CHAPTER II:
Mughal perception of European political system
Mughal Perception of European Political System

Prior to the reign of Akbar, the only European nation with which the Mughals established political contacts was Turkey under the Ottomans. The year 1556 marked the beginning of diplomatic relations between the Mughals and the Ottoman Turks when Emperor Humayun (1530-1556) sent a letter to Ottoman Sultan Suleiman II "the Magnificent" (1520-66). During Akbar’s reign, little effort was made to improve diplomatic relations with the Turks. However, in 1570s, Portuguese started coming to Akbar’s court and were given warm reception. In spite of occasional hostilities and frictions, the Portuguese developed regular political relations at the Mughal court. Perhaps the Jesuit priest, Father Julian Pereira, introduced through Pedro Tavares, was the first to come to his court in March, 1578.

Since the first decade of 17th century, Jahangir developed contacts with another West European nation— the English (Frangiyani Inglusi) who had started to visit his court. He occasionally enquired the Jesuits about the English. Thomas Roe, e.g., wrote in a letter to the East India Company that, “he (Jahangir) accepted your presents well; but after the English were come away he asked the Jesuyte (Francis Corsi) whether the king of England were a great kyng, that sent presents of so small valewe, and that

he looked for some jewells.\textsuperscript{4} By the time of arrival of Sir Thomas Roe’s embassy in 1615 from England, the Mughal court had a fair idea of Europe and the Europeans. During the third mission to Akbar’s court, (1594), the prince Murad, (Akbar’s second son) summoned the Jesuit Fathers on the New year day and enquired from them about the customs of Portugal, the occupations of royalty in Europe etc.\textsuperscript{5} Partly their ideas about the Europeans had developed from their interactions with the earlier English merchants visiting the Mughal Court such as Thomas Kerridge and William Hawkins with whom Jahangir held conversations about the countries of the West, particularly England,\textsuperscript{6} as well as with other English merchants such as Captain Thomas Best, Edwards etc. In a letter dated 7th September, 1613 to Thomas Aldworth and Council at Surat, Thomas Kerridge wrote that the Jesuits tell the king that we are a people rebelled subjects to their king, and make us and the Hollanders as one, they allege further our country and prince of no respect nor force, having only one city, wherein a few merchants, and that our king hath no hand in this business.\textsuperscript{7} In October 1613, in a letter to Thomas Smith and other merchants, William Biddulph wrote that ‘Jesuits, who ‘prevail much with him, tell him that we are a base people and dwell in a little island, and of

\textsuperscript{5} E. Maclagan, \textit{The Jesuits and the Great Mogul}, p.52.
\textsuperscript{6} W. Foster, \textit{Early Travels in India (1583-1619)}, pp.64,82.
no force." However, Jahangir knew that the English had their own king, they were not subservient to the Portuguese monarch.

In 1614, Edwards (who posed as English ambassador in Mughal Court in 1614), brought the pictures of king and Queen of England as a present for the king. Roe also observed that, “at the upper end (of the throne of Jahangir) was set the King, my sovereigns picture, the Queenes, my lady Elizabeth, Sir Thomas Smiths and some others.” Jamal ud Din Hussain, a noble, took Roe ‘to a house of Jahangir, and a garden of pleasure, Havaz Gemall, a mile out of towne, to feaste mee in, and showed the king’s closets and retyring roomes, and in some panes (i.e. panels) copyes of the French kings and other Christian Princes." He later even expressed a wish to see Roe’s country. At their farewell audience, they (Jourdain and three others) presented Jahangir with a ‘peece of gould of our kings quonye, which he looked earnestlie upon and putt itt in his pocket.’

Thomas Roe had come to India in 1615 as an ambassador of Great Britain, with the intention of securing trading privileges for the English Company in Mughal India. Prior to Roe, a negative

8 ibid., vol.i, p.300.
9 Muhammad Hindushah Astarbadi Ferishta, Tarikh-i-Ferishta, 2 vols. (Lucknow, 1865), pp. 368-73. (Ferishta’s account was written in 1606-10).
11 Letter Received by the East India Company from its Servants in the East, vol.ii, p.138.
13 ibid., p.211.
14 ibid., p.212.
image had been formed of the English in the Mughal court as William Edwards ‘tooke the title and state of an ambassador upon him; behavinge himselfe not as beseeminge an ambassadour, was kicked and spurned by the King’s porters out of the courte-gates, to the unrecoverable disgrace of our kinge for redresse, making himselfe and his nation a laughing stock to all people in general.’

The English probably hoped that by elevating the status of Roe to that of an ambassador, they would be able to pressure and persuade the Mughal court to into providing a privileged and dignified treatment to him and to the English trading activities in India. Roe was sent with a purpose to ‘procure and confirme such articles and privileges as may bee most beneficiall.’ However the embassy failed. Indeed, as an ambassador, Roe had expected a respectful treatment from the Mughals. Initially, Roe had reasons to believe that his status as an ambassador was duly acknowledged by Jahangir. He notes that he was ‘treated with more favour and outward grace, then was showed to any ambassador, eyther of the Turke or Persian, or other whatsoever.’

However soon the hopes of the English were belied and other English merchants accompanying him came round to the

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16 ibid., p.229-30.
18 ibid., pxvii.
19 ibid., p.xiv-xv.
20 ibid.,p.94,212,356-7.
21 ibid., p.xxxii.
view that the concept of an ‘ambassador’ was alien to Mughal sovereignty. Kerridge, for example, said that the ‘customes of these princes is not to receave ambassador(s) with such dewe ‘observation and honourable respect as is accustomed in Christendom, For if the King of Persia, who is the mightiest neighbour to this country, sent a prince of his blood in embassage heather, he should allwayes stand and attend in presence of the King, as if he were a servant.' Another debacle took place when ‘the new pretended Spanish ambassador was refused audience, the king having said that ‘he was no right ambassador.’ The king demanded of the Jesuits if he had any letters, who told him that there was ‘none from Spayne, and professed also that he came from Damon, a city of Portugalls.'

The exchange of ambassadors was a regular aspect of Mughal sovereignty. The Mughal court received and dispatched ambassadors regularly to the Courts of Safavids and Uzbegs, occasionally from Ottomans (Humayun in his memoirs noted that of the most potent sovereigns who sent embassies was king of dynasty of Othman, and even from ‘Cherif (sharif) at Mecca, king of Hyeman, prince of Basra, Ethiopia in Africa and Turan (there

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23 Roe wrote to the company that, ‘an ambassador lies not in fitt honor. I could sooner die then be subject to the slaverye the Persian is content with.’ Cf. Thomas Roe, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe, 1615-19*, ed. W. Foster, p.310.
24 *ibid.*, p.258.
26 No embassy was received from Ottomans during his period. Jauhar Aftabchi, *Tazkira-ul-Waqiat*, tr. Charles Stewart, Delhi,1972, p.123.
were no less than four embassies from Abdullah Khan, king of Turan in 1572, 1577, 1586, 1596, and also from his son, Abdul Mumin, although unlike in Europe there were no permanent representations of one sovereign at the seat of another in the form of embassies or consulates; embassies here were in the nature of a temporary mission, often with specific purposes. Monserrate observed that, "Zelaldinus behaves with marked courtesy and kindliness to foreigners, especially to the ambassadors of foreign kings." Besides, the reception that was accorded to the ambassador signified the level of political relations with that country.

28 ibid., p.135,139.
29 Fr. A. Monserrate, Commentary on his Journey to the Court of Akbar, tr. J.S. Hoyland, ed. S.N. Bannerjee, p.204.
30 M. Athar Ali, 'International Law' or Conventions Governing Conduct of Relations between Asian States, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, in "Towards an Interpretation of the Mughal Empire," in Mughal India: Studies in Polity, Ideas, Society and Culture, Preface by Irfan Habib, (Delhi, 2006), p. 313
31 Fr. A. Monserrate, Commentary on his Journey to the Court of Akbar, tr. J.S. Hoyland, ed. S.N. Bannerjee, p. 204.
32 Budaq Beg, envoy of Persia, came to Delhi on 23rd May, where he presented the Shah’s letter of congratulation on the Emperor’s accession. A robe, a turban, a jeweled dagger, betels with a gold betel casket and tray etc. were presented to him. The mansion of Rustam Khan was assigned for his residence. Shah’s presents were offered to the Emperor included 66 horses, one round pearl weighing 37 carat, and these were valued in all at 4 lakh and 22,000 rs., cf. Saqi Mustaid Khan, Maasir-i-Alamgiri, tr. and annotation by Jadunath Sarkar, Calcutta, 1990, p.21-22. In return, Tarbiyat Khan was sent to Iran as envoy with precious things and rarities worth seven lakhs of rupees. ibid., p.29; Bernier also wrote about the arrival of an embassy of the Tartars of Uzbek, ‘the presents from the Kans were brought before the king, consisting of boxes of lapis-lazuli and many loads of dry fruit.’ Cf. F. Bernier,
Clearly the English were wrong in believing that the concept of an ‘ambassador’ was alien in the Mughal state. Understandably, they developed this idea from the kind of treatment they got from Emperor Jahangir. In their understanding, there were two possible reasons behind the treatment they received from the imperial court. One was that in the Mughal perception, England was not only a distant, but also a considerably weak country in comparison to the mighty empire of the Mughals. Jahangir believed the monarch of England to be a ‘petic prince’ of a small state. William Hawkins reported that Abul Hasan, a Mughal noble, who was sent to him by the king told him that the king denied him the answer to the letter of King James saying that it ‘was not the custome of so great a monarch to write in the kind of a letter into a petic prince or governour;’

The failure of Sir Thomas Roe in negotiating better terms of trade with the Mughals on the basis of a treaty led him to believe that the treaty was an idea ‘utterly alien to the political system of

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*Travels in the Mughal Empire, 1656-68*, tr. A. Constable, p.117. For the embassy to king of Ethiopia in 1664, Aurangzeb sent an extremely rich *ser-apah*, a poniard studded with rubies; and gold and silver *roupies*. *ibid.*, p.139. In 1651, Muhyi ud Din, the ambassador from the Qaiser of Rum, Sultan Mohammad IV (1648-87) arrived in the capital of Lahore, in return of which an Envoy to Rum, Qa’im Beg, was dispatched with a handsome robe of honour, a jeweled turban ornament sword and shield with enameled appurtenances, and a fast piebald steed with gold saddle, donation of 30,000 rupees etc. *ibid.*, pp.460-61,500.

33 W. Foster (ed.), *Early Travels in India (1583-1619)*, p.92. A letter was written to James I by Jahangir but was never delivered. (*Letter Received*, vol.iii, p.285 fn. (Appendix)).
Mughals.\textsuperscript{34} Among the Islamic states, such interstate agreements took the form of exchange of letters, or an offer contained in the letter from one sovereign to the other.\textsuperscript{35} In the Mughal view of state, treaties were only conducted among equals and entering into a treaty with the English would have meant an acceptance on their part of their alleged equal status. Moreover, the Mughals held it derogatory that ‘the Emperor should sign a treaty with the representative of an obscure and distant country, especially on matters relating entirely to trade.’\textsuperscript{36} That ‘the Franks should send an ambassador to the imperial court was by no means unwelcome as a tribute to its splendour and fame but that they should sincerely claim to treat on terms of equality was not to be thought of.’\textsuperscript{37} Roe complained in a letter to the English ambassador at Constantinople that Jahangir ‘would not descend to article or bind himself reciprocally to any prince upon terms of equality, but only by way of favour admit our stay so long as it either likes him or those that govern him.’\textsuperscript{38} They could not be provided with the honours and privileges that were accorded to the land based powers since they were merchants unworthy of equal treatment. Hence, Jahangir

\textsuperscript{34}Thomas Roe, \textit{The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe, 1615-19}, ed. W. Foster, p.xlii.
\textsuperscript{35}As, for example, Abdullah Khan Uzbek’s offer in a letter of treating the Hindukush as the ‘boundary’ between them, which Akbar accepted (1596). Cf. Abul Fazl, \textit{Akbarnama}, Bib. Ind., Calcutta, 1873-87, vol.iii, p.705.
\textsuperscript{37}\textit{ibid.}, p.xliii.
\textsuperscript{38}\textit{Letter Received}, vol.vi, p.298.
refused to treat Roe as an ambassador, nor would he sign a treaty with him.\textsuperscript{39}

Another aspect of the Mughals’ political relations with Europe is that while occasionally embassies were sent to Turkey, an East European country, embassies ‘planned’ for any West European country never materialized.

One such embassy planned by Akbar, apparently meant for Philip II of Spain, was postponed and later abandoned.\textsuperscript{40} Likewise, an embassy to Portugal was planned by Jahangir also did not materialize.\textsuperscript{41} It is important to note here that none of the West European ‘embassy’ even found mention in the official historical accounts. Jahangir in his memoirs did not even mention Roe!

Even with Turkey, the Mughal rulers had intermittent relations.\textsuperscript{42} At Akbar’s ascension to throne, Ottomans did not send a diplomatic mission to his court. Akbar, on his part, also did not

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\textsuperscript{39} \textit{ibid.}, vol.ii, p.108. \\
\textsuperscript{40} A letter (addressed to the ‘ruler of the Europeans’ (\textit{Farman Rawa-i-Farang}), i.e. Philip II. Cf. E. Maclagan, The Jesuits and the Great Mogul, London, 1932, p.37) was sent with Saiyid Muzaffar and Abdullah Khan along with Father Monserrate, addressed to ‘the Wise Men of Christendom (\textit{Danayan-i-Farang}) Mar/Apr, 1582, in order to ‘to promote ties with His royal Majesty (or wise men of Franks) and talked about ‘obligations of a spiritual friendship.’ The embassy set forth in April, 1582. It was intended to secure among other things a fresh mission of priests to Akbar’s court. A copy of the letter which accompanied the embassy is still extant in the first \textit{daftar} of the \textit{Insha-i-Abul Fazl}. See \textit{Maktubat-i-Allami (Insha-i-Abul Fazl)} \textit{DAFTAR 1}, tr. Mansura Haider; Delhi, 1998, pp.8-10. \\
\textsuperscript{42} Naimur Rahman Farooqui, \textit{Mughal-Ottoman Relations}, pp.4,17,23,60.
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try to improve relations with them. One embassy that was sent by Akbar in 1595-6 (perhaps to congratulate Sultan Muhammad II (1595-1603) is not mentioned in any contemporary Mughal chronicle. Jahangir was indifferent towards Ottomans and the Ottoman embassy that arrived in 1608 was denied audience. In his memoirs, Jahangir writes, ‘looking to his (ambassador’s) circumstances and proceedings, none of the servants of the court believed in his being an ambassador, no one could bear witness to the accuracy of his claim. The next embassy in 1615 also proved abortive. After a brief friendly interlude during the period of Shahjahan, we find their relationship with the Ottomans turned sour again. Ottomans did not send congratulatory message on Aurangzeb’s ascension, and Aurangzeb too did not strive to improve relations with them.

It was realized, after a few misdemeanors by some Englishmen who posed as ambassadors that ‘now (we) must hold the reputation of an ambassador.’

The factors at Surat, while writing to Roe that ‘giving due respect to an ambassador is not a custom that they follow’, also point out that ‘they respect the Persian ambassador because his king is a potent prince bordering on these territories, and ours far

43 *ibid.*, p.22.
45 Thomas Roe wrote, ‘the envoy was insulted and his proposal to Jahangir to desist from an anti-Ottoman alliance with the Safavid monarch, was turned down by Jahangir. Thomas Roe, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe, 1615-19*, ed. W. Foster, p. 113. Also see Naimur Rahman Farooqui, *Mughal-Ottoman Relations*, p.23.
47 *Letter Received*, vol. ii, p.261.
off, whose greatness is scarcely known or not believed." In 1616, factors at Surat wrote to Thomas Roe that there is no usual custom to whom they give due respect. The king of Persia his ambassador speaks in his own person free with what liberty he pleaseth, otherwise he will not endure it, where in we can not but acknowledge the causes are different, he being a potent prince bordering on these territories, and ours far off, whose greatness is scarcely known or believed."

Similarly, in 1617, William Lesk wrote to the East India Company that "in the Mogull his country, my lord ambassador lives as he can, although his entertainment be nothing answerable either to the worth of the man or honour of his employment. For there be two things which make ambassadors gracious and acceptable in the eyes of foreign princes; a necessary relation and reference between the two kingdoms, or some great utility and profit redounding from one to the other; both which are greatly wanting in our particular."

In the Mughal polity, the exchange of ambassadors took place among equal powers. The Mughal Court offered honourable and respectful treatment only to those ambassadors that were sent by the mighty Empires of Asia—the Safavids or the Uzbegs, for instance. The dignitaries that were sent by petty political powers did not merit any special treatment, for that could jeopardize the imperial pretensions of the Mughal sovereignty. In Mughal perception, the English were just one such petty power, and their representative at the court, therefore, could not be offered anything beyond the ordinary courtesies. Jahangir.

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48 *ibid.*, vol.iv, p.310.
49 *ibid.*
50 *ibid.*, vol. v, p.176.
for example, was reportedly ‘so pleased with his visitor (Hawkins) that he pressed him to remain as a resident ambassador, promising in that case to permit English trade with his ports on favourable terms. To this Hawkins readily agreed; whereupon he was made captain of four hundred horse, with a handsome allowance. He was even married to an Armenian maiden, and took his place among the grandees of the court. But Jahangir soon got tired of this ‘troublesome visitor’ and he was asked to leave the court. Even his request to an answer for a letter from king James I was ‘contemptuously refused’51 and so also was forgotten the idea of sending an ‘ambassador to the King of England at the coming of next shipping.’52 Similarly, when Roe appeared before Jahangir in 1616, he was freely granted leave to use the customs of his country.53 Similar privilege was given to the Dutch envoy who performed salam in the Indian fashion before Aurangzeb, but the latter himself desired from him 'a salute a la Frank’54 after which Morturacan (Murtaza Khan) took the letter from the hands of the ambassador and presented it to the secretary (i.e. the wazir). The master of the ceremonies, with his gold cane in his hand, took the ambassador’s hand, and placed him in a fairly honourable place along with the five persons who accompanied him. They were

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51 Early Travels in India 1583-1619, ed. W. Foster, pp.64, 67.
52 ibid., p.82.
53 Roe writes that entering the durbar, he made three successive 'reverences' in the 'European manner,' cf. Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe, p. 87, where Jahangir told his officers not to insist that Roe should perform 'size-da' (sijda), ibid., p. 214.
invested with a *sarapa* of brocade. In 1688, to the Dutch ambassador, Mr. Bald, during his stay was given many marks of favour, honoured him with the title of *Golzarcan* (Gulzar Khan, that is, ‘Great and flourishing’) and at length sent him away with a properly executed *farman*, which granted privileges which they had asked for.

Roe himself observed that, ‘the Kings bountyes are rather markes of honor then of profit’ for the ambassador’s reason of arrival was not one of usual political contact (but the need for trade concessions). The second reason for their indifferent attitude perhaps lies in the fact that the English in India were essentially merchants, and in the Mughal perception the representatives of merchants could not be accorded ambassadorial status. It was the interest of the English merchants trading in Mughal India that was the main objective of Roe’s embassy and in the land-based polity of the Mughals, trading was a profession which was held in ‘great contempt.’ Jahangir on one occasion wondered as to why the king of England sent a merchant, ‘a meane man (Edwards) with more curious toys and then sent Roe as his ambassador who was so slightly set out,’ the Mogull doubtlesse making judgement of what His Majestie is by what he sends.’ Jahangir’s friendly

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56 *ibid.*, p.358.
58 *Letter Received*, vol.ii, pp.136,138.
60 *ibid.*, p.76.
attitude towards Roe was more a matter of personal liking and cordial behaviour than the marker of any possible diplomatic relation between him and the English king or a respectful acceptance of his ambassadorial status. (It is no accident that Roe’s embassy did not even find mention in his memoirs, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*).

It appears that in the Mughal perception: a) England was a small and weak country and no match to the great empires of the Islamic world such as the Safavids, Ottomans, and indeed the Mughals, b) the representatives of the English and other West European countries in India were essentially merchants and could not, therefore be treated as political authorities, irrespective of any ambassador claiming to represent the sovereign of England, and c) since they were merchants, their status was an inferior one and the Mughal court could not accord an ambassadorial status to any English or European representative/agent in India. It does not seem that this perception changed in the subsequent period as even at the end of 17th century, in the instructions given to William Norris on his appointment as an ambassador to the Mughal emperor on 31 Dec. 1698, the English king urged him to ‘pressure honour and dignity of ambassador.’ In the course of negotiations, when Ruhullah Khan sought information about Europe, he gave him information also about reception of ambassadors, stating that in Europe a representative of a sovereign would meet at boundary of nation to conduct him to royal presence, and, whenever ambassador demanded audience, it was granted.  

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When Sir Thomas Roe arrived at Surat in 1615, his difficulties with local officials who were not clear about his status, were resolved once a farman arrived from the court which, according to Roe, 'contayned a command to all governors of provinces or towns to attend me with sufficient guard and not to meddle with anything that was mine.' In 1701, when the Norris embassy (sent by William III on behalf of the New English East India Company) arrived, he was neither received well nor was he able to meet the Emperor for quite sometime. (Norris had landed at Masulipatam on September 25th, 1699, he reached Swally (Surat) on Dec.10, 1700, and proceeded thence to the Mughal camp via Burhanpur. And when he did try to meet Aurangzeb who was at a camp against Marathas, 'none of the high officials received Norris at the entrance to the lashkar beating of drum or sounding of trumpet were also not allowed.' Norris was advised (by Yar Ali Beg) not to ask for farman at first presence, but only convey to Emperor letters of king and list of presents.

p.77, 308. The ambassadors from the Islamic empires of Asia, on the other hand were given due acknowledgement. See Jahangir, Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, vol.i, pp.298,299,336,374; vol.ii, p.178; The Shahjahan Nama of Inayat Khan, W.E. Begley and Z.A. Desai (eds.), P.87, 460,499; F. Bernier, Travels in the Mughal Empire, 1656-68, p.147.


64 ibid., P.289. The ambassadors from the Islamic empires of Asia were given due permission to depart along with a letter to their Emperor and handsome presents. ibid., p.309.
Norris quitted the Mughal camp without permission on Nov. 5, 1701 (and sailed for England on May 5, 1702) although Manucci notes that ‘never had an ambassador from Europe appeared with such pomp and magnificence,' the fact remains that he had not received a treatment befitting an ambassador and his mission had failed.

In the Islamic empires, the rulers exchanged ambassadors on such occasions as the coronation of a new king or victory in an expedition. The Iranian ambassador Mohammad Ali Beg, for example, delivered a letter from Shah Safi the ruler of Iran, full of congratulations on His Majesty’s accession to throne; and received in return a gold-embroidered robe of honour, and a Qizilbashi tiara and turban ornament studded with gems. In return of Mohammad Ali Beg’s embassy, the Emperor determined to dispatch an embassy under Safdar Khan, entrusted him 4 lakhs for the purchase of presents for the Shah, towards end of Shawwal 1042 (early May 1633) a letter describing the victories that had been achieved by the imperial armies during his reign and informing about capture of fort of Daulatabad. When news of Shah Safi’s death arrived, Dara asked to send on Khan Dauran Bahadur Nusrat Jang and Said Khan Bahadur Zafar Jang with 30,000 men to Qandahar, after corroborating his death, he reported the matter to court. The Mughals clearly did not have such a convention with any of the European powers. By way of an exception, we find one Adrian, a

67 *ibid.*, p.94.
68 *ibid.*, p.294.
Dutch ambassador, arriving in Delhi to ‘offer congratulations on the king’s accession.’ However, he was not sent by the king of Holland, but by the Governor of Batavia in 1662 to obtain trade concessions.

The exchange of gifts was a recognized part of the formal etiquette in Islamic empires. Humayun wrote about an embassy sent by ‘the sovereign of Rum, Soleyman the Magnificent’ to Persia and exchange of ‘various valuable and curious articles: such as, instruments and vessels inlaid with the gold and precious stones, daggers, scimitars, cloths of different kinds, and rarities from the several countries of Europe.’

The value of the gifts sent was an index of the importance that was given to the recipient by the sovereign who sent it. Exchange of gifts was indeed an important aspect of the Mughal political system, but the connotations of each exchange varied from one situation to another. The gifts received from political powers, such as Safavids or the Uzbegs represented ritual and political relations, and signified reciprocal acceptance of sovereign

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69 They succeeded in getting a farman ‘favourable to their commerce in Bengal, Orissa and Patnarah’ (this farman was dated October, 29, 1662. F. Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire. 1656-68*, p.127; Niccolao Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor, 1656-1712*, vol.i, p.57.


71 Roe commented that ‘the Mogull doubtlesse making judgement of what His Majestie is by what he sends.’ Thomas Roe, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe, 1615-19*, p.76.

72 The English developed friendly relationship with the nobles and members of the imperial household through gifts and presents. (Thomas Roe, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe, 1615-19*, p.xxxvii,p.426; *Letters Received*, vol.vi, p.xxii).
authority. On the other hand, the gifts received from the English did not symbolize a relationship or an ‘alliance,’ as it were, but were usually considered as ‘curiosities’ offered to the Mughals in exchange of trading concessions. For example, William Hawkins once wrote that he had great hope that ‘the king would performe former grants in hope of rare things that should come from England.’ Roe in 1616 writes that ‘he took to Prince khurram some powerfull wine and in the strength thereof desired justice, within a few days the prince had signed two farmans (nishans)’ Jahangir on one occasion wondered as to why Roe was ‘so slightly set out.’ Interestingly, when Roe sent him ‘a clock and other trifles, Jahangir looked at them curiously and asked what he requires of him.’ Manucci writes that ‘since he (the Dutch ambassador, who arrived at Delhi in 1662 to Aurangzeb’s court) knew that those who bring the largest present and the heaviest purse are the most acceptable, the best received and soonest attended to, he brought a present, for the king. It consisted in a large quantity of very fine scarlet broadcloth, much fine green cloth, some large mirrors, many earthenware dishes, bric-a-brac.

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73 On the gifts brought by Persian embassies to Jahangir and Aurangzeb, see Thomas Roe, The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe, 1615-19, pp. 262-3; F. Bernier, Travels in the Mughal Empire, 1656-68, pp. 147-8. For the gifts carried by Khan Azam’s embassy to Persia, see Riazul Islam, Indo-Persian Relations; a Study of Political and Diplomatic Relations between the Mughal Empire and Iran, Tehran, 1970, pp. 74, 233; The Shahjahan Nama of Inayat Khan, W.E. Begley and Z.A. Desai (eds.), p. 63, 72.
74 Early Travels in India 1583-1619, ed. W. Foster, p.91.
76 ibid., p.351-2.
77 ibid., p.94n.
from China and Japan, and a small throne in appearance like a litter (*cherolla*), a piece of Japanese work with many pleasing paintings. For the ministers there was a large sum in gold and silver, with different kinds of cloth and other *bric-a-brac*. As soon as he arrived he began to set forth to the ministers what he desired. Thus in a few days leave was granted to him to be presented to the king.\(^{78}\) In 1701, the English ambassador, Norris was advised (by Yar Ali Beg) not to ask for *farman* at first presence. But only convey to Emperor letters of king and list of presents.\(^{79}\)

While Jahangir mentions gifts sent by the Persian king, (he, for example, wrote that ‘Shah Abbas sent me a cup of Venetian workmanship’),\(^{80}\) he does not mention any gift sent by any European power. The gifts brought by European embassies were symbolically less significant in comparison to those sent by neighbouring Islamic empires and hence, failed to impress the Emperor.

During Akbar’s period, only one work dealing with Europe was written at Akbar’s orders called ‘*Samarat al-falasifah,*’ (also known as *Ahval-i Frangistan*) compiled by 'Abd al-Sattar with the help of Jerome Xavier (who taught him European languages) in 1603. But even this work dealt with West’s philosophical past. This work was concerned with the history of the Roman Empire (*Salatin-i-Rum*), with special reference to its rulers, saints and philosophers (along with the sayings of Greek and Roman philosophers), including the life of Christ. There was no attempt to

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\(^{78}\) Niccolao Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor, 1656-1712*, vol.i, p.57.

\(^{79}\) *ibid.*, p.309.

\(^{80}\) Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, vol.i, p.310.
include any contemporary account of European Kings or nations. Here, their ideological fascination with the ancient Roman and Greek civilization and philosophers and their initial fascination with European religion is evident. Also, till the Jesuit influence was predominant, their primary interest was in their religion and philosophy, and not their political system.

After Akbar’s period, as the trading companies of different European nations, apart from the Portuguese, started settling in the Mughal Empire and their interaction with these diverse European merchants expanded, their knowledge about the Western European nations also started growing. Even so, the textual knowledge among Muslim scholars was mainly confined to the Eastern Europe. They occasionally evinced some interest in West European countries, but their knowledge of these countries was fragmentary and at best, insufficient and incomplete as their source of knowledge was exclusively derived from the conversations they had with the Europeans in India.

Nevertheless, the Mughal elite began to evince some interest in things from Europe during the seventeenth century, as some knowledge would have disseminated through Persian translations. For the major part, the information about events in Europe was given by the ambassadors. Alexander Hamilton in c.1690 wrote that ‘the Dutch Company had one Mr. Baroon as their ambassador,

81 Father Jerome Xavier composed in 1609, a work called Adah-us-Saltanat (pride of kings). (Ms. at School of Oriental Studies in London). This work, dedicated to Jahangir, contained information on Christianity, Roman kings and Plutarch (Tarjuma-i-Plutarko, Maqulat-i-Plutarko), Cicero (Ba’ze muqaddamat-i- Marko Tulio), cf. E. Maclagan, The Jesuits and the Great Mogul, p.215. Also see Amin Ahmad Razi, Haft Iqlim, 3 vols., Tehran, n.d.
82 Early Travels in India 1583-1619, ed. W. Foster, pp.64,82.
who designed to impose on Aurangzeb, who he thought was ignorant of European affairs, the news of revolution in Britain being arrived in India when he had an audience with Aurangzeb, he began to magnify the power and grandeur of his country, and vilify the English. The Mogul seemed to be pleased with his discourse and encouraged him to go on. He told that the English were but contemptible in comparison of his sovereigns, on which Aurangzeb reprimanded him saying that he knew that about seventeen years ago (referring to 1645), the king of France conquered most of their country in a few days and it was the power of English and not the power of Holland that repelled them, and that if England did not hold the balance of power, either the Emperor or the king of France could conquer it in one campaign.

In the course of negotiations, Ruh-ullah Khan, a noble of Aurangzeb, sought information from William Norris, the English ambassador, about the kings of Europe and the races over which they ruled, presumably in order to ascertain the relative position of the King of England. He told him of the superiority of English navy and explained that some of the European peoples were governed by their elected rulers, and all of them were Christians with different sects and languages.

According to Bernier, Aurangzeb once said to his teacher Mulla Jiwan Amethawi (d. 1717) that his youth had been wasted in learning outmoded philosophy instead of a subject like 'the rise and

84 *ibid.*, p.226.
fall of a state, more suitable for a prince's education'. He said, 'You taught me that the whole of Franguistan (Europe) was no more than some inconsiderable island, of which the most powerful Monarch was formerly the king of Portugal, then he of Holland, and afterward the king of England. In regard to the other sovereigns of Franguistan, such as the king of France and of him of Andalusia, you told me they resembled our petty rajas, and that the potentates of Hindoustan eclipsed the glory of other kings; and that Persia, Uzbek, Kachguer, Tartary, and Catay (Cathay or China), Pegu, Siam, China and Matchina (China), trembled at the name of the kings of the Indies. Was it not incumbent upon my preceptor to make me acquainted with distinguishing features of the every nation of the earth; its resources and strength; its mode of warfare, its manners, religion, form of government and wherein its interests principally exist; and by a regular course of historical reading, to render me familiar with the origin of states, their progress and decline; the events, accidents, or errors, owing to which such great changes and mighty revolutions, have been effected? Far from having imparted to me a profound and comprehensive knowledge of the history of mankind, scarcely did I learn from you the names of my ancestors.' Clearly then, by the time we come to Aurangzeb's reign, we notice a much broader, and far more mature, understanding of Europe and its peoples. There is, in Aurangzeb's disquiet a realization that Europe was an important place after all, worthy of sustained study.

But apart from these stray incidents, we do not have any evidence to suggest that there had occurred any significant advance

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in the information about European political structure. Mohammad Shafi (a writer and historian of Muhammad Shah's reign, writing in 1730s)\textsuperscript{87} wrote about Pope having complete religious and political control over kings of all Christendom. All of these rulers, according to Shafi, owed allegiance to the Pope (Papa), who exercised authority over them in his capacity as the representative of Jesus Christ (\textit{Na'ib-i Hazrat 'ha}). These kings were under his complete control and the kings would not raise their voice nor think of revolt (\textit{inhira\mathaccent'957E}); in fact any disobedience to the Pope was simply out of the question. He had the right to appoint them as well as to dismiss them. The kings of Europe were so completely subservient (\textit{ghulam zar kharid}) to the Papal authority, that, even if the Pope wished to install a common man (\textit{awam al-nass}) on the throne). As he mentions, almost the whole of Europe (\textit{Frangistan}) was governed by sixteen magnificent kings: nine out of these were known as \textit{qaral}, while seven were called \textit{frangi}.\textsuperscript{88}

Writing in 1730, Muhammad Shafi Warid, also had some knowledge of the Roman Emperor, whose seat of residence was close to the Pope. All the rulers of Europe, with the exception of the Hungarian one, paid tribute (\textit{baj u kharaj}) to the Holy Roman Emperor. He recalls that the other part of Europe, Vienna and Hungary once were conquered by the Ottomans.\textsuperscript{89}


\textsuperscript{88} \textit{ibid.}

\textsuperscript{89} \textit{ibid.}
To conclude, the Mughal perception of the European political system was an evolving one, and shifted across the Mughal period. Even so, they were scarcely aware of the political, social and economic developments occurring in Europe at the time, and treated it as marginal to their political concerns. The Europeans who sent their embassies to the court were disappointed in finding that for the Mughals they were unworthy of equal status, or even of the respect they saw the Mughals extending to the Safavid and the Ottoman embassies. In the Mughal perception, the Europeans came from a place that was socially and culturally inferior not only to the Mughal Empire but also the other Asian empires in the Islamic world—the Safavids, the Ottomans and the Uzbeks.