau des Algrins until the Vicomte de Souillac assumed the government of French India in May.

Recent changes affecting the governments of both the French and British establishments in the East were to exert a considerable influence on the pattern of Anglo-French relations during this decade. As has already been indicated, the powers of the Supreme Government at Fort William over the subordinate presidencies had been enlarged and clearly enumerated in Pitt's India Act, which further strengthened the powers of the Governor General over his Council. "The entire diplomatic relations of the Company in India as also the finance necessary to support them were thus specifically entrusted to the Supreme Government at Fort William in Bengal" whose sanction was now necessary for any treaties concluded with the country powers.¹ The edict of May 1785 produced a similar centralisation in the government of French India. Overall co-ordination of policy was in the hands of the Governor General at the Ile de France, while the subordinate administrations were centred on Pondicherry and the Ile de Bourbon. For the first time it was possible to regulate affairs between the two nations by a general agreement made in the East. In the

¹ Misra, The Central Administration of the East India Company, p.31.
twenty years before, when fractious councils vied with one another for power and influence, a general settlement of grievances negotiated by French and British governors in India was out of the question. But the consolidation of Fort William's control over the Indian settlements also implied that the metropolitan governments would attempt a more direct supervision of the affairs of their servants. The India Act provided such machinery in the form of the Board of Control, and during the 1780's British ministries tried with greater success than before to control the policies of their Governor General at Calcutta.

On 1 February 1785 Pondicherry was given up to the French and soon after they received Villenour and Bahour along with Karikal and the four magans.¹ The Fort William Council was informed by de Souillac on 27 June of the appointment of Monsieur Dangereux as the French commissary to reclaim the French establishments in Bengal and the Council appointed John Wilton to treat with him.² A minor dispute occurred in July over the possession of the house and lands at Ghyretty, originally built by Dupleix but greatly improved by Chevalier, which Sir Eyre Coote had acquired in 1779. It was agreed on 27 July that the French

¹ Fort William Council to the Court of Directors, 31 March 1785, Fort William - India House Correspondence (Delhi, 1963), vol.XV, (Foreign and Secret), p.415.
² Fort William Council to the Court of Directors, 31 July 1785, Fort William - India House Correspondence, vol.XV, p.466.
might occupy Ghyretty until the matter was settled in Europe. On the same day Chandernagore was restored to Dangereux.

From September 1785, however, there arose a succession of disputes with the French in Bengal which effectively tested the provisions of the peace treaty. Most of these disagreements were concerned with the definition of the 'safe, free and independent Trade' the French were to be afforded in India. Warren Hastings, who remained in Bengal until February 1785, was inclined to distrust any claims that the French based on ancient custom. The real question, according to his analysis, was not one of usage or prescription

but by what regulations our Government can ensure the regular Collection of the usual Customs,...without subjecting the Representatives of the Foreign Companies to Conditions to which their respective states will not Consent, and which to enforce might be Contrary to the Prosperity of these Provinces, and the General Interests of the British Empire.\(^1\)

As the territorial sovereign of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Hastings felt that the Company should be quite free to determine all regulations governing trade.

On 5 September Dangereux called on John Macpherson, who since Hastings' departure had been the acting Governor General, and protested about the obstructions imposed by the Company's

\(^1\) Extract of the Governor General's minute of October 1784, *French in India*, vol.VI, pp.113-14.
agents on the import of salt into the country. While once more affirming the right of the East India Company to the exclusive importation of salt, Macpherson conceded the French permission to import 'two lacks of Maunds' annually. The provisional arrangements made to regulate the trade with the foreign companies were soon disowned by Dangereux, who claimed that these regulations were innovations 'which directly strike at that Treaty, which assures us Liberty and Independance (sic)'. He asserted that the French were never before required 'to give Manifests of their Ships' Cargoes at their Arrival' and that they 'never wanted Rowannahs to assist in bringing in...our Merchandise from the different Factories, nor to send them down the River'. Rather, the dustucks issued by the chief at Chandernagore had always been adequate as a security for their goods.

These conflicts came to a head over the issue of 'visiting and examining Foreign Ships as they pass the Fort of Budge Budge'. As we have seen, this particular issue first arose in the 1770's and was unresolved at the time of the capture of the French possessions. As ever, the French persisted in claiming that the navigation of the Hooghly was free and open to Chandernagore. In order, therefore, to avoid provoking any further

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1 Dangereux to Wilton, 13 September 1785, Bengal Foreign Branch, Foreign Proceedings, 27 September 1785.
embarrassing incidents the Bengal Council resolved on 27 September
that the officer at Budge Budge

be directed to permit the French Ship now below that
place to pass on without being searched or without
his insisting on the Privilege of searching her,
provided the Commander has reported her Name and given
even a verbal Account of the place from whence she
came and of her Cargo. ¹

The Council also appealed to the Court for clear instructions
in the matter.

On 20 November 1785 Lieutenant Exshaw, the officer in
charge of the station immediately below Budge Budge, ordered that
a French ship, the Auguste Victor, be fired on when she attempted
'to pass the Batteries' without having been searched. Exshaw and
the other officers believed that the ship was carrying contraband
salt and their suspicions seemed confirmed by the French commander's
refusal to allow a search party aboard and by his determination
not to provide an account of her cargo. Nevertheless, when
Vansittart, the comptroller of the Salt Department, searched the
ship on 22 November he could find no salt. ³ Dangereux, of course,
protested with great vehemence about these proceedings, but the

¹ Bengal Foreign Branch, Foreign Proceedings, 27 September 1785.
² Fort William Council to the Court of Directors, 25 October 1785,
³ Fort William Council (Foreign Department) to the Court, 9 January
Council continued unabashedly to claim as a right of government the power to search merchant vessels suspected of carrying forbidden goods.

Another incident similar to this occurred at Budge Budge on 4 December when the garrison fired on the corvette, the Esperance, after she failed to hove to. Again Dangereux remonstrated with the Calcutta authorities and renewed the French claims for 'a Free, Certain, & Independant (sic) Entrance of French Ships' into the Hooghly and the free import and export 'of all the Merchandize of Europe and of India'.

Since the return of the French possessions the agents of the two powers had found themselves constantly at loggerheads over conflicting views of the thirteenth article of the peace treaty. The situation was analogous to that which had confronted Chevalier in the 1760's and the 1770's and in his arguments Dangereux relied heavily on the bitter legacy of Anglo-French tensions in Bengal. Within the space of six months a stalemate had been reached. The Council's claim to search foreign ships was strenuously resisted by the French with the result that Macpherson and his Council were convinced that the Esperance affair had been deliberately engineered by the French to embarrass the British,

1 Fort William Council to the Court of Directors, 9 January 1786, Fort William - India House Correspondence, vol.XV, p.588.
if not to precipitate hostilities. It was at this time that Macpherson first heard of French moves in Cochin China and Ava, and of Dutch efforts to strengthen their hold over the Malacca Straits area.¹ He was also alarmed by the size of the combined French and Dutch fleets in the Eastern Seas and he strongly urged the British government to reinforce the East Indian squadron as soon as possible.² However, to assuage Dangereux he agreed on 24 December to replace the ship and 'defray any expenses that might have been occasioned by her Loss'.³

But the French agent had also refused to comply with the regulations established by the Government Customs House, claiming the right to send private merchants with dustucks wherever he chose. Furthermore, he denied the jurisdiction of the country courts over French nationals and the servants employed by the Compagnie. While the numbers of disputes and disagreements with the French were mounting, there seemed little hope of resolving these tensions on the spot. Dangereux's powers were limited and uncertain. Indeed, Cossigny, the recently appointed Governor at Pondicherry, denied the Bengal agent's authority to conclude a

¹ See chapter 6, pp. 279–91 for a more detailed treatment of these schemes and their effect on the Fort William Council.
² Macpherson to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors, 26 January 1786, French in India, vol. VI, pp. 25–6.
³ Bengal Foreign Branch, Foreign Proceedings, 24 December 1785.
provisional agreement and had disavowed those arrangements which he had earlier made with the Bengal Council for the conduct of the salt and saltpetre trade. On the instructions of de Souillac, Dangereux was now busy denouncing the Company's monopoly of the salt, saltpetre and opium trade.  

In order to settle these vexed questions, which had been the cause of great bitterness for so long, the Supreme Government at Fort William appointed Lieutenant Colonel Charles Cathcart in January 1786 to conclude a general agreement with the French Governor General at the Ile de France. Macpherson was careful to choose someone who was 'personally known' to the French Governor General, and 'highly esteemed' by him.  

His appointee had distinguished himself during the battle of Cuddalore, and was now a member of the House of Commons. The commission he received from the Council on 31 January 1786 empowered him to adjust with  

1 Souillac instructed Dangereux to demand a 'free, certain and independent exportation of Saltpetre from Patna to Chandernagore, and from Chandernagore to France', and 'the free, certain and independent, Importation of Salt from the Coast of Coromandel and Orixa not only at Chandernagore, but even to all the Factories on the Ganges, where we have a right to hoist the Flag of his Majesty, without our being limited, as to quantity, that ought only to depend on the manner in which we would employ it'. Evidently the salt monopoly and the searching of French ships were the two major obstacles to an Anglo-French agreement. (Foreign Department to Court, 9 January 1786, Fort William - India House Correspondence, vol.XV, p.588.)  

2 Macpherson to Souillac, 26 January 1786, French in India, vol.VI, p.59.
the French Governor General whatever differences had arisen 'relative to the interpretation and execution of the 13th article of the definitive Treaty'.

ii. THE CATHCART-SOUILLAC NEGOTIATIONS AND THEIR FATE

Before leaving Calcutta Cathcart received detailed instructions. First, he was required to inform the Governor General and the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors of the outcome of the negotiations immediately on their completion. He was also instructed to obviate the confusion which had arisen over the restitution of the French factories by inviting de Souillac to present 'a definitive and particular Demand of all the Establishments, whether Factories or Residencies, which he judges his Nation entitled to'. However, French jurisdiction was not to be extended indiscriminately throughout the provinces. Only in cases where the French held territory 'in Property' would their 'Factorial Rights' be recognised and respected. Cathcart was to agree to the French claim for an alternate site for the factory at Jugdea, and they were to be permitted a saluting battery at Chandernagore. Further, Cathcart was recommended to treat with sympathy the French request 'to establish Residencies for Commercial Agents in Places where none have hitherto been established', though

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any concessions made at the Mauritius would require the ratification of the Directors in London. For the time being the Fort William Council was prepared to grant these demands if they were insisted upon by the French, convinced as it was that 'Public Advantage is connected with the Extension of Foreign Commerce in Bengal'.

Anticipating that the French would remain satisfied with the latest regulations issued to the officers at Budge Budge 'with Respect to the Visiting and Searching French Ships entering the Ganges', the Council instructed Cathcart to insist that the 'Search in case of Information of Contrabands is conformable to the Custom and Law of all Nations, and cannot be dispensed with'. He was not to tolerate any relaxation of the duty of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent 'upon all Merchandize exported from Chandernagore, or upon Goods imported from the Provinces into it'; but as a compensation the French factories were to be given the right to issue their own dustucks and rowannahs. The Council was convinced that the chief difficulties in the negotiation would arise over the question of the Company's monopolies of salt, saltpetre and opium, and so it ordered Cathcart to maintain these 'on the Ground of ancient Custom'. The Council's obduracy in this matter resulted from its conviction that the revenue produced by these monopolies was essential for the Company's trade. Macpherson stressed that
nothing could induce the Council to give up its salt monopoly 'but the most positive Instructions from Europe, nor could these even be complied with, until New Arrangements were taken to replace the large proportion of Revenue that would expire with it'.

Finally, Cathcart was directed to explain the firing on the corvette as an accident and 'to disclaim in the fullest Manner any Intention on our Part of insulting the Flag of His Most Christian Majesty'.

These instructions were devised at a time when the Bengal Council believed that a commercial agreement was being arranged in Europe between the Company's Court of Directors and the new Compagnie des Indes under the aegis of the Comptroller-General of Finances, Calonne. The negotiations, initiated by certain French bankers and private merchants in London soon after the conclusion of the peace, had acquired a considerable momentum by 1785. As they progressed it became apparent that there was a conflict between Calonne and the Paris bankers on the one hand, who wanted to divorce the Compagnie from all political functions and establish an informal commercial 'entente' with the East India Company, and the other ministers led by the marquis de Castries on the other, who supported the idea of a monopolistic Compagnie

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which would conduct its own political and commercial dealings with the Indian states. Towards the end of 1785 Calonne came in on the side of Vergennes and de Castries, subscribing to the view that the subordination of the Compagnie to the East India Company would imply a recognition by the French government of British sovereignty in India and also render the French trade 'précaire, limité et soumis aux volontés de la Compagnie Anglaise'.

Hence the discussions in Europe fell through. Macpherson, however, was not to know of these transactions until much later and, unlike Hastings, he considered that a liberal accommodation with the French in India would encourage them to surrender any political ambitions they might still have harboured for the overthrow of British rule. He continued to believe that the interests of the two powers were not 'independent of, or incompatible (sic)' with each other. 'It is our Duty', he argued, 'in every Respect to encourage the Prosecution of a Commerce which is a tie upon the Military Ambition of France and which above all other Obligations promises Permanency to the Peace of India'.

Such a policy of liberalisation would eventually benefit the English trade because

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2 Bengal Foreign Branch, Foreign Proceedings, 9 March 1786.
of the overwhelming dependence of the French on the credit, shipping and insurance facilities of the East India Company.¹

Optimistically, Macpherson noted in a despatch that

all Nations were becoming more enlightened on the subject of Commerce and the more the Subject was examined the more it became understood that Freedom was the Life of Commerce, and that Monopolies were destructive to the very Interests which maintained them.²

Cathcart concluded the convention with Souillac at Port Louis on 30 April 1786 and before his departure for England despatched his secretary, Lieutenant Young, with a copy of the convention to Calcutta, where he arrived towards the end of June. Immediately he presented the Council with a lengthy report on the outcome of the negotiations. According to this memorandum the main benefits secured for the Company were the preservation of the 'Municipal Duties' and 'the usual General Duties in Bengal'; the maintenance of 'the Monopolies of Salt, Saltpetre and Opium'; and the French agreement to prohibit 'Salt, Arms and Military Stores' as contraband.³

The right of hailing and visiting 'French Ships of War'

1 Furber has examined the complex and multifarious interactions between the commercial operations of the two companies. In particular see pp.39-51. See also C. Northcote Parkinson, The Trade Winds: A Study of British Overseas Trade during the French Wars 1793-1815 (London, 1948).

2 Bengal Foreign Branch, Foreign Proceedings, 5 July 1786.

3 Bengal Foreign Branch, Foreign Proceedings, 5 July 1786.
and merchant vessels was relinquished by Cathcart with the proviso that this right could be exercised by the officer at Budge Budge if 'Information upon Oath' were given that a French ship was carrying contraband. As an indulgence the French were allowed to import 200,000 maunds of salt for purchase by the Bengal government at the price of 120 rupees per hundred maunds, and they were entitled to 18,000 maunds of saltpetre and 200 chests of opium annually at prices fixed before the American War. They were also permitted to issue dustucks though the passports were to state clearly the 'quantity and quality' of the goods and were to be accompanied by an invoice. Moreover, French jurisdiction was recognised over French nationals and their native servants throughout Bengal. Cathcart insisted that these provisions 'distinctly defined' the rights the French were to possess in their 'Factories and Houses of Commerce'. He continued,

the Protection of Natives pursued and claimed by Government on account of Crimes, Misdemeanours or Debts, is formally relinquished; and a Reference to the Country Courts of Justice is acquiesced in, in cases where Frenchmen are aggrieved by Natives;

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These Tribunals were never before formally acknowledged by the French in Bengal.¹

However, the Board of Control and the Court of Directors were to adopt a far less lenient view of these concessions when Cathcart arrived in London.

On learning of the vexed Esperance incident and the Fort William Council's intention to conclude a general convention at the Mauritius, the Board of Control made certain overtures, through the Foreign Minister, to the French court to discover its reactions to the disputes in India. From the tenor of Vergennes' answer the Board was assured 'that the disputes which have taken place in India, did not arise from any preconcerted plan or Instruction from Europe, to create difficulties in the execution of the Treaty'.² The Board was concerned lest the plenipotentiary appointed by the Supreme Government in India should 'by concessions...weaken any ground' that the British government intended to maintain in their imminent negotiations with the French Foreign Minister. The Board also criticised the Bengal Council for its acquiescence in the French demand for a replacement for their

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⁰Bengal Foreign Branch, Foreign Proceedings, 5 July 1786.
²Board to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors, 19 July 1786, French in India, vol.VI, p.71. After the passing of the India Act all despatches from the newly instituted Board of Control to the presidencies in India passed through the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors.
factory at Jugdea, and it insisted firmly and unequivocally that if 'the French or any other Europeans exercise any jurisdiction it must certainly be confined to the limits of their own Factories'. Although the Board was prepared to concede the French the right to travel 'in the Districts' and navigate the Hooghly, it stressed that these agents must 'be subject to the authority of the Courts of Justice established by the Subadar and Dewan of the Provinces'.

When at last the Court of Directors and the India Board received copies of the provisional convention in August 1786 they strongly disapproved of the settlement Cathcart had concluded, fearing that the Fort William Council had overstepped its authority in vesting him with such extensive powers. Their reactions, however, were somewhat muted because negotiations had begun with the French to conclude a commercial treaty. William Eden had taken charge of those discussions in April 1786, and during September he received instructions to take up with the French government the matter of the East Indian trade and the Cathcart-Souillac convention. He was told, nevertheless, 'wholly to disavow

1 Board to the Secret Committee, 19 July 1786, French in India, vol. VI, pp. 69-82.

2 For a recent and masterly treatment of the commercial negotiations which succeeded the peace of 1783 see J. Ehrman, The British Government and Commercial Negotiations with Europe 1783-1793 (Cambridge, 1962).
that Convention as unauthorized and improper', 1 while the Fort William Council was admonished for its presumption.

Although Eden was authorised to convey the British government's intention to grant France 'a liberal and fair participation of the Commerce of India', he was instructed to maintain 'against every attempt to encroach, the Government of our Indian Possessions exclusively in our own hands'. 2

Carmarthen, the Foreign Secretary, drew a distinction between the French interests in India, which were 'purely and simply commercial', and those of Britain, which because of 'her territorial rights' were also 'objects of political concern'. 3 To all those French claims based on ancient custom and right, Eden was to assert

that as we are partly by Treaty, and partly by Conquest, now in possession of the Government & Substantial Right of Sovereignty of the Provinces of Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa, together with our other Territories on the Coast of Coromandel and Malabar, the Rights so acquired by us, could not be fettered by antiquated Grants, whose authority we were under no obligation to acknowledge. 4

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1 Carmarthen to Harris, 7 September 1787, F.O. 37/18.
2 Draught of Instructions proposed to be sent to Mr. Eden, for negotiating upon the Provisional Articles concluded by Colonel Cathcart with the French Governor General at the Mauritius the 30th April 1786, Board's Drafts of Secret Despatches to Bengal, vol.I, (1786-88), p.74.
3 Carmarthen to Hailes, 4 August 1786, (Add.Mss. 34422, fl3). I am indebted to Professor G. C. Bolton for this reference.
The French could hardly be expected to accept these views particularly when the British contended that both the treaties of Paris and Versailles implicitly recognised the Company as the de facto sovereign of Bengal. Vergennes jested with the British plenipotentiary about the 'Species of Sovereignty' the Company exercised in India, 'whether delegated or de jure, or permissory, or merely possessory', but he assured Eden that the French would not be too 'punctilious' in defining the matter provided that their interests were promoted by the treaty.¹

By December 1786 Eden had received a great mass of material on Anglo-French commercial dealings in Bengal, including a copy of the provisional convention with a copious gloss on each of its provisions. The Board was inclined to adopt a much less conciliatory attitude to the French in India largely, it seems, because it feared a resurgence of French political ambitions. The Board was also of the opinion that, in spite of its good intentions, the Supreme Government at Calcutta had usurped powers which it did not legally possess in authorising such an agreement; Eden was informed that the Board knew 'of no Power which warrants the Government of Bengal to name Plenipotentiaries for negotiating or concluding Treaties with any European Powers, relative to the

Dissatisfied with the provisions governing the inspection of French ships, the Board instructed Eden not to recognise any distinctions between ships of war and merchant ships since the French were prevented 'by positive Treaty...from having any Military Force within the Provinces of Bengal'. The British plenipotentiary was to argue the proposition that

it is inherent in the Nature of Government, and the Rights to Duties, such as admittedly belong to us, to make Regulations to render the Collection of those Duties effectual; and therefore if the Government Customs are to be continued, or if the Importation of Salt, or any other Article is to be prohibited, there is no pretence on the part of the French Nation, to object to an examination of their Ships at a convenient place of the River.

A mémoire, presumably written by Dundas and located in the Melville Papers, reveals how determined was the chief member of

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On 20 September 1786 the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors wrote to the Governor General and Council at Fort William informing them that the Cathcart-Souillac agreement was invalid 'except as far as they (the articles) may be admitted into a New Treaty with the Court of France, by Negotiation in Europe'.

The Council was chided for its agreeing to replace the Esperance corvette, and compensate the family of the lost Indian servant. The Secret Committee could not conclude their letter without expressing their expectation that the Company's servants would be 'strictly careful in future not to commit yourselves by Treaties with European Powers, on subjects materially affecting the relative situation, and the Political rights, of the British and other Nations'. (Extract of letter from the Secret Committee to the Governor General and Council, 20 September 1786, French in India, vol.VI, p.251).
the Board in this matter of hailing and searching French ships. 'But for this and this, as far as the French are concerned, we must assume the Character of the Governing power - without it we shall be subject to proper Embarrassments and Inconsistencies'.

It also suggests how fervent a supporter the British government had become of the Company's rights in India.

Although the Board was satisfied with the articles in the convention relative to the import of salt and the export of saltpetre and opium, it was tenaciously opposed to the extension of French jurisdiction beyond 'those old established Factories' which the French possessed before the war. It was convinced that the establishment of a legal authority independent of the Company's would be 'irreconcilable to every idea of regular Government' and as an inducement to persuade the French to abjure their claims for a separate jurisdiction the Board was prepared to give up the government customs altogether. Evidently the Board feared that the newly established factories and outposts of the French might become 'an Asylum for those who may offend against the Laws and Authority of the Government', and that these outlaws would be protected by French law. Dundas considered that the 'Claim of the French to send Agents everywhere is hurtful to the peace of

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1 From a microfilm of the Melville Papers (Mss.1060) in the National Archives of India.
the Country, and Conduct of Government, and in the Event of a War
dangerous'. Therefore Eden was empowered only to recognise the
jurisdiction of the French courts 'in disputes between their own
European Subjects' and in cases 'arising within the limits of
their Factories'.

These negotiations, although protracted by Vergennes' death in February 1787, eventually resulted in the agreement signed by Eden and Montmorin on 31 August 1787. This treaty differed significantly from the earlier Cathcart-Souillac convention in that the contentious provisions concerning French legal and national rights were entirely omitted. In fact, Carmarthen avowed that

the whole Tenour of the present Convention amounts to
a stronger Acknowledgement than has ever before been
made of the Rights of this Country in India...It con-
cedes no Point by which Our Revenues in India can be
affected to any considerable Amount. It preserves
Intire the Jurisdiction of the Country (from which the
French formerly pretended to be exempted) in every
Instance...And in general it maintains all the Rights
incident to Sovereign Authority...3

1 From the Melville Papers (Mss.1060) in the National Library of Scotland. These extracts were taken from the microfilm in the National Archives of India. A further paragraph claimed that the 'Convention is dangerous Wrong originally & having been annulled by the French themselves we should resort to the State we were in before. No concession in any of the principal points should be allowed'.

2 The Convention between his Britannick Majesty and the Most Christian King, signed at Versailles on 31 August 1787, is included in Appendix C.

3 Carmarthen to Harris, 7 September 1787, F.O. 37/18.
By its terms the French tacitly recognised the British claim to search their ships whereas the British only accepted the exercise of French 'Civil or Criminal Jurisdiction over the persons, Native or European, resident within their Factories, and on account of transactions originating within their factories'. Elsewhere in Bengal the French were to be afforded 'the same Judicatures and the same rules' as applied to 'British Subjects in India'.

Hence the issues that had for so long soured relations between the English and the French in Bengal were resolved, though this was not the achievement of the officials and merchants in the East. Governments in Europe negotiated on behalf of their servants, and it is perhaps the willingness of the British ministry of the day to endorse and support the Company's new found power in India which is the most significant development revealed by the diplomatic manoeuvres. We have earlier noted the partnership between the Company and the ministry that first emerged in the turmoils of the American War. During the peace negotiations Shelburne expended much time and energy on reducing the extent of French demands in India and he naturally met with the approval and support of the Company. But in this, the latest set of

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1 Board of Control to Secret Committee of the Court of Directors, 2 November 1787, French in India, vol.VI, p.290.
negotiations, the Board of Control had energetically pressed demands which the Calcutta Council had been prepared to forgo. Anglo-French tensions were simmering once more in Europe and the East over the fate of the Dutch possessions so that Pitt and Dundas favoured a more cautious policy towards the French.¹ With the advantage of hindsight, it may seem that Macpherson's policy of conciliation was wiser and more enlightened and that the commercial treaty concluded by Eden heralded the dawn of a new age in Anglo-French relations. Even in this period, however, it was considered a wildly idiosyncratic development, and with the Dutch crisis and the French Revolution there was a return to the more usual condition of distrust and antipathy. Trade and politics could not be separated as easily as this, for Frenchmen and Englishmen alike were too strongly cast in the mould of the past.

The India Act had wedded the might and authority of a European state with the calculating acquisitiveness of a commercial enterprise. In spite of their constitutional aversion to 'schemes of conquest and extension of dominion', the ministry and the Board of Control were inexorably drawn into the maze of Indian politics. One way by which it was hoped to curb the expansionist policies of the Company and to assert the supremacy of the

¹See chapter 7, pp.324-33.
Imperial parliament over the mercenary concerns of its employees was to appoint as Governor General a man who combined the public views and morality of the political nation with a large experience of the colonies. Such a man was the second Earl Cornwallis, the scion of a Suffolk family established at Brome Hall in the fourteenth century. A loyal and trusted servant of George III, Cornwallis saw military service in the American colonies. In 1778 he was appointed second in command to Sir Henry Clinton, and during 1780 he was in charge of the British army in the southern states. On 19 October 1781, however, Cornwallis was forced to capitulate at Yorktown. In spite of this humiliating defeat, which to all intents and purposes ended the American War, he was still remarkably popular at home. Twice he was offered the Governor Generalship of India and twice he refused, but owing to the importunities of Pitt and Dundas he reluctantly accepted the position on 23 February 1786.

iii. CORNWALLIS AND THE FRENCH 1786-1793

Cornwallis, the first Governor General appointed under the terms of the India Act, arrived in the East in September 1786. Before leaving England he had been urged to promote a policy of

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financial retrenchment and administrative reform,¹ and to eschew expensive entanglements with the native powers. Vigilance, not expansion, was to be the hallmark of his administration. In matters of external policy he was instructed never to depart from 'one universal Principle...either in the present condition of the native Powers, or in any future revolutions amongst them,...that we are completely satisfied with the Possessions we already have, and will engage in no War for the purpose of further acquisitions'.² However, this proviso was qualified by succeeding instructions which enjoined the Governor General 'to unite our Indian Possessions by an acquisition of Cuttack, if any favorable moment should arise for obtaining it by Negotiation', and to 'keep a constant watch upon the conduct of all European rivals, particularly the French'. Because the French 'cannot possibly interfere in the disputes of any of the native Princes, without ultimately intending prejudice to us', the Board of Control insisted 'that if any one of them shall accept of European aid, we shall feel ourselves warranted to throw the aid of our force into the opposite scale'. Here again we detect the influence of the fear of the French in provoking the government to support intervention. Of course

² Board of Control to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors, 19 July 1786, Secret Despatches from the Secret Committee, Series A (1778-1786).
expansion was not willed or wanted, but it was necessary if French intrigue were to be countered. 'It ought to be inculcated in every transaction with them that the acceptance of any such aid can only be with the risk of having our whole Force immediately employed to crush the effects of it'.

Soon after his arrival the bluff Cornwallis, who was also Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in the East, presented a lengthy report on the present state of the French in Bengal. His attitude clearly differed from Macpherson's since he strongly believed that the political and commercial benefits given to the French by the liberalisation of trade were harmful to the Company's power and prestige. According to the new Governor General, it was evident

that a foreign Commerce, which is carried on, at our expense, supported by Funds supplied by British subjects, which tends to lessen the consumption of our native Manufactures, without increasing that of the Manufactures of this Country and which diminishes the profits of the Company upon the Sales of Indian Goods in Europe, must be essentially detrimental to the Company and to the State.¹

But Cornwallis had even graver misgivings about the Cathcart-Souillac convention and Macpherson's attempts to placate the French. He wrote home:

The French Nation has long seen with Jealous impatience, the extensive Power and Influence which we possess in this part of the World, and their attempts to subvert it, have been manifest in a variety of Secret Machinations, and unavowed Intrigues directed to the accomplishment of this object. At this time they have Agents at the Courts of several of the native Princes, a Measure which cannot promote any commercial Advantage, and they have a considerable Establishment of Troops in India. If Trade alone were their object, these political Intrigues and Military Establishments, must be deem'd unnecessary and productive of a heavy and useless Expence since the English have undertaken to secure to them the Safety, Freedom and Independency (sic) of their Commerce as far as they possessed it before. Their Views of Hostility may be remote, but the existence of them seems probable.

In any future conflict with the French in India Cornwallis felt certain that French trade would be ruthlessly exploited by the French government for military and political ends. He mentioned that even now their commercial privileges afforded them 'unsuspected opportunities of sending to India, ample Supplies of Troops and Military Stores and at the least expence to their Government', and he concluded with the reflection that whatever success the native Powers have obtained in War against the Company, must be principally attributed to Europeans, who have taught them their Discipline, served in their Armies, furnished them with Arms and Ammunition, and have by their information led them into the secrets of our Policy.

Consequently all foreign companies should be depressed and discouraged from extending their trade, or so ran the plain inference

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1 Cornwallis to Secret Committee, 16 November 1786.
of Cornwallis' argument.

At the basis of the Company's dealings with the French was the constitutional issue of its status in Bengal. Cornwallis appreciated the complexities of the situation: whereas sovereignty was vested in the East India Company, its servants still recognised the Moghul's vague suzerainty and continued to suffer the Naib Nazim with the criminal jurisdiction of the provinces. 'From this complicated System founded on Grants conferred, and Powers assumed, of Sovereignty exercised though not avowed, many difficulties arise in all negotiations with Foreign Nations, and must ever exist whilst the same system continues'. In spite of the lack of a formal acknowledgement by the French government of these powers, Cornwallis insisted that the Fort William Council should regulate the trade of the French in Bengal.

In the light of these views it is hardly surprising that the Governor General should have been so disparaging of the terms of the provisional convention. He asserted the Company's sole right to the manufacture of saltpetre, salt and opium in Bengal, while expressing his extreme disapproval of the legal rights extended to the French, which, in his view, would create an 'Imperium in Imperio'. By these terms 'the French are in fact admitted to a participation of the Sovereign Power of the Country, whilst the Government wherever it may exist, has not the means of
affording redress to its own Subjects, and Submits to the Indignity of sending them for Justice to a foreign Tribunal'. Cornwallis categorically denied the legality of such rights and used the arguments earlier propounded by Hastings and his Council in the 1770's. His peroration was dramatic and lucid.

When we consider the relative situation of ourselves and the French in this Country, there appears a manifest inconsistency in admitting the free and unrestricted operation of these suspected Firmauns. By a series of fortunate Events and successful struggles we now in reality possess the Sovereignty of the Country. In this Capacity we must either frame Regulations for the Government and Commerce of it, or suffer it to degenerate into Anarchy and confusion... nor is it reasonable to expect that we should admit the operation of claims founded on an authority doubtful in itself and which has long ceased to exist, to the subversion of our own Rights and Privileges (sic) acquired and maintained at an immense Expence.1

Perhaps it was because the veteran general had fought the 'perfidious' French in two global wars, in Germany during the Seven Years' War and later in North America, or perhaps it was because the mind of the marquess was attuned to the imperial policies of Pitt and Dundas, but for whatever the reason Cornwallis soundly distrusted the French in Bengal and throughout the East. Trade could be their only legitimate end, and the Governor General was anxiously concerned to so hedge round their commercial privileges that they would never again embarrass British power in

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1 Cornwallis to the Secret Committee, 16 November 1786.
this part of the world. Although Macpherson's policy of gratuitous concessions was probably based on a more realistic appraisal of French power in the region, it was quite unacceptable to a ministry intent on driving a hard bargain with the French. Cornwallis' proposal, to allow a foreign jurisdiction only within the tiny French enclave of Chandernagore, was acceptable to the Company and the government. For over a century the Portuguese, the Dutch and the French had occupied small pockets of Indian territory both by right and by grace, and the British were now prepared to tolerate the fiction of a Portuguese or French India provided that these miniature colonies did not interfere with their own colossal activities as empire-builders.

At first, however, the Governor General endorsed the action of the Council in challenging the right of the French to hoist their national flag at Malda, Chittagong 'and places where it is not proved that the French did rightfully hoist a Flag before the late War'.\(^1\) The Council thought it necessary to resolve that the Flag of his most Christian Majesty should be hoisted only at the five original Factories belonging to the French, at Chandernagore, Dacca, Patna, Cossimbazar, and Ballasore, and at that Factory which they have been permitted to Establish in lieu of Jugdea.\(^2\)

\(^1\) Bengal Foreign Branch. Foreign Proceedings, 12 July 1786.

\(^2\) Fort William Council to the Court of Directors, 11 November 1786, *Fort William - India House Correspondence*, vol.XV, p.762ff.
and with this decision Cornwallis naturally concurred. Dangereux vigorously contested these assertions throughout 1786 and 1787 until Cornwallis informed him in May 1787 that the Council was no longer bound to abide by the Cathcart-Souillac agreement. At Malda a bitter quarrel ensued between Charles Grant and the French agent who purchased from the weavers there large quantities of cloth already commissioned and purchased by the Company. In July 1787 the Council promulgated the 'Regulations for Weavers', which made any person who clandestinely bought cloth already commissioned by the Company liable to prosecution. This was a clear assertion of the primacy of the Company's rights over those of the French and private merchants.

In November 1787 Dangereux was relieved of his duties and the Sieur Mottet arrived as the new chief at Chandernagore. His administration was marked by occasional wrangles with the Calcutta Council over the matter of the inspection of French ships and French inland jurisdiction. Mottet was succeeded by Montigny, an able diplomat recently stationed at the court of the Peshwa, early in 1789.

In his zeal to reform the wasteful administration of the

1 Bengal Foreign Branch, Foreign Proceedings, 9 May 1787.
2 Bengal Foreign Branch, Foreign Proceedings, 27 July 1787. For further details about this dispute see A.T. Embree, Charles Grant and British Rule in India (London, 1962), pp.80-2.
Chandernagore Council, Montigny succeeded in alienating the support of most of the senior French officials. As the protégé of the Comte de Conway, Governor at Pondicherry and after 1789 Governor General at the Ile de France, Montigny was also associated with the privileged and aristocratic ancien régime. Consequently when the glorious news of the outbreak of revolution reached Bengal in February 1790, the Governor's authority was generally resisted, another vivid demonstration of the problem of control in the far-flung outposts of empire. For a season Montigny attempted to work with the newly constituted General Assembly, but on 13 May he fled to the Dutch settlement at Chinsurah. Throughout the next few months Montigny feverishly intrigued with Cornwallis in the hope of re-establishing his power at Chandernagore. In September, however, Conway dismissed him and Montigny gave himself up to the revolutionaries. In all likelihood he was preserved from an unsavoury end by the intervention of Cornwallis, who was naturally more sympathetic to the old order.¹ The diarist, William Hickey, has amusingly described these events.

The French revolutionary mania extended its baneful influence even to the banks of the Ganges. A set of vagabond scoundrels, consisting principally of cooks, hair-dressers, and fellows who had been menial servants, headed and encouraged by a man of extraordinary talents whose name was Richemont, who filled the

¹ See Sen, The French in India, pp.455-64.
The revolutionary situation continued through 1791 and 1792, for the inhabitants of Chandernagore refused to subject themselves to any of the recognised authorities. Missions were sent from Pondicherry and Port Louis, but even they failed to pacify the intractable citizens. During this time Cornwallis and his government adopted a stance of strict neutrality in their dealings with the French, even though they must have been secretly pleased at the divisions in the enemy's ranks. Cornwallis, in fact, left Calcutta late in 1790 to take command of the British troops in the South against Tipu Sultan and he did not return to the Bengal Presidency until after the conclusion of a treaty with the ruler of Mysore in February 1792. Finally, on 11 June 1793

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2 For a further glance at these events in the South see chapter 5, pp. 240-3.
Chandernagore was taken by the British after they had received news of the outbreak of hostilities in Europe.

Thus after 1793 the French were eliminated from Bengal, but this is not to say that the French threat disappeared altogether from the region. The entertaining Hickey could still recall that

after the return of Commodore Mitchell's squadron to Bengal (in 1796), the French privateers renewed their depredations against our trade, doing much mischief. So daring and impudent were they, that a dirty little pariah sloop with only three small guns came to the mouth of the river Hooghley, there capturing two of the Company's pilot schooners which had considered themselves out of all danger.¹

It is perhaps worth remembering that the French retained control of their Indian Ocean bases until 1810.

In the thirty years between the conclusion of the Peace of Paris and the renewal of hostilities in 1793 British power and influence in Bengal grew both in extent of territory and splendour. Calcutta had become the metropolis of British India, a magnificent city of Georgian palaces surrounded by a rich and verdant landscape. The docks which extended along the Hooghly below the new fortifications bustled with activity, while on some days the river seemed crammed with sail. But this enormous expansion of trade and political influence had been consistently challenged by

the French merchants and officials at Chandernagore and the lesser comptoirs, who remained at least a serious commercial threat to the profits of the Company Bahadur. Their commercial and political activities were strenuously controlled by the Fort William Council, not a little suspicious of the vaulting ambitions of their national rivals. And although it would be too much to claim that the French posed a serious military threat to the Company's control of Bengal after the various reforms of Hastings and Cornwallis, it would be equally foolish to under-rate the nuisance value of the French in other areas indirectly under the control of the Fort William Government. The subordinate presidencies of Madras and Bombay as well as the new settlement at Penang were now explicitly subject to Bengal in all matters of war, revenue and diplomacy, and the need to assist and defend these lesser governments against the machinations of the French or their native allies would be a sufficient motive to entangle the Supreme Government in further Indian adventures. Paradoxically, just when the local French threat was removed from Bengal, the Fort William Government was required to take up the struggle elsewhere.
CHAPTER 5: ANGLO-FRENCH RIVALRY IN SOUTH INDIA 1765-1793

As we have already seen, the French were restored in 1765 all the settlements and factories that they held in India before the outbreak of the Seven Years' War. These comprised, of course, Pondicherry, the capital of the French establishments in India and their principal settlement on the Coromandel coast, Chandernagore, situated some twenty miles north of Calcutta, Mahé with smaller subordinate factories at Calicut and Surat on the western coast, Karikal in Tanjore, together with the comptoirs at Yanam and Masulipatam, ports of the Northern Circars. After the return of the French, disputes and disagreements between the two companies flourished, especially in Bengal and the Carnatic, for such commercial rivalry was largely unavoidable. Chandernagore and Pondicherry were situated in close proximity to the two most important presidencies of the East India Company, Fort William and Fort St George. Indeed, such was the degree of animosity between the English and the French that French officials seriously considered establishing their Indian capital on the Malabar coast,

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1 Pondicherry is situated 104 miles from Madras by road, Chandernagore 21 miles from Calcutta.
away from the ubiquitous and intimidating British influence in southern India.

But while the day-to-day relations between the English and the French were concerned with matters of trade, the sparring for profits and commercial advantage, the English were unable and unwilling to forget that the French had earlier been their major political rivals in the Carnatic and Bengal, and might well be so again. Our examination of the Chandernagore incident has revealed that the French were still feared as a grave military threat to the newly-won dominance of the British in Bengal. In order to better appreciate the local nature and significance of this French threat and its effect on British policy, there is need to examine the pattern of Anglo-French relations in the South, particularly in the Carnatic. While there are obvious similarities between rivalry in the South and in Bengal, there are also impressive differences. In both cases the final outcome was determined by military strength and diplomatic influence, but in the South the resources of the two contenders were more even. Like the French, the British had no basis of territorial power or revenue there, and they were confronted with a much more complex military situation than their contemporaries faced in Bengal. Although the Pondicherry garrison never amounted to more than
2,000 troops, the highly unstable political situation in the South afforded French mercenary-agents with many more opportunities for intrigue and expansion.

Apart from the considerable nuisance value provided by these condottieri, we have already noticed that the councils in India were often alarmed at the prospect of an invasion from the French Islands in the Indian Ocean. In the eyes of the English the Ile de France and the Ile de Bourbon were being used by the French 'as Seminaries for keeping, training and inuring to the Climate, a number of men from whence they may easily be transported to India'. Because of the secrecy of such operations, the English tended to overrate the strength of the French at these islands. Nonetheless, it was this very element of surprise and terror which heightened the suspicions of the Madras Council, whose roadstead lay exposed and vulnerable to enemy raids. And even when the French were deprived of their bases on the subcontinent, as in 1778 and in 1793, control of these islands still enabled them to wage a highly successful filibustering campaign against British merchantmen in war time.

1 Usually the garrison was composed of 4-500 European troops of the Regiment of Pondicherry and 400 sepoys, but the exigencies of a war with England forced Bellecombe, the Governor, to increase the number of European troops to 988 and the sepoys to 1,153 in July 1778, Sen, The French in India, pp.73-5.

2 Despatch to the Court of Directors, 14 October 1765, Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.99, p.282.
Since, therefore, this chapter will be focussed on the influence which the fear of the French exerted on the policies of the Madras Council during the last thirty years of the eighteenth century, of necessity it will be concerned with the administrative difficulties of the southern presidency. Throughout this period numerous attempts were made by both the ministry and the Court of Directors in London, and the Bengal Presidency in India, to bring the policies of the Madras Council under some sort of control. In the light of this development, were the policies of the Madras Council a matter of unco-ordinated and pragmatic responses to local situations as they cropped up, or were they affected by wider Indian and European considerations? How did the relationship between the Madras Council, the Bengal Presidency and the metropolitan authorities evolve during this period? And what effect, if any, did these administrative changes have on the perception and significance of the French threat in the Carnatic, Mysore and the Deccan?

1. THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE SOUTH AND THE FIRST MYSORE WAR 1765-1772

At first glance the situation of the English and the French in South India was least changed by the Peace of Paris, which attempted to turn the clock back to conditions as they had been in 1749 before the upheaval of the Carnatic wars. Renouncing
all the conquests they had earlier made in the Carnatic and the Northern Circars, the French government agreed to recognise Mohammad Ali as the Nawab of the Carnatic or Arcot and Salabat Jang as the Nizam of the Deccan (or Hyderabad).¹ Jean Law de Lauriston, recently appointed Governor of the French settlements in India, returned to the oppressive, tropical heat of the Coromandel early in 1765 and was placed in possession of the former French capital in April. In spite of the provisions of the peace treaty, great changes had intervened in the last four years and de Lauriston was compelled to recognise that the halycon days of Dupleix and Bussy were now gone for ever.

All of the fortifications and many of the public buildings and private homes of the once opulent Pondicherry had been razed by the English during their occupation of the city. Hence the most pressing task before the new governor was the re-building of the capital with its defences, and the re-establishment of a measure of French influence in the flat, lush green countryside extending around the settlement. This latter objective would be a particularly difficult one to achieve since the Nawab was firmly aligned with the Madras Government. In fact, it was not until 1768 that de Lauriston felt his position secure enough to

¹ By this time, however, Salabat Jang had been deposed and murdered by his brother, Nizam Ali. The Cambridge History of India, vol.V, p.274.
embark on independent policies of his own, and by this time the Madras Council with their roi fainéant, the Nawab of Arcot, had alienated most of the important Indian states in the area.

The Madras Council, unlike their colleagues on the Bengal Council, did not attempt to establish a direct political control over their client state in the South, the Carnatic. After the victory over Lally's forces at Wandewash in January 1760 and the capture of Pondicherry one year later, the Company turned most of its attention to the wealthier and more fertile province of Bengal. Here, in the north-east, the battles of Plassey and Buxar, along with the acquisition of the diwani, established the Company as the paramount power and revenue collector of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. And in its ungodly haste to extract the maximum returns from this new arrangement the Bengal Council embroiled itself further and further in the administration and foreign policy of Bengal. The Carnatic, by contrast, remained of only secondary importance to the Company after 1765 because its revenues were not a sufficiently enticing proposition to induce the Madras Council into assuming the hazardous role of revenue collector. Moreover, the Nawab himself was never the positive inconvenience to the Madras Council that his contemporary, Mir Kasim, proved to be in Bengal. He was certainly capable of duplicity and deviousness in the promotion of his own private interests, but he rarely
opposed the Council in a headstrong manner. Consequently the revenue and judicial administration remained in his hands and the hands of his successor until the turn of the century. Such was his reward.

In other ways, too, he soon became indispensable to many of the Madras Councillors. The Company's servants discovered that they could make a comfortable living by lending him large sums of money at the customary high rates of interest.

At Madras, the Company's servants had early discovered how to turn the military necessities of Indian princes to their own advantage. Usurious interest was an established feature of Indian economic life. Nothing was simpler than to provide European military equipment at prices which Indian rulers could not pay, thereby establishing debts which were seldom, if ever, liquidated.1

It was an ironical fact, then, that the Nawab's borrowing, which increased substantially throughout his reign, assured him of a greater degree of independence and control than his wealthier counterparts possessed in the North. Since most of his creditors were represented on the Council, the Nawab was enabled thereby to exert a real measure of influence over the foreign policies of the southern presidency 'and was sure of a following even when the Company or the governor was positively opposed to his designs'. 2

1 Furber, John Company at Work, p.21.
As far as he was able to, the Nawab tried to promote his own schemes during the next quarter of the century, but this outside influence was only one of several pressures that contributed to great confusion in the dealings of the Council with its neighbouring Indian states. The constitution of the Madras Presidency had altered little since the early eighteenth century and it was scarcely an efficient or reliable instrument for deciding on a consistent set of policies. In size, the Madras Council varied from ten to sixteen members, while nothing could be determined except by a majority of votes. Any member could move a resolution but the Governor had no powers to override his Council. He was truly *primus inter pares*. Factious, divided and cumbersome, the Madras Council provided an excellent field of opportunity for private adventurers wanting to feather their own nests. And the French, together with the other enemies of the Company, did not fail to exploit these many weaknesses of government.

Furthermore, the Council's traditional autonomy was being eroded by other pressures, this process being especially noticeable in time of war. The Council became increasingly dependent on financial remittances and military aid from Bengal,

the new and dynamic centre of the Company's power in India and the East. Such assistance enabled the Madras Council to sustain its various wars against Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, since it was during the 1760's that the formidable and expansionist power of Mysore emerged to threaten the southern settlements of the English and the French. In 1773 the Bengal Council's supervisory powers over the lesser presidencies were strengthened by the Regulating Act, as has already been noted, though the ambiguous and largely ineffective provisions of the Act were constantly disputed by the rival government at Madras.

Finally, it was during this period that the British ministry itself attempted to intervene in the affairs of the Madras Council. John Macpherson's mission to London in 1767 as the agent of the Nawab was the first of several efforts made by the Nawab's powerful creditors to influence the policy of the Imperial parliament. 1 Almost simultaneously, the ministry sent a special plenipotentiary to India with powers to deal with the native powers, but such early efforts at metropolitan control were

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1 Macpherson, who was employed by the Nawab as an agent to the Court of St James in 1767, appears to have exerted pressure on Viscount Weymouth to have Sir John Lindsay's powers extended to include relations between the Nawab and the Madras Council. See 'A Short Memorial of Services rendered to his Highness the Nabab of the Carnatick, Waulaujah etc. etc., by John Macpherson whom he sent upon a Secret Commission to His Majesty's first Minister of State in 1767', Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.110, pp.503-11. Also p.215 below.
inept and uncertain. Owing to all these diverse and conflicting pressures the Council found it impossible to pursue a coherent policy at a time when it was particularly necessary to do so.

The territories of the Nawab of the Carnatic extended in a narrow belt along the coastal plain of the Coromandel, encircling the possessions of both the English and the French. Accordingly, the Carnatic was vulnerable to attack from one or a coalition of the three large powers to the west and north-west - Mysore, the Maratha Confederacy and Hyderabad. With the slow disintegration of Moghul power in central India during the early eighteenth century, the Marathas had emerged as the likeliest successors to the great Moghul emperors until the disastrous defeat inflicted on them by the Afghans at Panipat in 1761.\(^1\) Henceforth an uneasy equilibrium was established between the Confederacy and the other competing powers, now augmented by a bellicose Mysore and a quarrelsome government at Madras intent on a policy of 'divide and rule'.

Mohammad Ali, resentful of the ability and pretensions of the upstart ruler of Mysore, sought to poison relations between the Madras Council and Mysore. Technically the Nawab of the

\(^1\) For a recent account of the vicissitudes of these Indian states in the eighteenth century see Chapter XXIII, 'Rivalries in India' by C.C. Davies, in The New Cambridge Modern History (vol. VII, Cambridge, 1963), pp. 541-65.
Carnatic was also a feudatory of Hyderabad, the large kingdom in the Deccan which had grown powerful and independent of the Moghuls under Nizam-ul-Mulk, although Clive had secured the Nawab's release from these obligations in a firman from Shah Alam in 1765. The present ruler of Hyderabad, Nizam Ali, who was in the eyes of the English as unscrupulous as the Nawab of the Carnatic, fomented divisions between the other powers and the Madras authorities, hoping thereby to profit from any protracted territorial conflict. In such a situation war was clearly unavoidable.

Yet the Madras Council was drawn into the First Mysore War to secure and preserve the territories of the Nawab, and not to extend them. Initially the French threat had relatively little impact on the Council's policies, although Basalat Jang, the brother of the Nizam and the ruler of the Guntur Circar, had a number of French officers in his service who were willing to come to the Nizam's defence. For the most part, however, the French remained passive spectators of this conflict despite their efforts to act as intermediaries in the latter stages of the war. The strength of the French at the Islands also remained an unknown

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1 See the letter from Madras, 23 July 1769, in French in India, vol. IV, for the British allegations about French complicity in Hyder's schemes. There are numerous references to the war in de Lauriston's correspondence, Françaises Nouvelles Acquisitions, vol. 9365.
factor and caused the Council alarm at critical phases of the campaign.

The origins of the first war against Hyder Ali are to be discovered in the various attempts made by the Madras Council on behalf of their protégé, the Nawab of the Carnatic, to gain control over the Northern Circars, strategically situated between the Company's territories in Bengal and the southern presidency. In 1765 Clive acquired from Shah Alam II a firman conferring on the Company possession of these Circars, which the Nizam had earlier ceded to de Bussy at the height of French influence in the Deccan. At first Nizam Ali resisted any change involving his territories, but in a treaty concluded with John Caillaud on 12 November 1766 he agreed to give the Company five of the Circars in return for an annual rent of nine lakhs. The Madras Council also pledged itself to provide the Nizam with troops if ever he should need them, the tribute being remitted every year he might call on such assistance. To propitiate the Nizam, the Council also agreed to leave Basalat Jang in possession of the Guntur Circar. In spite of these polite formalities there seems little doubt that the Nizam, envious of his parvenu cousin of Mysore, planned to use this offensive and defensive alliance against Hyder Ali.

Hyder Ali, after extending his influence westwards to the
the Malabar coast, hoped to expand northwards, but his efforts in this direction were blocked by the Nizam and the Marathas, who had recently joined the Nizam's coalition. The Madras Council quite reasonably suspected the intrigues of the Nizam and so as to dissuade the Indian states from attacking the Carnatic the Council resolved to throw their weight behind Nizam Ali. Thus the decision to send Colonel Joseph Smith with a detachment to Hyderabad was intended to prevent the formation of an alliance dominated by Mysore and directed against the Nawab of Arcot's domains. But there is also evidence to suggest that the Nawab and the Council were seeking - rather prematurely perhaps - to establish a preponderant influence over the politics of the South and the Deccan by waging a victorious war against Mysore and the Marathas. The Board's reasoning on 16 November 1767 was that

...the grand point we ought to aim at is to have the Carnatic, Mysore country and the Deccan so much under our influence that no disputes or jealousies may arise between the several governing powers, and that we may be able by this system to lay the foundation of internal tranquility in these countries by which means alone the Marathas can be kept in bounds.¹

In fact, it was this need to ensure stability on the frontiers of their existing possessions and their client states that was increasingly to determine the British response to the complex and changing pattern of Indian alliances.

¹ Quoted in Sheik Ali, British Relations with Haidar Ali, pp.95-6.
Nevertheless, the Council was also concerned about the possibilities which a successful and expansionist Mysore would provide for French political ambitions in the region. They informed the Court of Directors on 21 September 1767 that the reduction of Hyder Ali was

the only means of giving Peace to the Carnatic and Stability to the Company's Possessions, for it is not only his troublesome disposition and ambitious Views now that we have to apprehend, but that he may at a favorable (sic) opportunity or in some future War, take the French by the hand to re-establish their Affairs, which cannot fail being productive of the worst of Consequences for your possessions on this Coast, he has money to pay them, and they can spare and assemble Troops at the Island and it is reported that he has already made proposals for dispatches to the French King or Company in Europe.¹

The Maratha forces were first to engage Hyder Ali in battle, but after some minor skirmishes they concluded a peace with Mysore. In April 1767, the Nizam, assisted by Colonel Smith and the Company's forces, invaded Mysore, advancing within sight of Bangalore. However, the Nizam then proceeded to defect to the side of Hyder Ali. The ensuing conflict between the Madras Council and Mysore was a protracted and indecisive affair and while Smith won some impressive victories he was unable to consolidate them because of a defective commissariat, the major

¹ Extract of the letter from President and Council of Fort St George to the Court of Directors, 21 September 1767, Home Miscellaneous Series, vol. 99, p. 34.
obstacle in waging war in the hill country of the South. And so
the war continued desultorily enough until December 1768, when
Hyder's force entered the fertile, low plain of the Carnatic
'burning and destroying the Face of the whole Country, and
plundering and murthering the Inhabitants'.¹ The fear of a French
invasion now reached serious dimensions, for throughout 1768 the
Council had received reports of a massing of French forces at the
Mauritius. 'We have lately learned by Private Advices', they
wrote,

that the French are now actually collecting a Body of
Troops at the Islands, which it is said to consist of
30 Companies of 100 Men each,...This Force it is
imagined is to be kept in readiness to proceed to
India, on the first News of a Rupture, and there is
little reason to doubt but that they will immediately
attach themselves to some of the Country Powers and
none can more favor (sic) their Purpose than Hyder Ally,
who, from his Situation Riches and former Connection
is best able, and in all appearance well inclined to
afford their Assistance.²

Such fears seemed further corroborated by the news that 'the
Islands were taken Possession of by the French King in June 1767'
and that 'the Ships from Europe brought about 300 regular Troops,...
and 'twas common talk, they wou'd this season be reinforced to
complet the number of 3,000'.³ Evidently the French threat was

¹ Letter from Madras, 23 July 1769, *French in India*, vol. IV.
² Extract from Company's Separate General Letter from the President
and Council at Fort St George dated 11 May 1768, *Home Miscellaneous
Series*, vol. 99, p. 194.
³ Account of the State of the French Islands of Bourbon and France
received from Captain Steward of the *Neptune*, 1768, *Home Miscellaneous
not simply a product of the turbulent circumstances of Indian politics; as we have already noted, the threat posed by the French in the late 1760's was also derived from their naval and military strength at the Islands and the belligerence of Choiseul's diplomacy in Europe.

In March 1769 Hyder Ali appeared on the outskirts of Madras and proceeded to dictate terms to the Council. As a last desperate measure the Council concluded a defensive alliance with him in April 1769.

When news reached London of Hyder Ali's devastation of the Carnatic and the growing concentration of French forces at the Islands in May 1769, the East India Company found itself in dire financial straits. Its 'stock promptly fell from 273 to 250 and by the middle of June was down to 239'. Alarmed by the lamentable state of the war, the Court of Directors decided to appoint a commission with all the powers and authority of the Court to investigate the Company's affairs in India. The three commissioners, Henry Vansittart, Luke Scrafton and Francis Forde, were empowered to 'Superintend direct controul conduct manage and Transact All the Business and Affairs' of the Company 'in and thro' all parts of India', including, of course, relations between

the individual presidencies and the Indian states. It is clear from the detailed instructions that they received from the Court that some satisfactory settlement of the war with Hyder Ali, together with the prevention of a war with France, were major considerations behind the appointment of a commission. If the war were still in progress when they reached Madras, they were to ensure that an attack was launched against Hyder's capital. Otherwise they were instructed to restore peace in India 'upon a solid and permanent Basis' and were to inform the Indian powers that it is by no means the Intention of the Company, to encroach upon their Neighbours, or to acquire an extension of Dominion by Conquest; and that it is their determined Resolution, always to adhere to, and keep inviolable, the Faith of Treaties, and to confine their views to the Revenues of Bengal and their present Possessions.

In other words, the commissioners were expected to curb the acquisitive and unruly instincts of the Madras 'nabobs', who were supposed only to be interested in shaking the pagoda tree, and impose order on the foreign policy of that recalcitrant presidency. These instructions expressed a spirit of cautious withdrawal from the embarrassing and expensive entanglements of Indian alliances and wars, and as far as the Court was concerned the only legitimate objectives of the Madras Council were 'the Protection

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1 The three commissioners were appointed on 14 June 1769. A copy of the amended commission, which they received from the Court of Directors on 28 July 1769, is to be found in Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.100, pp.347-53.
of the Carnatic, and the possession of the Circars, free from all Engagements', and the support of 'the Subah of the Deccan, ... even without the Circars, preserving only Interest enough over any Country Power, who may hold them, to keep the French from settling in them'.

Furthermore, the notorious scandal of the Nawab of Arcot's debts was to be investigated by the commissioners, who were told 'for the future to prevent all Abuses and injustice in Transactions of this Sort'. Finally, they were to assess the French forces in the East and speedily transmit home full and accurate accounts of the strength and disposition of French forces at the Islands and in India. After putting into the Cape, however, the three commissioners, who sailed in October 1769, were lost at sea.

As Lucy S. Sutherland has shown in her study of the East India Company in British politics, the background to this commission was somewhat confused by the desire of the Chatham Ministry to intervene directly in the Company's affairs in India. The need for some form of parliamentary supervision had been felt since

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1 The detailed instructions from the Court are in Home Miscellaneous Series, vol. 100, pp. 399-433. The despatch continues: 'If we pass these bounds we shall be led on from one Acquisition to another 'till we shall find no security, but in the subjection of the whole, which by dividing your Force, might lose us the whole, and end in our extirpation from Hindostan'. (p. 403).
Clive's acquisition of the diwani, but the opportunity for further intervention was now afforded by the Company's desire for greater naval assistance. ¹ When on 17 March 1769 the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Court of Directors requested from the government further naval support in the East, they instanced the extent of piracy in the Persian Gulf and the military preparations of the French at Mauritius as evidence of the menace to the Company's possessions. From the numerous and various reports they received from their servants they were led to believe that the French intended 'to strike some important Blow in India', and the fear which transcended everything else was the conjunction of a French naval attack with a full-scale war against the country powers. ² Their appeals were renewed on 25 May and 9 June. 'Yet, My Lord, it is our Duty to declare, that We feel Ourselves at all Times in danger from the French, who must behold with an Eye of Jealousy & Mortification the general Situation of our Affairs in India'. ³

¹ Believing that the Company had derived enormous wealth from the Bengal revenues, the state indirectly intervened in the Company's business in the hope of securing relief for its increased financial liabilities. In 1767 the Company agreed to give the state annually the sum of £400,000 in return for the continuation of its charter until January 1769 when a similar arrangement assured the Company of an independent existence for a further five years. See Sutherland, The East India Company, chapter VII, and Harlow, The Founding of the Second British Empire, vol.II, pp.41-68.

² Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the East India Company to Lord Weymouth, 17 March 1769, C.O. 77/21.

³ Chairman and Deputy Chairman to Weymouth, 25 May 1769, C.O. 77/21.
Lord Weymouth, the Secretary of State for the Southern Department and a man generally distrustful of the Company's foreign policy, hoped to exploit the Company's fears in order to establish the Crown's ascendancy over the Company in the delicate matters of foreign policy and relations with the Indian states.¹ His distrust of the Company's agents was strengthened by the French ambassador's submission of a mémoire in June 1769 which complained of British oppression in Bengal.² It urged the Ministry to intervene in the affairs of the merchants and ensure that justice would be done to the French in India. By July Weymouth was ready to appoint Sir John Lindsay as the Commander in Chief of the naval forces in the East, but he insisted that the Company recognise and endorse those powers which the Crown claimed for Lindsay. Weymouth's ploy, therefore, was to get Lindsay appointed

¹ As we have already seen, in another context, there was a tradition of distrust between the Crown and the Company's officials. Shelburne had strongly disapproved of the concessions which the Bengal Council had given to the French at Chandernagore. In November 1768, Weymouth disapproved of the Company's dilatoriness in informing him of their decision to establish an entrepôt at Balambangan. (See chapter 6, pp.260-5). The Secretary of State was concerned lest their support for Dalrymple's scheme might involve the British government in disputes with the Spanish.

Later, in July 1769, Weymouth requested the Court of Directors to provide him with all the information it had received concerning the French. He suspected that it had been concealing intelligence from him.

² The mémoire, dated 8 June 1769, was received from Chatelet in London on 16 June 1769. The French complained of great difficulties in collecting the cloths from the districts, of attacks against their settlement, particularly Patna, and of the Calcutta Council's obstructions to the building of a ditch around Chandernagore. S.P. 78/278, pp.153-62.
as one of the reforming commissioners but when this failed he required that Lindsay be given powers to treat with Hyder Ali, the Marathas and other Indian maritime states, provided that such powers did 'not interfere with the Commission;...or with the Governors and Councils of the Four Presidencies, if the Commission does not take Effect'.  

In spite of Weymouth's dogged persistence, however, the Company was only prepared to concede Lindsay a commission to treat with the Indian powers in the Persian Gulf and enjoined 'that his Character as their Plenipotentiary must cease after he has finished the Object of his Business in the Persian Gulph'.  

The Directors categorically refused to invest Lindsay with ministerial powers even if these powers still left him subject to their servants in India. Weymouth countered their arguments with the assertion that the King could not in 'Dignity and Justice....trust the Execution of his Engagements with other Crowned Heads in any Hands but his own', a reference doubtless to relations with the French and the Spaniards in the East. Moreover, he claimed that, since the King had acknowledged 'the Legal Title of certain Princes in India to their respective Dominions', diplomatic relations with the Nawab of Arcot and the other states

1 R. Wood to Secret Committee, 11 July 1769, C.O. 77/21.
2 R. Wood to Chairman and Deputy Chairman, 26 July 1769, C.O. 77/21.
3 Weymouth to the Court, 15 August 1769, Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.100, p.487.
were really within the prerogative of the Crown. The Secretary of State firmly insisted that the admiral share in the deliberations and resolutions of the Council 'with regard to the two Objects of Peace and War, where His Majesty's Forces are employed'. But the East India Company and especially its servants in the East proved almost as stubborn in their defence of chartered and 'constitutional' liberties as the American colonists were proving to be.

These issues remained unsettled. Consequently Lindsay took with him public instructions from the Company and the Crown, and private ones from Weymouth. It is hardly surprising that there were substantial discrepancies between these private instructions and those approved by the Company. The Company's commission, issued on 5 August, limited his diplomatic rôle to the countries surrounding the Persian Gulf, though he was to be recognised as the Commander-in-Chief of the Company's naval forces 'through all parts of India'. On the other hand, the commission he received from the Crown authorised him 'to enquire how far the Eleventh Article of the Definitive Treaty of Peace' had been complied with by the French and the Spanish, and further 'to treat

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1 Weymouth to Chairman and Deputy Chairman, 10 August, Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.100, p.447. At this juncture in the negotiations, Macpherson warmly recommended to Lindsay, 'the support of the Nabob'. Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.110, pp.503-11.
with any of the Princes or Powers in India, to whom the above Eleventh Article may relate.\(^1\) However, these public instructions were merely the thin edge of the wedge, for Lindsay received extensive secret instructions from Weymouth which directed him to investigate the state of French fortifications and troops at Chandernagore to determine whether they involved an infraction of the peace treaty or not; and to examine the many arbitrary proceedings of which the French so vociferously complained in Bengal, alleviating their hardships if they were oppressed by the Company's servants.\(^2\) He was also authorised to enquire into the causes of the war with Hyder Ali and the conduct of the Madras Council towards the Nawab of the Carnatic. Weymouth, swayed perhaps by the importunities of the Nawab's agent in London, declared that there was great reason to fear that

the Nabob of Arcot has been treated in a Manner by no means correspondent to the friendly Stipulations, which His Majesty procured in his favour at the Company's Request; and that the Company's Servants, from selfish and unjustifiable Motives inconsistent with good Faith, repugnant to the true Interests of the Company, and contrary to the Engagements of the Crown, have kindled that War, which has involved both the affairs of the Nabob and the Company in their present Difficulties.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) Lindsay's commission from the King, 7 September 1769, Home Miscellaneous Series, vol. 101, pp. 53-6.

\(^2\) On 11 June 1770, Lindsay was actually deputed as the plenipotentiary to treat with Law de Lauriston over the Chandernagore ditch affair. Weymouth to Chairman and Deputy Chairman, 11 June 1770, Home Miscellaneous Series, vol. 102, p. 331.

Thus Lindsay was instructed to 'make the strictest Inquiry into their Conduct towards the Nabob of Arcot, since the late Peace, in order to judge, how far it has co-incided with His Majesty's friendly Declarations, and with the Eleventh Article of the last Treaty'. If the Madras Council remained obdurate in their refusal to provide Lindsay with the relevant information, he was to appeal directly to the Nawab for assistance. Apart from making a full enquiry into the details of the Balambangan venture, he was to assess as carefully as possible 'the State of the French Forces at the Mauritius, and in other Parts of India'. He was to try and find out 'how far the French have promoted the present Disturbances in India, by encouraging Hyder Ally, and supplying him with Money, Arms, or officers; all which is disclaimed by them at home'. Lindsay was informed:

The great Strength of the French in India is, no doubt, at the Mauritius; tho' they have repaired, in a great measure, the Fortifications of Pondicherry, and have a Garrison there, it is in that Island they are provided with Stores to equip the Company's large Ships for War; and the Difficulty of Access to it, from the necessity of warning into the Port, makes it easy for them to conceal what they are doing. As the French King has sometime ago taken that Island out of the Hands of their Company...it becomes highly proper to pay the strictest attention to the next Steps, which the French will take with regard to that Place of Strength and Magazine for Military Stores.

Although it was scarcely necessary, the Secretary of State emphasised that the object of Lindsay's commission was of
'the utmost National Importance' since 'the Servants of the Company, both at home and abroad, are too much taken up with partial and selfish Schemes, to admit the liberal and enlarged Consideration of Indian Affairs which includes the Good of the Whole'.

From the Cape Lindsay sent home intelligence about the state of the French forces at the Islands. Their numbers, according to his informants, ranged from 3,500 to 4,500 men. In April 1770 the admiral arrived at the western Presidency of Bombay, where almost immediately he encountered opposition from a resentful Council. The Councillors strongly objected to Lindsay's interference with their external policies, for Lindsay soon came to espouse an alliance with the Marathas against Hyder Ali, who he considered to be the gravest threat to the Company's possessions in the South and the West. In fact, Lindsay spent the greater part of his time in the Persian Gulf and in efforts to conclude an alliance with the Marathas. While at Bombay Lindsay wrote to the Madras Council, expressing his disapproval of their recently concluded treaty with Mysore. 'Everyone agrees', he declared, 'that the French assisted Hyder Ally with Arms and Ammunition'.

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To his consternation, on reaching Madras in August 1770, the Council refused 'to pay him any honours as the King's Plenipotentiary, not having had any Intimation of those Powers from the Directors'. The Council also declined to attend the Nawab's reception of the King's letters and presents, 'excusing Themselves on the Degradation it would be to Them in the Eyes of the Country Powers'. Such pointed gestures were intended to convey to the admiral that his plenipotentiary powers would not be recognised by the Councillors because they believed that such wide and unprecedented powers 'would diminish their Consequence and make it be thought by the People of the Country, that They were to be crushed like the French Company'. As they refused to provide Lindsay with papers of their dealings with the Nawab, the royal plenipotentiary turned to the Nawab himself, who 'after some Fluctuation in his Behaviour, from fear of the Resentment of the Governor and Council, at last entered into a very full and confidential Communication of all His Grievances'. Indeed, it seems more than probable that the Nawab exercised a considerable influence over Lindsay from this time on, particularly over the matters of intervention in Tanjore and the Mysore alliance.

1 C.O. 77/53, p.19.
3 C.O. 77/53, p.20.
4 C.O. 77/53, p.22.
However, Lindsay's powers were revoked early in 1771, when the new Secretary of State, Lord Rochford, decided to appoint Admiral Sir Robert Harland as Lindsay's successor.\(^1\) The instructions which Harland received on 15 March 1771 were considerably more moderate in tone than Lindsay's had been, and this was seen in some quarters as a triumphant vindication of the Company's autonomy.\(^2\) Nonetheless, Harland still met with strong resistance from the members of the Madras Council when he arrived in India. Unanimous for once, the Councillors denounced his powers as 'unconstitutional', a charge which the admiral interpreted as 'directly pointed at the royal Authority, and the undoubted rights of the Crown'.\(^3\) Harland naturally wanted to promote his own policies with the Indian states, though his views on Indian

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1 Rochford to Lindsay, 1 February 1771, *Home Miscellaneous Series*, vol.103, p.116. Earlier, on 10 October 1770, Lindsay had appealed to Weymouth for permission to return home for reasons of health. Lindsay to Weymouth, 10 October 1770, *Home Miscellaneous Series*, vol.103, p.125.

2 'Lord Rochford directs Sir Robert, in the King's Name, to use his utmost Endeavour to reconcile The Nabob, and the Company's Servants, recommending to the Latter the most Conciliating Behaviour towards that Prince'. C.O. 77/53, p.38.

3 From Harland, 25 December 1771, C.O. 77/22. Harland declared his stand in the following terms: 'I acknowledge I am still of opinion that the reserve of Sovereignty in all charters, establishes a right in the Crown, to send Ministers to India, as well as to any other foreign Power; and that the Royal Assent is Absolutely necessary to distinguish the Publick Treaty which binds the Nation, from the private agreement, which is obligatory on individuals only'. Harland to the Madras Council, 4 January 1772, C.O. 77/22.
diplomacy were also influenced by his friendly association with the Nawab. Like his predecessor, he strongly favoured an alliance with the Marathas and endorsed the Nawab's attack against Tanjore. But though the Council protested 'unfeigned allegiance and inviolable attachment to His Majesty's most sacred person and Government', they defiantly asserted that they were not authorised to divulge secrets to His Majesty's plenipotentiary.¹

Thus the first attempt by the Crown to exercise its powers of supervision over the Indian presidencies was stubbornly resisted by the entrenched interests at Madras, the arguments they employed in defence of their 'constitutional' rights being analogous in many ways to those so ardently propounded by the American colonists. Colonial pressures and interests were in conflict with the centralising plans of the Imperial parliament, and in this, the first round, the peripheral pressures dominated.

While Lindsay and Harland achieved surprisingly little in India, their appointment marked the first serious and sustained attempt by the Crown to influence directly the external affairs of the Company. It was in large measure the fear of the French that had impelled the Ministry to act and which made the Company at home, if not in India, more amenable to its wishes. The threat

¹ Madras Council to Sir Robert Harland, 23 December 1771, C.O. 77/22.
apprehended by the Court of Directors and the British government was a product of the marshalling of French forces at the Islands and the tumultuous war in the South on the one hand, and the revanche diplomacy of Choiseul on the other. However, the failure of the two admirals to direct or curb the policies of the Madras Council witnessed the zenith of that Presidency's independence. Its foreign policy was not moulded by the French at this stage, despite what its members might claim or fear, but by the kaleidoscopic quality of Indian politics. And the powerful influence of the Nawab and his creditors was immeasurably more effective in determining these policies than the puny efforts of the Crown's officials. Expansion, if we can so call it, was unplanned and unwanted, the fruit of selfish and grasping instincts at the edge of empire. Conveniently the French remained a potential, though not at this time an actual, threat, providing their traditional rivals with the perfect justification for an adventurous game.

ii. THE FRENCH THREAT IN THE SOUTH TO 1785

During the 1760's and the 1770's the administrators and officials of French India at Pondicherry, particularly the Governors Law de Lauriston and the Maréchal de Bellecombe, sustained a voluminous correspondence with the metropolitan authorities, the Ministries of Marine and Foreign Affairs. Apart from providing
a critical and shrewd examination of the policies of the Bengal and Madras Councils, these despatches presented the home authorities with a number of elaborate plans which the French government was urged to accept as the basis of its diplomacy in the East. As we have seen in the context of Bengal, the French advocated the stirring up of native revolutions against the British. They were led to believe that the ills of British rule, stemming from the mistake of assuming territorial sovereignty, were sufficiently grave as to provide the French with a superb opportunity to act as liberators. 'Notre rupture avec les anglais est inévitable d'ici à deux ou trois ans', wrote one memorialist,

à moins de se resoudre à abandonner entièrement le Commerce de l'Asie, et de supporter patiemment les insultes qu'ils ont déjà fait à notre pavillon et qui se multiplieront chaque jour. Si le gouvernement est determine à soutenir ce commerce il n'y a pas un instant à perdre pour préparer les Moyens de s'opposer avec succès à l'abus que les anglais font de leur puissance.¹

This writer then proceeded to describe the strategy by which the French would subvert the Company's power in the East Indies. The essence of his plan was the strengthening of the forces at the Ile de France and Pondicherry, a measure repeatedly advocated by

¹ Memoire sur la situation Respective des français et des Anglais, aux Indes Orientales, contenant le Tableau exact de la politique actuelle, des forces, et des Ressources des princes de l'Indoustan, et un plan d'offensive à Execute dans cette partie, dated Paris 4 February 1770, Colonies ² 54, p.131.
De Lauriston, impressed by the wealth and influence that the British had gained from the conquest of Bengal, argued that the French should concentrate their major assault against this northern province, and for a time he seriously thought of establishing Chandernagore as the capital of the French establishments. For him, Bengal was the trunk of the tree whereas Madras and Bombay were only the branches. He therefore endorsed with enthusiasm the schemes of his junior at Chandernagore until 1767, when he turned to the idea of forming alliances with the Marathas and Mysore. In all such schemes of native diplomacy de Lauriston emphasised the transitory and unstable nature of the Indian balance of power. As far as he could see the chances for defeating the British in the Carnatic would depend on the speedy despatch from France of a large expeditionary force to the Islands. For success in this enterprise supremacy at sea would be an

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1 The writer recommended, too, that, on the first news of the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, the administration at Mauritius should be instructed to send an expedition of 3,000 men to attack Calcutta. 'Calcutta une fois pris tout le Bengale est à nous, Suja-Daulah et les autres princes du Nord, pressant les Anglais d’un côté tandis que nous les presserons de l’autre, ils seront bientôt reduits dans cette partie'. (p.136.)

2 The phrase was Chevalier's. 'C'est (i.e. Bengale) le tronc de l'arbre, une fois qu'on le tient, l'on est bientôt maître de toutes ses branches'. Chevalier to Praslin, 10 January 1769, Françaises Nouvelles Acquisitions, vol.9366, p.7.
indispensable requirement if the French were to land a large force in the South and intercept British reinforcements sent from Bengal to Madras. In spite of his early support for an attack against Bengal, de Lauriston came to believe that the French force would be more wisely employed in operations against Madras, Masulipatam or Bombay.

The consolidation of French naval and military strength at the Islands was one important outcome of this policy. After the Crown's assumption of the administration of the Ile de Bourbon and the Ile de France in 1767 their defences were strengthened and the military force increased to something like 5,000 men, if the contemporary English accounts are to be relied upon. By 1774 the population of the two small, mountainous islands had increased to 6,386 whites, of whom 955 were soldiers (though almost all men over the age of 21 were subject to some form of military training), and 25,154 slaves, mainly imported from Madagascar and Africa. Visiting English sailors invariably commented on the impressive fortifications at Port Louis.

1 For a more elaborate treatment of de Lauriston's schemes see Sen, The French in India, pp.154-72.
2 See, for example, Chamier's report from Paris, 23 March 1769, Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.100, pp.81-3; further letter dated 27 March 1769, pp.87-9; and Report of Captain Lockhart Russell to the Court of Directors, 24 July 1772, Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.106, pp.191-249.
In order that the task of resisting and obstructing the English might be co-ordinated and simplified the metropolitan government was advised by its servants in India to re-organise and centralise the administration of the various settlements east of the Cape. The reforms of 1773 which brought the administration of French India in line with France's other colonial possessions were to some extent a response to these recommendations, but it was not until the return of the French to India in 1785 that all the settlements were brought under a Governor General at the Ile de France.

Despite their considerable and ambitious political designs, the establishments of the French in India remained in a parlous state for most of the inter-war period, from 1765 until 1778. The French government under Louis XV was reluctant, if not positively unwilling, to fortify Pondicherry and provide it with the necessary military force. In fact, during this period there were never more than 1,000 soldiers at Pondicherry and usually there were far fewer, while the sepoy regiments counted for no more than another 1,000 soldiers. Against these
meagre resources... the English had 35,000 sepoys in Bengal, 20,000 on the Coromandel and Orissa Coasts, and 15,000 on the Malabar Coast. They had about 10,000 European troops in all, 4,000 in Bengal, about the same number on the Coromandel and Orissa Coasts, and 2,000 on the Malabar Coast.\footnote{1}

The English were also, of course, possessed of the Bengal revenues, which proved to be an enormous advantage in the wars against the princes and the French. In 1778, on hearing of the outbreak of war between England and France in Europe, the English swiftly captured all the French settlements, though the French put up a fight at Pondicherry.

And yet even when they had subdued all resistance in the French settlements the British were not entirely liberated from their apprehensions about the French. The devious intrigues of French mercenaries and \textit{agents provocateurs} in the 'mofussil' still constituted a very real menace to the British position in the South and in the West. Invasion fears also haunted the minds of the Company's servants, who could not forget the ease with which Madras fell to the assault of Dupleix by land, and la Bourdonnais by sea, in 1746.

In Europe, the accession of Louis XVI in 1775 entailed a change in the conduct of French foreign policy. The pusillanimous and ineffectual d'Aiguillon was succeeded by Vergennes, a seasoned

\footnote{1} Sen, \textit{The French in India}, p.161.
diplomat cast in the mould of Choiseul, and the Naval Ministry was taken into the capable and energetic hands of de Sartine. Interest was again revived in the schemes of de Lauriston and Chevalier, and embassies were sent to some of the principal states of the sub-continent. French ambitions reached their apogee in 1780 with the emergence of a daunting coalition aimed at destroying the British power in India. However, the development of this united Indian front was not simply a tribute to the guiles and brilliance of French diplomacy, though the British tended to look upon it in this light. It arose primarily from the grievances which each of the powers believed it had suffered by the rise of the Company — grievances exacerbated by the ambiguous and contradictory policies pursued by the individual presidencies.

We have already seen that the Madras Council was incapable of adhering to a consistent set of policies because it was riven by dissension. Lindsay and Harland succeeded only in antagonising the Council, but Lord Pigot, whose policies were extremely unpopular, was deposed and arrested by his Council in 1776. His feckless attempt to restore the Rajah of Tanjore to his territories, although supported by the Court of Directors, had alienated the Nawab and his influential creditors.¹

Such turmoil did little to reassure the Indian states that the Council's intentions were pacific. Consequently Hyder Ali encountered no difficulty in forming an alliance with the other powers against the English and their Nawab. Earlier the Council's refusal to assist him with arms and men in his war against the Marathas caused him to lose faith in the professions of the English, since they had been formally allied with him by the treaty of 1769. A number of border incidents also occurred between Hyder Ali and the Nawab of Arcot, thus worsening relations between the two powers. Misunderstanding was further fostered by the belief, commonly held by the Madras Council, that Hyder Ali was especially sympathetic to the French. In point of fact Hyder Ali was intent on his own private aggrandisement and only marginally concerned with aiding and abetting the French.

Besides antagonising the ruler of Mysore, the Madras Council had also outraged the Nizam by its repeated efforts to take over the Guntur Circar, which had been given to the Nizam's brother for life in 1768. Their justification for this was simply that Basalat Jang had openly encouraged the French by entertaining a large number of them in his service. After the capture of Pondicherry in October 1778, President Rumbold negotiated a settlement with Basalat Jang by which the Circar passed under the influence of the Nawab of the Carnatic. Incensed by this action
and more particularly by the Council's refusal to pay the annual rent for the Northern Circars, the Nizam resolved to teach the English a lesson. He concluded an alliance with Hyder Ali and the Marathas. The Marathas were to attack Bombay, Berar would attack Bengal, the Nizam would seize the Circars and Hyder Ali would once more invade the Carnatic.¹

The rapid formation of this grand coalition, designed of course finally to expel the British from India, is evidence of the growing tensions between the various centres of British power and their neighbouring Indian states. For the Bombay Council in the north-west had also embroiled itself in the tortuous intricacies of native diplomacy. Intent on acquiring the outposts flanking Bombay Harbour, Bassein fort and the islands of Salsette, Kenery, Hog, Elephanta and Karanja, which were held by the Marathas, the Council had sided with Raghunath Rao, a contender for the hereditary Peshwaship at Poona. Through their agent at Poona, Thomas Mostyn, the Bombay Council promised Raghunath Rao military assistance if he would cede them the coveted islands. Fearing a resurgence of Portuguese power in the area, the Council resolved on 28 November 1773 to obtain possession of Salsette for the Company, and by the end of 1774 the British had reduced all

opposition on the island. On 7 March 1775 the Treaty of Surat was concluded with Raghunath Rao by which the Bombay Council agreed to provide him with a force of 2,500 men in return for Salsette, Bassein and the islands in the vicinity of Bombay.

However, the issue was further complicated by the attempts of Hastings and the Fort William Council to enforce the provisions of the Regulating Act. They soon stepped in and ordered a stop to the war in which the Bombay Council was involved after February 1775. The appointment of Lieutenant Colonel Upton by the Bengal Government as a plenipotentiary to treat with Poona resulted in the Treaty of Purandhar of 1 March 1776 and a precarious peace with the Maratha ministers. But the Bombay Council was bitterly dissatisfied with the terms of this treaty and they continued to support the cause of Raghunath Rao.

The intrigues of the Poona ministers took on a more sinister light when an accredited ambassador from the French court arrived at Chaul on 16 March 1777. Pallebot de Saint-Lubin, an adventurer who had earlier ingratiated himself with the Madras Council during that Presidency's struggle against Hyder Ali,

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succeeded in persuading the Minister for Marine, de Sartine, of the many advantages to be derived from an alliance with the Marathas.

France was to send a body of troops to the assistance of the Poona Government, and in return she was to secure a port on the western coast, preferably Chaul, complete freedom of trade in the Maratha dominions and assurance of Maratha protection of her settlements in India against English attacks.¹

On his arrival in western India he was welcomed with great pomp and circumstance by the Peshwa's chief ministers, Nana Farnavis and Sakharam Bapu, and his intricate diplomacy was jealously watched by Mostyn, the Bombay Council's representative at the Peshwa's durbar. Mostyn's reports of the formation of an alliance between the Marathas and the French persuaded the Bengal Government to take a firmer line with the Peshwa and to despatch a force overland to strengthen the forces of the Bombay Council. 'We cannot help being exceedingly alarmed', the Fort William Council confided to the Court of Directors, 'at the steps which are taking by the French to obtain a settlement on the Malabar Coast, so near to Bombay, and to establish a political influence in the Mahratta State, the immediate object of which must be the overthrow of your settlement.'² Hastings avowed that 'all the public advices from

¹ Sen, _The French in India_, p.182.
Bombay and Poona, corroborated by intelligence through other channels, prove beyond a doubt that the French have already formed a close and intimate connection with the ruling administration of the Mahratta State, and that their acquisition of Chaul was 'but a door for the introduction of arms and troops into the Mahratta country'. The Governor General also considered that it was incontrovertible, that if a detachment of much less than 1,000 Europeans, with arms for disciplining a body of Native troops in the European manner, shall have once obtained a footing in the Mahratta Country, as the allies of that Government, all the native powers of Indostan united will lie at their mercy, and even the Provinces of Bengal be exposed to their depredations.¹

From his correspondence with the lesser councils it is plain that Hastings took French intrigue very seriously indeed. Though he did not believe that Bengal was directly threatened, he certainly believed that the French could profit greatly from the many embarrassments of the Madras and Bombay Councils.

Meanwhile the over-ambitious Bombay Council had embarked on a disastrous war policy, which resulted in the humiliating Convention of Wadgaon in January 1779. Virtually all the territorial gains made over the last six years were returned to the Marathas. Hastings automatically disowned the treaty and sent

¹ Hastings' minute, Secret Department, Fort William, 23 February 1778, from Forrest, Selections, vol.2, pp.592-3.
Colonel Goddard with a large force to cross the Deccan to relieve the Bombay Presidency, provocative actions which cemented the coalition of the Marathas, Mysore, the Nizam and Berar directed against the Company. Hence in 1780 the southern and western presidencies found themselves with their backs to the sea, fighting for their very lives.

It was during this critical period that the Governor General for the first time imposed on the subordinate Indian councils a co-ordinated strategy of resistance. Naturally Hastings met with the usual opposition from his fellow Councillors, especially Philip Francis who considered that the Fort William Council should interest itself only in the immediate affairs and problems of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. By contrast, Hastings confidently asserted, on hearing of Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga, that

if it be really true that the British arms and influence have suffered so severe a check in the Western World, it is the more incumbent on those who are charged with the interest of Great Britain in the East to exert themselves for the retrieval of the national loss.

Not that we should act upon the defensive and wait till the designs of our enemies are ripe, and they have chosen their own time to carry them into execution, but that we should provide for the safety of Bengal by obviating the impending dangers, and by rendering their attempts abortive before the time destined for their birth.¹

Other historians have examined the means by which Hastings averted disaster in the grim years of the American War, and it is not necessary here to re-capitulate these successes. Suffice it to say that the Governor General bought off hostile powers wherever he could, despatched money and men to Madras and Bombay, and forced his Council to take an active interest in the predicament of the other settlements. By the time the French government was ready to send an expeditionary force to India the Marathas were negotiating a separate peace with Hastings' envoy. The Treaty of Salbai, which finally secured Bassein and Salsette Island for the Bombay Presidency, followed in May 1782.

In July 1780, however, Hyder Ali's cavalry swept through the Carnatic, and Hastings was forced to take up the problems of the Madras Council. Immediately he despatched the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Eyre Coote, to assume command of the armies in the South. The ensuing campaign was involved and indecisive, being further complicated by the re-appearance of the French as a naval and military power. It was at this point that the wider ramifications of the American and European struggle impinged on the conflict in India. We have already examined the interest shown by the North Ministry in a scheme to attack the Dutch and Spanish settlements in the East Indies, and we have also seen how this

1 See in particular K. Feiling, Warren Hastings (London, 1966), chapters XVI-XX.
project was transformed into an expedition to take the Cape after the Dutch entry into the war. 1 Suffren, of course, beat the English squadron to the Cape and then proceeded to the Indian Ocean, eventually capturing Trincomalee in August 1782.

On receiving news of the failure of the Johnstone-Medows expedition in October 1781, the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors again pressed on the government the need to capture the Cape, or to find some other provisioning base suitable for their convoys of merchantmen. Moreover, in that same month the Court of Directors were informed that the French government had commissioned the marquis de Bussy to return to India with a substantial naval and military force. 2

During 1781 Bussy had been approached by the Ministry, now determined to strike some decisive blow against Britain in the eastern sphere of her empire. The veteran general outlined the chief merits of a French expedition to India:

The most powerful Princes offer to join us against the common enemy as soon as they see us appear in force; and, if the revolution were such as one could expect were suitable measures adopted, it would, by depriving the British of a part of those establishments from which they derive their chief resources, certainly compel the

1 See chapter 2, pp.67-9.
Court of London to ask for peace.¹

Bussy insisted that the proposed expedition should consist of 8,400 regular troops and ten ships of the line, and he believed that 10,000 sepoys could be quickly raised in India once the force had landed. Leaving France in February of the next year (1782), Bussy planned that the force would reach the Ile de France in July. From this island base the French would be well placed to launch an attack against Bombay, 'a port where your Majesty's squadron would find security and the means to refit in case of accidents due to weather or war, without having to return to the Isle de France', or Surat, 'a rich town with every sort of commodity, should it be found that Bombay can only be captured by regular siege'. Then the French would assist the general of the Moghul Emperor, 'who only awaits this reinforcement to attack the English in the Upper Ganges', and induce Hyder Ali 'by a similar operation to invade the Provence (sic) of Arcate and to advance on Madras, the squadron attacking the place at the same time from the sea'.²

The instructions which Bussy eventually received stressed the liberating role that the French were to assume in India. The

² Richmond, The Navy in India, p.391.
preamble, for instance, stated that the French, 'having succeeded in redressing the wrongs suffered by the American Colonies from the King of England, and delivered them from the tyranny and oppression to which they had been subjected', had decided to effect 'the compleat re-establishment of the ancient government and free independence of the Indians'. The very wording echoed the despatches of Chevalier and Law de Lauriston.

Since the details of Bussy's expedition and campaign have been described elsewhere in the works of Colonel G.B. Malleson, Admiral Sir H. Richmond and most recently S.P. Sen, there is no need here to narrate the details. The war against Mysore dragged on until Bussy arrived at Cuddalore in April 1783. But before he could accomplish anything news reached India of the conclusion of peace preliminaries in Europe. Eventually a peace treaty was signed with Tipu Sultan, the successor to Hyder Ali, in March 1784, which restored the territories of the Nawab of the Carnatic and Tipu to the ante bellum status quo.

1 Copy of a Project given by the Sieur de Bussy, and making no. 6 of his Dispatches, Minutes of 14 August 1783, Minutes of the Secret Committee 1782-1806, p.224. See also the Instructions given to the Sieur de Bussy, Minute of 16 August 1783, Ibid., pp.234-47, and the Orders in explanation of Instructions delivered to the Sieur de Bussy, Minute of 16 September 1783, Ibid. pp.253-66.

Thus the conjunction of a global war with a series of localised wars in India had seriously jeopardised the security of the Company's possessions in the East and especially in the Carnatic. Once more the spectre of a French invasion began to torment the minds of the usually unruffled servants of the Company, and this time there was some substance to the threat. This crisis forced the Supreme Government in Bengal to take the dominant role in directing operations against the French and their country allies. From Calcutta came the armies and the resources which repulsed and turned back the enemy, and from the Governor General emanated precise and detailed instructions on subjects that had once been the exclusive concern of the Madras Council. Conflicts between Bengal and Madras, thinly disguised throughout the war, erupted after the peace. Hastings ordered that the assignment of the Carnatic revenues which the Nawab had temporarily transferred to the Madras Government for the better conduct of the war be returned to the Nawab. Lord Macartney, the Governor of Madras, refused to do this and later resigned when the Court of Directors confirmed Hastings' direction. Although the situation was still complex, the traditional independence of the Madras Council was gradually being supplanted by the Supreme Government at Fort William, and this tendency was accelerated in the last decades of the eighteenth century.
iii. THE FINAL PHASE

We have seen already in the preceding chapter that the restitution of territories to the French was delayed until February 1785 because of certain difficulties over the return of Trincomalee to the Dutch.1 Bussy died a disappointed and bitter man early in 1785 and the government was administered by Coutenceau des Algrins until the vicomte de Souillac arrived from the Ile de France in May 1785. Soon after he returned to the Islands to take up his appointment as Governor General, Pondicherry being left in the hands of Charpentier de Cossigny.

Gradually the French state was succumbing to the lethal effects of national bankruptcy exacerbated by its expensive intervention in the American War, and while Vergennes showed a passing interest in the exploration of the coasts of Asia and the new lands in the Pacific he was disinclined to spend money on the defenceless settlements of the French in India.2 Indeed, the legislation of May 1785 which further centralised their administration in the East implied the shifting of the capital from Pondicherry to Port Louis, and this had its eventual sequel in the withdrawal of all European troops, munitions and other military

1 Chapter 4, pp.157-8.
2 For his patronage of scientific expeditions see chapter 6, pp.281-3.
stores to the Isle of France. Henceforth rigorous economies were practised by the governors to reduce the expenditure of the town, but these measures only succeeded in antagonising its merchant inhabitants.

Therefore, when Pondicherry learnt of the outbreak of revolution and the toppling of the ancien régime in France, a comic opera situation soon developed. On 25 February 1790 the aggrieved citizens established their own replica of the National Assembly, opposing any further attempts to reduce the Pondicherry garrison and clamouring for the formation of a citizen militia. Governor de Fresne, the Mirabeau of the piece, tactfully agreed to their wishes and attempted to humour the more permanent body, the Committee of 65 Representatives. The revolutionaries sent two delegates to present their case before the august National Assembly itself.

The revolution in India reached its crescendo with the convening of a Colonial Assembly, representative of the citizens of Pondicherry, Chandernagore, Karikal, Yanam and Mahé, for 6 July 1791. However, the fraternal spirit of the revolutionaries was riven by sectional considerations and the Chandernagore

1 Sen, The French in India, p.430.
enragés disowned their more timid cousins at Pondicherry. By 1793 the revolution was appropriately threatened by counter-revolutionaries, the English, who after a three weeks' siege took charge of the town on 23 August 1793.¹

In spite of the eager reception of Burke's Reflections by the British in India,² it is difficult to see how they could have been greatly disturbed by these dramatic events. However, the fear of France, whether royalist or revolutionary, was still closely related to the political situation in South India, since French agents and soldiers continued their association with the courts of the Nizam, Tipu and the Peshwa. 'I look upon a rupture with Tipu as a certain and immediate consequence of a war with France', wrote Cornwallis in March 1788, 'and in that event a vigorous co-operation of the Marathas would certainly be of the utmost importance to our interests in this country'.³ In that year Tipu Sultan sent the first of his embassies to France in the fond hope of extracting naval and military assistance from her. Later, with the coming of the revolution, Tipu fervently planted

¹ See Sen, pp.435-51.
² 'In October my sister Ann sent me out Mr. Burke's celebrated publication upon the French Revolution,...his work was received and read with universal admiration and approbation throughout the British settlement in India'. Memoirs of William Hickey, vol.IV, p.43.
the tree of liberty in his capital, welcoming assistance from the Ile de France and from the Directory in Paris.

During this decade two further wars were waged against the 'lion of Mysore', the first being conducted by Cornwallis himself after 1790. The peace of February 1792 resulted in the cession of half Tipu's territories to the Nizam and the English, the first substantial acquisition of territory to the British since Clive's conquest of Bengal. Lord Mornington, who succeeded to the Governor Generalship in the grim days of 1798 when Napoleon was preparing for his assault on Egypt, was alarmed by the open consorting of Tipu with the French at Port Louis. In order to vanquish the power of Tipu once and for all he embarked on the Fourth Mysore War in 1799. Seringapatam was besieged and Tipu Sultan killed.

But Mornington had also resorted to the Subsidiary Alliance system as a means to eliminate French influence from the sub-continent. In September 1798 his envoys were successful in negotiating a treaty with the Nizam by which the Nizam promised to give up Colonel Raymond and his French officers in return for military assistance from the Company. While gaining a greater measure of security by this measure, the Nizam lost control of foreign relations.
The Governor General's close involvement in the wars against Mysore implied a further and more effective subordination of the southern presidency to the demands of the Supreme Government. In fact, it was not until Mornington took the affairs of the Madras Council firmly in hand that the complicated problem of the Nawab's debts was finally resolved. On the death of the Nawab, a son of Mohammad Ali, in July 1801, the Governor General used the evidence of his complicity in Tipu's schemes to assume the charge of the government of the Carnatic. The new Nawab was paid a fifth of its revenue as a pension.

Whereas many wars were fought in the South over this thirty year period, it was only at the end of the century that the Company began to acquire direct political control over extensive territories as Clive had done during the 1760's in Bengal. The four great wars waged by the Madras Council were struggles for survival rather than efforts at empire-building. Indeed, the accession of new territories came as an unwanted and largely unforeseen consequence. All of these struggles involved the menacing power of Mysore and all in varying degrees were intended to eradicate French influence in the South. Although we have seen that the fear of the French was usually excessive, based more on the unknown factor of French strength at the Islands than on a realistic assessment of French resources at Pondicherry, nonetheless,
it did exert a considerable influence on the policies of the Madras Council. Perhaps the most significant result of these wars, apart from the extension of British influence throughout the southern peninsula, was the establishment of firm control by the Supreme Government and the Governor General over the wayward and incorrigible Madras Council. The selfish interests and schemes of the Nawab and his creditors needed to be curbed if the Madras Presidency were to play a satisfactory rôle in the establishment of Wellesley's paramountcy over the Indian states.
CHAPTER 6: ANGLO-FRENCH RIVALRY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE
EASTERN SEAS 1763-1793: SOME REPERCUSSIONS

The overwhelming majority of disputes and disagreements between the English and the French in the East in the latter half of the eighteenth century occurred in India, where the interests of the European trading companies were most soundly established. We have seen already how in Bengal, the cockpit of the East India Company's power and influence in Asia, the French discovered themselves a much persecuted minority, and we have seen the outcome of the acrimonious wrangles which proliferated there. In the South, on the other hand, the French attempted in a more enthusiastic fashion to re-establish their political influence, but they only succeeded in forcing the presidencies at Madras and Calcutta to assume greater responsibility in Indian affairs. In spite of the concentration of earlier chapters on commercial and political developments in Bengal and the South, it is worth remembering that the trading activities of these two European powers extended throughout the region of the Indian Ocean and the Eastern Seas - from the Cape to Canton - and that the ramifications
of Anglo-French global rivalry were felt in these exotic areas as well. For with the beginnings of a territorial empire in Asia, the Company and the British government, whose partnership was consolidated by the pressures of war and the legislation of Pitt, became acutely concerned to secure the trade routes to India and China. In an attempt to forestall their most persistent rivals from annexing strategically located islands and harbours on the way to the 'gorgeous East', the British acquired a network of island bases and naval stations around the littoral of the Indian Ocean. Such moves paralleled earlier British intervention in the politics of the Coromandel since it was the fear of the machinations of a rival power that precipitated involvement in both cases.

In turning now from questions of native diplomacy and armed strength to those of maritime expansion and sea-power, it must be recognised that there was no hard and fast distinction between the two in the eighteenth century. The trading contacts that the European merchants established throughout this wider region, no matter how superficial or transitory, usually involved some attempt to penetrate the indigenous political structure. It was only in the case of the British in India, however, that such involvement led to the wholesale acquisition of territories, though it should be remembered that the Dutch too were gradually
extending their authority over the island of Java.

From their two bases in the Indian Ocean the French in war time could harry and destroy British trade with India and China, and during this period the French government consolidated its strength at Port Louis. The ministry also considered founding settlements at other islands which were closer to the Indian mainland, notably the Seychelles and Diego Garcia, and small establishments were formed there in the 1770's and the 1780's. At the same time the French also showed a considerable, if intermittent, interest in countries to the west of India, missions being sent to Muscat, Baghdad, Basra and the other native states which bordered the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. In fact, numerous mémoires were devised and submitted to the Foreign Affairs Ministry advocating the establishment of trade links with the East through Suez and the Red Sea. British naval power in the Indian Ocean would be outflanked by such means, and in 1785 a secret trade agreement was signed with the Mameluke Beys of Egypt. In 1788 Volney lucidly expressed the strategic rationale behind this new interest in Egypt, Muscat and Persia: 'Par l'Égypte, nous toucherons à l'Inde, nous rétablirons l'ancienne circulation par Suez et nous ferons désérer la route du Cap de Bonne-Espérance'. 1 With the advent of Napoleon this desultory

interest in colonising Egypt and constructing a canal at Suez merged into a coherent strategy aimed at undermining the British power in India.

But French interest also grew eastwards from India to embrace various states on the way to China. Under the vigorous direction of the marquis de Castries the Ministry of Marine made a concerted effort after the American War to increase its knowledge of the East, and it found willing allies in the missionary orders. The interest of the Société des Missions Étrangères extended from Tonkin and parts of southern China to Annam and Cochín China in the centre and south of present-day Vietnam, and such religious and cultural ties as it established were strengthened and diversified by the dealings of French country traders based on the Ile de France and Pondicherry.

Although for most of the century the European companies had an official monopoly of the trade between Europe and Asia, they were prepared to indulge their employees in the lucrative and clandestine trade which flourished between the Indian, African and Asian ports. This inter-Asian carrying trade, or the country trade as it was termed, involved both Arab and Indian merchants, the original controllers of the trade, and Europeans of all nationalities. It was, in fact, the handsome private gains from this trade that usually drew young men to the East since their
official salaries were so meagre. In the earlier part of the century the country trade was mainly concentrated between the west Indian ports, Bombay and Surat, and the Persian Gulf, Muscat, Arabia and Zanzibar, whereas after 1750 the trade rapidly expanded eastwards via Malaya and the East Indian archipelago to China.\(^1\) The companies were prepared to cast a blind eye at this breach of their monopoly privilege because the regional Asian trade alleviated the drain of specie from Europe to the East. For traditionally the major obstacle to oriental commerce had been the extreme difficulty of finding European goods which the Indians and Chinese were prepared to accept in return for silk, cotton piecegoods, tea, drugs, saltpetre, pepper and porcelain. Of necessity the companies were forced to export massive quantities of specie to finance their trade, a deplorable development in a mercantilist age. Louis Dermigny has estimated that in the period 1719-1762 specie comprised 68.58 per cent of all European exports to India, and 86.33 per cent of European exports to China.\(^2\)

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1 For a thorough treatment of the country trade in the eighteenth century see Furber, *John Company at Work*, especially chapter V.

2 Of all the bullion exported to the East, China received 81.41 per cent in the period 1766-1792, and 62.25 per cent in the period 1793-1801. These figures are taken from Louis Dermigny's masterly study of the China trade - *La Chine et L'Occident: Le Commerce à Canton au XVIII e Siècle 1719-1833* (3 vols., Paris, 1964), vol. 2, p. 734. There are a number of excellent graphs and diagrams, indicating the major changes in the eastern trade, in the 'album'. Detailed statistics are provided in the appendices of E.H. Pritchard, *Anglo-Chinese Relations during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, University of Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences, vol. XVII, nos. 1-2 (Urbana, 1929).
After the Peace of Paris the problem was further exacerbated by the rapid expansion of the Canton trade in response to the growing demand for tea in Europe, especially in England. Largely as a result of Pitt's Commutation Act of 1784, which reduced the duties on tea from 119 to $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, there was an astronomically increase in the East India Company's tea sales in England. By substantially reducing the price of tea the Act undermined the clandestine trade of the continental companies, who relied on smuggling vast quantities of tea into England via Cornwall, the Isle of Man and Ireland. The English, in this process, acquired a national taste for the beverage. After 1785 the Company's trade with China flourished as never before, while that of her continental rivals seriously declined. The Company's tonnage, which stood at 9,239 in 1780, reached 18,144 by 1789, and the number of the Company's ships engaged in the trade rose from 12 to 21 in the same period. Of the 17,419,906 pounds of tea exported from Canton in 1779 the Company's sales in England amounted to 6,733,202 pounds, while in 1791 the Company purchased 17,262,258 pounds of the 19,480,307 pounds sold at Canton.\footnote{These figures are taken from the tables in Pritchard, \textit{Anglo-Chinese Relations}, pp.155-76.}

Apart from the official trade, the private and unofficial country trade expanded enormously,\footnote{English "country" tonnage, which stood at 4,000 in 1780, had reached 25,000 by 1790, and every contemporary observer testified to the phenomenal increase in the number of English 'country' ships in the China Seas in the mid-1780's', Furber, p.174.} but yet the balance of payments problem still...
remained extremely acute. To some extent the problem was eased by Clive's victories in Bengal, which enabled the East India Company to exploit the Indian revenues and Indian trade to pay for its Canton investment, though the problem was not finally solved until the turn of the century with the large-scale exportation of Bengal opium and Bombay cotton to Canton.

The growth of British interest and activity in areas to the east of the Bay of Bengal during the latter half of the eighteenth century has been most often explained as a response to these economic difficulties. The drain of specie from Europe and India to Canton rendered necessary the establishment of a commercial emporium to the east of India, which would attract Chinese products, notably tea, in exchange for Indian textiles, saltpetre, opium and cotton, and spices from the Malay archipelago. And it would also free the trade from the vexatious customs and restrictions which applied increasingly at Canton after 1757. Yet it is the central argument of this chapter that the rival interests and activities of Frenchmen in areas outside of India

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1 See, for example, K.C. Tregonning, The British in Malaya: The First Forty Years 1786-1826 (Tucson, 1965), which argues on p.5 that 'the trade in tea, ... was the basic impulse that led to the expansion of British power in the Far East, and as a corollary, in Southeast Asia as well'. See also D.K. Bassett, 'British Commercial and Strategic Interest in the Malay Peninsula During the Late Eighteenth Century', in Malayan and Indonesian Studies, ed. J.S. Bastin and R. Roolvink (London, 1964), pp.122-40; and Harlow, The Founding of the Second British Empire, vol. II, pp.329-65.
provided as important an inducement for intervention as the economic pressures per se. Such an explanation as this—which sees the French as important 'precipitants' of action—seems a more satisfying one than the current orthodoxy of economic motivation, because while the economic problem remained constant throughout the period under consideration, British officials only acted when there was some reasonable evidence of a threat to their possessions or interests. Nevertheless, this is not to dispute or to distort the significance of commercial pressures as long-term causes of expansion. Rather it is the attempt to place them in a political and strategic context neglected by other historians.

i. THE BRITISH AND THE FRENCH AND THE SWING TO THE EAST 1763-1778

Since their first appearance in the East during the seventeenth century the French had been interested in the various states of Southeast Asia, although with the British their trading establishments were more or less restricted to India. However, the Société des Missions Étrangères, founded at Paris by letters patent from Louis XIV in 1663, was entrusted with the task of propagating the Catholic faith in Thailand (or Siam), Cochin China, Annam, Tonkin and southern China. Together with other missionary

orders - the Jesuits, Dominicans and the Franciscans - the French priests established contact with the ruling houses of these polities, in spite of periods of savage persecution. Except for the abortive intervention of Louis XIV in the domestic affairs of Thailand in the 1680's,¹ however, the French failed to concern themselves directly with the political vicissitudes of these states.

From the early eighteenth century French missionary ardour began to flag, and French associations with the region became more commercial in nature. The voyages and writings of Pierre Poivre shed valuable light on the new interest of the French, and also foreshadow the arguments and schemes of his English counterpart, Alexander Dalrymple. Poivre, a Lyonnais attached to the Missions Étrangères, left France for the East in 1740 with the intention of becoming a missionary and learning Chinese.² After a term in Cochín China (1742-43), he relinquished his ties with the missionary order and proceeded to Canton, where


² Poivre's own account of these events has been edited and published by Henri Cordier under the title, 'Voyages de Pierre Poivre, 1748-1757', in Revue de l'Histoire des Colonies Françaises, VI (1918), pp.5-88. See also Charles B. Maybon, Histoire Moderne du Pays d'Annam (1592-1820) (Paris, 1919), pp.156-67.
he remained for a year. In 1746 he was wounded in a naval engagement with Commander Barnett's squadron, and spent the next few years acquiring an extensive and detailed knowledge of the country trade with Canton, Cochin China, Thailand, Mergui and the Malay archipelago. While at Batavia he learnt much about the spice trade, deciding at last that the French could best overcome the Dutch spice monopoly by acquiring an entrepôt port in Cochin China and also by the cultivation 'des plants et des graines fraîches des deux épicerie' at their islands in the Indian Ocean. On his arrival at the Ile de France in 1746, he persuaded Governor David to support his plans. David then recommended these schemes to the French government, and in 1748 Poivre himself returned to France, where he proposed to the syndics of the Compagnie and the Naval Minister both 'l'ouverture d'une nouvelle branche de commerce à la Cochin Chine et l'établissement d'un comptoir dans ce Royaume', and 'l'acquisition des plants d'épicerie fines pour les transporter dans nos Îles de France et de Bourbon'.

Duly impressed by the wealth of his knowledge and the logic of his argument, the Compagnie commissioned Poivre to occupy some 'point d'appui' in the China Seas, which would attract trade from the neighbouring islands and states, and facilitate the growth of French trade with Canton. When he reached

1 Cordier, 'Voyages de Pierre Poivre', p.16.
Pondicherry, however, he was informed of Dupleix's own consider­able activities in Pegu and Cochin China. It appears that Dupleix intended to exploit the civil war which had flared up in Burma between Alaungpaya and the Mons in order to form settlements at Bassein, Syriam, Martaban and Mergui. Valuable teak supplies, used in the construction of country ships, were the major inducement for French and British interest in this region, though strategic considerations were also important. But Dupleix, an adventurous and successful country trader as well as an able diplomat, was eager to establish comptoirs further eastwards in Cochin China as an adjunct to the Canton trade. In spite of his antipathy for Poivre, therefore, the Governor provided him with a ship of 600 tons, the Machault, for his expedition to Cochin China.

Poivre encountered a sympathetic reception at Faifo


2 Dupleix's letters and instructions to the French envoy sent to Syriam in 1751, which reveal the motives for his involvement, are located in the Colonies' 21 collection, pp. 1-18, at the Archives Nationales.

3 For Dupleix's dealings with Cochin China see Taboulet, La Geste Française en Indochine, vol. I, pp. 118-23; 134-38.
(Hoi-nan) in 1749, and the prince - presumably Vo-Vuong\(^1\) - pressed Poivre to stay at his court, promising that all the commercial privileges he desired would be granted in the following year when the monsoon abated. But because of monetary difficulties and the political disorders endemic within the Nguyen lands, Poivre chose to return to Port Louis. He arrived there in April 1750 with a valuable cargo of sugar, silks, gold, silver, wax, pepper, indigo, various drugs, ivory and teak. In other hazardous voyages Poivre visited Sambuangan (Zamboanga) in the Philippines, the Celebes and Timor, where he fulfilled the major part of his commission by collecting a great number of spices. His simple and clear formulation of a solution to the economic problems which confronted the Compagnie was his lasting achievement; and the influence of these ideas gathered momentum during the latter half of the century as more serious efforts were made to break into the eastern trade and establish footholds in Southeast Asia.

For it was at this time that French interest in areas to the east of India was profoundly affected by the very same

\(^1\) Though Cochin China and Tonkin were linked in nominal allegiance to the Lê dynasty, effective power was exercised by the Trịnh family in the north and the Nguyen in the south. In fact, the Nguyen took the title of **vuong**, or 'prince', during the early eighteenth century. Almost certainly Poivre negotiated with the officials of Vo-Vuong, who ruled in the south (usually referred to in contemporary reports as Cochin China) from 1738 to 1765. Lê Thành Khôi, **Le Việt-Nam : Histoire et Civilisation** (Paris, 1955), pp.242-73.
economic pressures which moulded the British 'swing to the East'. Vincent Harlow, of course, has seen in the dramatic growth of the China trade one of the salient features of the age, and while some doubts have been raised as to the overall importance of this material change, few historians would question the new enthusiasm for an informal empire in the East. As Peter Marshall has written,

there can be no doubt that although Eastern trade remained subordinate to that of the North Atlantic, British political interests in the East showed a remarkable power of expansion, which is particularly evident if attention is directed not to the Pacific, a region reserved at this time for navigators and dreamers, but to the altogether more formidable political and economic forces established in India.¹

And it is significant to note that these expansive forces derived from the Indian presidencies themselves and not from some remote imperial authority or statesman. The mission of John Pybus to the King of Kandy in 1762 was authorised by the Madras Council, alarmed by the strength of French naval power in the Indian Ocean and desirous to participate in the restricted cinnamon trade of Ceylon. Pybus¹ efforts to acquire the harbour of Trincomalee and an entry into the closely guarded spice monopoly of the Dutch foundered on the question of military aid to the King,² but the

expedition marked the genesis of a new and confident interest by the Indian governments in hitherto unknown areas and states. After the declaration of war against Spain the East India Company planned to supplant the Spanish and penetrate the China trade by way of a permanent establishment at Mindanao; and the capture of Manila by Draper in 1762 was clearly a product of such a strategy, even though the Madras Council was, it seems, as interested in pillage as in matters of grand strategy. ¹

On the other hand, the French were perfectly capable of playing the same game as was shown by d'Estaing's capture of the British settlements in western Sumatra in 1760. This action, however, does not appear to have been conditioned by any wider geo-political considerations; instead it was characteristic of the filibustering campaigns that the corsairs, based on the French Islands, waged against British trade and shipping in the Eastern Seas. Still, it is interesting to note that d'Estaing earlier compiled a number of schemes advocating the foundation of a permanent establishment at Tourane in Cochin China which reveal that he was aware of the commercial and strategic benefits France would gain from eastwards expansion. ²

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² For further details about d'Estaing's schemes to colonise Cochin China, advocated as early as 1758, see Taboulet, vol.I, pp.145-51.
D'Estaing strongly urged that the Ile de France be developed as 'l'entrepôt général et le point de réunion de toutes les branches du commerce', an emphasis which we find echoed again and again in the arguments of Law de Lauriston and Chevalier. In particular he stressed the strategic advantages which the Islands gained from their proximity to the Cape, India and the East Indies, and recommended the prompt fortification of Port Louis. We have already noticed the efforts made by Choiseul and Poivre in this direction. The number of troops at the Ile de France increased as did the capacity of the two islands to support them, although the islands were never entirely self-sufficient. At any rate they continued to provide a standing threat to British power in India, and a spring-board for further French activity in the East.

Perhaps the only comparable English theoretician and strategist to emerge at this time was Alexander Dalrymple. As a writer at Madras from 1752 he had discovered, on looking through the Company's records, how diverse and extensive the trading associations of the Company had been in the early seventeenth century before the English had been forced 'by the intrigues of the Dutch and the pusillanimity of our own Court' to turn to the

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1 'Idées sur le commerce des Indes et des Iles de France', by the comte d'Estaing, *Françaises Nouvelles Acquisitions*, vol.9365, p.60.
Indian trade. From 1759 he was active in exploring the eastern islands and in cultivating a friendship with the Sultan of Sulu, anxious to enlist the support of the East India Company in his struggle against the Spaniards. Dalrymple returned to Madras in 1762, and was given command of a small vessel, the London, to open up the trade with Sulu. Though Dalrymple inveigled the Sultan into ceding the northern part of Borneo and the adjacent islands to the Company in 1764, the expedition was not entirely successful. In 1765, therefore, he returned to England with the hope of persuading the Directors to sanction his schemes for a settlement in the Eastern Seas. His arguments for an establishment at Balambangan, an island in the Sulu archipelago between the Philippines and Borneo, were that such an emporium would

draw the produce of these valuable countries, in exchange for European and Indian commodities, ... procure, by cultivation and commerce, a share in the *spice-trade*, ... extend the scene of traffick into the unfrequented extremities of Asia, ... direct the Chinese trade into a more advantageous channel

and

form a colony, by encouraging people of that industrious nation to settle with us, and by every other means; which colony would be enabled to export of its own produce, cargoes of pepper, cinnamon, sugar etc. and would consume large quantities of manufactures from Europe and India.  


2 A. Dalrymple, A Plan for Extending the Commerce of this Kingdom and of the East India Company (London, 1769), p.9. This was one of the several pamphlets privately published by Dalrymple in the 1760's.
Evidently the Court of Directors was impressed by this chain of reasoning since when the Court informed Viscount Weymouth of its intention to take possession of the 'small, uninhabited Island of Balambangan' it virtually repeated the arguments of Dalrymple. This settlement would, the Court wrote, 'divert the Chinese Trade into this Channel, by procuring a Resort of Chinese to settle at Balambangan, and engaging the China Junk to visit and dispose of their Cargoes there'; 'extend the sale of the Manufactures of Great Britain to Cochin China and the Northern Provinces of China and receive from thence many of those Commodities, which can now only be obtained from Canton at very high Prices'; 'open a Market for the Consumption of the Manufactures of Bengal, and by adding to the Balance of Trade in favor of Bengal,...encrease the circulating Specie in the Bengal Provinces'; 'and finally...extend the Company's Trade into the unfrequented parts of Asia'.

Weymouth was concerned lest the intended settlement involve the government in difficulties with Spain over the Treaty of Munster. This treaty, signed by the Dutch and the Spanish in

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1 Court of Directors to Weymouth, 28 October 1768, China and Japan Factory Records, vol.19. The letter from the Court of Directors authorising an establishment at Balambangan was dated 11 November 1768, and was sent to the Fort St George Council. Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.101, p.95. The Presidency of Bombay was instructed 'immediately to send one of their Cruisers to take possession' of Balambangan.
1648, had confirmed the territorial status quo of the Dutch and Spanish empires in the East. Accordingly the Spaniards claimed that the islands of Sulu, Balambangan and Palawan fell within their orbit of influence, whereas Dalrymple argued that the treaty only applied to the possessions they held in 1648.

If the Spaniards are not by the Treaty of Munster excluded from any claim on Sooloo, or extension towards Borneo, they are free to extend themselves to all parts of India, for there are no particular limits settled in that Treaty. The general sense of Europe has uniformly agreed that the Treaty of Munster confines the Spaniards to their then possessions and navigation and the Spaniards themselves will not presume to contradict this established construction.¹

However, the Secretary of State was seriously alarmed by the Company's authorisation of the venture without the sanction of the cabinet, particularly at this time of severe strain in Anglo-Bourbon relations. 'But considering it in a Political Light', Weymouth reproved the Chairman and Deputy Chairman on 24 November 1768,

I must not conceal from you, that His Majesty is extremely surprized to find the East India Company desire his Protection to a Measure, upon which He has never been consulted, and to hear, for the first time, that They have ordered their Servants to take possession of an Island, without the least Information of any other Right upon which that Measure is founded, except that of Utility, nor any Account, by which His Majesty might judge, whether it can interfere with the subsist-

¹ A. Dalrymple, A Full and Clear Proof that the Spaniards can have no claim to Balambangan (London, 1774), p.31. Dalrymple used the same arguments in a letter to Weymouth of 1 May 1769, Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.100, p.177.
ing treaties with other states, or give Umbrage to these Powers, with which He is upon Terms of Amity and Friendship. ¹

The Company was instructed not to attempt to remove the Spanish by force if they were established at the island of Palawan, while the Ministry expressed its disapproval of any attempts to assist the Sultan if he were engaged in a war with the Spanish. The government feared that the Company, through some reckless and ill-considered action, might provide the Bourbon powers with a casus belli. As a palliative measure the Court of Directors apologised on 16 December for the delay and provided the Minister with all the relevant documents. ²

Thus the question of a settlement at Balambangan ultimately involved the matter of imperial direction and control, an issue which became of increasing importance in the late 1760's as successive ministries led by Grenville, Chatham and Grafton sought to curb the growing power of the East India Company. We have already examined the development of this crisis in other situations, in Bengal and in the Carnatic, and the commissioners whom the Company appointed in June 1769 were also instructed to examine carefully the proposed establishment at Balambangan,

¹ Weymouth to Chairman and Deputy Chairman, 24 November 1768, Home Miscellaneous Series, vol. 99, pp. 204-5.
which, the Court hoped, would be 'a very important benefit to the Company in their present circumstances'. Sir John Lindsay, who soon followed the commissioners with extensive private instructions from the Crown, was to ensure that the undertaking did not 'interfere with the Rights of any other Power' before authorising the enterprise.

On receiving the instructions of the Court of Directors, the Bombay Council commissioned Captain Savage Trotter to compile a detailed survey of the island and investigate its resources. Although his report was enthusiastic, the venture was delayed until June 1771, when the Court of Directors despatched a small force to establish a factory at Balambangan. Towards the end of 1773 the Britannic arrived at the island, but the establishment was abandoned after it was attacked by the Suluans in February 1775.

Apart from these moves by the Company, the French and

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1 Court of Directors to Fort St George, 30 June 1769, Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.101, p.97. This letter informed the Presidency of the appointment of the commissioners and the extent of their powers.

2 R. Wood to Michell, 1 September 1769, Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.101, p.1. At this stage of the negotiations between the Secretary of State and the Court, Weymouth was attempting to secure the Company's formal recognition of Lindsay's powers. See chapter 5, pp.213-15.

the Spanish were also interested in making contact with the native rulers of these islands. On 22 February 1772 a French snow arrived at Sulu from Sambuangan (Zamboanga), and the commanding officer delivered a letter to the Sultan from Louis XV and the Naval Minister, Choiseul-Praslin, conveying the offer of a military alliance in exchange for commercial concessions and a share in the spice trade.¹ It appears that Poivre was a leading influence behind this attempt to embarrass the East India Company. However, 'the young Sultan and all the Chiefs were against taking any notice of this Letter'.² At the same time as these intrigues and counter-intrigues were proceeding, efforts were made by Edward Monckton and Charles Des Voeux, both appointed by the Madras Council, to form settlements at Kedah and Acheh respectively,³ while French missions also appeared at Acheh and the Maldives.

French administrators at the Ile de France and in India deluged the ministry in Paris with plans for the foundation of

² Intelligence from Xolo Balambangan etc. received 16 October 1772, Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.107, p.33.
entrepôt-bases in the Eastern Seas during these decades. Law de Lauriston argued that the French had to contend with genuine liabilities in their Asiatic trade because they had no adequate source of revenue in India to remedy the drain of bullion from Europe to pay for their investment. Whereas the English were in the fortunate position of being able to draw on the Bengal revenues and the Dutch had their lucrative spice trade, 'les François, portugais, Danois et Suédois sont aujourd'hui les seules nations Européennes qui exportent de l'argent pour le commerce des Indes'. Consequently de Lauriston advocated the conversion of Mauritius into the principal commercial emporium of the Indian Ocean and stressed once more the pressing need to fortify Port Louis and render it impregnable to naval attack.

L'île de France est un centre qui permet l'exécution des plus grandes entreprises sur l'Inde, sur Batavia, sur le Cap de Bonne-Esperance et même sur le Brésil. Cette île par sa situation, ses ports, sa fertilité et la salubrité de son climat doit devenir l'entrepôt des Indes françaises.

Yet the favourite project of de Lauriston and Chevalier entailed a sweeping commercial agreement with Spain, which would enable the Compagnie to exploit the China and the Spanish American trade through a base in the Philippines. The annual treasure

1 "Manière de commencer des compagnies Européennes aux Indes", 1768, Françaises Nouvelles Acquisitions, vol. 9365, p. 139.
ship from Acapulco would provide the French with the bullion so essential for the trade with Canton. Such a scheme, moreover, appeared to be the natural outcome of the Pacte Famille and the problems common to the French and the Spanish in the East, where they were both faced with the quite staggering growth of British trade. (During the last half of the eighteenth century British exports to the East trebled in value and imports from the East enjoyed a five-fold increase.)¹ In spite of these attractions, the Spanish at Manila stubbornly refused an alliance with the French mainly because they wanted to preserve their monopoly intact and, if possible, mollify the British.

During 1768 and 1769 de Lauriston suggested that the French government authorise an establishment in Cochin China or Cambodia, and in proposing this scheme de Lauriston resorted to the earlier arguments elaborated by Dupleix and Poivre. He was informed by some Portuguese traders who had recently visited Cochin China that the ruling prince was favourably disposed towards the French. He also remarked on the presence of a bishop and priests of the Missions Étrangères, who, because of their detailed and close acquaintance with Cambodia, would be of assistance in any French attempts to penetrate the trade of Cochin China.

In conclusion he recommended that an experienced and enterprising trader should be left at the court of the King for a year to gather further information.¹

Choiseul-Praslin, the cousin of the duc de Choiseul, noted these views and began a correspondence with Poivre about an expedition to Cochin China in 1768. While Poivre, now Intendant at the Ile de France, appreciated well enough the strategic and commercial merits of such a mission, he considered that a large measure of financial and military assistance from the government would be necessary to render it successful against the depredations of the King or his rebellious and unruly subjects.²

The idea was temporarily dropped after the fall of Choiseul until de Rothe put forward his proposals in 1775. A former merchant at Canton, de Rothe argued that the China trade could be best promoted from bases in Cochin China; that Cochin China would provide the French with ample naval stores and wood for the building of ships; and that the French from Cochin China 'en temps de guerre...intercepteroient tous les vaisseaux anglais à l'entrée, ou à la sortie de Canton'.³ The strength and prestige

¹ De Lauriston to Choiseul, 10 February 1769, Françaises Nouvelles Acquisitions, vol. 9365, pp. 184-5.
² Taboulet, pp. 151-4.
³ 'Réflexions Politiques et Secrettes sur les Royaumes de Cochin Chine et de Camboge', September 1775, Colonies, p. 141.
that would accrue from the establishment of a French 'sphere of influence' in this region would show the country powers that there was still some fight left in the French state, and would also 'persuade' the English to be less rapacious in their demands on French trade in India. Finally, and almost as an afterthought, de Rothé emphasised the opportunities which such political influence would provide for the conversion of souls. In his project, de Rothé mentioned the activities of the English in the eastern islands, at Sulu and Balambangan, and stressed the transcendent need to pre-empt their claims in Cochin China.

Il semble qu'il ne reste plus que la Cochinchine qui ait échappé jusqu'ici à la vigilance des Anglais, mais peut-on se flatter qu'ils tarderont à y porter leurs vues? S'ils s'y decident avant nous, nous en serons exclus pour jamais; nous aurons perdu un point d'appui important dans cette partie de l'Asie qui nous rendroit les maîtres d'intercepter aux Anglais, en temps de guerre, leur commerce en Chine, en protégeant le nôtre par toute l'Inde, et les tiendroit dans une continuelle inquiétude. Si les Anglais enfin s'y établissent, ils nous regarderont comme leurs tributaires sur toutes les côtes de l'Asie, et ils nous traiteront en conséquence.¹

These observations were presented to Vergennes and de Sartine, who were initially well disposed to a scheme which would compensate for French weakness in India. The Ministry instructed de Rothé to prepare the expedition as a private venture so as not to antagonise the English. However, in 1776, the

¹ Colonies '3, p.143.
Ministry, fearful of antagonising the Spanish and British governments, dissociated itself from the scheme and insisted that de Rothe himself should take full responsibility for the venture. Not unexpectedly, de Rothe’s enthusiasm abated at this point.¹

For over a decade Chevalier had shown a sustained interest in the prospect of establishing fortified factories at Pegu, the Andamans, Mergui, the Philippines and Cochin China. When, therefore, in February 1778 some mandarins from Cochin China together with a Portuguese Jesuit inadvertently arrived at Calcutta, he attempted to persuade the French governor at Pondicherry to assist the prince of Cochin China in his struggle against the Tayson and his traditional rivals in the north, the Trinh. Several years before a serious revolt erupted in the domains of Dinh-vuong. Rebels from the mountainous central-west assaulted the power of the Nguyen family, based since the eclipse of the Le empire in the seventeenth century on Hue, while Trinh forces from Tonkin invaded the Nguyen territory and took Hue in 1774. Forced to retreat into their strongholds in the south, the Nguyen surrendered Saigon to the Tayson brothers in 1776, and again in 1777, when most of the Nguyen family were slain. Nguyen-Phuoc-Anh, a nephew of the prince and the sole survivor of this massacre, managed to escape to an island with the aid of a French

¹ Taboulet, p.155, Maybon, pp.171-3.
missionary-bishop, Pigneau de Behaine.¹

The venerable mandarins, one of whom was 'a first Cousin of the King of Cochin China' and the other a man 'of considerable Rank', were brought to Calcutta in an English ship, the Rumbold, and Hastings eagerly provided them with a house and 'a Suitable Establishment during their Residence in Calcutta'.² Meanwhile Chevalier learnt from the Portuguese missionary, Father Loureiro, who was 'de plus intimement lié avec le Prince et tous les Seigneurs de Sa cour où il étoit distingué par le grade de Mandarin', of the splendid opportunities for intervention in the civil war. 'C'est alors, Monsieur,' confided Chevalier to Bellecombe, 'que vous pourriez opérer de grandes choses et dans l'indoustan et dans les différents pays de l'Asie'.³ According to Chevalier's enthusiastic report, '150 Européens et 200 Sipoyes réunis aux forces impériales seraient beaucoup plus qu'il ne faut pour détruire l'ennemi raffermir le prince sur le trône et ramener la paix et la tranquilité'. He feared that the English were contemplating similar measures, and insisted categorically that Bellecombe act to forestall them. His alarms were perfectly

¹ Lê Thanh Khôi, Le Viêt-Nam, pp.296-9. See also D.G.E. Hall, A History of South East Asia, pp.363-6.
² Extract of Bengal General Consultations, 12 February 1778, Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.219, p.719.
³ Chevalier to Bellecombe, 12 February 1778, Colonies 3, p.168.
In his next letter to Bellecombe of 30 April 1778, Chevalier recommended the services of the Portuguese priest, who was proceeding to Pondicherry to act as an interpreter for the expedition. Chevalier's ideas were somewhat more crystallised and he proposed the speedy conclusion of a defensive and offensive alliance with the Nguyen. In return for military assistance, this prince would be persuaded to grant the French a commercial base at Faifo, and the exclusive right to trade throughout his lands. And from such a foothold Chevalier believed that the French would be able to extend their influence to Thailand, Tonkin and even to southern China.¹

For it was the lure of the almost inaccessible Middle Kingdom, with its enormous resources and its untapped markets, that beckoned Englishmen and Frenchmen alike. It was this same goal that had inspired Hastings' early interest in Tibet and in the various hill states bordering the northern frontier of Bengal, an enterprise that had received the full endorsement of the Court

¹ Chevalier to Bellecombe, 30 April 1778, Colonies 13, pp.161-7. Father Loureiro travelled on the ship to Pondicherry which bore this letter. In the appendix to Chapman's report, which is found in the China and Japan Factory Records, vol.18, there are further details of Chevalier's attempts to organise a French expedition to assist the King.
of Directors. 1 'We desire you will obtain the best intelligence you can whether trade can be opened with Nepaul, and whether cloth and other European commodities may not find their way thence to Thibet, Lhassa and the western parts of China'. 2 George Bogle's mission to the Tashi Lama during 1774-75 did indeed establish the basis of good relations between Tibet and the Company, but the mountainous terrain of that country prohibited any further commercial or diplomatic contact. Cochin China, on the other hand, appeared a more likely prospect and Hastings accordingly authorised a small expedition to take the mandarins back to their country. Charles Chapman, the leader of this expedition, was instructed to make a thorough examination of the economic prospects of the region.

At the Council meeting Hastings proceeded to outline the great advantages 'that may be reaped from a Commercial Intercourse with Cochin China'. A factory at Tourane would fulfil the same objectives as the 'proposed settlement at Balambangan' in attracting the China trade.

Cochin China is peculiarly happy in its Situation for Commerce, Possessing a large extent of Coast of its own; it is within five days sail of Canton, has the

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Philippines laying opposite to it, the great Island of Borneo, the Molucca and Bunda Islands a few degrees to the South East, with Siam and Malacca to the Westward.1

Chapman left Calcutta on 9 April 1778. He was authorised to attempt and negotiate a commercial alliance with the prince. In supporting the mission, Hastings revealed his concern about Chevalier's overtures to the Jesuit and the mandarins and the more extensive operations of French missionaries and merchants in Cochin China. Chapman echoed these fears in the report which he presented to the Fort William Council in September 1779 after his return. The main emphasis of his report lay on the strategic advantages of a connection with Cochin China. He wrote:

Great as the commercial advantages are, the political ones resulting from a settlement in Cochin China would be scarce inferior. Turon Bay would not only afford a secure retreat to our Indiamen in case of losing their passage to China, but from thence we might also intercept the fleets of any hostile power either going to or returning from that country. We should become formidable neighbours to the Dutch and to the Spaniards and, in the event of war with either of them, attack with advantage their most valuable settlements.2

Nonetheless, the Calcutta Council was not encouraged to found a settlement there at this stage. The commercial incentives remained

1 Extract of Bengal General Consultations, 30 March 1778, Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.219, p.725.
NORTH-EAST MONSOON
November - April
SOUTH-WEST MONSOON
May - October
as strong as ever, but Cochin China was ravaged by civil war and the French threat was temporarily removed with the capture of their Indian settlements in 1778.

11. FRENCH ACTIVITY IN COCHIN CHINA AND THE BRITISH AT PENANG 1783-1789

In the preceding chapters an attempt has been made to assess the nature and importance of French attempts to re-establish their influence in India during the War of American Independence, the only open and global conflict between English and French forces in the period under consideration, and we have noted the considerable disparity between French ambitions and their performance in the South. In spite of this, the concatenation of a French war with a series of Indian wars did unnerve the Company and seriously embarrass their governments in the East. Moreover, in Chapter 2 we noted the fundamental importance of the American War in exposing the geo-political designs of the French, which in turn provoked the British to develop their own imperial strategy.¹ The alarming activities of de Suffren finally demonstrated the need for a naval base to the east of the Bay of Bengal to defend the eastern trade with China and protect the settlements in Bengal and along the Coromandel from a surprise naval attack.

¹ Chapter 2, pp. 59-74.
There can be no doubt that the Dutch entry into the war had a profound effect on these developments too. During 1782 the oceanic and trading links between Britain and India were almost completely severed by the French occupation of the Cape and Trincomalee, and by Dutch mastery of the Malacca and Sunda Straits. British ships damaged in war were forced to refit at Bombay, the only natural harbour the Company possessed in the East, while the East Indies fleet was also forced to resort to Bombay during the winter monsoon, thus leaving the Coromandel and Bengal Presidencies precariously exposed to attack from the Ile de France, Trincomalee, or the Dutch bases in the East Indies.

According to one contemporary writer;

The daring activity of Suffrein at this juncture made a striking impression. No change of Monsoon induced him to quit the Bay (of Bengal), and during the absence of the British Fleet he swept the Sea, destroyed our Trade and intercepted the Supplies from Bengal to the other Presidencies. A Ship of the line and 2 Frigates, which he stationed off the Sand-heads or entrance into the Hooghly, at one time nearly shut up the Port of Bengal; and at another time they made valuable Captures, carrying back an ample Supply of all Sorts of Provisions & Stores, which neither his own resources nor those of his allies could have furnished.¹

The extremely lucrative country trade with China and the eastern islands was imperilled through the lack of a naval base in eastern waters, and a heightened awareness of these strategic weaknesses

¹ From 'A Memoir on Prince of Wales Island considered Politically and Commercially', Straits Settlements Records, vol. I.
reinforced the efforts of the British to obtain a commercial emporium and a naval base on the way to Canton.

Alfred Thayer Mahan, in his study of the elements of sea-power, argued that mastery of the ocean lanes depended not only on a strong mercantile marine and armed navy, but also on the possession of 'stations along the road, like the Cape of Good Hope, St. Helena, and Mauritius, not primarily for trade, but for defence and war'. However this may be, in areas like the Malay archipelago the acquisition of factories and bases inevitably involved the maritime power in the question of territorial expansion. In fact, it had been precisely this fear of uncontrolled expansion that had made the ministry and the Court of Directors so wary of the schemes of Dalrymple. After the American War, however, the Company was more inclined to intervene in the politics of indigenous Asian states, when its interests appeared threatened and when there seemed a reasonable prospect of securing the concessions it desired from the native ruler. Captain Thomas Forrest's abortive embassy to the Celebes in April 1782, authorised by Hastings 'to excite the King of Celebes, the Sultan of Mindanao and other Chiefs against their antient oppressors the Dutch and to endeavour to deprive them of their possessions in

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those Countries, was soon followed by other missions of a quasi-diplomatic character. Henry Botham was despatched on an embassy to the King of Acheh in August 1782, and Forrest once more led a deputation to the King of Riau in July 1784. Forrest, who was to attempt 'to open a free intercourse of Trade not only with the Inhabitants of Rhio, but of all the neighbouring Islands', was to be vigilant in keeping 'a watchful eye on the designs of the Dutch.' Clearly the Calcutta Council was alarmed by the attempts of the Dutch after 1783 to re-assert their influence in the Malacca Straits area, though the Council was reluctant openly to challenge the Dutch spice monopoly. It is not surprising, then, that Forrest was forestalled at Riau by van Braam and his imposing squadron.

Not to be outmanoeuvred by their rivals, the French also sent a number of expeditions to investigate the commercial and strategic merits of establishments further eastwards. In September

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2 Botham's embassy, apart from considerations of trade, was conditioned by the need to establish a base in Sumatra which would be less vulnerable to attack from Batavia than Bencoolen. See Harlow, vol.II, pp.340-2, and Home Miscellaneous Series, vol.219, pp.577-612.

1783 Suffren commissioned Geslin to spend some time in Pegu and thereby acquire information about Burmese politics and trade.

At this time Bussy and de Suffren, dissatisfied with Pondicherry as the capital of French India because of its close proximity to Madras, were considering alternate sites for their chef-lieu. Syriam in Pegu appeared a likely choice and Geslin was to discern the Burmese King's reactions to such a suggestion. Of course the French were also drawn to the area because of its renowned teak supplies.

La Pegou fournit les trois quarts des vaisseaux qui naviguent dans l'Inde qui sont construits et mâtes de teq. Il est facile de s'y en procurer toute la quantité qu'on en peut désirer, soit pour la construction et pour la mâture des Vaisseaux, pour l'artillerie de placer et de campagner, soit enfin pour les bâtisses qu'on aura à construire, lorsque nous rentrons dans nos possessions au Bengale et sur la Côte de Coromandel. On trouveroit difficilement ailleurs ces articles en aussi grande abondance et d'aussi bonne qualité.¹

The councils in India were soon made aware of French activities in this quarter. A memorandum sent to Andrew Ross at Madras in 1784, which in all probability was composed by that ubiquitous country trader, Francis Light, claimed that Geslin, 'a Lieutenant in the grand Marine', had been sent to Pegu to

¹ 'Memoire pour procurer des boix de mâture de construction et autres pour les vaisseaux du Roi dans l'Inde', 1782, Colonies '21, p.74. The orders and instructions given to Geslin by Suffren on 9 September 1783, are located in Colonies '21, pp.79-84.
investigate the resources for a provisioning base. 'By the Instructions he left, when he went for Ava, it appeared that Rice and Boats, Timbers and Planks with some large masts, were what he came for'\(^1\). Although the French were 'not esteemed' by the Burmese, the memorialist believed that 'the indefatigable attention Geslin paid to his Business cannot fail of great success'. He considered 'that the French must very soon plant some Colony for the accommodation of the very encreasing population of the Islands of Mauritius and Bourbon' and he strongly suspected that it would be at 'some of the Islands on the Tennassary Coast, where they get supplied with all the necessaries of life from Pegu'. To counter any probable French move the Madras Council was encouraged to authorise a settlement at Junk Ceylon.

The French also renewed their interest in certain strategically located islands in the Indian Ocean, especially Diego Garcia. Souillac's action in sending the Normand to that island in May 1784 eventually provoked a counter-expedition from the British, and the ramifications of these moves were felt as far away as Paris and London\(^2\). In fact, after the American War the

\(^1\) 'Memorandum relative to the view/s of the French in cultivating an intercourse with Pegu and forming an establishment at the Island on the Coast of Tannassary', addressed to Andrew Ross, Fort St George Council, 18 March 1784, Straits Settlements Records, vol.I, pp.55-7.

\(^2\) A full account of the French and British moves at Diego Garcia is found in F.O. 148/6.
Ministry of Marine showed a quite remarkable interest in eastern waters and several expeditions of discovery were commissioned to survey the coastline of Asia from Suez to Korea. Rosily Mesrof was authorised in July 1784 to examine Madagascar and Mozambique, the Persian Gulf and the coast from Arabia to Suez; de Richery, after evacuating the French troops from Trincomalee, was instructed to chart the coasts of Tonkin, Cochin China, Siam, Malacca, Kedah, the Nicobars and the Andamans; while La Pérouse's expedition, which left Brest in May 1785, was to make the fullest examination of the coast of China from Canton to Korea. Cossigny, the Governor at Pondicherry, believed that 'ces trois voyages réunis, donneront une connaissance complète de toutes les côtes de l'Asie'. Other voyages were undertaken by Kergariou-Loemaria

1 See Françaises Nouvelles Acquisitions, vol.9434, pp.111-12, for Rosily Mesrof's instructions; and Françaises Nouvelles Acquisitions, vol.9434, pp.112-14, for de Richery's instructions. Further instructions which de Richery received in India are in Colonies '4, pp.10-13.

2 Cossigny to the Minister of Marine, 19 July 1787, Françaises Nouvelles Acquisitions, vol.9373, p.104. Curiously enough the same despatch mentioned rumours of a British settlement at New Holland, and urged the sending of a French expedition there under de Richery. The French authorities, both in India and in Europe, were convinced that this new settlement was part of a global maritime strategy to protect and foster British trade and influence eastwards. This, however, remains a controversial matter in Australian history, and for a recent discussion of the motives behind the founding of settlements in Australia see K.M. Dallas, 'The First Settlement in Australia considered in Relation to Sea-power in World Politics', Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Papers and Proceedings, 1952, No.3 (published in September 1968 as 'Commercial Influences on the First Settlements in Australia', T.H.R.A., vol.16, no.2, pp.36-49) and G. Blainey, The Tyranny of Distance (Melbourne, 1966), pp.18-46. The 'orthodox' view, that Port Jackson was intended primarily as a dumping ground for convicts, is presented in E. O'Brien, The Foundation of Australia (1786-1800): A Study in English Criminal Practice and Penal Colonization in the Eighteenth Century, second ed. (Sydney, 1950).
to the coast of Muscat and the Indian littoral from Surat to Mangalore, and by Kersauzon and Prévillo. ¹ Most of these expeditions were closely supervised by Admiral d'Entrecasteaux, the commander of the Indian station of the French navy, who himself visited Canton in February 1787. Each of the commanders was instructed to note the strength of British naval power in the regions they visited, and all were surprised at the ubiquity of British country traders. D'Entrecasteaux, for instance, wrote to the Minister: 'Plus on navigue dans ces mers, Monseigneur, et plus on est étonné de l'énorme puissance des anglais dans ces vastes et riches contrées'. ²

Furthermore, with the conclusion of the Franco-Dutch treaty at Fontainebleau in November 1785, the influence of the French government increased substantially in the United Provinces and the French were more than a little optimistic of gaining exclusive access to the Dutch bases at the Cape, Trincomalee and the East Indies. ³ The British naturally enough were alarmed by

¹ See Francaises Nouvelles Acquisitions, vol. 9434, pp. 115-19, for the instructions given to Kergariou-Loemaria, 15 August 1786.
² D'Entrecasteaux to the Minister of Marine, May 1787, Francaises Nouvelles Acquisitions, vol. 9373, p. 87. D'Entrecasteaux's visit to Canton was intended to ameliorate the conditions of French trade at Canton, and although in this respect it was a failure, it influenced the British governments' decision to send an embassy to China in 1787.
³ See chapter 7, pp. 324-38, for a detailed treatment of the European aspects of this crisis.
such a hostile combination, fearing that in a future war they might be squeezed out of the China trade altogether.

At this critical juncture French attention turned once more to Cochin China, where the French bishop had involved himself in the elaborate intricacies of that civil war which was raging between the Tayson, the Trinh forces from the north, and the weakened Nguyen party in the south. By 1783 the prince, Nguyen Anh, was in desperate straits, so desperate in fact that he appealed through the bishop, Pierre-Joseph-Georges Pigneau de Behaïne, for French military assistance. Arriving at Hatien as a missionary with the Missions Étrangères in 1767, Pigneau de Behaïne was consecrated Bishop of Adran and Apostolic Vicar of Cochin China in 1774. His responsibilities and powers in Cochin China were further increased after the dissolution of the Jesuit order in 1773. During his long and turbulent sojourn in Cochin China, interrupted by persecutions and the exigencies of civil war, he acquired a thorough and intimate acquaintance with the ruling dynasties and politics of Cochin China, Tonkin and Thailand. And throughout these vicissitudes he was sustained by the vision of a Catholic empire in the Far East, closely allied with France. He witnessed the many misfortunes of Dinh-vuong, who, as we have seen, was forced to flee from the traditional capital of Hué in 1775 before abdicating in favour of his nephew, Nguyen Anh. From 1776
the bishop was in close contact with the Nguyen family, and Nguyen Anh, for the most part restricted to some off-shore islands and a part of the Mekong delta, entrusted him with the protection and education of the four year old Prince Canh in 1783. At this time, when his position was most precarious and uncertain, Nguyen Anh also accepted the bishop's offer of a French alliance, but this only happened after Nguyen Anh had made an unsuccessful attempt to form an alliance with the Thais. The bishop optimistically promised that the French government would provide the King with 1,500 men, an artillery company and the vessels in which to transport them and their munitions to Cochin China. In return Nguyen Anh agreed to cede the French King 'en pleine et entière souveraineté, l'Ile qui forme le port principal de toute la Cochinchine, appelé par les Européens le port de Touron'.

The French were to be given joint control with the Cochin Chinese of Hoi-nan, which commanded Tourane Harbour, and they were to be accorded a free and exclusive trade throughout the kingdom. The bishop was also authorised to offer the French government the island of Pulo Condore.

Accompanied by the young prince, the bishop arrived at

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Pondicherry in February 1785, soon after the return of the French settlements. But he failed to persuade the acting governor, Coutenceau des Algrins, to intervene in Cochin China. Exasperated, Pigneau turned to the Portuguese at Macao and Goa, who were equally disobliging, \(^1\) and in July 1786 he sailed with the prince for France to negotiate a treaty there with Louis XVI. \(^2\)

In the meantime Francis Light arrived at Calcutta in early January 1786, bearing the Sultan of Kedah's offer of Penang to the East India Company. The Sultan appears to have been anxious to enlist the services of the Company against his belligerent neighbours, particularly Thailand and Burma, both of whom claimed tribute from Kedah. Light informed the Governor General, Macpherson, that he had acquired Penang from the Sultan because 'it was the wish of this Government to obtain some useful and convenient Port for the protection of the Merchants who trade to

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\(^2\) On 20 June 1786, however, Cossigny and d'Entrecasteaux, who were initially more sympathetic to the bishop's schemes than des Algrins had been, instructed de Richery to proceed to Thailand and Cochin China to locate Nguyen Anh. De Richery, who had visited Cochin China in 1785, took with him a Father Paul Nghi and some Cochin Chinese pilots and sailors. (They had arrived in the preceding year with the bishop). The voyage was intended primarily as a reconnaissance to investigate the resources, trade and ports of Cochin China, and de Richery was to inform the King of the bishop's departure for France. If his position proved impossible, de Richery was to escort Nguyen Anh to Pondicherry. 'Instructions pour M. de Richery, Enseigne de Vau, Commandant la flotte du Roy Le Marquis de Casties', 20 June 1786, *Colonies* 4, pp. 10-13.
China, and for the service of His Majesty's Fleet in the time of War in either monsoon. After carefully describing the commercial and strategic merits of the island, Light expressed concern at the tightening of the Dutch hold over the Malacca Straits, and the extent of French involvement in Cochin China. Both powers were now united in an alliance, and Light feared that the French in Cochin China, aided and abetted by their Dutch friends, might exclude the Company from the eastern country trade and the even more important trade at Canton. 'The French', he wrote,

by the Interest of a missionary Bishop, have obtained permission to establish a Settlement in Cochin China; and last August they sent two Frigates and a Store Ship with 500 Troops, Artillery, etc., to take possession; they are to be followed by two more Vessels from the Islands or Pondicherry; the French are to assist the Cochin Chinese against the Siamese, with whom (by the blessed endeavours of the pious Bishop) they are at War.

The Bishop, before he went to Pondicherry visited Siam, and is particularly acquainted with the characters, dispositions and views of that Court. He had laid the Plan of a Rebellion which is now actually begun, and no doubt during the contention he means to seize the bone himself. The history of his works are too long for this Letter, but they are not inferior to any which have been attempted in the Eastern Stage for a Century past.  

In this important despatch Light explained that he had learnt of the bishop's tortuous schemes at Junk Ceylon, near which

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place a priest and two officers sent by Pigneau had died. He had procured the 'Letters and Musters' of the expedition and claimed that 'they were meant to prepare the way for what the Bishop is now putting in execution'. Certainly there is a note of unreality and panic in Light's account of the intrigues in Cochin China, but this distortion was probably due to the rather garbled verbal reports he picked up at Junk Ceylon and his not unreasonable assumption that the French at Pondicherry or at the Ile de France would immediately act on the agreement concluded between the bishop and Nguyen Anh.

It is significant, too, that Light was anxious to force the hand of the Supreme Government at Calcutta, for he had his own substantial interests as a country trader to protect and foster. In 1771 he had tried unsuccessfully to interest the Madras firm of Jourdain, Sulivan and de Souza in the prospect of intervening in Kedah to secure a foothold at Penang. And later in 1777 and 1779, Light and James Scott, a trading partner, urged the Bengal Government to found bases at Mergui and Junk Ceylon respectively.

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1 Light's role as an intermediary between the Sultan and the Company is a controversial one and it is quite clear that Light secured his own interests as a country trader by the settlement at Penang. See R. Bonney, 'Francis Light and Penang', in J.M.B.R.A.S., vol.XXXVIII, pt. I (1965), pp.135-54. Although this article tends to overestimate the importance of the initiatives taken by the Sultan, it does reveal how remote political events on the Southeast Asian mainland could have a considerable impact on the policies of the European companies.

While it is true, as Light's biographer has conceded, that there was precious little altruism in these proposals, there is no reason to doubt the patriotism of these men, traders though they were. As Scott wryly observed to Warren Hastings:

You may perhaps ask who this James Scott is. I will here, in part, anticipate the answer. He is a Scotsman struggling to pay off some incumbrances incurred during the war, formerly a trading master and owner, otherwise but little known, but will be happy should his misfortunes turn out eventually of use to his country. It has become too common to consider the attainment of a huge quantity of the precious metals as the chief object of existence.¹

Both Scott and Light were genuinely apprehensive of a French coup in an area they had come to look on as their own.² Light himself had spent some time in 1783 as a prisoner of de Suffren.³

Light, moreover, reported the activities of the French at Ava, to which place he believed they had sent an embassy in July 1785. 'It is not improbable', he argued, 'that the French having failed, in junction with their former Allies, have embraced a new scheme, and not a weak one'.⁴ On 15 February Light indicated

¹ James Scott to Hastings, 28 October 1784. Quoted in Clodd, pp.35-6.
² Note, for instance, Light's statement that 'I look upon a part of this Island to be my property, it was granted (me) by their own free will, the ground cleared at my own expense, and tho' unjustly drove off I think myself at liberty to resume it whenever I have power'. Clodd, p.31.
the probable consequences for the Company if the French were successful in Burma and Cochin China.

...should the French be able to Negotiate an Alliance with the Court of Ava and attain so much influence as to direct the Counsels and Armys of that haughty imperious Nation, They will then become a more formidable Enemy than when joined with Hyder or his Successor Tippoo, as it is well known the Country of Pegue can furnish Provisions, Timber and in short every thing requisite for the supply of their Fleets. Add to this the Acquisition of Cochin China a rich Country, the People Brave intelligent and faithful, capable of being made excellent soldiers and sailors, with such allies the enterprising Spirit of the French is certainly more to be feared than when connected only with their Old friends on the Coast of Coromandel.¹

And to reinforce his point, he mentioned that the Dutch were striving to re-establish their influence at Riau and Selangor.

Evidently Macpherson and the Council were impressed by these arguments, for in Macpherson's letter to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors, where he first made mention of Francis Light's offer of Penang and Junk Ceylon, he confided:

I have long had my Eye to the Movements of the French at Pegu and Cochin China. I shall propose Possession to be taken of the Ports and Islands offered to us by the King of Cuda, and especially of Junk Ceylon, which is occupied by a separate People to the Number of 50,000. These have offered Captain Light, the Sovereign Command among them.²

² Postscript to the Governor General's letter to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors, 26 January 1786, Straits Settlements Records, vol.1.
In this, the earliest reference to Light's project, Macpherson suggests that the Council hoped to establish twin settlements at Penang and Junk Ceylon. Scott had earlier advocated the formation of an entrepôt at Junk Ceylon, and his version of the French bishop's departure for Pondicherry 'to sollicit the assistance of the French against Siam and the Mountaineers' differed in no way from Light's account. Scott also informed the Council that the local ruler of the island was anxiously inviting the help of foreign powers against an anticipated Burmese invasion and that, unless the Company intervened, the French or the Dutch would almost certainly form an alliance with this ruler. However, by early March 1786 the Council had decided to concentrate its main attention on Penang.

When it is remembered that Sultan Abdullah of Kedah stipulated that the Company should defend him in any future war, whether it be against dissident subjects, hostile Malay or Bugis forces, or the Thais and the Burmese, it is indeed remarkable that Light should have succeeded in his mission. Of course, the Calcutta Council and the Court of Directors prevaricated in their attitude to the question of political involvement, but nonetheless the formation of an outpost of the Company in the Malacca Straits was a significant step and would sooner or later involve the

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Company in the domestic and external problems of the Sultan. For the success of this venture a large measure of credit must go to the man on the spot, the assiduous country trader, Francis Light, but there can be no doubt that the French menace was useful in goading the Company into action. Long after Light landed and took formal possession of Prince of Wales Island on 11 August 1786, the Superintendent of Penang continued to note French and Dutch activities. In September of that year he wrote to Calcutta: 'There is no doubt that on your leaving this, the Dutch or French would possess themselves of it, and then you would be entirely cut out from procuring any Cargoes for China'.

Hence, strategic pressures — born of the historic

1 Light to Fort William Council, 12 September 1786, Straits Settlements Records, vol. I. Throughout 1786 and 1787 the Bengal Council continued to receive reports from Canton and Penang of French activity in Cochin China and the Malay peninsula. On 11 January 1787 the factors of Canton wrote that 'the French have now made 3 Settlements in Cochin China, are planning one on the Island of Formosa, so that in a future War they will put an entire stop to the English China Trade, because not a Ship can come either through the China Sea or the Eastern Passage which they may not intercept. I do assure you these new Settlements must soon create jealousy and bring on new disturbances. The English here are much alarmed at the enterprising Spirit of their Gallic friends'. French in India, vol. XIII. In March 1787 Light communicated some curious details about the voyage of de Richery. He sailed into Penang on 25 March, but refused to answer Light's questions. Light believed that he had come to investigate the Company's latest possession, and he received further menacing reports from Malacca. 'Two frigates the Venus and the Précieuse were at Cochin China,...The Marquis de Castries went to Siam where the pretended heir to Cochin China resides a kind of State prisoner, He promised the French if they would put him in possession of his Country a Factory near the Sea'. Straits Settlements Records, vol. 2, p. 497.
struggle with the French - were as significant in the Council's decision to authorise and uphold the settlement at Penang as the purely commercial factor, the desire to open an entrepôt in the Eastern Seas. And whereas it is true that enterprising country traders like Scott and Light were furthering their own interests when they advocated such establishments, it is also evident that they genuinely feared a resurgence of French and Dutch influence in the Eastern Seas and Southeast Asia. In this instance profits and power were one and the same. Though the Calcutta Council was eager to anticipate any hostile French moves, it was now under the necessity of justifying its policy to an increasingly vigilant Board of Control in London. The Board, intent on carrying through a policy of retrenchment in India, was naturally reluctant to embroil the state and the Company in further schemes of conquest and expansion. In spite of this, it was persuaded of the need for an establishment at Pulo Penang by the cogency of Macpherson's arguments. 'We certainly wish to avoid any unnecessary Expence,' the Board wrote, but

at the same time we must confess, that we always felt the importance of every measure which tended to facilitate our Commerce in the Eastern Seas, and thereby promote a more certain intercourse of Commerce with China. As it seems the object of other Nations, particularly the Dutch, to impede that pursuit, it must of course be our business, by any means to counteract their attempts.¹

¹ Board of Control to Secret Committee, 28 July 1787, Board's Drafts of Secret Letters to India (21 May 1781 - 8 November 1795).
In all subsequent appraisals of the role and significance of Penang the need to forestall a French or a Franco-Dutch threat to the country trade was implicitly or explicitly recognised. The author of *A Memoir on Prince of Wales Island* claimed that had the Company 'held Penang in the last War (i.e. 1778-83) in good force, the French Fleet would not have appeared a second time in the Bay of Bengal because it is a windward station with respect to the Coast of Choromandel'. The writer still urged the Indian presidencies to be wary and 'guard against the insidious designs' of the French. Elisha Trapaud, another defender of Penang, emphasised the strategic importance of the new settlement, 'particularly if the French continue their footing at Trincomalay'. Penang would afford 'shelter for our East-India-men', and its large trees would enable men-of-war to winter and refit at the harbour. There were also strong inducements of a commercial kind for staying there. The 'whole money arising from the sales' of opium in the eastern islands 'would be paid into the Company's treasury for bills on the Court of Directors'.

Thus this inconsiderable spot, ...may now,... become a place of considerable advantage to our trade, by affording shelter and protection at all times to our

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1 'A Memoir on Prince of Wales Island considered Politically and Commercially', *Straits Settlements Records*, vol. I.
3 Trapaud, p. 29.
East-India ships, and a source of equal annoyance to our enemies, in case of a rupture with any of the powers who possess influence or actual dominion in the east.¹

These fears for the future were not unjustified since the French had not entirely relinquished their oriental ambitions.

When the Bishop of Adran and the young Prince Canh arrived in France in January 1787, the details of this embassy to the court of Louis XVI were meticulously noted by the British ambassador in Paris, the Duke of Dorset. On 22 March 1787 Dorset informed the Foreign Secretary, Carmarthen, of the presentation at Versailles of 'the Son of the King of Cochinchine'. 'He is brought hither', the ambassador averred, 'at the Request of His Father by a French Missionary to solicit the Assistance of His Most Christian Majesty in the Recovery of His Kingdom, from which He has been driven'.² Dorset believed that the French might form an establishment in Cochin China and that 'such an Undertaking... might eventually affect our China Trade'. These reports were speedily conveyed to the Board of Control and they must have confirmed the apprehensions about French activity earlier communicated to the Company by Francis Light. Carmarthen soon after instructed Dorset to inform the ministry of any 'further Particulars as to

¹ Trapaud, p.34.
² Dorset to Carmarthen, 22 March 1787, F.O. 27/21.
any Designs of forming an Establishment in their Country.\(^1\) However, the Stadholderate crisis intervened before the French government was prepared to conclude a treaty with the bishop.\(^2\)

Throughout 1787 the bishop ardently pressed his plans on the French government and in a plethora of lucidly argued projects and mémoires he enumerated the many commercial and strategic advantages accruing from a French sphere of influence in Cochin China. Above all he stressed the importance of checking the expansive power of the British. If successful, intervention would enable the French to counterbalance 'la grande influence de la nation Anglaise dans tous les Gouvernements de l'Inde, en y paraissant avec des ressources plus assurées et des secours moins éloignés que ceux qu'on attend d'Europe'; to dominate trade 'dans les mers de Chine et dans tout son Archipel'; to establish bases for the refitting and revictualling of their ships, 'et même en construire de nouveaux'; and finally, 'moyen efficace d'arrêter les Anglais dans les projets qu'ils ont de nous chasser de l'Inde et d'étendre leurs Établissements dans toute la côte de l'Est'.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) Carmarthen to Dorset, 6 April 1787, F.O. 27/21. On 20 December 1787 Dorset informed the Foreign Secretary that two frigates were ready to leave L'Orient, 'and it is supposed that the young King of Cochinchine will return home in one of them. These Ships it cannot be doubted will convey all Sorts of useful Stores to the Possessions of His Most Christian Majesty in that Part of the World'. French in India, vol.XIII.

\(^2\) See chapter 7, pp.333-36.

\(^3\) 'Avantages d'un Établissement à la Cochin chine', September 1787, Mémoires et Documents. Asie, vol.19, pp.103-4.
Pigneau even suggested that from their new strongholds in Cochin China the French would be able to assault the chief source of British power in Asia - Bengal.

The French ministry eventually yielded to these arguments but only after the conclusion of the Dutch crisis. The intervention of the Prussians and the restoration of the Orange party had, of course, the effect of eliminating French influence from the Dutch bases in the East. Moreover, Montmorin was also influenced by news of the British acquisition of Penang, a move which seemed further to undermine French influence in the region.

Consequently a defensive and offensive treaty was drawn up and signed by Montmorin, the Foreign Minister, and Pigneau, who acted as Nguyen Anh's plenipotentiary, on 28 November 1787. Incorporating the provisions of the draft treaty which the bishop brought from Nguyen Anh, the French government bound itself to provide 'le Roi de la Cochinchine' with four frigates, a corps of 1,200 infantry, 200 artillery and 250 caffres in return for the eventual cession of Hoi-nan and the island of Pulo Condore, and the right

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to a complete and exclusive trade throughout the kingdom. Nevertheless, the Minister was cautious in the instructions he transmitted to d'Entrecasteaux and Conway, the Governor at Pondicherry who was given the final say in the matter of an expedition to assist the Nguyen. Conway was to take into account the reports of de Richery, believed to have just returned from a survey of southern Cochin China, and if another European power intervened in the civil war, Conway was ordered to desist from the enterprise. The Foreign Minister was careful to describe the change in policy that had resulted from the collapse of the francophile Patriots in the States General.

La révolution qui vient de se faire en Hollande change considérablement nos combinaisons politiques dans l'Inde, et ne nous permet plus guère de regarder le Cap de Bonne Espérance, ou l'Île de Ceylon, comme un point d'appui, ou de refuge. Cette considération fait pencher le Gouvernement vers le parti de porter ses principales forces, ses moyens et son attention sur l'Île de France et sur un Etablissement nouveau qui mette plus de distance entre le siège de la puissance Anglaise et nous. Mais la Cochinchine pourra-t-elle remplir ce but? Voilà, Monsieur, ce que le Roi commet à votre Jugement et à vos connaissances....

By the time the bishop had returned to Pondicherry both d'Entrecasteaux and Conway had lost their enthusiasm for the

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1 The treaty is included in Conway's letter to Montmorin, 18 June 1788, *Colonies* 4, pp.166-73. It is also published in Taboulet, vol.I, pp.186-88; and Maybon, pp.409-11. See Appendix D.

2 "Copie de la lettre écrite à M. de Cte. de Conway", 2 December 1787, *Colonies* 4, p.84.
Cochin Chinese venture. D'Entrecasteaux, who now resided at Port Louis, considered that it would be difficult to raise the men, stores and ships for the expedition, and feared that such an enterprise might further endanger the precarious position of the French in India and at the Ile de France. He stressed the enormous distance that separated Cochin China from the other French possessions, and argued that the British and the Dutch could easily encircle and destroy any establishments formed there. At Pondicherry, on the other hand, a lengthy and heated correspondence ensued between Conway, the bishop, impatient to embark on the expedition, and the authorities in France. Conway tenaciously resisted the bishop's importunities because he was sceptical of the value of the enterprise. The deposed King, 'qui n'a rien, ne peut rien, dont le séjour est inconnu, et dont l'existence même est douteuse', was in no position to win back his lost dominion, or to cede to the French Pulo Condore and Hoi-nan. These islands, or so he had been informed, were infertile and deserted, while the surrounding countryside had been devastated by civil war. Besides, Pondicherry was quite unable to provide the bishop with the four frigates promised by the treaty, and the expedition was accordingly postponed for a year.¹ In August 1788 Conway despatched Kersaint to make a detailed survey of the coast of Cochin China, and especially the two islands of Hoi-nan and Pulo Condore. Kersaint's

¹ Conway to Montmorin, 18 June 1788, Colonies 4, pp.166-73.
report confirmed Conway's low estimate of the commercial potential of the islands with the result that Conway finally dropped the expedition.

The bishop, therefore, was forced to rely on voluntary assistance from Pondicherry, the French Islands and the Portuguese settlements at Goa and Macao. Despite this, the volunteers he brought with him to Saigon, Philippe Vannier and Jean Baptiste Chaigneau among them, were of considerable value to Nguyen Anh in his struggle against the Tayson forces, now established as the ruling power in Tonkin, Annam and much of Cochin China. When the bishop died in 1799 Nguyen Anh had taken Qui-nhon and was preparing his assault against the old imperial capital of Hue. By 1802 his power was established over Hue and most of Tonkin as well, and in that year he proclaimed himself Gia Long, emperor of Vietnam. Earlier, in 1790 an attempt was made to interest the National Assembly in supporting the Nguyen cause but the Assembly was preoccupied with domestic matters. Throughout, the British remained curious about these moves, and the Cathcart and Macartney embassies, though primarily devised to facilitate and expand the China trade, were not uninfluenced by d'Entrecasteaux's earlier mission to Canton and the flurry of French activity in Cochin China.¹

¹ Macartney was authorised by Dundas to visit Cochin China on his famous mission to China in 1793. See Lamb, 'British Missions to Cochin China', pp. 87-95.
Francis Light also remained anxious about the French during the early days of Penang, and after the outbreak of the Revolutionary War he anticipated a French attack. Although this was the intention of Rear-Admiral Sercey, who sailed from Port Louis in June 1796, his squadron was engaged by two British ships near Acheh whereupon Sercey hastily returned to Mergui and Batavia.  

This examination of the motives behind the establishment of Penang has shown the importance of political and strategic considerations. It was the need for security as well as for profits that impelled the Fort William Council to support the distant efforts of the man on the spot. Having sanctioned Light's proposals, the Council was obliged to justify its policy to the Board of Control and the Court of Directors. Apart from appealing to the now traditional arguments of opening up the eastern trade to China, the Council emphasised the menacing actions of the French in Cochin China and Thailand. Clearly the Council was alarmed by the reports of Light and Scott, and to a considerable extent such alarms were warranted by French plans, which aimed at thwarting, if not destroying, the Company's essential trade with China. With the bishop's embassy to France and the negotiation of an official treaty with the French government, the worst fears of the Company seemed on the verge of realisation. Thus, the

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activities and presence of the French in Southeast Asia acted as both an immediate pretext and vindication for the acquisition of Pulo Penang.

Moreover, the basic strategy behind the Penang venture could be applied again and again to different situations and in this sense the contretemps of 1786 presents in miniature the forces of European expansion in Asia. Trincomalee was rapidly taken in August 1795 to forestall the French and to ensure British dominance of the Bay of Bengal area. Similarly, Malacca was carried in the same year.

In yet another sense the occupation of Penang provides us with a microcosm of these expansive pressures, for it is a classic instance of the man on the spot initiating the process. Without the ambitious and imperturbable Francis Light, a man familiar with Malay customs and esteemed by the Sultan of Kedah and the other Malay chiefs, the enterprise would probably have floundered like so many before it. His voyages and dealings as a country trader, extending over a period of thirty years, gave him a thorough acquaintance with the palm-fringed coasts of the Malay peninsula and the islands of the archipelago. And his knowledge was not merely restricted to matters of commerce and geography. Light admitted, with his typical candour, to having 'co-habited'
with Martina Rozells, probably a Eurasian, from 1772, and it would appear that Light felt a strong personal attachment to the colourful and exotic life of the East. His attitude to Penang was almost feudal. Whatever his motives, there can be no doubt that there was a patriotic element in his character, though this was strangely mixed with his love of the eastern world. His counter-part, the Bishop of Adran, provides an interesting contrast. Pigneau was no less adept in the matter of native diplomacy and no less committed to his missionary charge. But the dream which sustained him during his bitter trials was the building of a Catholic empire in Cochin China. As a French Catholic he sought to buttress his religious endeavours with the power and authority of the French state. Indeed, it is a tribute to this vision that successive British governments in India remained concerned about French activity in Cochin China at least until the Congress of Vienna.

1 Clodd, pp.26-7.
2 See Lamb, 'British Missions to Cochin China', chapters 5-9, for a discussion of the two missions by Roberts in 1803 and 1804, and the Crawfurd Mission of 1822.
CHAPTER 7: THE FORMATION OF POLICIES

So far the core of the thesis has been concerned with the emergence and resolution of Anglo-French tensions at the local Asian level, although passing glances have been directed here and there at the wider ramifications of the contest. We have examined the pattern of relations between the English and the French in three different situations which emerged in the period from 1763 to 1793. Traditionally, of course, most historians have discounted the French after the Peace of Paris, claiming that the French gave up their overseas ambitions to allow the British an open hand in the task of imperial expansion. There has been no serious effort to discern the elements of continuity in French policy between the Seven Years' War and the Napoleonic empire, and there has been even less concern with discovering how this activity affected the growth of British policies in India, Asia and the Pacific. In this matter, it seems that English language historians of the 'Empire' school have been the most neglectful. By contrast, we have discovered that the French in the East continued to harbour designs to overthrow, or substantially to diminish, British trade and power in the region. The schemes so enthusiastically
devised and advocated by Chevalier, de Lauriston, de Bussy, Pigneau de Behaine and others provided the prototypes for the oriental plans of Napoleon. Nevertheless, it would be very short-sighted indeed to deny that there was a tragic disparity between French dreams of an eastern empire and French activities there. For what after all were the permanent visible results of such fantasies and obsessions?

Some historians have argued that the associations which France established at Madagascar, in Vietnam and in the Indian and Pacific Oceans during the ancien régime provided the basis for her more dramatic imperial role in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such is the view expressed in the monumental *Histoire des Colonies Françaises*, published between 1929 and 1933. Other historians would keenly dispute this proposition. They would argue that there was little connection between the colonial activities of the French in the two periods, and that such ventures, whether in the seventeenth, eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, were hardly more than a romp in the peripheral world. According to A.J.P. Taylor, for instance, 'France and Germany were essentially continental Powers; colonial ventures were for them a diversion of energy, as the French turned to

colonies only when they could do nothing else'. However this may be, there is at least one substantial legacy of the French which the preceding four chapters have shown, and that is the considerable impact these adventures had on the steady consolidation of British power in India and Further India during the latter half of the eighteenth century.

By concentrating only on the economic facets of this prodigious growth, too many historians have neglected the political and strategic elements behind the accumulation of new territories. These historians forget that in the year after Hastings' capture of the French settlements in India, Vergennes and Florida Blanca mounted a full scale invasion force at Brest to cross the Channel and take Portsmouth and Plymouth. They also forget that in the next year the indomitable Suffren left France with orders to capture the Cape, and should he succeed in that then to proceed with all despatch to the Coromandel and there to land troops to aid Hyder Ali. Throughout this period, from the early struggles with Dupleix in the Carnatic until the final extinction of French

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2 The invasion attempt of 1779 is examined in A. Temple Patterson, The Other Armada : The Franco-Spanish Attempt to invade Britain in 1779 (Manchester, 1960). Napoleon drew on these plans for his famous invasion attempt of 1803-5.
influence at the Ile de France in 1810 and at Java in 1811, a spectre haunted Englishmen in the East, the spectre of the French. Whether the fears were generated by the dispositions of the French in the East Indies, or whether such alarms arose from a global and geo-political threat - as they certainly did in the Napoleonic period - they were a crucial factor in persuading reluctant British ministries to endorse and support a vast imperial programme.

The perception by the British of the challenge to their interests depended, as we have seen, on the local situation in which the two powers were established, usually side by side. For most of the period, therefore, the British responses to the rival activities of the French were of a regional kind.

After Clive's conquest of Bengal and the conferring of the diwani on the Company, the north-east of India, comprising the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, was securely lodged in the hands of the British. Furthermore, by the eleventh article of the Peace of Paris the French were effectively eliminated from the area as a military threat, and they remained only as traders. Yet with leaders as enterprising as Chevalier the French did not supinely acquiesce in defeat, and during the 1770's and the 1780's French officials fought hard to retain their special trading and legal immunities. The Fort William Council was chagrined by this
graceless performance, and succeeded in curbing the grosser pretensions of their commercial rivals. However, the political situation in the north-west, where the Marathas were once more asserting their sway, was not healthy and seemed to invite French intervention. Suspicious of the designs of Chevalier and de Lauriston, the Council stepped in to order the demolition of the questionable ditch at Chandernagore, fearing that the French might hold up large forces in a siege while the Marathas, Shah Alam and the Nawab of Oudh descended from the north. With the passing and implementation of the Regulating Act, the Council became responsible for the other presidencies. Further evidences of Gallican perfidy were provided by the Madras and Bombay Councils, and the inevitable consequence was that the French were distrusted and jealously watched whereas the Dutch and the Danes, trading competitors but national allies, were largely left alone.

In the other parts of India where the Company was established, the Carnatic and the west, we have noticed that the French remained a more active political element in the situation. Trade was also a less important component of the rivalry. The embassies of Saint Lubin and Montigny to Poona, of Modave to Hyderabad, together with the missions sent by Tipu Sultan to Versailles, suggested a more tangible threat to the precarious footholds of the British. There can be no doubt that without the
French presence the Madras and Bombay Councils would still have been forced to fight in the internecine and seemingly interminable wars of the Indian states if they wished to maintain their independent position, though it is still true that Frenchmen, skilled at diplomatic maneuvering and training sepoys armies, convinced the councils of the utter necessity of intervention and victory. In fact, Wellesley's subsidiary alliance system was devised primarily to eliminate the threat from French mercenaries and agents in the South.

It is important to remember that the defeats of the Seven Years' War and the peace which followed had a searing effect on French government circles, and that Choiseul and his cousin strove incessantly to re-habilitate French naval strength. By the time of his dismissal from office the navy had grown from some forty ships of all types in 1763 to sixty-four of the line and fifty frigates. In keeping with this spirit the French ministry evinced real interest in those schemes aimed at establishing French influence in areas of only marginal interest to the English. The defences of Port Louis were greatly strengthened, while that typical eighteenth century adventurer, the comte de

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1 Temple Patterson, p.21.
Benyowski, was assisted in his efforts to colonise Madagascar. \(^1\) Later, with the arrival of Suffren's squadron in the Bay of Bengal, the French renewed their interest in Burma, Sumatra and Cochin China. Partly, then, as a response to the growing menace of French sea-power the Supreme Government at Fort William chose to form a refitting base and an entrepot at Penang. Light's timely reporting of the French bishop's intrigues in Cochin China and Thailand clinched the argument.

These three regional studies have clearly revealed that the initiatives in this battle of wits were taken on the spot by men eager to make their fortune and reputation. Although the amount of effective control exerted by European governments over their settlements and nationals in the East gradually increased during the late eighteenth century, much discretionary power was still left vested in the governors and councils. The sheer factor of distance was crucial, for it meant that at best despatches from London or Paris took six months to reach India while personal

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\(^1\) Maurice Benyowski (1741-1786) was a soldier of fortune of Hungarian birth. After serving in the Austrian army during the Seven Years' War, he fought with the Poles against the Russians. Eventually captured, he was exiled to Kamtchatka in Siberia, but he managed to escape to China and Japan. From Canton he sailed to Paris, and in 1772 obtained the ministry's support to form a settlement at Madagascar, 'une colonie vaste et ample, aussi riche que formidable, plus encore, un bouclier contre nos ennemis aux Indes'. He established Louisbourg in the north-east of the island (1775-6), though he left soon after to join the American revolutionary armies. He was killed in Madagascar in 1786 at the hands of an expedition sent from the Ile de France.
correspondence, if it arrived at all, took from two to three years. In this situation of 'salutary neglect' the English and the French were free to put their pet schemes to the test without necessarily committing their respective governments to any one line of action. His Majesty's Secretary of State often chided the Company for the audacious and presumptuous exploits of its agents in the East Indies. The Fort William Council's compliance with de Lauriston's request for a small force at Chandernagore was one such case (though here the endeavours of the Council were devoted temporarily to conciliating the French, and not to repelling or anticipating them), and Dalrymple's Balambangan venture another. Choiseul and Vergennes were almost as distrustful of their own traders in the East, their attitude exemplifying the aristocrat's contempt for the merchant. In practice, however, the English were usually able to exploit their stronger position in India and the Eastern Seas to overawe and intimidate the French and their allies. Six months was more than enough time in which to present the home government with a fait accompli.

In India relations between the English and the French were almost invariably conducted through the administrative agencies of the companies. Each of the East India Company's presidencies determined its own foreign policy through its council meeting as a select or secret committee. The governors and their councillors
were appointed from the ranks of the Company's servants by the Court of Directors, meeting far away in Leadenhall Street in London. The Court was also responsible for formulating matters of general policy, but such was the state of administrative confusion in the 1760's and such the intractable problem of distance that the councils were able politely to disregard the directives of the Court with impunity. On the other hand, the French Governor at Pondicherry was held directly responsible to the Ministry of Marine for the conduct of foreign and political matters, the Compagnie des Indes having been suppressed in 1770.

There is a significant contrast in the attitudes of the French and British governments towards the appointment of pleni­potentiaries to settle the disputes which had arisen in India since the peace and which culminated in the Chandernagore ditch affair. While Choiseul was content to delegate these powers to Law de Lauriston, the Governor of the French possessions in India, Weymouth was obviously reluctant to vest such powers in the East India Company. Since no news had been received from the commissioners who had left England in October 1769 to reform the Company's administration in India, Weymouth declined the French ambassador's proposal that the commissioners be empowered by the Crown to treat with de Lauriston.

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1 See chapter 3, pp.97-116, and chapter 5, pp.211-18.
These differences over the appointment and powers of the plenipotentiaries largely reflected the differing relationships between the companies and their respective governments in Europe. The 'exclusif' was abolished in August 1769, and after April 1770 the Compagnie was dissolved and its administration was taken over by the Crown. Tensions between French merchants and officials in India and the metropolitan authority were thus reduced to a minimum. The French government hoped for a general settlement in India which would establish for their individual merchants the 'free and unmolested trade' they had previously claimed for the Compagnie.

In England the United East India Company remained a powerful, wealthy and relatively independent corporation, though increasingly through the 1760's it was subject to criticism at home. It was generally believed that the Company's acquisition of the Bengal revenues, together with the excesses of its unprincipled servants, threatened the safety of the British Constitution itself. Admiral Sir John Lindsay's appointment with special plenipotentiary powers in 1769 resulted from the Grafton Ministry's distrust and ignorance of the Company's policies, which appeared to be adverse to the 'national interest'. One of the more important tasks assigned to Lindsay was the examination of the Company's dealings with the surrounding Indian states. The Madras
Council had recently involved itself in a disastrous war with Hyder Ali, and a French invasion of the sub-continent was considered imminent. Moreover, it seemed that all three councils in their dealings with the other European powers in India were arrogating to themselves unconstitutional powers. Weymouth's attempts to persuade the Court of Directors to invest Lindsay with wide plenipotentiary powers were obstinately resisted by the Company, who feared for their chartered rights and privileges. While the missions of Lindsay and his successor, Sir Robert Harland, failed because of opposition from the councils in India, they are important as the first serious attempt by the British government to interfere directly in the foreign policy of the East India Company. John Macpherson's arrival in London as the leader of a deputation from the Nawab of Arcot also witnessed the attempt of certain Anglo-Indian interests to influence the policies of the Imperial parliament.

Although North's Regulating Act of 1773 was intended to solve the problem of the Company's ramshackle administration - at home by stabilising the powers and membership of the Court of Directors, and in India by increasing the supervisory role of the Fort William Council over the lesser settlements - its Indian provisions were largely nullified by dissensions within the Fort William Council. Whereas the Governor General had no powers to
override his fellow Councillors, he did have a casting vote in case of an equal division of votes. Pitt's India Act increased and strengthened both the powers of the Governor General over his Council, and the powers of the Supreme Government over the other presidencies. We have also seen that the consolidation and centralisation of control at Fort William was paralleled in the administration of the French settlements by the edict of May 1785 which united all the French possessions east of the Cape of Good Hope into a single government centred on the Ile de France.

These new conditions had a considerable impact on the pattern of Anglo-French relations in India after the return of the French settlements in 1785. The centralising of authority at Fort William and Port Louis implied that it was now feasible for the French and British governments in India to conclude a general settlement of outstanding disputes and differences. The despatch of Colonel Charles Cathcart to conclude such a general settlement with the French at Port Louis bears comparison with the earlier missions of Lindsay and Harland. Various incidents in Bengal, culminating in the firing on the Esperance below Budge Budge, provoked the Supreme Government at Fort William to appoint Cathcart as their envoy, and he was instructed to settle provisionally the differences which had arisen respecting the

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1 See chapter 4, pp. 166-81.
Interpretation and Execution of the last Treaty of Peace'.

Lindsay's appointment was also sparked off by local disturbances, and after news of the Chandernagore affair reached Europe he was directed to arbitrate between the English and the French in India. Nevertheless, Lindsay and Harland were commissioned by the Crown in London and because of their extensive but secret powers, frequently found themselves at loggerheads with the councils.

Cathcart, by contrast, received his powers from the Governor General - in - Council at Calcutta, and when he arrived in England with the convention the Board of Control and the Pitt Ministry disapproved strongly of the settlement he had concluded. Pitt and Dundas considered that the convention was not only illegal, but 'derogatory to those Rights of Sovereignty in which this Country could suffer no Encroachment to be made'. Consequently the Fort William Council was once more reproved while William Eden, who began negotiations with the French on the matter of the East Indies in September 1786, was instructed 'wholly to disavow that Convention as unauthorized and improper'.

With the arrival of Cornwallis in Bengal and the

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2. Carmarthen to Harris, 7 September 1787, F.O. 37/18.

3. According to Carmarthen's letter of 7 September (F.O. 37/18) these instructions were transmitted to Eden in February 1787.
implementation of the India Act, power was securely placed in the hands of the Governor General at Calcutta. In ideas and attitudes the new Governor General was supposed to embody the cautious wisdom of the government at home and thereby act as a restraint on the impatient and avaricious servants of the Company in India. Even Cornwallis, however, was drawn into a war policy against the ferocious Tipu Sultan, and when the chief executive office was occupied by such an imperialist as Wellesley, fired with the vision of creating a British paramountcy over the weak and fragmented Indian states and thwarting the global designs of Napoleon, all caution was thrown to the winds. Administrative reorganisation thus facilitated conquest and empire.

Our three studies of Anglo-French rivalry have so far tended to treat the conflict as simply another of those innumerable struggles which proliferated between warring polities and states in eighteenth century India and Southeast Asia. But it was, of course, derived from European experience and history, and while local Indian and Asian factors unavoidably determined the way in which the conflict developed, it continued throughout the period under study to be profoundly affected by European conditions. Invariably the serious crises in Anglo-French relations in India occurred when there was a conjunction of European tensions with disputes, troubles and grievances in India. This suggests again that the rivalry was still fundamentally related to the European
context even in spite of the formidable delay in communications. Individual incidents in India, trivial in themselves, tended to merge into a generalised crisis, which was often unconscionably protracted by its association with European crisis periods. And the common fear, entertained by the British in the East, that a French fleet off the Madras or the Balasore roads might be the first indication of the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, added a panic element to the reactions of the Company's servants.

It was more than fortuitous circumstance, then, that the first major crisis in the East which reached its apogee with the Chandernagore affair coincided with a more generalised war scare of 1770. After 1763, as has already been noted, the French government turned its attention to the colonial and commercial rivalry with the English, and guided by the indefatigable Choiseul France freed herself from distracting entanglements in central and eastern Europe to pursue with greater vigour and persistence the struggle against the maritime and global predominance of the English. Choiseul was convinced that 'la guerre aux colonies est la véritable affaire', and despite the real losses inflicted on the French colonial empire by the Peace of Paris, the French were a more serious threat to the security of English trade and possessions after 1763 than earlier in the century, when French foreign policy was hamstrung by traditional continental alliances and the
secret du roi. The navy was re-habilitated and its administration streamlined.

And yet Choiseul was not prepared for war in 1770, and though he categorically denied the allegations of the Fort William Council, asserting that such accusations were a screen to conceal the more sinister activities of the East India Company, he carefully retreated at the critical moment. The firm refusal of the Spanish Foreign Minister, Grimaldi, to support France over the ditch contretemps was a tangible factor in Choiseul's decision, but the failure of the Turks, the quondam ally of the French, to withstand a Russian naval attack also made him genuinely reluctant to involve his country in hostilities with Britain. Besides, his position at court was by no means secure and his attempts to weaken Spanish demands during the Falkland Islands' crisis were intended in part to win back the support of Louis XV. However, most governments - the British, French and the Spanish - expected war throughout 1770 and early 1771 with the inevitable by-product that the Indian settlements were urged to prepare for it.

The appointment of Sir John Lindsay as a plenipotentiary to treat with Law de Lauriston was a sop given to the French to placate their bitter criticisms. But the French remained thoroughly sceptical of the efforts of British ministries to control and discipline the servants of the Company. To the continental powers
with interests in the East, the French, the Dutch and the Spanish, the growing power of the British constituted the greatest menace to the security and peace of Asia, and they prayed for its speedy demise. The French were convinced that one result of the oppressive and despotic regime of the Company, especially in Bengal, would be a revolution of the princes, which, they optimistically predicted, would unseat the British from their pre-eminent position. Until that glorious time they were forced into the role of an armchair critic, and their eloquent and impassioned protests swelled the opposition to the 'nabobs', already vocal in England. Dire accounts of the terrible famine which ravaged Bengal during 1769 and 1770 slowly percolated through to London, while the recently published works of Alexander Dow and William Bolts further discredited the Company's servants. The Abbé Raynal published his voluminous and curious tomes in the 1770's and though deploring the corruption and avidity of the English in Bengal, he emphasised the immense gains which might accrue to the French if they exploited the situation to their advantage and renounced any pretensions to territorial sovereignty. He particularly stressed the 'necessary and mutual connection' between the Ile de France and Pondicherry, urging the speedy fortification of these two

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1 Alexander Dow, History of Hindustan (London, 1768). The second edition of this work was published in 1770. William Bolts, Considerations on Indian Affairs, particularly respecting the Present State of Bengal and its Dependencies (London, 1772).
important bases. He also espoused a military alliance with the Marathas, a martial nation, so that:

At the sight of their standards, all these oppressed sovereigns would take the field; and the rulers of India, surrounded with enemies, and attacked at one on the north and on the south, by sea and by land, would infallibly be overpowered.

Then the French, considered as the deliverers of Indostan, would emerge from that state of humiliation into which their own misconduct hath plunged them. They would become the idols of the princes and people of Asia, provided the revolution they brought about proved to them a lesson of moderation. Their trade would be extensive and flourishing, so long as they knew how to be just. But this prosperity would end in some fatal catastrophe, should an inordinate ambition prompt them to plunder, ravage and oppress.¹

Such in outline were the intentions of the French government during the American War, the second and most serious crisis in Anglo-French relations during this period. In Chapter 2 an examination was made of the strategies pursued by the French and the English in the East, and we have seen that the policies adopted by Vergennes in the Americas and the East Indies were the fulfilment of Choiseul's 'revanche' diplomacy. Suffren successfully occupied the Cape and Trincomalee, and whereas Bussy was not entirely welcomed as a messianic deliverer, he was able to hold up large British forces at Cuddalore, thus preventing them from pushing the war into Tipu's territories. In the face of these

¹ Abbe Raynal, A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies (London, 1777), vol.2, book 4, p.156. The original French edition was first published at Amsterdam in 1770.
exigencies a close liaison was established between the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors and the North Ministry. The elaborate negotiations that transpired between these two bodies have been dealt with in the second chapter, and the Secret Committee continued to be consulted by Shelburne and Grantham during the peace discussions of 1782 and 1783. This relationship was formalised in the India Act, which unequivocally brought the Company under the control of the state. Thereafter the Secret Committee became the major channel through which secret despatches passed between the Board of Control and the governments in India.

Consisting as it did of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman and one other, usually the senior Director, it became the 'cabinet council' of the Company and enjoyed the privilege of frequent consultation on all important India business with the President of the Board and the Ministers.¹

The years immediately following the Peace of Versailles saw some easing of tensions between the English and the French in Europe and India. Perhaps outright conflict had cleared the air of bitterness for a season, or perhaps the French hoped to use the somewhat vague terms of the treaty to extract a better modus vivendi in the East. At any rate the definitive peace treaty provided for the nomination of commissioners to reach new commercial arrangements with Britain, and during 1785 negotiations were

begun to conclude a commercial treaty with the French on the basis of 'mutual convenience'. French financiers, too, showed considerable interest in the idea of a commercial rapprochement with the East India Company, although the Court of Directors were of the opinion that it was not *for the present* adviseable to enter into any commercial arrangement with them.¹ For a time, therefore, the British believed that the French might be content simply with a commercial rôle, and Macpherson, who was usually more sympathetic to the French than either Hastings or Cornwallis, argued that a relaxation of trading regulations would inspire the French to abandon their tiresome political ambitions.

But such was not to be. For the French the interests of commercial profit and 'la gloire' were one and indivisible. Vergennes and de Castries were implacably opposed to any weakening of the Compagnie's political rôle because of the traditional mercantilist premise that private trade should subserve political ends. Consequently the administrators at Port Louis, Pondicherry and Chandernagore continued to hold their offices from the Crown and the Ministry of Marine, and to indulge in intrigue with the rulers and states of India and Southeast Asia.

The gradual deterioration in Anglo-French relations after

¹ Motion of the Secret Court of Directors, 24 August 1785, P.R.O. 30/8, 353, p.59.
the peace was not only due to local disturbances and antagonisms in the East (though these were instrumental in the decision to found a settlement at Penang), but also to the basic tensions of Anglo-French diplomacy in Europe. Some considerable attention has already been given to the wider repercussions of Indian crises on the policies of the French and British governments in Europe. A European crisis which had significant effects on the development of Anglo-French relations in India and the Eastern Seas during the 1780's will now be analysed in order to demonstrate the close-knit relationship between European and Indian events. It is also hoped that it will shed some light on the matter of East Indian policy, its formulation and execution, in the late eighteenth century.


After 1780 and especially after 1785 the security of the British possessions in India was related directly to the future of the enfeebled Dutch power in the East.¹ The Dutch entry into the American War on the side of the Bourbon powers had demonstrated finally and irrefutably the strategic importance of the

Cape and Trincomalee as the outer defences of India, and for the next decade the Dutch government was sedulously courted by France and Britain.

During the peace negotiations the French and British ministers evinced a keen interest in the fate of Trincomalee and Ceylon. A memorandum, prepared on the Dutch eastern settlements for the British plenipotentiary, stressed the urgent need to retain control of Trincomalee.

Shoud (sic) this Settlement be retained by us, here a Fleet in all Monsoons will find a Safe retreat, and would afford a Constant Protection to all our Settlements in India, it being situated within three weeks Sail of Bombay, a weeks to Bengal, and only 30 to 40 Hours Sail of Madrass in the Sth. West Monsoon: It is only from the French Islands, or from Batavia, a three weeks run. In Time of War, no Enemy's Fleet could approach the Coast of Coromandel, and if they did pass the Gulph of Bengal unobserved, or to Bombay, they would soon be followed by our Fleet, always clean, and in good order.  

The French, on the other hand, were dissatisfied with Pondicherry as the capital of French India because of its vulnerability to attack from Madras, and were anxiously searching for a new site. The splendid harbour of Trincomalee, dominating the ocean approaches to the Bay of Bengal, appeared a likely choice,

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1 'A Short Description of the Dutch Possessions In the East Indies lately captured by the English Arms, from which their great Consequence to the Dutch, and their Importance to England, in the Event of their Restoration to the former, or retention by the later, may be deduced'. F.O. 27/3, p.175.
and in their correspondence and discussions with the Dutch the French Minister nicely emphasised the many interests that they shared.1

However, the statesmen drafting the peace preliminaries believed that British forces were still in control of Trincomalee until late in March 1783, when news reached Europe of Suffren's capture of the naval station—another excellent illustration of the time lag and its strange effects. Grantham, the Foreign Minister, insisted that if a general restitution of captured Dutch possessions took place 'the Port of Trincomali must not be restored'.2 But Vergennes persisted in demanding the restoration of all possessions,

and particularly Trincomali, a settlement which he seemed to understand the great value and importance of, and consequently how necessary for France to wrest it out of our hands, from regard to her own Interests, even independantly (sic) of her connexion with Holland.3

Direct negotiations with the Dutch envoys began in December 1782. Grantham hoped to re-establish the old relationship

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1 See, for instance, 'Mémoire sur les principaux objets dont on doit s'occuper dans les Négociations pour la Paix', Mai 1782, Correspondance Politique, Angleterre, vol.537, p.125, for a statement of French aims vis-à-vis Trincomalee.

2 Grantham to Fitzherbert, 23 September 1782, F.0. 27/3, p.163.

3 Fitzherbert to Grantham, 3 October 1782, F.0. 27/3, p.200.
of amity with the Dutch, who had been traditional allies in war and peace since the Glorious Revolution but if the Dutch failed to respond to the British overtures, the Foreign Secretary stressed that 'Our Situation in India certainly renders the Port of Trincomale not only desireable but almost necessary to us.'

Fitzherbert was also instructed to contest any claims made by the Dutch to an exclusive 'Navigation of the Eastern Seas'. 'It will therefore be necessary that the Liberty of navigating those Seas should be asked for, and granted, more especially if they are allowed any Privileges in carrying on their Neutral Trade.'

But above all the British plenipotentiary was to prevent France from 'obtaining that important Post (of Trincomalee), as She has, by the Possession of the Cape, and of Demarary, and Essequibo, the Means of forcing it'.

In spite of many blandishments, the Dutch envoys remained unmoved on the issue of Trincomalee, for they were convinced with Vergennes that the possession of this naval station would enable the British to dominate the entire eastern trade, their own spice trade not excepted. Once established at Trincomalee, the British would ally themselves with the King of Kandy and subvert Dutch rule elsewhere on the island and deprive them of their profitable cinnamon trade.

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1 Grantham to Fitzherbert, 18 December 1782, F.O. 27/3, p.442.
In an effort to break the deadlock between the English and the Dutch, Vergennes suggested on 5 January 1783 that the Dutch cede Negapatam to the English in place of Trincomalee. With great reluctance Grantham permitted Fitzherbert on 9 January to yield on the matter of Trincomalee provided that the English could retain possession of Negapatam— an essential condition—and, if possible, Demerary and Essequebo, Dutch settlements now held by the French in Guiana. The British also hoped to procure from the Dutch 'an unequivocal declaration of the Company's right to a free navigation of the Eastern Seas, and to an uncontrolled Trade to any of the Islands situated in those Seas, not possessed by the Dutch',¹ but in this and the matter of Dutch Guiana they were not entirely successful. The Dutch promised only that they would not obstruct the navigation of British subjects in the Eastern Seas. The peace preliminaries, concluded with the French on 18 January, did not receive the approval of the Dutch until September. Moreover, the prevaricating Dutch were unwilling to admit the British claims to Negapatam and to a liberty to trade throughout the Eastern Seas, vainly insisting on the exclusion of British subjects 'from all intercourse with the Spice Islands or Moluccas: terms so general as to comprehend all the Islands in the Eastern Seas'.²

¹ Secret Committee of the Court of Directors to Grantham, 12 February 1783, F.O. 27/15, p.89.
² Chairman and Deputy Chairman to Fox, 30 July 1783, F.O. 27/6, p.743.
By the definitive treaty, concluded on 20 May 1784, Holland retained control of Trincomalee and the Cape while Britain was given Negapatam. Provision was made in the treaty for territorial readjustments if and when the two parties could come to some other acceptable arrangement. Naturally the British were still hopeful of acquiring Trincomalee, and they would have been prepared to concede the Dutch Negapatam, Bencoolen and their other settlements in western Sumatra, together with substantial trading concessions in Bengal, in return for Trincomalee and various privileges in the Riau archipelago. By contrast the Dutch stubbornly refused to yield up Trincomalee, even though they were willing to give Britain their own Sumatran factories for the return of Negapatam.

Conversely, Vergennes hoped that the Dutch would side with the French in this three-cornered tussle, believing that an alliance with the States General would be of more lasting value to France than the traditional Bourbon compact with Spain. Rumours of a Franco-Dutch alliance, rife after mid-1784, were in fact realised in the secret military alliance ratified at Fontainebleau in November 1785. The veteran French Minister clearly perceived the advantages that Britain would draw from Dutch support, and sought to prevent such a state of affairs from developing. He also realised the critical role that the Dutch possessions might play in any future conflict in undermining British power in the
East. De Castries, the truculent and spirited Minister of Marine, argued that the vaulting ambitions of the British could be checked throughout the world by a successful Franco-Dutch assault on their eastern empire.

The establishment of a joint administration for the French and Dutch East India Companies was proposed and the appointment of a Frenchman, Mr de Bouillé, as the 'Directeur militaire des colonies hollandaises' in Africa and the East and West Indies, was urged on the Ministry. De Bouillé himself later recalled:

At this moment (1784) I was preparing to depart for Russia I received an order from Government immediately to return. On my arrival I was acquainted by the Ministers with a project relative to the East Indies. The object of this was to unite the French and the Dutch forces in an attack upon the English Possessions to restore to the Princes of the Country the Provinces conquered from them by the English, and to obtain and secure for the two Nations, Factories and commercial Establishments which were to be free to the whole world.

The promised army was to number 18,000 men, and some 20 millions of livres in specie were to be taken to the East. 'Trincomalee

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1 'Mémoire sur les projets que la france et la hollande peuvent former relativement à l'Asie et sur les motifs qui doivent engager ces deux puissances à l'unir pour y opérer une révolution', Mémoires et Documents, Asie, vol. 7, p. 220.

2 These extracts from Bouillé's memoir are included in 'A Memorial for Mr. Dundas on the French Threats of Conquest in India', which in turn is located in Item 46 of the Hamilton-Bruce Collection, Scottish Record Office (microfilm in National Archives of India).
in the Island of Ceylon was the place destined for the rendez vous of the troops and the repository of the military magazines'. The Dutch, according to this report, agreed to furnish one third of the men and stores, while de Bouillette, who was popular with the Dutch, was to be given control with a military committee appointed by the States General. By such measures as these the Dutch would be attracted into the path of French influence. Furthermore, the joint administration would facilitate a common defence policy and greater economy and efficiency. 'On ajoutera seulement que par là les colonies hollandaises et la Hollande même deviendraient presque de provinces françaises'.

As a quid pro quo for their admission to the Cape and Trincomalee, the French offered to contribute handsomely to the defence costs of these establishments. They also desired to use Batavia as a base from which to disrupt the East India Company's trade with China. 'Si l'on établit des croisieres dans les détroits de Malaca, de la Sonde, de Bali et de Macassar, le commerce des Anglais avec la Chine sera interruptée'. To accomplish these not inconsiderable ends, France was to exploit the political divisions between the Patriot and Stadholderate parties in the States General.

La France a un intérêt trop capital à ce que les Provinces-Unies conservent leurs Colonies, pour ne pas employer toute son influence en Hollande, à fin d'y opérer le plutôt possible une révolution qui permettre de donner à ces établissements une forme nouvelle plus analogue aux intérêts de la cause commune.¹

A great many schemes were submitted to the Ministries of Marine and Foreign Affairs, advocating amongst other things the tactics to be adopted in an Indian war and a commercial alliance with Holland and the Republic of Venice to open up the Suez route to India.² This Franco-Dutch alliance and the idea of the commercial and political penetration of Egypt indicated a resurgence of French interest in expansion further eastwards, and this new interest was reflected — as we have already noticed — in the conclusion of a trade agreement with the Beys and the sending of a number of scientific and exploratory expeditions to Asia and the Pacific in the post-war period.³

¹ *Asie*, vol. 7, p. 49.
² See, for example, Suffren's memoir of 1783 which stressed the merits of a Franco-Dutch alliance (*Asie*, vol. 7, p. 143ff.); 'Plan sur le commerce de l'Inde, et des Caravannes de l'Asie et de l'Afrique', advocating the commercial penetration of the Mediterranean and Asia by means of an alliance with Holland and Venice, and the construction of a canal between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean (*Asie*, vol. 7, pp. 160-8); 'Demandes à former aux députés de la Compagnie des Indes de Hollande' (*Asie*, vol. 7, pp. 259-61); and 'Projet d'association entre la France et la Compagnie d'Hollande relativement à la partie de l'Inde' (*Asie*, vol. 7, pp. 263-70).
³ See chapter 6, pp. 281-3.
The limited successes of the Patriots in the spring of 1787 marked the zenith of French influence in the United Provinces, yet even after the death of the cautious Vergennes early in 1787 the French government was reluctant to embroil itself too openly in the vicissitudes of the Patriot party. Nevertheless, the confused and diffident moves of the French were closely watched by the British ambassador at the Hague, Sir James Harris. Pitt's Ministry was alarmed by reports that 'the Dutch Stations of Ceylon and on the Coromandel Coast were to be resorted to by the French', already assembling an army to invade India and assist Tipu Sultan, and the Ministry considered it more than a fortuitous circumstance that 'at the very time when the French Party were endeavouring to produce a Revolution in Holland, by the expulsion of the Stadholder, the Ambassadors of Tippoo Saib (as they were termed) arrived at Paris'.

Doubtless Pitt and Carmarthen were also concerned, and with less exotic reasons, at the massing of French troops at Givet on the frontier with the Austrian Netherlands.

Sir James Harris, briefed to re-establish British influence at the Hague, tried throughout 1786 and 1787 to assist and

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2 This quotation, taken from Perron's L'Inde en Rapport avec l'Europe (2 vols, Hamburg, 1798), is located in Item 45 of the Hamilton-Bruce collection in the Scottish Record Office (microfilm in National Archives of India).
strengthen the conservative Stadholder faction. Underlying all the British efforts to induce Holland to enter into an alliance with her was the faith that a mutual accommodation of interests could be arranged.

The two Countries have each one original great object in view, and which do not clash in the smallest degree: That of Great Britain is to maintain and preserve the Empire which she has acquired, in comparison of which even trade is a subordinate or collateral consideration.

The great object of Holland is, in the first instance, to secure to herself the monopoly of the Spice Islands; and secondly, to extend her general trade by every means in her power.¹

Since, according to the British view, there was no real conflict between these two policies, it was hoped that Holland would be 'disposed to assist and promote our political interests, if she desires any additional security to her own possessions, or additional advantage to her Trade'. The Ministry, which was in close touch through Dundas and the Board of Control with the Court of Directors, was evidently mindful of the dangers implicit in a Franco-Dutch alliance. It is significant that by the time of this crisis government and Company policy were identical. 'The nature of our Empire in India is so very singular that it cannot be guarded with too much caution, it is scarcely vulnerable from the

¹ 'Considerations on the Subject of a Treaty between Great Britain and Holland, relative to their Interests in India', P.R.O. 30/8, 360 part II, p.179.
attack of any single European Power, but it may be endangered from that of France and Holland united. Thus Pitt and Dundas wished to detach Holland from France and cement the historic Anglo-Dutch alliance.

As the political situation in Holland worsened during June and July 1787, the Pitt Ministry became acutely concerned about the possible fate of the Dutch possessions and they were forced to concur in Harris' judgement that 'the great point is, who shall be the first to occupy them and to leave the Right of possession to be discussed hereafter'. In fact, Pitt wrote to Cornwallis urging his government in India to make preparations for a likely conflict with the French and the Dutch. Furthermore, the Ministry was also persuaded to endorse the new settlement at Penang in the Malacca Straits because of the uncertainty of the Dutch as allies and their uncompromising claim 'to the sole exclusive possession of the Straits of Malacca and Sunda'. The reports...

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2 Harris to Carmarthen, 12 June 1787, F.O. 37/14.
4 Orders from the Court of Directors to Lord Cornwallis, relating to the Strait of Malacca, 27 June 1786, Straits Settlements Records, vol.I. The Court also emphasised 'the great importance of the China trade,...as well as the good policy of aving the Dutch to prevent a rupture with them, or in case of its taking place, to be able to avail ourselves of it advantageously, to break effectually their spice monopoly'.

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too of the presentation of the 'Son of the King of Cochinchine' at Versailles confirmed British alarms about French intrigue in the East Indies.¹ Macpherson felt that 'Paris may soon become the Center of Eastern politics and Asiatic intrigues',² for the British were quick to perceive a threat to their China trade.

And yet the French attitude to the Dutch crisis remained ambivalent and uncertain. Montmorin hesitated to provoke a war with both England and Prussia. Consequently, when at last Frederick William II intervened to protect his sister, the Stadholder's wife, from the insults of the Patriot party, France backed down and refused to support the Patriots with any further financial or military aid.

From September 1787 the British renewed their efforts to negotiate a general settlement with the Dutch on 'an amicable footing'. By this phrase Dundas meant, of course, 'a complete enjoyment of the advantages of the Cape and Trincomale and the arsenals of Batavia in time of war', and in concluding his despatch to Grenville Dundas stressed those interests which the two powers had in common.

² Macpherson to Dundas, 4 February 1788, P.R.O. 30/8, 362 part I, p. 91.
I do not see how there is any inconsistency between their having the exclusive spice trade, and yet our having Trincomalé as a safe asylum for our fleets, and our having a free navigation in the Eastern Seas for the purposes of our China trade, and likewise for the purpose of opening new markets both for our Indian and European manufactures...1

The Dutch unfortunately could not agree with these propositions; and although the British were prepared to return Negapatam to the Dutch, respect their spice monopoly in the Eastern Seas, and secure them a privileged position in Bengal with regard to the payment of inland and port duties, the Dutch were quite unwilling to give the British Trincomalee, Riau, or various concessions at the Cape. Instead the Dutch concluded an alliance with Britain and Prussia in April 1788, but vacillated over an eastern settlement. Negotiations were resumed with Lord Auckland in 1790, but they were no more successful than the earlier attempts of 1784 and 1787.2 With the flight of the Prince of Orange to England in 1795, the British government declared war on the pro-French Batavian Republic and soon after seized the Cape and Trincomalee.

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1 Dundas to Grenville, 2 September 1787. Quoted in V. Harlow and F. Madden, British Colonial Developments 1774-1834: Select Documents (Oxford, 1953), p.15. Grenville had been sent to Holland at the height of the crisis to investigate the situation independently of Harris.

2 Auckland's mission is discussed in Tarling, Anglo-Dutch Rivalry, pp.36-46.
One important outcome of the dissolution of the Franco-Dutch entente in 1787 was the renewal of interest by the French government in schemes of political and military intervention in areas of strategic value in Southeast Asia. For a cardinal feature of French foreign policy since the peace had been the attempt to gain access to the Dutch possessions. When these bases were rendered inaccessible to the French by the Anglo-Dutch rapprochement, the Ministry began to consider seriously Pigneau de Behaine's proposals. They were clearly impressed by the strategic arguments and the imperative need to establish bases for the country trade with China, and in November 1787 the government of Louis XVI committed itself in a secret treaty to support the cause of the Nguyen. The Ministry, however, was able to do precious little to assist the bishop's enterprise.

This examination of the wider repercussions of a European problem has strongly suggested the close interrelationship between European and Indian tensions. The gradual deterioration in Anglo-French relations in the East after 1786 was in large measure a product of the constitutional crisis in Holland. Naturally the stakes in this struggle were high - possession of the Dutch establishments in India and the East Indies, or at least
access to the more important harbours and ports. And while the
British supported the successful Prussian intervention in September,
thus ensuring the defeat of French ambitions, the Dutch proved
unwilling to grant any concessions in the East to the Company.
In fact, they resented the Company's new establishment at Penang
as an unwarranted intrusion on their monopoly of the navigation
of the Eastern Seas.

Fears about the French, arising from both their activi­
ties in the East and in Europe, provoked the English to act so
as to forestall French intervention in areas of strategic import­
ance. By and large the councils were prepared to act if they
believed that their material interests would be jeopardised by
delay. Probably the French were more aware than the English of
the liabilities which accrued from hesitancy and indecision, since
theirs had been such a galling experience. As early as 1749
Dupleix had described the predicament of the European powers
caught up in the process of political change and decay in Asia:

What often seems to be the principal Motive to determine
a Company to take advantage of such Circumstances is a
firm persuasion that some Rival Nation would avail
itself of their Refusal and this is what never fails
to happen as we have more than once experienced by our
own mismanagement from the English... 

So that any European Company that by an
impolitick indifference or on account of real weakness
shall refuse to take Concern in a War in India, will
not only lose the benefit which it's more enterprising
Neighbour must derive from that War, but will also sustain a loss in its Trade in proportion to the improvement which that of its neighbour makes. ¹

In deploring the French failure to exploit the many opportunities that arose in the East for commercial and political expansion, French officials continued to complain of the cumbersome bureaucracy, which prevented the exercise of responsibility and discretion at the colonial level. Chevalier, for one, lamented that individuals rarely grasped the initiative at the periphery of control because of their dread of offending the metropolitan authorities, and he contrasted this state of affairs with the more flexible system of the British.

Mais où sont nos moyens, Monsieur, pour payer les dépenses qu'entraînerait nécessairement une affaire de cette nature? Et quand bien même les fonds ne manqueraient pas, ne seriez-vous pas retenu par la crainte d'être blâmé d'avoir agi sans ordre de la Cour? Ce sont ces entraves qui empêcheront éternellement les Gouverneurs de l'Inde de rien opérer de grand et d'utile. Les Anglais, au contraire, ont toujours les pouvoirs les plus étendus pour exécuter tout ce qui peut tendre à augmenter leur puissance et le commerce de leur nation.... ²

Although the French administration in the East was probably more centralised and tightly-knit than that of the East India Company, the failure of the French to form permanent establishments in

¹ Extracts from Mr Dupleix's Memoirs relating to the donations to them by the Country powers in India, 1749-1753, *French in India*, vol. I.
² Chevalier to Bellecombe, 12 February 1778, *Colonies* ³, p.168.
Cochin China and elsewhere was not entirely or primarily due to administrative inflexibility and impoverishment. Fundamentally it reflected the preoccupation of French diplomacy with continental affairs, and the absence of French naval power in the Eastern Seas.

Their national rivals and global competitors, however, had committed themselves irrevocably to the Indian adventure, at least by the time of the wars against Revolutionary and Imperial France. And as a corollary, successive British governments also found themselves committed during the late eighteenth century to a world-wide maritime strategy based on the securing of the sea routes to the East. To Dundas and Pitt it appeared axiomatic that Britain's strength and prestige as a global power depended substantially on her empire of trade and dominion in the East. While some historians may doubt the final economic importance of the eighteenth century eastern trade, there can be no doubt that the acquisition of a great territorial empire in Asia gave an enormous boost of confidence to Britain, recently humbled in a colonial war. As one memorialist expressed it in 1789:

The Government in India is so interwoven in the general System of the British Empire, and the Advantages derived from it so important, that it may not be rash to hazard the Assertion, that the Downfall of our Empire in the East will inevitably deprive Great Britain of that commercial and political ascendancy, which it now maintains in the general System of Europe. In the Formation therefore of our India System, we should
not forget, that permanent Possession of our Sovereignty is the principal Point to which we should direct our Attention, and upon which all the Benefits derived to this Country absolutely depend; for the Moment our Empire ceases in Bengal, the commercial Connection with that Country will cease also.¹

In spite of the British parliament's disclaimers that 'schemes of conquest and extension of dominion in India, are measures repugnant to the wish, the honour, and policy of this nation',² the Ministry and the Board of Control found it necessary to sanction the forward policies of the proconsuls at the frontier. For statesmen had commenced to believe that India and the British Isles were the two great pillars of Britain's wealth and power in the world as a whole. The Age of Imperialism had dawned.

¹ 'A Plan for altering the System of the British Government in India', 15 July 1789, P.R.O. 30/8, 355, part I, p.51.
² From Article XXXIV of Pitt's India Act, 1784.
EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSION

Although this study closes with the capture of the French Indian possessions in 1793 on the outbreak of the Revolutionary Wars, the French threat, no matter how hypothetical, remained to influence British policies in India and the East, at least until the defeat of Napoleon. The two missions of Roberts in 1803-4 and the mission of Crawfurd in 1822 to Cochin China, together with Symes' mission to Ava in 1802, were in part provoked by British fears of French designs and intrigue. For as Dr. Lamb cogently argues, 'A French dominated Cochin China at this date....was a far more formidable prospect, united as it now was under Nguyen Anh, than ever was the war torn country which Chapman and Macartney had visited'. Moreover, Professor Graham has recently described the effects of French activity at Reunion and Madagascar on British maritime strategy and enterprise in the Indian Ocean during the first half of the nineteenth century, and his conclusions suggest that Anglo-French distrust and rivalry

continued well into the nineteenth century. Other historians have also stressed the role played by the French in 'promoting' the British colonisation of New Zealand and the Pacific, and the extension of British outposts around the Australian littoral.

And yet 1793 does provide us with a landmark in both European and Indian history. In France, it marked the greatest triumph of the revolutionaries, the destruction of the last surviving remnants of the feudal order, and the declaration of war a' outrance against the old order in Europe. With the exception of Napoleon's desultory interest in schemes of eastern conquest, the French were to remain preoccupied with continental affairs for the next twenty years. In India, however, these same years witnessed the emergence of the British as the paramount power and the residuary legatee of the Moghul empire. While Wellesley's policies were closely related to local Indian politics, they were affected, too, by wider geo-political considerations and by events in Europe. The Governor General's alarms about a French invasion coincided with Napoleon's Egyptian


campaign on the one hand, and the conclusion of a treaty of alliance between Tipu Sultan and Malartic on the other. Hence the rapid growth of British political and military dominance in India was overshadowed by the even more extraordinary rise of the French Emperor. It is hardly surprising, then, to find that Wellesley regarded his Indian policy as part of the titanic struggle his countrymen were waging against France.

Clearly there is need for a new and more thorough treatment of Wellesley's diplomacy and its relationship with European events. Although G.S. Misra has written an able general summary of British Foreign Policy in India during the period 1783-1815, he has almost entirely ignored the French sources and has failed to examine in any depth the repercussions of Wellesley's system on the Indian states.¹ The interesting works of K.A. Ballhatchet and T.H. Beaglehole concentrate on matters of government and revenue administration, and are not greatly concerned with war and diplomacy.² Even so, they demonstrate how important these decades were for the development of British policy in India. A diplomatic study of the rise of the British

1 G.S. Misra, British Foreign Policy and Indian Affairs 1783-1815 (New York, 1963).
power in India at this time, which makes ample use of the Indian, British and French sources, would be the obvious complement to this thesis.

The successful conclusion of the wars which Wellesley undertook against Mysore and the Marathas, together with the establishment of direct British control over the Carnatic and Oudh, eliminated the possibility of French sponsored wars in India, at least for the immediate future. However, the French still retained possession of their two bases in the Indian Ocean, and Napoleon exploited the interlude of the Peace of Amiens to send General Decaen in command of 1,300 troops and a naval squadron to assume charge of the government at Port Louis.

With the resumption of hostilities in May 1803, French privateers once more scourged the Indian Ocean and the Eastern Seas. Merchants in Calcutta pressed the government to despatch a naval expedition to capture the islands, but it was generally believed that the fortifications at the Ile de France were impregnable. Besides, British officials were alarmed by the prospect of another invasion, this time a concerted Franco-Russian attack on their Indian possessions from the north-west.

In 1807 Persia turned to France for assistance after she had been humbled in a recent war with Russia. Napoleon was eager to conclude an alliance with a power that could assist him
in wars against either Russia or Britain, and on 4 May 1807 the Treaty of Finkenstein was signed by the Shah and Monsieur Johanni, Napoleon's envoy. In return for French military aid and a guarantee of Persian territorial integrity, the Shah of Persia engaged to break off diplomatic relations with the English and join forces with the French should they send an army to attack the British in India.\(^1\) After the Treaty of Tilsit, which converted Russia from an enemy into an ally of France, Napoleon fostered the idea of a joint expedition through Turkey and Persia against British India. General Gardane was promptly despatched to Teheran to prepare the ground for this project.

Lord Minto, Wellesley's successor, appreciated the magnitude of the new danger. In 1808 he wrote home;

As long as France might be engaged in continental wars in Europe, the project of directing her arms towards this quarter must be considered impracticable; but if her armies have been liberated by a pacification with Russia, and by the continued submission of the powers in Europe, the advance of a considerable force of French troops into Persia under the acquiescence of the Turkish, Russian, and Persian powers, cannot be deemed an undertaking beyond the scope of that energy and perseverance which distinguish the present ruler of France.\(^2\) The ascendancy of France being once established in the territories of Persia it may justly be expected that they may be enabled gradually to extend their influence towards the region of Hindostan, and ultimately open a passage for their troops into the dominion of the Company.\(^2\)

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1. Misra, p.68.
2. Quoted from Ramsay Muir, The Making of British India 1756-1858 (Manchester, 1923), pp.252-3.
In order to obstruct Gardane's mission, Minto lost no time in sending Colonel Malcolm to the Shah's court with instructions to form a defensive alliance with Persia. Malcolm's mission was successful and by 1809 the French had departed from the region. On 12 March of that year the Shah declared all previous treaties with European powers invalid, and he promised explicitly that he would not assist the French in any further attempts they might make to attack their national rivals.

In 1810 the war in the East entered its final phase with the launching of expeditions against the French Islands and Java. By 1811 all traces of French influence had been removed from Asia, leaving the British undisputed masters of India and the trade routes to the East.

At home the East India Company's charter was renewed in 1813, although the Company was deprived of its monopoly of the trade between India and Europe. In spite of the British government's claims to the 'undoubted sovereignty' of the Company's territorial possessions, the actual administration was left with the Company. Most statesmen were convinced that Pitt's India Act had successfully curbed the abuses and inefficiencies of an earlier age, and they were reluctant to interfere further with a powerful vested interest. In the following year, 'British Sovereignty on
the Continent of India' was recognised for the first time by other European nations. The British Indian empire was now an accomplished fact.

Sir John Seeley based his explanation of the rise of the British power in India on the reality and ubiquity of Anglo-French conflict in the eighteenth century. He argued that the fears roused by the activities of the French, along with the need to forestall them in areas of strategic importance, provided the raison d'être for British political and military intrusion in India and Southeast Asia. While there can be no doubt that the ambitious policies of Dupleix precipitated the Company's first intervention in the complexities of Carnatic and Bengal politics, historians have usually dismissed the French in India after the Seven Years' War and the Peace of Paris. The obvious weakness and ineptitude of French governments in the latter half of the eighteenth century has given further weight to this view, since metropolitan France was scarcely ever in a position to implement the many paper schemes so enthusiastically devised by her servants in the East.

Recent studies of French diplomacy have shown, however, that the French government under a Choiseul or a Vergennes was by no means devoid of initiative, ability and influence. And although the French state of the ancien régime might seem a ramshackle affair by the more exacting standards of a later age, its achievements could be favourably compared with most other European governments of the time. It should be remembered that the reforming ministry of the younger Pitt was confronted with administrative anomalies no less formidable than those which faced the French state. British statesmen in the eighteenth century had always feared France because of its potential advantages in land-space, wealth and population, and when these resources were harnessed by a new and centralised government organised on rational lines, such alarms were seen to be perfectly justified.

Moreover, our three regional studies of Anglo-French relations in the East have indicated that the French continued to exert a powerful influence on British policy there, and that the French threat was intimately related to the local situations in which the two European powers found themselves. The French, of course, felt their subordinate status and vulnerability most acutely in Bengal where the Company acquired effective control of the revenues in 1765. French defiance of the British was largely a product of their fears that the English were 'squeezing' their
trade with the ultimate object of eliminating them as commercial competitors from the country. They saw the Nawab's government as a convenient screen for the East India Company's extortion of unwarranted duties and payments from them. In order to preserve their influence, protect their trade, and check the encroachments of the Company, the French appealed to their firmans, which were intended to ascertain and guarantee their immunities and rights. The active resistance by the French to the Company's authority ensured that their activities were constantly scrutinised by the Fort William Council; and it also forced the Council to define its powers more clearly, thus facilitating the emergence of the doctrine of British sovereignty in India. Above all, the existence of a potential fifth column clandestinely intriguing with hostile powers to the north-west and in the South meant that the British governments in India continued to be preoccupied with the problem of external security. Such fears and alarms as were aroused by the prospect of a French invasion in conjunction with a series of native wars predisposed the British to interfere in the troubled waters of native diplomacy. Thus, paradoxically, the desire to preserve and safeguard the frontiers of the Company's possessions entailed in time the conquest of the entire sub-continent, and in this train of events the French were a not insignificant factor.
This classic process is clearly exemplified in the South. Initially, the British were extremely reluctant to assume the revenues and administration of the Carnatic, but because of the threats from neighbouring Indian states, whose armies were trained and officered by Frenchmen, the Madras Council was forced to assume a dominant role in South Indian politics. While it is highly probable that these developments would have occurred without the presence of the French, it is doubtful whether the acquisition of territories would have been quite so rapid or as extensive. Nor is it certain that the ministries at home would have so readily concurred in arrangements made by the men on the spot. It was the concatenation of European and Indian fears about a French invasion that persuaded the government to support the Company even during the 1760's and the 1770's when the Company was subject to bitter and protracted criticism at home. Fortunately for the Company, the local wars its servants waged in India took place against the background of a century-long struggle against the French.

Geo-political considerations, born of the struggle with France during the American War, also affected the spread of British power beyond India. The loss of the Cape and Trincomalee demonstrated to the Company and the British government the need for a co-ordinated maritime strategy, and henceforth the securing
of the ocean routes to the East was to become a cardinal feature of British foreign and imperial policy. Our third study has established that the 'swing to the East' was not simply determined by economic considerations - the desire to participate more fully in the China trade and redress the adverse balance of payments. Pigneau de Béhaine's open canvassing of support for the dispossessed ruler of Cochin China, Nguyen Anh, was an important immediate cause of the East India Company's acquisition of Penang in 1786. The activities of Frenchmen like this bishop, no less than the activities of Francis Light, James Scott and Thomas Forrest, contributed to the growth of an Anglo-Indian empire in Asia - Further India.

Was this Indian empire acquired as part of a deliberate British policy, or was it conquered 'in a fit of absence of mind', as Seeley claimed? Our three detailed case studies have exposed the insurmountable difficulties encountered by European governments in their attempts to impose controls on their nationals in the East. In the sense that the metropolitan authorities had little direct impact on the policies devised in India, that they could only watch what was happening in the East from the side lines, as it were, it is true that the growth of the British power was not part of a conscious imperial design but essentially the work of pragmatists on the spot. It would also
be a gross oversimplification of the political situation in India to see this development as the unravelling of some master plan concocted either in Whitehall or Calcutta. In fact, the three different types of situation we have examined over the period 1763-1793 reveal how slow, tentative and uncertain this process could be. Nevertheless, the individuals caught up in this movement were conscious of their own interests at least, and they saw that these could be fostered by European political intervention. If we consider the extension of European control over great tracts of Asia in the eighteenth century as a piecemeal and incomplete process, then it was in part the conscious design and creation of Robert Clive, Warren Hastings, Francis Light and Lord Wellesley.
APPENDIX A

This copy of the instructions proposed to be sent to Law de Lauriston is found in the letter of 19 February 1770 from the duc de Praslin to the duc de Choiseul. (S.P. 78/280, pp.119-20).

LAW DE LAURISTON’S COMMISSION

Louis par la Grace de Dieu Roi de France et de Navarre, à tous ceux qui ces présentes Lettres verront Salut. Ayant à nommer un Commissaire pour terminer de concert avec les Comr. du Roi de la Gd. Bret. les discussions survenues aux Indes orientales entre les deux Compagnies de france et de angre depuis le T. de paix conclu entre les deux Puissances le 10 fév. 1763; prendre les arrangemens convenables pour assurer la liberté du Commerce de l’Asie aux deux Comp. conformément à ce qui est porté par ce T. éclaircir par les explications nettes et précises les articles de ce même T. qui pouvoient être une Semence de divisions, et enfin faire tel accord jugé efficace pour entretenir la paix et l’amitié entre les deux Nations: nous avons jugé ne pouvoir faire un meilleur choix que de la personne de Law de Lauriston, Ch. de notre ordre R. et milit. de S. Louis, Brigadier de nos armées, notre Gouverneur actuel des ville et forts de Pondichery et Commandant G. de tous les établissements
françois aux Indes Orientales: vu les preuves qu'il nous a données de son expérience, Capacité, fidélité et affection à notre Service dans les différentes occasions où nous l'avons employé, et notamment dans la reprise de possession des établissements français aux Indes à ces causes et autres considérations à ce nous mouvant, nous avons le dit S.

Law de Lauriston fait, constitué, ordonné et établi, faisons, constituons, ordonnons et établisons pour notre Comm. à l'effet de régler et terminer avec les Com. nommés par Sa M. les discussions survenues et qui surviendront entre les deux Comp. aux Indes Orientales tant à la Côte de Coromandel, d'Orixa qu'à celle de Malabar et dans le Royaume de Bengale et autres Lieux des Indes où les deux Comp. ont des établissements, des Loges de Commerce, ou simplement des opérations de Commerce à exécuter, de faire et signer les accords, T. et Conventions nécessaire pour assurer aux deux Comp. et aux particuliers des deux Nations le libre exercice du Commerce dans toutes les parties de l'Inde; et attendu la distance des Lieux où il peut être nécessaire que les Com. se transportent, permettons au S. Law de déléguer à sa place telles personnes qu'il jugera à propos, auxquelles il donnera les Instructions relatives à ce qu'elles auront à traiter, à la charge par elle de ne rien arrêter définitivement qu'après l'approbation qu'il aura donnée aux
Conventions faites par les subdélégués; de ce faire nous lui avons donné et donnons pleinpouvoir; Car tel est notre plaisir. Entemoin de quoi nous avons fait mettre notre Scel à ces présentes.
APPENDIX B

This copy of the Cathcart-Souillac Convention has been taken from the French in India series, vol. VI, pp. 191-242. While the original spelling and punctuation have been retained, the capitalisation has been simplified.

THE CATHCART-SOUILLAC CONVENTION

Convention settled provisionally betwixt Mr Le Vicomte de Souillac Governor-General of the French Establishments in the East Indies and Lieutenant Colonel Cathcart Plenipotentiary of the Government General for the English Company in the East Indies in explanation of the 13th 14th and 15th articles of the Treaty of Peace between their Britannick and Most Christian Majesties concluded at Versailles the 3rd September 1783, which provisional Convention shall have effect until the decision of our respective courts.

Article 1 All difficulties which may arise on account of the establishments which the King of Great Britain has restored to His Most Christian Majesty or of the districts and magans which His Britannick Majesty has procured for France, shall be amicably adjusted by the representatives of Their Majesties in the East Indies.

Article 2 Although it has not been acknowledged that the Nabobship of Arcot, the countries of Madura and Tanjore, ought to
be included in the engagement contracted by His (Britannick) Majesty in the 13th article of the last Treaty of Peace, nevertheless the English Company shall readily exert every friendly mediation with the princes of Arcot and Tanjore, to procure to the subjects of France in their territories a safe, free, and independent trade, such as was carried on by the former French Company, whether they exercise it individually or united in a Company.

Article 3 The engagement of His Britannick Majesty concerning the safety, freedom and independence of the French trade shall have full effect in the provinces of Bengal, Bahar and Orixa, as also in the provinces on the coast of Orixa usually called Northern Circars; and in general in all the possessions of the English Company on the coasts of Orixa, of Coromandel and of Malabar.

Article 4 French trading vessels carrying on traffick in the English establishments, and English trading vessels carrying on traffick in the French establishments shall be subject reciprocally to the municipal duties of the said establishments.

Article 5 All French ships of war, frigates, sloops, armed ships, and in general all vessels carrying the marks which distinguish King's ships from those of commerce, shall pass freely up and down the river Ganges, without being hailed, or subjected to any visit whatever.
Article 6  All French trading vessels whether belonging to individuals or to the Company, shall equally pass up and down the river Ganges without being hailed or visited; except in cases where information upon oath, in writing and under a known signature, shall be given to the officers of the Government of Bengal, that such vessels are loaded with articles prohibited by the present convention; viz. salt, in greater quantities than that which it is agreed shall be imported as shall be hereafter mentioned, and arms and military stores exclusive of those afterwards specified.

Article 7  A post composed of natives only, shall be established by the Government of Bengal, on the banks of the Ganges, below Budge Budge, which alone shall have a right to hail, stop and visit such French trading vessels only as shall have been informed against upon oath, conformable to what has been mentioned in the 6th article, as being loaded with articles prohibited by the present convention. The persons at the said post appointed to hail and visit, shall be officers of the Nabob, with a particular commission for that purpose, and a chop as a distinguishing mark.

Article 8  Should the French trading ships, whether belonging to individuals or to the Company, refuse to stop upon being summoned, the officers of the said post may claim assistance at Budge Budge, and other forts belonging to the English Company.
Article 9  When a French trading ship shall be stopped, information shall be given of it to the agent of the said nation, who shall send immediately a person commissioned by him and in whose presence the said vessel shall be searched. The articles found fraudulent shall be confiscated to the use of the Government of Bengal, which shall dispose of them as it may think proper; after which the vessel shall be delivered over to the agent of the French nation, who shall determine on the punishment to be inflicted on the captain.

If the information should prove false, the informer shall pay a fine proportioned to the loss occasioned by the detention of the vessel, and in default of means on the part of the informer, he shall be subject to exemplary punishment.

Article 10  The French trade shall import annually into Bengal two hundred thousand maunds of salt, which shall be unloaded at the place of deposit fixed by the Government of Bengal, and delivered to the officers of the said Government appointed for this purpose, at the price agreed on, of one hundred and twenty rupees per hundred maunds.

Article 11  There shall not be imported into Bengal by the French trade, any arms or military stores, except such as are necessary for the equipment of the people employed to maintain the police in the French establishments.
Article 12  The French trade shall receive annually upon application from the agent of the said nation in Bengal, eighteen thousand maunds of salt petre and two hundred chests of opium, at the prices fixed before the last war.

Article 13  All goods that shall be sent from Chandernagore into the interior of the country, or that shall come into Chandernagore from the interior of the country, shall be subject to a duty of two and a half per cent. But no duty shall be imposed by the Government of Bengal upon articles imported into or exported from Chandernagore in French trading vessels passing up and down the Ganges; and of the cargoes of these no manifests shall be required.

Article 14  The quantity and quality of the said goods which shall pass through the interior of the country, shall be expressed in the dustucks or passports, whether of the French nation or of the chiefs of the different factories and houses of commerce, all of whom shall be entitled to grant them; and invoices in French shall accompany the said dustucks. These dustucks shall be carried to the custom house at Hoogly, or to any other established by the Government of Bengal beyond the territory of Chandernagore. The said dustucks shall not be exchanged for buxbunder rowannahs, but shall have a full and free currency.

Article 15  The duties to be paid shall be regulated by a talika or tarif, settled by what was formerly established by the princes
of the country, and there shall be a review of the ancient talikas, which shall be the rule to follow.

Article 16 An account shall be kept of the duties paid, until the decision of our respective courts.

Article 17 Besides the abovementioned articles, the rules shall be the 7th, 11th, 12th, 13th and 15th articles of the regulation proposed by the English Government General to Mons. Dangereux agent of the French nation, on the margins of which the said Mr. Dangereux hath made answers, dated 17th October 1785, and which said articles shall remain as they were proposed.

Article 18 Agreeable to the proposal of the English Government General to the agent of the French nation in Bengal, the factories and houses of commerce which Mr. Nicholas or any two members of the ancient council at Chandernagore shall specify by name, as having been held in property or otherwise by the French nation, in the provinces of Bengal, Bahar and Orixa, before the last war shall be declared to belong to the French nation, but no encrease or exchange of factories or houses of commerce shall take place without the sanction of the Government of Bengal.

Article 19 All the inhabitants whether Europeans or natives, of the French establishments, factories, and houses of commerce, as well as of the territory annexed to them, shall be under the protection of the French flag, and subject to the French jurisdiction.
Article 20  The chiefs of factories and other French establishments shall enjoy the privilege of recovering the debts and balances due by the weavers or other manufacturers, as also by the delols employed by the French, although they may reside beyond the bounds of the said establishments; with this restriction however, that if a delol should have contracts with more than one European nation at the same time, he must in that case only be proceeded against before the ordinary jurisdiction of the country.

Article 21  In whatever French factories of Bengal the Dewans of the chiefs may have exercised a jurisdiction over their ryots betwixt the years 1765 and 1778, tho' the territories inhabited by the said ryots may be beyond the bounds of the said factories, the said custom of jurisdiction shall be continued; that is to say, there shall be no innovation in this respect.

Article 22  Natives who being pursued by the government of the country for crimes, misdemeanours or debts shall take refuge in the French factories shall be delivered up by the chiefs of these factories, when claimed by the said government. But the said chiefs shall have a right to give protection to Europeans in similar circumstances.

Article 23  In cases where French subjects shall be accused of outrages against natives of the country, they shall be delivered
over by the officers of the government to the nearest French chief who shall examine the accusation, and proceed according to the exigency of the case.

If a French subject should have similar cause of complaint against a native of the country, the cause of the said native shall be tried in the courts of justice of the said country; provided that these cases occur beyond the bounds of the French territory.

**Article 24** The other customs whether relating to civil or criminal matters which have not been mentioned in the preceding articles shall be continued in full force, and as they were practised before the last war.

**Article 25** The peninsula lately become an island situated to the east of Yanam extending to that place and formerly covered with the wood a part of which is now cleared, shall remain in the possession of the French entirely both the parts that are cleared and those which remain covered with wood: saving the claims which the English Company may have to make relative to the extent and limits of the said peninsula.

**Article 26** Upon the production of the perwannah obtained by the French in 1765, from the Souba Nizam Alli which grants a savaron containing twelve candies malka of cultivated land in the district
of Cotapilly, or an authentic proof being given that the said perwannah was obtained, the abovementioned savaron shall be delivered up to the French in full property.

**Article 27** The dustucks of the chiefs of Yanam, and of the French factory at Masulipatam shall have free currency in the Northern Circars, and shall secure a free passage exempt from all duties whether on exports or imports for goods which shall belong to French individuals, or to the French Companies.

**Article 28** European goods which shall pass thro' the hands of native inhabitants of Yanam and of the French factory at Masulipatam shall circulate thro' the Northern Circars, under dustucks of the chiefs of Yanam and of the French factory at Masulipatam with entire freedom from duties in all cases where the same custom takes place with regard to the native inhabitants of the English establishments of Masulipatam and Ingeram.

**Article 29** The inhabitants of Yanam shall enjoy the rights of fishing and of markets, and all the other privileges they enjoyed before the last war without being molested by any person whomsoever.

**Separate Article Definitively Settled:**

It is agreed and settled definitively that a corvette nearly such as the *Esperance* belonging to His Most Christian Majesty, which was lost in consequence of several cannot shot,
fired from the English fort of Budge Budge, by a mistake of the officer commanding the fort, shall be sent by the Governor General and Council of Calcutta to Chandernagore, and delivered by an English officer to the agent of the French nation to replace the said corvette Esperance.

It is further agreed and settled definitively, that the relations and friends or cast of the native, attached to the service of the said corvette Esperance, and who perished by one of the cannon shot fired at the said corvette, shall be indemnified as far as may be for their loss by a pecuniary compensation from the English government.

Done at the Isle of France,
30 April 1786
Souillac
Cathcart
APPENDIX C

This copy of the Eden-Montmorin Convention is found in the *French in India* series, vol. VI, pp. 275-81.

Convention between his Britannick Majesty and the Most Christian King. Signed at Versailles 31 August 1787.

Difficulties having arisen in the East Indies, relative to the meaning and extent of the 13th article of the Treaty of Peace, signed at Versailles 3 September 1783, His Britannick Majesty and His Most Christian Majesty, with a view to remove every cause of dispute between their respective subjects in that part of the world, have thought proper to make a particular convention, which may serve as an explanation of the 13th article abovementioned: in this view, their said Majesties have named for their respective plenipotentiaries, to wit, on the part of His Britannic Majesty, William Eden Esq. Privy Counsellor in Great Britain and Ireland, member of the British Parliament, and his Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to his Most Christian Majesty; and on the part of his Most Christian Majesty the Sieur Armand Mark Count de Montmorin de St Herem, Marshall of his Camps and Forces, Counsellor in all his Councils, Knight of his Orders, and of the Golden Fleece, Minister and Secretary of State, and of his Commands and Finances, having the Department of Foreign Affairs; who after having communicated to each other
their respective full powers have agreed upon the following articles.

1 His Britannic Majesty 'again engages to take such measures as shall be in his power for securing to the subjects of France a safe, free, and independent trade, such as was carried on by the French East India Company' and as is explained in the following articles, 'whether they exercise it individually or as a Company', as well in the Nabobship of Arcot and the countries of Madura and Tanjore, as in the provinces of Bengal, Bahar and Orixa, the Northern Circars, and in general in all British possessions on the coast of Orixa, Coromandel and Malabar.

2 In order to prevent all abuses and disputes relative to the importation of salt, it is agreed that the French shall not import annually into Bengal more than two hundred thousand maunds of salt; the said salt shall be delivered at a place of deposit appointed for that purpose by the Government of Bengal, and to officers of the said Government, at the fixed price of one hundred and twenty rupees for every hundred maunds.

3 There shall be delivered annually for the French commerce, upon the demand of the French agent in Bengal, eighteen thousand maunds of salt petre, and three thousand chests of opium,* at the price established before the late war.

*This is an obvious error: the French were conceded the right to 300, not 3,000, chests of opium each year.
4. The six ancient factories, namely, Chandernagore, Cossimbazar, Dacca, Jugdea, Balasore, and Patna, with territories belonging to the said factories, shall be under protection of the French flag, and subject to the French jurisdiction.

5. France shall also have possession of the ancient houses of Soopore, Keerpoy, Carricole, Mohunpore, Serampore, and Chittagong, as well as the dependencies on Soopore, viz. Gautjurat, Allende, Chintzabad, Patorcha, Monepore and Dolobody; and shall further have the faculty of establishing new houses of commerce; but none of the said houses shall have any jurisdiction, or any exemption from the ordinary justice of the country exercised over British subjects.

6. His Britannic Majesty engages to take measures to secure to French subjects without the limits of the ancient factories abovementioned, an exact and impartial administration of justice, in all matters concerning their persons or properties, or the carrying on their trade in the same manner and as effectually as to his own subjects.

7. All Europeans as well as natives, against whom judicial proceedings shall be instituted, within the limits of the ancient factories abovementioned, for offences committed or debts contracted within the said limits, and who shall take refuge out of the same, shall be delivered up to the chiefs of the said factories: and
all Europeans or others whosoever against whom judicial proceedings shall be instituted, without the said limits, and who shall take refuge within the same, shall be delivered up by the chiefs of the said factories, upon demand being made of them by the government of the country.

8 All the subjects of either nations respectively who shall take refuge within the factories of the other, shall be delivered up on each side, upon demand being made of them.

9 The factory of Yanam with its dependencies, having in pursuance of the said Treaty of Peace, been delivered up by Mr. Wm. Hamilton, on the part of His Britannic Majesty, to Mr. Peter Paul Martin on the part of His Most Christian Majesty, the restitution thereof is confirmed by the present convention, in terms of the instrument bearing date the 7 March 1785, and signed by Messrs. Hamilton and Martin.

10 The present convention shall be ratified and confirmed in the space of three months, or sooner if it can be done, after the exchange of signature between the plenipotentiaries.

In witness whereof, we Ministers Plenipotentiary, have signed the present convention, and have caused the seals of our arms to be affixed thereto.

Done at Versailles, 31 August 1787.

William Eden (L.S.)
Le Cte de Montmorin (L.S.)
APPENDIX D

This copy of the treaty concluded by Montmorin and Pigneau de Béhaine on 28 November 1787 is taken from Taboulet, La Geste Française en Indochine, vol. I, pp. 186-88. Articles 3 and 4, which are somewhat abbreviated in Taboulet's version, have been supplemented from the copy of the articles in Conway's letter to Montmorin of 18 June 1788. (Colonies, pp. 166-73).

TRAITE D'ALLIANCE OFFENSIVE ET DÉFENSIVE

Nguyen-Anh, Roi de la Cochinchine, ayant été dépouillé de ses États, et se trouvant dans la nécessité d'employer la force des armes pour les retrouver, a envoyé en France le Sieur Pierre-Joseph-Georges Pigneau de Béhaine, Evêque d'Adran, dans la vue de réclamer le secours et l'assistance de Sa Majesté le Roi Très Chrétien. Sa dite Majesté, convaincue de la justice de la cause de ce prince, et voulant lui donner une marque signalée de son amitié comme de son amour pour la justice, s'est déterminée à accueillir favorablement la demande faite en son nom. En conséquence, elle a autorisé le sieur Comte Emile de Montmorin, Maréchal de ses camps et armées, Chevalier de ses Ordres et de la Toison d'Or, son Conseiller en tous ses conseils, Ministre et Secrétaire d'État de ses commandements et finances, ayant le Département des Affaires Etrangères, à discuter et à arrêter, avec le dit Sieur Evêque d'Adran, la nature, l'étendue et les conditions
des secours à fournir. Et les deux Plénipotentiaires, après s'être légitimés, savoir: le Comte de Montmorin en communiquant son plein pouvoir, et l'Évêque d'Adran en produisant le grand sceau du Royaume de la Cochinchine ainsi qu'une délibération du Grand Conseil du dit Royaume, sont convenus des points et articles suivants:

 Artikel 1

 Le Roi Très Chrétien promet et s'engage de seconder de la manière la plus efficace les efforts que le Roi de la Cochinchine est résolu de faire pour rentrer dans la possession et jouissance de ses États.

 Artikel 2

 Pour cet effet, Sa Majesté Très Chrétienne enverra incessamment sur les côtes de la Cochinchine, à ses frais, quatre frégates avec un corps de troupe de douze cents hommes d'infanterie, deux cents hommes d'artillerie, et deux cent cinquante Cafres. Ces troupes seront munies de tout leur attirail de guerre, et nommément d'une artillerie compétente de campagne.

 Artikel 3

 Le Roi de la Cochinchine, dans l'attente du service important que le Roi Très Chrétien est disposé à lui rendre, lui cède éventuellement, ainsi qu'à la Couronne de France, la propriété absolue et la souveraineté de l'île formant le port
principal de la Cochinchine appelée Hôi-nan et par les Européens Touron et cette propriété et souveraineté seront incommutablement acquises dès l'instant où les Français auront occupé l'île sub-mentionnée.

Article 4

Il est convenu en outre que le Roi Très Chrétien aura, concurremment avec celui de la Cochinchine, la propriété du port susdité, et que les Français pourront faire sur le continent tous les établissements tant pour leur navigation ou leur commerce que pour garder et carêner leurs vaisseaux, et pour en construire quand à la police du port elle sera réglée sur les lieux par une convention particulière.

Article 5

Le Roi Très Chrétien aura aussi la propriété et la souveraineté de l'île de Poulo-Condore.

Article 6

Les sujets du Roi Très Chrétien jouiront d'une entière liberté de commerce dans tous les états du Roi de la Cochinchine, à l'exclusion de toutes les autres nations européennes. Ils pourront, pour cet effet, aller, venir et séjourner librement, sans obstacle et sans payer aucun droit quelconque pour leurs personnes, à condition toutefois qu'ils seront munis d'un passeport du Commandant de l'île de Hôi-nan. Ils pourront importer toutes
les marchandises d'Europe et des autres parties du monde, à l'exception de celles qui seront défendues par les lois du pays. Ils pourront également exporter toutes les denrées et marchandises du pays et des pays voisins sans aucune exception; ils ne paieront d'autres droits d'entrée et de sortie que ceux qu'acquittent actuellement les naturels du pays, et ces droits ne pourront être haussés en aucun cas, et sous quelque dénomination que ce puisse être. Il est convenu, de plus, qu'aucun bâtiment étranger, soit marchand, soit de guerre, ne sera admis dans les États du Roi de la Cochinchine que sous pavillon français et avec un passeport français.

Article 7

Le Gouvernement Cochinchinois accordera aux sujets du Roi Très Chrétien la protection la plus efficace pour la liberté et la sûreté tant de leurs personnes que de leurs effets, et, en cas de difficulté ou de contestation, il leur fera rendre la justice la plus exacte et la plus prompte.

Article 8

Dans le cas où le Roi Très Chrétien serait attaqué ou menacé par quelque puissance que ce puisse être, relativement à la jouissance des îles de Hoï-nan et de Poulo-Condore, et dans le cas où Sa Majesté Très Chrétienne serait en guerre avec quelque puissance, soit européenne, soit asiatique, le Roi de la Cochinchine s'engage à lui donner des secours en soldats, matelots,
vivres, vaisseaux et galères. Ces secours seront fournis trois mois après la réquisition, mais ils ne pourront pas être employés au delà des îles Moluques et de la Sonde et du détroit de Malacca. Quant à leur entretien, il sera à la charge du souverain qui les fournira.

Article 9

Le Roi Très Chrétien s'oblige d'assister le Roi de la Cochinchine lorsqu'il sera trouble dans la possession de ses états. Ces secours seront proportionnés à la nécessité des circonstances; cependant, ils ne pourront en aucun cas excéder ceux énoncés dans l'article deuxième du présent traité.

Article 10

Le présent traité sera ratifié par les deux souverains contractants, et les ratifications seront échangées dans l'espace d'un an, ou plus tôt si faire se peut. En foi de quoi, nous Plénipotentiaires avons signé le présent traité et y avons fait apposer le cachet de nos armes.

Fait à Versailles, le 28 novembre 1787.

Le Comte de Montmorin
P.-J.-G., Evêque d'Adran.

Article séparé

Dans la vue de prévenir toutes difficultés et mésentendus relativement aux établissements que le Roi Très Chrétien est
autorisé à faire sur le continent pour l'utilité de la navigation et du commerce, il est convenu avec le Roi de la Cochinchine que ces mêmes établissements seront et appartiendront en toute propriété à Sa Majesté Très Chrétienne, et que la juridiction, la police et la garde, et tous les actes d'autorité sans exception s'y exerceront privativement en son nom. Pour prévenir les abus auxquels les établissements mentionnés ci-dessus pourraient donner lieu, il est convenu que l'on n'y recevra aucun Cochinchinois poursuivi pour crime; et que ceux qui pourraient s'y être introduits seront extradés à la première requérition du Gouvernement. Il est convenu également que tous les Français transfuges seront extradés à la première requérition du commandant de Hoï-nan ou de celui de Poulo-Condore...

Fait à Versailles, le 28 novembre 1787.
Le Comte de Montmorin.
P.-J.-G., Evêque d'Adran.

Déclaration de l'Evêque d'Adran

Quoique dans la convention signée ce jour'hui, il ne soit fait aucune mention des frais qu'occasionneront les établissements que Sa Majesté Très Chrétienne pourra former soit dans le îles de Hoï-nan et Poulo-Condor, soit sur le continent du Royaume de Cochinchine, le Soussigné, en vertu de l'autorisation dont il est muni, déclare que le Roi de la Cochinchine prendra à sa charge, soit par fournitures en nature, soit en argent, d'après
les évaluations qui en seront faites, les premiers frais de l'établissement à former pour la sûreté et la protection, tels que fortifications, casernes, hôpitaux, magasins, bâtiments militaires et logement du Commandant. En foi de quoi j'ai signé le présente Déclaration et y ai apposé le cachet de mes armes, avec promesse d'en procurer la ratification de la part du Roi de la Cochinchine.

Versailles, 28 novembre 1787.

P.-J.-G., Evêque d'Adran.
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In 1954 the bulk of the old Pondicherry archives, which
had been catalogued by Martineau and Gaudart earlier in the
century, were taken to France. Miss D.G. Keswani of the National
Archives of India assured me that there was very little of
importance left at Pondicherry. Her investigations revealed only stray copies of the decisions of the Pondicherry Superior Council 1774-77, letters from Karikal, the decisions of the Police Court of Choualty 1766-1899, judgements of the Council of Pondicherry 1735-1815, records of the Police Court 1805-39, and the Registry Office papers of baptisms, marriages and deaths.

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C1 4. Lettres reçues, mémoires et documents divers; Cochin Chine, 1784-91. In this volume there is much on French interest and activity in Cochin China after the American War; the instructions given by d'Entrecasteaux and Cossigny to de Richery 1786, various mémoires on the advantages to be derived from a settlement in Cochin China, the convention concluded between the bishop and Montmorin in 1787 with other official papers, and correspondence between Conway and the bishop 1788-9.
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