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THE INFLUENCE OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE ON THE DOMESTIC POLICIES OF THE EMIRATE OF BUKHARA AND THE KHANATE OF KHIVA UNDER THE RUSSIAN PROTECTORATE (1868–1917)

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Abstract

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Russian Empire established protectorates over the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva. Although both states formally retained their sovereignty, they became politically, economically, and diplomatically dependent on the Russian Empire.

The foundation of Russian policy was a system of indirect rule, often referred to as “dual sovereignty.” The Emir and the Khan preserved their traditional governing institutions and the Islamic legal system; however, major political decisions were made with due regard to the interests of the Russian Empire. This model enabled the imperial authorities to maintain effective control over the region without introducing direct colonial administration.

Keywords: Russian Empire, Turkestan Governor-Generalship, Emirate of Bukhara, Khanate of Khiva, protectorate, Russian Political Agency, Central Asia, colonial policy.



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One of the principal instruments of Russian influence was the Imperial Russian Political Agency in Bukhara, established in 1885. The Political Agent supervised the implementation of bilateral agreements, protected the interests of Russian subjects, influenced the Emirate's personnel policy, and participated in discussions concerning administrative reforms. In the Khanate of Khiva, similar functions were performed through the Head of the Amu Darya Department and the Russian military administration.

Economic mechanisms also played a significant role. The construction of the Trans-Caspian Railway, the expansion of trade, integration into the Russian customs system, and the development of cotton production strengthened the economic dependence of Bukhara and Khiva on the Russian market. Over time, this economic influence gradually evolved into political influence.

The Russian presence also facilitated the dissemination of new administrative and legal practices. Russian settlements, particularly New Bukhara (Kagan), became important centers of the region's economic, cultural, and administrative modernization. While traditional institutions were formally preserved, elements of Russian legislation and administrative practices were gradually introduced.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Russian influence was also reflected in the emergence and development of reformist movements, including the Jadids, the Young Bukharans, and the Young Khivans. The Russian administration supported certain reforms while simultaneously seeking to preserve political stability and the existing order, fearing that radical changes might undermine imperial interests.

In conclusion, the Russian protectorate system represented a form of indirect colonial rule that combined the formal independence of the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva with their actual political and economic dependence on the Russian Empire.