The Mughal state evolved from an intricate set of relationships established by Akbar, and his strategies of conciliation and coercion contributed in no small measure to the empire’s stability. We have already examined the factors, both the material constraints and the normative traditions, which determined his choice of grand strategy and the modes through which it was executed. The chapter traces the evolution of Akbar’s twin strategies and is accordingly organised around two chief sections. The first segment unbundles the notion of Mughal hegemony in the context of Akbar’s evolving relations with the Rajput ruling elite. It will also explore the persistence of hegemonic ideas through institutions and their subsequent internalisation by the Rajput elite through the process of co-optation. In the second section, we will look at a contrasting case study from the Deccan to demonstrate the coercive strand within accommodation that focussed on eliciting cooperation on the basis of material considerations at the cost of enhancing the normative appeal of the Mughal state.

**MUGHAL CONCILIATORY STRATEGY: THE CASE STUDY OF THE RAJPUTS**

The Mughal stratagem of accommodation was in keeping with the diffused networks of power that operated outside the realm of state control. Locating the state within the existing social milieu would help explain the compulsions and imperatives behind the adoption of an accommodative approach. A long view of history would reveal that the endemic problem of militarisation and violence had plagued empires in the past as well. Perhaps it explains their reluctance to seek a lasting solution in coercion, and their marked preference to broker arrangements that are accommodative of all the interests involved. Wink regards the forging of such alliances as an operative aspect of sovereignty.

‘In India, as in all Islamic states, sovereignty was primarily a matter of allegiances; the state organized itself around conflict and remained essentially open-ended instead of becoming territorially circumscribed.’ (Wink 1986: 27-28)
"Dirk Kolff makes a similar observation on the persistence of alliances in medieval India,

'One is struck by the omnipresence of the alliance theme in sixteenth-century India. Politics in this period was largely synonymous with the making and unmaking of alliances. These alliances had little of the nature of sacred treaties and seem to have been regarded very much like service contracts, temporary agreements of an auxiliary character. Negotiation, alliance and- as a corollary-brokerage were the elements that largely made up medieval Indian political-military behaviour.' (Kolff 1990: 91)

The Mughal grand strategy of accommodation was distinct for its coherence and integrated approach towards eliciting the support of diverse social groups. Socialisation was a crucial component of Mughal hegemony, and in the Rajput case, performed the systemic function of order maintenance. To a great extent, the high level of socialisation initiated by the Mughals mitigated their reliance on the use of force. Increased participation and identification with the goals of the Mughal empire drew the Rajputs into a complex web of shared values and interests that made Mughal rule over the area effective and efficient. The complimentary belief systems of the Mughals and the Rajputs coupled with the strategic location of the region facilitated the growth of a composite culture that was instrumental in maintaining the stability of the expanding empire. The process of enculturation that it implied ensured the Mughals the lasting loyalty and service of the Rajputs. Given that enculturation followed a decisive phase of conquest and subjugation, the power projection capabilities of the Mughal state assume greater significance.

The Mughal Mode of Power Projection: The Imperial Camp

A striking aspect of the Mughal state was its ability to project power over great distances and towards this end, the emperor devised ingenious means to stay mobile and tour their domain. That mobility was regarded as vital for state survival and a long established canon of Mughal policy is evident from Aurangzeb's stricture,

'...an emperor should never allow himself to be fond of ease and inclined to retirement because the most fatal cause of the decline of kingdoms and the destruction of royal power is this undesirable habit. Always be moving about, as much as possible; it is bad for both emperors and water to remain at the same place; the water grows putrid and the king's power slips out of his control. In
touring lie the honour, ease and splendour of kings; the desire of comfort and happiness makes them untrustworthy. (Cited in Bahadur 1963: 53)

Akbar came to be seen as an emperor who was able ‘to capture the country by means of travelling through it.’ (Gommans 2002: 101) The accoutrements of power, which created an aura of authority around the hegemon, called for sustained material inputs on a massive scale. The imperial camp was exhibitionist in nature, showcasing the grandeur of the Mughal court. In Fazl’s rhetorical question, ‘If the majesty of royalty did not exist, how would various disturbances subside?’, the centrality of projecting power over vast distances is evident. (Cited in Mukhia 2005: 59) The data given below in Table 1 is indicative of the emphasis Mughal emperors laid on touring their domain.

Table 1
Ruling in Absentia: Years Spent Away from the Capital (1556-1739)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emperors</th>
<th>Akbar</th>
<th>Jahangir</th>
<th>Shahjahan</th>
<th>Aurangzeb</th>
<th>Bahadur Shah</th>
<th>Farrukhsivat</th>
<th>Muhammad Shah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regnal Years</td>
<td>1556-1605</td>
<td>1605-1627</td>
<td>1627-1658</td>
<td>1658-1707</td>
<td>1707-1712</td>
<td>1712-1719</td>
<td>1719-1739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>49 years</td>
<td>22 years</td>
<td>31 years</td>
<td>49 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Reign Absent</td>
<td>10/49 20%</td>
<td>6/22 27%</td>
<td>14/31 45%</td>
<td>34/49 69%</td>
<td>5/5 100%</td>
<td>0/7 0%</td>
<td>0/20 0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Columns one and two give details of the rule of individual Mughal emperors both in terms of regnal years and duration. Column three indicates the number of years spent in travel out of the total number of regnal years of each emperor, and computes the same in terms of percentage. Total number of years spent by all the Mughal emperors put together- 69/183
Combined percentage of regnal years spent in travelling- 38%] (Blake 1979: 91)

Mobile imperial camps were common both in medieval Asia and Western Europe. However, the wealth and might on display in the Mughal camp was on a much more massive scale than in its European counterpart. The royal entourage maintained the imperial hierarchy with the princes and nobles following the emperor, who was flanked by 8000 horsemen on either side. Spread over one-and-a-half miles in breadth, the camp carried with it all elements of a functional administration, complete with merchants, accountants, soldiers and artisans. The official records and accounts registers alone occupied 80 camels, 30 elephants and 20 carts. The imperial treasury, also part of the
entourage, spurred commercial transactions with local economies and through such economic operations displayed the financial well-being of the empire. The imperial camp also showcased the assimilative ethos of the Mughal court. Mobility and co-habitation ensured that sectarian and ethnic identities remained muted and the thick web of internal interactions amongst the nobles and the retainers fostered a liberal and cosmopolitan ethos. Thus, the mobile camp not only displayed the extensive resources at the command of the Mughal state but was also instrumental in integrating its various regions within the empire. (Gommans 2002: 105-110)

The Mughal emperors, more than their Ottoman counterparts, attached a great deal of strategic significance to travelling across the length and breadth of their imperial domain. The ostensible display was an impressive means of projecting power over great distances and came to be a veritable symbol of the emperor’s authority. Such imperial journeys of the empire not only helped renew contact and forge personal ties with local powers, but also served as surveillance missions that gathered vital information of the regions it passed through. However, the perambulations of the camp concentrated more on the safe inner confines of the empire than on its outer limits. The radius of action which was limited to around 1200 kms from Delhi, also marked out the geographical reach of imperial socialisation and enculturation. (Gommans 2002: 108) Roughly the same geographical pattern emerges if one were to examine the settled residences of the Mughal emperors, as given in Table 2.

Table 2
Settled Residences of Mughal Emperors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>In capital</th>
<th>In centre</th>
<th>In north</th>
<th>In south</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Akbar</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jahangir</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shah Jahan</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurangzeb</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Based on periods of > six months of unbroken residence in and around one place (excluding sieges) in the central, northern and southern parts of the empire, in round quinary percentages of the total period of regular government. (Gommans 2002: 102)

Rajasthan, for instance with its proximity to the centre was to see constant assertions and reminders of Akbar’s sovereignty, while the Deccani states fell beyond the pale of
Akbar's power projection efforts. Akbar's interest in developing close ties with the Rajputs owed itself in no small measure to the strategic location of Rajasthan. Situated close to the ports of Gujarat, Rajasthan was the gateway to the prosperity of Malwa. So critical was its perceived value that any power that controlled the region was strategically secure in north India. Given Rajasthan's strategic location, every ambitious ruler aimed with an expansionist agenda sought to establish long-term relationships with the Rajputs, and thus, to a great extent Akbar's efforts in that direction were natural.

The Elements of Mughal Hegemonic Power

In a hegemonic order, the material and ideational aspects of power intersect at two distinct levels. Elites are driven to submission by the hegemon through a combination of incentives and sanctions. As Ikenberry and Kupchan note, '[m]aterial incentives and opportunities for political advancement...play crucial role in making elites susceptible to the socialising efforts of the hegemon.' (Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990: 293, emphasis added)

The following causal chain employs a modified version of the one propounded by Ikenberry and Kupchan and seeks to trace the influence of socialisation on the behaviour patterns of the Rajputs. Although the primary catalyst is framed in the form of material incentives and sanctions, the eventual outcome, namely lowered coercion levels, is attained through cooperation based on normative persuasion. Thus, the causal chain that we referred to in the introductory chapter is further extended beyond the stage of norm change to include its manifestation in fewer instances of resort to force.

External inducement → policy change (cooperation through coercion) → norm change (cooperation through legitimate domination) → lowered coercion levels

Bull similarly stresses on the role of perception and legitimacy in ensuring the effectiveness of a rule. He argues,

'Rules are legitimised to the extent that members of the society accept them as valid, or embrace the values implied or presupposed by the rulers. To the extent that the rules are legitimised they do not depend for their effectiveness on sanctions or enforcement.' (Bull 1977: 56-57)
This particular interpretation of how coercion and ideas work in conjunction to generate supportive alliances approximates André Wink’s explanation of how the Islamic concept of fitna works.

‘As opposed to a purely military operation fitna was at least a mixture of coercion and conciliation and characteristically implied intervention in and making use of existing local conflicts. Fitna can be equated with the political expedient of upajapa of the Indian arthasastra, comprising conciliation, gift-giving, sowing dissension among and ‘winning over’ of an enemy’s local supporters, and involving the use of force only secondarily.’¹²⁵ (Wink 1986: 27)

Elias offers a sociological perspective on the process through which variation in symbolic acts become representative of actual change in the relative positions of the nobility. Since every act (such as one aiding the king into his robe) was an expression of privilege and power for both the king and the concerned courtier, any subtle change in the symbolic function was indicative of a corresponding shift in rank at the court society. It is no surprise then that every noble was extremely alert to even slight alterations in acts of etiquette, the preservation of which was in his vested interest. (Elias 1983: 88) Apart from the complex nuances that were attached to the observance of court etiquettes, nomenclature was another indication of the status and power.

Nomenclature was a significant index of sovereignty and power, and gradations in the use of titles were carefully observed and maintained. The world view of the Mughals reveals that they made certain distinctions between what they considered as their internal and external realms. For the Mughals, states located within the Indian subcontinent were vassals and hence subordinate in status to the Mughal state. In keeping with that perception, the Mughals refused to recognise titles claiming sovereign status that kings of smaller kingdoms appended to their name. Although the designation of ‘Raja’ was permissible as it was an honorary title bestowed on Mughal nobles, the title of ‘Shah’ was not, and hence we see Adil Shah being referred to as Adil Khan. In sharp contrast, the Mughals regarded contemporary sovereign rulers like the Ottomans and the Safavids as

¹²⁵ Wink interprets the Maratha expansion in the eighteenth century as a classic example of fitna in practice. However, in the pursuit of sovereignty, the Marathas maintained their rhetorical subordination to the Mughal emperor. (Wink 1986: 40)
their equals and this was evident in the observance of their royal titles proclaiming them as such. (Ali 2006: 311)

Cooperation from subject elites would still be for instrumental purposes: it is in their self-interest to comply with a more powerful entity. Once having secured the cooperation of the subject elite, the hegemon formulates a new order with a new set of norms to which elites are expected to orient themselves. Akbar's conquests were followed not by suppression but accommodation of which marital alliance was a crucial tool. Political relations were cemented through the establishment of marital alliances with the emperor. Establishing personal ties with the Rajputs enabled Akbar to rule with consent without resorting to coercion. Eliciting cooperation from the Rajputs helped Akbar draw upon the military resource base and the territories controlled by the Rajputs. Accommodation eliciting cooperation and participation was the optimal strategy for Akbar as suppression and coercion would have led to costly sieges and campaigns. In the Rajputs, the Mughals found a loyal ally experienced in their mode of warfare and willing to serve. Thus, the long association began with military collaboration before the Rajputs entered administrative service. The following section throws light on the material setting within which the Mughals and the Rajputs found it mutually beneficial to engage each other.

The Material Setting
Hegemony does not operate in a power vacuum and accordingly, its operational aspect of socialisation rests on an elaborate support base. Socialisation, though a latent aspect of authority, is nonetheless an exhibition of power. The Mughal artillery and mounted archers proved decisive in military confrontations. Barring three major battles early in the history of Mughal India, the process of the empire's expansion is marked by a remarkable absence of famous wars. As mentioned earlier, the two battles of Panipat in 1526 and 1556, and the battle of Khanwa in 1527 were the only significant encounters on a massive scale. The other two battles, the battle of Tukaroi in 1575 and the battle of Haldighati in 1576 were provincial level confrontations rather than imperial battles. (Streusand 1989: 52) The early occurrence of battles followed by a prolonged phase of low key military encounters suggests that Akbar succeeded in projecting his military power beyond the
immediacy of particular contexts. (Khan 1997: 12-13) The Mughal military advantage proved to be particularly decisive in the expansion that followed these initial confrontations, as many Rajput principalities submitted to Akbar without a fight. The success of the Chittor siege was to see many Rajput principalities submit to Akbar and accept Mughal superiority. Thus, Ranthambhor surrendered in 1569 followed by Kalinjar, Bikaner, Jaisalmer and Marwar.

The Mughal inducements of high imperial ranks and lucrative land holdings followed the initial period of conquest and subjugation and was instrumental in making the Rajputs 'susceptible' to Mughal socialisation. Indeed, Akbar's grand strategy entailed a complex blend of interests and values that was intrinsically appealing to the Rajputs. The Mughal offer of induction into the nobility was the prime incentive to the Rajputs. The Mughal nobility constituted the mansabdari system, which was essentially a hierarchical organisation, combining military and administrative institutions within its fold. Upon entering Mughal service, a chieftain was assigned a rank or a mansab, which determined the size of a military contingent he was to maintain for the imperial army. In return, a mansabdar was offered jagirs or revenue assignments in lieu of his salary and maintenance costs incurred. Akbar also introduced the notion of watan jagirs or the royal confirmation of the hereditary domains of chiefs, which unlike regular jagirs were non-transferable. Since the assignment of watan jagirs was permanent, Akbar ensured that these did not fall within the traditional patrimonies of the Rajput chiefs since it could strengthen their position. As a result, watan jagirs were allocated in areas distant from the local strongholds of chieftains. The mansabdari system created stakes for the Rajputs in imperial affairs as their involvement intensified from merely paying tribute to being partners in administration. (Zaidi 1997: 15) With the new assignments giving the Rajput chiefs greater mobility within the empire, they began to establish ties beyond the immediate confines of their traditional territories. Rajput clans with little erstwhile contact came together through matrimonial ties. Moreover, the revenue accruing from the

126 There were certain key characteristics discernible in the assignment of watan jagirs, such as,
1. it was a non-transferable permanent assignment
2. the emperor held the discretion to award a watan jagir to any noble in any location within the empire
3. the noble was expected to develop a long association with his watan jagir. (Zaidi 1997: 21)
watan jagir was calculated as a portion of their salary rather than as an added honour.

"Thus, as Zaidi notes,

'it was held by Akbar that the revenues assigned to chiefs in their watans were in lieu of their military service and not simply by virtue of their hereditary right. The nature of this assignment continued to be like that of an ordinary...jagir in all other respects, barring one only, that it would remain immune from transfer.'
(Zaidi 1997: 21-23)

Nonetheless, their patrimonies were jagirs, the revenue from which was part of their salaries. Ancestral land was held not merely by hereditary right but by recognition from the emperor. Akbar gained greater control over land rights as chieftains increasingly turned to him for the confirmation of theirs hereditary domains. His mode of integrating subjugated principalities into the empire marked a significant departure from the erstwhile policy of extracting a tribute from the defeated chief in return for his continued autonomy. Regulation of land rights led to increased Mughal intervention in succession disputes. Asserting the principle of paramountcy, Akbar assumed the right to nominate a suitable successor that entailed overruling law of primogeniture in certain cases. The ensuing contestations served to further weaken clan solidarity while enhancing Akbar's legitimacy in Rajput affairs.

As is with the grand strategy of any ruler, Akbar's seemingly disparate strategies were geared towards his primary goal of expansion and consolidation. The process of consolidation proceeded along three phases, which marked the evolution of Akbar's Rajput policy. (Chandra 1999: 114-116) The first phase from 1556 to 1572 saw Akbar establish his supremacy through conquest and his demand for personal submission of Rajput rulers. The first of the Rajput chiefs to associate himself with the Mughals through military and matrimonial ties was Raja Bharamal of Amber. The submission of the Kachhwaha chief signalled the beginning of a long royal association with the clan. It was during Akbar's first visit to Rajasthan in 1562 that Bharamal proposed a marital alliance with the emperor. The marriage to the chief's daughter paved the way for closer collaboration between the two households. Bharamal's entry into Mughal service was followed by his son Bhagwan Das and later his grandson Man Singh. (Husain 1999: 89)
The Kachhwahas had good reason to vie for royal support since their clout within Rajasthan was not substantial. Beyond a few parganas, their native lands were limited and it was only through the high ranks they occupied within the nobility that they managed to amass substantial jagirs. (Husain 1999: 95) Within Rajput clan politics, the Kachhwahas were not a very influential group in terms of controlling vast tracts of territory as the Rathors did. That the clan received royal patronage was evident in their increased involvement in the royal military and administrative matters. Following the Gujarat expedition in which many Kachhwahas participated and during which time Akbar entrusted Bharamal with the control of the capital, the induction of clan members into royal service increased both in terms of scale and responsibility, particularly between 1578 and 1587. The positions and privileges enjoyed by the Kachhwahas were unparalleled by any other family-group. Akbar placed them in important positions as co-governors of key subas such as Ajmer, Agra and Kabul in 1586. (Husain 1999: 92) To optimise the available military potential of the local elite, Akbar was particular about not restricting recruitment to only the prominent chiefs but expanded it to include the leaders of smaller clans as well. This ensured that the dominance of clan leaders that could potentially enable them to consolidate their power against Akbar was broken, and hence their authority counter-balanced and superseded. (Zaidi 1997: 20)

The Rajputs who submitted emerged as Akbar’s political allies, rendering military service in local campaigns against other recalcitrant Rajput principalities. Rajput contingents were part of the imperial forces that vanquished Merta in 1562 and Jodhpur in 1563. The conquests of Chittor and Ranthambor in 1569 went on to further reinforce Akbar’s supremacy were established and a number of Rajput kings thought it prudent to strengthen ties with the emperor. Thereafter, marital alliances with the kings of Jaisalmer, Bikaner and Marwar were concluded. Yet, despite their status as allies, the military participation of Rajputs remained limited at this stage. It was the Gujarat campaigns of 1572 that marked a shift in Akbar’s policy in that it further deepened and extended the involvement of Rajputs in imperial affairs. Following this, the Rajputs were for this first time entrusted with independent commands outside Rajasthan. Man Singh, for instance, led the Mughal forces against Rana Pratap in 1572. Akbar also broadened his support base by involving Rajputs other than the Kachhwahas, such as the rulers of Bikaner and
Jodhpur with important military missions. The third phase saw a further intensification of Mughal-Rajput relations with Rajputs entering into Mughal administrative service. Akbar further consolidated his position by enhancing the role of Rajputs from being military allies to partners in administration and governance of the empire. They were appointed to joint governorship for subahs (provinces) with the strategically important Kabul and Lahore being placed under Man Singh and Bhagawant Das.

Since the Rajputs were not a homogenous group, Akbar’s Rajput policy had a significant impact on clan politics. The biggest beneficiaries were the Kachhwahas of Amber who were among the first clans to submit to Akbar. The alliance with Akbar accorded the Kachhwahas with high administrative posts and brought the little-known clan into political prominence. Four out of six Rajputs appointed as governors to the 12 provinces were Kachhwahas and they constituted 69 per cent of the Rajput mansabdars. Akbar not only established marital ties with many Kachhwahas but also reposed trust in them on critical occasions. For instance, Bharamal was given the rare honour managing the affairs of the capital in 1572-73 during Akbar’s absence. (Refaqat Ali Khan 1976: 193-197)

Although the internal divisions of within the Kachhwaha clan into sub-clans (chiefly the Rajawats, the Shaikhawats and the Udawats) did not significantly affect their service to the Mughal emperor, it arose in the factional politics over Akbar’s possible success when the emperor fell seriously ill. (Husain 1999: 89) The unsuccessful bid by the Kachhwahas to place Khusrau on the throne after Akbar’s death was one of the reasons why the clan fell out of favour with Jahangir. Apart from the more obvious removal of Man Singh from Bengal as the governor in 1606, there was a discernible decline in Rajput representation within the nobility. Husain observes that ‘After Man Singh not a single Rajput noble was appointed governor or given independent command in an important campaign. Most of the Rajput nobles remained posted in the Deccan.’ (Husain 1999: 100) From 19 Rajput nobles at the end of the sixth year of Jahangir’s reign, their numbers came down to 14 nine years hence. Their zat (personal rank) and savar (cavalry rank) positions also came down over the years, a pattern that emerges from Table 3.
Table 3:
Relative Positions of Rajput Nobles under Akbar and Jahangir

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status of Rajput nobles</th>
<th>Total no.</th>
<th>Zat</th>
<th>Sawar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rajput nobles at the death of Akbar</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>41,000</td>
<td>10,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajput nobles at end of 6th year of Jahangir's reign</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>51,000</td>
<td>21,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajput nobles at the end of 15th year of Jahangir's reign</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35,500</td>
<td>20,650</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Husain 1999: 99)

It is evident from the above table that the Rajputs represented a sizeable section of the Mughal nobility, although it gradually declined with Akbar's death in 1605. The material benefits in terms of lucrative posts and land rights created stakes for the Rajputs within the system, as their association with the empire increased from being military allies to participants in the governance process. The next segment will examine the cultural and normative appeal that the Mughal state held for its nobility and subjects, and which was instrumental in translating its power into authority.

The Ideational Aspect of Mughal Hegemony

While the support of hegemonic norms may be a political strategy on the part of the Rajput elite, the resulting internalisation was not a deliberate act but a gradual process. The participation in the hegemonic order offered rewards for cooperation and stiff disincentives for defiance, in the process facilitating patterns of habitual compliance. According to Ian Hurd, internalisation occurs

'...when the actor's sense of its own interests is partly constituted by a force outside itself, that is, by standards, laws, rules and norms present in the community, existing at an intersubjective level. A rule will become legitimate to a specific individual and therefore become behaviourally significant when the individual internalises its content and reconceives his or her interests to the rule. Compliance then becomes habitual, and it is non-compliance that requires of the individual special consideration and psychic costs'. (Hurd 1999: 388)
It is important to note that socialisation is not reducible to the material support base it is erected upon. Weber’s observation on the functionality of legitimacy reiterates the significance of norms.

‘Experience shows that in no instance does domination voluntarily limit itself to the appeal to material or affectual or ideal motives as a basis for its continuance. In addition every such system attempts to establish and to cultivate the belief in its legitimacy.’ (Weber 1978: 213)

The nature of domination undergoes a change under hegemony as power transforms into authority. For instance, the period in which Akbar commissioned the translations of ancient Sanskrit texts revered by the Hindus into Persian, coincided with the intensification of Mughal relations with the Rajputs. The imperial support extended to the translation project was integral to Akbar’s efforts in making the Mughal state more identifiable with the Rajputs. Several ancient texts such as the Ramayana and the Rajatarangini were translated under royal patronage. The Razmnama, the Persian translation of the Mahabharata, was the outcome of one such royal project that Akbar had initiated and completed by 1586. The final translated version was gleaned from several drafts that the royal scribes had penned with the help of learned Hindus chosen for this purpose. Akbar sought to popularise the translated version of the Hindu epic throughout his empire by commanding his nobles to commission copies of the Razmnama for their libraries. (Beach 1992: 40) The Persian translation of the Atharva Veda, which commenced in 1575-76, was perhaps one of the earliest of its kind.

The extension of royal patronage to translations of revered texts enhanced the acceptability of the Mughals among the Rajputs. The court’s keen interest in ancient literary and historical traditions ‘indigenised’ the Mughal state, and its assertion of power came to be seen as rightful and legitimate. The transformation involved ‘normative persuasion’, wherein the elites came to accept the new set of norms as credible. Thus, the Mughal state as the socialising agent became the primary actor that set the terms of the hegemonic discourse and suitably modified it for greater legitimacy. Emphasising on the syncretic nature of Akbar’s formulation of his authority, Streusand observed, ‘Though there had been Muslims in the subcontinent for some eight centuries, there was no synthesis of the Islamic and Indian doctrines of kingship before Akbar’s time.’ (Streusand 1999: 37) The successful reformulation of hegemonic principles marked the
process of consolidation as rules, norms and procedures began to take root and set
"patterns emerged gradually.

The inherent nature of hegemonic norms matters at this level of socialisation. The
greater the affinity of hegemonic norms to the existing ones, the higher is their
acceptability with the elite. Akbar’s strategy of socialisation with the Rajputs was to a
great extent facilitated by the complimentarity of the Mughal and Rajput belief systems.
The affinity of their belief systems made the processes that socialisation entailed
mutually recognisable. As Sikkink notes, ‘New ideas are more likely to be influential if
they ‘fit’ well with existing ideas and ideologies in a particular historical setting.’
(Sikkink 1991: 26) Elites identify with a new value system which does not contradict
their established beliefs, but in turn appears to reinforce them. Such complementarity of
value systems allows elites to justify to their political community their participation in a
hegemonic order, and maintain domestic legitimacy during the period of transformation.
According to Ziegler,

The Rajput ‘support and loyalty rested primarily upon a basic ‘fit’ between Rajput
ideals and aspirations, expressed in local myth and symbol, and Mughal actions in
this area, which did not challenge fundamental Rajput tenets regarding order and
precedence.... Only in periods when the Mughals directly contradicted these tenets
concerning order and precedence did Rajputs withdraw their support and shift the
direction of their loyalties’ (Ziegler 1998: 210)

Ideological compatibility between the Mughals and Rajputs was further accentuated by
their complementary military cultures. The Rajputs were expected to fight battles as part
of their military service, and their military entrepreneurship often took them far from
their homelands. The Rajput retainers were adept horsemen trained in archery and man­
to-man combat in the open plains. The Mughal military culture too shared these attributes
since the Mughal army was predominantly composed of a cavalry force of mounted
archers and a developed artillery wing. (Hodgson 1993: 26) Their mode of warfare is
brought out in Babur’s description of his battleplan at Khanwa in 1527, when that he
‘posted matchlock men and cannoneers along the line of carts which were chained to one
another in front of us.’ (BN: 296) This initial affinity in belief systems and military ethos
translated into a lasting alliance when it was ‘institutionalised’. In the next section, we
will examine how Akbar tapped into the traditional Rajput institutions of marital alliances and honourable service in order to sustain their cooperation.

The Persistence of Hegemonic Ideas: Institutionalising Socialisation

Given that the efficiency benefits of socialisation emerge in the long run, it needs to be institutionalised. Ideas are entrenched in institutions established by the hegemon and such institutionalisation enhances their staying power. Ideas and institutions are integrally linked, as institutions mediate between ideas and policies by delimiting and channelising the flow of ideas into the policy making process. (Yee 1996: 89-93) Institutions not only impart a structure to hegemonic ideas, they also tend to reinforce the organisation of the political system itself. In a hierarchical system where power is concentrated, institutions and the ideas they encase uphold existing power structures by building into the system the costs and constraints of pursuing revisionist tendencies. Particularly in the medieval context, institutions were also an articulation of social opinion that served to reinforce the identity and position of an individual in society. Thus, the institutionalisation of ideas helped codify the intersubjective context within which they were to be interpreted henceforth. As Elias explains,

'Social opinion was an inescapable fact of human existence in the court society in which an individual was ‘honourable’ only if he was socially accepted as such. The centrality of social perception cannot be understated in a milieu in which ‘the recognition of membership by others itself constitutes membership’.' (Elias 1983: 96)

The local institutions and belief systems of the Rajputs provide the context within which the lasting relations between the Mughals and the Rajputs can be understood. Akbar sought to capitalise on the prevalent local institutions of the Rajputs in attempting to consolidate his position in the region. Marriage alliances and honourable service, the two institutions through which they consolidated their ties, were not merely tactical moves on the part of the Rajputs, but were practices embedded in their local culture. Thus, both were highly identifiable among the Rajputs and were also culturally loaded notions. The Rajput society was organised around two referents, brotherhood (bhai bandh) and marriage alliances (sāga). The brotherhood had a developed sense of territory, wherein territorial acquisitions by a clan came under collective control.
Although the clan chief selected on the basis of primogeniture stood at the apex of the administrative system, decision-making within the clan was collegial. The ruler, upon parcelling out lands to clan leaders (sardars) who were members of his extended family, had little control over the manner in which these were governed. (Sharma 1975: 157)

Although part of a clan, each brotherhood perceived of itself as a distinct entity, thereby staking an equal claim over the territory the clan traditionally controlled. Relations by marriage constituted the other referent of the Rajput identity. Hence, in order to analyse the cultural appeal of Mughal hegemony among the Rajputs, it is imperative to gain an understanding of the local Rajput practices and institutions which were instrumental in enhancing cooperation between the two actors.

Marital Alliances

The significance that the Rajputs attached to marriage as a mode of establishing ties is evident from the fact that the term sagai stood for both, betrothal as well as for alliance in Marvari. (Ziegler 1998: 183) Marital alliance as a strategic tool was common to both Mughals and Rajputs. Akbar inherited the Timurid tradition of consolidating power by means of marital alliances with other potential power centres. For instance, Babur married the daughter of the Yusufzai chief so that ‘the Yusufzai horde will be conciliated’. (BN: 375) Although marriage as a political tool was not an innovation introduced by Akbar, what was noteworthy was the scale at which the vast network was established. From 1562 to 1605, Akbar arranged as many as 40 marital alliances for himself, his sons and grandson, of which 17 were Mughal-Rajput marriages. The practice of establishing personal ties with the Rajputs continued after Akbar, although the number of marriages gradually diminished. From 1562 to 1715, 27 Mughal-Rajput marriages were concluded, of which only three took place during Aurangzeb’s reign.127

That Akbar’s political marriages were a means of co-opting the Rajputs into the Mughal system is evident from the fact that the marriages were followed by the concerned rulers joining the Mughal administration. The marriages enabled Akbar to establish direct and personal ties with the ruling families of all Rajput principalities

except Mewar and Bundi. The Kachhwahas of Amber and the Rathores of Jodhpur were exceptions to this practice, as their daughters continued to be married to Mughal emperors and princes generations after their chiefs had first submitted to the emperor.

Akbar’s unorthodox approach is reflected in the numerous marital alliances he established for himself in violation of the stipulated four-marriage norm laid out by Islamic law. The marriages were not only marked by Hindu and Muslim rituals, but the Rajput wives were also allowed to follow their faith after marrying into the Mughal harem. However, orthodoxy began to creep into the marital alliances after Akbar’s reign. Although the Mughal emperors continued to take brides from Rajput families, over time their numbers declined and the religious connotations attached to them also altered. There is a discernible change in the conduct of the marriage during Aurangzeb’s reign when the Rajput brides were expected to convert to Islam prior to their marriage into the Mughal household. Table 4 provides details regarding the patterns and profiles of marital alliances entered into by Mughal rulers.

Table 4:
Marriage Patterns of the Mughal Emperors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Marriages</th>
<th>Irani</th>
<th>Turani</th>
<th>Indian Muslim</th>
<th>Rajputs</th>
<th>Deccani rulers</th>
<th>Not known</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Akbar (31)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jahangir (11)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shahjahan (9)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurangzeb (22)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Husain 1972: 305)

However, keen as the Mughals were in establishing matrimonial ties with the Rajputs, they were mindful of clan considerations, refusing to marry daughters outside the ruling Rajput families. Moreover, the marriages always entailed the Mughal emperor or princes marrying Rajput women but never Mughal women marrying the Rajput chiefs. The
Mughals were particular about marrying their women within the royal family. (Husain 1972: 306-307) The table below gives an overview of marriage patterns among the Mughal emperors. The marital alliances established under Akbar were not only distinct in terms of scale, but also in terms of diversity as they drew brides from more groups than any other succeeding emperor. The period of forging personal relations with various ethnic groups coincided with the initial phase of Mughal expansion and consolidation.

The Rajput Notion of Honourable Service

The prevalence of distinct institutions and practices made certain brotherhoods more internally stratified than the rest, which directly influenced their group behaviour. In relatively undifferentiated brotherhoods, kinship was the key determinant of group politics. The lack of stratification meant that members interacted on equal terms and collectively selected a leader who had nominal authority over the brotherhood. There were other brotherhoods that were marked by a high degree of internal stratification, undercut as they were by the institutions of rulership and clientship.

In contrast to kinship, rulership and clientship rendered a hierarchical and stratified structure to certain brotherhoods. The ruler and client were locked in a symbiotic relationship wherein the client pledged to offer his allegiance and military service to his patron, who in turn bestowed upon his retainer his protection and other favours. Clients took an oath of loyalty, pledging to serve their patron to death even if it entailed fighting their own kinsmen. The obligation to serve emerged from having eaten the salt (lun) of the patron. The patron-client system of military service permeated the Rajput polity and determined the nature of interpersonal relations among the Rajputs. Explaining the immense significance attached to the notion of 'honor' in court societies, Elias writes,

'If such a society refused to recognize a member, if he lost his 'honor', he lost a constitutive element of his personal identity. In reality a noble would often enough risk his life for his 'honor', losing it rather than forfeiting membership of his society, his distinction from the surrounding mass, without which his life, as long as the power of privileged society remained intact, was meaningless.' (Elias 1983: 95)

The Rajput society presents a similar picture of a complex web of interpersonal relations upon which the personal identities of its members was based. The notions of honourable
service and personal allegiance to the ruler were deeply embedded in local Rajput culture.

As Zeigler observes,

‘In understanding medieval Rajput cultural conceptions of rank, power and sovereignty, it is important to note that the Muslim was also included within this hierarchical scheme as a Rajput... [The] category of ‘Muslim’ within the Rajput jati does not include all Muslims but only those who were warriors and who possessed sovereignty and power equal to or greater than the Hindu Rajput. ...Within Hindu Rajput cultural conceptions, Hindu Rajput service for the Mughal emperor or one of his subordinates was thus no different from service for a local ruler or thakur.’128 (Ziegler 1998: 202)

Since the patron-client relationship was essentially an unequal one, the Mughals married the Rajput women but never gave their daughters in marriage to Rajput princes. Complementary military cultures brought both material and ideational benefits to the Mughal and Rajputs. Mughal military ethos was not only identifiable to the Rajputs but it also brought them rewards in terms of land grants and high administrative posts.

**Co-optation through Normative Reorientation**

Mughal intervention led to a restructuring of Rajput social relations by playing up different facets of Rajput identity, and prompted a ‘shift in ideology’ from corporate egalitarianism to hierarchy. An expanding empire meant greater benefits, and as Rajput stakes in the empire increased, the traditional notions of self-sacrifice as the highest form of service began to lose much of its original appeal. The norm of salvation through continued loyal service was favoured for its perceived compatibility with the privileges of high Mughal rank and land rights. (Gommans 2002: 56)

Normative significance began to be attached to the relative possession of sovereignty as the Rajput society made a transition from an egalitarian order to a more hierarchised system of administration. Rajput dharma expected a clan member to both support his brotherhood and display utmost loyalty to his master. Mughal intervention

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128 The transformation of Akbar’s image in the popular Rajput imagination is evident from the following verse composed by a poet in praise of Akbar.

‘O Akbar, the son of Humayun, you clear my doubts that whose incarnation you are? ... Your charisma is beyond (the understanding) of a Jogi, you are not human being but certainly a great incarnation. O Lord of Delhi... tell me who you are out of the four Lakshman, Arjun, Ram and Krishna?’ (Cited in Bhandari 1992: 53)
highlighted the latent contradictions that lay in these mutually inconsistent principles. The Mughal intervention in settling succession issues within clans and the support it extended to loyal Rajput subordinates through land grants and rewards consolidated the position of a privileged few over others within the clan. As the patron-client dyadic relations gained strength and brotherhoods disintegrated, Rajputs in control of land sought to transform kinship ties into relations of service. For instance, Rao Maldeo who ruled over Marwar in mid-sixteenth century, attempted to modify this collegial nature of clan structure by introducing changes that rendered it more hierarchical. An assertion of his authority was reinforced by accompanying attempts at reducing the clout of sardars and relegating them to the position of subordinates to the clan ruler. Sardars could now command control of lands only upon the approval of the ruler and not on the basis of their hereditary claims. To further emphasise their dependence on the ruler, Maldeo began parcelling out land as pattas (land revenue grants) to loyalists in return for their compliance. The changes introduced by Maldeo served to make the clan structure vertical in terms of decision-making and control over clan territories, although it proved to be fragile as the disgruntled sardars rose up in rebellion after his death. (Sharma 1975: 160-62)

Another indication that the Rajputs were imbibing the Mughal court culture was the increased bureaucratisation of local administration. Written deeds became the basis of legitimate claim to land under Mughals. Notably, the system was first introduced in Jodhpur, whose ruler was closely associated with the Mughals. Gradually, procedures came to be more bureaucratised and formalised in Rajput kingdoms- a visible impact of the Rajput association with the Mughals. A gradual shift was also discernible in the Rajput military ethos as a result of Rajput participation in battles alongside the Mughal armies. The traditional mode of war fighting involving man-to-man combat on foot declined, as a Rajput soldier was increasingly expected to engage in combat on horseback.

Thus one can discern how Rajput notions of honour began to undergo a marked shift, as their participation in an increasingly ritualised and formalised Mughal court intensified. In return for their military service, the Mughals assigned land grants to the Rajputs and thus joining the Mughal service came to be seen as opening up access to land
outside Rajasthan. To the Rajput, loyalty to the master constituted the supreme virtue. Rajput tradition dictated that service to one’s patron was akin to worship, and the sacrifice of one’s life was the ultimate test of loyalty. As B.L. Bhadani notes,

‘Sacrifice of life in the battlefield by the Rajput chiefs and of their contingents was considered as the highest expression of their loyalty to their master, Akbar....Sacrificing life in the battlefield for his master became a major mark of merit in contemporary Rajasthani literature.’ (Bhadani 1992: 49)

The Rajasthani bardic literature refers to Akbar in lofty terms, addressing him as shriji, nath and chhatrapati. The emperor, portrayed in positive light even in his victory against Rana Pratap, is depicted as an incarnation of Hindu gods possessing godly qualities of Rama and Krishna. Richards observes that

‘[b]y the seventeenth century, after Akbar’s initiatives, the Mughal emperors had come to be regarded as essentially Rajputs. Indeed, in some local traditions, the Mughal emperor was equated with Rama himself.’ (Richards 1984: 267)

In the bardic poetry, Akbar’s territorial expansion is not portrayed as a threat but justified using mythical analogy in terms of Lord Indra’s assurance to the gods that the emperor would not invade their domains. The elevation of Akbar’s status to that of a Hindu god carried significant import, in that it behove the Rajputs to heed to the moral duty of obeying his orders. (Bhadani 1992: 50) The impression that Akbar’s conquests were not to the detriment of Rajput interests; indeed, he had received divine assurance is significant for the acceptance of his legitimate right to rule over their lands. What is also noteworthy is that in the depiction of the historic battle between Rana Pratap and Akbar, neither is glorified or vilified in entirety. Both are shown to be faithful to their call of duty (dharma) and their confrontation is likened to the fight between the mythical heroes and brothers, Karan and Arjun. In victory, Akbar is shown to be appreciative of the gallant Rana, who is glorified as the keeper of Rajput chivalry. (Bhadani 1992: 47-48)

This kind of normative reorientation to the reality of Mughal domination is evident in the local literature of other kingdoms as well. A good example would be the princely state of Orcha in modern day Madhya Pradesh, whose encounter with Mughal power produced pejorative literary images that eventually grew benign with the gradual acceptance of the emperor’s supremacy. Allison Busch explores three works in historical
poetry by seventeenth century poet Kesavdas to trace the altered perceptions of Mughal power in Orcha that had come under its sway. The first historical poem (*Ratnabavani*) written in the context of Orcha’s defeat in the hands of Akbar in 1570s, valorises Prince Ratnasena in his futile efforts to repel the Mughals who are portrayed as the reviled ‘Turks’ and ‘Mlecchas’. The second work (*Vrisimhdevcarit*) written in 1607 is set within the context of court intrigue in both the Orcha and Mughal political orders, and results in the forging of a new alliance between the respective claimants to power. Derogatory connotations attached to ‘Turks’ now give way to more blurred and nuanced notions of righteousness and villainy, characterised by the shifting sympathies of the poet. The passage in which Kesavdas dwells on Akbar’s anguish over the murder of Fazl by the Orcha prince at the behest of his rebellious son Salim is particularly striking. In the third historical poem (*Jahangirjascandrika*), the image of the virtuous Hindu king is eventually transposed on the persona of the Mughal emperor, Jahangir. While on the one hand, Jahangir is ‘Hinduised’ by his comparison to Raghubira and Rama (allegories employed in praise of the ideal Hindu king), the work itself is ‘Mughalised’ through the conscious use of Perso-Arabic vocabulary, signifying the cultural acceptance of the Mughals. (Busch 2005: 35-49) Busch rejects the interpretation that the change in imageries occurred on account of shift in power balances, arguing instead that the later literary responses reflected an increasing recognition and inclusion of the Mughals within the matrix of local cultural identities. It is imperative, she argues, to examine the cultural context which impelled

‘...Kesavdas to construct images of the Mughal emperor in terms of this Sanskrit-derived symbolic repertoire of kingship that stemmed back perhaps two millennia in *kavya* and public *prasastis* (panegyric). The historically important point is that for this regional Braj author, in the year 1612, Mughal rule had become fully routinized, and was entirely comprehensible within the traditional Sanskritic episteme of Hindu dharma and kingship. And this was a marked departure from how the Mughals were perceived just 30 years prior in Kesavdas’s first work, the *Bavani*, where they were hated interlopers.’ (Busch 2005: 47)

The changing metaphors employed for the Mughal emperor in Kesavdas’ poems signify the gradual shift that occurred in Rajput perceptions. The initial sense of suspicion and hostility among the Rajputs gave way to a more accommodative and sympathetic perspective that reflected an acceptance of the Mughals as one of their kind. The altered
perceptions were the result of a coherent imperial ideology that was notable for its rhetoric of accommodation, a subject that will be the focus of our study in the next section.

**Imperial Ideology: The Rhetoric of Accommodation**

Historically, conquest and the establishment of imperial rule were justified in terms of some grand objective and were often regarded as a mark of the king’s virility. Justification of conquest in moral terms was not a novel strategy. Philip II desiring status-quo in the neighbourhood, had declared that, ‘I would very much like to justify my actions to the whole world and show that I do not lay claim to other states.’ He further asserted that ‘God is my witness that I have never made war to gain more kingdoms, but only to maintain them in the [Catholic] faith and in peace.’ (Parker 1992: 5-6) Likewise, while Mahmud of Ghazni attributed religious significance to his plunder of the subcontinent, Babur claimed India to be the land of his ancestors. With the accession of Akbar, there is a discernible shift in the motive of conquest for the Mughals. Conquest for the first time was legitimised in terms of justice and good governance. It implied the establishment of a just order and his rule was portrayed as the manifestation of peace and harmony for his subjects. (Mukhia 2005: 50) Conquest thus came to be seen as a means towards the establishment of a just system rather than an end in itself.

Accordingly in strategic terms, this implied the justification of the use of force as a means of accommodation. This was in evidence in the conquest of Malwa, which marked the advent of the Mughal empire’s expansion under Akbar. As a ruler seeking to establish his hegemony, Akbar sought to justify Malwa’s invasion on the basis of righteousness. Malwa’s ruler, Baz Bahadur was portrayed as a tyrannical and unjust ruler who engaged in ‘unlawful and vicious practices’. Nizamuddin Ahmed justified Akbar’s conquest on the grounds that Baz Bahadur

‘...had no care of (sic) his kingdom. For this reason the arms of tyrants and oppressors had become long on faqirs and on the poor, and...the greater part of the people were stricken almost to death by the hand of his tyranny’.129 (Cited in Chandra 1999: 103)

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129 Nizamuddin Ahmed was a bakshi in Akbar’s court.
The moral justification of the conquest that was couched in the rhetoric of righteous rule thus cast Akbar in the role of a liberator. It is important to note that the rhetoric at no point invoked religious principles to justify the invasion, but instead projected Akbar as the upholder of ‘secular’ universal virtues of justice. The legitimisation of intervention on moral grounds was a crucial step in the establishment of Akbar’s hegemonic order.

The Chittor siege in 1567-68 presents a study in contrast. The justification of the attack was marked by religious undertones. Chittor, the capital of the most powerful of Rajput principalities, Mewar, was the largest and most formidable fortress in Hindustan. Mewar had come to be the symbol of Rajput resistance to the Mughals and for this reason, the capture of Chittor held enormous political significance for Akbar. It also explains Akbar’s refusal to accept the personal submission of the Rana. The prolonged siege, which resulted in high Rajput casualties finally ended in the capture of the fort. Angered by the Rajput defiance, Akbar declared jihad against Rana Udai Singh and the massacre that followed killed 30,000 people. (TA: 150) As Streusand notes, ‘Akbar’s victory at Chittor was the first Mughal success against a major fortress and the only instance of conquest of a major fortress by storm in Mughal history’. (Streusand 1989: 57) The justification of the siege was laden with religious rhetoric contained in the Fatahnama that Akbar issued following the conquest. As against the Malwa case where Akbar was portrayed as a king moved by universal principles, the Chittor conquest projected him as a ruler who was implementing a religious sanction. Akbar was projected as being both, the upholder of the universal order and the destroyer of infidels, an all encompassing image that he fostered through his ‘ideology of paternalism’.

‘The Ideology of Paternalism’

All state policies had to be brought in line with Akbar’s grand strategy of accommodation, and accordingly his imperial ideology became the primary means in its pursuit. Inconsistencies and contradictions were ironed out so that every institution of the Mughal state apparatus became an extension and reflection of Akbar’s vision. Given the eclectic nature of the Indian ruling elite and the massive military manpower it commanded, Akbar had to devise a strategy to co-opt and not exclude the regional
powers, and that inclusive and universal strategy came to be the ‘ideology of paternalism’. Father Monserrate observed of Akbar,

'It is hard to exaggerate how accessible he makes himself to all those who wish audience with him. For he creates an opportunity almost everyday for any of the common people or of the nobles to see him and to converse with him; and he endeavours to show himself pleasant-spoken and affable rather than severe toward all who come to speak with him. It is very remarkable how great an effect this courtesy and affability has in attaching to the minds of his subject.' (Monserrate 1922: 197)

Fazl was well aware that he had to formulate a theory of sovereignty that at once set Akbar apart from his subjects, his predecessors and his contemporary rulers and at the same time incorporated all. In short, he had to devise a theory that informed his master’s mission and couched his military conquests in moral rhetoric. Fazl observes in the Ain,

'Just as spiritual leadership requires a regulated mind, capable of controlling covetousness and wrath, so does political leadership depend on an external order of things, on the regulation of the difference among men in rank, and the power of liberality. (AA, I: 168)

Fazl carefully crafted the image of Akbar as the Universal Man along the lines of the Sufi thinker Ibn al-Arabi’s conception of the Perfect Man. In that endeavour, Akbar went beyond the traditional role envisaged of the king in Islamic kingship, and as Streusand points out,

'Akbar’s claim to be a spiritual teacher strengthened the perception that he was neither a Muslim nor a Hindu. For Badauni, and for later Shariah-minded Muslims, Akbar’s programme removed him from the category of Muslim sovereign and constituted political apostasy.' (Streusand 1999: 151)

Fazl’s elevation of Akbar to a distinct position as ‘the emanation of God’s light’ or the extension of the divine force approximates the status of the king within Hindu kingship. A shift away from the position of a Muslim king towards his Hindu counterpart is discernible in Fazl’s articulation of Akbar’s authority. Fazl’s universalism was not dichotomous, in that it was not posited against an outside entity. A universal order did not envisage a relentless war against the infidels but instead sought the attainment of harmonious balance within. Gommans notes that ‘(t)he most interesting aspect of Akbar’s sovereign cult was ... not the tendency to emphasise the exclusive position of the
Mughals, but its almost all-inclusive capacity to incorporate all those willing to serve 'them.' (Gommans 2002: 56) Indeed, the intertwined nature of the personal and the political realms of kings figures early in Elias’ book *The Court Society*. The phenomenon of 'court society', signifying the inextricable link between the imperial court and the society over which it presides, emerged in history with a militarily and politically ascendant state.

In contrast, Philip II institutionalised this dichotomy by constructing two separate domains. The nucleus of his administration comprised of over 4000 people, consisting of officials, staff and their accompanying families. The unwieldy number was a hindrance to mobility and made Philip to locate his government machinery in Madrid in 1561. His rather public and ostentatious court was in sharp contrast to his more informal reclusive retreats where he would retire to occasionally. (Parker 1992: 17) The Valecian royal councillor Fadrique Furio Ceriol noted in 1559,

'Every prince is made up, as it were, of two persons: the first, the natural person, is fashioned by the hands of nature and as such is given the same essence as other human beings. The other is a gift of fortune and the favour of heaven, created to govern and protect the public good, for which reason we call it the public person... Each and every prince may therefore be considered in two distinct ways: as a man and as a sovereign.' (Cited in Parker 1992: 17)

Fazl’s formulation of universalism blended with Akbar’s grand strategy of accommodation. Akbar realised that the Mughal state could not be accommodationist and theocratic at the same time. A theocracy in its orthodox functioning is often unyielding towards minority communities under its rule. Religion becomes the primary referent as the state seeks to sustain its religious identity through conversions and the implementation of religious laws. However, historically Islamic power in South Asia has focused on the extension of territorial control rather than on intensification through conversion. The fact that the Muslim populations were not concentrated around the central areas of Muslim control was indicative of the absence of state-run conversion programme under either the Sultanate rulers or the Mughals. (Metcalf and Metcalf 2002: 6)

Akbar realised the need to personalise and secularise his authority so as to appeal to his heterogeneous subjects. As Gordon notes, men were rewarded with 'non-Islamic
symbols' such as 'the personal robes of the Emperor, turban jewels, swords, horses and
decorated quivers, never with Korans'. 130 (Gordon 1994: 190) Although induction into
the Mughal nobility required the assimilation of the court culture, it did not entail
conversion to Islam, 'a phenomenon whose parallel would have been inconceivable under
the Habsburgs... and somewhat difficult under the Ottomans.' (Subrahmanyam 2006: 83)
The Mughal state was not a theocratic state on two critical counts. Firstly, conversion was
not a state policy, and secondly, the Sharia was not the sole basis of jurisprudence.
(Mukhia 2005: 38-40; Ali 1992: 134) Conversion was ordered as a form of punishment to
those guilty of serious crimes, whereby the emperor pardoned death penalty on the
condition that the offender should convert to Islam. Akbar made such an offer to Hemu
after the latter's defeat at Panipat in 1556, one which he rejected and was subsequently
put to death.

Notwithstanding conversion under duress, the Mughal state did not systematically
pursue a policy of proselytisation and non-Muslim officers seldom faced such a
predicament. Moreover, the Sharia was not the sole basis of all laws. The Sharia ruled in
matters pertaining to criminal justice, whereas civil law cases were governed by religious
codes of respective communities. This tendency to resist attributing events to religious
causes was reflected in Mughal historiography as well. Compared to the Sultanate period,
the historians of the Mughal era did not attribute the shortcomings in non-Muslims to
their religious disposition. For instance, a typical description of Hemu in his clash with
Akbar was restricted to branding him as arrogant and haughty, character defects that had
little to do with his status as a non-believer. (Hardy 1983: 170) Summing up on the tenor
of Indo-Persian writings regarding violence, Hardy writes that the notion of the Muslim
ruler as the keeper of peace and stability within the system

'...was embodied in the shari'a of Islam or, as in the work of Abu’l Fazl in
Akbar’s reign, [embodied in] the ruler’s God-endowed perceptions of justice as an
equilibrium between men of different God-given qualities, capacities and needs-

130 Interestingly, the Ain makes no direct reference to Islam, which is referred to as ‘Ahmadi kesh’ or the
Mohammedan doctrine. The term, which Akbar invented, does not figure in any other Persian text, further emphasising
the fact that the emperor had sought to distance himself and his authority from formalised
conceptualisations of all religions. (Ali 1983: 125)
and perhaps of beliefs also. Force is legitimate in the service of the system of values.' (Hardy 1983: 201-202)

Locating the use of force within the larger discourse on righteousness and peace was in keeping with Akbar’s image as the upholder of balance and harmony in society. He consciously sought to elevate his position above particularistic identities, while at the same time seeking to make his persona identifiable to a broad spectrum of society. Among the many measures that aided Akbar in this endeavour, and pursuing which he believed would be for the betterment of his people, was ‘the path of reason’. The subsequent section will look at why Akbar privileged the faculty of reason in his pursuit of peace and stability.

The Path of Reason

Akbar’s military campaigns were portrayed as the progressive realisation of the state of sulh-i kul (absolute peace). Bearing greater affinity to the Sufi and Bhakti sects than to orthodox Islam or Hinduism, sulh-i kul appealed to reason over blind faith. Akbar had asserted that, ‘The pursuit of reason and the rejection of traditionalism are so brilliantly patent as to be above the need of argument.’ (AA III: 179) His recitation of the khutbah in 1579, commonly seen as an assertion of Islamic sovereignty, must be seen in the larger context of his efforts to break away from the orthodoxies of the ulema.131 The contents of the declaration allowed Akbar greater independence in determining matters of religious jurisprudence, traditionally reserved for the caliphs, than being an enforcer of the Sharia would have allowed him. Given that Akbar wished to be released from the encumbrance of heeding to the advice of the ulema, which he found increasingly to be untenable and orthodox, his move to redefine his role in the khutbah reveals a new dimension of his religious policy. Indeed, this overtly religious initiative to break away from religious orthodoxy eventually became the basis for Akbar’s syncretic cult. (Streusand 1999: 118-119)

131 The khutbah also contained the term ‘Allahu Akbar’ which could be interpreted to mean either ‘God is Great’ or that ‘God is Akbar’. The duality was perhaps intentional, since it permitted the allegory of Akbar as God’s prophet, a metaphor that further distanced him from the ulema.
Social strife signified the absence of *sulh-i kul*, and was brought about by blind imitation of practices. Accordingly, if peace and harmony were to be restored, retrograde practices and rituals had to be purged. Thus, convinced of the need for reform, Akbar prohibited *Sati*, condemned child marriage and abolished the *Jizya* tax on non-Muslims stressing that such social ills were contrary to reason. For Akbar,

‘[t]he path of reason (*Rahi Aql*) facilitated dialogue and mediation among various cultures and thereby fostered religious tolerance. Under the patronage of Akbar, discussion involving Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Jains and Parsees were arranged, laying the foundation of a secular Indian state that observed religious neutrality.’ (Sen 2005: 289)

Clearly, reason being a universal attribute was the supreme consideration for Akbar. In a pluralistic setting, reason was to be the unifying force in society, and its pursuit alone could help the emperor achieve a harmonious social balance. Fazl articulates the ideal state of being, in which the principle of reason prevails as the supreme arbiter of differences.

‘The inner and external conflicts should turn into amity, the thorn-bush of enmity and hostility into the garden of friendship and the sounds of reasoned arguments should come forth and an informed assemblage be arranged.’ (Cited in Ali 1997: 223)

Further emphasising the inclusive character of *sulh-i kul*, Jahangir wrote,

‘Let the disciples never make their own time dark and disturbed by the hostility against any religion (*milat*) from amongst the religions; with men of all faiths, let them follow the path of *Sulh-i Kul* (Absolute Peace).’ (Cited in Ali 1983: 127)

Although the underlying spirit of *Din-i Ilahi* and *Sulh-i kul* were the same, namely acknowledging the spiritual supremacy of Akbar and an adherence to reason, the two served very different purposes. *Din-i Ilahi* was to be observed and followed by a select number of disciples who were chosen by the emperor himself, whereas by seeking to put *Sulh-i kul* into practice through his policies, Akbar was in effect articulating the ideational dimension of his grand strategy. *Sulh-i kul* was the ideological extension of Akbar’s strategy of accommodation, wherein conflict was a transient state of affairs and not a perpetual one. Under *Sulh-i kul*, differences were reconciled to achieve the dynamic state of harmony that could be realistically referred to as the successful consolidation of his empire. Savitri Chandra contends that the concept was a reflection of the prevailing
intellectual milieu in which prominent bhakti saints like Tusi and Dadu propounded moderation in their writings. (Chandra 1992: 35) Differentiating between the notions of Din-i Ilahi and Sulh-i kul, Streusand argues, ‘Din-i Ilahi did not replace Islam as Akbar’s sovereign cult; Sulh-i kul (general peace) did.’ (Streusand 1999: 122) As the prevailing normative notion, Sulh-i kul came to inform imperial measures in all areas of royal administration through which it was implemented. (Ali 1983: 127)

By its very nature, accommodation implied limitations on the exercise of power. The challenge that lay before Fazl was that having created an aura of divinity around Akbar, the limitations on his sovereignty could not be attributed to external causes. Since Akbar was projected as a divinely ordained emperor, the constraints on his power were not externally induced but instead were inherent to his capacities. As Mukhia notes,

‘The king’s absolute power then gets circumscribed by the responsibility to establish absolute peace among his subjects through the practice of non-discrimination, and to bring about tranquillity and prosperity through paternalistic care.’ (Mukhia 2005: 52)

Akbar’s responsibility towards his subjects and his goal of ensuring harmony were hence inherently self-limiting.

Fazl’s writings are as much a celebration of loyalty as a virtue, as it is of Akbar’s divine sovereignty. The most virtuous of all are those who have unconditional loyalty to the emperor, whereas the less noble ones are those who seek to draw benefit from their loyal service. The ones who are disloyal and contemptuous of the emperor’s authority are the most condemned rebellions and hence need to be vanquished. (Mukhia 2005: 50) Fazl’s gradation approximates most analyses of power dynamics. While cooperation through socialisation and normative persuasion elicits absolute loyalty, interest-based cooperation is more tactical and prone to vacillation as there is a constant revaluation of gains and losses. Cooperation elicited through purely coercive means is what Fazl refers to as the ‘cleansing operation’ against the rebels. It is the least virtuous of all to Fazl, precisely because it is hardly a cost-effective means of keeping control and hence, the least desirable of all possibilities.
Conclusion

The subjugation and the subsequent enculturation of the Rajput elite point to the successful formulation of hegemonic ideas by Akbar and the consolidation of his empire. The case study serves to demonstrate the fact that the ideational facet of hegemony is as important as the material foundation upon which it is erected. Enhanced Rajput participation in imperial affairs, albeit initially for instrumental reasons, brought about a discernible shift in their value orientations. It attests to the fact that socialisation performs a systemic function, namely that of order maintenance and hence, is not entirely reducible to a materialist understanding of power. The second case study on Mughal relations with the Deccani powers seeks to bring out the fragile balance of power at the empire's fringes, owing to its coercive strategy that was devoid of any cultural appeal.

B. MUGHAL COERCIVE STRATEGY: THE DECCAN CASE STUDY

By the parameters of Mughal hegemony outlined above, the states in the Deccan fell beyond the pale of the thick web of interactions that marked off the areas surrounding the imperial core. The Deccani states were located on the empire's fringes, the contours of which were beginning to emerge from the consolidation process. The sheer distance and the concern of empire building delayed imperial encounters with the southern states. The second case study on the Deccani states would serve to illustrate the working of a coercive strategy within the broad rubric of accommodation. The southward shift in the focus reveals a different set of dynamics in motion wherein the material aspect of Mughal hegemony was predominant and its ideational facet muted to relative insignificance. The Mughal-Deccan encounters could not proceed beyond the initial phase of attacks and retreats and thus, Mughal control whenever gained remained tentative. The distance factor was further compounded by an absence of cultural affinity between the Deccan powers and the Mughals.

As we have seen, complementary value systems had been instrumental in forging long-lasting ties of loyalty with the Rajputs. Similar belief systems facilitated engagement as the hegemonic practices and values that Akbar's strategy of socialisation entailed were identifiable to the Rajputs. In the Rajput case, material aspect of hegemony was reinforced by the ideational aspect to ensure normative persuasion. The Rajput elites
came to accept Mughal domination as legitimate, and the cooperation they extended was not tactical and calculative, but based on normative identification with hegemonic values. Socialisation, by ensuring that the value orientations of the Rajputs were compatible with Akbar’s normative claims, pre-empted the resort to coercion to settle differences. The prerequisite to socialisation, as the previous case study demonstrates, is participation in the hegemonic system which draws in subject actors through a complex web of interactions. Ikenberry and Kupchan rightly note that

‘[t]hrough frequent participation in the institutions erected by the hegemon, elites in secondary states are exposed to and may eventually embrace the norms and value orientations that these institutions embody.’ (Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990: 292)

As the second case study would seek to establish, the Deccan states were not coopted into the military and administrative system as the Rajputs were. Their marginalisation, as the next section will demonstrate, was the function of their peripheral location from the locus of power in the north.

**Distance as a variable in Mughal-Deccan relations**

The primacy of location in the expansion process of empires is corroborated by a number of scholars, albeit from different perspectives. Schwartzberg notes that

‘...many small and medium-sized states have survived over much of Indian history merely by virtue of their remoteness from the contemporary principal centers of political and military power. This is, of course, what accounts for the continuation of [the Deccan states of] Bijapur and Golkonda as independent entities well beyond the time when the Mughals attained pan-Indian status.’ (Schwartzberg 1992: 259)

The pattern of marginalisation that Schwartzberg outlined did not remain merely a matter of geographical disadvantage. Schwartzberg’s geopolitical analysis on the likelihood of certain regions to dominate and of others to submit is corroborated by Gommans’ observation on the areas covered by the imperial perambulations of the Mughals. The radius of approximately 1200 kms from the imperial capital that was covered by the mobile imperial camp roughly coincided with the regions from where pan-Indian and supra-regional powers had historically emerged in the subcontinent. This covered the area that comprised of the north-west region that has historically been the seat of political
power through the major historical periods. Regions such as the south and the north east which fell outside the pale of imperial socialisation were also the ones which witnessed low levels of political activity in terms of the emergence of pan-Indian and supra-regional powers. These regions were brought into the imperial fold relatively late, as the Mughal southward expansion began once the northern and north-western areas around the centre had been secured. Given the nature of the fluctuating boundaries of an expanding empire, the Deccan located at its fringes saw more wars and battles than the pacified core.

Map 5: The Deccan, 1565

Another indicator against which this perspective can be tested is the composition of the Mughal nobility. A look at the geographical representation of the regions brought under Mughal subjugation reveals an imbalance in favour of the core areas. The Rajputs constituted a sizeable chunk of the total number of mansabdars, whereas the Deccan states went largely underrepresented even after they were brought under Mughal control. The Rajputs and other Hindus together made up over 22 per cent of the high ranking nobles within imperial service. (Khan 2001: 30) In contrast, Gordon notes that not even one Maratha was inducted into the mansabdar system between 1600 and 1630, which were the early decades of Mughal forays into the Deccan. (Gordon 1994: 205) The marginalisation of the Marathas from the imperial system was indicative of their peripheral status within the empire as their region was one of the outposts of imperialism in Indian history. The peripheral location was further compounded by the military ethos of the Marathas, who did not share similar belief systems with the Mughals as the Rajputs did.

Deccan history remains an understudied aspect of the Mughal era of expansion, and one of the reasons for this lacuna is the lack of reliable sources on relations between the Mughals and the Deccan Sultanates. The only extensive Mughal account is that of Fazl, which ends with his death in 1602. The subsequent years during which time the Mughals were further drawn into Deccan politics are not sufficiently elaborated even in Deccan chronicles. Deccani sources on the Mughal period are also found to be wanting in this regard. The unavailability of reliable source material has been a major factor behind the understudied nature of the region. Comparatively, Rajput history is much richer in terms of historical accounts available to the researcher and hence it is no surprise that there is far more secondary material available on the Rajputs than on the Deccan powers. Moreover, the paucity of research material has caused discrepancies to creep into accounts on Deccan history, and thus any attempt at tracing the history of the Sultanates has to be approached tentatively. Consequently, the fragments of Mughal relations with the Sultanate kingdoms are pieced together from references in Persian, Deccani and Portuguese literature.

Deccan is referred to in epics like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana as Dakshinapatha, commonly implying the land south of the river Narmada and the Satpura.
range of mountains. Khandesh, as the Tapti region in northern Deccan was known, was
the gateway to the rest of the Deccan peninsula. According to Ferishta, ‘Dakhan the son
of Hind had three sons and the country of Dakhan was divided among them. Their names
are Marath [Maharashtra], Kanhar [Karnataka] and TIlang [Andhra]. At present these
races reside in the Dakhan.’ (Cited in Sherwani 1974: 4) Ahmadnagar was ruled by the
Nizamshahi dynasty, which came into being with Malik Ahmed declaring himself as
Ahmad Nizam Shah Bahri. The removal of the names of the Bahamani rulers from the
khutba and striking coins in his name were evident signs of secession. The history of
Deccan politics is that of incessant strife and fluid alignments, the predominant conflict
being between the Sultanates of Ahmadnagar and Bijapur.

Compared to the Mughal alliance with the Rajputs, the Deccan case study is a
picture in contrast where cooperation was evinced on the sole basis of coercion and the
stabilising element of socialisation was absent in the Mughal efforts to draw the Deccani
states within the empire’s fold. Schwartzberg notes that

‘... in subjugating the last significant Deccani states, the overextended Mughal
power became unable to counter effectively the rising military threat of the
Marathas and subsequently to maintain the allegiance of ambitious provincial
governors, especially those on the periphery of the empire.’ (Schwartzberg 1992:
259)

The lack of normative persuasion is evident in the constant realignments of Mughal-
Deccan power configuration. The political fluidity is typical of a system in which the
actors base their allegiances solely on calculated interest rather than on perceptions of
legitimate dominance. Thus, the picture that begins to emerge is of shifting alliances in
the Deccan that were tactical responses to changes in the military balance of power. As a
result, Mughal rule on the southern fringes remained tenuous and was constantly
negotiated. However, before analysing the nature of Mughal forays in the Deccan, it
would be instructive to look at a brief history of the region and its key players.

The Material Setting
The five Deccan states emerged from the ruins of the first Muslim state in Deccan
history, the Bahmani kingdom. Established in the fourteenth century, the Bahmanids
ruled for over a century before it began to disintegrate under Sultan Muhammad Shah IV.
The first to break away were Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Berar in 1490, followed by Bidar and finally, Golconda in 1518. The territories of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda were contiguous with their adjoining linguistic domains of Marathi, Kannada and Telugu. The Faruqis of Khandesh, which was situated on the northern part of the Deccan region outlasted the Bahmanis and survived through the sixteenth century. The fractured region was prone to instability and conflict, as was evident from the fluctuating allegiances and intrigues that characterised relations among the Deccan Sultanates. However, discernable patterns of role-playing emerge from the apparently chaotic political scenario. For instance, the central conflict was between two key adversaries, Bijapur and Ahmadnagar. The rest of the regional players were arranged around this particular dyad. While Golconda attempted to maintain a political balance between the two rivals, Bidar sought to secure itself by playing off the two. For his reputation to instigate the Deccan rulers against one another and foment trouble, Amir Barid who ruled Bidar came to be known as the ‘Fox of the Deccan’ (Joshi 1974: 318)

The Cultural Context
The Hindu and Muslim monarchs who reigned over the Deccan were structurally similar in their functioning. Their centralised mode of functioning could be attributed to a host of factors unique to the region. The Deccan witnessed intermittent warfare among the Sultanates which viewed one another with mutual suspicion. The powers were engaged in a set of shifting alliances that rendered the political climate in the region fluid and uncertain. Regional instability was further compounded by the collective awareness of their vulnerability to attack from northern India. Furthermore, according to the kingship theory, the position of the ruler was lower only to that of the lord. The moral force of the theory which expected the people to obey him provided the Sultans with a strong basis of legitimacy and social acceptance. The conjunction of these factors enabled the monarch to rule with a firm hand in the Deccan.

Since the king was seen as the representative of God on earth, his coronation was loaded with religious significance. The religious leaders appointed the ruler and also played an instrumental role in settling succession disputes. Their support to the Sultan was considered invaluable in aiding him to gain legitimacy among contending factions
and the masses. Usually, succession issues were determined along religious and racial lines, and outcomes based on these tended to be both stable and lasting. However, times of transition from one regime to another saw brief periods of fluidity when contending religious and racial identities vied for power and precipitated the downfall of an established order. An illustrative example would be the rebellion of the five Bahamani governors belonging to diverse backgrounds, paving the way for the downfall of the Bahamani kingdom and the establishment of the five successor states in the Deccan. (Sherwani 1974a: 478-479)

Irrespective of their religious persuasions, the Deccani rulers were careful in observing the religious codes that laid down the prerogatives and duties of the king. Texts such as the Quran and the Vedas were seen as sources of legitimacy and adherence to these assured the kings of popular support. Eliciting cooperation through the observance of the sacred was a common practice in the Deccan and is akin to such similar exercises that Mughal rulers carried out, albeit on a larger scale. The Deccan states were structured on the lines of the institutions of the Delhi Sultanate, although they came to develop strong religious ties with the Abbasid Khalifas. George Michell and Mark Zebrowski noted that the 'Deccani kings perceived the Safavid state as the source of their own legitimacy and the Sunni Mughal empire as their enemy.' (Michell and Zebrowski 1999:2) The Deccani powers were splinter states that emerged from the downfall of the Bahamani empire, which had itself broken away from the Tughlaq empire through a successful rebellion to its power in the Deccan. (Sherwani 1974a: 474) Although the Deccani states were predominantly Islamic, their rulers often belonged to different religious dispositions. For instance, whereas the Bahamani kingdom, Berar and Bidar were Sunni by disposition, the rulers of Bijapur, Ahmadnagar and Golconda followed the Shia faith, although the early years saw Ahmadnagar and Bijapur follow Sunni persuasion. (Sherwani 1974a: 483) That the 'learned divines' cast considerable influence on the religious disposition of the Sultans is evident from the conversion of Nizamshahi ruler Burhan from Sunni to Shia faith at the instance Shah Tahir. The Deccani states were ridden with factionalism, particularly between the Dakhni and the Afaq nobles. The tensions were further compounded by the fact that the two factions were divided on the
religious issue, with Dakhni nobles following the Sunni sect and the Afaqis being of Shia disposition.

The Middle Eastern culture had a deep impact on the Deccani culture, and its distinct elements set it off from the Islamic culture that developed in North India. Cultural affinities with the Middle East that resulted from centuries of prolonged interaction through saints, merchants and soldiers, are reflected in the architectural marvels and artistic works of the Deccan. Art as a medium of cultural expression brings out the contrasting cultural dispensations that were celebrated in Mughal and Deccani courts, which are highlighted by art historian Zebrowski;¹³²

'Few Deccani paintings record historical events or realistically portray their subjects as Mughal art does. Nor was there much interest in the thrills of the hunt, court ceremonial or Hindu ritual, favourite Rajasthani themes. Instead, princely portraits predominate which aim to establish a gently lyrical atmosphere, often one of quiet abandon to the joys of love, music, poetry or just the perfume of a flower,... We are admitted into a private world of feeling...[and] rarely do we see an army on the march. Reflection and reverie triumph over dramatic action.' (Zebrowski 1983: 10)

Part of the influence also had to do with the ties that the Deccani dynasties claimed with the region, either on religious or ancestral grounds The Adil Shah dynasty of Bijapur traced familial ties to the Ottoman dynasty of Istanbul, whereas Golconda’s Qutb Shahis were descendants of Turkman princes who fled Iran during the fifteenth century. Safavid Persia’s influence increased with the capture of Iran in 1501, and with it the prominence on the Middle East, in fact, seems to have informed many aspects of Deccani culture. The sultans identified with Iranian and Turkish rulers, adopting their ceremonial practices and patterns of patronage. The ethnic composition of the Deccan was the result of sustained contacts with the Middle East, with large and influential communities of Turks, Persians, Arabs and Africans.' (Michell and Zebrowski 1999: 2)

Despite their avowed allegiance to the Sharia, the Deccani states were not exclusionist in practice. Non-Muslims not only filled the rank and file of the state

¹³² Mughal art drew on the influences of European style, evident from the painting of St. Matthew by Kesu Das in 1588 in which the subject and the motifs used are distinctly European. Indeed, European art became one of the significant benchmarks against which Mughal skills were gauged. (Beach 1992: 55) For more on European influences on Mughal court culture, see Burke 2005: 59-63.
administration, but also occupied important positions in the political system. Hindus were left free to practice their religion without state control. Indeed, the Brahmins received state favours in terms of appointments to high offices and as advisors on matters of astrological significance. The force and legitimacy of local customs was acknowledged by the Deccan Sultans who did not attempt to interfere in their influence and pull. In matters of civil law, the state did not impose the Sharia on the Hindu populace who were free to observe the Shastras. However, the state intervened in the case of criminal law, the application of which saw little discrimination on religious grounds. The Sultan was also not seen to be above the laws laid down by the Sharia, and all Deccan rulers persevered to adhere to its tenets to the extent possible. (Sherwani 1974a: 490-93)

The Politics in the Deccan

The Bahmani kingdom, control over which had been wrested by the governor of Bidar, gradually disintegrated into five successor states over a span of 25 years. Ahmadnagar was the first to cede from the Bahmani kingdom after overcoming the army sent by Bidar and Bijapur. The new Sultanate born under Ahmad Nizam al-Mulk adopted the Shia faith. Ahmadnagar was to later align itself with Golconda and Vijayanagar against Bijapur. Following the conquest of Berar in 1574, Murtaza I (1565-88) continued his campaign to the north in Khandesh, where his march ended with an encounter with the Mughal forces in 1586. In an effort to gain a foothold in the Deccan, Akbar extended support to Murtaza’s successor, Burhan II (1591-5). The annexation of Berar to the Mughal empire in 1596 was a precursor to the eventual integration of Ahmadnagar itself in 1600. Both forays into Ahmadnagar took advantage of the political instability and court intrigue that plagued the Nizam Shahi dynasty. (Michell and Zebrowski 1999: 11)

Yusuf Adil Khan established the Deccani state of Bijapur in 1490 when the Bahmani governor declared rebellion on the declining kingdom. Yusuf concluded a marriage alliance with the son of the Bahmani ruler, Mahmud Shah in a bid to gain in influence over the other Deccan Sultanates. However, in 1503 the Deccan states of Ahmadnagar and Golconda aligned against Bijapur under the leadership of Qasim Barid of Bidar. Berar’s efforts at averting war in the Deccan paid off when it succeeded in convincing Yusuf to retract from his new religious policy of following Shi’ism. The
spectre of a similar alliance formation against the other two Deccani states at the instance of Bidar deterred Ahmadnagar and Golconda from continuing to support the possible confrontation. Yusuf's death in 1510 resulted in the recapture of Goa by the Portuguese who had been steadily gaining a foothold in coastal Deccan since their arrival by sea in 1498. The Portuguese were aware of their strong bargaining position against Bijapur which like the other Deccan Sultanates did not possess naval powers to match their prowess. The assumption of power by Ismail Adil Khan ended the influence that the Dakhani faction of nobles wielded, and with that the state reverted to Shia faith. (Joshi 1974: 299-307)

The death of the last Bahmani ruler in 1538 ended the notional allegiance that Bijapur owed to him. Ibrahim Adil Shah as the new ruler of Bijapur signalled a shift not only in terms of the assumption of full sovereign powers over his state, but also a reversal of the religious policies of his predecessors with the establishment of Sunni practices. However, Bijapur's change of faith was preceded by a similar move in Ahmadnagar, in this case to Shi'ism. The conflicting religious inclinations further exacerbated political tensions between the two states. Although Ahmadnagar managed to scuttle Bijapur's plan to carve up its territory among Gujarat, Khandesh and Bijapur, the attempt worsened an already vitiated atmosphere.

Burhan Nizam Shah of Ahmadnagar was not satisfied with the compromise he had arrived at with Ibrahim, and soon set about forming a counter-alliance in 1543 with Vijayanagar, Golconda and Bidar. The military attack left Bijapur with little choice but to cede Sholapur to Ahmadnagar in return for cessation of hostilities. (Joshi 1974: 319) The cold response Ahmadnagar's envoy received at the court of the new ruler Ali Barid angered Burhan who took control of three Baridi forts including one at Qandhar in 1545. The wresting of Baridi forts brought Bijapur to its aid but was repeatedly repulsed by Burhan's forces. Burhan's death in 1553 resulted in a change in the political scenario in the Deccan, as Vijayanagara shifted allegiance from Ahmadnagar to Bijapur. However, new rulers were at the helm of affairs as Ibrahim's death in 1558 brought a succession change in Bijapur as well. From 1559, the combined forces of Bijapur and Vijayanagar fought Ahmadnagar for three years which received help from Golconda and Berar intermittently.
The Deccan Sultanates came together to form a confederacy against Vijayanagar, which they realised was playing up one Sultan against the other to make territorial gains for itself. In 1564, Ahmadnagar took the initiative, and through an envoy to Bijapur suggested a marital alliance between Husain Nizam Shah’s daughter Chand Bibi and Ali Adil Shah. The alliance was to be further reinforced by another marriage between Ali's sister and Husain's son. Ahmadnagar agreed to give Sholapur in dowry to Bijapur upon the solemnisation of the marriage between the two families. Husain had already got the approval of Golconda and when Bidar also extended its support to the confederacy, Vijayanagar found itself beleaguered by the rest. The weddings sealed the pact between the Sultans who mobilised their forces for war against Vijayanagar soon after.

In the battle of Bannihatti in 1565, the combined might of the Sultanates defeated the Vijayanagari forces that marked the end of its ruler, Ramaraj’s reign. Ahmadnagar and Bijapur came together once more against another adversary who had wrested their territorial assets- the Portuguese. The assault proved futile and Bijapur which had laid siege on Goa was forced to conclude a peace pact with the Portuguese in 1571. Subsequent treaties allowed Bijapur to conduct sea trade through Goa upon the payment of the stipulated customs. (Joshi 1974: 333-34) Bijapur and Ahmadnagar entered into a pact of non-interference, whereby Adil Shah could pursue his expansionist policy in Karnatak on the assurance that Ahmadnagar would remain neutral in the ensuing struggle. In return, Ahmadnagar was assured by Bijapur that it would not come in the way of the annexation of Bidar and Berar. Although Ahmadnagar managed to seize Berar, its ruler Murtaza Nizam Shah was assassinated in 1580 before it could annex Bidar.

The Mughal Initiatives in the Deccan

Although the initial Mughal forays into Deccan were tentative in nature, the peace initiatives in the region came early in Akbar's reign. Having consolidated his position in the north, he turned his attention to the south in 1564. Strategically, the southward turn was only inevitable given the fact that Akbar was keen on securing access to the Gujarat ports as well as countering the growing threat of an expanding Portuguese power. The solemnisation of a marital alliance with the ruler of Khandesh was the first step for Akbar
in that direction, following which he sent his envoys to the Deccan. In 1575, the Mughal envoy was granted an audience with Ali Adil Shah who, upon hearing of the diplomatic overtures, despatched his representative to the Mughal court offering his submission.

The Mughal role was tactical in the early phase, intervening to settle the succession issue in Ahmadnagar. Akbar intervened on the behalf of Burhan in the succession struggle that ensued after the assassination of his brother Murtaza Nizam Shah in 1588. Akbar sought to utilise the opportunity to establish a stable link with Ahmadnagar by inducting Burhan into the Mughal nobility as a mansabdar in 1584. However, even as Mughal involvement in Deccan affairs increased, the policy did not veer off the course of accommodation. This is evident from the fact that even after Ahmadnagar was annexed to the Mughal empire in 1600, Akbar did not formally declare either its annexation or the end of the Nizamshahi dynasty that had ruled over the erstwhile kingdom. Moreover, the earliest expeditions to the southern states were not military expeditions that reflected a confrontationist approach. Rather, Akbar's diplomatic missions were indicative of the willingness to accommodate the Sultanate states within the imperial fold provided they submitted to his authority. The annexation of Ahmadnagar did not see the Mughals launch a full-scale offensive against the rest of the Deccan kingdoms. It was followed by diplomatic missions to the neighbouring kingdoms of Golconda and Bijapur, assuring them of Akbar's intention to maintain the delicate balance of power in the Deccan.

Having secured the submission of Bijapur, Akbar sent diplomatic envoys to the other Deccan powers as well. His envoys reached Khandesh, Ahmadnagar, Hyderabad and Bijapur in 1591, the last mission supposed to return with a reiteration of support that Ali Adil Shah had pledged towards the end of his reign. The diplomatic missions returned two years later with rejections from all courts. Although Akbar decided to launch a military offensive in the Deccan to compel them into submission, he delegated the responsibility to Prince Daniyal. Of all the Deccan powers, Ahmadnagar proved to be the most vulnerable due to internal factionalism that had arisen to challenge the authority of Chand Bibi. (Sherwani 1974b: 274) It was but natural for the Mughal prince to begin by attacking Ahmadnagar which urgently sought the help of Bijapur and Golconda.
battle of Sonpat took place in 1597 in which despite initial reversals, the Mughal forces managed to beat back the combined forces of the three Deccan powers.

Due to internal differences in the military command, the Mughal forces failed to capitalise on their victory and the Deccan states were spared from annexation to the empire. However, the battle made Golconda and Bijapur realise that their power was ineffective against the military might of the Mughals. Although both decided to send peace envoys to Akbar’s court, they stopped short of offering complete submission. The emissaries were meant to ensure that the Deccan states did not get assimilated into the empire, a motivation that explains their disinterest in recognising the suzerainty of the Mughals. Thus, although Mughal forays into the Deccan were initially tentative in nature, these were not devoid of territorial ambitions. The relentless attacks on Ahmadnagar were meant to compel it to cede with Berar which it had annexed to its own territories. Although Ahmadnagar submitted to Mughal rule and Berar was ceded by Chand Bibi in 1596, relations between the imperial court and Ahmadnagar remained strained till 1600 when finally Ahmadnagar was annexed to the Mughal empire. Golconda was forced to submit to Mughal supremacy in 1636 and consequently, Sunni faith was declared as the state religion. The dynastic rule of the Qutb Shahis eventually ended with the capture and death of Abul Hasan in 1687. (Michell and Zebrowski 1999: 18) Mughal advances into the Deccan were also viewed with unease by the Portuguese. Their suspicions of Akbar’s southern ventures is evident from Vidigueira’s comment after the death of Burhan,

‘...there arose such a division in the Kingdom that Equebar profiting from this facility has subjected most of it, which would not have happened nor would the Mughal have attempted it had the King Melique [Burhan Nizam Shah II of Ahmadnagar] been alive...’(Cited in Subrahmanyam 1998: 177)

Akbar attempted to infuse greater stability in Mughal-Deccan relations by using means that had been successful with the Rajputs. Marital alliances in conjunction with other instruments of socialisation had been enormously successful in transforming interest-based cooperation into normative support, thereby securing the lasting loyalty of the Rajputs. In order to convince Akbar of his intentions, Ibrahim Adil Shah, the ruler of the most powerful Deccan state of Bijapur offered his daughter in a marital alliance to Prince Daniyal. By accepting the proposal in 1604, Akbar attempted to replicate the
success of incorporating the Rajputs with the Deccan states. However, the mission to the "Deccan remained incomplete due to the long absence of the Mughal envoy to the region who failed to report to the court for extended periods of time. (Joshi 1974: 344-45) In 1605, although a new diplomatic mission was sent to the Sultanates, it proved ineffective as Akbar died before any arrangement could be put in place in the region. Akbar’s designs of conquering the Deccan remained unrealised and it fell upon his son, Jahangir to bring the region under the Mughal banner.

However, the lack of other institutionalised means of enculturation led to the failure of these isolated cases of cooperative ventures. This was compounded by Daniyal’s untimely death that terminated the nascent marital alliance Akbar had established with Bijapur. Thus, it was no surprise that the Mughals never got a chance to consolidate their position in Deccan. Sanjay Subrahmanyam called the Deccan campaigns as the ‘true war of attrition’ that tested the limits of Mughal accommodation. (Subrahmanyam 1998: 172) The sheer distance of the Deccan region from the centre had compelled Akbar to delay sending any mission there, although he had been toying with the idea from 1577. Materially and hence, militarily campaigns would have meant a long haul from where the seat of power was. Unlike Rajputana which was more accessible given its proximity to the centre, Deccan lay outside the imperial pale. Any attempt to draw the states into the empire's fold would have meant stretching the supply lines too far. Hence, distance as a factor played an important role in delaying the southward move till the 1590s.

The Ideational Aspect of Mughal-Deccan Relations
The material setting was further compounded by the absence of cultural affinity between the Mughals and the Sultanate kingdoms of the nature that the Mughals shared with the Rajputs. The Rajput principalities experienced a whole array of modes of enculturation and came to accept Mughal rule as legitimate, as it sought to base itself on identifiable sources of authority. Marital alliances, induction into the nobility, contact and familiarity through the mobile imperial camp were some of the instruments through which the Mughal state asserted its authority over the Rajputs, and were constant reminders of its power. Cultural affinity enabled instrumental cooperation to be transformed into
normative persuasion that infused greater predictability into their interpersonal relations. This degree of stability was never achieved with the Deccan states.

By a number of indicators, the Deccan was marginalised from the imperial processes of socialisation. For instance, the perambulations of the imperial camp did not extend to the outer reaches of the empire. The power projection capabilities of the Mughal state were confined to areas around the centre and hence, a potent mode of display of the grandeur and might of the empire could not be employed in the distant Deccan. Moreover, for the Deccan nobility the Mughal state did not offer lucrative positions within its mansabdari system. A look at the composition of the Mughal nobility would reveal the low representation of officials from the Deccan. (Gordon 1994: 205) Without the promise of interest sharing, the Deccan officials had no stakes in a system that did not cultivate and safeguard their aspirations. As the Rajput case proves, the safeguarding of interests is the preliminary stage in the development of ties of loyalty.

The interaction with the Deccan states did not develop beyond the level of tactical engagement. Excluded from the system in every sense, they failed to see a convergence of their interests with those of the Mughals. The outcome was that the two parties dealt with each other as per the dictates and contingencies of time. The lack of predictability was evident in their interpersonal relations, which was marked by shifting alliances and intermittent wars. These were indicative of an instrumental view of cooperation and hence were susceptible to changes in the fluctuating balance of power in the Deccan. A good example would be the case of Burhan who appealed to the Mughals to support his claim to the Nizamshahi throne. Despite the help Akbar extended to him which enabled him to assume the reigns of power, Burhan upon return in 1591 sought to consolidate his position with the help of the neighbouring kingdom of Khandesh rather than strengthen his ties with the Mughals. The displeasure of the Mughals at this move is evident in Fazl's observation that Burhan upon taking over Ahmadnagar,

'...should have increased his devotion and gratitude, and been an example of obedience to other rulers in that quarter. The wine of success robbed him of his senses, and he forgot the varied favours he had received from the Shahinshah. In his evil fortune he set himself to oppress the weak, and considered that his profit consisted in the injury of others.' (AN, III: 909)
The rhetoric of conquest was not altogether absent from the chronicling of the Deccan operations, as Fazl justified Akbar’s invasion of Ahmadnagar in terms of the pursuit of higher objectives. He wrote that the ‘...sole idea of Shahinshah was to clear the territory of Ahmadnagar of the weeds and rubbish of rebellion, and then to prevail over Bijapur, Golkonda and Bidar.’ (AN, III: 1183) Despite the moral justification behind the military campaigns, uncertainty over control of the Deccan continued even after its eventual annexation to the Mughal empire. The tenuous nature of Mughal rule in the region highlights the significance of normative persuasion and legitimacy in ensuring stability and predictability in political relationships. Given the lack of cultural appeal and engagement at the level of popular discourses and belief systems by the Mughals, the Mughal state remained a distant and alien entity with which the kingdoms in the Deccan failed to identify. Thus, a conjunction of both material and ideational factors explains the costly and relatively ineffective campaigns that the Mughals had to wage in the region.

Conclusion
The contrasting case studies demonstrate the centrality of norms in facilitating or impeding the development of a dialogue between two actors. Complementarities in belief systems lay the edifice for a possible engagement between the participants, the terms and ‘language’ of which are mutually comprehensible and familiar. As the Rajput case study demonstrates, interests and values of actors could not only coincide but also reinforce each other. The Mughals were keen on tapping the vast military resource base of the Rajputs and absorbing the local elite into their administrative system. For the Rajputs, the opportunity meant holding lucrative high profile positions that would further enhance their status in the clan politics of Rajasthan. Relations between the Mughals and the Rajputs were cemented by the affinity in their belief systems that caused the Rajputs to relate to and internalise the hegemonic norms. Akbar’s approach towards moderation, paternalism and reasoned debates provided the space for a fit between the two cultures. The Rajput notion of honourable service by evoking qualities such as loyalty enabled the alliance to evolve beyond its initial instrumental purposes. That the Rajputs regarded the Mughals as their rightful masters was evident from their normative identification of Akbar as an incarnation of a Hindu god. Offering a Rajput daughter in marriage to the
emperor was considered another gesture of submission to his authority. Such a 'thick'
web of interaction that characterised Mughal-Rajput relations was missing in the case of
the Deccan powers. Neither did they identify with the hegemonic norms of the Mughals
nor did they regard them as their legitimate rulers once they were forced to submit. The
result was an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust that made relations between the
powers vulnerable to fluctuations in the alliance system. The case studies go on to
highlight the power of norms and the function that socialisation plays in system
maintenance. They also underline the need to explore the latent aspects of power, which
remain an understudied area in international politics.