

## Topic Page: [Hastings, Warren, 1732-1818](#)

Definition: **Hastings, Warren** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

First British governor general of India (1774-85). He successfully defended British territory against several Indian opponents. He made many enemies and returned to England in 1785 to face a variety of charges. Although eventually acquitted, his career was ruined.

Summary Article: **Hastings, Warren**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

1732–1818, first governor-general of British India. Employed (1750) as a clerk by the East India Company, he soon became manager of a trading post in Bengal. When Calcutta (now Kolkata) was captured (1756) by Siraj-ud-Daula, Hastings was taken prisoner but soon released. After the British recapture (1757) of the city, he was made British resident at Murshidabad. Good service there brought appointment to the Calcutta council (1761), but he returned to England (1764) disgusted with administrative corruption in Bengal.

Hastings went back (1769) to India as a member of the Madras council and became (1772) governor of Bengal, immediately embarking on a course of judicial and financial reform, law codification, and the suppression of banditry, measures that laid the foundation of direct British rule in India. In 1774, he was appointed governor-general of India. This position was created by Lord North's Regulating Act (1773), which also set up a four-member governing council. In the succeeding years Hastings was greatly hampered by opposition in the council, especially from Sir Philip Francis. Another problem he encountered in his new position was the ill-defined relationship with and resulting lack of control over the subordinate provincial governors. The interference of the Bombay government in Maratha affairs led to a war with the Marathas, while the blunders of the Madras government provoked conflict with Haidar Ali of Mysore. In both cases Hastings, conscious of the danger of French intervention, dispatched armies from Bengal that saved the British position. Nonetheless he was criticized for interference with the provincial governments.

Hastings resigned (1784) and returned to England, where he was charged with high crimes and misdemeanors by Edmund Burke and Sir Philip Francis, whom he had wounded in a duel in India. The chief charges against him concerned his extortion of money from the rajah of Benares and the begum of Oudh, his hiring out of British troops to the nawab of Oudh to subdue the Rohillas (an Afghan tribe), and his alleged responsibility for the judicial murder of an Indian merchant, Nandkumar. He was impeached in 1787; but the trial, begun in 1788, ended with acquittal in 1795, despite the bitter prosecution of Burke, Francis, Richard B. Sheridan, and Charles James Fox. Hastings's fortune was spent in the defense, but the East India Company contributed to his later support. He became popular and was made a privy counselor (1814).

See biographies by A. M. Davies (1935), K. G. Feiling (1955, repr. 1967), and J. Bernstein (2000); studies by P. Moon (1947, repr. 1962) and P. J. Marshall (1965).

**APA**

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Harvard

MLA

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Hastings, Warren. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from [https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/hastings\\_warren\\_1732\\_1818](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/hastings_warren_1732_1818)

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## Chicago

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## Harvard

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## MLA

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