INTRODUCTION

"The intimate contact between India and the outer Asiatic World" remarks Sir Jadunath Sarkar, "which had been established in the early Buddhistic age, was lost when the new Hindu society was reorganized and set in rigidity like a concrete structure about the 8th Century A.D. (800 A.D.), with the result India again became self-centred and isolated from the moving world beyond her natural barriers. ¹"

One of the factors responsible for this isolationistic attitude of the Hindus was their sense of superiority.

"According to their beliefs writes Al-beruni, "there is no country on earth but theirs no other race of man but theirs and no created beings besides them have any knowledge". ² This attitude at

¹. India Through the Ages, p.43.
². Al-beruni's India, p.23
large is to be found in India from the eighth century till the coming of the Turks in the 12th century A.D. It had exercised its unhealthy influence on almost every sphere of external relations, be it intellectual, cultural, political and even economic. If the laws of Manu may be an index to the mind of the Hindu ruling classes, their attitude towards foreign powers was one of contemptuous in difference suspicion and even hostility.  

"Let ( the King ) consider as hostile his immediate neighbour" was Manu's advice to his contemporary rulers. The Muslim conquest of India restored the diplomatic relations with the rest of the world and India once again started bubbling with foreign travellers and diplomatic relations were soon established with Central Asia, Persia and nearest parts of Africa.

India's contact with Central Asia covers many aspects of human relationship—social, political, intellectual and economic. Caravans of men and streams of thought constantly flowed between India and Central Asia despite limited means of communication and intimate contacts developed between these two regions. Zia Uddin Barani, our main authority for the period under study informs us of and on about the visits of ambassadors from distant lands. Barani's account regarding the exchange of embassies and ambassadors is also corroborated by the other contemporary Indian and non-Indian historians of that period.

Our modern historical works however do not offer the positive side of the diplomatic relations with the neighbouring countries ruled over by the descendents of Chengiz Khan. Their account includes only a record of continual warfare lasting for more than a hundred years. No doubt, the occupation by the Mongols of Ghaznin and the areas around (now
included in modern Afghanistan) constituted a serious threat to the Delhi Sultanate, yet the odd bits available in the contemporary sources provide clues to the exchange of gifts and diplomatic courtesies between the Mongol princes in different regions and the Sultans of Delhi. But before we discuss the different aspects of diplomatic relations between India and its foreign counterparts we must have a careful look at the political developments in Central Asia and other Afro-Asian countries. Besides, we may also analyse the developments in the North-West Frontier region and role played by the tribes of these region in determining the foreign policy of the Delhi Sultans.
North West Frontier Region And Its Significance in Determining The Foreign Policy of the Delhi Sultans:

Every ruling dynasty of Hindustan had to deal with the complex problem of the North-west frontier region of Hindustan. This region occupied a position of great strategic as well as economic importance, and it was therefore necessary for a ruler of Hindustan to maintain effective control over it. Its geographical configuration, the courses of its rivers, its economic setting determined the political developments of the period. The tribes inhabiting this area retained their tribal character, freedom of thought, and action. It required great tact to deal with and control these tribes inhabiting this significant region of the empire.

Any reference to the north-western frontier of Hindustan during the medieval period brings to mind the picture of rugged mountains. It touches
Kabul and Qandahar and included portions of Modern Afghanistan. The most impressive physical feature of the region is the range of mountains known as Hindu Kush. It is pierced by a number of passes—the important being Bolan, Gomal Tochi, Malakand and Khyber. These passes have witnessed many marches and counter marches by globe trotters and settlers.

While the towering mountain ranges make this region look inhospitable these passes which connect India with Central Asia bring in a measure of relief. The region has rightly been called the "cross roads of Asia".

The Medieval governments fully realized that possession of this region provided them a natural frontier which considerably buttressed their position by making it difficult for the foreign armies to cross it. The ordinary route in those days was not known Khyber pass nor the Bolan in the south but through the Gomal which led to Dera
Ismail Khan and from there to upper Sind Sagar Doab. The Khyber Bolan and the less accessible Kurram and Tochi Passes were not used by trading caravans to the same extent as the Gomal Passage which was the normal military route also.

This is proved by the fact that throughout the thirteenth century the first point of attack for an invading army from beyond the salt range was Multan or Uchch and not Lahore and Peshawar. From Ghazni the shortest route to Punjab was through Kurrani Tochi and Gomal Passes.

With the establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi close links were established with the northwestern frontier which was the homeland of the founder of the Delhi Sultanate.

Referring to the strategic importance of this region Abul Fazl observes, "The wise of Ancient
times considered Kabul and Qandahar as the twin gates of Hindustan the one leading to Turkestan and the other to Persia. The custody of these highways secured India from foreign invaders and they are likewise the appropriate portals of foreign travel.\(^1\)

Kabul and Qandahar were places of great commercial importance. Babar noticed two trade routes between Hindustan and Khurasan viz Kabul and Qandhar. "To Kabul" remarks Babar, caravans come from Kashgar, Farghana, Turkestan, Samargand, Bukhara Balkh, Hisar and Badakhshan.\(^2\)

Thus the roads and passes pierced into the region of the North-west Frontier of Hindustan through which India's contact had been maintained.

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with Central Asia. During the Sultanate period the irruption of the Mongols led to a situation which required diplomatic and careful handling of the tribal population of this region.

Another problem that confronted the Delhi Sultans was the importance of this area as a buffer region whenever any important power rose up in Central Asia and its role as the main shock absorber in times of actual conflict and crises.

The tribal involvement in the politics of this region began when the Khokars entered into a conspiracy with the Carmathians and assassinated Shihabuddin Muhammad Ghuri at Damyak. Aibek's decision to remain in Lahore was to some extent dictated by the need to keep a close watch over the tribal activities. It appears from Insha-i-Mahru, that even for the realization of taxes from these areas, the support of saints and other influential persons was
sought by the governors. The success of Ain-ul Mulk Mahru's administration in Multan and the frontier region was largely due to his tactful handling of these tribes.¹ The flight of the Khwarazmian Prince Jalauddin into Hindustan being closely followed by Chengiz Khan led to a situation when the crack forces of the empire had to be stationed in the North-west Frontier region. In fact as a result of this development, wardenship of marches became a stepping stone to Kingship. Iltutmish, Balban and Alauddin Khalji planned their policies in the light of this development in the North-west frontier region.

¹ Tariq Ahmad, "Religio-Political Ferment in the North-West Frontier during the Mughal Period, 'The Raushanya Movement', p.2.
After the Ghurid conquest of Northern India when Iltutmish ascended the throne in 1210 A.D. he established the Sultanate of Delhi, which was otherwise founded by the slave of the Ghurid ruler Muizuddin Ghori, Qutbuddin Aibek. It is, therefore necessary to acquire some understanding of the background and home land of the Ghurid rulers and then their ultimate liquidation from Central Asian scene by the Khwarazmian emperor Allauddin Muhammad Khwarazm Shah.

Further we find that the establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi was simultaneous with the rise of the Mongols in Central Asia. The ascendancy of Chengiz Khan and the rise of the mongols made the Indian chronicles generally lament that "the whole of the land of Iran and Turan fell under the sway of the Mongols" and "the authority of Muhammad religion departed from these regions which became the seat of
Paganism and not a trace of the Maliks and Sultans of Islam remained in these countries. It was during this time that we find Sultan Iltutmish kept the Sultanate of Delhi aloof from the Central Asian Politics. But when the mongol danger loomed large on the Indian horizon Iltutmish adopted the policy of appeasement. We find references to show that Iltutmish was desirous of some kind of an alliance with the mongols by which the territorial integrity of the Delhi Sultanate should be maintained.

The successors of Sultan Iltutmish were weak rulers who could not, except for Sultan Razia, establish stability within the empire which ultimately passed on to Ulugh Khan-i-Azam, who ascended the throne

2. K.A. Nizami, Rel. & Pol. in India during the 13th Cen. p.30.
of the Delhi Sultanate as Sultan Ghyasuddin Balban.

Balban adopted a policy of resistance towards the mongols. He openly confessed that but for the mongols he would have followed an expansionist policy. But Balban had to pay a heavy price for his policy of resistance towards the mongols. He lost his eldest son Prince Muhammad in this struggle.

With the advent of the Khaljis the policy of resistance is further strengthened and during the reign of Sultan Alauddin Khalji the policy towards the Mongols assumed entirely different dimensions.

The greatest pressure upon the independent Sultanate of Delhi fell during the early years of Alauddin Khalji's reign (1296-1316 A.D.). The reign of Sultan Alauddin Khalji specially witnessed a series of Mongol invasions from the Chaghtai Khanate of Central Asia, in the course of which the enemy twice reached the outskirts of Delhi. After about 1307 A.D. however, the Mongol threat suddenly receded; and only
on one occasion subsequently does it appear to have attained to the same proportions during the reign of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq.

The rise of the Tughluq's marks a departure from the policies of the Khalji's in certain respects and an elaboration of them in other spheres. Of the Sultan of Delhi, Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq (1324-1351 A.D.) a remarkable man on several counts, adopted a foreign policy that had far reaching consequences. The corner stone of his foreign policy was the establishment of friendly relations with the neighbouring countries, in particular the Mongol powers in Central Asia and Iran. He believed in the use of military force, in case the end could not be achieved through peaceful means. His knowledge of the political developments beyond the Indian frontiers is reflected in his Qarachil and Khurasan expeditions and his scheme of Token Currency. Recent discovery of 'Bayaz' of Tajuddin
Wazir in Iran has brought to light many interesting aspects of the relations of Muhammad bin Tughluq with Sultan Abu Saeed of Persia. During the reign of Firuz Shah Tughluq a reaction had started against the policies of Muhammad bin Tughluq with the result that Sultan Firuz Tughluq abstained from following the policies of his predecessor in the diplomatic sphere. In fact he was not keen in maintaining diplomatic contacts with the neighbouring countries. As a result, it was difficult to discuss in detail the foreign relations of Firuz Tughluq in the present work.