

## SHERGOZIKHAN'S POLITICAL STRATEGY IN THE KHANATE OF KHIVA AND THE DEFEAT OF THE RUSSIAN EXPEDITION

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**Annotation:** This article analyzes the political, economic and geopolitical situation of the Khiva Khanate during the reign of Shergozi Khan, especially the process of defeating the Bekovich-Cherkassky expedition sent by Peter I, based on scientific sources. The study examines the strategic goals of the Russian Empire in relation to Central Asia at the beginning of the 18th century and the military-diplomatic tactics used by Shergozikhan against them, highlighting his historical role in maintaining the security of the region. In conclusion, it is argued that Shergozikhan's victory delayed the Russian invasion for more than a century and was a decisive factor in preserving the political sovereignty of the Khiva Khanate.

**Keywords:** Shergozikhan, Khiva Khanate, Peter I, Bekovich expedition, diplomacy, geopolitics, Amu Darya, Russian invasion, military stratagem, Central Asia, strategy, political independence, history of Khorezm, defeat of the expedition, state administration.

### INTRODUCTION.

At the beginning of the 18th century, the political space of Central Asia was becoming increasingly important as a region where the interests of various powers clashed. The conflicts between the Central Asian states, the invasions of the Dzungar Khanate, the occupation of Iran by Afghan tribes, internal struggles in the Emirate of Bukhara, and the economic and political turmoil of the Khiva Khanate complicated the geopolitical landscape of the region. The expansionist policy of the Russian Empire, which began in particular during the reign of Peter I, became the starting point for a global strategy that included Central Asia. Opening the way to India, strengthening the Caspian Sea as a military base, subordinating the Central Asian markets to Russian capital, and finally, economically connecting the region by returning the Amu Darya to its ancient roots, formed the main part of Peter I's political ideology.

### METHODS AND MATERIALS.

In this historical context, the activities of Shergozi Khan, who ascended the throne of Khiva, deserve special attention. The sources note that he was educated in Bukhara, deeply studied political and cultural traditions, and had good knowledge in the fields of state administration and jurisprudence [1, p. 87]. He is also described as a ruler with a unique diplomatic mindset and strategic decision-making ability for his time. His invitation to the Khiva Khanate and his accession to the throne were also the result of socio-political necessity, and in the crisis situation of the country, the people and officials had great hopes for Shergozikhan [2, p. 103].

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.

Having come to the throne, Shergozikhan initially initiated internal reforms. He tried to strengthen the defense system of the city of Khiva, regulate taxes, mitigate the discontent of the Karakalpak tribes, and restore trade routes. In particular, he took measures to restore irrigated agricultural lands along the Amu Darya River and to ensure the security of caravan routes. Contemporary authors also confirm that he tried to restore the internal market in order to revive the state economically [3, p. 58].

The campaign to Khorasan in 1715–1716 is one of the events that demonstrated Sherghazi Khan's military potential. He managed to capture Mashhad, while the Safavid dynasty of Iran was in a state of crisis, and the influence of Khorezm in Khorasan had significantly increased. Although it was not possible to successfully complete the siege of Nishapur, this campaign demonstrated the military power of the Khiva Khanate [4, p. 113]. It was at this time that the foreign political influence of the Khiva state increased, but the internal economic crisis had not yet been resolved. The Bekovich-Cherkassky expedition sent by Peter I to Khiva is one of the most complex pages of Eastern policy. Peter I set five main tasks for the expedition:

1. Subjugate the Khan of Khiva to the Russian Tsar;
2. Turn the ancient course of the Amu Darya into the Caspian;
3. Build Russian fortresses along the Caspian;
4. Bring the Turkmen, Karakalpak, and Kazakh tribes into the Russian political orbit;
5. Open the caravan route to India and transfer it to Russian control [5, pp. 74–76].

These ideas formed the first foundation of Russia's colonial policy in Central Asia. The fact that the expedition was sent with more than 6,000 military personnel also indicates that Russia's goal was not simple diplomacy, but invasion. But Shergozikhan was able to foresee this danger. He first crushed the expedition through diplomacy, and then through military trickery. The plan of the Khiva people to divide the Russian detachments into five groups is considered one of the classic examples of military art. Each group was ambushed separately and completely destroyed [6, p. 142].

The death of Bekovich and the defeat of the expedition left an indelible mark on Russian history. Russian historians such as Pushkin, Karamzin, and Solovyov also evaluate this defeat as one of the most severe blows in Russia's eastern policy. As Pushkin noted, the failure to take revenge on Khiva in the last years of his life was one of the emperor's greatest dreams [7, p. 55]. This historical fact shows that Shergozikhan was not only a local ruler, but also a strategic figure in the geopolitical history of Central Asia in the 15th–19th centuries.

Shergozikhan's state administration activities are also noteworthy. He initiated a number of creative works for the cultural revival of Khiva: the repair and reconstruction of the madrasa, library, caravanserais, irrigation facilities were carried out on his personal initiative. The Shergozikhan madrasa is one of his most important architectural heritages, highly reflecting the style of Khiva architecture of the early 18th century. Unfortunately, it was in that madrasa that the khan was killed in 1728 as a result of a conspiracy organized by Persian slaves [8, p. 93].

This incident shows that the strict regulations and tax policy introduced by Shergozikhan in the country caused discontent among some tribes and groups. After the death of Shergozi Khan, internal stability in the Khiva Khanate weakened again[9]. However, his defeat of the expedition of Peter the Great became of great strategic importance in the history of Central Asia. It was precisely because of this victory that Russia was forced to postpone its plan to conquer Central Asia for 120 years - until the middle of the 19th century[10]. This allowed the region to continue its economic and cultural development to a certain extent, and the sovereignty of local states to be preserved.

## CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, the activities of Shergozikhan are an important historical source for understanding the geopolitical processes in Central Asia at the beginning of the 18th century. He simultaneously carried out such complex tasks as managing a weakened state, eliminating internal unrest, and protecting it from external invasions. Most importantly, Shergozikhan is the only Central Asian ruler who, with his military and diplomatic skills, thwarted the global strategic plan of such a powerful statesman as Peter I. This event left an indelible mark both in

the history of statehood of the Khiva Khanate and in the history of regional independence. Shergozikhan's political legacy is still being studied today, and his activities play an important role in the development of statecraft, military strategy, and geopolitical thinking in Central Asia.

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