



International Conference on Modern Science and Scientific Studies

Hosted online from Madrid, Spain

Website: econfseries.com

20th November 2025

FRAGMENTATION AND CRISES IN CENTRAL ASIA UNDER THE SELEUCID GOVERNMENT

Sharifov Ehronbek Erkin oglu

Scientist of the Educational Methodological

Department of Termez State University

ehronbek@tersu.uz

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-1409-6496>

Abstract:

This article examines the political, military, and psychological crises that led to the fragmentation of Central Asia under the Seleucid Empire. Following the death of Seleucus I, the vast Seleucid realm faced increasing instability as eastern satrapies such as Bactria, Sogdiana, and Parthia sought independence. The weakening of central authority, combined with internal dynastic conflicts and foreign invasions, gradually dissolved Seleucid control over the eastern territories. The study highlights how socio-economic developments in Central Asia, coupled with the rise of local powers and the influence of Hellenistic culture, transformed the political landscape of the region. Ultimately, the paper demonstrates that continuous internal strife and external pressure from Rome and Parthia accelerated the decline of Seleucid rule, leaving behind a legacy of fragmented states and cultural hybridity in Central Asia.

Keywords: Seleucid Empire, Central Asia, Bactria, Parthia, Hellenistic period, political fragmentation, military crisis, dynastic conflict, Antiochus III, Antiochus IV.

Introduction

The Seleucid Empire, established in the aftermath of Alexander the Great's vast conquests, was one of the most powerful Hellenistic states of the ancient world. Stretching from the Mediterranean to the borders of India, it played a crucial role in shaping the political, economic, and cultural landscape of the Near East and Central Asia. However, maintaining such an extensive and ethnically diverse empire proved to be an immense challenge. After the death of Seleucus I Nicator, the founder of



International Conference on Modern Science and Scientific Studies

Hosted online from Madrid, Spain

Website: econfseries.com

20th November 2025

the empire, the Seleucid state began to experience internal instability, regional separatism, and continuous wars of succession.

Central Asia, encompassing regions such as Bactria, Sogdiana, and Parthia, became both a frontier and a fault line of Seleucid authority. While the Seleucid rulers attempted to spread Hellenistic governance and culture, the local populations retained their traditional systems, gradually asserting greater autonomy. Economic development in agriculture, trade, and urbanization in these territories contributed to the emergence of local elites who sought independence from the weakening central power.

Discussion

Military-political crisis:

After the death of Salavka I, the lands of the state were destroyed. Although the eastern provinces always paid fines with gold and ivory lazurites, it was clear that they were striving for independence. This process became especially noticeable in the middle of the 3rd century BC. During this period, the population of Bactria and Sogdiana was engaged in farming. Urban growth has influenced the development of handicrafts and water management. The fact that Central Asia was part of the Seleucid state was undoubtedly a factor in the spread of Hellenic culture among the peoples of the region. In the middle of the 3rd century BC, the Seleucid kingdom was in crisis. Eastern satraps refused to submit to the central government and pursued an independent policy.

In about 250 BC, the nomadic Parn (Dahlar) tribe of the Saks, led by Arshak, invaded Parthia or Parthian satrapy, which had seceded from the Seleucid state, and then conquered Parthia and the neighboring province of Gorkania. Parthia existed until the 1920s. Several unsuccessful attempts by Seleucus II to restore his power forced him to recognize Arshakian rule in Parthia after 230-227 BC. Antiochus III, king of the Seleucids, conquered Parthia B.C in 209. However, taking advantage of the weakening of the Seleucid state, Parthia quickly regained its independence.

Antiochus's march temporarily halted the collapse of the Seleucid state. He strengthened the central government. A large part of Asia Minor was conquered and Kelesiria was completely taken from Egypt. The growing Seleucid state began to



International Conference on Modern Science and Scientific Studies

Hosted online from Madrid, Spain

Website: econfséries.com

20th November 2025

pose a serious threat to the security of Pergamum and Rhodes. Pergamum and Rhodes complained to Antiochus III and asked Rome for help. Rome was also dissatisfied with the fact that the famous Carthage commander Hannibal was an adviser to the palace of Antiochus III. BC At the beginning of the 2nd century, competition between the Seleucids and the Roman Republic for Greece began. B.C. In 189, Antiochus III's army was defeated in a battle with Rome. Protests and revolts against the oppression of the Seleucids began in different parts of the country. Greco-Bactria and Parthia regained their independence, and Parthia marched west and began to occupy Seleucid territory. The revolt of the satrap Timarch in Media helped the region to be conquered by the Parthians. The Parthians also conquered Persia and Elam. One of Antiochus III's sons, Antiochus IV (175 BC), was a valiant ruler who succeeded in consolidating state power. During his reign, the king sponsored art and culture in the country. The glorious Antiochus IV tried to restore the power of the Seleucid state in the past. He sought to expand its territory, creating some socio-political stability within the country. Antiochus IV marched with a powerful army to conquer Egypt. On the way, he was stopped by Gay Popilius Lena, the Roman ambassador to Egypt. It is said that the Roman ambassador, who was more powerful than the Seleucids, drew a circle around the seat of Antiochus IV and forbade Antiochus IV to leave the circle until Rome's demand was met (stop marching on Egypt). As a result, the Roman invasion of Egypt was stopped.

Psychological crisis:

After Antiochus III, the Seleucid monarchy focused on their boasting at the expense of the people, as if they had forgotten or purposefully ignored their ideas about Seleucus I. In 163 and 145 BC, three kings ruled, all of whom were concerned with defending their position rather than real rule. Although the monarchy openly fought or rallied against each other, piracy became a vital opportunity for many trying to live in Cilicia, and today a coalition of different nations regularly attacking ships and ports around the Mediterranean - the Cilicia pirates. 'He said. The Cilician pirates were encouraged and protected by Diodotus Tryphon (140-138 BC), who seized power from Antiochus VI Dionysius (145-140 BC), because they were pirates engaged in the slave trade and the Seleucid trade, slaves like other forces of the era.



International Conference on Modern Science and Scientific Studies

Hosted online from Madrid, Spain

Website: econfseries.com

20th November 2025

The chaos of the monarchy, Cleopatra Tea (164-121 BC) is depicted in the court conspiracy of five separate rulers as partly a pawnshop and partly a participant. Cleopatra was the wife of Alexander Balas (150-145 BC) before her father Ptolemy VI invaded Syria, killed Alexander, and then sent her to Demetrius II Nicator (145-138 BC). BC 129-126 married was captured and preserved by the Parthians until 129 BC. While he was in captivity, his brother Antiochus VII Sidetes (138-129 BC) married Cleopatra to ascend the throne. The Parthians freed Demetrius to incite inter-dynastic strife, but Antiochus VII Sidetes was killed in battle at the same time as them. Demetrius regained power for three years until his campaign against Egypt failed and he was betrayed and killed by Cleopatra Thea. When his son Seleucus V Philometer (126-125 BC) came to power, he killed him and appointed his son Antiochus VIII Gripos (125-96 BC) as king. He tried to kill her if she didn't bow to his will, but he forced her to drink from the poisoned cup he offered. By this time, there was no Seleucid empire at such a distance as the views of the Seleucid Empire, only that the small kingdom of Syria continued to use this title. Rome became more involved in the surrounding region during the Mithridatic Wars (89-63 BC) against the king Mithridates VI Pontus (120-63 BC) and the son-in-law of Mithridates VI, Tigranes Greater Armenia (BC 95-56), noticing that neither side cared what happened to the Syrian kingdom, invaded and annexed it to its own. But his control was short-lived, and as soon as General Pompey defeated the Mithridates, he turned both into Roman provinces, ending the Seleucid monarchy and destroying the Cilician pirates at about the same time. The last king of the Seleucids was Philip II Philoromey (65-63 BC), about whom little is known except the desperate attempts to maintain his position, which generally reflects the Seleucid monarchy after Antiochus III. Once Salavkid I lost his great views on a vast, multicultural empire living in peace - from the reign of Antiochus IV to Epiphanes - the rest of the empire's royal history was characterized by arrogance, indifference to people, and petty power. which eventually left them with nothing. After the death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Seleucid empire became increasingly unstable. Frequent civil wars stabilized the central government at its best. Antiochus V Europator, the young son of Epiphany, was first overthrown in 161 BC by Demetrius I Sother, son of Seleucus IV. Demetrius I tried to restore Seleucid rule, especially in Judea, but in



International Conference on Modern Science and Scientific Studies

Hosted online from Madrid, Spain

Website: econfseries.com

20th November 2025

150 BC Alexander Balas - (with the support of Egypt) was overthrown by a swindler who claimed to be the son of Epiphany. Alexander Balas ruled until 145 BC, when he was overthrown by Demetrius II Nicator, son of Demetrius I. But Demetrius II proved that he could not rule the whole kingdom. When he ruled Babylon and Damascus from eastern Syria, his son Antiochus VI, the son of "supporters - the first child support" remnants, then the general Diodotus Tryphon - took over Antioch. Meanwhile, the disintegration of the territorial possessions of the empire continued at a rapid pace. By 143 BC, the Jews in the form of the Maccabees had fully established their independence. The Parthian expansion also continued. In 139 BC, Demetrius II was defeated and captured in battle by the Parthians. By this time, the entire Iranian plateau was under Parthian control.

Demetrius Nicator's brother Antiochus VII Sidetes ascended the throne after his brother was captured. He faced the enormous task of rebuilding a rapidly collapsing empire, facing threats on several fronts. The Jewish Maccabi rebels, who had seized Koele-Syria hard, were threatened. Once vassal dynasties in Armenia, Cappadocia, and Pontus threatened Syria and northern Mesopotamia. The nomadic Parthians, led by the Parthian Mithridates I, conquered the mountain Media (the home of the famous Nisyan horse); and Roman intervention was an ever-present threat. Sidetes managed to intimidate the Maccabees by temporarily subjugating the Anatolian dynasties then, in 133, to bring back Parthia. With all the strength of the Royal Army (supported by the Jewish body led by Prince John Hirkan of Hasmoney), he turned east. Sidetes' campaign was initially a resounding success and recaptured Mesopotamia, Babylon, and Media. In the winter of 130-129 BC, when the Parthian king Phraates II launched a counterattack, his army was scattered in the wintering grounds across Media and Persia. Moving only with the armies under his control to pursue the Parthians, he was killed in an ambush at the Battle of Ekbatana in 129 BC. Antiochus Sidetes is sometimes called the last great Seleucid king.

After the death of Antiochus VII Sidetes, all the eastern territories restored were recaptured by the Parthians. The Maccabees revolted again, soon the civil war tore apart the empire, and the Armenians began to invade Syria from the north. By 100 BC, the once terrifying Seleucid Empire had covered less than some cities in Antioch and Syria. Despite the apparent decline of his power and the decline of his



International Conference on Modern Science and Scientific Studies

Hosted online from Madrid, Spain

Website: econfseries.com

20th November 2025

surrounding kingdom, the aristocracy continued to play kings on a regular basis with the intervention of Ptolemy Egypt and other external forces. The Seleucids existed only because no other people wanted to assimilate them, as they were a useful side among other neighbors. In the years of the Asian wars of Pontus and Sulla Rome of Mithridates VI, the Seleucids were largely left alone by both great fighters. Mithridates ambitious son-in-law, the Great Tigranes, king of Armenia, but the south saw an opportunity to escalate constant civil strife. In 83 BC, at the invitation of one of the groups in the uninterrupted civil wars, he invaded Syria and soon established himself as the ruler of Syria, ending the Seleucid Empire. However, the rule of the Seleucids was not over. After the defeat of the Roman general Lucullus Mithridates and the Tigranes in 69 BC, the rough Seleucid kingdom was restored during the reign of Antiochus XIII. However, it was not possible to prevent civil wars, as another Seleucid reigned with Philip II Antiochus. After the Roman conquest of Pontus, the Romans became concerned about the constant source of instability in Syria during the Seleucid period. After Mithridates was defeated by Pompey in 63 BC, Pompey set himself the task of rebuilding the Hellenistic East by creating new client kingdoms and provinces. Client states such as Armenia and Judea were allowed to continue their autonomy during the reign of local kings, and Pompey found it very difficult to continue the Seleucids.

Conclusion

The history of the Seleucid Empire in Central Asia reflects a complex process of political disintegration, cultural transformation, and regional empowerment. Initially, the Seleucids inherited a vast and diverse empire from the legacy of Alexander the Great, seeking to unify its territories under Hellenistic governance and culture. However, the empire's immense size, administrative challenges, and ethnic diversity made long-term stability difficult to sustain.

The weakening of central authority following the death of Seleucus I and the subsequent dynastic conflicts accelerated the empire's decline. In particular, the independence movements in Bactria and Parthia signaled the erosion of Seleucid control over the eastern provinces. Military defeats, internal conspiracies, and the



International Conference on Modern Science and Scientific Studies

Hosted online from Madrid, Spain

Website: econfseries.com

20th November 2025

inability to balance relations between the Hellenistic and native elites further deepened the crisis.

References:

1. Azamat Ziyoy O'zbek davlatchiligi tarixi – T.: “Sharq” 2000 yil, 42-48 bet.
2. Kosmin, Pol J. (2018). Salavkiylar imperiyasidagi vaqt va uning dushmanlari. Garvard universiteti matbuoti. -Pp. 207.
3. Engels, Devid (201). "Eronning o'ziga xosligi va salavkiylar sadoqati: Vahbarz, Frataraka va dastlabki Arsatsid tangalari". K. Eriksonda (tahrir). Miloddan avvalgi 281–222 yillarda Seleukidlar imperiyasi: Oila ichidagi urush. "Suonsi". 173-196 betlar.
4. Britannica, Salavkiylar saltanati, 2008 yil, O.Ed.