



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** What were the underlying factors and forces of Wellesley's policy of expansion? (150 words)

10 Jan, 2022 GS Paper 1 History

### Approach

- Briefly talk about Lord Wellesley
- Discuss his motives behind his policies of aggressive expansion
- Enumerate how he annexed territories and how his policy furthered the imperialist expansion
- Conclude accordingly

### Answer

Large-scale expansion of British rule in India occurred during the Governor-Generalship of Lord Wellesley who came to India in 1798 at a time when the British were locked in a life and death struggle with France all over the world.

#### Underlying factors of Wellesley's policy of expansion

- Wellesley wanted to expand the British dominions in India to such an extent that it should become the sovereign power in India.
- His expansionist mind would not remain content with the British remaining one of the powers in India, as such, he set himself to the task of converting India into an empire of Britain.
- Another aim, which was ancillary to his main objective, was the removal of French influence from India and to make the possibility of French territorial expansion of India impossible.

#### Forces of Wellesley's policy of expansion

- Under him the British East India Company adopted a non-interventionist policy of subsidiary alliance, assumption of the territories of previously subordinated rulers and outright wars.
- Under the Subsidiary Alliance System used by Lord Wellesley, every ruler in India had to accept to pay a subsidy to the British for the maintenance of the British army. In return, the British would protect them from their enemies which gave British enormous expansion.
- The system was extremely advantageous to the British. They could now maintain a large army at the cost of the Indian states.
- The system of subsidiary alliance enabled them to fight wars far away from their own territories since any war would occur in the territories either of the British ally or of the British enemy.
- They controlled the defence and foreign relations of the protected ally, and had a powerful force stationed at the very heart of his lands, and could, therefore, at a time of their choosing, overthrow him and annex his territories by declaring him to be 'inefficient'.

The Policy of Subsidiary Alliance was in reality, a document of losing sovereignty which meant the state did not have the rights of self defence, of maintaining diplomatic relations, of employing foreign experts, and of settling its disputes with its neighbours. The system of Subsidiary Alliances was, in the words of a British writer, "a system of fattening allies as we fatten oxen, till they were worthy of being devoured"

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