Chapter - III

ROLE OF PRIME MINISTERS IN EXPANSION AND CONSOLIDATION OF MUGHAL EMPIRE

The Mughal Empire was a powerful organisation based on constant military expansion. Since expansion through warfare was the primary concern of the Mughal emperors they invested a bulk of their resources on their military strength. This process of territorial expansion and consolidation depended as much upon the strategic perception of the emperors as well as their advisors.

In the absence of a clear cut demarcation between civil and military duties the emperors commanded the services of a body of ‘warrior aristocrats’ who functioned both as military commanders and administrative advisors. Since the imperial system depended heavily upon the warlike qualities and administrative skills of these officials the Mughal empire can be termed as a patrimonial bureaucratic system.\(^1\) Based on Weber’s model of the patrimonial state the regime was therefore seen as an extension of the household of the ruler, whose authority was an extension of that of the father in a patriarchal family.\(^2\)

In their capacity as the leaders of the nobility and the aristocracy, coupled with their proximity to the monarch, different prime ministers made significant contribution towards territorial expansion and consolidation of the Mughal state; their wise deliberations often

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Nizamuddin Khalifa, Babur’s Prime Minister during his four year tenure as ruler of northern India, who had served him for a long time prior to his coming to India, actually participated in all of Babur’s military campaigns, evolving brilliant defence strategies and displaying brilliant statesmanship and organizing ability.

Mir Khalifa, belonged to a noble family of Khurasan. His father, Sultan Junaid Barlas, was one of the amirs of Sultan Hussain Mirza and had been his most loyal and devoted companion, since Babur’s Farghana days.

Nizamuddin Khalifa played a significant role in the famous battle of Panipat, a contest between Babur and Ibrahim Lodhi that ushered the Mughal dynasty in North India. In the arrangement at the battlefield Nizamudin Khalifa commanded the left centre along with others like Khwaja Mir-i-Miran, Ahmad Parvanchi, Tardi beg, Quch Beg and Mirza Beg Tarkhan.

The battle of Panipat was short and decisive in which superb tactics and able generalship of men like Khalifa won the war inspite of the vast numerical difference in the two armies. When Ibrahim Lodhi

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died along with sixteen thousands Afghans,\(^1\) Amir Khalifa was given the task of burying him where he had fallen.\(^2\) An indication of the degree of responsibility Nizamudin was entrusted with, can be had from the fact that it was he who was sent to Agra along with Amir Quli Beg to collect and forward to Babur a list of the property, valuables, treasury, horses, elephants, camels, tents, and slaves of the king.

Nizamudin Khalifa also rendered valuable service in the battle of Khanwa against Rana Sangram Singh. At a time when the Turkish army having heard a lot about the valour of the Rajputs, was totally demoralised, Nizamudin Khalifa remained unaffected by the general feeling of despair and frustration and supported Babur in rejecting the proposal\(^3\) of not facing the Rana's forces.

The army was chiefly drawn by Amir Khalifa who also supervised the work of preparation for the battle. A unique feature of the preparations was the use of novel engines of wood, resembling tripods. When placed in line they provided a cover for the musketeers as well as arrest for the muskets. In ordering the army to make these instruments of war Nizamudin Khalifa, Babur's ablest general and right hand man was killing "two birds with one stone".\(^4\) It strengthened Babur's army

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\(^1\) Babur, Baburnama, Vol. I and II, p. 474. It says that according to estimates made later the number was forty thousand or fifty thousand; Mohibbul Hasan, Babur, Founder of Mughal Empire in India, gives the number of people killed as fifty thousand, p. 80.

\(^2\) Ahmad Yadgar, Tarikh-i-Salatin Afghana, Eng. trans. Elliot & Dowson, Vol. V, p. 30; Abdul Qadir Badaoni, Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh, Vol. I, p. 442, states that Ibrahim was captured in the desert. This seems incorrect as all other sources say that he was killed at Panipat.

\(^3\) Babur, Baburnama, Vol. II, p. 556.

\(^4\) L.F. Rushbrooke Williams, An Empire Builder of the Sixteenth Century, pp. 146-147.
despite the disparity in the numerical strength of the two armies\(^1\).

Although the position of Nizamudin Khalifa in the course of the battle is not known for certain\(^2\) his role in Babur's success was tremendous. Eulogising Khalifa's services Babur remarked, "Khalifa did well in the campaign neglecting nothing of control, supervision, painstaking effort and diligence\(^3\) and was unremitting and indefatigable in his endeavours to put everything in order.

Nizamudin's support that contributed to the success at Khanwa established Babur's hegemony in Hindustan, shifting the centre of his power from Kabul to Hindustan. The next campaign undertaken by Babur was that of Chanderi,\(^4\) where Khalifa's wholehearted support contributed to the Mughal success. Khalifa also accompanied Babur in his expedition towards the East. Khalifa whose opinion and advice was highly valued by Babur displayed brilliant statesmanship and organizing ability, a pre-requisite of a successful general. He evolved brilliant defence strategies and it was he alone who rose to meet the situation in times of extreme distress remaining unruffled and boldly supporting his master when all others buckled under pressure. He was

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1 Babur had twelve thousand men at Panipat but as various chiefs joined him the number must have increased. Shyamal Das Kaviraj, *Vir Vinod*, Vol. I, p. 364. and Mohibbul Hasan, *Babur, Founder of Mughal Empire*, in India, p. 91 give the Rana's forces as two hundred thousand horses and footsoldiers. Contemporary sources like Nizamuddin Khalifa, *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, Vol II, p. 31, n2 and Gulbadan Begum *Humayan Nama*, also mention two lakh as Babur's cavalry which seems to be an exaggeration.

2 Abul Fazl believes that the rear of carts was supervised by him, whereas Mohibbul Hasan feels Nizamuddin fought on the right side of Babur, *Babur, Founder of Mughal Empire in India*, p. 92.


highly praised and rewarded for his services and the title of “Muqarrab al hazrat al Sultani al Darle Ae khaqan” was bestowed on him.¹

Besides his contribution in territorial expansion, the credit of consolidation of Babur’s empire also goes to Khalifa. Although Babur does not refer to Khalifa as Vakil or Wazir, contemporary sources do refer to him as the Vakil or ‘Prime Minister’.² The circumstances in which Babur found himself were not favourable for a separation of civil and military duties. Thus, as Prime Minister of the empire Khalifa was the chief of administration,³ holding charge of all civil and military affairs. He was endowed with all authority, enjoyed royal support and his command was like the command of a king.⁴

With rapid decline in the decision making faculties of the emperor during his last illness, Mir Khalifa had become the focus of all authority and Babur left the administration in his hands without going into the details himself.⁵ Khalifa, the vice-regent was the Prime Minister who acted as a link between the sovereign and the heads of various departments. And his position was very similar to some of the Wazirs of the Turkish period.⁶

Humayun faced many difficulties in his endeavour to retain and expand Babur’s conquests in India. The Wizarat, during his fragmented and unsettled tenure as emperor, also proved to be ineffective. His two

¹ Radhey Shyam Babur, p. 409.
⁵ Yusuf Hussain, Two Studies in Early Mughal History, p. 91; Radhey Shyam, Babur, p. 410.
Wazirs, Hindu Beg in the first phase and Qaracha Khan (when Humayun as a royal exile was trying to rebuild his strength) did not contribute in any outstanding way towards military success. Infact, Sher Khan who acquired the throne of India in 1540 A.D. attributed his success against the Mughals to the treachery of his senior nobility. His view was based on his experience of Humayun's Wazir Hindu Beg.

One sees the development of the Mughal tradition of Wazir with political, financial and military powers revived in the early days of Akbar's reign on account of two reasons. Firstly, his ancestors both Babur and Humayun had powerful Wazirs and secondly, Akbar at the age of thirteen could not alone muster the strength that was needed to face the enemies who endangered his position. Moreover, the exigency of the circumstances made necessary the appointment of an advisor with powers of a regent. In fact it was the dynamic personality and tireless endeavours made by Bairam Khan which established peace and brought stability in the country.

Bairam Khan was born in Badakhan and had moved to Balkh after his father's death. Having entered Humayun's service at the age of sixteen years he rose to be a powerful Amir and companion of the Mughal emperor.

Bairam Khan's contribution, both in terms of territorial expansion and consolidation of the Mughal empire, that helped Humayun to regain the throne of Hindustan and Akbar to realize his ambition of building a vast and enduring empire based on a strong political system and an efficient administrative machinery is very significant. The history of Humayun from his defeat and exile till his restoration and

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death is in fact the history of Bairam Khan as the leading performer. It was Bairam Khan who urged his master not to despair even when Humayun was at the lowest ebb of his career. He was also responsible for arranging help from the King of Persia. His perceptive leadership was responsible for the success of the Mughals in the battles of Machiwar and the more decisive encounter at Sirhind. These battles decided the fate of the Afghans by undoing the work of Chausa and Kanauj making Bairam Khan the undisputed hero of Mughal restoration. Infact even after the defeat of the Afghans in these battles, there were ample reasons that could have made the reconquest of India by Mughals a virtual impossibility, had it not been for Bairam Khan’s resolve and devotion. Therefore, his tenure as Regent and chief minister during Akbar’s minority has rightly been called the era of Bairam Khan when he ruled supreme with all the paraphennalia of royalty.

Bairam Khan possessed tremendous ability, excellence, able generalship and vigour and above all was devoted to the house of Timur. At the hour of crisis, when Humayun died before giving any stability to the empire that was surrounded by enemies, it was Bairam Khan who by the sole influence of his courage, firmness and excellent arrangements made the stream which had left its course return to its

4 Abdul Baqi Nihawandi in his Maasir-i-Rahimi places Bairam Khan and his son Abdur Rahim on level with Mughal Royalty requiring special studies on their contribution as Mughal surrogates. Sukumar Ray, Bairam Khan, M.H.A. Beg. ed. Institute of Central and West Asian studies, Karachi, 1992, p. 128.
channel and re-established his sovereignty. Akbar also entrusted the management of affairs to him and ordered that he should carry out what he thought proper and be without fear of any censure.

Bairam Khan's greatest contribution by way of stability was in keeping Humayun's death a secret in order to prepare for the unopposed succession of Akbar, without any resistance. It was a very wise step as the troubles between Babur's death and Humayun's succession proved. In view of the abnormal times Bairam Khan thought it dangerous to keep the throne vacant and announced Akbar's succession to the throne immediately, although his formal coronation took place three days later on 14th February, 1556 A.D.

Bairam Khan's role as Akbar's guardian was formidable in view of the rickety throne and vague kingdom the young prince inherited. All that they possessed were a few districts in Punjab. His greatness lies in managing Akbar's affairs, despite the unfavourable circumstances, in such an awe-inspiring manner that gave the young boy of fourteen a terrific start to his career of conquest and consolidation and also ensured his success.

Bairam Khan's role in the second Battle of Panipat (1556 A.D.) is undeniable. Three days before the battle Bairam Khan held a Durbar in order to encourage the nobles and inspire them. Realising that the
battle was to decide the future of the Mughals in India, he made the following speech to the nobles which reminds one of the memorable oration of Babur in a similar crisis before the battle of Khanwa:

"This is commencement of his Majesty's reign. This infidel has routed the whole army and is now making preparations against us. If you do your best in this business with one heart and soul, Hindustan is yours. I place my trust in God. If we fail in this, you whose homes are at a distance of about one thousand miles will not be able to find an asylum."1

The success in the battle of Panipat raised the prestige of Bairam Khan and made him a virtual dictator. In 1540 A.D., when he had escaped after the battle of Kanauj he was one of the amirs whose part in the battle was insignificant. But after 1556 A.D., in the post battle of Panipat phase, the history of Mughal kingdom in India was the biography of Bairam Khan.2 This was followed by the occupation of Delhi and Agra where huge treasures fell into his hands.

His next military success in the course of third and fourth years (1558-60 A.D.) was the consolidation of Akbar's dominion by bringing about the surrender of Gwalior in central India and the annexation of Jaunpur province in the east. This was followed by a campaign directed against Sikandar Sur leader of the Afghans, who was forced to take shelter in Mankot. Bairam Khan followed him into the hill country

1 Sukumar Ray, Bairam Khan, p. 147.
2 Ibid., p. 148.
via Dasuya¹ and made excellent arrangements for the siege that lasted six months.²

The crushing of Afghan power, accompanied by military successes undertaken under the supervision of the all important Bairam Khan resulted in aggressive military activity bringing the vital strongholds of a compact region between Lahore, Delhi, Agra and Jaunpur under Mughal control. Elphinston³ one remarks, "The real restoration of the House of Timur may be dated from this period and had been brought entirely through the exertions of Bairam Khan whose power was now at the highest pitch ever reached by a subject."³

Bairam Khan played an equally important role in consolidating the position of Akbar as an undisputed emperor. He was aware of the precarious condition of the Mughal empire and also that at such times of political uncertainty aspirations and claims of individuals were likely to be fulfilled. The ruthlessness with which he eliminated any and everyone who showed the slightest disregard for imperial authority showed his determination to strengthen Akbar's position.

Incidents like the arrest of Shah Abul Maali⁴, a very senior Mughal noble, who had shown signs of pride and rebellion by refusing to attend the Durbar held in honour of Akbar's accession goes to prove that Bairam Khan in his selfless devotion to the Mughal throne did not want to take any chances as far as royal authority was concerned.⁵

² Muhammad Arif Qandhari, Tarikh-i-Akbari, says the siege lasted eight months, pp. 77-78.
³ Elphinston, History of India, p. 496.
The Arrest of Shah Abu'l Maali
However, the enmity between Bairam Khan and Abul Maali could be traced to the battle of Sirhind where both of them had played an important part but the Khan-i-Khanan who was the moving spirit behind the success was not happy when Humayun out of fear of displeasing Abul Maali had refrained from giving due credit to him and cleverly ascribed the victory to Akbar.

The murder of Tardi Beg owing to whose feeble generalship the Mughals were defeated by Hemu at Delhi is yet another example of Bairam Khan's determination to assert and strengthen the position of Akbar. The Khan-i-Khanan saw that the destruction of Tardi Beg was essential in the interest of Akbar's authority and sent for him and had him put to death.1

Bairam Khan impressed upon Akbar that the execution of Tardi Beg was necessary as he had acted disloyally. Advising Akbar that compassion at such a crucial time would lead to dangerous consequences the Vakil-us-Sultanat made him approve of the severe measure. Abul Fazl does not fail to remark that the monarch left to himself would not have agreed to Tardi Beg being killed.2 Ferishtah also observes that he understood from the best informed men of the time that had Tardi Beg not been punished by way example “such was the condition of the Mughal army and the general feeling of those foreigners, in the army that the old scene of Sher Shah would have been acted over again”.3 This terrifying example of inexorable power produced at least one good effect by way of absolute obedience replacing the earlier insubordination.

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1 Nizamuddin Ahmad, Tabaqat-i-Akbari, Vol. III, p. 215; Badaoni, Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh, Vol. III, p. 7, says Tardi Beg was killed on account of his treachery. Nizamudin, on the other hand says there is no evidence of treachery against Tardi but he did display cowardice.
When Hemu, assuming the title of Raja Vikramjit, decided to fight the forces of Akbar (who was unsure of himself because of youth and inexperience) it was Bairam Khan who pledged by the soul of Humayun that he would be faithful to the young master. The way in which he put Hemu, who had dared to challenge Akbar by becoming a competitor, to death goes to show that the Wazir enjoyed the power of asserting his decisions on his benefactor by forcing him to slay an infidel and win for himself the little of ‘Ghazi’.

Bairam Khan convinced Akbar by saying “as this is our first success let your own august hand smite this infidel with the sword”. The prince acted accordingly and separated his head from his unclean body. Muhammad Arif Qandhari, a contemporary in Bairam Khan’s service who was also present, records that Akbar complied with the request of his Prime Minister and gave a blow of the sword to Hemu and Bairam Khan finished him off. The story of Akbar’s magnanimity and refusal to kill a fallen foe seems to be a later invention which was approved by Akbar himself as he could not justify his action in his mature years.

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2 A Champion, A hero especially one who fights against infidels.
3 Ahmad Yagar, Tarikh-i-Salatin-i-Afghana in Elliot and Dowson, Vol. V, pp. 65-66, but other contemporary writers are opposed to this. Ferishtah, History of Rise of Mahomedan Power, Vol. II, p. 189 says Akbar in order to fulfil the wishes of the protector drew his sword and touching the head of the captive with it became entitled to the appellation of Ghazi while Bairam drawing his own sabre severed the head of Hemu; Abul Fazl, Akbarnama, Vol. II, p. 67, says Akbar refused to slay the captive saying that there was nothing meritorious before God in such an act and thereupon Bairam Khan drawing his own sabre severed his head; Badaoni, Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh, Vol. II, p. 9 says Akbar declined to slay Hemu saying “why should I strike him now that he is already dead”? Bairam Khan then performing an act of religious warfare, was the first to strike his sword into Hemu’s body and following him Gada-i-Shaikh, and others made an end of Hemu. However, V.A. Smith, Akbar, p. 39, and Wolseley Haig, Cambridge History of India, Vol. IV, p. 72, accept the view that Akbar slew Hemu at the behest of his protector.
4 Sukumar Ray, Bairam Khan, p. 146.
Bairam Khan as *Vakil-us-Sultanat* also played an equally important part in streamlining the administrative process that was to be perfected by Akbar in later years. From this point of view his four year dominance reveals an intensive feature in the administrative history of northern India. He exercised all the sovereign powers in the name of the king who was behind the veil and the rule was that of the *Vakil*.\(^1\) He advised Akbar on appointments, dismissals, promotions and demotions. Although financial affairs were not under his direct control yet he received the returns from the heads of all financial departments and kept their abstracts.\(^2\) He and his group of supporters came to control the entire machinery of the state at the centre as well as in the provinces.

Bairam Khan’s dominant status as Akbar’s ‘*ataliq*’ and Prime Minister with all powers of administration and patronage left to his direction aroused the jealousy and opposition of the old Turkish nobility who resolved to get rid of the protector at any cost.\(^3\)

The four year regency of Bairam Khan was momentous for the history of India as well as to the reign of Akbar as it was during this period that despite the chaotic condition of the empire the young Akbar was securely placed on the throne of Delhi, internal dissidence stamped out and a regular administrative structure set up. It was the result of Bairam Khan’s efforts that the Mughal empire, notwithstanding its initial weakness, came to embrace the whole of Punjab and Multan, the territory of Delhi, the present Uttar Pradesh, including Jaunpur, Dholpur, Gwalior, Ajmer and Nagpur. Akbar

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\(^3\) Mohd Arif Qandhari agrees that he did commit certain deeds which offended the Emperor and in January-February 1560 he had finally acceded to do away with those conspiring against him. *Tarikh-i-Akbari*, p. 83. The date given by Arif Qandhari is the same as in *Akbarnama*, Vol. II, p. 94 and *Muntakhah-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. II, p. 36.
always nurtured feelings of love and kindness towards his guardian to whom he owed his throne. One of his farmans throws light on the feelings of the Emperor.¹

There could be no better testimony to Bairam Khan's worth than that recorded by the bigot Badaoni who could seldom see any good in a Shia.

"In wisdom, generosity, sincerity, goodness of disposition, submissiveness and heartily he surpassed all ... the second conquest of Hindustan and the building of the empire were due to his strenuous efforts, his valour and his wise policy".²

If Babur founded the Mughal Empire and Humayun lost it, Bairam Khan regained and restored it.³

In terms of their contribution towards the expansion and consolidation of the Mughal Empire in Akbar's time the role of the Hindu nobility was of immense value. Raja Todar Mal who occupied the highest place among them served the Mughal house with distinction and can easily be placed among the best of Akbar's nobles. Playing a multifarious role in civil and military affairs, Todar Mal excelled in both. His talents were recognized by Akbar who took him into confidence with regard to some very important administrative and political decisions of the time.

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¹ "...... whenever he acts according to this order we shall clear our heart with regard to him and entirely forgive his crimes and offences, and as his services are still appreciated and approved by us though he has received a thousand favours equal to them we desire that his name which has for years been celebrated in all countries for sincerity, devotion, obedience and reliability may not become notorious for rebellion, contumacy and sedition", Abul Fazl, Akbarnama, Vol. II, p. 161.


Akbar had decided against appointing a Vakil after the transfer of Muzaffar Khan to Bengal in 1579 A.D., but the vacancy was filled in 1582 A.D. by the promotion of Todar Mal who had held the post of Ashraf-i-Diwan\(^1\) and had distinguished himself as a soldier and general, a diplomat and above all a financier. No other individual in Akbar’s reign, not even Muzaffar Khan, was equally at ease in all branches of administration as Todar Mal was.

Todar Mal, a talented man of comparatively low origin rose to occupy the highest office in the empire by virtue of what Abul Fazl calls his “incomparable courage, administrative skill and freedom from avarice”. The first and only Hindu to become Prime Minister (Vakil) under any Mughal emperor, he came to symbolise the socio-religious priorities Akbar believed in. His appointment justifies the emperor’s all consuming desire to bind Hindustan into a bond of unity that rose above race and religion.

Todar Mal was the son of a poor peasant of the village of Laharpur in Oudh and was a Lahori Khattri.\(^2\) While working under Sher Shah he gave evidence of great clarity of thought and capacity. When power shifted from the Afghans to the Chagtais, Todar Mal continued in state service until Akbar recognising in him a genius for statecraft entrusted him with responsible positions from where he rose until his appointment as Mushrif-i-Diwan — a capacity in which he earned undying fame for himself and his master. Owing to his devotion and

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\(^1\) Also, known as the Mushrif-i-Diwan, it was a post higher than that of revenue minister but lower than that of Prime Minister, A.L. Srivastava Akbar the Great, Vol. I, p. 76.

\(^2\) Shah Nawaz Khan, Maasir-ul-Umara, Vol. II, Pt.II, p. 951, says it is not sure whether Raja was born in Lahore in Punjab but the statement that he was a Lahori Khattri is correct for it is admitted by the people of Laharpur that his father was a Punjabi Khattri who came to Lahorpur and married the daughter of a Chepari Khattri and that Todar Mal was born there. Abul Fazl, Ain-i-Akbari, Vol. I, pp. 376-379; Kumud Rajan Das, Raja Todar Mal, Calcutta, 1979, pp. 102-103.
competence he gradually became one of the most influential hindus of Akbar's court.¹

The Raja's role in territorial expansion of the Mughal empire can hardly be over emphasised. Early in his career, he was instrumental in Mughal victory over Chittor² in 1567 A.D.. Todar Mal who was incharge of one section of the army fought with great zeal and along with Qasim Khan he supervised the construction of 'sabats'.³ So diligently was he involved in the campaign that he took neither rest nor food for one day and two nights. Their efforts were crowned with success when Chittor fell after a siege of six months.⁴

Akbar's confidence in Todar Mal's ability as a general of great excellence is also revealed from the fact that when Akbar was contemplating the second expedition to Bengal and deployed a large army for the purpose, he appointed Todar Mal, who was known for his trustworthiness and reliability, to assist Munim Khan.⁵ Though the leadership and planning in this campaign were Khan-i-Khanan's share yet in the actual campaigning, encouraging the soldiers, making dashing marches, chastising the recalcitrant and opposing the forces, the Raja played a more distinguished part.⁶

¹ The others were Mansingh, Bhagwan Das, Bidhi Chand, Jaimal Kachwaha etc. A.L. Srivastava, Akbar the Great, Vol. I, p. 75.
³ Sabats were covered pathways that helped besieger to reach the walls of the fort in case of a siege. Nizamuddin Ahmad, Tabaqat-i-Akbari, Vol. II, p. 344; Abul Fazl, Akbarnama, Vol. II, p. 471.
Since the conquest of Bengal was a prolonged one, Todar Mal was entrusted with the duty of reporting to the emperor about the strength and temper of troops and their state of preparedness. When Munim Khan was appointed governor of Bengal, Todar Mal was associated with him. The enthusiasm and wholeheartedness with which Todar Mal was involved in building up of the Mughal empire can be ascertained from the Battle of Takaroi in Orissa. Even when Munim Khan was seriously injured and Khan-i-Alam was killed, Todar Mal remained unnerved, and raised the morale of the soldiers by the following words,

"The ray of Shahin Shah’s fortune is shedding light on the head of the courageous servants, if the days of one are ended and if the feet of another have slipped — the breeze of victory is about to blow and light of success is emerging from the Horizon of hope".2

Todar Mal showed exemplary resolve in holding firm against the enemy and prevented the Afghans from destroying the Mughal army. This victory permitted Akbar to formally annex Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. After the battle ended, Todar Mal in his farsightedness and political maturity saw no sense in the peace negotiations with Daud. His apprehension proved correct as subsequent events showed that Daud was insincere. However, Iqtidar Alam Khan attributes Todar Mal’s resistance to a selfish motive since Orissa had been promised to him as jagir by Akbar.3

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1 One of the highest distinctions were conferred on this Hindu, when the alam and Naqqira, an imperial banner and kettle drum were given to him. Abul Fazl, Akbarnama, Vol. III, p. 98; Ain-i-Akbari, Vol. I, p. 376; Shah Nawaz Khan Maasir-ul-Umar, Vol. II, Part II, p. 952.
3 Iqtidar Alam Khan, Political Biography of a Mughal Noble - Munim Khan, Khan-i-Khanan, p. 78.
Later, when trouble broke out in Bengal,\(^1\) Akbar deputed Todar Mal and Khan-i-Jahan, the governor of Punjab to recover Bengal. Their exertions, skills and capacities led to imperial victory.\(^2\)

The loyalty and devotion with which Todar Mal served the cause of strengthening the Mughal empire is also revealed in the successful restoration of normalcy in Gujrat. Since Wazir Khan, the governor, had failed to deal with the peculiar political and administrative problems of the province after the famine of 1574-75 A.D., Akbar deputed Todar Mal who strove in a laudable manner to give respite to the country. When he was engaged in carrying out the Emperor’s orders, Muzaffar Hussain Mirza tried to create disturbance\(^3\) but Todar Mal living up to his master’s expectations stood firm against the enemy and was ultimately crowned with success.\(^4\)

When disorder in Kashmir became prolonged and a number of Akbar’s officers were killed, the emperor deciding to wage a war against the rebel Afghan tribes was convinced that none other than his Prime Minister Todar Mal should be entrusted with ‘operation revenge’. The expedition was to be led along with prince Murad, but Todar Mal knowing fully well the handicaps of a joint command submitted discreetly that the prince should not be exposed to the hazards of

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1 Todar Mal’s suspicion of Daud’s disloyalty had proved correct. After Munim Khan’s death Daud took advantage of the situation and created disturbance. But ultimately fear of Akbar and Todar Mal’s tactful handling of the situation proved sufficient to meet the situation. Muhammad Arif Qandhari, Tarikh-i-Akbari, p. 250.


3 Nizamuddin Ahmad says Muzaffar Hussain was the son of Ibrahim Hussain Mirza who was the grandson of Kamran Mirza. He became the centre of disturbance, Tabaqat-i Akbari, Vol. II, pp. 500-502.

warfare. Akbar read the message and cancelled the appointment of Murad. Todar Mai, a great general that he was, led the imperial army with extreme caution, built forts as he progressed, avoided frontal attacks on Afghan positions and ultimately succeeded in inflicting heavy losses on the enemy.

Again when in 1587 A.D. Akbar learnt that the province of Badakshan had been captured by the Uzbeks who also threatened Kabul, he sent two armies under Raja Birbal and Bhagwan Das but since both these armies were driven back, Akbar as a last resort sent his dependable commander, Raja Todar Mal, in assistance with Man Singh. The Raja manoeuvered with great caution and was successful in completely defeating the tribes in the Khyber pass proving that his able generalship could put life in the Mughal army.

Despite the confidence that Akbar had in his abilities as a general and administrator, it is difficult to ascertain whether Todar Mal enjoyed all the powers of his office. Since it was against Akbar’s policy to make the Prime Minister head of the administrative setup, the Raja must have exercised the powers of the Vakil whom Islamic jurists call the Wazir of second category. Nevertheless Akbar had full faith in his abilities and turned to him for advice on all important matters, and Todar Mal on his part fulfilled the duties of his elevated office with ability, extraordinary diligence and loyalty.

In 1589 A.D. Raja Todar Mal sent a petition to Akbar that since old age and sickness had prevailed on him he should be allowed to retire from service. Akbar who knew that the Raja was keeping indifferent health, agreed to his request but changed his mind and

1 Abul Fazl Akbarnama, Vol.III, p. 733, says Todar Mal represented to Akbar “..... is it proper that auspicious son (Murad) should be sent to conquer distant countries and to subdue great rulers and that the present work should be made over to a servant”. He also revealed his love and concern for the royal family in this way.
asked him to come back as "no worship of God was equal to the soothing of the oppressed." How indispensable Raja Todar Mal had become for the Empire can be gauged from this fact that even Akbar felt his presence essential to carry on the work of administration effectively. However, Raja died very soon in November, 1589 A.D.

With the exception of the Sufi brothers, Abul Fazl and Faizi, Raja Todar Mal was the most competent official in imperial service. He was unquestionably the most distinguished among Hindus wielding his pen as well as his sword with equal skill. Even Abul Fazl who criticised the Raja for his orthodoxy admitted that in "uprightness, straightforwardness, service, kind nature, arranging expeditions, courage, zeal and administration of Indian affairs he was unique in his age."

Todar Mal as Akbar's subordinate worked in complete accordance with his sovereign's ideals and goals. Their way of thinking was similar, so were the ways in which they wanted to transform their plans into concrete achievements. If Akbar genuinely desired to strengthen his empire by bringing two major communities (Hindus and Muslims) close to one another, Todar Mal made use of the administrative machinery at his command to assist him and facilitate the process of building a vast and enduring empire.

Abdur Rahim, Khan-i-Khanan, who was appointed Prime Minister after Todar Mal was not very influential in administrative measures but his talents as Akbar's military commander who made a significant contribution in territorial expansion of the empire is noteworthy. Abdur

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5 By making it compulsory to keep all records and accounts in Persian he urged Hindus to achieve proficiency in Persian and aspire for responsible offices in the Government.
Rahim was the son and heir of Bairam Khan, an illustrious noble of Akbar who rose to be the Vakil-us-Sultanat of the Empire. Born in Lahore in 1556 A.D., he was only four years old when his father fell a martyr at the hands of the Afghans in Pattan in Gujarat. The young boy was taken into Akbar's care and on account of his father's valuable services became acceptable to all and was later on to be adorned with the title of Khan-i-Khanan, once enjoyed by his father. In 1576 A.D., he was raised to the Mansab of 4000 and appointed governor of Gujrat. Abdur Rahim, also called Mirza Khan, served Akbar in several military assignments like the campaign against Mewar led by Bhagwan Das and Man Singh. He was successful in punishing miscreants and establishing peace in the vicinity of Ajmer where the killing of an important official by the nephew of Raja Bharmal had created disturbances.

Abdur Rahim, Khan-i-Khanan, made a significant contribution in establishing Akbar's authority and sway in Gujrat. When Sultan Muzaffar of Gujrat, taking advantage of some discontentment among imperial officers, over Akbar's policies, expelled the Mughal governor and captured Ahmedabad in 1583 A.D., Akbar sent Abdur Rahim for the task of defeating him. Keeping in mind the group rivalries within the nobility, Akbar sent only those nobles with him who had no affinity with those who were hostile to Abdur Rahim. In an engagement at Sarkhej, three kilometers from Ahmedabad, the Mughal army under

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Abdur Rahim defeated Muzaffar Gujarati who fled, while many of his men were slain. Muzaffar made another attempt at raising sedition but was defeated and expelled from imperial territories. Akbar honoured Abdur Rahim with the title of Khan-i-Khanan with a robe of honour, a jewelled belt, a dagger and also conferred on him the tumantogh.

Abdur Rahim after sending a body of men in pursuit of Muzaffar occupied himself in “arranging the affairs of the soldiery and raiyyat in Gujrat”. Muzaffar Khan was not captured and continued to fight tenaciously at Kutch and Kathiawar and was arrested only after ten years in 1593 A.D.

The Khan-i-Khanan was also responsible for extending Akbar’s influence over Sindh in 1592 A.D, the imperial army including a hundred elephants and a park of artillery besieged the fort of Sehwan and moved forward to Nasrpur. On learning that Mirza Jani Beg, backed by all the zamindars of the province, was marching forward with almost hundred warships, canoes and artillery, the Khan-i-Khanan showed exemplary courage by carrying on fight although he had just twenty five warships. When Jani Beg raised an entrenchment around his army, Abdur Rahim erected batteries that slew the enemy’s men despite the entrenchment. The siege continued for two months and the imperial army inspite of being reinforced with money, weapons and

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artillery, suffered great scarcity and hardship. In another attempt Mirza Jani Beg fortified himself at Anwarpur (Unarpur) about twenty five kilometers north-west of Sindh. The Khan-i-Khanan's unfailing efforts reduced Jani Beg to such a painful state that he was forced to submit to him and in all humility accompanied him to court to render homage to Akbar. He even agreed to give his daughter in marriage to Mirza Iraj, Abdur Rahim's son. Abdur Rahim was honoured with many royal favours and rose to the Mansab of four thousand. He even received Thatta as his fief.

Following the conquest of Sindh, Akbar wanted to acquire Qandahar as an effective possession of the fort was essential for the successful defence of Akbar's North-Western frontier and for the smooth flow of commercial relations with the West. Although Qandahar was under Muzaffar Hussain, but on account of his internal quarrel with Rustam Mirza, it had become an easy target for the Uzbeks. A strong force was deputed for the conquest of Qandahar under the generalship of Abdur Rahim whose reputation as a great military leader frightened Muzaffar Hussain and forced him to surrender. Abdur Rahim's success resulted in pushing the North-Western frontier of the empire to the Hindukush mountains which was recognized as the boundary between Mughal Empire and Turan by Abdullah Khan Uzbek the ruler of Transoxiana in 1594 A.D.

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3 Shaikh Farid Bhakkari, The Dhakirat-ul-Khawanin, p. 27; Afzal Hussain, Nobility under Akbar, A Study of Family Groups, p. 32.
4 Abul Fazl, Akbarnama, Eng. trans. Vol. III, p. 886. Since Humayun had given it to Shah Tahmaasp, Akbar had so far not thought of taking it back.
Abdur Rahim, Khan-i-Khanan, was also actively involved in Akbar's plan of the conquest of the Deccan\textsuperscript{1} although Akbar could not acquire much success in the area during his life time. The first foray of the Mughals in the Deccan had been as early as 1561 A.D. when Pir Muhammad entered Khandesh in pursuit of Baz Bahadur, the ruler of Malwa. When Akbar was chastising the rebels in Malwa, he demanded the submission of Khandesh and received a princess as bride to the Mughal court as a symbol of its submission. On account of several preoccupations he ignored the Deccan for the next twenty seven years. However in 1591 A.D., he revived the issue of allegiance from Bijapur, Golkunda and Khandesh.

Akbar's correspondence with Abdur Rahim in this regard is proof of the emperor's confidence in the Khan-i-Khanan's advice on the matter. In a farman addressed to Abdur Rahim there is a long description of the Deccan problem and Akbar consulting him about the proposed campaign.\textsuperscript{2}

When in 1595 A.D., a chaotic succession struggle in Ahmadnagar provided an opportunity for the Mughals to enter the Deccan, it was Abdur Rahim who along with Prince Murad as leader of the campaign was sent there.\textsuperscript{3} However, the imprealists were repulsed and the siege was lifted in March 1596 A.D., the main reason being the failure of prince Murad and Abdur Rahim as joint commanders to act together. It is believed that during the course of the campaign Abdur was not very keen on seizure of Ahmednagar and in fact some of his

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{1}] Abdul Baqi Nihawandi, \textit{Maasir-i-Rahimi}, Eng. trans. Elliot and Dowson, Vol. VI, p.241.
\item[\textsuperscript{2}] Abul Fazl, \textit{Akbarnama}, Vol. III, pp. 741-42.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
associates were secretly helping the enemy.\textsuperscript{1} It was in these circumstances that the imperial forces withdrew from Ahmednagar. When Murad died in 1599 A.D. and was replaced with prince Daniyal as Mughal viceroy, again it was Abdur Rahim who was asked to accompany him.

In an attempt to establish Akbar's sway in the Deccan, fresh attempts to besiege the fort of Ahmednagar were made in 1600 A.D.. Chand Bibi who proposed an agreement was murdered and the siege continued. Miyan Khwaja Suhail headed the combined forces of the four principalities of the Deccan and confronted the Khan-i-Khanan who had just about twenty thousand horsemen with him. It was in this battle that the Khan-i-Khanan displayed exemplary courage. Miyan Suhail was successful in killing many soldiers of the royal army and demoralising the rest, but Abdur Rahim along with his horsemen remained steadfast in the battlefield. When his subordinate, Miyan Daulat Khan asked the Khan-i-Khanan where to find him in the event of retreat the Khan replied "find me under the corpses of the killed, rest assured that there is no errand (before me) but to die".\textsuperscript{2} The royal army eulogized their leader's courage and attacked Suhail Khan with such force that his army was forced to retreat and all the elephants, artillery and guns fell into the hands of the imperial army. The vanquished Suhail Khan left the battlefield to save himself. Akbar honoured Abdur Rahim, by marrying his daughter to prince Daniyal.

The Khan-i-Khanan became the Mughal viceroy of Deccan after Daniyal's death in 1604 A.D. However his intervention in the struggle between Malik Ambar and Raju Deccani was not in imperial interests

\textsuperscript{1} Von Noer gives a graphic account of the differences between Abdur Rahim and Murad in \textit{The Emperor Akbar}, Vol. II, 1973, pp. 350-353.

\textsuperscript{2} Farid Shaikh Bhakkari, \textit{The Dhakirat-ul-Khawanin}, p. 30; Abdul Baqi Nihawandi, \textit{Maasir-i-Rahimi}, Eng.trans. Elliot and Dowson, Vol. VI, p. 242, also discusses the Khan-i-Khanan's military achievements in Deccan.
and caused some embarrassments for them, leading to suspicions of Abdur Rahim not being loyal to the Mughal cause.¹

At the time of Akbar’s death, Abdur Rahim was serving in the Deccan along with his two sons Mirza Iraj and Darab Khan but the Khan-i-Khanan was unsuccessful in preventing the Deccan from throwing off the Mughal yoke and even failed to prevent the conquered territories from being lost. After his accession in 1606 A.D., Jahangir sent Abdur Rahim to the Deccan in 1608 A.D.² but despite the promises, no success could be achieved and the Khan-i-Khanan was on the contrary held responsible for the reverses suffered by the imperialists.

Jahangir was fortunate like his father in having the services of efficient Wazirs who helped in carrying the administrative reforms of Akbar and contributing towards the strengthening of the political set up. Among these Mirza Ghiyas Beg better known as Itmad-ud-Daulah,³ Jahangir’s Wazir from 1611-1622 A.D. made a significant contribution towards providing vitality to the empire, although his name is not associated with high powered military successes. Every contemporary writer has borne testimony to the sterling qualities⁴ of this Wazir who was known as the open ear of the court and who by reputation was just, fair and compassionate. Itmad-ud-Daulah was exceptionally well educated and skillful in both writing and transacting business.⁵

¹ Shaikh Farid Bhakkari, *Dhakirat-ul-Khawanin*, p. 31. It is believed that the Khan-i-Khanan had friendly relations with the Deccan rulers and had been declared a rebel by Abul Fazl, Radhey Shyam, *Life and Times of Malik Ambar*, Delhi, 1968, p. 69.
³ Itmad-ud-daulah was a title given to Nur Jahan’s father by Jahangir on his accession. It meant pillar of the government.
Mirza Ghias Beg was the son of Khwaja Muhammad Sharif who was the chief minister of Sultan Beglar Begi of Khurasan. He enjoyed the same position under Qazaq Khan, son and successor of Beglar Begi. He later got the favour of Shah Tahmasp Safavi and was appointed minister of Yezd, a province in Persia. On the death of his patron in 1577 A.D., Ghias Beg seeing no possibility of any opening for himself decided to migrate to Hindustan. He faced great hardships on the way and finally met Malik Masud who directed him to the court of Akbar at Fatehpur Sikri. He began his career with an appointment by Akbar to a modest mansab of three hundred horse and rose to become the Diwan-i-Buyutat, incharge of buildings, at the Imperial court in 1596 A.D.

It was undoubtedly his fate that brought him from a position, where he was on the verge of destruction in his native place to the helm of affairs in one of the most magnificent empires of the times. On Jahangir's accession in 1605 A.D. Mirza Ghias Beg was, honoured with the title of Itmad-ud-Daulah, 'pillar of the government', and a mansab of 1500. Successive promotions followed in the next few years, and in 1611 A.D. when Jahangir married Mehrunissa, Itmad-ud-Daulah in recognition of his past service and competence was made the

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2 Ghias Beg's failure to get a foothold in his country can also be attributed to the political chaos and confusion that followed the death of Shah Tahmasp Safawi. A.K. Sarkar, "Itmad-ud-Daulah, A Sketch of his Life and Career", Q.R.H.S, Vol. I, p. 154.
3 Malik Masud, a man of notable background was the caravan leader who relieved Ghias Beg's family of their misery. Shah Nawaz Khan, Maasir-ul-Umara, p. 1073; Abul Fazl, Ain-i-Akbari, Vol. I, p. 573; Beni Prasad, History of Jahangir, pp. 159-160; C. Pant, Nurjahan and her Family, Dan Dewed pub. Allahabad, 1978, p. 27.
For the first time since Jahangir’s accession a single man was appointed chief Wazir of the empire in the real sense of the word. This change in the existing state of affairs reflects Jahangir appreciation of Itmad-ud-Daulah’s extraordinary talent and unquestionable efficiency.

Itmad-ud-Daulah’s appointment to the Wizarat is generally viewed as a direct outcome of the marriage of NurJahan with Jahangir for his advancement in subsequent years cannot be fully explained without reference to this matrimonial alliance. The suggestion that the good fortune of Itmad-ud-Daulah’s family was solely due to Nur Jahan’s influence comes from early chroniclers like Mutamad Khan, Shahnawaz Khan, and Mutammad Hadi and is endorsed by later writers; but recent researchers like Nurul Hasan, Chandra Pant, Rekha Misra, and K.S. Lal have questioned their theory by arguing that the rise of the family had begun during the reign of Akbar and only strengthened by the matrimonial alliance and dedicated service on the part of Itmad-ud-Daulah’s family.

Itmad-ud-Daulah was not only a loyal courtier but a minister whose services, as Jahangir often remarked, were conspicuously

4. C.Pant, Nuriahan and her Family, pp. 50-52, dispels the commonly prevalent myth that during the reign of Jahangir power was wielded entirely by Nur Jahan who used this power for boosting her family’s position.
5. Rekha Misra, Women in Mughal India, 1526-1748, Munshiram Manohar Lal, 1967, p. 34, argues that “the existence of a Junta is not fully supported by contemporary or other reliable documents and that the theory is based on speculation and not substantiated by facts.”
6. K.S. Lal, The Mughal Harem, Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi, 1988, pp. 79-82, believes that it is unjust to assign pure political aspiration to Nurjahan’s acts of interference in political matters. He highlights the non-political and altruistic traits of Nur Jahan’s personality.
intelligent, judicious and dependable. Jahangir often acclaimed his unusual perceptiveness and complemented him on the dedication towards the Mughal ruling house. He remarked:

"He was a wise and perfect Wazir .... Though the weight of such a kingdom was on his shoulders no one ever went to Itmad-ud-Daulah with a petition or on business, who turned from him in an injured frame of mind. He showed loyalty to the sovereign and yet left pleased and hopeful him who was in need. In fact this was a speciality of his."!

The general state of affairs under Itmad-ud-Daulah's tenure as Wazir was one of peace and prosperity for the empire which contributed to giving it strength and at the same time freeing the emperor from the major responsibilities of government. Itmad-ud-Daulah enjoyed the total confidence of the emperor who held his Wazir's goodwill towards him very dear. He was of immense help to the emperor in deciding important matters like the release of Diyanat Rai from the Gwalior fort where he had been a captive and return his confiscated property\(^2\) to him. On Itmad-ud-Daulah's advice Raja Man Singh was appointed the leader of the army that was to attack the fort of Kangra\(^3\).

As the pivot of the country (Madar-ul-Mulk), Itmad-ud-Daulah enjoyed special privileges and was rewarded with honours that no other minister on record had ever seen. Acknowledging him as a well wisher of the royal family, Jahangir even allowed the women of the harem to go


\(^3\) Ibid., Vol. I, p. 336.
unveiled before him.\(^1\) Jahangir’s regard for Itmad-ud-Daulah is also reflected from his once removing the imperial turban from his own head and placing it on Itmad-ud-Daulah as a special honour.\(^2\)

If Jahangir showed extraordinary favours to Itmad-ud-Daulah it was more due to his immense faith in the latter’s administrative ability than to the matrimonial alliance with his daughter. As Beni Prasad remarks. “He would have risen to high office in any circumstance but since he became the emperor’s father-in-law his ascent in the hierarchy was extra-ordinarily rapid.”\(^3\)

Scholars are not unanimous in their opinion about the extent of Jahangir’s interest in the affairs of the state but contemporary writers do agree that he allowed administrative responsibilities to drift off his hands.\(^4\) The disintegration of a state ruled by an inactive and indulgent emperor like Jahangir was not uncommon in the medieval times but such a possibility was largely prevented by the astuteness and efficiency of Itmad-ud-Daulah.

In terms of his contribution towards strengthening of Mughal empire it would be improper to say that he brought about a radical change in the administrative set up. Nevertheless he contributed to a great extent towards the smooth running of the administrative machinery by regulating the internal affairs of the country and providing it with a cohesion that enabled to steer the country out of

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3. Beni Prasad, History of Jahangir, p. 120.
4. Francisco Palsaert, Jahangir’s India, The Remonstrantie of F.Palsaert, Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delli, 1972, p.50, says “He [Jahangir] is king in name only.... The king does not trouble himself with public affairs but behaves as if they are no concern of his.”
danger. An idea about his hold on the administration and his role in
the building up of the empire can be had from the fact that at his death
a great sense of loss was felt by the kingdom.

Itmad-ud-Daulah had been, except for some financial
irregularities,\(^1\) a man of impeccable character. His unquestionable
loyalty to the emperor brought him admiration even from his
adversaries. Although other contemporary chronicles are silent about
the administrative measures adopted by Itmad-ud-Daulah, Alexander
Dow observes:

\[\text{"agriculture which had been neglected was encouraged,}
\text{many provinces dislocated by former disturbances and}
\text{wars were cultivated, security of property was given to the}
\text{farmer, the industry of the mechanic was protected. The}
\text{country assumed a new face. The useful arts were revived}
\text{and flourished in the cities .... the revenue of the empire}
\text{gradually increased .... No distinction was made in the}
\text{administration of justice between Mahomedan and}
\text{Hindu."}\(^2\)

However, we cannot accept Dow's statement completely,
especially when one takes into account the picture of agricultural
conditions provided by the contemporary chroniclers and foreign

\(^1\) Greed was perceived as one of his few faults. Muhammad Hadi said, "Mirza Ghias
Beg was so charitably disposed, that no one ever left his door dissatisfied, but in
the taking of bribes, he was most uncompromising and fearless, **Tatimma-i-
Wakiat-i-Jahangiri**, Eng.trans. Elliot and Dowson, Vol. VI, p. 397; Van Den

\(^2\) Alexander Dow, *the History of Hindostan, from the Death of Akbar to the
travellers where conditions of peasants were described as far from satisfactory.¹

Itmad-ud-Daulah’s courage and genius lay in strengthening of the polity. All contemporary writers bear witness to his active participation, long experience in imperial service, remarkable self control, undisputed sincerity, and farsightedness which made him an astute politician of the age. It is quite possible that Nur Jahan who is credited with shaping imperial policies during the period of her ascendancy could not have shouldered all responsibility without her father’s guidance and support.

Itmad-ud-Daulah’s loyalty to the Mughal throne is also reflected from his continuing to look after the affairs of the kingdom and ordering of civil and military matters even after the death of his wife Asmat Begum² who had been his strength and constant companion. He died three months and twenty days after her death.³ Beni Prasad remarks, “from a penniless adventure he had risen to the first place in the most magnificent empire of the world and left a name for himself in sagacity and learning”.⁴ The whole empire mourned the death of the Wazir. The following verse reveals the emperor’s feelings through this terrible event:

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¹ Palsaert, *Jahangir’s India. The Remonstrantie of F. Palsaert*, writes “so much is wrung from the peasants that even dry bread is scarcely left for them for their food.” He further writes peasants were so cruelly and pitilessly oppressed that the fields lay unsown and grew into wilderness, p. 47.

² The factors that contributed to his personal rise to power were his innate qualities and the cooperation that he received from his gifted family... the assistance of his wife Asmat Begum being of inestimable value in this respect. Ashok Kumar Sarkar, "Itmad-ud-Daulah, A Sketch of his Life and Career", *Q.R.H.S.* Vol. X, p. 151.


By the reckoning of the eye there is one frame less.
By wisdom's reckoning the lessening is more than thousands.¹

Noted for his intelligent grasp of the complexities of a situation, Itmad-ud-Daulah's blend of severity and moderation, feeling for the distressed and above all devotion to the throne endeared him to the people who looked upon him as a father figure and it was the love and respect that he received from the emperor and his friends that was immensely responsible for making his career so successful as well as meaningful to the Mughal throne.

Ever since the reorganization of the administrative system under Akbar, the Vakil had disappeared as an administrative officer and the title was retained as an honorific one² and the office of the Diwan emerged as one of prime importance in the Mughal bureaucracy.³

Sadullah Khan, a reputed scholar, was brought into politics by the emperor himself.⁴ He was a scion of a rather obscure family of Chiniot⁵ in the Lahore province and a descendent of Bani Tamin Quraish.⁶ A man of great intelligence and judgment, Sadullah Khan was first appointed to the revenue ministry on the recommendation of Sadr-i-Sudur, Musavi Khan. After his appointment as Mir Saman in 1643 A.D., he rose to the post of Diwan-i-kul in 1645 A.D. which he

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² Asaf Khan was the last noble who was appointed as Vakil under Jahangir.
⁴ Firdoz Anwar, _Nobility under the Mughals_, 1628-1658, p. 188, Sadullah Khan’s reputation as a scholar had come to the notice of the Emperor during his visit to Lahore.
⁵ Chiniot was situated on the bank of the river Chenab and was in the Jhang District. _Imperial Gazetteer X_, p. 284. It is called Jhanwat in Irwin’s translation of Manucci’s _Storia Do Mogor_.
continued to hold till his death in 1656 A.D. This long tenure of almost eleven years remains unsurpassed during the reign of Shah Jahan.

Sadullah Khan’s rise was primarily due to his personal merit, efficiency and loyalty. Being a non-Khanazad and a personal choice of the emperor it indicated the recognition of merit against distinctions of birth, rank and wealth. His ability coupled with devotion to service made him receive a constant and consistent rise in Mansabs. When appointed Prime Minister he was raised to the rank of 5000 and finally achieved a high mansab of 7000, a rank he continued to enjoy till his death.

Sadullah Khan was actively involved in military service to the Mughal empire. Shah Jahan had always been keen to test the limits of Mughal power by recovering the Timurid homelands in Central Asia. After a request from the Uzbek ruler Nazar Muhammad Khan, Shah Jahan sent Murad against Balkh in 1646 A.D. The prince was able to conquer Balkh. However, within a month, owing to inhospitable conditions in the area the prince wanted to return. When Shah Jahan failed to convince him against returning he sent none other than his efficient Wazir Sadullah Khan to take charge of country and entrusted him with its entire management as well as making the revenue settlement of the province. The set of instructions issued to


3 Abdul Hamid Lahori, *Badshahnama*, Eng.trans. Vol. VII, Elliot and Dowson, says although the King on account of the confidence he reposed in Sadullah Khan and power of decision he possessed, never tolerated his separations from the court, yet need was felt for a trusted person who might possess such a position and experience that all might rely upon his word and action ... and entertain fear at his disapproval; hence the King decided to send Sadullah Khan to Balkh.
issued to Sadullah Khan indicate the position he enjoyed and the trust Shah Jahan had in his abilities. Sadullah Khan finished his work in twenty two days and returned to Kabul in September 1646 A.D., after restoring order and tranquility and rescuing the country from a dismal state. The emperor rewarded him with a khilat and a thousand increase in mansab for effectively carrying out his orders. Soon afterwards on the occasion of lunar weighing he was promoted to the rank of 7,000 with 7,000 horses and gifted an Arab horse with a golden saddle.

Similarly when Shah Jahan received the information that Qandahar had been taken over by Shah Abbas of Persia he ordered Aurangzeb and his trustworthy Diwan, Sadullah Khan to advance to Qandhar with thirty five famous Amirs and their contingents, Sadullah Khan obeyed the orders implicitly and planned his strategy well. With remarkable enthusiasm, in spite of considerable loss of lives he constructed trenches and dug mines. He opened siege by pushing on five divisions of the army. In the end he was able to break Persian offensive but this was the only relieving feature of the first Qandhar expedition. The siege dragged on but was ultimately abandoned on Sadullah Khan’s advice. A second attempt to capture Qandhar in 1652

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1 He was instructed to: (a) inquire into the conditions of the people and reduce the rent if necessary. (b) to award compensation for damage caused by army. (c) to advance loans to those in need (d) to recommend cases for increments. Abdul Hamid Lahori, Badshahnama, Elliot and Dowson, Vol. VII, p. 71.


3 Abdul Hamid Lahori, Badshahnama, Elliot and Dowson, Vol. VII, p. 71.

4 Shah Nawaz Khan, Maasir-ul-Umara, Vol. II, Part II, p.641; Anees Jahan Syed, Aurangzeb in Muntakhab-ul-Lubab, p. 71, says Shah Jahan never gave the mansab of 7,000 to more than four persons at one time, only when one of them died was another officer given this mansab. In 1656 A.D. The amirs who held this rank were, Jumdat-ul-mulk Sadullah Khan, Ali Mardan Khan, Sipah Salar Saeed Khan Bahadur and Islam Khan. Shabbir Ahmad Siddiqui “Relations between Dara Shirkoh and Sadullah Khan”, P.I.H.C., 1986, p. 273.

A.D. under the leadership of Sadullah Khan and Aurangzeb reveals the emperor's faith in the ability of his general. But inspite of the best of efforts no useful result was obtained. However, in both these military endeavors Sadullah Khan showed his capacity and skill in the management of the field, organization of sieges, erection of murchals (entrenchments for besieging fortified walls) and other necessary arrangements.

When Shah Jahan was called upon to settle the trouble brewing up in Chittor, where Rana Raj Singh, son of Rana Jagat Singh was making some gates and lofty bastions (yagan) in violation of the treaty signed between Jahangir and Rana Amar Singh against any repair of the fort even by his descendents, he sent a huge force of thirty thousands troops under the leadership of Sadullah Khan to demolish the repairs and bring Raj Singh to submission. Sadullah Khan complying with the orders of the emperor attacked the country and raised the old and new bastions of Chittor to the ground. The Rana's submission was marked by sending his eldest son, the 'Sahib-i-tika' to carry his apologies to court as desired by the emperor.

Sadullah Khan's contribution in various expeditions where his services were called upon were different from the services of his predecessors in similar circumstances. Whereas their association with their office ceased when they left court as military generals, Sadullah Khan went in the capacity of the first minister and exercised his power and discretion in that capacity. Very often it was his personal prestige

and influence that was considered invaluable in taking right and speedy decisions.¹

Sadullah Khan contributed significantly in strengthening the empire by the way in which he conducted himself within the circle of the nobility in general. He knew well that constant bickering within court circles could weaken the empire and always maintained cordial relations with his colleagues. In the words of Farid Bhakhari, “Sadullah Khan behaved in such a way that everyone used to praise him”.² Shah Nawaz Khan also remarks that Sadullah Khan did justice to the people and in his dealings with them was always honest.³ Inspite of his great influence he was a very polite man. Whatever may be the allegations of the foreign travellers about his political ambitions, Sadullah Khan was undoubtedly a loyal person who never crossed his limits.

Sadullah Khan, despite his gentle temperament and honesty, was not liked by prince Dara Shukoh. Once when the prince rebuked Sadullah Khan for turning down his request for the grant of certain sum of money as irregular, Shah Jahan censured his son and expressed his appreciation of the Wazir’s action. The Ruqqat-i-Alamgiri is quoted as expressing Shah Jahan’s disapproval of Dara Shikoh’s conduct.⁴ However since this set of evidence comes from a source which was openly hostile to Dara Shukoh (despite being an important one) it cannot be relied upon entirely. Yet, since such complaints had no

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⁴ This is a collection of letters of Emperor Aurangzeb and exhibit the private life and sentiments of the Prince. There are three collections of his letters: *The Kalimat-i-Taiyibat, Rakaim-i-Karaim* and *Dastur-i-Aml Agahi*. 
adverse affect on the position enjoyed by Sadullah Khan as Diwan one can imagine his estimation in the eyes of the emperor and his position of being almost indispensable for the smooth working of the polity.

Sadullah Khan has often been regarded as the best Diwan in the long line of Mughal Wazirs.¹ The fact that Shah Jahan’s reign has been looked upon as the golden age of the Mughal empire owing to the peace and prosperity it witnessed till the onset of the war of succession was to a some extent the contribution of his able Diwan Sadullah Khan who ran the administration with good judgement and ability.

Chandra Bhan Brahman’s² work Chahar Chadian gives a lot of information on the working of the administration under Sadullah Khan.³ His comments, coming from an eminent Hindu scholar and public servant who knew Sadullah Khan personally, give an indication of the admiration in which Mughal rule was held by the Hindus.

The death of Sadullah Khan at a time when turmoil, as a result of the ensuing war of succession between Shah Jahan’s sons began to surround the Mughal empire, deprived the monarch of the services of his most trustworthy and efficient advisor. This surely was the time when Sadullah Khan could have been of enormous help to the emperor.⁴ Shah Jahan’s letter (illustration Chapter II) written to Ali Mardan Khan at the death of Sadullah Khan is a proof of the Wazir’s

¹ Francois Bernier, Travels in the Mogul Empire, p.23 calls him most able and upright Minister that ever appeared in India. In an assessment during Aurangzeb’s time, of able ministers of the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan namely Abul Fazl, Itmad-ud-Daulah, Asaf Khan and Sadullah Khan, it is Sadullah Khan who occupies the highest position. Ibn Hasan, Central Structure of the Mughal Empire, p. 201.
² The author was officially connected with four great Diwans and was on intimate terms with them. Under Sadullah Khan he held charge of the draft of farmans and in this position was in direct touch with the Emperor as well. Hence he was highly qualified to express views upon the working of the Diwan’s office.
⁴ Inayat Khan, Shah Jahannama, Eng. trans. Elliot and Dowson, Vol. VII, p. 118, says, “The monarch, the appreciator of worth, expressed intense regret at the demise of that deserving object of kindness and consideration.....”
Chandra Bhan Brahman's account of Sadullah Khan as his companion
Translation of a note written by Chandra Bhan Brahman

This is a note written by Chandra Bhan Brahman who had been a companion of Sadullah Khan. In this note he has expressed his views which he gathered during his companionship with the minister. He says Sadullah Khan acted bravely in crucial circumstances and solved all problems faced by the ministry. He never lost his temper. He used his mind and heart to solve every problem. Any kind of challenge was a simple thing for him because he always had the support of every high ranking personality and common man in the empire. In difficult times he has always seen with a smile on his face, and without any tension. He was highly respected by the Mughal emperor, ministers and other officials. Therefore he will be remembered for his hard work and dedication in the history of the Mughals.
dedication in providing strength and stability to the Mughal dynasty and the emperor's acknowledgement of his work.

Mir Muhammad Saeed, better known as Mir Jumla, was an energetic, ambitious and self-made man who left a great impact on the history of the subcontinent. He was the son of Syed Mirza Hazru, an oil merchant of Isfahan, the old capital of Iran. Conditions of poverty forced him to migrate to Golconda one of the richest and most prosperous kingdoms of the Deccan. On account of his entrepreneurship he obtained lucrative diamond mining concessions and became a prominent member of a group of Persian traders and ship owners in Golconda. Credited with unusual organizational skills he aspired for political power. Under what has been called a system of 'political capitalism' officials in Golconda were heavily involved in commerce and shipping using political power to improve their commercial interests. Mohammad Saeed rose from the post of Sardaftardar (Keeper of Records) to that of the exalted office of Wazir of Golconda state in 1638 A.D.

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1 Mir Jumla was a 'post' to which Mir Muhammad Saeed was promoted to by Abdullah Qutb Shah of Golconda on account of his administrative qualities and indefatigable energy. Henceforth the epithet became synonymous with his name, H.K. Sherwani, "Administration, International conduct and social conditions under Abdullah Qutb Shah", (1626-72), J.I.H., Vol. XLIV, 1966, p. 6
4 Sinnappah Arasaratnam, Merchants Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1740, O.U.P., Delhi, 1986, p. 225.
A talented military strategist and diplomat, Mir Jumla conquered large areas of Karnataka and by 1652 A.D. he controlled Golkunda, a kingdom nearly forty thousand square kilometers in area with an annual revenue of forty lakhs a year.\textsuperscript{1} However, his growing wealth and power which overshadowed the grandeur of the Sultan caused suspicions in the mind of his master Abdullah Qutb Shah who was persuaded by his nobles to bring about his elimination.\textsuperscript{2} He escaped an assassination attempt against himself and turned to the Mughal empire to 'negotiate a position for himself and his newly founded domains in another state system'.\textsuperscript{3}

Aurangzeb, the Viceroy of the Deccan and an excellent judge of men always wanted to utilize Mir Jumla's unrivalled qualities of military leadership and unsurpassed knowledge of the Deccan affairs for his own imperialistic purposes. He persuaded Shah Jahan to give assistance to Mir Jumla as "Golkunda together with what Mir Jumla had occupied in the Karnataka, with the choicest and rare things in abundance would fall into the hands of the emperor".\textsuperscript{4}

On Mir Jumla's appeal and Aurangzeb's recommendation, Shah Jahan sent a farman to the general, appointing him to the rank of 5000 Zat/5000 Sawar and the Mughal title of Muazzam Khan and on his arrival at the court he was appointed to the office of Wazir.\textsuperscript{5} The

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{3} J.F. Richards, \textit{The Mughal Empire}, p. 156.
\end{itemize}
territory of Karnataka was also bestowed on him as rent free land for seven years. Herein began a phase of undying devotion towards the territorial expansion of the Mughal empire by Muazzam Khan. Initially, Shah Jahan wanted to depute this fearless general to the recovery of Qandhar but Muazzam Khan succeeded in diverting the emperor's attention from the Northwest to the Deccan with the assurance that he would very soon make Shah Jahan the lord of the Coromandel and Girzellin (Ginjili). Tempted by the prospects of acquiring large tracts of the Deccan, Shahjahan made Mir Jumla, the leader of the Bijapur campaign of 1657-58 A.D.

Muazzam Khan left for the Deccan in December 1656 A.D. and on reaching Bidar opened the siege of the fort once considered to be the strongest in the Deccan. The imperial forces under his superior generalship were successful in capturing the well defended fort which was the key to the victory over Deccan.

Muazzam Khan's next military endeavour was aimed at Kalyani. Though the Bijapuris defended themselves with chivalry they suffered heavy casualties and were defeated in August 1657 A.D. The emperor honoured his Wazir with a special robe and some mahals of Karnataka territory yielding a revenue of four crore of dams. Complete victory over Bijapur was not a unachievable object for a general of Mir Jumla's calibre but Dara Shikoh out of jealousy convinced Shah Jahan to ask

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3 Plural of dam, it was a small coin. Forty dams made a rupee.
them to conclude peace with Adil Shah and return to court. Taking advantage of Shah Jahan's illness he took control of the administration and dismissed him from the office of Wazir on charges of disobedience.

On account of the vague reports of the emperor's illness the political situation remained uncertain and Aurangzeb got Muazzam imprisoned only to prevent him from being approached by Dara Shikoh or Shah Jahan. However after the situation turned in his favour and he acquired the throne in July 1658 A.D., he immediately issued orders of Muazzam's release, apologised for his conduct and restored all his property to him.

Muazzam's devotion to his master and zeal to serve the Mughal throne is evident in his immediate departure to the most crucial military expeditions aimed against Shah Shuja. Soon after his reinstatement, the imperial army was arranged according to the advice given by Muazzam Khan. On seeing Shuja's army better placed, he went about encouraging his men all the time and raised their morale. His superb generalship is also seen when despite the panic in the Mughal camp, Muazzam Khan showed no signs of anxiety and engaged himself in preparing his men for the impending battle, Aurangzeb

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2 Laiq Ahmad, Prime Ministers of Aurangzeb, p. 53.
4 Shah Nawaz Khan, Maasir-ul-Umara, Vol. II, Part I, p. 194; Khafi Khan, Muntakhab-ul-Lubab, Elliot and Dowson, Vol. VII, p. 232. Aurangzeb wrote, "I detained you for some reason ... the time has come when I should apologise to you ... it is highly imperative that a sincere well wisher versed in business like yourself should remain in my court". Khafi Khan, Muntakhab-ul-Lubab, Vol. II, p. 44, quoted in Laiq Ahmad, Prime Ministers of Aurangzeb, p. 58.
showed complete trust in his ability by giving him total discretion in the planning of the battle. Even on the day of the battle Muazzam’s elephant was stationed next to Aurangzeb to enable him to advise the emperor. During the course of the battle when Shuja’s elephant driver was killed while attacking the centre wing of the imperial army and the emperor was about to dismount, Muazzam shouting ‘Qaim Qaim’1 (steady steady), saved the situation at a critical time. Muazzam Khan who had been for all practical purposes Aurangzeb’s advisor was awarded a mansab of haft hazari 7000 Zat 7000 sawar and a reward of one lakh rupees in cash.2

The services of Muazzam Khan were again called upon when he was asked to pursue Shuja who had fled towards the East.3 Accompanied by prince Muhammad Sultan he performed valiant deeds such as were befitting of high officers.4 When Shuja after fortifying Monghyr entrenched himself there, Muazzam by his skillful manoeuvres forced him to leave that place and shift to Akbarnagar (Rajmahal). Further he displayed tact by taking an indirect route through the jungles and hills to block Shuja’s escape. When Shuja deceitfully succeeded in winning over Sultan Muhammad over to his side Muazzam

1 Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, p. 314. It appears in Bernier’s account *Travels in the Mogul Empire* as Decankon, which Constable reads as ‘Dakhin Kahan’ (where is the Deccan)
2 Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*, Vol. II, p. 59, “Muazzam was given a distinction over all others, he got an additional mansab 7000/7000 which is 12,000 barawardi, of this 5,000 were Aspa which including barawardi would be, 7,000/5000 + 5000 + 2000 = 7000/12000 which seems to be rather improbable for no other historian, either contemporary or later has mentioned this, quoted in Anees Jahan Syed, *Aurangzeb in Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*, p. 120.
Khan did not lose his calm and showing tremendous presence of mind saved the imperial army from fatal consequences.¹

The war to exterminate Shuja was a long drawn affair involving several engagements between the two armies but the imperial army under Muazzam Khan was always successful. The great general who ignored all personal comforts to complete the work entrusted to him was also responsible for the return of Prince Muhammad to his father's side.² In the final stages of the battle against Shuja, Muazzam Khan encircled him from all sides forcing him to give up possession of Bengal³ and moving to Tanda enroute to Jahangir Nagar (Dacca). Shuja was forced to go to Arrakan (Rakhang) as he was left without any supporters. Thus Muazam brought the task of Shuja's pursuit, assigned to him by Aurangzeb, to a successful conclusion. As a reward for his great role in this campaign that lasted sixteen months he was granted the title of Khan-i-Khanan Sipahasalar.⁴

Muazzam Khan was destined to achieve greater military success for his master Aurangzeb and it was only due to his conquest of Kuch Bihar and Assam that the North-Eastern push of the Mughal emperor reached its logical culmination.⁵

Owing to the illness of emperor Shah Jahan and the consequent struggle for power among his sons, Bengal became a scene of anarchy and confusion. Taking advantage of such a situation the Raja of Kuch Bihar, Pran Narayan\(^1\) stopped payment of tribute and declared himself independent. He also initiated raids in adjoining Mughal territories. Jayadhwaj Singh, Raja of Assam also started making inroads into the Mughal territories of Kamrup and Gauhati. In these dismal conditions, Aurangzeb directed his Wazir to restore order in Assam and Kuch Bihar. Muazzam Khan who thought it was imperative to build a strong navy to punish the ruler of Assam set out to strengthen the imperial naval power, (Mughal emperors had shown marked apathy towards building their naval forces) before undertaking the assault with twelve thousand horses, thirty thousand foot soldiers and a strong flotilla of boats.\(^2\) His army which included Europeans as well\(^3\) reached its destination in December 1661 A.D. The Raja Pran Narayan and his Wazir Bhavnath fled and Muazzam Khan occupied the capital of Kuch Bihar without any opposition. However, he forbade the soldiers from indulging in loot and plunder\(^4\) and endeared himself to the people.

After his signal success in Kuch Bihar, Muazzam decided to chastise Jaidhwaj, the ruler of Assam. Reaching the bank of Brahmaputra, Muazzam, army had a tough time crossing the impenetrable jungles of Assam, but finally captured the fort of

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Jogighopa and the Panch Ratan. The imperial forces also took possession of the famous temples of Kamakhya and Lona Chamari. After bringing the area as far as Gauhati under his control, Muazzam Khan, convinced that mere conquest was meaningless, addressed himself to settling the affairs of the country.

The final round in which Muazzam Khan captured the fort of Simlagarh, fifty Kos from Garhgaon, followed by the capture of Samdhara, completed his victory over the whole of Kamrup and established Mughal authority there. Muazzam Khan’s skill and courage had led to the conquest of such a vast distant area fortified with numerous forts. The great general was honoured with a special Khilat, the tumantogh and reward of one crore dams.

The appearance of Mir Jumla in the North Eastern frontier resulting in the subjugation of Kuch Bihar and Kamrup was the most daring example of imperialistic venture that was almost unparalleled in the history of Mughal India. Soon after signing the peace treaty, Muazzam Khan died in March, 1663 A.D. (Masnad-Arae-i-Bahisht) leaving Aurangzeb to grieve at the death of a loyal, willing and efficient servant who earned great military successes for his master.

Spending a major part of his career as a general in camps in the eastern region, Mir Jumla combined intrepidity with wisdom, energy with caution and resolution with ability. His services as Wazir were utilised to the utmost by both Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. Although he

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did not get an opportunity to display his talent on the administrative side, yet his achievements were of no mean order. It was he who diverted Shah Jahan's attention from a hopeless expedition of Qandhar to the successful conquest of Bijapur. Further as the advisor of Aurangzeb during the war of succession, Muazzam Khan secured the throne for him against his brother Shah Shuja. It was due to his efforts that the difficult conquest of Kuch Bihar and Assam that carried Mughal conquest in the North-East to a logical and successful conclusion was achieved.¹

Mir Jumla's achievements in territorial expansion are set forth in an ode written by Mulla Darvesh of Herat in praise of the conquest of Assam:

\[\text{The rank-shattering warrior, the captor of forts} \]
\[\text{and conqueror of realms (i.e. Mir Jumla)} \]
\[\text{Revived anew the forgotten tale of} \]
\[\text{The ‘Seven Stages’ which had been sung} \]
\[\text{by the Philosopher (Firdausi) in the Shah Nama.} \]
\[\text{And which had been gone through by Isfandiyar and Rustom.} \]
\[\text{The face of Fortune, the heart of Valour and the arm of victory.} \]
\[\text{Conqueror of realms, bestower of Kingdoms and Ornaments of the world;} \]
\[\text{The Khan-i-Khana, Commander in Chief,} \]
\[\text{leader of armies, whom, by way of honour,} \]
\[\text{The Emperor gave the title of ‘Faithful Friend’}; \]

That peer of royal dignity, that Sayyid possessed of the characteristics of his ancestors,
The back of Persia, the cheek of India,
The head of the Kingdom of God, ---
He is Mustafa charged with divine instruction and guidance after that (chosen one, Muhammad)
He is Murtaza (in) the keenness of his Sword and spear in the day of battle.¹

The role of Jafar Khan and Asad Khan in expansion and consolidation of the empire was inconsequential as there was no expansion worth the name. Despite Aurangzeb’s success in the conquest of Bijapur and Golkunda in 1686-1687 A.D. his Deccan experience proved the military inadequacy of Aurangzeb, as despite his best efforts the Marathas managed to undermine imperial campaigns.²

The prolonged inconclusiveness of the Deccan wars complicated matters beyond repair. His absence from North India weakened imperial institutions there and led to agrarian revolts³ that put a tremendous strain on the financial resources and undermined the achievements of the previous years.