

## Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

# Diplomatic Elements in Qarakhanid Foreign Policy toward the Saljuqs in the 11th–12th Centuries\*

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### Abstract

Diplomacy was in its formative stages during the Middle Ages, and states used advanced diplomatic tools in their interactions. Diplomatic methods such as treaties, mediation, marriage alliances, and cooperation offered distinct advantages and reflected the role and position of a country in the international arena. Analyzing the interstate relations of the Qarakhanids and Saljuqs, we found that they initially had similar state structures, cultural and economic traditions, and religion, but evolved in different directions as a result of their interactions. This article argues that the diplomatic methods and tools used by a state reflect its level of internal development and affect the effectiveness of its actions. Moreover, the article offers a new holistic perspective on interstate relations in the Turkic world.

### Keywords

Qarakhanids, Saljuqs, medieval diplomacy, interstate relations, diplomatic methods.

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# 11-12. Yüzyıllarda Karahanlıların Selçuklulara Yönelik Dış Politikasındaki Diplomatik Unsurlar\*

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## Öz

Orta Çağ diplomasisi henüz gelişme aşamasındaydı ve devletler etkileşimleri için ileri düzey araçlar kullanıyordu. Anlaşmalar, araboluculuk, evlilik ittifakları ve iş birliği gibi diplomatik yöntemler, Orta Çağa özgü özel niteliklere sahipti ve ülkenin uluslararası arenadaki rolünü ve konumunu gösteriyordu. Anlatıları karşılaştırmalı olarak analiz ederek ve ele alarak, başlangıçta benzer devlet yapısına, kültürel ve ekonomik geleneklere ve dine sahip olan, ancak karşılıklı etkileşim dönemlerinde evrim geçiren Karahanlılar ve Selçukluların devletler arası ilişkilerinden bazı örnekler sunduk. Çalışma, devletler tarafından kullanılan diplomatik yöntem ve araçların bir ülkenin iç gelişmişlik düzeyini yansıtışı ve uygulanan adımların etkinliğini etkilediği sonucuna varmaktadır. Bu, Türk dünyasında devletler arası ilişkilerin bölgesel aşamasının tüm resmini yeniden yapılandırma fırsatı sunmaktadır.

## Anahtar Kelimeler

Karahanlı, Selçuklu, Orta Çağ diplomasisi, devletler arası ilişkiler, diplomatik yöntemler.

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## Introduction

Foreign policy and diplomacy in the Middle Ages were aimed at overcoming feudal fragmentation, uniting and expanding state territory, fighting rivals for military and commercial dominance, and finding strategic allies. In this environment, diplomatic activity gradually acquired the same importance as state work. The diplomatic methods emerging during this period share features with modern diplomacy (Potemkin 89–90).

The emergence of the largest medieval Turkic states—the Saljuqs, Qarakhanids, and Ghaznawids—significantly influenced international relations. These states united diverse cultural and ethnic traditions within a single historical and cultural subregion whose legacy is seen in modern Central Asian countries: Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan. The Saljuqs' conquest of Asia Minor, the Ghaznawids' aggression in India, and the Qarakhanids' cultural flourishing shaped medieval history and boosted the Turkic world's significance in global history.

The diplomatic methods and tools used by a state to build relations with other states in the international space are an integral part of foreign policy. Accordingly, foreign policy is a good indicator of the position of a state in the international arena.

To our knowledge, there is no targeted research on the diplomacy between the Qarakhanids and the Saljuqs, although some studies have covered the Qarakhanids' political history and the Great Saljuq Empire's foreign policy. Turkish historian Hunkar's book includes a subsection on Qarakhanid–Saljuq relations but lacks analysis of the diplomatic tools used. Duturaeva's in-depth work on Qarakhanid foreign policy details their relations with China, focusing on the Silk Road and their trade relations.

Karaev's work on Qarakhanid history details events in Mawarannah and Kashgar. Numerous works exist on the Great Saljuq Empire's foreign policy, including Köymen, Kafesoğlu, Turan, Merçil and Sevim, and Peacock. While these studies provide historical information on the Qarakhanids and Saljuqs, none addresses the significance of their diplomatic interactions, which remain underexplored; this study aims to fill this gap in the literature.

This study aims to define the Qarakhanid state's regional significance, evaluate its diplomatic strategies, and examine the dynamics of Qarakhanid–Saljuq

relations, with a focus on the role of diplomacy. We employed multiple narrative and retrospective methods to examine relevant historical events. The historical genetic method was employed to understand the development and dynamics of Qarakhanid–Saljuq relations and identify causal links in their foreign policies. The comparative method was used to identify common and unique features, revealing the causes and effects of diplomatic strategies. The historical system method allowed us to isolate elements of diplomacy, analyze state relations, and explore medieval international relations.

To study the Qarakhanids' foreign policy, we analyzed sources on medieval Central Asia, particularly sources in Arabic. Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil fi al-Tārikh* (13th c.) has informed many studies on Central Asian history and is a key source in this study, as it provides insight into Qarakhanid–Saljuq events and relations. Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī's *Mir'at az-zamān fi tārikh ab-ā'yān* (13th c.) is another significant source on Muslim history, spanning 23 volumes. We used volumes XIX and XX, covering 1059–1159, to validate dates in Qarakhanid–Saljuq relations. Although less detailed than Ibn al-Athīr's work, Ibn al-Jawzī's work cites notable historians like at-Ṭabarī and al-Qalānisi.

We also referenced Persian writer Ḥamdallāh Qazwīnī's *Tārikh-i Guzīda* (14th c.), a general history covering events from Adam to the 14th century, using Browne's *Select History* English translation. Additionally, we used a section on the Qarakhanids from Ottoman author Aḥmad Dede Müneccimbaşı's *Sahāif al-Akhbār* (17th c.). Müneccimbaşı introduces corrections on names and places based on Ottoman Empire archives. We worked with Lugal's Turkish translation *Camii'üd düvel. Karahanlılar ve Anadolu Selçükleri*.

Abu Said Gardizi's *Zayn al-Akhbār* (11th c.) covers Persian rulers, Khorasan, Turks, and Central Asian peoples. It provides key details on the devout and benevolent Qarakhanid and Saljuq rulers. We used the Arabic translation by 'Affāf Sayid Zīdāne.

For Saljuq history, we used several key sources: Nishapuri's *Saljūq-nāmah* (12th c.), Rāwandī's *Rāhat-al-ṣudūr wa āyat-al-surūr* (12th c.), al-Isfahāni's *Nusrat al-fatra wa 'usrat al-fitra* (12th c.), and al-Bundāri's *Tārikh dawlat al-Saljūq* (13th c.). We obtained additional information on the Saljuqs from Mirhānd's *Rawdat al-Safā* (15th c.), *Mujmal al-tawārīkh wa al-qīṣāṣ* (12th c.), and Shabānkārāi's *Majma' al-ansāb* (14th c.).

Nishapuri's work, part of Ȇamadāni's *Jami‘u al-Tawārikh*, details Saljuq rulers; we used the English translation by Kenneth Allen Luther. We also used Ahmed Ateş's Turkish translation of Rāwandi's two-volume work, a rare account from a participant in the Saljuq state's collapse. Al-Isfahāni's work and al-Bundāri's abridgment, which provide detailed accounts of Saljuq rulers and state relations, were used in the original Arabic.

Nizām al-Mulk's *Siyāsat-nāmah* (11th c.) offers a comprehensive view of the Saljuq state's formation, development, and the role of Turkic women in governance, particularly through dynastic marriages. As a vizier and eyewitness, Nizām al-Mulk provides insights into the political situation. Jamāl al-Qarshy's *al-Mulhaqāt bi-al-Şurāh* (13th c.) also details dynastic marriages and their reasons.

Sadr ad-Din al-Ȇusainī's *Reports on the Saljuq State* (12th c.) provides valuable details on the Saljuqs and their relations with neighboring countries. As an official of Khwarazmshah Ala ad-Din Takish, he compiled information and described events he witnessed, primarily referencing al-Isfahāni. This work is particularly valuable for its details on the dynastic marriage between the Qarakhanids and the Saljuqs as a diplomatic tool.

For historiographical analysis, notable contributors to Qarakhanid history include Bartol'd, Agadzhanov, Karaev, Duturaeva, Sevim, Merçil, Turan, Hunkan, and Paul. Bezer, Kuşçu, and Ayan focus on women's roles in Saljuq political life and dynastic marriages in Central Asia, but not as a tool for regulating international relations.

Data on the Muslim legal system, international law under Islam, traditions and practices used in medieval and modern Muslim countries, and other diplomatic tools are presented in the works of Bsoul, Kumhera, Masri, Zukhayli, Chomaev, and Meta.

## Discussion

The Qarakhanid state exemplifies a medieval Turkic state with a mixed nomadic–sedentary economy, although some nomadic traditions prevailed. Both the Qarakhanids and the Saljuqs were Muslims with nomadic lifestyles and adhered to ancient “tore” traditions. Despite these similarities, as the Saljuq state evolved, it adopted the settled peoples' traditions, particularly those of the Samanids, including political administration practices from

medieval Iran. This shift led to a centralized state with a strong administrative apparatus (Agadzhany 82).

In the Qarakhanid state, nomadic traditions persisted, and the population continued to practice Islamic prohibitions and prescriptions (Gardīzī 266; Ibn al-Athīr, VIII 117). Islam was intended to unite the people and strengthen the government, but this did not occur. The Turkic–Muslim synthesis resulted in the adaptation of Islam to Turkic traditions while retaining core Turkic attributes. Geography also influenced adherence to Turkic and Iranian governance traditions. The Saljuqs, after conquering lands beyond the Amu Darya, adopted the administrative traditions of the Persian-speaking, settled civilizations they encountered (Golden 366; Peacock 166). By contrast, the Qarakhanids, located in Turan, maintained nomadic traditions. The Qarakhanids also adapted Islam to local customs. However, political dominance in the Islamic world gradually changed in favor of Turkic traditions. According to Biran, the Qarakhanid period put an end to the Persian dominance in the eastern Islamic world and established the foundations for Turkic political leadership.

The appanage system, integral to the nomadic lifestyle, fragmented the Qarakhanid state, weakening it and complicating defense against other states. This fragmentation altered relations between the Qarakhanids and the Saljuqs. Studying this fragmentation can clarify how diplomatic tools were used by the Qarakhanids and the Saljuqs in various situations and their consequences. Moreover, studying the Qarakhanid state's foreign policy can help clarify the Qarakhanids' political interests, which remain understudied to date.

Analyzing the sources outlined above, we found that medieval Turkic nomadic states used diplomatic methods similar to those of today. Their main tools included peace treaties, marriage alliances, mediation, letters, embassy delegations, and visits. Relations between the Qarakhanids and the Saljuqs evolved from the subjection of the Saljuqs to their dominance over the Qarakhanids. Depending on peace or war conditions, they used various means of interaction, including treaties, marriage alliances, mediation, and cooperation, to delay or resolve conflicts.

### Treaties as a Diplomatic Mechanism

Medieval treaties varied by region and religion. Contracts could be made orally or in writing, but were often oral oaths, with written documents serving

as guarantees (Kumhera 20). In Muslim treaties, the ultimate authority was the Creator, with Sharia prescribing obligations and punishments (Bsoul 201–204; Masri 222). Modern Islamic international law (*Siyar*), which now regulates interstate relations, developed as a separate branch of Islamic law.

Peace treaties among Central Asian states have been practiced since ancient times, becoming more organized after the advent of Islam (Chomaev 81). By the 10th–11th centuries, treaties were common in relations between states like the Ghaznawids, Saljuqs, Qarakhanids, and Khwarazmshahs.

This paper examines peace treaties as a diplomatic tool between the Qarakhanids and the Saljuqs. The treaty texts have not survived; only mentions in medieval writings are still available. Thus, we rely on references from Arab-Persian authors such as Ibn al-Athīr, al-Ḥusainī, Jamāl al-Qarshy, and Nizām al-Mulk. Moreover, medieval states' diplomacy was shaped by their legal systems, with Muslim law being central to the Qarakhanid and Saljuq states. Accordingly, we examine the use of diplomatic instruments in the context of Islamic law.

Islamic law categorized countries by religion, influencing attitudes and agreements. It required adherence to treaty conditions (Qor'an 23:8). The division into "World of Islam" (dar al-Islam) and "World of War" (dar al-harb) impacted interstate relations. While jihad was used against non-Muslims, peaceful relations were preferred with coreligionists. Fighting among Muslims is generally forbidden, except in cases of apostasy or severe lawbreaking (al-Dawoodi 122). Wehbe Zukhayli notes that self-defense is a justified action under Sharia (Zukhayli 94).

The Qarakhanids and Saljuqs, despite being coreligionists, fought over territory and power. As the caliphate's borders expanded, conflicts between Muslim states in Central Asia grew even though such motives are discouraged by Islamic law. According to Zukhayli, reasons for such hostilities include local dissatisfaction with a ruler and disputes over territorial claims. Instances of these conflicts between the Qarakhanids and Saljuqs often ended with peace agreements or new governors.

One of the well-known agreements is the peace treaty concluded in 1074 between the Saljuq Sultan Malikshah and the Qarakhanid ruler Shams al-Mulk (Ibn al-Athīr, VIII 118, 404; Ibn al-Jawzī XIX 293). This treaty

ended the struggle of the Saljuqs and the Qarakhanids for Termez and Balkh. Taking advantage of the death of Alp Arslan, Shams al-Mulk sent a letter to Malikshah stating that the lands of Mawarannahr belonged to the Qarakhanids and that to maintain friendly relations, the Saljuqs should give them Termez and Balkh (al-Ḥusainī 59–60). Malikshah refused these terms. He asserted his power within the state, destroyed the contenders for the throne, and continued the campaign for Mawarannahr started by Alp Arslan. At this time, Shams al-Mulk occupied Termez and Balkh, and then returned to Samarqand. Malikshah, intending to punish Shams al-Mulk, moved with his army to Samarqand. Upon learning of this, Shams al-Mulk did not dare to go to war with the Saljuqs and appealed to the Saljuq vizier Nizām al-Mulk to be pardoned by Malikshah (Ibn al-Athīr, VIII 395).

The peace treaty aimed to prevent hostilities and was respected by the signatories. Despite this, Shams al-Mulk's brother later resumed attacks on Samarqand. The treaty required the sultan to withdraw his forces and Shams al-Mulk to cease territorial claims. The treaty was a nonaggression pact facilitated through mediation. Nizām al-Mulk acted as the mediator to reduce tensions in Mawarannahr while the Saljuqs focused on conquests in the Middle East and dealt with internal strife.

Another agreement between the Qarakhanids and the Saljuqs was the agreement of 1089–1090 between the Saljuq Sultan Malikshah and the Qarakhanid ruler of the city of Atbash, Ya'qūb Tegin, the brother of Kashgar's khan. To understand the rationale for this treaty, it is necessary to consider the internal situation in the Qarakhanid state. At that time, the Saljuqs were already a powerful force that many states did not dare to oppose. The Qarakhanids, weakened by internal strife and fragmented governance, came under the Saljuqs' influence. In 1089–1090, after Ahmād Khan, the Qarakhanid ruler of Mawarannahr, was removed by the Saljuq Sultan Malikshah, his Khwarazm nobleman Abu Tahir was appointed ruler of Samarqand in his place. After Malikshah left Samarqand, the city's inhabitants and the commander of the army, consisting of representatives of the Chigil clan, 'Ayn ad-Dawla, rebelled against Abu Tahir. Abu Tahir returned to Khwarazm, and 'Ayn ad-Dawla, fearing the wrath of Malikshah, decided to enlist the help of the Kashgar khan and called his brother Ya'qūb Tegin to Samarqand. Ya'qūb Tegin, having arrived in Samarqand, realized

that he would not be able to interact with ‘Ayn ad-Dawla and set the locals against him, especially since people claimed that he had mocked many of them. For this reason, ‘Ayn ad-Dawla was executed. The news of the uprising and execution of ‘Ayn ad-Dawla forced Malikshah to return to Samarcand. At this time, Ya’qūb Tegin left Samarcand. Malikshah ordered his pursuit and, according to Ibn al-Athīr, Kashgar’s khan handed over Ya’qūb Tegin to Malikshah for fear of creating enmity. The Saljuq sultan concluded a truce with Ya’qūb Tegin and left Mawarannahr. The only condition of the agreement was the containment of Ya’qūb Tegin by Toghrūl ibn Inal, who was trying to capture Kashgar. The Kashgar khan had already sworn allegiance to Malikshah (Ibn al-Athīr, VIII 458–460).

According to fiqh, such an uprising can encourage hostilities against fellow believers, and their suppression is the natural right of Muslims to prevent turmoil (Zukhayli 126). According to Bartol’d (referring to Nizām al-Mulk), such uprisings can emerge from conflicts between the interests of nomadic and sedentary peoples. For instance, the vizier Nizām al-Mulk tried to establish a state order characteristic of a sedentary culture, which was incompatible with nomadic traditions (Bartol’d 372–373).

We argue that this treaty did not fully balance Qarakhanid and Saljuq rights, as at that time many Qarakhanid cities and villages were already under the patronage of the Saljuq sultan (Ayan, “Karahanlıların” 22). This truce was more like another forced recognition of the power of the suzerain over the subject.

These two treaties are clear examples of the continuous relations between the Qarakhanids and the Saljuqs. However, the first treaty was an agreement between equal states, while the second had a more coercive character. From the second half of the 11th century, the Qarakhanids gradually turned into vassals of the Saljuqs—a relationship that inherently prevented the stipulation of balanced treaties between the two parties.

### Mediation

While mediation services formally began in the U.S. in the 1960s, mediation has long been a method for resolving interpersonal and interstate conflicts. In the Middle Ages, mediators were influential figures who negotiated on

behalf of conflicting parties. Shuttle diplomacy, a related concept, emerged in the 1970s with Henry Kissinger's efforts in the Arab–Israeli conflict.

When studying Qarakhanid–Saljuq relations, it is evident that mediation played an important role in their interactions. One example is the mediation of Nizām al-Mulk in the conclusion of a peace treaty in 1074 between the Saljuq Sultan Malikshah and the Qarakhanid ruler Shams al-Mulk. The Saljuq sultan, wishing to punish the recalcitrant Shams al-Mulk because Termez and Balkh were besieged by his troops, moved with his army to Samarqand. Wishing to avoid a military conflict, Shams al-Mulk turned to Nizām al-Mulk to obtain forgiveness and peace from the sultan (Ibn al-Athīr, VIII 395). Nizām al-Mulk was not a neutral third party; rather, he was a trusted person whose authority was respected by both sides in the conflict. This is one of the hallmarks of medieval mediation and a key feature for successful mediation in this period. Moreover, in this case, all three parties were interested in the same outcome.

Another example of mediation is the resolution of the conflict between the Qarakhanid ruler Muhammad ibn Sulaiman and the Saljuq Sultan Sanjar. In Mawarannah, Sanjar's henchman Muhammad ibn Sulaiman began to neglect his position and take property from his subjects—a situation that reoccurred more than once as Sanjar undertook several military campaigns against the Qarakhanid ruler (Karaev 157). Furthermore, in 1113–1114, the behavior of Muhammad ibn Sulaiman forced Sanjar to gather his army and head to Mawarannah (Ibn al-Athīr, IX 150; Qazwīnī 101). To obtain a pardon from Sanjar, Muhammad ibn Sulaiman asked for help from one of the main Saljuq emirs, Kumach, and Khwarazmshah Kutbuddin Muhammad. In this event, Müneccimbaşı mentions only Emir Kumach as an intermediary (Müneccimbaşı 11). Both mediators convinced the sultan to pardon the Qarakhanid ruler on the condition that he bow before him and ask for forgiveness (Ibn al-Athīr, IX 150). The Qarakhanid ruler agreed to kiss the land on the eastern bank of the Amu Darya while Sanjar stood on horseback on its western bank. Such admiration, even at a distance, indicated recognition of the suzerainty of the Saljuqs over the Qarakhanids.

In this case, the mediators were a person close to the sultan and the head of a neighboring state who had good relations with both the Saljuqs and the Qarakhanids. Once again, the mediators had authoritative stature and

were familiar to the participants in the conflict. In both cases of mediation, the weaker party contacted the mediators voluntarily, hoping to reach a consensus with the stronger party.

### Marriage Alliances

In the Middle Ages, marriage alliances were a key diplomatic tool to strengthen ties between countries, prevent wars, boost authority, gain economic benefits, form alliances, and gain power. These dynastic marriages often served as initial steps toward recognizing vassalage or annexing territory.

In medieval Muslim Central Asia, marriage unions were common in interstate relations. Muslim women, required by Sharia to marry only Muslims, often married within the Islamic world, such as the Qarakhanids with the Ghaznawids and the Saljuqs. Religion was less of an issue in these cases, as all parties shared the same faith.

The Qarakhanids and the Saljuqs led a nomadic way of life. In a nomadic society, a woman was not only the successor of the family and the keeper of the hearth but also a warrior and a hero (Mishukova 204). For this reason, she could influence the opinion of the rulers and the male portion of society (Bartol'd 372; Nizām al-Mulk 179). After the ruler, his wife occupied the main place in the khan's court and was awarded the title of "khatun" (Kuşçu 173).

One of the famous marriage alliances was the marriage between Alp Arslan and Shah Khatun, the daughter of the Qarakhanid ruler Yusuf Kadir Khan, the ruler of Kashgar and Khotan. Based on the information available, she was previously married to the Ghaznawid ruler Mas'ūd ibn Mahmūd (Ibn al-Athīr, VIII 118). Shah Khatun was met by the Ghaznawids with special preparation, as they wanted to demonstrate their wealth and impress the Turks (Bartol'd 357; Bayhaqi 451). This indicates that marriage to Shah Khatun was primarily a political step to achieve peaceful relations. After the death of the Ghaznawid Sultan Mas'ūd, imprisoned in the Giri fortress, Shah Khatun returned to the Western Qarakhanid Khaganate (Hunkan, "Türk Hakanlığında" 381). In her marriage to Alp Arslan, Shah Khatun seemingly bore the same responsibility and strengthened the relationship between the two states (Ayan, "Karahanlı Hânedân" 401). Although the date

of this marriage is not available in the literature, it is evident that through this marriage, the Qarakhanids wanted a guarantee of nonaggression in Mawarannahr from the Saljuqs, while the Saljuqs wanted to stop attempts by the Qarakhanids to capture Khorasan.

In 1065–1066, Alp Arslan married his son Malikshah, the heir to the throne, to Tarkān Khatun, the daughter of the Western Qarakhanid ruler Ibrahim Tabgach Khan (Ibn al-Athīr, VIII 118; Nishapuri 61; Qazwīnī 96; Şebānkāreī 79). In the same year, Malikshah was declared heir to the throne (Ibn al-Athīr, VIII 376; *Mujmal al-tawārīkh wa al-qisāṣ* 315). The Qarakhanid princess arrived in Marw with a thousand servants and maids and a luxurious dowry that transformed the city (Mirhānd 104; Sevim and Mercil 158). Tarkān Khatun became one of the most famous women in the Saljuq state and had a great influence on the sultan (Rāwandī I 130). She was called the “Queen of the Turks” (Duturaeva 23). She had not only her diwan (council), which dealt with financial and administrative affairs, but also a cavalry of 12,000 soldiers. She was distinguished by her generosity and often presented troops with rich gifts (Turan 215). Among nomadic peoples, generosity was an important quality for a leader (Bartol'd 372). Taking advantage of this, Tarkān Khatun repeatedly tried to put her young son on the throne but failed each time (al-Ḥusainī ch. 27; Nishapuri 61; Qazwīnī 97; Şebānkāreī 79). Because of her claims to power and influence on the ruler, Nizām al-Mulk wrote about the bad influence of women on government (Nizām al-Mulk 179). The purpose of this marriage was most likely to strengthen neighborly relations, but Tarkān Khatun’s actions led to troubled years in the Saljuq state. The role of Tarkān Khatun during the years of “distemper” (ahd al-fīrat) has become a niche research topic within the literature on the Saljuqs.

The next dynastic marriage was the union of the daughter of Alp Arslan with Shams al-Mulk (Ibn al-Athīr, VIII 118), although other sources state it was his younger sister (Hunkan, “Türk Hakanlığında” 383; Turan 158). This marriage was the result of a truce between the Qarakhanids and the Saljuqs. After the death of Alp Arslan, the Qarakhanids, having decided to take advantage of the transitional period in the Saljuq state, launched an attack on Balkh and Termez. This attack was unsuccessful. Shams al-Mulk retreated, concluded a truce with Malikshah, and married the daughter of

Alp Arslan (Ibn al-Athīr, VIII 118, 404). As Shams al-Mulk became ruler in 1067–1068 and Alp Arslan died in 1072–1073, this marriage presumably occurred after 1072. Some authors argue that it occurred in 1074–1075 (Ibn al-Athīr, VIII 118, 404; Ibn al-Jawzī XIX 293). This marriage reflects the dominance of the Saljuqs over the Qarakhanids, as Shams al-Mulk renounced his claims and was forced to agree to a truce.

Another marriage that could be considered dynastic is the marriage between the daughter of Malikshah and Tegin Khan Sulaiman, which took place in 1096–1097. There is little information about this marriage. The literature indicates that from this marriage, they had a son, Muhammad Arslan Khan, whom Sanjar appointed as the ruler of Samarqand (Beysembiev 186; Ibn al-Athīr, IX 59). The Saljuq Sultan Barkyaruq appointed Tegin Khan Sulaiman as the ruler of the Western Qarakhanid state. Here, it transpires that Malikshah's daughter is married to Tegin Khan Sulaiman (Hunkan, *Türk Hakanlığı* 288). The relations between the Qarakhanids and the Saljuqs during this period were tense. The Saljuqs appointed Qarakhanid rulers one after another, and the Qarakhanid state depended on the Saljuqs. Thus, this marriage strengthened the dominant position of the Saljuq rulers.

The marriage of Sultan Sanjar and Turkan Khatun is another politically motivated marriage. In 1129, Sanjar began moving to Samarqand, where the father of his wife Turkan Khatun, Qarakhanid Muhammad ibn Sulaiman ibn Daūd, ruled (Agadzhanov 175; al-Ḥusainī ch. 30). At the end of the 1120s, Sanjar's henchman Muhammad Arslan Khan ceased to obey him and abused the trust of the Saljuq sultan; the sultan captured Samarqand and sent Muhammad Khan to his daughter (Ibn al-Athīr, IX 253; Müneccimbaşı 11). Shabānkarāī reports that after the defeat at the Battle of Qatwan, Sanjar's wife, Turkan, was taken captive and released only a year later (Şebânkâreî 85). This marriage was also a political tool: for the Saljuqs, it was a means for managing Qarakhanid forces and territories.

Medieval dynastic marriages between Turkic and other peoples were a common practice in foreign policy. The prerequisites and reasons for these marriages were primarily the geopolitical and strategic interests of the state. Additionally, Hunkan argues that the preservation of Turkic and aristocratic roots was an important goal of the Saljuq state. By forging marriages with Qarakhanid princesses, the Saljuqs obtained connections with “royal” blood,

which was not the case with the Ghaznawids and the Anushteginids—descendants of the lower strata of society who did not have aristocratic roots (Hunkan, “Türk Hakanlığında” 385). This strategy suggests that the Saljuqs had long-term plans for building a strong state.

### Coalitions and Military Cooperation

International relations involve cooperation and interaction among countries across fields, including military, political, cultural, and economic areas. Diplomatic tools such as military assistance and coalitions also featured in the relations between the Qarakhanids and the Saljuqs, albeit in different forms compared to modern cooperation efforts.

Several events in Qarakhanid–Saljuq relations can be cited as examples of coalitions. In 1102–1103, the ruler of Samarcand was Muhammed bin Sulaiman Khan. After his appointment, he had to fight the rest of the dynasty to maintain his place. One of these pretenders, Saghir Bey, gathered an army in Mawarannahr and moved to Samarcand. Upon learning of this, Muhammad bin Sulaiman asked for help from Sultan Sanjar (Ibn al-Athīr, IX 69; Müneccimbaşı 11). Sultan Sanjar arrived with an army in Samarcand and, not daring to fight, Saghir Bey retreated and asked the sultan for forgiveness. In this case, to protect the city from a third party, the ruler asked for help.

Another example is the appeal of the population of Samarcand to the Saljuq Sultan Malikshah for help against Ahmad Khan in 1089–1090 (Ibn al-Athīr, VIII 457; Müneccimbaşı 8). Müneccimbaşı notes that the people were represented not only by ordinary residents but also by scientists and theologians. According to Ibn al-Athīr, the people secretly wrote complaints against Ahmad Khan, and on behalf of the people, under the pretext of hajj and trade, the Shaf'iyy theologian Abu Tahir bin Ilk arrived at Malikshah. According to him, the khan took property and money from the people and oppressed them, and the theologian was afraid for his wealth (Ibn al-Athīr, VIII 457). This was the last straw for the escalation of the troops and the movement of Malikshah toward Samarcand. Ultimately, Ahmad Khan was captured and sent to Isfahan. During the reign of Ahmad Khan, internal strife—the result of a confrontation between the bureaucrats and the ulema (Muslim theologians)—made it possible for the Saljuqs to establish dominance in Qarakhanid lands.

In this example, the people of Samarqand are the initiators in seeking outside help against their ruler. Hunkan claims that such appeals of the population of Mawarannahr to external forces have occurred since the time of the Samanids. For them, it was important not who ruled their land but who defended their interests. During the period of the Samanids, they turned to the Qarakhanids for help, then to the Ghaznawids, and then to the Saljuqs (Hunkan, *Türk Hakanlığı* 328). Muslim scholars and dignitaries felt particularly free to criticize the ruler (Paul 3). Such behavior was characteristic of the peoples of the Middle Ages, and it was based on political, economic, and social principles. First, medieval states were not created based on ethnicity, and it was not necessary to speak of a single nation and patriotism to unite the people. Their unity was more influenced by the confessional principle, and the ruling dynasties of Mawarannahr, which quickly succeeded each other, were Muslim. For this reason, the name of the dynasty was not important for the people. Second, economic and financial well-being was of utmost importance since the cities of Mawarannahr were the trade and economic centers of the region. Large landowners, merchants, nobles, and theologians were interested in protecting their wealth. They paid tribute to their patrons and rulers in exchange for order and tranquility in their cities and towns. Thus, the inhabitants of Mawarannahr preferred rulers who were able to maintain the internal stability of the state.

Another example of cooperation is an event in 1129–1130 in Samarqand during the reign of Muhammad bin Sulaiman Khan, who was appointed by Sultan Sanjar. Due to the paralysis of Muhammad bin Sulaiman Khan, Sanjar chose his son Nasr Khan as his deputy. However, the Alid theologian, who played an important role in the life of the city and was the head of the city administration (Ibn al-Athīr, IX 466), conspired to and ultimately killed Nasr Khan. Having learned of this, Muhammad bin Sulaiman Khan, who was outside the city at that time, sent his son Ahmad bin Muhammad from Turkestan to the city. At the same time, Muhammad bin Sulaiman asked Sultan Sanjar for help. However, Ahmad bin Muhammad neutralized the enemies, and Muhammad bin Sulaiman refused Sanjar's help, which was deemed unnecessary. This act angered Sanjar, who had already crossed the Amu Darya, pushing him to seize Muhammad bin Sulaiman and send him to his daughter in Balkh (Ibn al-Athīr, IX 253). In this case, the requested assistance was not realized. Nevertheless, similar to the previous

cases presented in this paper, the appeal to the sultan for military support was prompted by the appearance of an external threat.

In Qarakhanid–Saljuq relations, cooperation often involved the stronger Saljuqs aiding the weaker Qarakhanids. This support also benefited the Saljuqs, as it helped them maintain stability in their territories and prevent threats.

The call for military assistance did not always come from the Qarakhanids; in some cases, representatives of the Saljuq state asked for help. In 1118, the Saljuq Mahmūd bin Muhammad, the young son of Muhammad Tapar who sat on the throne according to his father's will, wrote a letter to Arslan Muhammad, the khan of Samarcand. In this letter, he called for them to jointly attack Sultan Sanjar, who was approaching them. Mahmūd bin Muhammad was concerned that Sultan Sanjar, being stronger, more experienced, and more authoritative than him, could seize power. This strategy was not implemented, as Sanjar was ahead of them and defeated the army of Mahmūd (al-Bundārī 110–111; al-Isfahāni II 13–14; Şebânkârê 84, 87).

The Qarakhanids also had active relations with the Ghaznawids, a Turkic dynasty that adopted Islam and became one of the two successors to the Samanid Empire alongside the Qarakhanids. Treaties, intermarriage unions, mediation, coalition agreements, and envoy visits occurred between them. Examples include the border treaty of 1001 between Sultan Mahmūd and Ilik Nasr, the Treaty of Samarcand of 1025, marriage alliances between the sons and daughters of Kadir Khan and Sultan Mahmūd, and the embassy visit of the Ghaznawids in 1031 led by Abul Qasim Husayri and Abu Talip al-Tabani. Unlike Qarakhanid–Saljuq relations, the nature of Qarakhanid–Ghaznawids relations did not change; they were on equal footing. No side subjugated the other, although there were attempts to conquer each other's territories.

## Conclusion

Diplomatic methods such as peace treaties, mediation, marriages, and cooperation were often used in interstate relations between the Qarakhanids and the Saljuqs. We argue that the main reasons for the effectiveness of these methods are the shared cultural and historical traditions of these nomadic peoples, the unstable military-political situation in the region, and the tactful policies of the rulers of these states.

Based on the cases presented in this paper, we draw the following conclusions. First, both states used advanced tools for peaceful interaction and conflict resolution. Second, as the central power in the Saljuq state grew, its dominance over the Qarakhanids increased. Third, the strengthening of centrifugal tendencies in the Qarakhanid state negatively affected the relations between countries and the effectiveness of preventive diplomacy.

The use of diplomatic methods and tools in crisis management is not always successful due to internal and external factors, especially in the early stages of a diplomatic relationship. Despite this, diplomacy remains the most reliable option for resolving differences. Accordingly, diplomatic methods featuring elements of mutual understanding, agreement, and compromise maintain an important place in both internal and foreign policy across time. This is especially important for medieval states in Central Asia, which experienced rapid political, social, economic, and cultural changes at the regional level. The Qarakhanid and Saljuq states, being at the crossroads of the Turkic, Iranian, Muslim, and Chinese civilizations, were in a particularly volatile environment, in which diplomatic tools proved to be most effective. The Qarakhanids also had unique relations with other Muslim countries. Notably, they developed well-balanced relations with the Ghaznawids, as indicated by Arab-Persian sources describing their dynastic marriages, ambassadorial visits, and various meetings to conclude agreements.

This study of Qarakhanid–Saljuq relations revealed that their economic and cultural developments warrant further research. Saljuq expansion led to shifts in societal norms, with nomadic rites like feasts for soldiers fading over time; understanding the role of such rites and comparing the religiosity of Qarakhanid and Saljuq rulers could shed further light on the relations between the Qarakhanids and Saljuqs.

### **Contribution Rate Statement**

The authors' contribution rates in this study are equal.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

There is no conflict of interest with any institution or person within the scope of this study. There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

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