



Military Transformations in Medieval India-A Case Study of Khilji Dynasty

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ABSTRACT

During his time as Sultan of Delhi in mediaeval India, Alauddin Khilji faced a number of military threats. Defending against Mongol invasions, putting down internal rebellions, extending the Sultanate's borders, and dealing with logistical difficulties all fit within this category. Khilji responded to these threats by instituting several military reforms, including the creation of a permanent army, harsh disciplinary procedures, the introduction of horse branding, and the construction of strategically placed forts. These changes were crucial in establishing his authority, expanding the Sultanate's territory, bolstering the efficiency of the military, and making the Delhi Sultanate more secure. Khilji's military accomplishments and the reshaping of the Sultanate's social and political dynamics were the result of his plans and choices, notably his aggressive expansionist strategy and concentration on defence, intelligence collection, and resource utilisation.





INTRODUCTION

During his time as Sultan of Delhi, Alauddin Khilji was confronted with several military problems. In 1296, when he came to power, the northern Indian territory was beset by internal political strife and foreign threats. The Mongol invasions were a major obstacle that Khilji had to overcome. Genghis Khan and his offspring, the Mongols, were a constant danger to the Delhi Sultanate's safety and independence. Military battles on numerous fronts and fortification of strategic border districts were common responses by Khilji to Mongol invasions. Khilji also had to deal with insurrection from inside his own ranks and revolts in neighbouring regions.¹ Keeping order over such a large and varied kingdom as the Delhi Sultanate was no simple undertaking. Khilji had to put down a number of revolts and uprisings, especially in areas where the central government's authority was being questioned. To quell rebellions and restore the Sultanate's authority in the face of these internal threats, military force and careful preparation were necessary.

Khilji's drive for territorial expansion informed his military campaigns as well. He planned to increase the size of his Delhi Sultanate and subjugate additional territory. This desire for more territory called for military wars against other kingdoms and principalities, frequently against formidable armies and fortifications. Khilji had to devise methods and tactics to counter the opposition posed by these regional forces, calculating carefully to secure the best possible military results. In addition, Khilji was stymied by problems with logistics. His military operations could not have succeeded without well-developed networks of transportation and supply centres to cover the immense expanse of his dominion. Keeping an army well-supplied and operational across great distances was a logistical challenge that required meticulous preparation.² To keep his armed troops mobile and effective, Khilji had to solve these problems. There were several military threats during Alauddin Khilji's rule. Defending against Mongol invasions, putting down internal rebellions, extending the Sultanate's borders, and dealing with logistical difficulties all fit within this category. Khilji faced a challenging historical environment characterised by internal political discord and foreign dangers. In order to overcome these obstacles, careful planning, strong military capabilities, and well-oiled logistical networks were essential. Despite setbacks, Khilji's military successes were essential in strengthening his grip on power and increasing the Delhi Sultanate's territory.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to examine the historical context and challenges faced by Alauddin Khilji in the military sphere, analyze his specific military reforms and their objectives, evaluate the effectiveness and impact of these reforms on the stability and expansion of the Delhi Sultanate, assess the strategic military decisions and their role in achieving successes, investigate the organizational structure and logistical advancements in Khilji's military administration, explore the use of innovative military tactics and technologies and their influence on battlefield outcomes, and study the relationship between Khilji's military reforms and the socio-political dynamics of the Delhi Sultanate.

Research Methodology

The research methodology employed in this study is historical in nature. It involves analyzing primary and secondary sources, such as historical texts, documents, and artifacts, to understand and interpret the events and context surrounding Alauddin Khilji's reign as the ruler of the Delhi Sultanate.



DISCUSSION

In order to achieve certain goals, Alauddin Khilji, the illustrious sultan of the Delhi Sultanate in mediaeval India, made substantial military changes. His reforms attempted to increase his empire's military might, improve centralised command, guarantee efficient governance, and safeguard his geographical gains. The creation of a well-organized and effective standing army was one of Alauddin Khilji's most important military innovations. He established a standing army of well-trained and disciplined troops who were given monthly wages by the state, known as the "New Standing Army" or the "Corps of Forty Thousand." Alauddin Khilji wanted to assure a prompt reaction to any internal or foreign challenges to his power and maintain a permanent state of preparedness, therefore he kept a standing army. Khilji instituted stringent measures to promote discipline and loyalty among the troops in order to increase the size and efficiency of his army. Disobedience or neglect was punished harshly, and any indication of disloyalty or insubordination was dealt with harshly. These actions attempted to increase the military's overall performance by instilling a strong feeling of discipline, obedience, and loyalty within the ranks.³

Implementing a system known as the "Dagh" or branding system was another significant military change started by Alauddin Khilji. This technique included branding the horses that belonged to the military and having the state keep track of their numbers and other information. The identification and management of the cavalry were made easier by this approach, which also allowed for effective administration. Additionally, it acted as a safeguard against graft and unauthorised use of public funds. Alauddin Khilji adopted strategic steps to safeguard his borders and defend his domains in addition to these internal military changes. He built a network of forts and fortresses at the weak points of his empire's borders, especially in areas susceptible to outside incursions. These forts served as powerful defensive fortifications and served to keep the adversary at bay. Khilji also adopted a strategy of keeping a formidable cavalry force ready to launch swift raids and counterattacks, scaring off possible rivals and boosting his own power. The objectives of Alauddin Khilji's military reforms were to bolster military might, impose discipline and obedience, and secure his kingdom.⁴ During Khilji's administration, these changes were very important in making him a strong leader and supporting the Delhi Sultanate. His empire's military strength and stability came from the standing army, stringent rules, branding system, and fortifications, which allowed him to efficiently rule his territory and repel outside attacks.

The stability and growth of the Delhi Sultanate were significantly impacted by the military reforms carried out by Alauddin Khilji. The empire's military capabilities and territorial integrity were to be improved via these measures. The emphasis placed on professionalisation and discipline within the army was one of the main components of Khilji's military reforms. He established stringent rules of behaviour and discipline for the troops, emphasising their allegiance and submission to the Sultan. This helped create a more unified, orderly military force that could carry out directives successfully. By fostering a feeling of cohesion and discipline among the warriors, professionalising the army was crucial in improving the stability of the Delhi Sultanate.⁵ Significant adjustments were made to the military's structure and recruiting processes under Khilji. He formed the "New Order" or "Dagh," a standing force of skilled and knowledgeable troops. As compensation for their service, this standing army received regular salary, sufficient food, and land grants. This methodical strategy to hiring and paying employees meant that there was a dependable and obedient



military force available for both offensive and defensive operations. The implementation of a strategic fortification system was another significant military change. To stave off outside invasions and preserve hegemony over the empire's boundaries, Khilji built an extensive network of powerful fortifications. These forts served as sites for starting military operations and as a solid defensive line. By preventing possible invaders and improving the Sultanate's grip over critical territories, the fortification system significantly contributed to the stability of the Delhi Sultanate.⁶

The Delhi Sultanate's realm grew as a result of Khilji's military reforms. Strategic planning and the professionalisation of the army allowed for efficient military operations and territory conquests. Khilji led a number of military campaigns that increased the Sultanate's dominance over places like Gujarat, Malwa, and Rajasthan. These victories were made possible by the military reforms, which also ensured the Sultanate's geographical growth and strengthened its position. The growth and stability of the Delhi Sultanate were greatly impacted by the military reforms introduced by Alauddin Khilji. The Sultanate's military capabilities were strengthened and its territorial integrity was protected through the strategic fortification system, the focus on professionalisation and discipline within the army, and the creation of a standing army. These changes produced a more dependable and stable military force that could successfully conduct military operations and protect the empire. Overall, the stability and growth of the Delhi Sultanate during Khilji's rule were greatly influenced by his military reforms.⁷

Alauddin Khilji, the sultan of the Delhi Sultanate in mediaeval India, made tactical military choices that were crucial to his empire's notable military victories. These choices included a range of topics, including resource use, defence, expansion, and information collecting. His ambitious expansionist programme was one of Alauddin Khilji's significant strategic military choices.⁸ Khilji led military wars to expand the borders of his empire because he understood the value of territorial victories for gaining and retaining political power. He was successful in capturing and annexing places like Ranthambore, Malwa, and Gujarat, expanding his controllable area. His domain expanded as a result of this expansionist strategy, which also improved his military's personnel, money, and key positions.⁹

Khilji's concentration on bolstering the defence of his realm was another crucial strategic choice. He understood the use of fortifications in defending his territory from outside dangers. Khilji made investments in the building and repair of forts and fortifications, especially along borders that were vulnerable.¹⁰ These strongholds offered safe defensive locations and acted as barriers to avert enemy incursions. Khilji's military policy, which was defense-focused, assisted in securing his holdings and preserving peace inside his kingdom. Using his strategic prowess, Alauddin Khilji gathered military information. He set up a highly developed intelligence network to keep track on both internal and external changes. He was able to obtain crucial information through this network concerning enemy kingdoms' military might and political allegiances. Khilji was able to foresee possible risks by remaining educated and coming up with efficient countermeasures. Khilji's military judgements and the effectiveness of his military operations were greatly influenced by the intelligence-gathering activities of his government.

Another essential component of Khilji's strategic military choices was the efficient use of his resources. He understood the value of a powerful, well-equipped army in gaining military victories. Khilji concentrated on creating a powerful cavalry force, the "Chaghtai Mashaikh," made up of



talented riders. This cavalry was essential for quick movements, attacking enemy strongholds, and supplying tactical benefits in combat. Khilji's military efforts were more successful as a whole because of his ability to properly mobilise and use his resources. The key factor in Alauddin Khilji's military victories was his strategic military choices.¹¹ His successes on the battlefield were a result of his aggressive expansionist strategy, focus on defence and fortifications, attempts to acquire information, and efficient use of resources. These tactical choices allowed him to successfully use his military resources, defend his territory, obtain vital information, and grow his empire. The Delhi Sultanate's military supremacy during Alauddin Khilji's leadership was ensured by his shrewd military methods and choices, which helped him gain a reputation as a fearsome leader.

The organisational structure and logistical innovations used by Alauddin Khilji's military administration during the Indian mediaeval era contributed to the effectiveness and efficiency of his armed forces. A hierarchical framework defined the organisational structure of Khilji's military administration. Each of the several units that made up the army was led by a commander or officer.¹² Divisions of cavalry, infantry, and artillery were among these troops. Khilji put a high value on obedience to orders and a rigid military structure. He chose dependable, obedient commanders and gave them considerable latitude in commanding their different divisions. This centralised command system made it possible to coordinate military activities quickly and effectively. Alauddin Khilji made a number of logistical improvements to support the efficient operation of his military government. The creation of a productive supply chain system was a key logistical breakthrough. Recognising the need of keeping an army well-supplied, Khilji took steps to guarantee a constant supply of supplies to his soldiers. He built granaries and storehouses in key areas, where they kept enough of food and other supplies for his troops during military expeditions. His soldiers were able to operate in distant areas without experiencing acute shortages because to this logistics system.¹³

Khilji also made changes to how the military managed its funds. He built a treasury system to effectively manage the income his empire produced. This money was used to fund the military's requirements, such as paying troops' wages, buying weapons and equipment, and maintaining the infrastructure. Khilji's financial reforms secured a consistent supply of finance for his military leadership, enabling continued military operations and the general health of his armed forces. Creating effective communication networks was another significant logistical

development. Within his military administration and across the many parts of his empire, Khilji understood the need of fast and accurate information sharing. He set up a network of messengers and couriers who relayed important orders, reports, and communications between commanders, garrisons, and the central government. This communication system made it easier to make quick decisions, plan military operations, and guarantee an efficient reaction to changing circumstances. Alauddin Khilji's military leadership placed a strong emphasis on his troops' training and professional growth in addition to organisational structure and logistical improvements. He made investments in organisations that provided troops with intensive training in many facets of combat. His focus on training helped his men become more skilled and combat-ready, which allowed them to perform expertly on the battlefield. Alauddin Khilji's military reforms had a significant influence on the sociopolitical dynamics of the Delhi Sultanate. These changes not only improved the empire's military might but also significantly influenced the socio-political climate



and the consolidation of Khilji's rule. The strengthening of central authority was a significant factor in the interaction between Khilji's military reforms and the socio-political dynamics. The development of a well-trained standing army and the imposition of severe discipline helped to solidify the Sultan's position of power. The Sultan's influence over the empire was strengthened by the military reforms, which made sure the army remained devoted to and submissive to him. Khilji was able to construct a more centralised government structure and exercise more control over the sociopolitical dynamics of the Delhi Sultanate thanks to the consolidation of central power. Khilji's military reforms had a noticeable effect on the alliance between the military and the ruling class. There was a feeling of allegiance and dependency on the Sultan as a result of the formation of the "New Order" and the payment of regular wages and prizes. Regional military commanders and local power centres lost authority and autonomy as a result of the professionalisation of the army brought about by Khilji's reforms. This change in the balance of power strengthened the Sultan's hold over the armed forces and further established his status as the supreme ruler of the socio-political system.

The Sultanate's connections with the common public were also impacted by the military changes. The efficacy of the army and the fortification system gave the populace a feeling of security and stability. This strengthened the Sultanate's power and promoted societal harmony. The Sultan's reign also gained legitimacy and pride as a consequence of the reforms' successful military operations and territorial expansion. Military victories and the public's view of a powerful empire under Khilji's rule increased his legitimacy and public support.¹⁴ The socio-political dynamics were not without difficulties, however. Regional nobility and elites felt some degree of animosity as a result of the Sultan's ability to consolidate power and centralise authority. The Sultan's authority over the military may have made certain social groups feel marginalised or endangered, especially those whose power was reduced by the reforms. Throughout Khilji's rule, this conflict between the national government and the many regional power centres persisted.

During his rule in mediaeval India, Alauddin Khilji used cutting-edge military strategies and equipment that significantly influenced how battles turned out. Khilji grasped the value of surprise assaults and hit-and-run tactics against bigger and more conventional forces, which made him a noteworthy user of the notion of "Guerilla Warfare." Skilled riders that made up Khilji's army were able to assault the enemy quickly and unexpectedly because to their mobility and terrain awareness. By disrupting the enemy's formations and causing confusion, Khilji's soldiers were able to deal significant losses before making a swift retreat to safety.¹⁵ Khilji had a tactical advantage thanks to guerilla warfare tactics, which were important to his military victories. Khilji used cutting-edge technology to improve his military might. Using modern artillery was one such technique. When Khilji adopted strong siege engines like trebuchets and catapults, his army was able to penetrate defended enemy strongholds. With the aid of these artillery pieces, Khilji's army was able to seriously harm the enemy's defences and carry out successful sieges and victories. The use of cutting-edge artillery technology improved the military operations of Khilji and provided him a clear advantage over his rivals.

Khilji intimidated and demoralised his adversaries through psychological warfare techniques. He was aware of the significance of making his opponents feel scared and confused. His strategy included showing out the severed heads of vanquished foes, especially in front of walled



towns, to incite fear and deter resistance. This psychological warfare tactic sought to undermine the enemy's will and morale in order to make victories simpler. By giving his troops a psychological edge, Khilji's employment of psychological strategies aided in his military victories. Khilji emphasised the need of conducting reconnaissance and obtaining information. To learn the strengths, weaknesses, and war strategies of the opposition, he used spies and scouts. He was able to develop effective war plans and make wise choices because to his knowledge. Khilji could place his soldiers efficiently and take advantage of any weaknesses by having a comprehensive grasp of the enemy's actions and goals. This helped him achieve favourable combat results.

CONCLUSION

The Delhi Sultanate in mediaeval India was ruled by Alauddin Khilji, who faced a number of military difficulties and made strategic choices that influenced the empire's growth, stability, and overall military might. Khilji was able to effectively manage a difficult historical setting that was characterised by political disunity, outside dangers, internal uprisings, and logistical difficulties. His military reforms, which included creating a permanent army, enforcing rigorous rules of conduct, building fortifications, and improving logistical capabilities, were essential to consolidating his authority, extending the Sultanate's realm, and retaining dominance over several areas. These changes strengthened the Delhi Sultanate's military might and stability, allowing Khilji to fight off Mongol incursions, put down internal uprisings, and launch successful military operations. The aggressive expansionist tactics, concentration on defence and fortifications, intelligence gathering, and resource utilisation made by Khilji were responsible for his military victories and altered the socio-political dynamics of the empire. His military reforms had the effect of consolidating power, improving ties between the governing class and the military, and giving the population a feeling of security and legitimacy. Alauddin Khilji's shrewd military tactics, creative plans, and efficient governance had a long-lasting influence on the Delhi Sultanate, making him a powerful leader and contributing to the stability and growth of the empire throughout his leadership.

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