



AMIR TEMUR'S STATE AS A MODEL OF TURKIC STATEHOOD

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Abstract: This article analyzes, from the perspective of political science, the state-building experience of Amir Temur, who ruled over Mawarannahr in the XIV–XV centuries (1370–1405). The study examines Amir Temur's efforts to establish a centralized state, to introduce principles of justice into public administration, and to unify and govern the population. Particular attention is given to the political mechanisms described in his work *Tuzuklar* (“Temur’s Code”), including the practice of making political decisions through various councils and consultative assemblies, the governance of society based on its division into social strata, and the implementation of justice-oriented diplomatic policies. These aspects are explored through historical examples aimed at identifying the outcomes of Temur’s administrative and diplomatic approaches.

Keywords: Amir Temur, principles of justice, state policy, public administration, consultation, advisory councils, diplomatic relations, causes of wars, peace and stability policy, centralized state, historical realities and their relevance today.

INTRODUCTION

In the present era—marked by the development of New Uzbekistan, preparations for a Third Renaissance, and efforts to elevate our national spirit—the necessity of turning to the legacy of our great ancestor, Sahibqiron Amir Temur, arises naturally. On the eve of the widely celebrated anniversary of Amir Temur’s birth, the historical significance of this remarkable figure, his legacy in unifying the nation around a national idea, and his contribution to the development of national statehood acquire renewed importance and relevance.

As New Uzbekistan lays the foundations of its future, the heritage of our great forefathers concerning nationhood and statecraft is becoming increasingly essential. The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, highlights the contemporary significance of Amir Temur’s personality with the following statement: **“Why do we not study the history of our great ancestors thoroughly? For many years, others’ history and others’ victories were instilled in our minds with loud slogans. I have instructed officials that we must first and foremost study the history of our own forefathers.”** [1]

RESEARCH METHODS

This article employs historical approaches, comparative-political analysis, and systemic-functional and analytical methodologies.

RESEARCH RESULTS

It is well known that when Sahibqiron Amir Temur began his early period of rule, the political landscape of Mawarannahr was extremely complex and unstable. On one hand, the Mongol amirs—successors of Chinggis Khan—were striving to restore their former influence and maintain control over the Chagatai Ulus. On the other hand, local amirs who had matured within Mawarannahr were increasingly driven by aspirations of self-governance, the establishment of an independent state, and the management of their



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own homeland. It was on the threshold of this critical historical turning point that Amir Temur entered the political arena.

By the mid-fourteenth century, the idea of a struggle for independence had already emerged, and the socio-political and psychological conditions necessary for launching such a movement had sufficiently developed. At that time, the cultural environment of Mawarannahr was nourished by the deep intellectual heritage of its ancient civilizations. The inhabitants of this region had established their own national statehood millennia before the Mongol conquests, and unlike the Mongols, the sedentary and culturally advanced way of life of the local population made it impossible for the region to remain permanently under Mongol domination. Furthermore, the Mongols who had settled in Mawarannahr gradually shifted to the Turkic language under the influence of the region's rich culture, and many of them had embraced Islam on a large scale. The adoption of Islam by Uzbek Khan—a Chinggisid ruler of the Golden Horde—beginning in 1312, and his efforts to disseminate Islam widely throughout his dominions, provided further evidence of the moral and cultural ascendancy of the local Turkic peoples.

In this historical process, the profound spiritual and cultural legacy of the ancient Turkic peoples—and particularly the powerful influence of Islam—played a decisive role. As demonstrated by the harsh truths of history and the inherent laws governing global development, a country that had long been a center of culture and scholarship could not remain indefinitely under the domination of a nomadic power or any state whose way of life was marked by nomadism. Consequently, the rich civilizational heritage of the region naturally stirred, prompting a strong inclination toward the restoration of independence—a process embodied in the rise of Amir Temur's centralized empire.

Historical sources portray Sahibqiron Amir Temur not only as a shrewd statesman and a wise, intelligent military leader but also as a person of exceptional sensitivity, capable of influencing the spiritual world and worldview of individuals. Numerous sources attest that even during his years as a madrasa student, Temur was known for his intelligence, scholarship, and intellectual curiosity, and that he possessed deep knowledge of Islamic sciences. This allowed him to grasp and internalize the intellectual, ideological, and political impulses of his era. The future ruler matured under the spiritual guidance of prominent Islamic scholars such as Shaykh Zayniddin Abubakr Tayobodiy, Khoja Ahmad Yassavi, and Sayyid Amir Kulol. In governing the state, Amir Temur consistently adhered to the following wise exhortation of his spiritual mentor, Zayniddin Abu Bakr Tayobodiy:

“A kingdom ruled without consultation and counsel may be likened to an ignorant man whose actions and words are misguided; such a person’s deeds inevitably lead to regret. Therefore, administer the affairs of the state through consultation, deliberation, and prudent strategy, so that you may not come to remorse. Know that a portion of governance requires patience and endurance, while another portion is accomplished by acting with discretion—sometimes by knowing and sometimes by feigning not to know. After describing the necessary measures, it must be emphasized that determination, patience, perseverance, vigilance, caution, and bravery form the foundation of effective governance.” [2:24]

Historical records indicate that it was Tayobodiy who advised Amir Temur to inscribe the maxim “**Rasti-rusti**” on his signet ring. The phrase translates as “In righteousness lies salvation,” and is popularly rendered today as “**Strength is in justice.**” This demonstrates that Temur consistently adhered to principles of justice in implementing state policy. His reputation, the loyalty of his commanders, and his victories in warfare all stemmed from his devotion to justice and his generosity.

By the 1360s, Amir Temur had developed a firm ideological foundation grounded in patriotism, resistance to tyranny, and a desire to restore the power of the ancient Turkic states. Moreover, a vigilant and spiritually awakened segment of the population—sharing his aspirations and national consciousness—had emerged to support him. Their collective yearning for independence aligned with Temur’s grand



vision. In Hegelian terms, if “the state is the embodiment of the spirit of the people,” then the spiritual readiness for national state-building had fully matured.

History shows that Alexander the Great, shaped by Greek philosophy, sought to conquer the East and immortalized his name through bravery and far-reaching ambition. Chinggis Khan, in turn, sought global domination and envisioned the rule of the world by Mongol nomadic tribes. In contrast to these conquerors, Sahibqiron Amir Temur strove to establish justice, uphold the rule of law, and create a prosperous life based on Islamic principles in the territories he unified.

Sahibqiron Amir Temur was a statesman who developed and successfully implemented a set of principles for building a powerful state, unifying the nation, and ensuring the welfare of the population. These principles, articulated in the Tuzuklar (“Temur’s Code”), may be summarized as follows:

“I conducted the affairs of my state with conciliation, patience, and magnanimity. Even when I understood much, I would often feign ignorance. I acted with tolerance toward both friends and foes.”

“I governed state affairs on the basis of the laws and regulations of the realm. Relying on the principles of order and the provisions of the adage and the code, I firmly preserved my authority and standing within the state.” [2:69]

“I restored the rights of the oppressed from the hands of the unjust. After demonstrating the material and physical harms caused by oppressors, I tried them in accordance with the sharia, ensuring that no innocent person suffered punishment for the crime of another. Even those who had done me great harm—those who had raised the sword against me—were forgiven when they approached me in humility and repentance; I erased their misdeeds from my memory and even elevated their ranks.”

“I regarded sayyids, scholars, spiritual leaders, wise men, hadith experts, and chroniclers as select and honorable individuals, granting them due respect and esteem.”

“I remained attentive to the condition of my subjects, treating the elders as brothers and the young as my own children. I kept myself informed about the customs, temperament, and social character of every region and every community. To ensure that I was regularly updated on the circumstances of each land, the mood of the army and the populace, and the behavior and interactions of its inhabitants, I appointed honest and truthful chroniclers (‘akhbor-navis’) to record and report these matters.” [2:70–71]

Sahibqiron Amir Temur possessed a profound spiritual worldview—yet it was a spirituality inseparably intertwined with justice. A careful examination of the Tuzuklar reveals numerous remarkable insights. For example, Temur carefully classified political elites and state administrators into categories and treated each according to their abilities, merits, and social standing. He appointed officials based on their talent, competence, reputation, and lineage, establishing strict mechanisms for evaluating and monitoring their performance. While he honored, supported, and rewarded governors and amirs for their service, he did not hesitate to impose severe punishment when they violated state laws or caused suffering to the populace.

For this reason, when Amir Temur conducted military campaigns in various countries, local populations often received him not as a conqueror but as a ruler committed to justice. Such sentiments were observable during his campaigns in Iran, the Caucasus, the Arab lands, and in the repeated expeditions against Tokhtamysh Khan.

Had Sahibqiron acted solely for his personal interests and the expansion of his own dominion, he would not have achieved such monumental victories. One of the fundamental reasons for his historic successes was his struggle for great civilizational ideas. Amir Temur did not pursue personal glory; he sought above



all to strengthen his state and homeland. He understood that a strong state guaranteed internal unity and shielded the country from external aggression. As a result, any act threatening the unity of the state was met with strict and decisive punishment.

The strength and grandeur of the Temurid state derived from Amir Temur's meticulous approach to selecting individuals for administrative posts and military leadership. He chose only those who possessed exemplary leadership qualities and moral integrity. As he stated:

“In my experience, a single capable, courageous, disciplined, and vigilant man of decisive character is more valuable than thousands of negligent and indifferent individuals. A man of experience commands a thousand men.” [2:25]

One of Amir Temur's favored maxims was **“Justice is the emblem of rulers.”** This phrase was inscribed at his command on the walls of the Aq Saray in Shahrizabz. Another of his profound sayings reads: “Without harmony and reconciliation, there is no world. Beyond truth, there is no closeness. Beyond forgiveness, no noble conduct. Beyond loyalty, no true friendship.” This maxim was carved into one of the mausoleums of Shohi Zinda. [3]

The symbols of the state founded by Sahibqiron, his conduct, the principles of his governance, his practical policies, and the expressions frequently found in his sayings all reveal that the power and durability of his state were built upon the values of justice.

Mirzo Yoqub Khojandiy, a contemporary of Amir Temur, expressed the following views about him:

“Amir was merciless toward his enemies, yet gentle toward his supporters; in personal dealings he was kind-hearted and free from arrogance. At the same time, although he was strict with his soldiers, he treated them with justice. While punishing those who violated discipline, he never withheld from his troops the spoils of war they had earned. He believed that ‘a well-provided man steals less than a hungry one.’ I myself witnessed how the Amir conducted military exercises with his army in freezing winds, on rainy days, amidst deep snowdrifts, in desolate deserts devoid of human life, and while ascending steep heights. Compared to these drills, the hard labor of peasants seemed like rest. If some professions were paid in copper, the clinking of gold was heard abundantly during the swift campaigns of the soldiers.” [4]

DISCUSSION

Sohibqiron Amir Temur has been highly esteemed by both European and Eastern thinkers. To deny the significance of his struggles, victorious campaigns, and his experience in building a powerful state would be to deny history itself. For example, while analyzing the play written in 1590 by the English dramatist Marlowe, which portrays the figure of Temur, the German professor Tilman Nagel remarked:

“In the first part of the play, Temur represents the ideal of human achievement—an example of a person capable of advancing forward regardless of his origin or social status.” [5: 41]

The American scholar Richard Nelson assessed Sohibqiron as follows:

“Temur did not attempt to forcibly impose a single imperial culture. Rather, he created opportunities for various cultures to merge, and in doing so, he was the first to strategically formulate the idea of Eurasia as a set of compromises—an idea that continues to function today. Temur was the first great commander to synthesize within himself the skills of nomads, the courage of the Mongols, and the spiritual fervor of Islam. All cultures are pluralistic to some extent, but their different elements acquire strategic value as they adapt over time. Temur was



the one who recognized this theoretical possibility in Central Asia, and his genius in implementing tactics allowed this idea to be realized in practice.” [6: 34]

When a reader once asked Muhammad Iqbal, the “spiritual father” of Pakistan, “**Why did you praise Temur as a model for the Muslim world?**” he responded:

“...Because in him I did not see a destructive force; rather, I saw the embodiment of a leader who united positive forces around himself solely through the strength of his authority.” [7: 121]

The significance of Sohibqiron Amir Temur as a model of Turkic statehood has also been acknowledged in various countries around the world. For example, during his visit to the mausoleum of Amir Temur on 18 November 2016, the President of the Republic of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, expressed his feelings as follows:

“Those who witness the suffering of the Turkic and Islamic world today can better understand the greatness of Temur’s achievements and his struggles in his own era. Temur was a great leader who lost sleep for the sake of the unity and equality of the Turks and Muslims, who endured every hardship in this cause, and who devoted his life to jihad. Today, more than ever, we are in great need of adhering to the teachings and example of Amir Temur.” [8]

The positive assessments of Amir Temur expressed by foreign thinkers could be continued indefinitely.

CONCLUSION

It is impossible to evaluate the historical events of the 14th century without some measure of subjectivity. Yet ignoring the real circumstances of historical development would be an even greater distortion of reality. If we examine the events of the 14th century from the perspective of contemporary national ideology, it becomes evident that the spiritual, moral, and legal foundations of our current independence were laid by none other than Sohibqiron Amir Temur. With every passing century, the greatness and power of Sohibqiron are understood more deeply and comprehensively. Favored by the Creator, Temur was the first among the numerous Chinggisid khans and amirs surrounding him who demonstrated in practice that the people of this land—Turk—were capable and worthy of building and sustaining an independent state. In this sense, the legacy of Sohibqiron—his life, his activity, and the mighty state he established—forms the cornerstone of our national spirit and national pride.

Every nation’s independence rests on a chain of historical events and experiences. Its strength, consistency, and resilience depend largely on the richness and depth of these historical foundations. From this perspective, Sohibqiron continues to guide us from a distance of more than six centuries. Today, one of the reasons why Uzbekistan has earned respect and recognition from foreign states within a short historical period is the grandeur of the national heritage and culture inherited from Sohibqiron and his descendants.

In conclusion, the statecraft developed by Sohibqiron Amir Temur has not lost its relevance as a model for the development of modern Turkic statehood. In strengthening cooperation and solidarity among Turkic-speaking nations—who share a common language, faith, and cultural traditions—the spirit of Temur’s statecraft remains highly significant. Likewise, the reforms aimed at building the foundation of the Third Renaissance and New Uzbekistan draw profound inspiration from the statecraft experience bequeathed by Sohibqiron Amir Temur.



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