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Nawabi Karnatak: Muhammad Ali Khan in the Making of a Mughal Successor State in Pre-colonial South India, 1749-1795

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Chapter 9: Military Encounters

This chapter argues that, in their military encounters and “military cooperation,” the Nawab and the EIC attempted to control each other just as they did in the economic and cultural spheres. However, the Nawab’s schemes went wrong in the military sphere as a result of miscalculations on his part, as well as various other complicated and uncontrollable factors. This chapter is divided into three main parts. In the first, the discussion will focus on how the Nawab’s military plans went awry. In the second part, the Nawab’s efforts to fix his mistakes and improve his military position will be explored. In the final section, I will discuss how the wider context of British-South Asian politics was significantly transformed from the mid-1770s, and how this shaped the Nawab’s military successes and failures.

9.1 Clashes of Interests in the Joint Force

On the surface, the grand project of military cooperation between the Nawab and the EIC began positively and harmoniously.¹ However, from the very beginning both parties viewed it from completely different perspectives. As is revealed by correspondence between the Court of Directors and the Madras Presidency, the Company had seen this project as a great opportunity “to keep the Nabob the more firm in our interest by having under our own orders and control almost the whole military force by which the province [of Karnatak] is to be protected and kept in obedience.”² The EIC’s Directors sent many instructions to Madras to ensure that the joint force would be fully under the control of the Company, that none of the troops would consider themselves nor be considered by others to be the troops of the Nawab, and that they would never receive nor obey any direct orders from him. Among the various measures that were taken to ensure the dependence and affection of this force of native sepoys was confined to the EIC alone, the Directors requested that the Madras officers conceal from their soldiers the fact that the Nawab was the financial sponsor. In order to do so, the paymaster of these sepoys had to be a civilian British official within the Presidency and he had to pay each soldier directly, the money not passing through the hands of any indigenous chief. Furthermore, they insisted that these sepoys should have a uniform that was completely different from that of the Nawab’s other indigenous troops. Instead, British colors, such as those carried by the Company’s battalions, would be employed.³

¹ This continues the discussion in Chapter 4.3: “the Nawab-EIC Joint Force.”

² IOR, E/4/863, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, 19 Feb. 1766, 335.

³ IOR, E/4/863, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, 19 Feb. 1766, 332-343.

Despite the EIC's proposals being fully adopted at the start, it soon became clear that the Nawab also had a view on the future of this military force, one which differed significantly from that of the EIC. From 1767 to the early 1770s, one finds frequent complaints by the Madras Presidency that the Nawab did not want to disband his other "private forces," as he had promised to do after the joint force with the EIC had been established. On the contrary, the ruler increased their numbers daily.⁴ When the Company appealed to him about this, he requested that the British let him judge what was best for the management of his own country. The precise number of the Nawab's private troops was unknowable by the EIC's officers, and it was probably the Nawab's intention to hide how many he had from them. Yet, from estimates, it seems there were no fewer than 20,000 in both 1767 and 1769.⁵ From Paterson's record of the period 1770-1773, as well as the twelve battalions that constituted the joint force with the EIC, the Nawab had another twelve battalions of sepoy, seven of which were disciplined with European officers and five were *sibandi*—lower-ranking soldiers used for revenue collection. It is likely that each battalion contained about 1,000 men. Some of the European officers who trained the Nawab's private force were EIC military officers borrowed by the Nawab, while many others were independent European mercenaries who had been hired by him and were, therefore, under his direct command. This number does not include several thousand cavalry and 500-1,000 *topasses* (artillery men).⁶ The total number of people in the Nawab's private forces was between double and triple the amount that the EIC had expected the Nawab to maintain after the establishment of the Nawab-EIC joint force. Evidently, and unlike the initial British understanding and expectation, the Nawab never trusted the EIC to the extent that he would place his entire military future into its hands. Instead, he wanted to use it as just one of a number of military resources, as well as employing his good relations with it and its skills to create his own high-quality private troops. The fact that the Nawab officially declared the lands he granted to the EIC to be "jagirs," even though they were, in fact, inams or free grants, can, in this light, be interpreted as the Nawab's perspective on or approach to his military

⁴ IOR, P/251/59, MP, MMSC, 17 Aug. 1767, 702, 767-770.

⁵ IOR, P/251/59, MP, MMSC, 17 Aug. 1767, 769-770; E/4/864, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, 17 Mar. 1769, 633.

⁶ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Dec. 1770, 107; E/379/3, Dec. 1771, 98; E/379/8, Jun. 1774, 164; Gurney, "The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot," 270. The *topasi* was defined by an eighteenth-century South Asian soldier as a tawny race of foot soldiers who were descended from the Portuguese marrying indigenous women and called Topasses because they wore hats (i.e. Portuguese Topo-European style hats). Alternative etymologies of *topasi* include: Turkish *top-chi*, "cannoneer." This new *topasi* military type included specialists in Western firearms, which included soldier with either a Western biological ancestor or South Asian converts to Catholicism. See further: Roy and Lorge, *Chinese and Indian Warfare*, 329.

project with the EIC. He wanted the Madras Presidency to be one of his jagirdars, with the result that it was duty-bound to maintain and provide him with sepoy troops.⁷

The combination of his trust in the EIC as a result of its service to him over the course of a decade, his eagerness to have a large, European-trained army to serve his interests, and his confidence in his own ability to manage relations with the Company supposedly made the Nawab initially negligent, which meant the joint force was managed solely by the EIC for a number of years. In the meantime, he kept himself busy accumulating and expanding other private forces. However, a number of incidents that occurred in the period 1769-1773 drastically altered the Nawab's attitudes and policies regarding military cooperation with the EIC.

The Mysore War

The first was the war between the Nawab-EIC alliance and Hyder Ali Khan, known as the First Anglo-Mysore War (1767-1769), which was the first significant conflict after the Nawab-EIC joint force had been established. It may be imagined that the Nawab was very confident of victory, as he had twelve battalions of the joint army—trained and commanded by skillful EIC military commanders—combined with large numbers of his own private troops, led by his indigenous servants. His expectations rose even higher when he received a promise from the Madras Presidency that, after it won the war, the Mysore throne and territory would be transferred to him.⁸ However, the outcome was both disappointing and shocking for the Nawab. There were reports that the joint force and the Nawab's private forces were unable to cooperate properly in the field nor match their opponents. As such, Karnatak was devastated, and the EIC's Commander-in-Chief, General Smith, seems to have done everything he could to avoid a major confrontation with enemy forces.⁹ In 1769, in defiance of the Nawab and the Karnatak elites, who still believed they could win the war, the Madras Presidency under Governor Du Pré decided to surrender and open peace negotiations. Although the Nawab made repeated protests, demanding that the army continue fighting, a treaty was eventually concluded. This was the first severe clash of interests between the Nawab and the Company since the beginning of their friendship two decades earlier. The Nawab was furious, because he believed that there had been secret negotiations and bribes between the Madras Presidency and Mysore. More significantly, this episode made the

⁷ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/3, DGP, Sep. 1771, 13-14.

⁸ IOR, Z/E/4/864, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, 17 Mar. 1769, 588-609.

⁹ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/3, DGP, Nov. 1771, 46-47; Turnbull, *Warren Hastings*, 54.

Nawab realize for the first time that, although he had spent much of his own money on creating a large, European-trained army, he could not use it without the Company's permission. As such, and significantly, he lost power on the inter-regional stage to the Madras Presidency. After the Mysore war, the Nawab protested against the Company in several ways. For example, he declared his intention to abolish the entire joint force under his pay and remove the Company's military officers from all the forts he held in the hinterland. However, such displays of assertiveness were likely to have been threats to remind the EIC of his own authority and prestige, rather than any real attempt to cut himself off from his most important military resource. The EIC's Directors also strongly desired for there to be no more clashes with the Nawab, as he was their main ally and sponsor in the region. Thus, they sent strict orders to Madras to compromise with the Nawab as far as possible in the future in order to calm him and regain his trust and favor.¹⁰ Their relationship would have been improved by the Company's new direction in this regard if new conflicts over Tanjore had not followed soon after.

The Two Conquests of Tanjore

As discussed earlier, the conquest of Tanjore had always been one of the Nawab's principle aims, but the peace treaty of 1762 had prevented this. However, a justification to do so presented itself in February 1771, when the raja sent his troops to invade Ramnad and Sivaganga.¹¹ Seizing on this great opportunity, the Nawab immediately sent a request to the Madras Presidency, demanding that it send the Nawab-EIC joint army, along with his private troops, to punish the raja. However, Governor Du Pré, who had just made peace with Mysore against the Nawab's consent, again rejected his request. One of his reasons was that the Company was the guarantor of the 1762 treaty, so it needed to be cautious about getting involved in such an affair. Furthermore, it could only enter such a war if it had ensured that it would be fought effectively, since the Company's honor was at stake. The Nawab then proposed that, in order not to involve the Company's reputation, he would not rely on its military Commander-in-Chief, General Smith, to lead the war. Instead, he would give the role to Captain Matthews, a British man, probably an ex-EIC officer, who had been hired by the Nawab to command his cavalry. What he needed from the EIC was just three battalions of the joint army (of the seven under his pay) to support his private troops. The Nawab also promised that he would only defend Ramnad against the aggressor and that he would not

¹⁰ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Apr. 1771, 256; Z/E/4/865, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, 30 Nov. 1770, 77-82.

¹¹ See the previous discussion on Tanjore and the treaty of 1762 in Chapter Four (4.3).

break the 1762 treaty by attacking Tanjore. Even with these many attempts at compromise by the Nawab, however, the Madras Governor forbade the battalions from moving without his approval. As the Madras Governor claimed, most of the military officers commanding the battalions were Company officers, bearing the Company's name and representing it. If the Nawab still insisted on sending troops, all the Company's officers must be withdrawn.¹² As such, from March 1771, the conquest of Tanjore became the principal point of conflict between the Nawab and the Madras Presidency, and was, in fact, the primary cause of many of the other battles of honor that took place during the early 1770s (discussed in the previous chapter). The British king's minister was drawn into this conflict as the Nawab's supporter, since he was convinced by the latter of the Tanjore raja's bad behavior and of the EIC's injustice in not allowing him to protect his own lands nor to use the military forces on which he had spent significant amounts of money. By this time, it no longer seemed necessary for the EIC to hide its true designs regarding authority over the Nawab-EIC joint army, as the Madras Governor freely gave the following statements to the king's minister, surely knowing that his words would reach the Nawab's ears:

[...] These troops were raised no doubt for the service of the Carnatick [...] but not to answer every capricious scheme of the Nabob. They were always to remain under the orders of the governor and council [of Madras].¹³

[...] they have no forces of the Nabob's under their orders; but all are absolutely the Company's to be employed for the defense of the Carnatick solely as their servants shall judge best.¹⁴

As an eyewitness described, during this period the Nawab was always in a violent rage, and he once expressed his distress as follows:

Nobody will either trust or respect me now. It is plain I have no authority even in my own country, even my own troops are not suffered to march to protect one subject against the insults of another. The people here first ruined my credit and now they want to sacrifice my honor. [...] Besides the Company have seven Battalions of my sepoys which I pay under their orders. Surely they are mine as I

¹² IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Feb. 1771, 187-191, Mar. 1771, 204-205, Apr. 1771, 252; IOR, Mss Eur E/379/3, DGP, Jun. 1772, 185-186.

¹³ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Mar. 1771, 230.

¹⁴ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Apr. 1771, 256. See also: TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 66, *Ruznama*, 17 Oct. 1773.

pay them, and they should assist to support my honor and dignity, and to maintain the peace of my country. But this the governor absolutely refuses.¹⁵

Although being consistently rejected by the Madras Governor, the Nawab continued to explore all possible avenues. Eventually, after six months, in July 1771 he managed to get the Madras Presidency to agree to march the joint army against Tanjore. According to Paterson, who claimed to have learnt the information from various credible sources, many intrigues were behind this Tanjore expedition. The main reason that the expedition had been delayed was the “renowned fact” that the Tanjore raja had been paying 30,000 pagodas annually as a bribe to the Madras Governor, Du Pré, to maintain his friendship with the EIC. But the Nawab solved this problem by enticing the Governor with a larger amount of money, said to be as much as 100,000 pagodas in cash and security. All members of the Madras Council and many of his British private creditors also received generous promises from the Nawab should Tanjore fall. Nevertheless, things did not play out as the Nawab had anticipated. Only three months later, General Smith abruptly ended the war with a negotiated peace, claiming that he had no confidence in his ability to gain victory. As with the end of the Mysore War, this outcome was contrary to the Nawab’s wish and made him extremely angry. It is likely that the downfall of Tanjore was prevented by the raja using similar methods, of bribing the EIC officers (and probably also the Nawab’s eldest son), that the Nawab had applied in order to attempt to eliminate him.¹⁶

Although this first attempt at conquering Tanjore was a disappointment for him, the Nawab kept reporting the disruptive deeds of the raja to the British in order to urge them to attempt a second conquest. “Proofs” of a conspiracy between the Madras Presidency and the Tanjore raja were consistently shown to the king’s minister by the Nawab in an attempt to use the king’s faction to put pressure on the Company. A good opportunity for the Nawab emerged once more in mid-1773, when it became clear that the raja was about to break the recent peace treaty. Furthermore, it was during the period of transition between the Madras Governors Du Pré and Alexander Wynch. Unlike the former, Governor Wynch was well disposed towards the Nawab, and during his initial period in his new position showed an inclination to forge good relations with the ruler. Seeing this as his best chance, the Nawab stridently asked the Madras Presidency to recommence the campaign. Just as in the previous war, many deals and intrigues were said to have been required first. Publicly, the Nawab

¹⁵ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Mar. 1771, 194-195.

¹⁶ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/3, DGP, Oct. 1771, 32, Nov. 1771, 38, 53-56, Dec. 1771, 69; Gurney, “The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot,” 145.

promised to pay all the expenses of the expedition and to increase his contribution to the Nawab-EIC joint army from seven to ten battalions, “as a present to the Company.”¹⁷ The latter was one of the EIC’s most long-standing requests, one which the Nawab had consistently refused under Governor Du Pré. Under the table, huge rewards were promised to Madras Council members and military officers if Tanjore fell. As a result of these deals and the pressure placed on the EIC by the king’s minister, the joint force was dispatched in June 1773. This time, the Madras Presidency was loyal to its agreements and Tanjore was taken within a few months.¹⁸

9.2 Nawabi Efforts at Military Reform

After the incidents of 1769 to 1773, the Nawab must have been very aware of his previous, significant mistake in heavily and incautiously trusting most of Karnatak’s armed forces, especially the most effective one, to the EIC. Evidently, during this period, the Nawab’s trust in the EIC was in pieces. However, the accounts also show that the Nawab did not simply surrender to his fate when he realized that his military capability had been unexpectedly lost. Eventually, he was able to successfully use the British men around him to achieve his political designs. What has been discussed in the above are some of the short-term means the Nawab used to solve his immediate problems. In the following sections, we will explore further the long-term policies that the Nawab used while attempting to fix his past military-based errors in management.

The Reduction of the EIC’s Military Power in Karnatak

Learning that he had almost no power over the joint army, one of the first things he did to improve the situation was to limit, to an extent, this force within Karnatak territory. His attempts to do so were two-fold. First, he requested a reduction in the size of the joint force. Secondly, he tried to remove them from various strategically important places within Karnatak. In fact, long before the final conquest of Tanjore, jealousy and distrust of the EIC had been festering in the Nawab’s mind. He had been worried that the Company would keep that wealthy domain for themselves instead of handing it over to him,¹⁹ and, after Tanjore was taken, the Nawab quickly requested that the joint army withdraw as soon as possible, leaving the country under the management of his own people. The Nawab’s suspicion was not groundless, as many of the EIC’s civil and military officers strongly opposed his request,

¹⁷ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/5, DGP, May 1773, 131, Jun. 1773, 208.

¹⁸ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/5, DGP, Jun. 1773, 217.

¹⁹ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/6, DGP, Sep. 1773, 186; Z/E/4/865, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, 27 Nov. 1771, 467-469.

claiming that if all of the joint force under British commanders moved out, the Nawab might face counter-attacks from Tanjore.²⁰ Enraged, the Nawab threatened to stop paying the joint army and to send petitions on the matter to the British king and government through the king's minister. According to Paterson, during this time, the Nawab became panicked and very cautious in his movements so as not to give the British the chance to expand their influence in Tanjore, nor in any other part of his domain. In October 1773, when he requested that Paterson write a letter of friendship on his behalf to the British king, the ruler approved all the contents of the draft, except one diplomatic sentence that stated: "it was his [the Nawab's] firm solution, no nation but the English should have territory so as to enable them to maintain a standing army in his country."²¹ Believing that this sentence could communicate the idea that the British would be allowed to claim as much ground to maintain a standing army as they pleased, the Nawab firmly objected. He wished to change it to an unambiguous line, saying that "he was very well pleased with what they [the Company] had got; but he did not ch[oo]se to give them anymore."²² It was a long time before Paterson could convince the Nawab of the impropriety of that harsh expression, and that the former sentence did not convey the idea about which he was worrying.

Several signs suggesting an unusually cordial relationship between the Nawab and the French CIO and the Dutch VOC during the early 1770s were also likely to have been part of his attempts to pressure the EIC. In June 1770 (just after the peace with Mysore), the Nawab insisted on receiving the representatives of the French from Pondicherry in his palace and showed himself sympathetic to a French request to rent lands around Pondicherry that were worth 60,000 pagodas. And certainly, this caused the EIC great anxiety.²³ Regarding the Dutch, the conquest of Tanjore in 1773 caused the Nawab and the VOC to clash over the port-town of Nagore, not far from the VOC's Coromandel headquarters of Negapatnam. Not long before, the raja of Tanjore had traded this town to the VOC in exchange for military aid against the Nawab. After the conquest of Tanjore, the Nawab demanded that the Dutch return the port-town to him, claiming that the raja, who had been paying tribute to him, had no right to give any land to a foreigner without his consent. However, after a short period of confrontation between the troops of the Nawab and the Dutch, both parties agreed to negotiate.²⁴ Eventually, the Nawab offered to re-purchase Nagore at the same price the Dutch

²⁰ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/6, DGP, Sep. 1773, 210, 223.

²¹ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/6, DGP, Oct. 1773, 313-314.

²² IOR, Mss Eur E/379/6, DGP, Oct. 1773, 313-314.

²³ Gurney, "The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot," 125.

²⁴ Gurney, "The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot," 204-205.

had paid for it, to which the VOC consented, with one condition; in future, should the Nawab choose to part with it, Nagore would never be given to anyone but the VOC. Usually, the Nawab was very sensitive about any European nation placing conditions on him or interfering his decisions. Yet in this case, the Nawab not only quickly acquiesced to the Dutch request, he also said in his letter to them that “the English have agreed with me, never to ask a foot more of ground: and I never intend to give Nagore to anyone.”²⁵ As Paterson stated, this statement was totally unnecessary, but “the Nabob seems too fond of every opportunity of letting everyone know, that he does not mean to give the English anymore country.”²⁶ Certainly, the words caused great irritation to the Madras Presidency, who did indeed want to have control of Nagore in order to check the VOC’s influence in Negapatnam.²⁷

The assertive attitude the Nawab showed during this period, at least, was not in vain. It caused the Madras Presidency to make some compromises, such as moving its troops out of Tanjore and stationing them at the nearby fort of Vellum. However, such did not reduce the Nawab’s distrust of the Company. During mid-1774, Paterson received many complaints from the EIC’s military officers, who were working in the battalions of the Nawab-EIC joint army in various areas of Karnatak, that the Nawab had ordered his servants to closely monitor any instances of bad behavior by the British officers towards the locals. Then all these “trifles” were to be “magnified in an extraordinary degree” by the Nawab in order to blame the Madras Presidency for ruining his country. Behind those appeals was the Nawab’s determination to reduce the number of joint troops stationed within his domains and to increase his control over them.²⁸

The Alteration of the Paymasters’ Customs

Around the same time that the Nawab tried to decrease the Company’s military influence in his territories, he started another policy that was probably aimed at stimulating changes within the joint army. Condemning the current system of military payment through the civil officers of the Madras Presidency, which had been initiated by the Company in 1765, the Nawab requested that the EIC resume the ancient practice of distributing the role of paymasters to various European military commanders of each sepoy sub-section. As the Nawab argued, it had been the custom of South Asia that the sepoys and cavalry were always

²⁵ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/7, DGP, Nov. 1773, 57.

²⁶ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/7, DGP, Nov. 1773, 58.

²⁷ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/7, DGP, Nov. 1773, 60, 62.

²⁸ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/8, DGP, Jul. 1774, 234-235.

considered the “Buxies” (bakhshi)—the military officers-*cum*-paymasters from whom the soldiers received their means of subsistence directly—as their immediate masters, to whom they should devote all their services. A bakhshi, in the past, had always taken to the field with his soldiers, hence a very firm attachment was formed between them, making the soldiers’ fighting much more efficient than it was at the present time. In order to pressurize the EIC into resuming this tradition, the Nawab also drew comparisons with the EIC’s practice in the Bengal Presidency and the general custom in Europe: “I [the Nawab] am told in Bengal Captain Commandants always pay their own Battalions. And I know in Europe the pay always goes from the Captain to his Company: but the practice had arisen here from an injudicious jealousy in the civil power of the military.”²⁹

Clearly, the Nawab understood that letting the payment of the joint army’s troops be made by the Madras Presidency had been a major mistake; as such, he wished to stop the Madras Presidency’s monopoly of the sepoys’ loyalty. Instead, he would attempt to ensure that their devotion was to their immediate, individual commanders. But how would this benefit the Nawab? In my view, the answer lies in the Nawab’s belief in his own ability to “make friends” with individual British commanders. As the many aforementioned examples have shown, the Nawab had excellent ability to make many individual British his “friends” and “supporters,” people who were prepared to serve his interests even if, sometimes, they went against their institutions’ wishes. In fact, through “presents” and “rewards” doled out in the previous two decades of his reign (1750s-1760s), the Nawab had developed good private relations with many of the EIC’s officers and, according to Gurney, the British who had the largest financial bonds from the Nawab were Company’s military officers, not civil servants.³⁰ Presumably, the Nawab believed that this approach—of distributing the loyalty of the sepoys to many individuals—would open up more opportunities for him, through personal relationships, to influence the management of the joint army and undermine the Madras Council’s control of it. Such an approach is reminiscent of the concept of “divide and rule” and the local practice of “fitna.”

The Increase in the Numbers of European Officers in the Nawab’s Service

As various sources reveal, throughout the 1770s the Nawab’s court was open and welcomed all British war-jobbers who wanted to be directly employed there. They were hired mainly to drill and to lead the sepoys of the Nawab’s private troops, and thus they were in positions that,

²⁹ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/7, DGP, Jan. 1774, 176.

³⁰ Gurney, “The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot,” 59.

in previous times, were usually taken by military officers that the Nawab had temporarily borrowed from the EIC. In mid-1773, Paterson noted that the Nawab was firmly resolved not to give command of his private troops to anyone unless those in his direct employment.³¹ Significantly, the Nawab's recruitment was not limited to adventurers or free mercenaries; he was also able to convince large numbers of EIC officers to move into his private service. Certainly, this caused great dissatisfaction within the Company. In 1772, the Company filed grievances against the Nawab, complaining that its interests and honor were suffering because the Nawab had given help or support to British subjects who had severely violated the Company's rights. The EIC asked the Nawab to dismiss those British soldiers who had entered his service without the consent of the Madras Presidency³² but, despite many complaints and further efforts to put obstacles in the way, the EIC failed to prevent the Nawab's recruitment drive. To put it more bluntly, it failed to prevent its own servants from moving into the Nawab's service. Throughout 1773 and 1774, many British soldiers sent the Nawab applications for employment. The majority of them were ex-Company officers whose contracts had just expired, meaning that they were not violating the rules. Furthermore, there were not only officers from the Madras Presidency but also some from the Bengal settlement in the Nawab's forces. Some of them were still under contract with the Company, but they had expressed their intention to resign from their posts if the Nawab promised to secure them a commission. The EIC was highly apprehensive about this, believing that, if such a practice continued, it would not be able to keep any talented officers in its service when their contract had expired.³³ The Company's anxiety rose still further when the Nawab hired men from other European nations. One such example is from August 1774, when a French soldier, Martinz, was appointed as a commanding officer in Tanjore. Criticisms of his nationality were put forward by the British, but they were not able to interfere with the decision of the Nawab.³⁴

The key to the Nawab's success in enticing large numbers of British and other European soldiers into his circle was the promise of better pay and rank. Along with recruitment, during this period the Nawab often showed generosity to the European soldiers in his service by granting them promotions to higher ranks and giving them better pay, and in so doing demonstrating to other British soldiers that they could have better careers in his court than in the service of the Company. A very important point worth noting is that the

³¹ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/5, DGP, Jun. 1773, 195.

³² IOR, Z/E/4/865, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, (no date) 1772, 789-790.

³³ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/7, DGP, Dec. 1773, 140-141, 147, Feb. 1774, 228; E/379/8, Apr. 1774, 44, 50.

³⁴ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/9, DGP, Aug. 1774, 91.

system of military ranking used by the Nawab to promote his private European soldiers was wholly lifted from the British custom of military organization—for example, lieutenants, captains, and majors—rather than the “distant” Mughal mansabdari system.³⁵ This is another example of how the Nawab was very pragmatic in adopting foreign customs for his own benefit. The Nawab’s promotion of British soldiers in the European style also seems to have been done previously, to some British officers who had served in the Nawab-EIC joint army and to some of the Nawab’s private troops. Beforehand, promotions had always taken place under the supervision and approbation of the EIC, so that they were considered as coming from just one source of authority, i.e. the Company; in later cases, the Nawab applied this right independently of the EIC’s decision-making processes, in a way that seems to have been both unprecedented and frequent. This issue of military ranking soon added another dimension to the conflict between the Nawab and the Company’s people. For example, in April 1773, a dispute broke out during a joint military operation between a British lieutenant of the joint army—under the EIC’s control—and a British captain of the Nawab’s private troop. The heart of the conflict centered on which of them had the right to command the other. In general, captain was a higher rank than lieutenant, but the Company’s officers, of every rank, considered themselves superior to the private officers of the Nawab, both indigenous and Europeans, and refused to be commanded by the Nawab’s people.³⁶ A significant problem thus arose; how could the military hierarchy be organized when European soldiers in the Nawab’s service had to work with those officials in the Company in joint military operations? However, such disputes regarding military honor and hierarchy were not unprecedented; starting in 1754, units of the British royal army were often sent to South Asia to supplement the Company’s troops in important wars. Inevitably, this gave rise to disputes between the two British military organizations over the same issue; who had the right to command the other?³⁷

Paterson, as the Nawab’s secretary, proposed several possible solutions to both the Nawab and the Presidency. His first idea was that the Nawab’s troops and the Company’s troops were always to act separately. This would certainly prevent conflict, but was not possible in practice, since troops from both parties always needed to work together in battle. The second alternative was based on seniority; all the officers, in both armies, were to be ranked according to military rank and then, if this was equal, the date of their commission.

³⁵ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/5, DGP, Apr. 1773, 87; E/379/7, Dec. 1773, 111.

³⁶ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/5, DGP, Apr. 1773, 91.

³⁷ Arthur N. Gilbert, “Recruitment and Reform in the East India Company Army, 1760-1800,” *Journal of British Studies* 15 (1975): 91.

This may seem the fairest solution, but it was hardly possible for the Company to allow some of its officers to be of lower rank than those of the Nawab. The third possibility was the model used when the EIC's troops had to work with the British royal troops: the Nawab's troops should have the same relationship to the EIC's troops that the EIC's had to the crown's. As such, the youngest captain of the Company was to command all the Nawab's captains and the youngest of the Nawab's captains was to command all the subalterns of the army—both the Nawab's and the Company's soldiers—and so on in all other ranks. Paterson thought that the last idea seemed to be the most practical, but the Nawab declared his people to be extremely displeased with it. As the Nawab said, he had no objection to giving first place to the military officers of the British king, but he was a sovereign prince and the Company's people were his subjects, so “why should their troops have their advantage over his?”³⁸ At least until 1775, the debate on this issue was still ongoing, with no solution found. The Nawab insisted on equality; the officers he appointed should be on the same level as the Company's officers in all situations. The Company, who disdained the Nawab's officers and complained that the Nawab could raise up anyone—people from the lowest station, Company deserters, or even enemies (other Europeans)—to serve him, insisted the EIC's officers had to be ranked over those of the Nawab.³⁹

Improvements in the Nawab's Private Troops

Wanting to reduce the numbers and role of the Nawab-EIC joint army, the Nawab then realized it was an urgent necessity for him to improve the quantity and quality of his private forces. As a first step, the Nawab placed particular emphasis on his cavalry. The reason for this is obvious. As a former Mughal army, the cavalry was the ablest and most reliable part of his forces. From the beginning of their contacts in the late 1740s, the Nawab's indigenous troops, especially the infantry, had usually been looked down upon by the British officers for their lack of discipline, equipment, and skill. In sharp contrast, his cavalry units frequently received compliments for their efficiency and usefulness from the British soldiers, and thus saved the Nawab's pride.⁴⁰ The Nawab's ambitious plan to improve his cavalry commenced around 1773, a short time before his second conquest of Tanjore. The Nawab's goal was to have a large force of 6,000 horses in total. While, at the time, he had roughly half that number, the Nawab intended to purchase some and to gain others as spoils of war from Tanjore. They

³⁸ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/5, DGP, Apr. 1773, 92.

³⁹ IOR, Z/E/4/866, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, 12 Apr. 1775, 243-245. I have been unable to find evidence as to whether this problematic issue was ever resolved, and, if so, how.

⁴⁰ IOR, P/D/42, MP, MMSC, 26 Nov. 1759, 721; Mss Eur E/379/6, DGP, Aug. 1773, 123.

would be formed into six regiments, each with a battalion of infantry sepoy with high quality arms. When he originally started to put his plan into effect, the Nawab requested that the EIC lend him some of its skilled officers in order to drill his new regiments. However, after the conquest of Tanjore, the Nawab's distrust of the EIC increased so much that, despite many recommendations and applications from various skilled Company officers, the Nawab insisted on using only individuals who could be called "his people" because "he could not trust the Company's officers anymore."⁴¹ Eventually, the Nawab decided to appoint two newly-recruited British mercenaries who were unrelated to the Company as commanders of the first two regiments. One thing is particularly worth remarking on here. At first glance, because his pioneering experiments with the European military had caused him much trouble it seems as if the Nawab wanted to return to his old, tried and tested traditional army model. But, in fact, the Nawab did not change his approach, since the new cavalry he intended to form was not in the traditional Mughal style but fully European.⁴²

In December 1773, Prince Modar al-Mulk—the second son who became the Nawab's favorite and his principle assistant in all of his most ambitious military projects during this time—presented to the EIC and the British king's minister a structural blueprint for the future of the Karnatak forces and the means for paying them. This scheme clearly demonstrates how determined the Karnatak elites were to rid their military of dependence on the EIC. As well as the concrete idea for how the cavalry regiments would be organized, it also included a plan for the Nawab's infantry; the Nawab would form twelve disciplined battalions of regular infantry that would be under his own command. Each battalion consisted of a thousand men, with a proper amount of artillery, drilled by his European officers. This explains the Nawab's efforts to recruit large numbers of European military officers, as discussed previously. In addition, another twelve or fifteen battalions of sibandi would be kept, to collect revenue.⁴³ The Nawab and the young prince also put great efforts into accumulating high-quality arms, something which caused great anxiety for the EIC. In fact, right from the beginning of their relationship, the Nawab had been trying to gain as much of an advantage as possible from the EIC in this respect; for example, he had always wanted the EIC to provide his forces with European arms and military stores. This was actually mutually beneficial; while the Nawab received European arms, the EIC made enormous profits from the deals. However, the EIC had always been cautious about making such provisions, since it did not want to let the local

⁴¹ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/7, DGP, Dec. 1773, 86-87.

⁴² IOR, Mss Eur E/379/6, DGP, Aug. 1773, 122.

⁴³ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/7, DGP, Dec. 1773, 121-122.

ruler create too strong a force that could one day be a threat to the Company's own existence. After 1765, the EIC wanted to provide arms only for the joint army that was under its management and was not willing to give such to the Nawab's private troops. There were even secret orders from the Court of Directors to supply the Nawab's forces with old-style and lower-quality arms and to keep the new and better ones for the Company's own use.⁴⁴ In response to the EIC's efforts to curtail his military progress, the Nawab sought to gain access to military provisions, both in public and in secret, from various other European ports along the Coromandel Coast, such as Pondicherry, Porto-Novo, and Tranquebar. British private merchants, the Danish East India Company, and probably traders from other nations, too, became the Nawab's business partners. Frequently, clashes broke out between the Nawab and the EIC because the arms-smuggling was detected. Not wishing to break its relationship with the Nawab, the EIC usually had to allow the arms to pass with firm requests to the Nawab not to make any additional purchases of arms from foreigners in the future. However, such repetitive requests-*cum*-warnings could not stop the Nawab from doing so.⁴⁵ When the Nawab made direct contact with the British government he also asked it, via the king's minister, to provide him with 10,000 stand of arms⁴⁶ and 14 brass guns, "such as are used for the [British] king's troops"; he was willing to pay the full price and expressed his desire that such might be sent out to him each year. However, it is likely that the deal was never concluded.⁴⁷ Furthermore, in 1775, the Nawab made the large request to the EIC to send his military stores as much as 700 tons of equipment, worth £76,000, to him. In the latter case, the sources suggest that the EIC was faced with a huge dilemma, but eventually thought it necessary to acquiesce to the Nawab's demands in order to prevent him from smuggling in arms through other channels. However, the Company sought to control the quantity and quality as far as possible.⁴⁸

The Nawab not only relied on imports of arms from Europe. There is evidence that he attempted to imitate European technology by making his own versions of their products.⁴⁹ For example, in 1774, when Paterson visited the Nawab's palace in Trichinopoly, he found the place was being used for making and storing the Nawab's weapons, the quality of which

⁴⁴ See some examples in: IOR, Mss Eur E/379/8, DGP, Jun. 1774, 164-166; Z/E/4/864, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, 25 Mar. 1768, 98; Z/E/4/866, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, 20 Feb. 1774, 10.

⁴⁵ See the examples in: IOR, P/240/27, MPP, Madras Consultation, 12 Sep. 1768, 707; P/240/38, MPP, Madras Consultation, Aug. 1774, 638-639; P/240/56, MPP, Madras Consultation, 1 Mar. 1783, 287-288; Mss Eur E/379/5, DGP, Jun. 1773, 176-177; Mss Eur E/379/9, DGP, Jul. 1774, 76; Z/E/4/868, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, 23 Dec. 1778, 241-243.

⁴⁶ A stand of arms denotes a complete set of weapons for one soldier including a musket, bayonet, cartridge box, belt, and etc.

⁴⁷ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/3, DGP, Apr. 1772, 178.

⁴⁸ IOR, Z/E/4/866, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, 25 Nov. 1775, 459.

⁴⁹ TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 65, *Ruznama*, 30 Apr. and 12 Jun. 1773.

impressed him. Following Paterson's account, there were foundries to create arsenals, many good gun-mounts on field carriages, and a good store of small arms, all well-arranged. These foundries were directed by a European officer. As Paterson went on to describe, many workmen were employed there, in all different branches of the gunsmith, "who seem to understand their business well, and go thro's it in a mastery manner."⁵⁰

The evidence suggests that, after the Nawab had realized his mistake of putting too large a percentage of his military capacity into the hands of the EIC, he applied various short- and long-term policies to reduce the Company's control and strengthen his own forces. Yet he knew very well that he needed to take such steps very cautiously. It was still crucial for him to maintain and monopolize the EIC's friendship and assistance and to prevent it from having contact with other local powers. The EIC had a similar perspective towards keeping his friendship with the Nawab. In this light, one can see that there were conflicts, pressures, compromises, negotiations, and conspiracies on both sides of their military relationship, but a real break-up of the bond between the Nawab and the EIC never occurred.

9.3 The Irreversible Context

As well as his increasing distrust of the EIC, another crucial factor that allowed the Nawab's military ambition to increase during the conquest of Tanjore was his belief that his revenue would be greatly increased by the wealth acquired from that region and the peace that would reign across his whole state when the war had ended. Unfortunately, from the mid-1770s and for two decades subsequently, many of the circumstances in which he found himself were unexpected and unfavorable to the Nawab. Most of them were the result of the effects of the British government's increasing interference in EIC business after the Regulating Act of 1773 had proved ineffective in preventing the "evil" behavior of the EIC's people. The British king and government, as one interest group, had long had a passive role in South Asia, being a tool by which the EIC could develop links with local rulers, and recently also as a tool of the Karnatak Nawab to put pressure back on the EIC. But from the mid-1770s, it transformed itself into active players in British-South Asian politics, ones that would forever change the whole political scene at the expense of old, active players such as the EIC and the South Asian rulers. In the following section, I will discuss how the Nawab of Karnatak received an enormous blow—especially regarding his military plans—from the new, changed context, and how he struggled to reverse his fortunes in the last two decades of his reign.

⁵⁰ IOR, Mss Eur E/379/8, DGP, Jun. 1774, 208.

The Restoration of Tanjore

At a time when public demands for the EIC to stop its servants' evil practices in South Asia were heard across Britain, news of the corruption and conspiracies of the Madras officers in relation to the Tanjore conquests of late 1773 added fuel to the fire. The Tanjore expeditions were seen as a violation by the Madras Presidency of the Regulating Act of 1773, which had banned the Company from becoming involved in South Asian rulers' wars of territorial expansion. Having been pressured by the British government and public opinion, as well as the various moves by the Nawab to display his military independence from the EIC and manipulate its agents in the Madras Presidency in the previous few years, in 1775 the EIC's Directors decided to give disapprobation to the conquest and order Tanjore to be returned to its raja as soon as possible. The mission to execute this order was given to George Pigot, a former Governor of Madras who was appointed to that position for the second time.⁵¹ Pigot arrived in Madras in late 1775, at a time when the Nawab had high hopes that the revenue of Tanjore would soon pour into his treasury, allowing him to repay the enormous debts that had been caused by the wars and to achieve his grand military projects. This unexpected order immediately disturbed all his plans and sent the Nawab into a state of apoplexy.

Pigot returned this second time not only to complete that specific mission but also to set right all the matters related to the Madras Presidency. Such included efforts to eliminate the extraordinary influence of the Nawab over the Madras Presidency which had, on too many occasions, caused the Company's servants to act "unreasonably" in serving his interests at the expenses of the institution. He moved quickly to restore Tanjore to its raja in April 1776. However, Pigot was probably not able to fully understand just how deeply entwined the interests of the Nawab and British individuals in Madras were by that time, since they were almost certainly much more complicated than during his previous time there, in 1755-1763. His hasty move to restore Tanjore, which suddenly deprived the Nawab of its prospective revenue, not only caused huge losses to the local ruler but also to all the Nawab's European creditors and associates, who numbered more than 150 British gentlemen in Madras, both Company servants and private entrepreneurs. Most of them had advanced large sums of money to the Nawab for his wars and in return had received promises of repayments primarily in the form of land-revenue assignments of the new conquest territories for the

⁵¹ The details of the two conquests of Tanjore and the EIC's Directors' opinions on them can be found in IOR, Z/E/4/866, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, 12 Apr. 1775, 291-350.

subsequent years.⁵² During this period, Pigot also dismissed several senior Company officers who disagreed with his new approach and were thus considered the Nawab's friends.⁵³ Pigot's harsh policies in reforming the Madras Presidency made him many enemies and eventually led to his demise. In mid-September 1776, he was overthrown in a coup by most of the Madras Council's members, who claimed that his dictatorial actions threatened the stability of the Presidency.⁵⁴ Paul Benfield, one of the Nawab's biggest creditors and someone whose business was deeply entangled with Chepauk Palace, was said to have been the main sponsor. Furthermore, and although no evidence could be found, it seems to have been widely believed that the Nawab also had a hand in the coup. Unfortunately, and to everyone's surprise, Pigot became sick and died in captivity in May 1777. All the company's servants and the most influential Britons in Madras who were believed to have been involved in the coup were investigated, but, in the end, little progress could be made due to the many intrigues that were swirling around.⁵⁵

For many years after Pigot was removed, the Nawab sent protests about the restoration of Tanjore to its raja in all directions: the EIC's Directors, the Governor-General in Bengal, the British government, and his friends in Britain.⁵⁶ This is a good reflection of how the Nawab attempted to play fitna even in Britain. However, his rival, the raja of Tanjore also used the similar tactic. By many public and secret deals the raja of Tanjore had also successfully developed many contacts in London who would act in his best interests, just as the Nawab had done. In fact, and ironically, the Nawab and his British friends contributed greatly to the raja's success in forming his support network, since many of the raja's supporters had been opponents of the Nawab's party and his interests in British-South Asian politics. Phillips, whose work discusses the long-running debates over the Tanjore Restoration in London in great detail, describes how, in 1776-1778, the Nawab's agents, led by Lauchlin Maclean (mentioned in Chapter Five), and the agents and supporters of the Tanjore raja, led by the famous politician and writer Edmund Burke, were at each other's throats. To support the interests of the South Asian ruler they supported (as well as their own), each used a variety of means, including appealing to the EIC's stock holders, the British king's compassion, and the British Parliament, as well as campaigns in the press to get public opinion on their side. This debate was certainly not merely about whether the two

⁵² Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic*, 264.

⁵³ For details of the Nawab's conflicts with Lord Pigot, see: *CPC*, V, Nawab to Governor-General, 10 Sep. 1776, 37-39.

⁵⁴ *CPC*, V, Nawab to Governor of Madras, Dec. 1776, 71; Gurney, "The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot," 284-324; Phillips, "The Development of British Authority in Southern India," 75-144; Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic*, 266-287.

⁵⁵ Turnbull, *Warren Hastings*, 98.

⁵⁶ *CPC*, V, Nawab to Governor-General, 14 Apr. 1778, 133-135.

local South Asian rulers would win or lose, but involved the rights of the Company, the corruption of its servants, and the right of the state to intervene, as well as the future direction of the British nation in South Asia. To sum up, the Nawab's party eventually lost the battle, and, while the Nawab considered the raja to be his subject, the British nation considered the raja as an independent sovereign under their protection.⁵⁷

The Nawab's Debts

The Nawab had had an enormous debt to the EIC and hundreds of private investors from the very beginning of their relationships, and many historians have assumed that this was the main cause of the Nawab's constant acquiescence to the Company's power. I argue along the lines of Ramaswami, who views the debt as a main tool by which the Nawab was able to tie the British into his interests.⁵⁸ With a few exceptional and temporary periods, the debt was seemingly never a serious hindrance to the Nawab's political or economic designs. As is revealed by many EIC documents, although the EIC's agents always worried and complained about the Nawab's great debts, when the Nawab proposed new projects related to conquest or business investments to them—meaning the creation of new debts—they usually agreed. This was because, thus far, the Nawab had proved his ability to pay his debts—along with their very high rates of interest—albeit with some delays. Many times, the Madras officers gave their reports to the Court of Directors with positive evaluations, stating that within a few years the Nawab would be able to clear all his past debts, so the latter gave its consent for new ones to be created.⁵⁹ The fact that hundreds of private investors, both European and South Asian, invested their money in his business and became his creditors is one of the best proofs for how the financial credit status of the Nawab had, up to then, been very good.⁶⁰ In fact, as Phillips points out, for many of the Nawab's bonds in the 1770s the money was never actually lent; bonds were given as gratuities or bribes to the British, a practice which actually began in the 1760s.⁶¹

The period when possession of Tanjore was suddenly and unexpectedly taken away from the Nawab after his large financial investment in it was an exceptional case. It was likely to have been the first time that the Nawab's finances had been in real trouble since the

⁵⁷ Phillips, "The Development of British Authority in Southern India," 156-168, 174, 177-179, 181-182. Among the raja's supporters in London were Hugh Pigot, William Waldegrave, William Burke, and Edmund Burke. Among the Nawab's agents were Lauchlin Maclean, John Macpherson, Frederick Stuart, James Macpherson, and James Mackenzie-Stuart.

⁵⁸ See my discussion on Ramaswami's work in the main introduction.

⁵⁹ Gurney, "The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot," 67, 210, 215-218.

⁶⁰ Detailed discussions of the Nawab's debts can be found in Gurney's doctoral dissertation, "The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot" and Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic*, especially 237-326.

⁶¹ Phillips, "The Development of British Authority in Southern India," 18-19.

early 1750s. This can be seen by the Nawab being forced to reduce the numbers of his private troops, the last thing he would have wished to do. Due to the enormous arrears in payment—which had reached 700,000 pagodas—and various mutinies that broke out, in April 1777 the Nawab was forced to negotiate a “Cavalry Loan” for 400,000 pagodas (£160,000) with his British creditors, on the Company’s security. Under this loan’s contract, the Nawab was compelled to disband 9,000 of his infantry and a number of cavalry after the arrears had been paid to them.⁶² There were yet more mutinies by his cavalry in 1778-1779, and the Nawab was pressed hard by the EIC to reduce his expenses and disband his private troops while, at the same time, continuing to pay the ten battalions of the joint force.⁶³ However, as Phillips points out, even at this time of manifest financial crisis on the part of the Nawab there were many British people in Madras who had been long associated with the Nawab who viewed the event in a different light. In 1778, a military commander Hector Munro alleged that the Nawab was not truly short of money but was instead merely pretending to be extremely poor and causing his cavalry to mutiny and imprison their European officers in order to force the EIC to lessen its demands on him and turn its attention to the Tanjore raja instead. In August 1778, an old creditor, Charles Smith, gave his opinion on the Nawab’s debts by stating that he had “never yet failed us in the End.”⁶⁴ Also, in 1778-1779, when conflict again broke out between the British and the French on the Coast, the Nawab offered the British government to defray the full cost of taking Pondicherry to make a favorable impression in London.⁶⁵ Phillips argues that the Nawab’s finances at this time were certainly strained, but he was never actually vacant of the funds needed. Instead, the Nawab was intentionally holding back on his payments, hoping that the Madras Presidency’s unavoidable need for money would compel it to coerce the funds from the Tanjore raja and reconsider restoring that kingdom to the Nawab who, when having revenue resources, would pay them much better.⁶⁶

In my opinion, the suspicions of the British officers and creditors that form the basis of Phillips’ arguments were probably not groundless, especially in light of the evidence from Chapter Seven that, during the late 1770s, the Nawab was still very active in many mercantile investments. At this time, the Nawab could still maintain his position as the sole renter of the Company’s Jagirs in Karnatak and was also able to manage to secure the rental contract of Guntur district, in the Northern Circars, in 1779, albeit under the table. Also, there is

⁶² IOR, MP, P/251/83, MMSC, 21 Apr. 613-14, MMSC, 28 Apr. 1777, 626.

⁶³ *CPC*, V, Nawab to Governor-General, 13 Apr. 1779, 319-320, 12 Nov. 1779, 386; Ramaswami, *Political History of Karnatak*, 307, 313-317.

⁶⁴ Phillips, “The Development of British Authority in Southern India,” 206-208.

⁶⁵ Phillips, “The Development of British Authority in Southern India,” 212.

⁶⁶ Phillips, “The Development of British Authority in Southern India,” 207-208.

evidence that, during the negotiation to rent Guntur district from the Company, the Nawab paid his debts more regularly and quickly reduced the size of his public debt.⁶⁷ Two possibilities can be deduced from the accounts. It was either that the Nawab very quickly regained a firm financial position after a short crisis in 1777 or, in fact, there were no real financial problems but the Nawab was using his debts to further his political agenda. Both possibilities reflect the fact that the “unmanageable debts” were hardly the core of the Nawab’s failure to resist the British domination, at least until the late 1770s.

The Nawab-Bengal Alliance

While the restoration of Tanjore left the Nawab’s military designs of the early 1770s in tatters, two other, related events that reduced the Nawab’s ability to reverse his fortune happened in the first half of the 1780s. The first was the start of the Second Anglo-Mysore War (1780-1784), the second was the appointment of George Macartney as the new Madras Governor (1781-1785). The Second Anglo-Mysore War started when the British invaded the French port town of Mahé on the Malabar Coast, which the Mysore sultan considered to be in his territory.⁶⁸ Consequently, Hyder Ali Khan and his son Tipu Sultan declared war on the EIC and sent Mysore troops to invade Bombay and Madras. At the beginning of this war, while the Mysore soldiers were invading many parts of Karnatak, the Nawab and the Madras Presidency under Governor Rumbold failed to defend the state as a result of internal conflict. On one side, the Madras Governor pressed the Nawab to assign some of his provinces to the Presidency so that it could collect the revenue to pay his debts and the costs of the current war, for it was his country that the Presidency needed to defend. On the other, the Nawab refused to pay, blaming the EIC for creating the war. The Nawab was pleased that the EIC was at war with Mysore, the enemy that the Nawab most wished to see eliminated and, throughout the 1770s, the Nawab had been trying to convince the EIC to use its military forces to destroy Mysore.⁶⁹ Now, however, the Nawab had another, more urgent goal. As he claimed, he had no money to pay for the war and to cover his debts because the EIC had taken Tanjore from him. If Tanjore was returned to him, he claimed, the British would not lack for troops or money as they did currently.⁷⁰

It was only when the situation was almost irreparable that the Nawab realized he had no choice but to cooperate with the Company to ensure the survival of both parties. This

⁶⁷ Phillips, “The Development of British Authority in Southern India,” 218, 222.

⁶⁸ Fox, *North Arcot*, 79.

⁶⁹ See for examples: IOR, Mss Eur E/379/3, DGP, Sep. 1771, 14, Dec. 1771, 69, 104, Aug. 1772, 252.

⁷⁰ Fox, *North Arcot*, 89; *CPC*, VI, Nawab to Governor-General, 14 Mar. 1781, 39.

occurred at the same time that Governor-General Warren Hastings, after finishing his long stint struggling to gain control of the Supreme Council, began to turn his attention to Madras and Bombay. Hastings' aim was to bring these other two Presidencies under the control of Bengal following the Regulating Act of 1773. However, he was shocked to learn that the two Presidencies had caused the war with Mysore and thereby caused a crisis for their settlements, especially Madras, which was close to being lost. Hastings immediately wrote to the Karnatak Nawab that he would send reinforcements from Bengal with General Eyre Coote—the famous EIC Commander-in-Chief who had played a significant role in the Carnatic Wars of the 1750s-1760s—to recover the situation and appealed for the Nawab's full cooperation.⁷¹ The Nawab, who was also desperate to save his country but still deep in conflict with the Madras Presidency, immediately embraced the Governor-General and Sir Eyre Coote.⁷² Remarkably, in early 1781, the Nawab made an unprecedented move by sending his diwan, Saiyid Asim Khan, and his British representative, Richard Joseph Sullivan, to Bengal to suggest a direct treaty of friendship between him and the Supreme Council, thus side-stepping the Madras Presidency. It is also important to note that Richard Sullivan was a relative of Laurence Sullivan, one of the most powerful Company Directors of the period and the patron of Warren Hastings. From 1776, Richard Sullivan had worked in Karnatak as a secretary to the Madras Presidency. He went to Bengal ostensibly on leave but appeared later as the Nawab's envoy, helping his diwan to negotiate the treaty.⁷³ Clearly, Richard Sullivan was one of Warren Hastings' friends and collaborators. According to this first treaty with the Supreme Council (concluded in April 1781, but not yet approved by the Company's Directors), the Nawab requested full authority to manage all his domestic affairs without any outside interference. In return, he would pay for ten battalions of the joint force and his previous debts to the Company on time so that the EIC could continue the war against Mysore. Furthermore, Richard Sullivan was to be appointed to reside at the Karnatak court as the representative of the Supreme Council to give him direct advice and protection. The Nawab also added the condition that, after Mysore was defeated, he would not be prevented from resuming his plan of creating 5,000 well-drilled cavalrymen.⁷⁴ Evidently, like the king's agents earlier, the Nawab saw Governor-General Warren Hastings as a potential new ally that he could play off against the Madras Council because, at this time, Hastings was planning to

⁷¹ For Sir Eyre Coote's heroic role in the Carnatic Wars of the 1750s-1760s, see: Fox, *North Arcot*, 67-69.

⁷² Turnbull, *Warren Hastings*, 145-148, 151; Fisher, *The Politics of the British Annexation of India*, 94.

⁷³ Phillips, "The Development of British Authority in Southern India," 58; Henry Dodwell, "Warren Hastings and the Assignment of the Carnatic," *The English Historical Review* 40, 159 (1925): 378, 380.

⁷⁴ Dodwell, "Warren Hastings and the Assignment of the Carnatic," 379-380; Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties*, X: 43-51; CPC, VI, Nawab to Governor-General, 26 Mar. 1781, 42-44.

subjugate the Madras Presidency to his control. This is reminiscent of the traditional tactic of fitna and the case of the king's ministers in the early 1770s: when the Nawab felt that his power was threatened by one group in his network of allies, he tried to find a new one among its potential "rivals" to balance its power. However, it may be wondered why the Nawab trusted Warren Hastings. His decision was probably due to their long and good friendship. While Hastings spent most of his career in the Bengal Presidency, there were a few years in the 1760s when he had been appointed to Madras and met with the Nawab. After Hastings had become the Governor-General of Bengal, he and the Nawab kept up their regular, official correspondence, thereby informing each other regarding important affairs and asking each other for assistance in various small matters.⁷⁵ Moreover, Hastings was known for having an especially sympathetic attitude towards South Asia and the region's sovereigns, particularly those who were bound to the EIC and the ruler of Britain by treaties of alliance. According to him, in order to secure the co-operation of the local rulers, the strictest justice must be displayed and only at the highest level of necessity should the EIC interfere. Another reason that the Nawab was supposed to like Hastings in particular related to the latter's views of the status of the native polities, which perfectly fitted the Nawab's interest. He firmly delineated the "independent princes"—the Nawabs of Awadh, the Nizams of Deccan, and the Nawabs of Karnatak—from "dependents" such as the rajas of Banares and Tanjore. So, regarding the Nawab's argument regarding the status of Tanjore, Hastings was one of the most prominent of the Company's figures to support the Nawab, as he viewed that polity as no more than a zamindar of Karnatak.⁷⁶

The Nawab vs George Macartney during the Madras Presidency's Reforms

The direct treaty between the Nawab and the Supreme Council was a public insult to the Madras government and widened the breach between the two EIC Presidencies. However, I argue that, just as in the case of the king's minister, the Nawab did not wish to throw himself fully beneath the shield of the Supreme Council, passively waiting for its protection. As Henry Dodwell rightly suggests, the Nawab knew very well that the Bengal government lacked the means to directly enforce its decisions within the territories of the two subordinate Presidencies. The rivalry between Bengal and Madras merely provided the Nawab with more time and opportunities to delay the demands made upon him by the latter. One further important point to note regarding this relates to Richard Sullivan. In the preceding few years,

⁷⁵ Their correspondences can be found in *CPC*, vol. I-XI; see also TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 66, *Ruznama*, 22 and 25, 28 Aug. 1773.

⁷⁶ Dodwell, "Warren Hastings and the Assignment of the Carnatic," 390, 396.

he had been the military and political secretary to the Madras Presidency, before suddenly becoming the Nawab's representative in treaty negotiations with the Bengal government. He was certainly considered as a traitor by the Madras officers. The fact that he returned to Madras as the appointed Governor-General's representative in the Karnatak court merely served to reinforce the Bengal-Madras hostility.⁷⁷

The news of this treaty and the appointment of Sullivan reached Madras at around the same time as George Macartney—the new Madras Governor who had been appointed to replace Rumbold—arrived. Macartney promptly sent petitions to London and Bengal requesting the cancellation of this arrangement. As he proclaimed: “none of the members of the Madras Government would ever approve of the exercise of the Governor-General's authority over his head.”⁷⁸ After a war of words, eventually the treaty and the appointment of Sullivan were annulled with the consent of all involved, including Hastings and the Nawab, primarily because Hastings had been informed by his friends in London that the new Madras Governor was not his enemy and had been fully prepared to cooperate with him, unlike earlier Madras Governors. Believing this to be the case, Hastings then convinced the Nawab to come to an understanding with the new Madras Governor and, trusting in Hastings, the Nawab then arranged a new treaty with Macartney, in December 1781. According to this treaty, for a period of five years from the time of its agreement, the Nawab granted the Madras Presidency full authority to collect and administer the revenue of the whole Karnatak for the purpose of carrying on the war with Mysore and discharging all his debts, with the exception of one-sixth of the revenue, which was to be left for the Nawab's own expenses. The Madras Governor was also empowered to appoint renters and collectors, but their appointments needed to be confirmed by the Nawab, who maintained the right to veto.⁷⁹ This was the first time in the three decades of their relationship that the Nawab had given authority over his internal affairs to the EIC.

The selection and appointment of Macartney occurred at the beginning of 1780, when moves to transfer Company's South Asian administration into the hands of the British government became strong again in Britain. This was mainly because of the many wars that had broken out in South Asia in the previous decades between the EIC and various regional states, bearing testimony to the failure of the EIC's senior figures and the Regulating Act of 1773 to fix the corruption and despotic acts of their officers. Macartney, as with Hastings

⁷⁷ Dodwell, “Warren Hastings and the Assignment of the Carnatic,” 378, 380.

⁷⁸ *CPC*, VI, Nawab to Governor-General, 22 Nov. 1781, 112.

⁷⁹ Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties*, X: 51-52.; *CPC*, VI, Saiyid Asim Khan to Governor-General, 1 Jul. 1782, 194.

back in 1773, was appointed at a time when the British Tory government and the Company's Directors were being heavily pressured by anti-Company factions to improve the situation in South Asia. However, one sharp difference between Macartney's case and Hastings' is that it was the first time that the EIC's stockholders elected "an outsider" to one of its main positions. Macartney used to serve the British government and had a great reputation as a statesman, but no previous connection with the Company. Hence, he was widely accepted by those who believed that the crisis in Madras required a new head, one who was wholly unconnected with any of the contending interest groups there. However, behind the scenes, Macartney also owed his adoption as a candidate to the group of "Company politicians," led by Laurence Sullivan and James Macpherson (both of whom were the Nawab's friends). The former was the patron of Warren Hastings, and it was he who told Hastings to trust the new Madras Governor. Furthermore, it was Paul Benfield, one of the Nawab's biggest creditors, who financially supported Macartney's nomination and travelling expenses to Madras. These old players likely thought that, as a result of his ignorance of South Asian affairs and lack of connections in Madras, Macartney could be easily controlled by them. Nevertheless, those experienced Britons were all wrong, as it turned out that Macartney was not prepared to be anyone's puppet.⁸⁰ Soon, Macartney revealed his true self: an opponent of Hastings, with a determination to reform the Madras Presidency in his own way with no intervention from Bengal. During the Anglo-Mysore War, Macartney often failed to listen to or support General Eyre Coote, who had been sent by the Governor-General to save Karnatak, seeing him as "Hastings' man." The Anglo-Mysore War ended with a peace negotiation between Macartney and Tipu Sultan in 1784, despite the strong objections of Hastings, who had believed the EIC could win the war.⁸¹

The individual who was most impacted by the unanticipated character of Macartney was the Nawab. What distinguished him from previous Madras Governors was the fact that the Nawab was not only unable to convince Macartney to compromise in any of his ideas, the latter also did many things that the Nawab viewed as public challenges to his sovereignty. For instance, Macartney insisted on appointing a district renter of whom the Nawab did not approve. This was a violation of the treaty of 1781 and led to bloodshed in Nellore between the local people and the Company's officers. Elsewhere, Macartney threatened to dismiss the Nawab's old amildars if they did not obey the orders of the Madras Governor. He also gave

⁸⁰ Lucy S. Sutherland, "Lord Macartney's Appointment as Governor of Madras, 1780: The Treasury in East India Company Elections," *The English Historical Review* 90 (1975): 523-529; Dodwell, "Warren Hastings and the Assignment of the Carnatic," 375, 381.

⁸¹ Turnbull, *Warren Hastings*, 154, 156.

protection to the Nawab's relatives who had caused that ruler trouble. This was a violation of the treaty of 1760 between the EIC and the Nawab, which stated that the EIC would not give protection to any of the Nawab's families and subjects. Macartney also tried to lessen the amount the Nawab was spending on charity and canceled various jagir and inam lands that the Nawab had granted to various individuals in his patronage networks, turning them into central government lands so that he could collect more revenue in order to clear the Nawab's debts. This was despite the fact that religious donations and rewards of land to prominent subjects were the core means by which a local sovereign could maintain his political power. On the international stage, Macartney also went over the Nawab's head by concluding a treaty with Mysore to end the war in 1784—the Treaty of Mangalore—without including the Nawab's name in the agreement.⁸²

Yet the most problematic aspect of Macartney's governorship for the Nawab was related to his military power. The treaty of 1781 reduced the Nawab's expenses to only one-sixth of what it had been, so he could barely maintain his private troops outside the EIC's joint forces, and the arrears caused mutinies among his officers; in turn, Macartney used this to press the Nawab to disband most of them. In May 1784, Macartney went a step further by issuing an order, posted at the gates of Fort St George and circulated throughout Karnatak, forbidding any recruitment of sepoys without the explicit permission of the Madras Governor. As justification, Macartney argued that several of the Nawab's servants had been treacherously recruiting men in Karnatak for the army of Tipu Sultan, so he launched the order to prevent it. Whether the allegation was true or not, this was an unprecedented challenge to the Nawab's authority as a sovereign. In earlier times, all the recruitment of local soldiers in Karnatak, for whichever troops, had to be done via the Nawab and solely under the Nawab's order, as the supreme leader of the state. Even when the EIC had wanted indigenous soldiers for its own troops, it had to request that the Nawab issue the order. Some of the Nawab's native officers certainly tried to challenge this rule, and supposedly the Nawab was behind their actions. But these officers were severely punished by Macartney, the Nawab unable to protect them. Next, in August 1784, Macartney disbanded the Nawab's private cavalry which he had sent to assist the Company during the war with Mysore, without the Nawab's permission. Macartney allowed the Nawab to maintain only one cavalry regiment, of 500 horses, instead of the many thousands that he had been planning since 1773. More

⁸² For details of the conflicts and complaints between the Nawab and Governor Macartney, see: *CPC*, VI, Saiyid Asim Khan to Governor-General, 1 July 1782, 192-197, Saiyid Asim Khan to Governor-General, 25 Nov. 1782, 226-229, Nawab to Governor-General, 7 Apr. 1783, 259, Nawab to Governor-General, 22 Jun. 1784, 365-367; Keay, *India*, 396-397.

importantly, the soldiers who were disbanded from the Nawab's force were immediately enrolled in the Company's service to form two new regiments of Company cavalry. Some of those soldiers who were still loyal to the Nawab and refused to enlist were taken prisoner and punished by Macartney as mutineers. It is likely that the intention of Macartney was to remove as many Karnatak soldiers as possible from the Nawab's private forces and to transfer them to the Company's control.⁸³

During these years, the Nawab tried to fight back against Macartney, inch by inch. On the one hand, as is hinted in several documents, the Nawab worked secretly to impede Macartney's revenue collection. For an example, in 1782, an EIC officer in Nellore reported that indigenous officials there had received orders from the court to send as much money as they could to the court but not show it in their accounts.⁸⁴ On the other hand, in the years 1782-1785, the Nawab made countless complaints, containing severe charges against Macartney, to the EIC's senior officers and his British friends everywhere. Significantly, the Nawab's complaints against Macartney were very similar in style to those he had made against Pigot in the mid-1770s. For example, the Nawab stressed how Macartney violated his power, how he abusively dismissed the Company's old servants who defied him, and how he secretly negotiated with Tipu Sultan and Raja Tanjore against the Company's interests.⁸⁵ In my view, the Nawab would probably have desired a similar end to Macartney as that of Pigot, by an "internal coup." During this period of crisis, Warren Hastings was still seen by the Nawab as his main ally, and the Nawab sent his diwan Saiyid Asim Khan to stay in Bengal from May 1782 to 1784 in order to repeatedly deliver his complaints to Macartney, pressuring Hastings and the Supreme Council of Bengal to help him terminate or alter the treaty of 1781 as soon as possible. The Nawab let it be known to Hastings that he was willing to hand over his power to collect the Karnatak revenue and five-sixths of Karnatak income to the EIC during the war with Mysore. However, his power was not to be in the hands of Macartney, but of Hastings, and the Nawab suggested that General Sir Eyre Coote should be the man appointed to do so. That general, currently in Karnatak fighting against Mysore, was a member of the Supreme Council and a friend of Hastings. Above all, as Dodwell has observed, Coote had been on the worst terms with Macartney from their first encounter. Coote and the Nawab were thus linked by a common enemy.⁸⁶ According to the Nawab's plan, if Hastings agreed, he would invest Coote alone with full authority over revenue

⁸³ *CPC*, VI, Nawab to Governor-General, 22 Jun. 1784, 365-367, 16 Aug. 1784, 381.

⁸⁴ Dodwell, "Warren Hastings and the Assignment of the Carnatic," 384.

⁸⁵ *PC*, VI, Nawab to Governor-General, 7 Apr. 1783, 259, 13 Oct. 1783, 307.

⁸⁶ Dodwell, "Warren Hastings and the Assignment of the Carnatic," 385-388.

collection, and the latter would receive the right to issue any orders regarding Karnatak's officers, zamindars, Poligars, and the inhabitants. The Karnatak's supreme military general, Muhammad Najib Khan, would carry the Nawab's seal and always stay with Coote so that his order would be legalized.⁸⁷

For Hastings, from early 1782 at least, he not only realized Macartney was not his friend but also had strongly believed that Macartney was attempting to destroy his reputation at home in London. As is revealed by Hastings himself, the Karnatak Nawab played a crucial role in planting hostile feelings towards Macartney in Hastings' mind. In a letter Hastings wrote in 1782 to one Mr. Scott, in which he complained about Macartney's behavior, he said: "[t]he second symptom is contained a letter from the old Nabob Walajah. [...] I doubt the facts stated in this representation, and yet I fear their reality."⁸⁸ Believing so, Hastings promptly agreed to the Nawab's proposals that would undermine Macartney's authority and allow him to maintain his influence in Karnatak. In January 1783, he issued orders to the Madras Presidency to follow the Nawab's plans. However, Macartney utterly refused to obey Hastings' orders. Furthermore, and unfortunately for the Nawab and Hastings, General Coote suddenly died of an illness in April 1783, so their plan had to be dropped. In the mid-1783, the Nawab proposed a new scheme to Hastings. He wanted to take back total control of the revenue collection but promised to still pay the five-sixths' revenue to the EIC in order to support the war and discharge his debts. Securities from reliable bankers would be provided to guarantee his regular payments. The Nawab convinced Hastings that he could definitely collect the revenue with the addition of a third more than the current management of Macartney, while local people would suffer less from the Governor's tyrannical behavior.⁸⁹ Again, the Nawab succeeded in obtaining an order from Bengal to restore his authority, but it was ignored by the Madras Governor. In the meantime, news had arrived from London that the treaty of December 1781 between the Nawab and Macartney had been approved by the Court of Directors. As can be seen, although the Nawab and Hastings cooperated well, the latter could not help much to improve the Nawab's situation. Principally it was because the changing political circumstances in Britain during these years gave much more influence to Macartney than Hastings.

At the time that Macartney started to reform the Madras Presidency in 1781, many Whig politicians in the House of Commons, led by Charles James Fox and Edmund Burke,

⁸⁷ PC, VI, Nawab to Eyre Coote, 6 Jun. 1782, 184, Governor-General to Saiyid Asim Khan, 27 Feb. 1783, 250-251.

⁸⁸ Dodwell, "Warren Hastings and the Assignment of the Carnatic," 390.

⁸⁹ PC, VI, Nawab to Governor-General, 10 Apr. 1782, 155-156, Governor-General to Nawab, 25 Jun. 1783, 290.

actively resumed their attempts to bring change to South Asian affairs by ending the Company's rule. The beginning of Burke's deep interest in affairs of this region had been caused by the issues of the Nawab's debts and the conquest of Tanjore by the Madras Presidency in particular.⁹⁰ The Whigs pushed two main demands during this period: first, to issue the "Magna Carta" for South Asia; second, to dismiss Warren Hastings on charges of failing to improve the EIC's situation there and acting against the policy of the British nation over the preceding decade. The Whigs were not yet successful because Company supporters used their traditional strategic cry about assaults on private property.⁹¹ However, the Tory government under William Pitt (the Younger), who had just won the general election of 1783, was well aware that South Asian affairs thereafter needed to be managed on a new ground. The outcome of this political situation was Pitt's India Act of 1784, which resolved to place the EIC's South Asian possessions under a form of dual government. By this Act, the roles and powers of the EIC's Directors were retained only nominally, and executive control of all matters was passed to a new body, called "the Board of Control," whose president was a member of the British Cabinet and answerable directly to Parliament.⁹² Intending to make the EIC a "peaceful" organization, subsequently the only times the Company could go to war in South Asia were in self-defense, or in defense of the allies it was already committed to.⁹³ As a result of Pitt's reformation, around early 1785, Parliament summoned Warren Hastings back to Britain to face impeachment over his misconducts in South Asia. Thus, the Nawab was left to face Macartney's reformation in Madras (up to June 1785) and the new British administration in South Asia alone.

The appointment of Macartney, Pitt's reformation, and the impeachment of Warren Hastings signaled a crucial turning point in the British-Karnatak politics; the rules of the game were totally changed at the expense of the old players like both the Nawab and the old-style EIC officers who he had dealt with for the past four decades. The EIC—though still continued to exist for almost a century—was hereafter heavily controlled, nationalized, and merged into the British government. The new generations of EIC officers increasingly saw themselves as representatives of the British "national" interest. Company officers were no longer able to "legally" gain individual interests without risking corruption charges. Under these new circumstances, many doors were likely shut for the Nawab to use the tactic of *fitna* with individual British officers and to play the old political games that he used to play so well.

⁹⁰ Eaton, "The Art of Colonial Despotism," 85.

⁹¹ James, *Raj*, 54; Dodwell, "Warren Hastings and the Assignment of the Carnatic," 392.

⁹² James, *Raj*, 54; Metcalf and Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, 56-57.

⁹³ Oak and Swamy, "Myopia or Strategic Behavior?," 353, 361.

Phillips used the India Act of 1784 as the end point of his study of the Karnatak state. According to him, after Pitt's reformation—meaning from 1785 until the formal annexation of Karnatak in 1801—the Nawab and his heir, Ghulam Husain (r. 1795-1801), were only revenue collectors for the Company. The Nawab had failed in his role as partner and was made to assume a role of complete subservience.⁹⁴ Rajayyan also depicts post-1785 as a period when the Anglo-Saxons simply “imposed burdensome treaties upon Arcot and Tanjore” and “reduced the whole coast to the status of a British protectorate.”⁹⁵ I agree with them that the Nawab's situation changed significantly thereafter. However, I argue that, even in the last decade of his reign (1785-1795), the Nawab did not stop such attempts to reverse his fortunes. Some ways in which these new circumstances impacted the Nawab and how he reacted to them are worth briefly observing.

Karnatak in the New Context

The ramifications of Pitt's Act of 1784 reached South Asia in 1785, around the same time that the five-year treaty of Revenue Assignments (1781) between the Nawab and Macartney was about to end. In fact, in the previous few years, there had been serious discussions among the EIC's senior officers regarding whether they should return the management of the Karnatak state to the Nawab or not. However, because of the Nawab's strong protests and his influence as one of the Company's oldest allies, the EIC, under the new Board of Control, eventually agreed to cancel the old treaty and restore revenue collections to the Nawab. A new treaty, of 1785, and an improved version of it, in 1787, were negotiated and signed; these would form the basis of the new Nawab-EIC relationship. The Nawab experienced some important losses and gains by the new treaty of 1787, which are worth discussing here. The treaty was, first and foremost, focused on paying the Nawab's debts and future expenses for the joint force to defend his country. Principally, he agreed to pay 1,200,000 pagodas a year to clear his debts to both the Company and his private creditors, and another 900,000 pagodas a year to cover the military defense of Karnatak. He shared the latter cost with the EIC and the raja of Tanjore, as it totaled 2,100,000 a year. In peaceful times, the Nawab had full autonomy in managing his country. In times of war, the Nawab, as well as other contracting parties (the raja of Tanjore and the EIC), would pay four-fifths of their total revenue for the defense of Karnatak. But if the Nawab could not pay the amounts detailed—in cash—certain districts, specified at the end of the treaty, would be assigned to the Company for a certain

⁹⁴ See abstract of Phillips, “The Development of British Authority in Southern India”; Phillips, “A Successor to the Moguls,” 388.

⁹⁵ Rajayyan, *Administration and Society in the Carnatic*, 13-14.

length of time until the payments could be collected. Reflecting on these conditions, although the Nawab regained control of his country, the new treaty came with the strictest measures for controlling his spending. The new atmosphere in British-South Asia politics also favored strict implement of the treaty. According to Oaks and Swamy, unlike the Regulating of 1773, Pitt's Act of 1784 was taken very seriously by the Company's officials in South Asia under the new leaders, especially Charles Cornwallis, who was appointed the new Governor-General in 1786.⁹⁶ They left little room for the Nawab to postpone or delay paying his debts without penalty. He lost the freedom to use his surplus revenues freely, in the usual ways: in lavish patronage, bribing natives and Europeans to create "fitna," accumulating a large private military force, and so on. This treaty officially engaged the Nawab in a subsidiary alliance with the EIC for the first time after four decades of relationship (if not including the abovementioned treaty of Revenue Assignments during the irregular war period between 1781-1785).⁹⁷

There are two other important points related to the Nawab-EIC treaty of 1787 that are worth noting. The first is related to the Nawab's power on the international stage. According to Article 15, the Nawab agreed to relinquish his right to enter negotiations with other states or powers without the consent of the Madras Presidency. However, when the Company wished to enter into negotiations, declare war, or make peace with any power holders of Hindustan in which the interests of Karnatak and its dependencies might be concerned, the Madras Presidency also needed to communicate all such issues to the Nawab, and the name of the Nawab should be inserted into all such treaties.⁹⁸ At first glance, it may seem that the Nawab was again negatively impacted by this treaty. However, viewing it in long-term context of the Nawab-EIC relationship, I would suggest the opposite. In reality, from the beginning of his reign up to that point, the Nawab had never made any crucial political and military treaties with any other powers without the consent of the EIC, as he considered the latter to be his most important ally, one that he needed to keep. So the condition in the treaty of 1787 would change little in practice for the Nawab. In contrast, there were many times, as previously shown, when the EIC became involved in wars or peace treaties with his

⁹⁶ Oak and Swamy, "Myopia or Strategic Behavior?," 361.

⁹⁷ Being engaged in a treaty of subsidiary alliance with the EIC meant that the South Asian rulers were not allowed to have private armed force beyond the amount that the EIC permitted. Their territories were to be protected by the EIC's forces, but the local rulers had to pay for the subsidiary forces that the Company was to maintain for that purpose. In some treaties, local rulers needed to permanently assign parts of his territory to the Company to directly collect revenue for the maintenance of subsidiary troops. In other cases, local rulers only relinquished his rights on parts of those territories as indicated in the treaty only when he failed to make the payment. Further, the local rulers also relinquished their autonomous right to make any negotiations and treaties with any other rulers beyond the British's consents. The early subsidiary treaties that were signed between the EIC and the South Asian rulers were, for example, the treaties with the Nawab of Bengal in 1760 and 1765 and the treaties with the Nawab of Awadh in 1775, 1787, and 1801, and the treaties with the Nawab of Karnatak in 1787 and 1792. See Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties*, II: 105-119, 130-133, 230-232, 237-240.

⁹⁸ Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties*, X: 52-63.

neighboring power holders—such as the Deccan, Mysore, or Marathas—without the Nawab’s approbation and/or without listing him as party to the treaty, even when the interests of the Karnatak state were directly related. In all such cases, the Nawab had to put great efforts to insert his name in the treaties later. Thus, Article 15 seems to fit the desires of the Nawab more than the EIC.

The military aspect of this treaty is also significant. Glancing through its conditions together with those of other documents, it is likely that, after four years of harsh reforms (1781-1785), Macartney had been successful in disbanding the Nawab’s entire private force. The only military resource the Nawab relied on at that time was the joint force, which had long been under the sole control of the Company. The Nawab’s role was now officially limited to financial sponsor. However, Article 14 of the treaty of 1787 shows that the Nawab may, at least, still have been in charge of the very limited military capacity he retained. According to this, if the Nawab, at any time, needed military troops “for the security and collection of his revenue, the support of his authority, or the good order and government of his dominions,” he could make a public request to the Madras Presidency; the EIC would then furnish him with a sufficient number of troops for the purpose, while expenses would be charged to his accounts.⁹⁹ As the evidence shows, Article 14 indeed proved to be very problematic for the EIC: in the early 1790s, the EIC’s Board of Control in London repeatedly expressed its concern and dissatisfaction with how the troops of the Madras Presidency were being used by the Nawab like “mercenaries” in his unjustified campaigns because of the condition in the treaty of 1787:

[...] It appears that tho’almost the whole strength of the southern Army was at one time employed in support of what was termed the Nabob’s authority they were considered in no other light than as Mercenaries, to attack, or to retreat, at the pleasure of the agent appointed by the Nabob to march with the force, [...] ¹⁰⁰

These complaints were caused by several recent times, in 1789-1790, when the Nawab had requested military assistance to help him subjugate two rebellious tributary subjects—the Poligars of Sivaganga and Sitarampur—under the pretext of regaining the tribute owed to him.¹⁰¹ As was known among the British, if the EIC did not agree to his requests then the Nawab would complain that it was in violation of the treaty of 1787, but the EIC was also

⁹⁹ Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties*, X: 60.

¹⁰⁰ IOR, E/4/877, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, 6 May 1791, 524-525.

¹⁰¹ See also the discussion on this local Hindu ruler in Chapter Four (4.3).

very aware of the potential for the Nawab to overstep the mark and so it needed to work out where the line was to be drawn.¹⁰² The sources reveal that, the British still sometimes found themselves being involuntary driven to follow the Nawab's military designs, even after attempting to reform the Madras Presidency and to limit the power of the Nawab. This is another good example of how the Nawab was able to exploit the European treaty system at the expense of the European themselves. These "military successes" of the Nawab, mirroring his ability to adjust to new political conditions, however, proved to be inappropriately timed and soon led to negative outcomes for his independence since it forced the EIC's Board of Control to seriously reconsider how best to manage its relationship with the Nawab. During 1790-1791, in order to prevent the EIC being used in the internal affairs of Karnatak, it ordered the Madras Presidency to interfere in the disputes between the Nawab and the Karnatak Poligars by being the guarantors and protectors of the rights of those tributary subjects. By taking this new approach, the British forced the Nawab not to disturb the internal affairs of local Poligars as long as they paid the agreed amount of tribute or contributions.¹⁰³ To this, there were strong protests from the Nawab. However, this period coincided with the outbreak of the Third Anglo-Mysore War (1790-1792) and the Nawab was not able to keep his promise regarding his contribution during wartime as set down by the treaty of 1787. Therefore, the EIC was justified in imposing new conditions upon the Nawab by forcing him into a new treaty in 1792.¹⁰⁴ According to an article in that treaty, the Nawab was forced to assign all the tribute paid by some of his Poligars (according to a list) to pay off his debts and military expenses, while the management of the revenue collection in all those Poligar districts was to be directly controlled by the EIC. Although the treaty (Article 6) said "the said company, desirous of preserving the rights of sovereignty over the said Poligars to the said Nawab," to permanently lose the management of those areas was, in practice, equal to the ruler's loss of sovereignty over them. The treaty of 1792 was the last one between the Nawab and the EIC, and it was very different from the first treaty between the Nawab and EIC, in 1760, in which the EIC had promised never to interfere with any of the Nawab's subjects nor his internal affairs.

¹⁰² IOR, E/4/876, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, 5 Mar. 1790, 140-145; 19 May 1790, 474-527.

¹⁰³ IOR, E/4/876, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, 19 May 1790, 493-495; E/4/877, 6 May 1791, 504-529.

¹⁰⁴ Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties*, X: 63-71.

