

# PERCEPTIONS

## JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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Cooperation and Turkic World Vision-2040

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A Teacher and Norm-Creator  
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Book Review  
New Silk Roads: Present and Future of the World

Book Review  
Conflict and Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific:  
New Geopolitical Realities



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# Organization of Turkic States: Deepening Turkic Cooperation and Turkic World Vision-2040

Established in 2009 as an intergovernmental organization, the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (also known as the Turkic Council) has gradually become one of the main platforms for intensified cooperation between its five member states – Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Türkiye and Uzbekistan – and two observer states – Turkmenistan and Hungary. On November 12, 2021, during the 8th summit meeting held in Istanbul, the organization has changed its name to the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), which is an indication of the interest of the member and observer states in deepening their cooperation in the political, economic and cultural spheres. At this historic meeting, significant decisions have also been taken with regard to the modalities for obtaining observer and partner status at the OTS, while Türkiye assumed the chairmanship of the organization until the next summit to be held in Uzbekistan in 2022.

The Istanbul Summit was also quite remarkable because of the adoption of the “Turkic World Vision-2040” document, which could be regarded as a milestone in the evolution of Turkic cooperation as it is the first strategic vision document to set the ground for future cooperation in the Turkic world. It should also be noted that the OTS has been intensifying its efforts for institutionalization in the last few years in close cooperation with its related and affiliated organizations including TURKSOY, TURKPA, Turkic Academy and Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation.

With the goal of elaborating on regional cooperation in the Turkic world, this issue includes articles exploring the various dimensions of the OTS – also in accordance with Türkiye’s efforts to enhance Turkic cooperation during its chairmanship. We would especially like to thank Dr. Pelin Musabay Baki, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye who kindly accepted to act as a guest editor and collaborated with distinguished scholars from the OTS member and observer states in order to provide the most comprehensive analysis of the new role(s) played by the OTS in international relations. At a time when the OTS is turning into a key actor in the Turkic world, we believe that the articles of this issue are going to be valuable contributions to the emerging academic literature on this important regional organization.

## ARTICLE

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# Examining the Organization of Turkic States: A Teacher and Norm-Creator

Çağla Gül YESEVİ\*

### Abstract

*The Organization of Turkic States (OTS) is evaluated in this article by means of a social constructivist approach. Social constructivism emphasizes the roles of international organizations in norm-emergence, norm-creation and standard-setting. The new norms that international organizations initiate can shape, change and regulate the behaviors of states. As Martha Finnemore states international organizations may act as teachers. They can persuade states to adopt cooperative behavior, accept the culture of the organization and internalize the organization's values. International organizations can thus be seen as essential vehicles for the socialization of states. States may become more eager to rearrange their foreign policy decisions in response to the socially constructed norms held by international organizations. This article will examine the role of the OTS as an agent and a principal in the new regionalization process.*

### Keywords

Organization of Turkic States, social constructivism, international organizations, norm-creation, regionalization.

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## Introduction

The Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (the Turkic Council) was established in 2009, and was renamed the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) during its 8<sup>th</sup> Summit held in November 2021. As an intergovernmental organization, the OTS acts as an umbrella organization for other vital organizations such as the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY), the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic Speaking Countries (TURKPA), the Turkic Academy, the Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation and the Turkic Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Together, they deal with a broad range of topics concerning the Turkic world. Having the mentality and the awareness of being part of the Turkic world are the main concerns related to this organization. In addition, it is a platform that reminds the societies of the member states that they share the same cultural and ethnic identity. The central theme of the organization has always been cooperation, a value first conferred in the summits of the Heads of the Turkic Speaking States held between 1992–2009, and afterward in the documents of the Turkic Council after its establishment in 2009. It is important to note the longstanding institutionalization process of developing this structure, which started with the convening of summits leading to the establishment of the organization.

The renaming of the organization in November 2021 should not be considered merely a simple name change. Instead, it represents an essential step forward in the evolution of the identity of the OTS. Although it is too early to evaluate the effects of the name change, being part of an international organization will ensure cooperation and significant cohesion among member states, primarily in matters related to international conflicts.

In this article, the identity of the OTS will be evaluated by referring to the social constructivist approach. Alexander Wendt claims that state-centric international relations (IR) theories cannot explain structural changes, and instead stresses the importance of intersubjective dynamics. The identities and interests of states are not given, he argues; rather, they are constructed by social structures.<sup>1</sup> According to social constructivists, the international system functions as a social structure, complete with norms, rules and principles. The international structure,

international relations, and many terms such as anarchy, security, interest and cooperation are all constructed. In this regard, amity or enmity among states with intersubjective meaning could be created and recreated. The interests and identities of states can be reconstructed with the help of shared knowledge, understanding, interconnectivity and collective consciousness.

## History of the OTS

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan declared their independence. The region caught the attention of many regional and external states with diverse agendas, and the newly formed states struggled with many internal and external problems, as well as the nation-building process. As a result, they became part of different regional organizations, such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); the Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova (GUAM) Organization for Democracy and Economic Development; the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU); the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). After the Turkic states gained their independence from the former Soviet Union, all of the leaders of the Turkic world articulated very emotionally that an influential and effective Turkic world could now be formed with the help of the unity of their powers. Although such statements garnered complaints and hostility toward the developing relations between Türkiye and the Turkic states of the former Soviet Union,<sup>2</sup> the newly independent states held many summits with Türkiye between 1992–2009. It is important to recognize that Türkiye and the Turkic states came together first because of cultural bonds, and later to pursue economic cooperation. The process began with the first summit of the Heads of the Turkic Speaking States held in Ankara in 1992. Subsequent meetings were held in Istanbul (1994), Bishkek (1995), Tashkent (1996), Astana (1998), Baku (2000), Istanbul (2001), Antalya (2006), Nakhchivan (2009) and Istanbul (2009).<sup>3</sup>

Finally, in 2009, the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (the Turkic Council) was established during the Nakhchivan Summit.



The Turkic Council was itself a reflection of the prevalent political will at the meetings of the heads of states of the Turkic speaking states. The organization's main aim was to bring about extensive cooperation among the Turkic speaking states. The organization's founding members are Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Türkiye. Hungary gained observer status in 2018, Uzbekistan became an official member in October 2019 and Turkmenistan became an observer member of the OTS in 2021. This expansion further strengthened the organization, and is consistent with its aims.<sup>4</sup>

This article examines how the OTS helps shape economic and cultural cooperation among its member states. It also explains the organization's importance, aims, activities and identity since its establishment by drawing upon speeches made by the leaders of the member states, as well as documents and publications on the organization's website. The activities, initiatives, meetings and decisions of the OTS are detailed on its website and social media accounts. In addition, there are a number of articles about this organization in academic journals and proceedings books.

The OTS has contributed to norm emergence and identity formation, primarily on cultural and economic grounds. It has helped its member states internalize the concept of unity and strengthened the consciousness and spirit of their fraternal affinities. Moreover, the OTS has been cautious and rational about not posing any threat to other states, and has not considered any state as a threat. Although the OTS has concerns about the region's security issues, as seen in the Nakhchivan Agreement and "Turkic World Vision-2040", it has made only general acknowledgments and statements about these issues in order to preserve regional and universal security. In some of the publications mentioned on the website of the OTS, certain security problems of the member states are described. The organization itself and its member states are well aware that the

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Eurasian region has its own characteristics and historical background. Indeed, the member states are cautious not to cause any apprehension to other regional powers. Member states have affirmed that they will pursue peaceful means of interaction and contribute to the peace and order of the region.

One of the crucial contributions of the OTS has been on cultural grounds with the help of affiliated organizations such as TURKSOY, the Turkic Academy and the Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation. Addressing the challenges derived from the economic conditions of the member states, many of which are remnants of the former system, the OTS could be considered a platform to alleviate these conditions and promote economic cooperation. It can help provide new instruments, policies and strong trade ties, and work to reform internal laws and regulations to strengthen further economic cooperation. For this purpose, the OTS has introduced many policies, meetings and institutions. These new regulations and instruments could further strengthen economic relations among members.

States are the main actors in the OTS. Nonetheless, it is essential to have the help of civil societies. The comprehensive aims of the organization and the fulfillment of these aims are its primary concern. The OTS's good relations with other international organizations are viewed as an asset that contributes positively to regional peace and stability. Having cooperative relations with other organizations will empower the OTS.

It is essential to recognize that the Turkic states came together for the first time in history as an international organization; the establishment of the Turkic Council in 2009 was the product of the aspirations of the Turkic world. It has long been a milestone for the Turkic world to have unity. The idea and hope of achieving it probably began centuries ago. In this context, the emergence of the OTS represents a concrete step forward for Turkic unity.

The second part of this article examines the collective identity, primary goals and strategies of the OTS and its affiliated organizations. The third part briefly defines social constructivism. The fourth part examines the aims, activities and roles of the OTS by referring to social constructivism. The final part describes the accomplishments of the OTS and makes recommendations for its continued success.

## OTS: Collective Identity, Primary Goals and Strategies

The unique identity of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States which later turned into the OTS was revealed in the Nakhchivan Agreement. The principal organs of the OTS are the Council of Heads of State, the Council of Foreign Ministers, the Council of Elders, the Senior Officials Committee and the Secretariat. The OTS is also an umbrella organization for other affiliated organizations such as TURKSOY, TURKPA, the Turkic Academy, the Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation, and the Turkic Chamber of Commerce and Industry.<sup>5</sup>

Initially, the OTS aimed to ensure far-reaching cooperation among Turkic speaking states based on shared history, language, identity and culture. Secondly, member states wanted to cooperate on political, security, economic and cultural issues.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the purposes, decisions and activities of the OTS have been comprehensive and inclusive. To date, the OTS has made only non-binding decisions. To become a member, a country must have one or more Turkic languages as an official language.<sup>7</sup> By providing a platform for cooperation, member states have become aware of their working mechanisms, leading them to collaborate in other areas. Empowering the sectoral approach has strengthened multidimensional cooperation and people-to-people collaboration.<sup>8</sup> Above all, the OTS has emphasized that they do not consider any state an enemy. Most importantly, the organization will have a voice in further cooperation among the Turkic states. Indeed, the OTS has the chance to become the single voice of the Turkic states.

Before establishing the OTS, many institutions, meetings, and summits resulted in a fragmented approach to cooperation among the Turkic states. The establishment of the OTS as an umbrella organization has remedied this fragmentation to some extent. While the headquarters of the OTS are located in Istanbul, the headquarters of the other organizations are in different member states, which has ensured equality among them, giving the impression that every member has responsibility in a unique area. Moreover, this distribution of duties has helped develop the internalization of norms in every member state and enhance the contribution of member states to the policies of the OTS.

**While the name change does not affect the essence and evolution of the organization's identity, it cannot be considered a simple name change. Rather, it represents the transformation of an implied reality into a tangible reality.**

There are different opinions related to the organization's name change. While the name change does not affect the essence and evolution of the organization's identity, it cannot be considered a simple name change. Rather, it represents the transformation of an implied reality into a tangible reality. As a result, the notions of

Turkic unity and the soul of Turkicness have been strengthened. In addition, it is clear that whether the name change has converted the discourse, aims, and uniqueness of the organization or not will be better understood and assessed in the future. It could be highlighted that the organization initiated a process to present its identity. The member states declared their fraternal affinities and shared cultural and historical similarities on every ground. The President of the Republic of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, considering the OTS, used the phrase "the family assembly" in the press conference during the 8<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Heads of State of the OTS in Istanbul in 2021.<sup>9</sup>

The founding Secretary-General of the Turkic Council Halil Akıncı, defined the unique identity of the OTS. He emphasized the sovereign equality principle and indicated that every nation should have a consciousness of its own identity. Turkicness could be constructed upon this awareness. Most importantly, radical nationalism has been disaffirmed in this regard. In Akıncı's words:

"The Turkic Council was founded on the principle of sovereign equality and the principle of recognition and acceptance of identities. If a Kyrgyz does not know his/her Kyrgyz identity, a Kazakh does not know his/her Kazakh identity, or an Azerbaijani does not know his/her Azerbaijani identity, then s/he will not be able to know Turkic-ness as his/her common identity. Therefore, our goal is to strengthen our common identity based on the sovereign equality principle. Surely, we do not want the development of radical nationalism, but I personally do not see any drawbacks for that kind of nationalism I alluded to earlier to develop."<sup>10</sup>

Although Turkic unity has been discussed for centuries, Turks have voluntarily come together for the first time under the umbrella of the Turkic Council, as Akinci highlights. His statement clearly articulates that the member states will not lose their national identities under this organization. Rather, they have a shared history, culture and common ancestors, and these assets will contribute to cooperation in many areas. Strengthening ties and the spirit of cooperation, the OTS has emerged as a norm-creator by establishing unity within the Turkic world.

The cooperative nature of the OTS is evident in the eleven areas of cooperation mentioned on its website. These are political cooperation, education, economy, transport, youth & sport, customs, health, tourism, diaspora, information and communication technologies (ICT), information and media. This article, to make it easier, will focus on three important areas of cooperation, namely, political, cultural and economic; the other areas will be regarded as sub-sets of these three main areas of cooperation.

With the aim of political cooperation, the OTS has convened regular meetings of the member states' Foreign Ministers, the Senior Officials Committee, the Junior Diplomats Training Program, Foreign Policy Research Centers, and the International Election Observer Missions.<sup>11</sup> As an affiliated organization of the OTS, TURKPA has contributed to political cooperation among member states. Established in 2008, it aims to ensure parliamentary cooperation in the Turkic world.<sup>12</sup> TURKPA's main principles are independence, sovereignty, territorial and state boundaries, integrity, legal equity and mutual respect grounded on the principle of non-interference in others' internal affairs.<sup>13</sup> In addition, TURKPA has election observation missions.<sup>14</sup>

Security cooperation under the OTS has a consultative nature. It has no structure, and the OTS shows no inclination to take any concrete actions on military issues involving the member states. Rather, the OTS has pointed out the importance of the peaceful settlement of disputes. In January 2022, the OTS emphasized the importance of peace and stability in Kazakhstan, and the member states expressed their strong solidarity with Kazakhstan.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the OTS expressed its deep concerns about the conflicts on the Kyrgyz-Tajik state border in January 2022 and called for an immediate cessation of the armed clashes and a peaceful settlement of disputes.<sup>16</sup>

The OTS considers education, diplomacy, youth, transport and tourism as distinct areas of cooperation. The Turkic University Union has initiated the Orkhun Exchange Program, the Sports Games, and the Student Council.<sup>17</sup> 160 students and academicians have already benefited from the Orkhun Exchange Program.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, 138 diplomats participated in the Junior Diplomats Training Program and more than 1,500 young people have participated in the OTS International Youth Camps.

The Turkic Academy is another affiliated organization of the OTS, founded in 2012. This organization explores Turkic people's language, literature, culture and history. The main aim of the Turkic Academy is to base findings on indigenous sources of the Turkic world.<sup>19</sup>

TURKSOY, which defines itself as the UNESCO of the Turkic world, was established in 1993. It aims to provide a platform for artists and scholars of the Turkic world for cooperation in culture. TURKSOY introduced Nowruz, otherwise known as the Persian New Year, as one of the common traditions of the Turkic world. In addition, it explores the common culture, history, language, literature and art of Turkic people.<sup>20</sup> The Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation, founded in 2015, aims to preserve and conduct research on the Turkic culture and heritage objectives.<sup>21</sup> The Turkic Business Council was established in 2011. It works to deepen the cooperation in the Turkic business world by organizing business forums. The Turkic Chamber of Commerce and Industry Turkic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI) was officially established in 2019 and is composed of the member and observer states' chambers of commerce and industry and business communities.<sup>22</sup>

The member states of the OTS have been demanding to cooperate in trade, energy, transport, customs, tourism and ICT. There are many meetings on all of these issues. Concerning cultural and economic aspirations, the Modern Silk Road Joint Tour Project is one of the initiatives of the OTS. The dates and price of the tour have not been announced yet. The project's primary purpose is to show tourists the traditional Silk Road's unique cultural, spiritual, historical and gastronomic life. Therefore, the modern Silk Road Joint Tour Package aims to increase the number of tourists visiting the Turkic states.<sup>23</sup> It

is important to note that the UN considered the OTS as a significant example of a regional organization utilizing South-South cooperation. South-South cooperation refers to a situation in which two or more developing countries implement individual or shared national capacity involving triangular cooperation with other Southern actors, multilateral organizations, and/or Northern partners. The UN noted that the OTS has used South-South cooperation to intensify cooperation among Turkic states, and between Turkic states and other states. The OTS has taken an active role in increasing consciousness about South-South and triangular cooperation among its member states and with other countries. In this regard, the OTS has focused intensively on economy, tourism, transport, education and youth. It prioritizes efforts to create employment, prevent violent extremism and empower youth.<sup>24</sup>

In these endeavors, the OTS works together with institutions, academia and its member states' private sectors. In addition, it has good relations with other international organizations. The UN regards the OTS as a success in regard to its tourism vocational training program, customs training program and junior diplomats training program.

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No discussion of the OTS's identity, goals and achievements would be complete without mention of the organization's efforts to combat the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. After holding the first international summit on COVID-19, the OTS decided to set up a Health Coordination Committee and Health Scientific Group.<sup>25</sup> As a result, the OTS member states moved quickly and responded collectively to the COVID-19 pandemic. They shared hospital facilities and exchanged clinical expertise with each other.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the OTS began to help other regions and states after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, delivering vaccines to Burkina Faso and Togo.<sup>27</sup>

## The Social Constructivist Approach

This article employs a social constructivist approach to examine the contribution of the OTS to the emergence of collective identity and norm creation. The social constructivist approach, which attaches importance to ideas, norms, rules, interests, identity, shared knowledge and culture, was introduced to the paradigm of IR at the end of the 1980s.<sup>28</sup> Social constructivism sees the international structure as a social structure that involves norms, rules and law. Like any other social structure, it can be defined through social relationships, shared meanings, principles, beliefs, knowledge, practices and material elements. Social constructivism gives primary importance to ideational and intellectual factors, and its proponents claim a shared meaning behind material factors based on collective identities, common principles and accepted norms, considering the dynamic relationship between ideas and material forces.<sup>29</sup>

In the past, social constructivists assert, constructs such as “the Cold War”, “Soviet Socialist Republics”, “Soviet Central Asia” and “the Socialist World” were social structures of intersubjectively shared knowledge. During the post-Cold War era, shared knowledge and meanings began to change. The OTS has made a concrete contribution to the construction of “Turkicness”, “the Turkic world” and “Turkic cooperation”. Indeed, with its unique structure and affiliated organizations, the OTS has contributed significantly to constructing the international system and international relations.

Social constructivism states that international organizations are important and influential actors of international politics with their own agendas and aims. They could gain the power to implement norms and values that even overreach the member states’ preferences.<sup>30</sup> Norms are defined as accepted values that determine the standards of appropriate behavior for agents (actors) with a given identity. Martha Finnemore points out that international organizations promote international norms. Norms can be considered rules when they are recognized and approved by actors. Over time, norms evolve into principled beliefs.<sup>31</sup> The OTS has contributed to the development of both norms and beliefs—such as having common ancestors, sharing Turkic ethnicity, having a shared history, common culture, collective Turkic identity and



support for economic development, etc. The identities of the Turkic states of the former Soviet Union were different in the past, when factors of culture, ethnicity and religion were downplayed in favor of a dominant political state ideology.

Moreover, the OTS will help member states reexamine their interests and identity. The member states' collective identity is based on common Turkic culture, history, language and Turkicness. This self-understanding will affect the foreign policy decision-making processes of the member states.

The OTS, in influencing the reexamination of member states' interests and identities, has contributed to the socialization process. However, it is essential to note that member states have also affected the evolution of the OTS. As a result, the OTS and its member states influence and constitute each other.<sup>32</sup> The OTS has contributed to the capacity building of its member states and intensified cooperation among them. It has initiated vocational projects and training in different areas, including a program to train young diplomats. The OTS organized the Social Media Training Program and initiated a training program for diaspora institutions. Furthermore, the Secretariat implemented various economic, transport, customs, tourism, media, diaspora and health projects. These activities have contributed to experience-sharing and knowledge-sharing among member states.<sup>33</sup> As a result, the OTS has become an efficient vehicle for achieving the socialization process.

Acting as a norm entrepreneur, the OTS has offered a solid moral content so that the Turkic states can work together, cooperate further and mutually benefit from this cooperation.<sup>34</sup> This ethical dimension includes commitment to sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-intervention principles. Furthermore, the OTS has pledged to promote common Turkic identity as the source of cultural richness and looks for ways to bring the peoples of the member states closer to each other.<sup>35</sup>

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The Turkic states initially convened many summits and conferences; eventually, this initiative turned into an organization. During this development, it is clear that the level of interest of the member states changed: in the beginning, some of the states were not even eager to cooperate; today, they have learned the benefits of their cooperation.<sup>36</sup>

The social constructivist approach claims that shared knowledge, which is an outcome of the global interaction of ideas, determines the international structure. In this regard, idea and norm shifts ensure the system's transformation. Norms are shared assessments and have a variety of strengths.<sup>37</sup> Thus, some norms can be regarded as more potent than the others if we measure the level of the agreement among member states. It is apparent under the domain of the OTS, that some norms are much more praised than others.

Norm influence has three levels; the first level is norm emergence, the second is broad norm acceptance (norm cascade), and the third is internalization. Norm entrepreneurs lead and support the process of norm emergence. As a norm entrepreneur, the OTS induces states (norm leaders) to accept new norms. Norm leaders (some member states) take necessary steps to socialize other member states to become norm followers. Lastly, norm internalization occurs. The OTS, presenting a platform for comprehensive cooperation and gradually developing expertise on many issues, has been gaining the power to change the behaviors of its member states. Its expertise has been enhanced with the help of working groups, institutions and related organizations. Moreover, it has set up various programs to train diplomats, bureaucrats and youth, who will in turn help with the promotion of new norms.<sup>38</sup>

Social constructivists emphasize that international organizations can act as principals rather than agents in the international arena. They have had an active role in the promotion of the new norm. As Finnemore states, international organizations may act as teachers. They can persuade states to adopt cooperative behavior, and can be effective on states to accept the culture of the organization. Moreover, states begin to internalize the values of organizations to which they belong. In this sense, international organizations can be seen as essential vehicles for the socialization of states. States may become more eager to rearrange their foreign policy decisions in response to the socially constructed norms

of international organizations.<sup>39</sup> Norms initiated by the OTS influence the policies of the member states. The OTS has been socializing the member states to accept the benefits of multilateral cooperation within the Turkic world, believing in the motto “together we are stronger”. As a means of engaging in norm entrepreneurship and norm creation, the Junior Diplomats Training Program aims to raise consciousness about the Turkic people’s shared history, culture and language, and will make an essential contribution to the training of future diplomats.

International organizations are considered conglomerations of rules, norms and decision-making mechanisms that determine the member states’ behaviors and actions.<sup>40</sup> Social constructivism explains that joining an international organization has less to do with material interests than with shared norms, values and principles. The OTS has instructed its member states on its norms, values and principles. Moreover, internalizing the organization’s shared beliefs, the OTS staff present and recommend the shared values and shared knowledge of the OTS. The member states, in this regard, have been passing through a collective learning process. In short, the OTS has been constructing the cognitive evolution of the Turkic world.

## Evaluation of the OTS

This article highlights some fundamental topics and related subtopics to evaluate the OTS with reference to social constructivism. Initially, the OTS, as a cooperative platform, began creating norms, especially those having to do with the unity of the Turkic world. Indeed, the most powerful characteristic of the OTS is cultural cooperation based on shared language, culture and history. Fraternal affinities have eased the development of multilateral cooperation among member states.<sup>41</sup> In this regard, the OTS has successfully established norms and values among its members in the cultural arena. Moreover, the OTS has been willing to disseminate its norms and rules.<sup>42</sup> It has been gradually institution-building and gaining the power to convince its member states of the benefits of cooperation. The fundamental norm created by the OTS is that the Turkic states have a common history, language and culture and they could work together, they are stronger together.<sup>43</sup> In this context,

as Wendt notes, states under the effect of Lockean culture are inclining to help each other.<sup>44</sup>

Second, in the realm of political cooperation, the OTS has created a collective identity on many grounds, and interactions among member states have enhanced collaboration on political issues. This understanding is expected to grow considerably stronger in the future. The collective identity cultivated by the OTS could help in unifying the national interests of the member states in mutually beneficial ways.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, the member states have already begun to speak as one voice, as witnessed in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). The OTS members' voting cohesiveness has been rising in the UNGA, which could be seen as a sign of the convergence of the member states' foreign policy preferences.<sup>46</sup> This indicates that the OTS has been successful in establishing mutual trust among member states, and in constructing similar behaviors to determine common foreign policies. The OTS has made declarations on behalf of its members and has implemented common policies on various foreign policy issues, for instance on the Cyprus issue and Afghanistan.

Third, relatedly, Onuf and Kratochwill are interested in “speech acts theory”, which explores language’s social meaning. Through speech acts such as statements and declarations, and even in terms of “who speaks”, in this case the OTS, language constructs social structure by shaping intersubjective meaning.<sup>47</sup> According to some theorists in this field, the whole world is socially constructed through language.<sup>48</sup> The OTS has engaged in defining certain international events and some international terms, a speech act that functions to both position it in a place of authority and establish the meanings of these events and terms. In addition, its tendency to use cooperative language continues to construct its own identity as a collaborative structure and as a wielder of soft power. The OTS has been creating norms and values through all these activities.

Fourth, the OTS has been helping member states develop common communication strategies, and is functioning as a platform to promote good relations among the strategic research centers of the member states.<sup>49</sup> The OTS members recently opted to consult and coordinate regarding the conflict in Afghanistan. They also collectively emphasized

the need to reach a just, lasting, sustainable and mutually acceptable settlement of the Cyprus issue based on the realities on the island. Moreover, the member states expressed their solidarity with the Turkish Cypriot people in their aspirations to secure their equal, inherent rights. In addition, they recognized Türkiye's request to invite the Turkish Cypriots to participate in the relevant activities of the OTS.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, they supported Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and during the 44-Days Patriotic War. The OTS expressed strong solidarity with Kazakhstan during the uprisings there in December 2021. The OTS examined the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border conflict, requested immediate cessation of the armed clashes and offered a proposal for peaceful settlement.<sup>51</sup>

While interested in security cooperation, the OTS is not a military organization. In its process of pursuing an integrationist spirit within the Turkic world, it has made cautious declarations on security issues, as witnessed during the Kazakhstan uprisings and the Kyrgyz-Tajik border issues. Moreover, taking into account the values and norms of the organization, the OTS has received requests from different circles that it should take an influential role in regional military conflicts. However, regardless of their validity, such requests are not in conformity with the aims and activities of the OTS.

In terms of its aims and activities, the OTS has proven itself an effective and successful international organization. Moreover, as mentioned in "Turkic World Vision-2040", as a regional organization, the OTS has gradually become institutionalized, and this process has been carried out with a realistic vision. "Turkic World Vision-2040" clarifies that the existing cooperation will be beneficial to ensure that each member state's principal goal is to increase their people's cultural, economic and political conditions.<sup>52</sup>

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Fifth, the member states of the OTS have begun to internalize economic cooperation on various grounds as a shared understanding, as witnessed in their rational decisions. The OTS has aimed to strengthen the economic structures of its member states; it has helped to increase trade relations among member states and has enhanced socializations in the region. As agents of the international system, individuals are the main research area of social constructivism. The OTS offers an efficient platform for private companies.

Moreover, the sectoral approach of the organization will enhance people-to-people connections. The OTS continues to foster cooperation in transport, customs, ICT, energy and tourism. It ensures “economic cooperation among the Turkic world” as a norm. In this regard, while the Turkic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI) implements joint projects and training programs, the Turkic Investment and Development Fund will provide funds to the member states. All these efforts will enhance the economic relations of the people of the Turkic world.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, norm acceptors will collaborate in other areas. The organs and affiliated organizations will attract people to collaborate in the economic arena. The OTS will help share information and technical experience among member states. It will continue to have an informative and instructive effect on states, which will learn and adopt the new norms initiated by the OTS.<sup>54</sup>

Considering these issues, the OTS has been acting as a teacher; it is a norm creator and a norm entrepreneur in terms of cultural, economic and political cooperation. The rules, norms and principles initiated by the OTS have been changing and shaping the behaviors of the member states.<sup>55</sup> Secretary-General of the OTS Baghdad Amreyev emphasized that if the member states had the opportunity to gather more often under the roof of the OTS, they would be able to understand each other better. As a result, they could have a common position in foreign policy. The OTS has been contributing to the socialization process of the member states on having common behavior and taking similar foreign policy decisions. Moreover, Amreyev stated that the OTS held a pioneering international meeting on Afghanistan on September 27, 2021 upon the call of Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu. At this meeting, the member states signed a joint declaration, and Amreyev asserted that they were more powerful when they acted together.<sup>56</sup>

Türkiye and Kazakhstan initially acted as norm leaders, and have been eager to draw attention to the fraternal affinities of the Turkic world; this knowledge about Turkicness became the shared knowledge of the OTS. In this regard, this knowledge was constructed as an international norm along with the establishment and gradual institutionalization of the OTS. The evolution of the organization's name from the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States to the Organization of Turkic States is an expression of this progress.

## Concluding Remarks

The OTS is a regional organization that aims to ensure political, cultural and economic cooperation among its member states. Although it has pledged to cooperate to achieve regional and international peace, stability and prosperity, it is neither a security organization nor a military alliance. Indeed, it has emphasized and praised regional and universal peace and stability, the supremacy of international law, the significance of multilateral cooperation and the peaceful settlement of disputes.<sup>57</sup> The OTS successfully creates its identity and pursues meaningful activities to ensure cooperation within the Turkic world. It also takes action in instructive and informative roles to create knowledge, shape the behaviors of member states and support the emergence and internalization of new norms within the Turkic world.

Social constructivism focuses on the role of international organizations as norm-creators and norm-entrepreneurs. In this regard, the OTS, acting as an instructor, has had a specific influence on its member states' foreign policies. Although the member states have had different international commitments and agendas, they have begun to act similarly as a group and cooperate in different international organizations such as UNESCO and the UNGA.<sup>58</sup> In this sense, the OTS, acting as a teacher, has successfully provided a platform for developing mutual interest and trust based on its members' fraternal affinities.

Social constructivists consider individuals as agents. Onuf emphasizes that like all social realities, international relations were constructed by individuals.<sup>59</sup> Hence, compared to the past, the OTS has been offering joint development projects and helping the peoples of member states

get closer by engaging in shared activities. In terms of the organization's recent achievements, the liberalization of transport between Türkiye and Kyrgyzstan is a concrete example. In addition, the member states have been sharing knowledge for the training of nuclear engineers, developing nuclear infrastructure and uranium mining. Moreover, the OTS has focused on vocational training, which will disseminate information, experience and knowledge.<sup>60</sup> Elites could help with the process of circulating and promoting the values and norms of the OTS. Also, it is significant to state that opening the Zangezur corridor will be essential for further economic and cultural integration among member states.

The OTS has been highly successful in ensuring cultural affinities among member states. There are notable affiliated organizations of the OTS, and they have had a significant impact on closer interaction among the citizens of member states. Exchange programs are the most effective tools to enhance people-people interaction. The existing exchange programs for high schools and universities should be extended, and

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many more students, teachers and academics should have a chance to benefit from them. Similarly, OTS youth programs could be supported financially by civil society organizations and private companies. In addition, empowering the diaspora communities of the Turkic world, which is one of the aims of the organization, will be an important achievement of the OTS.

One of the strengths of the OTS is its transparent character. All of the related speeches, decisions, aims and activities are shared on the organization's website in the languages of the member states and in English. This transparency has contributed to interaction among the peoples of the member states, and to the socialization process whereby its shared values, principles, norms, and knowledge are internalized. In addition, the transparent character of the OTS will prevent any



perception that it poses a threat to the external world. While emotional public demands could push the organization to take action or give speeches on every regional conflict, a major strength of the OTS has been its way of handling international events cautiously, carefully, rationally and with a long-term perspective. Therefore, the cautious speech culture of the OTS will remain an important asset and feature of its organizational culture.

Examining the roles of the member states in different affiliated organizations, one can say that the OTS is an egalitarian organization in which responsibilities are shared among the different member states. Its meetings and summits have been held in different cities of the member states; the Secretariat of the OTS is in Istanbul, the Turkic Academy is in Astana, and the Secretariat of the Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation is in Baku.

The OTS would benefit from declaring its aims more clearly. It has received many criticisms from different circles of the public related to its role in cooperation among the Turkic states. The expectations from the organization to its members have been increasing incrementally. However, high and unrealistic expectations may affect the organization negatively. In particular, ultranationalist and extremist demands could damage the institutionalization process of the organization and the cooperation among member states. Moreover, other states could perceive such high demands and expectations as threatening under current international conditions. Thus, the OTS must present its aims, activities and results more explicitly on different platforms, especially regarding security concerns.

First, the OTS could benefit more fully from academics, civil society activists and the media to correctly describe and disseminate its aims and activities. Collaboration with universities and civil society organizations would help strengthen the organization in many respects. Second, the purposes, activities and agendas of the OTS and its affiliated organizations are enormously wide-reaching. “Turkic World Vision–2040” was prepared in detail and with great care; nonetheless, it has generated questions as to how all these aims will be accomplished. Moreover, every summit of the OTS has concentrated on different topics, and subsequently, working groups have begun to handle the decisions

taken. These circumstances could complicate the workload management of the OTS. In addition, the monitoring and measurement of its many achievements risks being complicated, unclear and indefinite. In other words, the organization's comprehensive aims could cause difficulties in attaining precise and concrete results. Shortfalls in staffing, difficulties in financing the activities and challenges involved in the adaptation to digitalization are likely problems that the OTS must anticipate.

To solve these problems, Secretary-General Amreyev announced at the 2021 Istanbul Summit that the OTS would generate five-year strategic plans. The OTS has already prepared the 2022–2026 Strategy Document, an operational document containing concrete steps to be taken within the paradigm of “Turkic World Vision–2040”. It is important to note that even if the organization does not limit its agenda, some of the aims and topics will be prioritized within these five-years plans.<sup>61</sup> Concentrating on fewer aims within a given period will ease the organization's workload and yield concrete results. Furthermore, to share responsibility and lessen the organization's workload, it is advisable to cooperate with civil society organizations and universities of the Turkic world. In particular, support from academics and civil society activists will contribute to realizing people-to-people collaboration.

Last but not least, the organization has been exceedingly successful to date in realizing its aims and activities. Moreover, the OTS has acted as a successful teacher and norm-creator. In many respects, it is a norm entrepreneur: importantly, it has initiated an economic and political cooperation culture. The commonalities in language, culture and the history of the communities of the member states have become shared knowledge. As a result, Turkicness has become a collective identity, and the values of collaborative culture and collective action have been internalized.

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## ARTICLE

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# Turkic World Vision–2040: A Step Forward for the Resilience of Turkic Cooperation

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### Abstract

*The article explores the “Turkic World Vision–2040” adopted during the Istanbul Summit held on November 12, 2021 by the Heads of States of the Organization of the Turkic States (OTS) through the lense of the theory of resilience. This Summit was historical in many terms where the name of this institutionalized regional cooperation mechanism changed from Cooperation of Turkic Speaking States (Turkic Council) to OTS, modalities for observership and partnership were adopted and Turkmenistan became an observer to the Organization. As one the staunch outcomes of the Summit, “Turkic World Vision–2040” constitutes the first strategic document of the Organization established in 2009 with the Nakhchivan Agreement. Touching upon the turbulence through which the international system is passing today and the accompanying need for better global governance, the article first touches upon the basic elements of the theory of resilience, then turns to the vision documents prepared by international actors to offer resilient solutions to the challenges of today and tomorrow. Next, the structure of the OTS vision document is examined, together with its linkages to resiliency. Finally, the article discusses what “Turkic World Vision–2040” brings to the ongoing Turkic cooperation in terms of resilience.*

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Organization of Turkic States, Turkic World Vision–2040, resilience, Turkic cooperation, global governance.

## Introduction

The famous first lines of *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens aptly describes the status of the international system as we know it today as also acknowledged by H.E. Minister Çavuşoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye in his opening address at the annual Antalya Diplomacy Forum in 2022: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness.”<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, we have all the capabilities necessary to run a workable global order. On the other hand, even the territorial integrity of sovereign states can be questioned under today’s pressing circumstances. Instead of moving ahead toward an empowerment of the rules-based international order, there is a strong trend of regression regarding international law and values. While there is ample room to make the international order more inclusive, representative and resilient, debates on the enlargement of “spheres of influence” have resumed, as if there is a new chessboard on the table. In addition to these challenges, the Russia-Ukraine war has disrupted several geopolitical and geo-economic calculations at both the regional and global level, constituting another turning point in the history of international relations bringing with it a wide range of repercussions and severe humanitarian, military, economic and food security challenges.

The international system had already been experiencing severe turbulence, especially in the last twenty years, and the recent outbreak of COVID-19 and the unpreparedness to manage it have crowned it. The quest for building resilient societies, states and a more representative international order has already been one of the most debated topics of the global agenda for decades. As modern challenges to international development and security become more complex, interrelated and unpredictable than ever, the notion of “resilience” has gained further ground in the literature of international relations (IR). In this fragile scaffold of global order, international organizations have begun to adopt new

strategies to adapt to the new realities of today's global system. Therefore, the period of 2020–2022 is emerging as a time of renewed visions with new projections for the future. For instance, “2030 NATO: United for a New Era” report which constitutes the basis of NATO's new strategic concept adopted in June 2022 during the NATO Summit in Madrid, is among these new vision papers. Prepared by a high-level, independent expert group appointed by the NATO Secretary-General, the report presents a wake-up call for the Alliance to recalibrate for future uncertainties, and prepared for “a world of competing great powers.”<sup>2</sup> This timely report makes countless references to “resilience” and “the importance of building resilient societies” to counter today's security challenges and ensure the development of global governance that goes hand in hand with it.

Following the Strategic Concept endeavors of NATO, the EU has also engaged in the preparation of strategic documents. The “EU Global Strategy”, drafted by Nathalie Tocci, Special Advisor to the Former High Representative of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission Frederica Mogherini, and published in 2016, was a remarkable work in this direction. The strategy not only focuses on EU issues, but places special emphasis on the potential and prospects of resilience in the EU's global role”—zooming inward toward resilience within the EU and zooming outward toward resilience in the multilateral system.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the “EU Global Strategy” elevated resilience to one of the EU's top priorities.<sup>4</sup> Tocci presents a self-critique of the EU's implementation of resilience in her article. Thus, the EU launched preparation of a new strategic document, resulting in the release of its “Global Compass 2022”, approved at the EU Foreign Affairs Council on March 21, 2022.<sup>5</sup> This document again makes reference to resilience, albeit to a lesser degree compared to the previous one. Nevertheless, it focuses on giving the EU an ambitious plan of action for strengthening the EU's security and defense policy by 2030. It is important to note that, the document misses the truth and reality and myopically views Türkiye, a candidate country and NATO ally, from such a shallow perspective, particularly in the chapter on the Eastern Mediterranean, where there is a persistent denial of Türkiye's rights and those of the Turkish Cypriots, in full contradiction of international law, practice and even the EU's own *acquis*.<sup>6</sup>



Contributing to the efforts of strategic thinking taking place at the global level, the Heads of States of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) that was named before the Council of Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (Turkic Council) adopted “Turkic World Vision–2040” during the historical Istanbul Summit hosted by H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Türkiye, on November 12, 2021. This is the first strategic document prepared since the OTS’ establishment as the Turkic Council in 2009. As such, it constitutes an important opening for the organization as a real pledge for the upcoming two decades. The preparation of this document was commissioned during the Baku Summit on October 15, 2019, hosted by H.E. İlham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, upon the proposal of the Republic of Kazakhstan. It was eventually based on the stipulations of the Nakhchivan Agreement adopted in 2009 as the founding document that set the tone for the institutionalization of cooperation among the Turkic States.<sup>7</sup>

The collapse of the Soviet Union had paved the way for the emergence of five new independent Turkic States: the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. With its background of Summit Process dating back to the 1990s, this emergence resulted in the awakening of a long-awaited Turkic cooperation. However, the achievement of this cooperation was not as easy as it had been dreamed of and projected for. The individual conditions of the Turkic States, along with regional circumstances and global calculations were not ready for the initiation of such cooperation in its full expression.<sup>8</sup> However, the establishment of the Turkic Council with its permanent Secretariat based in Istanbul and its achievements in a relatively short period of time soon gained it popularity on the international scene.<sup>9</sup> This led to the accession of Uzbekistan as a Member State in 2019, as well as Hungary and Turkmenistan as observer states in 2018 and in 2022, respectively. The organization’s scope of cooperation increased throughout the years in line with the changing needs of its Member States and the developments at both regional and global level. In this regard, the recent historical Istanbul Summit was dedicated to theme of “Green Technologies and Smart Cities”, in true resonance with the global agenda.<sup>10</sup>

The Istanbul Summit was a historical event in many respects: the name of the Turkic Council was changed to the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), the adaption of the document regarding the modalities of observership and partnership opened a new page for the organization, and Turkmenistan became an observer state, completing the OTS' roster of former Soviet Turkic states. Above all, however, the most important development of the Istanbul Summit was the adoption of the "Turkic World Vision-2040". This first strategic document of the organization took more than a year to prepare, and is the outcome of the tremendous efforts of the Secretariat, the contributions of the Member States and

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the guidance of Türkiye's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which assumed the chairmanship of the organization just after the Istanbul Summit. The implementation of the vision document will be framed and detailed in a series of strategic road maps to be renewed every five years in line with the priorities of the organization. The "First Road Map 2022-2026" is expected to be approved later in 2022 as an implementation framework. When we look into the details of the "Turkic World Vision-2040", we find clues about the background of the establishment of

the organization, its aims and values, its areas of collaboration, its enlargement process, its cooperation with international actors and its contributions to inter-regionalism together with the future measures to be taken to empower the Turkic cooperation.

In the light of above-mentioned issues, in this article, we will analyze the "Turkic World Vision-2040" through the lens of the theory of resilience. We will first touch upon the basic elements of the theory of resilience; next we will examine the structure of the document together with its linkages to resiliency; then, we will explore the new openings the vision document presents for Turkic cooperation in terms of resilience.

## Resilience: A Smart Way of Thinking & Dynamic Process

Resilience derives from the Latin verb *resilire*, meaning “to bounce back from damage”.<sup>11</sup> It is not of course a new phenomenon, but there is no doubt that its initial definition has expanded throughout the years. The concept of resilience as we use it today originated in ecology in the 1970s as the ability “to absorb changes of variables and parameters”; it then penetrated in other disciplines, from psychology and economics to the social sciences.<sup>12</sup> In recent years, the concept of resilience has become particularly interlinked with governance, especially in IR.<sup>13</sup> During the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, the term “resilient power”, which refers to a nation’s ability to adapt itself to changing conditions and renew its capabilities, gained traction.<sup>14</sup> Before the emphasis on the subject matter, the concept has already entered into the literature of IR with regard to global governance.<sup>15</sup> The concept has been more and more problematized in the framework of the United Nations (UN) and other international organizations, through its linkages to issues such as good governance, sustainable development, security, urban planning, peace-keeping and the management of humanitarian crises.<sup>16</sup>

Impressively, all of the major international actors, including the UN, the UN Development Program (UNDP), the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), NATO and the EU make strong reference to the importance of resilience in their respective.<sup>17</sup> The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which constitute important targets to make the world more livable leave no one behind, repeat the term resilience countless times in the descriptions of each of the 17 targets.<sup>18</sup> Resilience is thus considered essential for the implementation of the 2030 Global Sustainable Agenda.<sup>19</sup>

There is also an ongoing debate as to whether the increasing role of resilience in governance and security discourse is too Western-oriented. Critics argue that the concept of resilience has become a component of neo-liberalism, ignoring the self-governance methods of the rest of the world.<sup>20</sup> However, this does not seem as a relevant criticism and constitutes rather a biased approach as several documents of other organizations such as the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC),<sup>21</sup>

the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO),<sup>22</sup> the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN),<sup>23</sup> the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU),<sup>24</sup> the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)<sup>25</sup> and the African Union (AU),<sup>26</sup> whose member states do not always follow a neo-liberal approach, make reference to the importance of resilience in their policy documents.

Depending on the disciplines, contexts and situations in which it is evoked, the concept of resilience has a number of different, in some cases multifaceted meanings. Thus, resilience discussions tackle a variety of themes, from politics, the economy, sustainable development, counter-terrorism, energy supply security and cyber security to disaster risk-management and climate change, together with all their domestic and external dynamics.<sup>27</sup> Clearly, resilience is not a static concept but rather is in perpetual movement.<sup>28</sup> As a multi-layered phenomenon, resilience is described and implemented differently in various fields and branches of academia. Yet overall, resilience is characterized as “the capacity to adapt, respond, react and bounce back in the aftermath of shocks and crises in a timely and efficient manner.”<sup>29</sup> Taking into consideration that resilience has become a commonplace concept in our daily lives, it is also about preparedness, responsiveness and agility, as well as the implementation of adequate policies for prevention and management.

The latter definition places a special emphasis on empowerment and capacity-building.<sup>30</sup> Truly being resilient at the policy level necessitates not only a system of a certain quality, but also effective processes of governance in an increasingly complex and dynamic environment at both the local and global level. For this reason, providing a link between local and global phenomena is of utmost importance in facilitating change, mitigating complexity and managing unpredictability.<sup>31</sup> Thus, local and global governance are certainly inseparable from each other; this necessitates cultivating qualities of resilience across different sectorial policies. This is directly related to frame resilient, sustainable and robust institutions that are the *sine quo non* of rules-based international order.

Resilience is not of course only about structuring resilient institutions but also about building resilient societies. Therefore, observing, preventing, responding, repairing the imbalances of governance, man-

aging, recovering and ensuring post-recovery constitute the essence of resilience-thinking, whatever subject is at stake. When it comes to cooperation, whether at the regional or global level, the term is usually accompanied by key words such as partnering and shouldering, often through innovative, comprehensive and mutual-learning methods supported by capacity-building activities in order to secure a workable global governance system. With all of these features, resilience is certainly a dynamic process: there is no-one-size-fits-all resiliency. Because of its responsiveness to local conditions, resilience cannot necessarily be exported from one locale to another. Yet because of our increasing interconnectedness, resilience has a global reach and effect, and should be based on universal values and rules with a human-centered approach.

In IR, there is an organic linkage between resilience and good governance that can be summarized as “a process of decision-making that is accountable, transparent, just, responsive and participatory.”<sup>32</sup> Establishing good governance at the national level requires building inclusive, prosperous and secure institutions and societies. Implementing tailor-made policies to meet the dire needs of everyday people, building on social capital, securing connectedness based on a resilient economy, engaging all reliable actors and institutions in harmony, ensuring effective and responsive delivery of public services, developing good communication skills and mobilizing all the potential for cooperation among all of these actors are among the key concepts to bolster the linkage between good governance and resilience.<sup>33</sup> And as long as resilience within states is well-built, resilience at the regional level will be enhanced. In this regard, regional organizations such as the OTS assume an important responsibility; promoting resilience at the regional level will have a *domino effect* to enhance global resilience within the multilateral system in a rules-based order. A constructive, comprehensive and inclusive approach to be applied at regional level would promote a resilient multilateralism where discussions regarding reforms of the UN and its Security Council would be much more tempered and productive. Thus, international organizations within the multilateral system can ensure their relevance and thus their perpetuation through institutional transformation in line with the necessities of the day by adapting to the environment they face.<sup>34</sup>

## Turkic World Vision–2040: An Ambitious Pledge for the Future

“Turkic World Vision–2040” was adopted at the 8<sup>th</sup> historical Istanbul Summit of the OTS, more than twelve years since the establishment of this regional cooperation organization. The 2009 Nakhchivan Agreement constitutes the beginning of this institutionalized collaborative pathway leading to today’s cooperation scheme, which has yielded remarkable achievements in a short period of time.<sup>35</sup> Equipped with adequate instruments in its toolkit, the OTS has been instrumental in increasing cooperation among the Turkic States in a wide range of areas. The declarations adopted at the annual Summits by the Heads of State have provided the compass of this cooperation. Furthermore, the activities and projects implemented by the Secretariat have been applauded by the international community, as indicated in the 2017 report of the UN Office for South-South Cooperation, titled “How the Turkic Council Uses South-South Cooperation to Promote Regional and Global Development”.<sup>36</sup> So what was the relevance of preparing such a vision document and why it is important in terms of resilience?

While the founding Nakhchivan Agreement framed the members’ ideal of a regional cooperation mechanism, changes in the needs of the Member States, across the region, and developments in the international system throughout the following years called upon the OTS Member States to envision an enhanced Turkic cooperation in a more structured way. “Turkic World Vision–2040” presents, in 17 pages, a summary of the accumulation of the OTS’ past achievements, the organization’s commitments and instructions and lays out the OTS’ vision for a long-term approach to ongoing Turkic cooperation. It is organized into four sections or ‘pillars’ in line with the existing cooperation mechanisms within the OTS: (1) political and security cooperation; (2) economic and sectoral cooperation, including economics, transport and customs, information and communications technology (ICT), energy, tourism, health, environment and agriculture; (3) people-to-people contact, which includes areas such as culture, education and science, youth and sports, diaspora, information and media, as well as cooperation with civil societies; and finally (4) cooperation with external parties, which includes cooperation with international organizations, and humanitarian and development cooperation.<sup>37</sup>

The introduction to “Turkic World Vision–2040” begins with a statement of the document’s necessity: “We are living in an age that requires a strategic vision to recognize and address the rapid changes worldwide and their impact on us.”<sup>38</sup> It highlights the need for Member States to adapt themselves, their societies and institutions to the emerging global realities. The numerous references made to preparedness, resilience, capacity for adaptation and transformation across a spectrum of political, economic to cultural domains emphasize the importance that the organization attributes to this outcome. Cooperative mechanisms and joint projects within the OTS, the pooling of experiences and the sharing of material and intellectual resources when needed are considered essential instruments for a robust and transparent platform of growing cooperation and solidarity within the Turkic world. What is striking is the awareness within the document that the ongoing process of adaptation needs to be supported by a forward-looking and realistic vision. In this vein, it aims “to develop such a framework to support the capacity of its members to address, individually and collectively, the challenges of our time.”<sup>39</sup> It acknowledges the high stakes in play for regional organizations such as the OTS to render the international system more effective, cooperative and representative. “Turkic World Vision–2040” intends to provide direction “for individual and joint action by the member states to further build their administrative capacities to serve the needs and aspirations of their people” and expresses the OTS’ promise to “render each Member State stronger nationally and stronger as a group, without prejudice to their already existing international commitments.”<sup>40</sup> Referring to the fraternal affinities between the Member States, the document does not forget that positive engagement with other countries and international organizations constitutes a key course of action for the organization.

Following the introduction, after commending the OTS’ achievements to enhance cooperation and solidarity among the Turkic states and

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their people since its establishment based on historical ties, common language, culture and traditions, the Heads of State of the Member States reiterate their political will “to deepen the ongoing institutionalized Turkic cooperation in line with the stipulations of the Nakhchivan Agreement and the Organization of Turkic States Summit Declarations, in close coordination with the other Turkic Cooperation Organizations.”<sup>41</sup> It reaffirms the OTS’ robust adherence to “the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and other universally recognized principles and norms of international law, including sovereign equality, territorial integrity and inviolability of internationally recognized borders of states.”<sup>42</sup> Indeed, these key concepts constitute the backbone of the spirit of cooperation within the OTS.<sup>43</sup>

Underlining that the multi-layered, systemized and structured multilateral cooperation within the OTS, based on equality, mutual confidence and shared benefit would continue to yield positive outcomes for Turkic states and Turkic people and others, “Turkic World Vision–2040” attributes special importance to the essential components of resilience: good-governance, pluralism, inclusiveness, accountability and transparency in building and maintaining resilient societies. Moreover, the desire “to ensure cooperation with regional and international organizations as well as partners for enhancing development, peace, stability and prosperity worldwide through the development of a comprehensive and inclusive global governance approach with adequate mechanisms” bolsters the resilient-thinking character of this document.<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, it illustrates a decisive call “to secure the reform and efficient functioning of the international system.”<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, pointing out the necessity of ensuring preparedness, the accent placed on taking joint action to meet the current and emerging global challenges while working for the achievement of the SDGs is of utmost importance, not only for rendering the member, observer and partner states more resilient, but also for building resilient societies. The commitment to strengthen people-to-people interaction and cooperation among the citizens of Turkic states for their active participation in Turkic cooperation and for framing their shared future presents a firm step to be taken to this end.<sup>46</sup> Within this framework, the document describes the OTS as “a responsible and responsive regional actor that keeps its door open for new and innovative cooperation areas of common interest among the Member States as well as other regional and international actors.”<sup>47</sup>



Before engaging in the four pillars of the Vision, the document next presents the elements that will guide the next phase of the OTS' priorities, evolution and direction in the upcoming two decades, and the Heads of State declare their continuing commitment to this unique cooperation. Reflecting their dedication to resilience-thinking, the Heads of State pledge "to channel the cooperative synergy of the Member States and their people to contribute to developing and protecting global common goods and build a more representative and participatory international order with adequate cooperation mechanisms," while "using the cooperative platform of the Organization to strengthen governance and to raise the political, economic and social standards of their societies."<sup>48</sup> The aim of "supporting economic, social, and institutional reforms in the Member States to avoid socioeconomic precarity, upholding human dignity and building a more prosperous community of Turkic countries" are equally significant to this end.<sup>49</sup> The items that are *sine quo non* to build resilient nations and societies are also enshrined in the Vision document. This involves "promoting democratic governance as a general principle while respecting the circumstances of each Member State to advance on this path" and "strengthening good governance with all its aspects including human rights, rule of law, inclusive institutions, transparency, efficiency, accountability and fighting corruption for the socioeconomic development and prosperity of the peoples of the Member States."<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, "promoting human security, equality between men and women, as well as women and youth empowerment in our societies" are significant components of resilience necessary to prepare future generations with this line of understanding, as described in the document.<sup>51</sup>

Economic resilience is another subject that "Turkic World Vision–2040" broadly touches upon in this part of the document with a sectoral approach. Indeed, the Vision encapsulates ambitious aspects to deepen economic cooperation between the Member States.<sup>52</sup> In this regard, it emphasizes the utmost importance of deepening economic cooperation and interaction among the Member States by harmonizing national economic development policies through regular dialogue and experience sharing, increasing the trade volume among the Member States through policies aimed at increasing trade complementarities, facilitating trade and eliminating quantitative restrictions and non-tar-

iff barriers to trade, transforming the Member States into a vigorous regional economic group linking East and West, North and South trade corridors contributing to regional and global economic stability.<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, the issue of “creating seamless, integrated, efficient, fast and sustainable multimodal connectivity among the Member States by simplifying and harmonizing customs and transit procedures for border crossings, liberalizing their transport sectors, including transit passes” has a wide coverage in the document.<sup>54</sup> This aims “to accelerate transport operations with minimum logistical costs, and eradicate the non-physical barriers to efficient, stable, fast and seamless transport across the Trans-Caspian International East-West Middle Corridor (TITR).”<sup>55</sup> Thus, ensuring connectedness is among the issues that the organization repeatedly takes up to reach a resilient regional economy.<sup>56</sup>

The Vision further refers to contemporary concepts such as establishing intra-regional digital connectivity, supporting the fourth Industrial Revolution in the Member States and ensuring better integration with the global knowledge-based economy through the use of Big Data and digital technologies as well as artificial intelligence in various fields to support transformation into digital, green, smart economies and smart cities. From enhancing cooperation in satellite technology to promoting partnerships between space agencies and relevant institutions, “Turkic World Vision–2040” touches upon several critical areas in compliance with today’s necessities.<sup>57</sup>

On the other hand, as mentioned in the Vision, the OTS has already made significant progress in transforming the OTS region into a center of tourism to better utilize its rich cultural and historical heritage as well as the natural attractions of the Member States through new joint tourism projects, and diversifying tourism destinations along the ancient Silk Road for fully tapping their tourism potential.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, the commitment to “maintaining health cooperation as a priority agenda item among the Member States to achieve universal health coverage, access to quality essential healthcare services as well as to safe, effective, quality, affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all in the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic” stands as a decisive projection for preparedness with regard to continued and deepening cooperation on health.<sup>59</sup>

For the first time within the history of the OTS, in line with the theme of the 8<sup>th</sup> Istanbul Summit, environmental issues are emphasized in all relevant areas of the “Turkic World Vision–2040”. Accordingly, there is firm pledge “to ensure sustainable agriculture, self-sufficiency and food security in the OTS region through agricultural cooperation together with capacity building and technology transfer programs and partnerships with an emphasis on founding environmentally friendly, sustainable and organic solutions,” which we need more than ever today. All of these commitments present remarkable attempts to render the Member States and their societies more resilient across various crucial sectors.<sup>60</sup>

In terms of people-to-people cooperation, “Turkic World Vision–2040” presents the OTS’ commitment to achieve further harmonization of the national cultural, educational and youth policies, build capacity to achieve unity in alphabet and terminology for enabling better communication among the Member States and make the OTS region a center of academic and scientific research, learning and innovation.<sup>61</sup> The Vision describes youth cooperation “as an essential element of comprehensive intra-regional cooperation through joint projects on youth mobility, exchange and education together with pledges to make additional efforts to prevent youth from the threat of radicalization and violent extremism.”<sup>62</sup> The OTS has already made significant efforts in the field of youth cooperation over the past several years.<sup>63</sup> Relatedly, commitments such as ensuring the active participation, engagement and integration of the Turkic diaspora communities in the social, political, economic and cultural life of the countries where they reside and securing institutionalized cooperation among TV, news agencies and media outlets while joining efforts to tackle disinformation and infollution are also beneficial to increase regional resilience by deepening connectedness at the societal level.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, “strengthening the role and activities of the OTS as a responsible and cooperative regional actor at national, regional and international levels through public diplomacy programs and activities” constitutes an important part of the Vision to raise awareness about the activities of the OTS to render its members’ societies more resilient and to ensure the resiliency of future generations.<sup>65</sup>

Cooperation with external actors is also crucial to enhance resilience at the global level, as the document intends. Therefore, “Turkic World Vision–2040” accentuates the OTS’ commitment to enhance cooperation with international and regional organizations that share common interests to contribute to global governance. This can be realized by “keeping up with the global agenda of cooperation through collaboration with the UN, its bodies and specialized agencies as well as other relevant international organizations based on the requirements of regional and global ownership.”<sup>66</sup> Commitments such as “to render the multilateral system more resilient through working together on the need for UN reform, as well as on the attainment of internationally agreed development goals” together with the targets “to implement joint development and aid programs and projects for responding to the dire needs of the developing and least developed countries across the world” are among the crucial targets of the OTS to achieve this end.<sup>67</sup>

Recalling the ecological connotation of the term resilience, the pledge “to develop programs and projects to prevent and respond to natural disasters in the organization’s domain and across the world, and coordinate joint initiatives and actions for disaster relief in affected areas” represents another important dimension among the commitments of the OTS to enhance preparedness and ability to withstand such shocks.<sup>68</sup>

Last but not least, promoting effective coordination and cooperation

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among the relevant authorities of the Member States on issues of migration and displacement constitutes an important needed reality that the Vision highlights in compliance with the aim of developing a more resolute regional and global approach to this trans-boundary issue.<sup>69</sup>

In the part concerning the four pillars of the Vision, the above-mentioned commitments are expressed in detail and accompanied by an illustrated road map.

Instead of zooming in on each pillar, in the next part of the article, we will focus on the new light that the Vision brings to Turkic cooperation in terms of resilience.

### Turkic World Vision–2040: Aspects of Further Resilience

Before its name change from Turkic Council to OTS and the adoption of “Turkic World Vision–2040”, this regional cooperation mechanism had been already operating through a well-established working group and Ministerial meeting mechanisms involving actors from the public and private sectors when needed. The dedication of each annual Summit to a specific theme of cooperation enlarged the organization’s scope of collaboration. As an umbrella organization of Turkic cooperation with a result-oriented, comprehensive and inclusive approach, the OTS has already contributed to the development of solidarity among the Turkic States and across the region. From diplomacy to the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), tourism to transport and customs, youth to health and media, education to media and diaspora, the OTS has been carrying out capacity-building programs and benefiting from the comparative advantages of its Member and Observer States. Within this framework, “pragmatic economic interests have played a more important role than ideological concerns in the development of the OTS.”<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, its ongoing cooperation with UN agencies and bodies, as well as with other international and regional organizations sharing common goals, has already positioned the OTS among the promising regional institutional mechanisms contributing to the empowerment of global governance.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, one might say that a resilience-oriented approach is already in the genes of the OTS. “Turkic World Vision–2040” brings further dynamic resiliency to the projects and programs that the OTS is already carrying out while paving the way for the development of adequate tools to equip the organization with resilient solutions to the issues on its agenda of cooperation. Moreover, “Turkic World Vision-2040” provides a strategic perspective to the OTS to shape its future, based on its ongoing rules and values, but in a more innovative, comprehensive and smart manner in line with the requirements of our time.<sup>72</sup> Within this framework,

each of the document's sub-sections contains references to resiliency. In this regard, further emphasis is placed on the harmonization of policies and regulations on sectoral cooperation areas with adequate up-to-date means, stimulation of digitalization in each area of cooperation with the power of Big Data, better use of smart technologies, support to entrepreneurship with a reference to young and women entrepreneurs, implementation of environmentally friendly, green solutions, and the development of accountability and sustainability. These are indispensable components of enhancing resiliency. Moreover, the enhancement of knowledge experience and capacity building, and ensuring preparedness in a wide range of cooperation areas from health to disaster management are emphasized, with the aim of rendering the OTS more robust to potential shocks and crises.<sup>73</sup>

From contributing to the green economy and low-carbon development to jointly promoting sustainable rural development programs and effective intellectual property protection, "Turkic World Vision-2040" calls repeated attention to the importance of resilient-thinking and acting. For example, in the pillar of "political and security cooperation", it makes a firm pledge for "strengthening the regular mechanism of multilateral political consultations among the Member States on international and regional foreign policy issues of common interest while increasing synergy among national institutions and other stakeholders to achieve the targets of OTS to leverage Turkic cooperation."<sup>74</sup> This commitment constitutes an important proof that the Organization is seeking to enhance its resiliency with regard to the empowerment of cooperation in foreign policy areas. Upon the call of Turkish Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu, the OTS had organized an extraordinary meet-

**Moreover, "Turkic World Vision-2040" provides a strategic perspective to the OTS to shape its future, based on its ongoing rules and values, but in a more innovative, comprehensive and smart manner in line with the requirements of our time.**

ing to take up the developments in Afghanistan on September 27, 2021, after which a joint statement was released, before the adoption of "Turkic World Vision-2040".<sup>75</sup> Moreover, the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OTS, upon the initiative of Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu, acting as Chairperson in Office of

the Organization, held an extraordinary video-conference meeting on January 11, 2022 to discuss the recent developments in Kazakhstan.<sup>76</sup> In addition to the regular meetings of Foreign Ministers, the OTS has already accelerated its efforts to voice joint positions on issues of common interest. The OTS is on a path to empower political resilience among its Member and Observer States.

References made to “the improvement of professional skills of public entities in good governance and public service delivery, strengthening of rule of law, judicial systems and legal infrastructure and institutional capacities in Member States” perfectly dovetail with the endeavor to render regional cooperation more resilient.<sup>77</sup> With this aim, “strengthening the Representation Office of Organization of OTS in Budapest as a hub for developing multi-layered cooperation with European institutions including the Visegrád Group” constitutes a significant target to bolster cooperation between the OTS and European institutions on issues of mutual interest.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, the pledge “to carry out tangible joint projects with international and regional organizations that share common goals to contribute to the global governance” indicates that the Organization will continue to track the global agenda very closely.<sup>79</sup>

When it comes to security cooperation, the OTS’ focus is “on building a network for cooperation and information-sharing among the Member States to combat the threats of radicalization, violent extremism, Islamophobia, xenophobia and terrorism, and to ensure border security.”<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, “carrying out effective cooperation and coordination among law enforcement authorities to combat transnational organized crime, including illegal drug trade, irregular migration, human trafficking, illicit arms trade, organ trafficking, economic, financial and cybercrimes as well as illegal migration” are equally important in enhancing security cooperation in the region and for empowering the resilience of the Turkic States in the mentioned fields.<sup>81</sup>

The section of the document that addresses economic and sectoral cooperation is quite long and detailed. What is pressing here, is the strong commitment to “work toward the achievement of free movement of commodities, capital, services, technologies and people among the Member States.”<sup>82</sup> Supporting the development of SMEs in the Member and Observer States and mobilizing resources to be allocated to the



development of joint projects are other important issues touched upon in this part of the document. For more than two years, the OTS has been working on the establishment of the Turkic Investment Fund to be operationalized as a significant step toward boosting economic cooperation between the Member and Observer States for these particular reasons.<sup>83</sup>

Digitalization, in the context of several economic and financial issues, is also of utmost importance for the OTS. In this regard, prioritizing the diversification of economic activities to increase the resiliency with a focus on evolving digital technologies, cooperating to build a future knowledge economy, generate opportunities and enhance infrastructure for greater production capabilities in different sectors constitute specific, achievable targets to be reached by joining efforts. Specific reference is made to nurture policies for “sustainable, green, innovative, smart, and inclusive economic growth while preserving macroeconomic and financial stability” and “to prepare a favorable environment for the development of start-ups and innovative entrepreneurship and expanding the network of incubators among the Member States,” indicating that the OTS is fully aware of the need for global economic resilience and has a realistic strategy for its development vis-à-vis economic and financial issues.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, the Vision makes a significant pledge for “jointly promoting the Zangezur Corridor at various international economic platforms” to enhance regional economic and logistic connectivity; this corridor has become a significant cooperation issue since the glorious 44 Days Victory of the Republic of Azerbaijan.<sup>85</sup>

Among other sectors of cooperation, the environment has an innovative share in the Vision document and this is the first time that the OTS has been vocal in its commitment “to give priority to environmental protection in the national and joint policies of the Member States and take necessary measures to increase societal awareness on this global challenge.”<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, the announcement of the establishment of a “Turkic Council Civil Protection Mechanism” to take joint action to prevent and respond to natural and manmade disasters and to mitigate their effects while working on recovery is another important contribution to the preparedness aspect of the OTS’ emphasis on resilience. This on-call mechanism, whose regulatory documents are under prepa-



ration, will provide a concrete cooperation mechanism through which the peoples of the OTS will benefit when needed. The OTS pledge to increase cooperation in this area matches well with the “Drought Prevention Center” proposed by Hungary to be established in addition to the OTS Representation Office in Budapest.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, although there is no reference to it in the Vision, this goes hand-in-hand with the document’s spirit with regard to environmental protection as a sign of the OTS’s further engagement in the fight against climate change and its devastating consequences.

In addition to environmental issues, “Turkic World Vision–2040” touches upon on food security as another important challenge facing the world today. It details the means to carry out cooperation in agriculture, an important aspect of resilient economies and societies.<sup>88</sup> References made to “the achievement of digital connectivity through the effective use of space technologies within the ICT cooperation” are also remarkable in terms of enlarging the scope of cooperation to such an important area that requires resiliency.<sup>89</sup> The call for “harmonizing national space policies and establishing result-oriented cooperation among the Member States through joint programs” and the intention to “share space-based data for resource management, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development” indicates that even the sky is not the limit for enhancing collaboration within the OTS.<sup>90</sup>

In terms of ideas to build resilient societies, the Vision is very generous in its pillar of people-to-people cooperation in culture, education and science, to youth and sports, diaspora, and information and media cooperation. In each area of this cooperation sphere, “Turkic World Vision–2040” emphasizes the importance of raising Turkic generations who are aware of the necessity of national, regional and global good governance directly linked to the concept of resilience. In addition to this, the Vision seeks to foster an “enabling environment for networking, and supporting the joint work of civil society organizations with the aim of strengthening dialogue among them and ensuring their active engagement in the socio-economic and political development of their countries.”<sup>91</sup> Meanwhile, it urges “the involvement of civil societies in the activities of OTS and other Turkic Cooperation Organizations to promote common culture, foster dialogue and boost people-to-people

contacts within the region” through a participatory and inclusive approach.<sup>92</sup> All of these elements are crucial to building and sustaining resilient societies through connectedness and engagement.

In the section addressing cooperation with external parties, “Turkic World Vision–2040” reiterates the OTS’ pledge to enhance cooperation with international and regional organizations as well as third countries through joint projects and sectoral partnerships. Contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Member States and across the globe, as it was first enshrined in the OTS’ 2018 Cholpon-Ata Declaration, is also emphasized in this part of the document.<sup>93</sup> What is more striking is the inclusion of humanitarian and development cooperation in this pillar with a firm commitment “to channel official development assistance and lines of development credit for the Member States for poverty eradication in developing countries while initiating a regular dialogue with the donor community and providing a regional perspective in donor assistance.”<sup>94</sup> This crafts a perspective for the OTS “to carry out joint projects to link countries that have development needs with Member States that have solutions.”<sup>95</sup> These commitments accentuate the significance that the OTS attributes to humanitarian and development cooperation. The donation

**In terms of ideas to build resilient societies, the Vision is very generous in its pillar of people-to-people cooperation in culture, education and science, to youth and sports, diaspora, and information and media cooperation.**

of a total of 511,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses by OTS members Türkiye and Azerbaijan and observer Hungary to African countries in need in the course of the historical Istanbul Summit constituted an important action step already taken to this end – one that demonstrates cognizance of the close linkage between regional and global resilience.<sup>96</sup>

## Conclusion

“Turkic World 2040–Vision” represents a dynamic, adaptive and transformative approach to ongoing collaboration within the OTS, which is

truly in line with the realities the organization faces on the ground. The rhetoric used in the document and the ongoing endeavors conducted within the OTS indicate the organization's efforts to make regional cooperation less vulnerable and more robust to face the inevitable crises and shocks the future will hold. Therefore, throughout its four-pillar structure, the Vision aims to better prepare its Member and Observer States to the emerging challenges and provide the necessary climate to deliver a prosperous and sustainable form of well-functioning regional cooperation to the benefit of the rules-based global order. Among others, good governance prevails as a keyword in this sense, at national, regional and global levels that are closely interlinked. The most profound elaboration of resilience can be observed in international organizations whose scope of activities includes the development of expertise, methodologies and instruments for regional and global governance.<sup>97</sup> Through the “Turkic World 2040–Vision”, the OTS addresses all three, with a concrete projection for the upcoming two decades in a geo-political and geo-economic environment that is more complicated than ever.

Of course, no vision document is perfect or a “silver bullet”. Therefore, the implementation of “Turkic World 2040–Vision” by means of five-year strategic road maps to be adopted at regular intervals is essential to render it a vivid and valid document. As such, the adoption of this document is an important achievement in itself to render Turkic cooperation a more resilient process for regional and global governance. The methods and means for the implementation of commitments stipulated within the Vision are as important as the document itself. Therefore, the materialization of the commitments indicated in the Vision is essential even with a reasonable delay. Thus, the necessary efforts should be exhorted to properly manage the establishment and implementation of mechanisms such as the Turkic Investment Fund, the Turkic Civil Protection Mechanism and the Drought Prevention Center and to secure their successful functioning and test the resiliency of these commitments. Hence,

**“Turkic World 2040–Vision” represents a dynamic, adaptive and transformative approach to ongoing collaboration within the OTS, which is truly in line with the realities the organization faces on the ground.**

a balance needs to be struck between theory and practice.

Meanwhile, any redundancy in the projects of the OTS and the other Turkic Cooperation Organizations should be avoided to produce the most efficient and resilient outcomes possible. The aim of building resilient societies and institutions must always be kept top of mind in the OTS, whatever cooperation area is at the stake. To this end, principles such as accountability, preparedness, readiness to adapt and responsibility should continue to be the anchors of Turkic cooperation. These solid principles have long resonated throughout the Turkic world. They appear in *Kutadgu Bilig* (*Blessed Knowledge*), written centuries ago in the Karakhanids age by Yusuf Has Hacib, a Turkic philosopher and writer from Balasagun.<sup>98</sup> As a timeless work of Turkic literature dating back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, this book and the values it ensconces will keep on inspiring the visionary and resilient aspects of Turkic cooperation.

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## ARTICLE

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# The Organization of Turkic States' Economic Potential and Cooperation Prospects among its Members

Orkhan BAGHIROV\*

### Abstract

*In recent years, the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) has significantly increased its global influence and has attracted new member and observer states. In this process, its economic potential has played an important role. Thus, the main goal of this article is to analyze the OTS' present economic potential and the extent of economic cooperation within the organization, and to determine the future prospects of such cooperation. For this purpose, the article examines the economic potential of OTS member and observer states and the total potential of the organization by focusing on major economic sectors such as trade, transport and energy. It then analyzes the current extent of cooperation among member and observer states in these sectors. Based on the results of these analyses, the article determines the OTS' economic cooperation prospects and discusses the measures that could be taken for the further development of cooperation within the OTS. In general, the results of the research presented in the article reveal that the OTS has a large and comprehensive economic potential, and that despite the level of economic cooperation that has already been achieved within the organization, there are many unrealized opportunities. Therefore, the economic prospects and measures identified in the article could enable member and observer states to focus on those opportunities, thereby increasing the economic strength of the OTS.*

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## Keywords

Organization of Turkic States, economic cooperation, Middle Corridor, energy, Turkic world.

## Introduction

The Organization of Turkic States (OTS) is an intergovernmental organization with the goal of promoting and developing comprehensive cooperation among the independent Turkic States. The organization was formerly called the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (Turkic Council). Its name was changed via a joint declaration of the organization's 8<sup>th</sup> Summit held in Istanbul in 2021.<sup>1</sup> The OTS was founded on October 3, 2009, on the basis of the Nakhchivan Agreement signed by the founding member states of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Türkiye,<sup>2</sup> becoming the first voluntary alliance of Turkic states in history. In subsequent years, other states joined the organization. During the 6<sup>th</sup> Summit in Cholpon-Ata, the Kyrgyz Republic became a member, and in September 2018, Hungary received observer status.<sup>3</sup> At the next summit held in Baku in October 2019, Uzbekistan joined the organization as a full member. And at the latest 8<sup>th</sup> Summit held in November 2021 in Türkiye, Turkmenistan joined as an observer member.

The OTS is committed to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations (UN) and the norms of international law, including sovereign equality, territorial integrity and the inviolability of internationally recognized borders. Although the organization brings together Turkic states, it does not take an exclusive approach. By promoting solidarity and deeper relations among the Turkic-speaking states, it aims to become an effective regional instrument not only for developing cooperation between its members, but also for expanding international cooperation in the Eurasian continent. To achieve this aim, the OTS does not limit itself to working solely within the framework of its members and cooperates with its neighboring states in order to ensure regional and global peace and stability.

As the first organization of Turkic states, the OTS was formed on the basis of the four main shared characteristics of its members: common history, common language, common identity and common culture. The organization aims to broaden existing cooperation in areas such as the economy, science, education, transportation, customs and tourism.

Multilateral cooperation in these areas within the OTS will positively contribute to regional development, particularly in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

While the OTS promotes cooperation in many different sectors, economic cooperation is one of its highest priorities. The organization's purposes and tasks in the economic sector, outlined in Article 2 of the Nakhchivan Agreement, demonstrate that economic cooperation is one of the main pillars of the OTS. The agreement's economic goals include creating favorable conditions for trade and investment; simplifying customs and transit procedures to facilitate the effective movement of goods, capital, services and technologies; and simplifying financial and banking operations to achieve comprehensive and balanced economic growth.<sup>4</sup> The aims to which the summits of the OTS are dedicated also demonstrate the importance of economic cooperation within the organization. Three of the last seven summits have been entirely dedicated to economic issues such as transport and connectivity, cooperation in tourism and support for small and medium-sized enterprises. At the 8<sup>th</sup> Summit, the members agreed to establish a Turkic Investment Fund.<sup>5</sup>

Taking into account the importance of economic issues for the OTS, the main goal of this article is to analyze the economic cooperation opportunities within the organization. For this purpose, the first section focuses on revealing the economic potential of the OTS by analyzing the economic potential of its member and observer states and assessing the total economic potential of the organization. The second section examines the current level, and the weak points of economic cooperation between the member and observer states of the OTS. The last section articulates the prospects for economic cooperation within the organization.

## Economic Potential

In order to analyze the extent of economic cooperation between OTS member and observer states and the prospects for developing their cooperation, it is important to determine the economic potential of the organization as a whole. Therefore, in this section,

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we briefly describe the economic potential of the member and observer states and the total economic potential of the organization by analyzing the level of GDP, trade potential, main trade partners and areas of specialization of the economies of the member states. Determining the economic potential of the OTS enables us to identify the areas in which economic cooperation could be effectively developed, as well as the prospects for further integration.

### *The Economic Potential of OTS Member and Observer States*

Among the member and observer states of the OTS, Türkiye has the biggest economy. In 2020, despite the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, Türkiye's economy grew by about 1.6%.<sup>6</sup> The following year, the growth level of Türkiye's economy was about 11%, which resulted in the formation of a GDP of \$803 billion.<sup>7</sup> Türkiye's significant economic growth in 2021 affected its levels of trade, and its export volume increased by about 32% to \$225.3 billion.<sup>8</sup> In the same period, Türkiye's level of imports increased by about 23% to \$271.4 billion. The manufacturing industry is the most developed sector of the Turkish economy, and the products of this sector had the biggest share of exports in 2020 (79%).

The second biggest economy in the OTS is Kazakhstan, with a total GDP of \$164.79 billion in 2020.<sup>9</sup> Unlike Türkiye, the size of Kazakhstan's economy decreased in 2020 by about 2.6%; after the bounce-back in 2021, the Kazakh economy expanded by about 4% to reach a total GDP of \$171.4 billion.<sup>10</sup> The structure of Kazakhstan's exports is not very diversified as fuels constitute about 61% of its total exports. Kazakhstan's other main export products are manufactured goods, and ores and metals, which have a share of 17% and 6%, respectively.

The third biggest economy among the OTS member states is Uzbekistan, which proved resilient against pandemic-related problems and expanded by about 1.6% in 2020.<sup>11</sup> In 2021, according to preliminary calculations, Uzbekistan's GDP increased by about 6.2%.<sup>12</sup> Compared to the other member states, Uzbekistan has a more diversified economy, since the main products it exports are manufactured goods (26%) and fuel products (22%).

Azerbaijan has the fourth largest economy among the OTS member states, with a total GDP of \$42.6 billion as of 2020. In 2020, because of pandemic-related economic problems, its economy shrank by 4.3%.<sup>13</sup>

According to preliminary calculations, Azerbaijan's GDP increased by about 5.6% the following year to reach \$54.52 billion.<sup>14</sup> The structure of Azerbaijan's exports is not very diversified, and mostly consists of fuel products. In 2020, the share of fuel products in its exports was 86%, whereas the shares of manufactured goods and food products were 4% and 6%, respectively.

In terms of economic size, Kyrgyzstan ranks last among the member states. In 2020, Kyrgyzstan's GDP was about \$7.4 billion, 8.6% smaller compared to 2019.<sup>15</sup> However, in 2021, Kyrgyzstan's GDP level increased by about 3.6% in real terms.<sup>16</sup> As Kyrgyzstan has a diversified economy, the structure of its exports is also diversified. The largest share belongs to manufactured products (17%).

Among the observer states, Hungary has the biggest economy, with a GDP of \$154.3 billion as of 2020.<sup>17</sup> Hungary has a diversified economy, and most of its exports are manufactured products. In contrast, Turkmenistan, the other observer state, has a less diversified economy, and its exports mostly consist of fuel products (88%).<sup>18</sup>

### *Total Economic Potential of the OTS*

After analyzing the economic potential of the member and observer states separately, we can now determine the total economic potential of the OTS. According to the official statistical numbers of the OTS, the Turkic States have a combined population of approximately 150 million, which constitutes 2% of the world's population. They comprise an area of over 4.5 million square kilometers, 0.9% of the world's total area.<sup>19</sup> The total GDP of the member states is around \$1.5 trillion, ranking 13<sup>th</sup> as a whole globally. The proportion of the total GDP of the OTS members in the world's GDP is about 1.8%.

After 2015, the OTS member countries' trade relations improved significantly. According to the official calculations of the organization, since 2015, the trade turnover among the founding member states of the Turkic Council has increased by 22%, reaching almost \$9 billion.<sup>20</sup> If we include Uzbekistan's trade turnover with that of the

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member states (Uzbekistan joined the organization as a full member in 2019), then the increase in member states' total trade turnover was about 35% higher in 2020 compared to 2015.<sup>21</sup> Considered separately, Uzbekistan's trade turnover with the member states has increased by 40% since 2016. Adding the trade turnover of the observer states (i.e. Turkmenistan and Hungary) to that of the other members, we come up with a total trade turnover number of \$19.9 billion.<sup>22</sup>

It is instructive to consider the total trade turnover of the OTS members in comparison with countries around the world. According to Türkiye's Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges, in 2020, the total foreign trade volume of the OTS member states was about \$560 billion, constituting about 3% of global trade.<sup>23</sup> This represents a huge market in which all the member and observer states could increase their share. By engaging more fully in each others' markets, the OTS members could enter other markets in different parts of the world. An increase of integration between the member states would also create new opportunities to deepen integration with other countries.

To determine the OTS' general economic potential, it is important to analyze the changes in the organization's GDP and total trade volume in recent years, and to look at the structure of its total trade based on product groups and main trade partners. If we look at the data regarding GDP growth, we can observe that during 2020, most of the economies of the member and observer states were affected by the pandemic and their economic growth decelerated. Growth in GDP was recorded only in Türkiye, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The greatest decrease in the size of the economy was recorded in Kyrgyzstan (-8.6%). Despite the pandemic, Türkiye and Uzbekistan were able to maintain a growth rate because their economies are more diversified compared to other members. The economies of the member states in which the oil and gas sectors play an important role were hit hard by the pandemic. However, in 2021, the GDP of all member and observer states increased, as they were able to restore their economies. The highest increase in the level of GDP was recorded in Türkiye, at about 11%. So, the total GDP of the OTS was mostly affected by the pandemics in 2020, and the next year its growth was restored. Compared to other organizations, such as the European Union (EU) and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the effect of the pandemic on the economies of the OTS (including observer states) was moderate.

In 2020, the export levels of most of the member and observer states were also affected by the pandemic. The most significant decreases in

the level of exports were recorded in Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, at 34.1%, 30% and 19%, respectively, due to sharp decrease in the prices of crude oil

and natural gas, which were the main export products of these countries.<sup>24</sup> However, the dependence of their exports on the oil and gas sector enabled these countries to achieve the highest growth in export levels in the following year. Azerbaijan's export level increased by approximately 64%,<sup>25</sup> while Turkmenistan's and Kazakhstan's export levels increased by 61%<sup>26</sup> and 26%,<sup>27</sup> respectively, in 2021. Türkiye also had a huge increase in the level of exports—32%—in 2021. Similar changes were recorded in the volume of imports in the last two years. In 2020, the level of imports of the OTS member and observer states, with the exception of Turkmenistan, fell as a result of contractions in GDP.<sup>28</sup> In the subsequent year, the import levels of all of the OTS member and observer states increased. All these changes show that fluctuations in the international oil and gas markets affect the trade level of the organization. However, the richness of some member states in terms of oil and gas resources contributes positively to the energy security of the organization as a whole.

An analysis of the structure of OTS trade in general indicates that fuel products, especially oil and gas, along with manufactured products, constitute most of the exports. Some member and observer countries specialize in the export of fuels, and others in the export of manufactured products. This fact reveals that the OTS can effectively meet the demand of the members for energy and manufactured products, which increases the economic security of the organization as a whole. Additionally, some member and observer states specialize in the production of food products, ores and metals, which could play an important role in maintaining food security and supplying the necessary raw materials for the heavy industries of the other members.

Unlike the structure of its trade, the geography of the OTS' trade relations is not very diversified.<sup>29</sup> Because the majority of the member and observer states are post-Soviet countries, they have highly developed trade relations with Russia, making Russia one of the OTS' main trading partners. Russia is one of the top five trade partners of the majority of OTS member and observer states. The members and observer states from Central Asia also have good trade relations with China, their neighboring country. China is one of the top five trade partners of four

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out of seven member and observer states. Along with Russia and China, EU members, especially Italy and Germany, are among the countries with which OTS member and observer states have strong trade ties. Oil and gas products play an important role in the formation of trade relations between OTS members and EU states; most of Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan's exports go to Europe. Through these countries, then, the OTS plays an important role in contributing to Europe's energy security. Most of the remaining oil and gas products are exported to China. Manufactured goods and agricultural products are mostly exported to Russia. In short, the geography of OTS trade relations mostly includes Russia, China and Europe—with one major exception: Russia and China are not among Türkiye's top five export partners, while the EU countries are Türkiye's main export partners.<sup>30</sup> Among the member and observer states, Türkiye is the only member country on the list of the top trade partners of the other members, with the exception of Kyrgyzstan.

## Economic Cooperation within the OTS

As detailed in the previous section, the OTS has huge economic potential and many opportunities for its members and observer states to develop bilateral relations. The development of economic relations between members could effectively contribute to their economic growth and financial and energy security. Although economic relations between the member states have significantly improved since the establishment of the organization, there are still untapped opportunities that could expand the scale of their cooperation. In order to determine the potential directions in which their economic cooperation could proceed, it is important to analyze the current extent of economic cooperation between the member and observer states. Thus, in this part, we will analyze the current extent of economic cooperation and compare it to the total potential of the OTS. Comparing the current cooperation level with the total potential will help us determine the OTS' economic cooperation prospects in the subsequent section. For the purpose of analyzing the current extent of cooperation, it is important to look at the main areas of cooperation within the OTS, such as trade, transport and energy.

If we review the total trade turnover of each member and observer state in comparison with other members, we can see that Türkiye has the biggest economy and the greatest volume of trade turnover with other



member and observer states—more than \$14 billion as of 2020.<sup>31</sup> The products with the greatest share in Türkiye's trade turnover with other member states are natural gas and manufactured products. Türkiye imports gas from and exported manufactured products, especially those of the light industry, to other members. After Türkiye, Kazakhstan has the highest level of trade turnover with other members, which in 2020 reached a level of more than \$7 billion.<sup>32</sup> Most of the trade turnover between Kazakhstan and other OTS members consists of oil, wheat and gas products. Azerbaijan, the other oil- and gas-rich member of the OTS, had a trade turnover of more than \$4.5 billion with the other member and observer states in 2020.<sup>33</sup> Uzbekistan also has a high level of trade turnover with other members. Its total trade turnover with other OTS states amounted to \$6.5 billion in 2020,<sup>34</sup> and consists primarily of fuels, fruits, metals and manufactured goods. Kyrgyzstan has the lowest level of trade turnover with other member and observer states, at about \$1.7 billion in 2020.<sup>35</sup> Hungary had a trade turnover with other OTS members of \$3.9 billion at the end of the 2020.<sup>36</sup> Although the total trade volume between member and observer states increased from \$11 billion to more than \$20 billion between 2010–2020, it still constitutes only 3% of the total trade of the member and observer states.<sup>37</sup>

To see a clear picture of the trade relations between the member and observer states and the importance of these relations for the countries involved, it is worthwhile to calculate and analyze the share of the trade relations of each member and observer state with the OTS in their total trade. The results of calculations based on the data provided above indicate that Kyrgyzstan had the biggest share of the trade with OTS in its total trade in 2020 at 32%. Although Kyrgyzstan's total trade turnover with other member and observer states is not that high, three members of the OTS—Türkiye, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan—are included in the country's top five trade partners. Kyrgyzstan's trade with other OTS member and observer states mostly consists of food products, metals and manufactured products. Among the other members, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan also had a high share of trade with the organization in their total trade turnover, which in 2020 was 17%, 18% and 19%, respectively.<sup>38</sup> Among them, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan have one each, and Uzbekistan has two other member states in their top trade partners list. Although Türkiye has the biggest economy and the highest level of trade among the members of the OTS, its share of trade with the member and observer states constitutes only 3% of its total trade.<sup>39</sup> In the case of Kazakhstan, trade with OTS member and observer states also has only a small share in total trade volume, which in 2020

was about 8%. That is why none of the other member or observer states are on the list of Türkiye or Kazakhstan's top trade partners. Although most of the members have a great share of trade with other OTS members in their total trade, the two biggest economies in the organization have a low level of trade with other members and observer states.

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The transportation sector is one of the main areas that member and observer states are striving to develop within the framework of the OTS. From a geographical point of view, the members of the organization are spread horizontally across Eurasia, which makes them a natural segment of the East-West transportation corridor and necessitates the development of transportation connections with each other. Such connections would empower OTS countries to become major players in the transportation of cargo between

Europe and China. Taking into account the importance of cooperation in this sector, member states are working together on the realization of different transportation projects, especially the Trans Caspian International Transportation Corridor (TITR) or the Middle Corridor.

The Middle Corridor is a rail freight corridor linking China and the EU through Central Asia, the Caucasus, Türkiye and Eastern Europe. The history of the establishment of this route dates back to 2013, when the main railway companies of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Georgia signed an agreement on the establishment of a Coordination Committee for the Development of the TITR.<sup>40</sup> The work of the Coordination Committee led to the adoption of an effective, complex rate schedule for container transportation, and preferential tariffs for the transportation of important products such as fuel, oil and grain. The technology of interaction between transport companies for the passage of container trains via China-Kazakhstan-Azerbaijan-Georgia-Türkiye was also approved. In 2022, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Georgia agreed to establish a joint venture to develop the TITR by addressing the issues of tariff setting, cargo declaration and the use of unified IT solutions.<sup>41</sup> The Middle Corridor has the potential to transport up to 10 million tons annually, in up to 200,000 containers.<sup>42</sup> The efforts of OTS members

to develop the Middle Corridor have already begun to yield significant results as the volume of freight transportation via this route increased by 101% in 2021 compared to the previous year.<sup>43</sup>

While the Middle Corridor is the primary transport project on which the OTS members have coordinated, other transport routes connect these states as well. These include China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which connects Türkiye, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan; the International North-South Transport Corridor, which runs through Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan; the Southern Trans-Asian Railway, which runs through Kazakhstan, Türkiye and Turkmenistan; and Lapis-Lazuli, which runs through Türkiye and Azerbaijan. Most of these projects, including the Middle Corridor, connect to each other, given that the members of the OTS in the South Caucasus, Central Asia and Türkiye are in the center of Eurasia, and serve as connectors for different transportation corridors. The comprehensive connection of the member states through different communication and transport lines creates great opportunities for the development of cooperation in the transportation sector. Therefore, transportation remains one of the main areas of cooperation within the organization.

In contrast to the transportation sector, cooperation between member and observer states in the energy sector is not very developed. Although three members of the organization are major global oil and gas producers, they mostly export their fuel resources to Europe and China, two of the main economic centers in the world. Among the member and observer states, Azerbaijan and Türkiye have the most developed energy cooperation. In recent years, Azerbaijan has become one of the main natural gas suppliers to Türkiye. Especially after the launch of the Southern Gas Corridor in 2020, gas exports to Türkiye have substantially increased (more than 20% in 2021).<sup>44</sup> The other member of the OTS that engages in energy cooperation with other member and observer states is Kazakhstan, which exports oil and gas to Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, albeit in low volumes. Kazakhstan's export of these products to Kyrgyzstan made up 17% (\$103 million) of its total exports to Kyrgyzstan in 2020.<sup>45</sup> In the case of Uzbekistan, it was only 6%. Turkmenistan, another OTS member rich in oil and gas resources, exports these products only to Uzbekistan among the member states. In 2020, it exported about \$161 million worth of refined and crude petroleum to Uzbekistan.<sup>46</sup> All of these factors indicate that, despite progress in cooperation among the OTS countries in the energy sector, its level is too small compared to the capabilities of the member states that are rich in oil and gas resources.

All of the factors and development trends in different economic sectors mentioned above suggest that even though economic cooperation within the OTS has been increasing, many prospective opportunities remain that could be realized in the future. It is worth mentioning that although the OTS was established in 2009, the most noticeable increase in the development of relations within the organization has taken place in more recent years, and the full economic potential of the organization has yet to be realized. Thus, continuing the growth trend of economic cooperation within the OTS in upcoming years could significantly expand the OTS' capabilities to positively contribute to the development of the economies of member states and cooperation within Eurasia.

### Prospects for Economic Cooperation

After analyzing the economic potential and extent of economic cooperation within the OTS, we can now determine its future prospects by focusing on the directions and measures that could expand cooperation within the organization. As noted in the previous sections, cooperation between the member states in the early years of the organization was not highly developed, and this lag affected the OTS' total potential. Over time, as new members and observer states joined the organization, its economic potential expanded in different sectors such as trade, transportation and energy. Today, the OTS still has significant potential that could be realized in the future. So, it is important to identify the main directions and measures that could unleash the unused potential of the OTS in different sectors.

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According to our research, as presented above, trade volumes between member and observer states have been increasing in recent years. After experiencing a decrease in total trade turnover within the OTS from 2013–2016, the total level of trade turnover among the member and observer states increased by about 1.5 times during 2015–2020 and

reached its highest level in 2019—close to \$21 billion. Nonetheless, the level of trade turnover remains low compared to the total trade poten-

tial of the OTS. Specifically, trade turnover within the OTS constitutes only 3% of the total trade of the member and observer states. Thus, a huge amount of potential for the development of trade relations within OTS remains unused. Taking this factor into account, the member states and management bodies of the OTS should take the necessary measures to promote the development of trade relations between member and observer states. These measures could include the application of tax and customs concessions and the opening of trade houses in order to promote the products of member and observer states in the local markets of other members. Although several measures of this kind have already been taken, it is important to intensify this process and offer more effective concessions. In particular, the members with more diversified economies should be active in this process.

With its large and diversified economy, Türkiye could play a leading role in expanding trade relations within the OTS. Currently, trade with member and observer states makes up only a small part of Türkiye's total trade. Thus, additional measures should be taken to attract Turkish producers and sellers to the markets of OTS member and observer states, and special concessions should be offered by the Turkish side to the other members to allow them to easily enter its market. Observer states could also play an active role in the expansion of the OTS' trade relations. For example, Hungary could play a key role as a bridge between the markets of member states and the EU. Other members' products in the manufacturing and food industries, unlike Türkiye's, cannot easily enter the European market due to standardization differences. Therefore, along with Türkiye, Hungary as an EU member state could play an important role in the OTS member states' adoption of the EU's production standards. In doing so, Hungary could help the local producers of the member states enter the European market and significantly contribute to the development of the OTS' trade potential.

There are also promising prospects for the development of transportation relations between the member and observer states of the OTS, as global and regional geopolitical processes continue to increase the role of the Middle Corridor, the main transportation project on which the member states are working. It is clear that the heavy sanctions imposed against Russia because of the Russia-Ukraine war will weaken its position as the main transit country connecting Europe with China. Therefore, the importance of the Middle Corridor as an alternative route will increase, and it could become the main overland transportation route in Eurasia. As a result, the OTS member states that are part of

the Middle Corridor will strengthen their position as primary transit countries. However, for this to happen, some technical issues, especially the harmonization of policies and legislation in relevant countries of the OTS, should be finalized as soon as possible in order to make the Middle Corridor ready for the expected increases in cargo. The first steps toward addressing the harmonization issues have already been taken. Recently, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Georgia agreed to establish a joint venture for the development of the TITR.<sup>47</sup> The main goal of this venture is to consolidate transit cargo by contributing to tariff setting, cargo declaration and unified IT solutions.

Along with the Russia-Ukraine war, the intensification of US-China rivalry in the Indo-Pacific region will also increase the importance of the Middle Corridor, as this confrontation is expected to redirect some Chinese cargo from sea to overland transportation through Eurasia. Another geopolitical event generating new prospects for the development of OTS relations in the transportation sector is the end of the Armenian occupation of Azerbaijan's territories in the South Caucasus

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after the 44-Day War. As a result of the war, the parties agreed to the establishment of the Zangezur Corridor, which will connect the mainland of Azerbaijan with the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, an exclave of Azerbaijan that had been isolated due to the Armenian occupation.<sup>48</sup> Due to the closure of the Azerbaijan-Armenia border because of the occupation, direct land connections between Azerbaijan and Türkiye had also been interrupted. After the estab-

lishment of the Zangezur Corridor, this connection will be restored, and Türkiye will be able to connect directly not only with Azerbaijan, but through Azerbaijan to the other members of the OTS in Central Asia.

Recently, Azerbaijan signed a memorandum of understanding with Iran for the establishment of communication lines connecting the mainland of Azerbaijan with its exclave of Nakhchivan through Iranian territory.<sup>49</sup> The opening of the two parallel communication lines between the mainland of Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan will add new arteries to the

Middle Corridor, increasing its capacity to meet the expected increase in cargo volumes in the future. All of these processes and their anticipated results create advantageous prospects for the development of cooperation within the OTS in the transportation sector. The realization of these new opportunities will not only strengthen the positions of the OTS member states but also increase the geopolitical role of the organization.

Opportunities abound in the energy sector as well. While cooperation in the energy sector has developed to some extent, especially in recent years, and Azerbaijan has become one of Türkiye's main gas suppliers, there is a large gap between the capabilities of the oil- and gas-rich members of the OTS and their actual performance in exporting these resources to other members. The wealth of their capabilities presents opportunities for resourced OTS countries to become the main guarantors of other members' energy security. Thus, in order to strengthen the energy security of the OTS as a whole, the member and observer states should work together on new energy projects and expand cooperation in this direction. To strengthen energy security within the organization, some of the member and observer states could cooperate to become the main transit countries for exporting the oil and gas resources of other members.

Some preliminary steps in this direction have already been taken; for example, discussions on the establishment of the Trans-Caspian Pipeline (TCP) intensified after the completion of the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC).<sup>50</sup> The TCP's purpose is to transport natural gas from Turkmenistan to the EU through Azerbaijan. In 2021, the American company Trans Caspian Resources presented its project for the Trans-Caspian Interconnector.<sup>51</sup> Some plans propose a connection with Kazakhstan. At a recent meeting between the official representatives of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, the potential for cooperation in the transportation of Kazakh oil through Azerbaijan was discussed.<sup>52</sup> Discussion on the export of Azerbaijani oil to Hungary has also started, and Hungary could receive Azerbaijani gas starting in 2023.<sup>53</sup> The implementation of these projects will contribute substantially to the development of cooperation within the OTS in the energy sector. It will also increase the role of some member and observer states in the energy security of other members.

In exploring the OTS' economic cooperation prospects, it is worth looking at "Turkic World Vision-2040", which was approved at the 8<sup>th</sup> Summit of the OTS. The vision statement lays out the organization's medium- and long-term goals and tasks.<sup>54</sup> It also includes a section



titled “Economic and Sectoral Cooperation”, which covers general economic development priorities and economic sectors such as transport and customs, energy, tourism and agriculture. The directions indicated in the document for the development of cooperation in these sectors include the prospects mentioned above. The realization of the directions and prospects identified in our analysis, along with the cooperation directions laid out in “Turkic World Vision–2040” will greatly expand the scale of cooperation within the OTS and significantly affect the economic potential of the organization.

## Conclusion

The research conducted in this article brings us to the conclusion that the OTS has great, untapped economic potential, as its total GDP is ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in the world. The total trade turnover, on the other hand, constitutes 3% of the global trade. Although in 2020, because of the pandemic, the economic potential of OTS decreased, in the following year all member and observer states were able to restore their economies. Compared to other organizations such as the EU and EAEU, the effect of the pandemics on the economy of the OTS was moderate.

The article also analyzed the extent of economic cooperation within the OTS in different sectors such as trade, transport and energy, and revealed that there are still a lot of unused opportunities that could be realized. A noticeable increase in the development of relations within the organization has begun in recent years, which was not enough to realize the full economic potential of the organization. Despite the fact that the total trade volume between the member and observer states increased about 1.8 times from 2010–2020, it constituted only 3% of the total trade of the member and observer states. Among the member and observer states, Kyrgyzstan has the largest share of trade with the OTS in its total trade. However, unlike the other member and observer states, Türkiye and Kazakhstan, the two biggest economies in the organization, have a low share of trade with OTS in their total trade.

Cooperation in the transportation sector within the OTS has also developed in recent years. Member states have worked jointly on the realization of different transportation projects, especially the Trans Caspian International Transportation Corridor or Middle Corridor. The efforts of the members to develop the Middle Corridor have begun to yield significant results, and in 2021, the volume of freight transportation via this route increased by 101%. Cooperation in the energy sector



is less developed, although the three members of the organization are the major oil and gas producers in the world. Among the member and observer states, Azerbaijan and Türkiye have the most developed energy cooperation, as in recent years, Azerbaijan has become one of the main natural gas suppliers to Türkiye.

Based on the analyses in the previous sectors, the last section of the article determined the economic cooperation prospects and the measures that could strengthen cooperation within the OTS. Member states and OTS management bodies could take the significant steps to expand trade cooperation, such as implementing more effective tax and customs concessions and opening trade houses to promote the products of member and observer states. With its large and diversified economy, Türkiye could play a leading role in expanding trade relations within the OTS. Taking into account that trade volume with member and observer states makes up only a small part of Türkiye's total trade, additional measures should be taken to attract Turkish producers and sellers to the markets of OTS countries, and special concessions should be offered by the Turkish side to the other members. Hungary along with Türkiye could play a role as a bridge between the markets of member states and the EU.

There are also promising prospects for the development of transportation relations within the OTS, as recent global and regional geopolitical processes such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict and US-China rivalry in the Indo-Pacific region will increase the importance of the Middle Corridor, which has a chance to become the main overland transportation route in Eurasia. However, for this to happen, some technical issues, especially the standardization of policies and legislation in the relevant countries of OTS, should be finalized. The 44-Day War also created prospects for the development of cooperation in transportation sector. As a result of the war, the establishment of the Zangezur Corridor was agreed upon. Using this corridor, Türkiye will restore direct land connections with Azerbaijan and other members of the OTS in Central Asia. Also, the laying of parallel communication lines to the Zangezur Corridor through the territory of Iran, the establishment of which was recently approved, will also positively contribute to cooperation in the transportation sector within the OTS.

An abundance of capabilities in the energy sector within the OTS creates opportunities for the development of cooperation there as well. Some preliminary steps in this direction have already been taken, and discussions on the establishment of the Trans-Caspian Pipeline, which

will transport natural gas from Turkmenistan to the EU through Azerbaijan, have intensified. Some plans also include a connection of the pipeline with Kazakhstan. In 2021, the American company Trans Caspian Resources presented its project for the Trans-Caspian Interconnector. The export of Azerbaijani gas to Hungary is scheduled to begin in 2023. The implementation of these projects will also increase the role of some member and observer states in the energy security of other members.

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## ARTICLE

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# New Kazakhstan and the Future of the Organization of Turkic States: Key Areas of Cooperation

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### Abstract

*This article explores promising areas of cooperation between the member states of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), which need to be developed in response to global climate and geopolitical challenges. It also examines issues of economic, energy and environmental security while referring to the theory of regional security complex developed by representatives of the Copenhagen School of international relations. After the theoretical introduction, the article analyses the significance of different areas of cooperation, such as transport and communications, the green energy sector and food security. In line with its aim, the article focuses on the role of the OTS in providing security in the sensitive fields of transportation, logistics, agriculture and power supply. Finally, the article discusses the need for a qualitative deepening of integration between the Turkic countries in the face of geopolitical uncertainty.*

### Keywords

Organization of Turkic States, New Kazakhstan, regional security complex, diversification of transport routes, green energy, food security.

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## Introduction

During the first thirty years of Kazakhstan's independence, there was a powerful connection between its socio-economic situation and the legacy of the Soviet Union. However, in 2022, affected by the tragic January events in the country and the military conflict in Ukraine, the Kazakh society is witnessing a breakdown of the previous system. Kazakhstan is on the verge of moving to a new stage: it is vital to understand that the country's future depends on the citizens themselves, and it is crucial to respond to the current geopolitical challenges in a balanced and correct way.

In March 2022, the authorities of the country announced the transition to a New Kazakhstan and Second Republic.<sup>1</sup> These two ideologemes have the same essence but differ in emphasis. As noted by the state authorities, New Kazakhstan is, in general, an image of the future of the country, a new goal of nation-building with updated social values. The construction of New Kazakhstan entails a deep and lengthy process of social transformation.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the term "Second Republic" first used by the President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in his speech on the Nowruz holiday this year, represents the formation of a fundamentally new constitutional balance between the institutions of power which, in brief, means transitioning from a super-presidential form of government to a presidential republic with a strong parliament.<sup>3</sup> The ambitious reform plan includes working to amend more than 30 articles of the Constitution and 20 laws with the focus on expanding the participation of citizens in the government and the formation of a new political culture. According to experts, the implementation of the political initiatives announced by the President has already begun, so the transition to the Second Republic will take place quite soon. Therefore, if New Kazakhstan is the renewal of the society and nation, that is, a profound and conceptual process, then the Second Republic is the renewal of the state model, which is an institutional process.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of internal revisions and the tragic Russian-Ukrainian war (or "special military operation" by Russian interpretation), the Kazakh people are beginning to realize the value of independence obtained with difficulties and the significance of the country's multilateral foreign policy. As President Tokayev noted in his article "Independence is Above All,"

"Our ancestors survived and went through a terrible famine, repression, world war. During totalitarianism, we almost lost our traditions, language, and religion. Nevertheless, thanks to Independence, we were able to revive and strengthen our values. However, if we want to survive as a nation and state, current and future generations must be ready for new challenges."<sup>5</sup>

It is necessary to review modern geopolitical threats and challenges in the context of security, which is understood not as an objective state of affairs but as a

political practice or social construct. This is the main principle of the influential Copenhagen School of security studies. While crediting the importance of the military meaning of security, an expanded understanding of the concept includes various spheres of public life. New threats such as population growth, lack of resources, unfavorable environmental conditions, natural disasters and energy dependence are coming to the fore.<sup>6</sup>

The authors of securitization theory, Danish researcher Ole Waever and British researcher Barry Buzan, write that small and medium-sized states cannot cope with such challenges alone and can only respond adequately to these threats by cooperating with their neighbors. Thus, the dynamics of the security of medium and small countries must be considered at the regional level.<sup>7</sup> To analyze regional processes, Buzan and Waever propose the theory of regional security complex (RSC), defined as distinct and stable patterns of security interaction between actors.<sup>8</sup>

RSCs are conceptually distinct from “regions”. Buzan and Wæver’s view of security as a social construct means that such factors as culture and history can significantly influence actors’ perceptions.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, the OTS has the potential to evolve into an RSC. There are certain factors that could facilitate this transformation

- Turkic states share a common understanding of external sources of risks. Often, in the political discourse of the Turkic countries, the challenges represented by their considerable neighbors have an increased significance. At the same time, Türkiye along with Kazakhstan, as OTS drivers, are perceived as allies and partners.
- Turkic states are concerned with nontraditional security threats and prioritize such issues as climate change, water resources management, energy deficit and food security. These multivariate security threats require deeper understanding, strategic planning and transnational cooperation among member states of the OTS in order to design and implement effective mitigation and adaptation measures at scale. Meanwhile, policies and frameworks constructed in Washington, Moscow or Beijing fail to resolve these regional concerns.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Summit of the OTS in Istanbul in November 2021 marked a fundamental transformation in regional cooperation where the name of the Turkic Council changed into the Organization of Turkic States. This Summit will undoubtedly further strengthen the unity and solidarity of the Turkic countries. H.E. Nursultan Nazarbayev, the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Honorary Chairman of the Turkic Council, initiated the change to the name of the organization and the approval of the “Turkic World Vision–2040” strategic document.



It is noteworthy that new parties are joining the OTS. In particular, Turkmenistan's official inclusion as an observer country has practically united the Turkic states into a single unit. Thus, the evolutionary development of the Turkic Council has transformed it into a full-fledged political subject in the world arena.

Kazakhstan has been an active member, architect and author of initiatives within the Turkic world since gaining its independence. It has initiated the establishment of the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY), the Turkic Council, the Turkic Academy, the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-Speaking Countries (TurkPA) and the Coordination Committee of Turkic Cooperation Organizations. These interaction formats were essential and

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relevant for maintaining cultural and humanitarian relations with fraternal countries. In the past two years, Kazakh representatives have headed three out of five Turkic cooperation organizations and have been instrumental in bringing Turkic integration to a new level. Low politics has provided an excellent political background for cooperation, but the evolution of the OTS is more visible in high politics. The development vectors of the Turkic countries are associated with such sectors as the economy and security. Now is the time to deepen their integration and enhance their strategic development.

This article aims to introduce the reader to the promising projects of the Turkic countries in transport, communications, sustainable development and green energy to show the productivity of these areas of cooperation. From this perspective, the OTS could become not only a driver of economic and environmental initiatives but also a provider of security in climate, decarbonization and sustainable development for people living on a vast territory stretching from the Altai to the Balkan Mountains. The evolution of the OTS in this direction will contribute to the content and institutional development of the organization.

## Transport and Communications

Transport and communication is already a solid platform for interaction among the member states of the OTS and an essential integrating factor. Increasing the capacity of transport corridors and expanding the possibilities of transit and logistics centers would provide ample opportunities for the OTS states to enter European and Asian markets. However, infrastructure improvements must be accompanied by improvements in public policies and agreements to facilitate trade and transit across national borders.

## For Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, diversifying and increasing the capacity of hydrocarbon transportation routes to world markets is of great importance.

For Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, diversifying and increasing the capacity of hydrocarbon transportation routes to world markets is of great importance. This spring, due to the international sanctions imposed on Russia

and an emergency that necessitated repairs on the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) pipeline, Kazakhstan could not export oil to Europe for a month. As a result, the country's budget is presently short by more than \$300 million. In these challenging circumstances, oil-producing corporations are considering the possibility of constructing a pipeline from the north of the Caspian Sea

with a further tie-in to Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan. In addition to European partners, companies from Türkiye and Azerbaijan could be involved in creating this critical infrastructure.<sup>10</sup>

Despite ongoing geopolitical tensions, interest in the transit opportunities of Kazakhstan and other Turkic states remains high, and the demand for transport and logistics services is growing. According to Russian carriers, in the first two months of the war in Ukraine, almost 3,000 twenty-foot equivalent (TEU) containers were transported along the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) corridor through the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Experts say that cargo transportation to Georgian ports can reach 10 million tons, but Georgia lacks locomotives and freight trains to further disperse the cargo.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the best solution is to share locomotives with Georgia and increase the volume of traffic along the Trans-Caspian corridor. In addition, the first train was launched from China, bypassing Russia, through Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic to Mannheim, Germany.<sup>12</sup> In this context, the potential for strategic cooperation in the railway sector opens up broad prospects for the Turkic countries. According to the government of Kazakhstan, machine engineering is one of the most promising sectors of the national economy, and there is significant potential for expanding localization in Kazakhstan. Systematic work is underway to upgrade the rolling stock.<sup>13</sup>

One of the essential components of transport and communications development is the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR) initiative or "Middle Corridor". It begins in Türkiye and passes through the Caucasus region via Georgia and Azerbaijan, crosses the Caspian Sea, traverses Central Asia and finally reaches China. It connects via rail and road respectively through Georgia and Azerbaijan, and across the Caspian Sea via the Caspian transit corridor, reaching China by following the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan or Kazakhstan route. On this route, the ports of Baku/Alat in Azerbaijan, Aktau/Kuryk in Kazakhstan and Turkmenbashi in Turkmenistan

are the main points of multimodal transport on the Caspian transit corridor. The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) Railway, inaugurated in 2017, offers broad opportunities for uninterrupted trade between China and Europe, and has an initial capacity of 1 million passengers and 6.5 million tons of cargo, which is foreseen to increase to 3 million passengers and 17 million tons of cargo per year by 2034. The Middle Corridor is crucial for landlocked Kazakhstan and offers excellent opportunities for cargo traffic from Central Asia. The loads can reach the Middle East, North Africa and the Mediterranean region by benefiting from port connections in Türkiye.<sup>14</sup>

**One of the essential components of transport and communications development is the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR) initiative or “Middle Corridor”.**

According to the results of the activities of the “International Association Trans-Caspian International Transport Route” for 2021, the stable growth of transit and container traffic along the TITR was noted. Thus, over the past year, 25,200 TEU containers were transported along the TITR route—20% more than in 2020. This year, cargo transshipment is expected to grow six times, reaching 3.2 million tons due to sharply increasing demand for the TITR route against the backdrop of recent world events. The container shipping plan also aims to increase capacity to 50,000 TEU containers.<sup>15</sup>

The branching and resilience of transport networks are vital to strengthening regional economic integration. The “Turkic World Vision–2040” adopted at the summit last year calls the Trans-Caspian International Transport or “Turan” Corridor “the shortest and safest transport link between East and West.”<sup>16</sup> It also states that it is crucial to incorporate the member states into the supply and value chains regionally and globally via this corridor. The implementation of the Turan Corridor project will significantly unlock the economic transit potential of the OTS.

In addition, the Turan corridor is of great geo-economic importance. Land corridors will become increasingly vital, given the growing pressure on China from the U.S., Japan and South Korea. As the first President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev mentioned in his speech before the Turkic countries in March 2021, with the development of the Chinese project “Belt and Road Initiative”, the importance of transit along the Turan corridor becomes the most optimal.<sup>17</sup> However, for large volumes of transportation, it is necessary to build infrastructure, specifically to increase the ferry and dry cargo fleet in the Caspian Sea, develop alternative pipeline routes and attract long-term investments.

It is also essential to increase the capacity of digital transit corridors. Therefore, Kazakhstan attaches great importance to the Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway (TASIM) project as a strategic initiative that can serve

the interests of many states. In addition, on a bilateral basis, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan have already launched the construction of a fiber-optic communication line (Transcaspian Fiber Optic) along the bottom of the Caspian Sea. The joint project will facilitate a higher level of development of high-speed, secure data transmission infrastructure joining several leading Europe-Asia trunk routes and taking a worthy place in the network of global data transit.

Further, the creation of special economic tourist zones and routes can contribute to building economic corridors and expanding economic cooperation. Creating special economic zones of this type would significantly promote the fast-growing market for event tourism. In the current conditions of economic recession, this should be one of the factors for increasing regional products, diversifying sources of income, creating jobs and improving the population's quality of life. Their rich cultural heritage, national holidays and traditions provide the basis for the development of event tourism among the OTS members. Many cities with unique and interesting sites and art installations provide the hubs for forming tourist routes and marketing these attractions would serve as an additional tool to increase tourist traffic from abroad.

## Funding

As Kazakhstan's Minister of Foreign Affairs Mukhtar Tleuberdi stated at the Meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Turkic Council in November 2021, the digital age sets different technological requirements and priorities. Today it is crucial to develop and invest in new environmentally friendly technologies and ensure comfortable conditions for living places. Tleuberdi accentuated the importance of the Turkic Investment Fund initiated by the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. On November 11, 2021, following the results of consultations and negotiations between the parties, the Heads of State decided to create such a fund by September 1, 2022, with equal contributions from each of the parties. The matter of its location is currently under consideration. One of the possible locations for the Fund is Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Tleuberdi proposed to establish its headquarters in the Astana International Financial Center, which plays a pivotal role as a global center for business and finance, connecting the economies of Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), West China, Mongolia, the Middle East and Europe.<sup>18</sup> In future, the Turkic Investment Fund may play an extremely important role in the sphere of economic development across many sectors.

## Green Energy as a Ground for Consolidated Solutions

In 2010, climate change was identified as a key threat to global stability—one that is contributing to poverty, food and water scarcity, environmental degra-

ation and the weakening of already fragile states.<sup>19</sup> Eleven years later at the COP26 conference, over 153 countries pledged to reach net-zero emissions, and more than 40 countries pledged to move away from coal.<sup>20</sup> Türkiye declared that it would be a party to the Paris Agreement and that it would accept the 2053 net-zero emissions target. Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan will endeavor to reach carbon neutrality by 2050, and Kazakhstan confirmed its commitment to achieve net-zero emissions by 2060.

Achieving these goals will require significant changes in the structure of electricity generation, since electrification based on renewable energy sources (RES) is the best way to reach carbon neutrality. Also, energy transition creates incentives for developing new innovative sectors of the economy. Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan are the OTS members with the highest carbon footprint. Therefore, these countries face complex tasks in reforming their energy market structure.

As President Tokayev noted at the 8<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Organization of Turkic States, in order to achieve carbon neutrality, Kazakhstan intends to develop the use of RESs. At the time of this writing, the country has brought its share of renewable energy to 3%. By 2030, this figure will rise to 15%, as stated in Kazakhstan's concept for the transition to a "green economy". Over the next ten years, greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced by 15%. The International Center for Green Technologies and Investment Projects was opened in Nur-Sultan to achieve these goals.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the 8th Summit that was dedicated to the theme of "Green Technologies and Smart Cities in the Digital Age" upon the proposal of the host country Türkiye could be regarded as a significant commitment for the activities of the OTS in the aforementioned areas.

The backbone of any energy transition to achieve net-zero emissions consists of renewable energy sources. The growth of the world's capacity to generate electricity from solar panels, wind turbines and other renewable technologies is on course to accelerate over the coming years, with 2021 setting a record for new installations (290 gigawatts of new renewable power capacity), according to a recent International Energy Agency (IEA) report.<sup>22</sup> By 2026, global renewable electricity capacity is forecast to rise more than 60% from 2020 levels to over 4,800 GW—equivalent to the current total global power capacity of fossil fuels and nuclear power combined.

There are many options for promising projects in the field of renewable energy that could become the basis for further cooperation between the OTS states:

- Construction of offshore wind farms in the Caspian Sea

**Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan are the OTS members with the highest carbon footprint. Therefore, these countries face complex tasks in reforming their energy market structure.**

- Creation of a powerful consortium for solar generation in Central Asia, construction of stations in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan
- Production of solar photovoltaic panels from silicon raw materials
- Construction of gas infrastructure for use in tandem with RES
- Digitization of the electric power industry, digital accounting of consumption and losses

President Tokayev named the development of hydrogen energy the second priority of the green agenda and drew attention to the fact that hydrogen energy is considered a new type of “clean” fuel.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, Kazakhstan has excellent opportunities to create an industrial “green” hydrogen cluster. Currently, the Kazakh authorities are working on new technological projects with French companies, and Kazakhstan is exploring the possibility of implementing large projects in the field of “green” hydrogen production. The KazMunaiGaz company is considering creating a Competence Center for hydrogen energy and technology for carbon capture, storage and processing (CCUS). Foreign investors are ready to study five regions in Kazakhstan to assess the economic feasibility of implementing large projects there.<sup>24</sup> A possible outcome is to export the hydrogen produced in Kazakhstan to the markets of the European Union.

The global “green” hydrogen market will be formed over the next ten years. During this time, Kazakhstan and other Turkic countries need to make an offer on the future market in the form of products. As renewable energy and other low-carbon technologies, including hydrogen, develop, the boundary

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between energy and electricity markets in a narrower sense will blur. Traditional utilities can build and operate “fueling” infrastructure, whether charging stations or hydrogen distribution stations. Consumers will expect integrated energy practices in which fungible sources (renewables, batteries, hydrogen) are seamlessly used to power homes, vehicles and workplaces.<sup>25</sup> The Turkic states must consistently develop and integrate these important processes to

prevent technological backwardness at the global level.

It should be noted that in the current conditions, the topic of sustainable development is going through difficult times. The drivers and incentives that moved the agenda yesterday are undergoing significant changes. A new oil super-cycle is brewing on world markets, and European countries, in an at-

tempt to reduce Russian gas imports, are rushing from one extreme to another—stimulating the processes of decarbonization while frantically reopening coal stations.

At the same time, the sustainable development agenda is evolving unevenly. Most countries are proceeding with a combination of international practices and local approaches that consider national interests and development rates. For example, for Kazakhstan, whose economy is dominated by heavy mining and coal power production, issues of health and safety, industrial waste and emissions, and air quality come first. Some aspects of these important considerations need local and regional regulations, as well as regulatory mechanisms related to carbon control and climate projects that bring together the efforts of stakeholders and governments. The OTS can become an optimal platform for enhanced dialogue between stakeholders to develop consolidated solutions to maintain a balance between economic development and environmental conservation in the Turkic states.

When studying sustainable development, the question of incentives inevitably arises. Therefore, motivation for ESG (environmental, social and governance) contains both material and moral components. First, without following ESG standards, a company, organization or even a country will not be allowed to enter the markets, not be given funding and, after a while, consumers will turn away from it and stop buying its goods. Second, ESG is necessary because it is the basis of sustainability as well as the moral climate of the society and the country. ESG should be an internal agenda, not only for attracting banks, clients or investors. All citizens should feel a severe and profound moral demand for sustainable development. In addition, a mature and systematically implemented ESG agenda is a serious contribution to a state's brand and image, which will yield long-term sustainable, competitive advantages.

The coordinated actions of the participating countries and the development of a unified strategy to achieve carbon neutrality will allow the OTS to become a space in which climate problems are effectively addressed. It might be a long-term strategy, but if properly executed and implemented, it will help improve the international image and increase the political and economic clout of the OTS.

There are several high-potential directions of work for the OTS in the field of sustainable development:

- 1) Creation of infrastructure for sustainable development: Starting with goal-setting, it is necessary to formulate OTS development goals around which to build the activities of the state bodies and commercial organizations of the member countries and facilitate interactions between Turkic countries and international organizations, including international verifiers in the field of climate and sustainable development. Next, it will be advisable to build rating models and metrics relevant to territories and regions,



which will ensure the adaptation of international practices and standards to the development conditions of the Turkic countries. In the future, this may contribute to the localization of ESG standards in the Turkic world and the development of the energy policy of the OTS countries.

- 2) Development of a “green” capital market for the implementation of projects related to green technologies: In the context of rising inflation and geo-economic turbulence, the development of incentive measures for the ESG agenda can include priority lending to green energy projects, improving conditions for state support and subsidizing environmental modernization projects. As President Tokayev noted, during the last ten years, the global volume of green bonds has grown 20x and has reached \$2 trillion. Kazakhstan has begun to develop a bond market whose volume exceeded 100 million dollars in 2021. This work is carried out at the Astana International Financial Center and the Kazakhstan Stock Exchange. Kazakhstan is ready to place the green bonds of the Turkic countries on these sites.<sup>26</sup>
- 3) Technical assistance and exchange of competencies between OTS member countries in such matters as energy storage, hybrid RES, smart grid intelligent energy distribution systems and long-duration energy storage (LDES) technologies.
- 4) Conducting joint academic research in sustainable development that will result in identifying priority transformational projects that are important for all OTS states.

## Providing Food Security: Sustainable Agriculture

In March 2022, the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) warned that food prices could rise as much as 22 percent due to the war in Ukraine. A severe drop in Ukrainian and Russian exports will devastate global food security, adding 13.1 million additional people to the 821.6 million already malnourished or starving. As states grapple with the effects of climate change, war and the ongoing pandemic, foreign and trade relations are shifting to minimize food insecurity and meet domestic demand for food to avoid further cascading crises.<sup>27</sup>

Maurice Obstfeld, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics and formerly chief economist at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), stated that food price increases would strain incomes in poorer countries, especially in some parts of Latin America and Africa, where some people may spend up to 50 or 60 percent of their income on food. According to the economist, it was “not much of an exaggeration” to say that the world was



approaching a global food crisis and that slower growth, high unemployment and stressed budgets from governments that have spent heavily to combat the pandemic had created “a perfect storm of adverse circumstances. There is a lot of cause for worry about social unrest on a widespread scale.”<sup>28</sup> Sudden spikes in food prices could lead to social unrest, as happened in 2007–2008 and again in 2011 when global food price increases were associated with riots in more than 40 countries.

For the OTS, food security issues are relevant and on the agenda. The problem of food imports remains an area of vulnerability that must be addressed. On April 17, the Kazakhstan Ministry of Agriculture limited the export of wheat and flour until June 15, 2022. The main markets for Kazakh grain are Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Kazakhstan is a fairly large exporter of grain, and the demand for this product is growing. For two months of this year, the export of wheat from Kazakhstan to the countries of the EU increased by 13 times.<sup>29</sup> The establishment of logistics chains for the export of grain through the territory of the Turkic countries is a promising area of cooperation.

For Kazakhstan, the fact that Türkiye has built a powerful port flour-grinding industry over the past 15 years is beneficial. The largest Turkish mills are situated in ports; Türkiye buys grain from Russia and Ukraine, processes it into flour and other products and sends it to the Middle East and African countries, taking advantage of its strategic position on sea routes.

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In addition to the production of grain, the cultivation of other crops in the territory of the countries of Central Asia has broad prospects. For example, the southern regions of Kazakhstan are excellent in terms of climatic conditions and labor resources. In these areas, investments are being attracted to construct agro-industrial complexes with greenhouses to ensure a year-round production cycle.

The agro-industrial complex could become an important component of the “TURANSEZ” special economic zone project presented by the delegation of Kazakhstan at the 8<sup>th</sup> summit of OTS in Istanbul. TURANSEZ was first initiated by President Tokayev during the Turkistan Informal Summit and was deliberately created for the Turkic states. All of the member and observer states of the OTS are invited to join “TURANSEZ”, which is situated at the spiritual capital of the Turkic world, Turkistan.<sup>30</sup>

The OTS countries need to realize the potential of the agro-industry, given the consistent rise in food prices. Since the issue of low industrial labor productivity remains relevant in the agricultural sector, the Turkic states can cooperate

and exchange experience and competencies in such matters as the creation and installation of engineering infrastructure, mechanisms for investment subsidies and project financing, the transfer of effective agricultural technologies and making these technologies accessible for small and medium farms.

It is worth highlighting the problem of staffing. According to local executive bodies in Kazakhstan, about 80% of the subjects of the agro-industrial complex are in dire need of specialists.<sup>31</sup> Under the auspices of the OTS, it would be possible to create educational centers to train relevant personnel for the agro-industrial complex.

Another promising direction in the development of the agricultural industry is the production of high-quality protein in the form of meat products. Kazakhstan has already made progress in achieving a higher processing stage, bringing more expensive products to market and minimizing costs, including transportation costs. Development of this industry has resulted in the creation of new jobs and a new labor market. Today, Kazakhstan has the potential to export 500,000 tons of beef with its existing water and land resources. In monetary terms, this is the equivalent of about 5 billion dollars. Very promisingly, the economic multiplier in animal husbandry is 1:6 – that is, 1 dollar from meat exports puts 6 dollars into the economy through feed, fertilizers, logistics and jobs. Thus, the turnover around meat production can reach \$30 billion, which is comparable to the volume of the oil and gas industry in Kazakhstan.<sup>32</sup> And unlike oil and gas, the income from the agricultural sector is stable as it does not depend on the global oil price environment or the development of technology, engineering or transport electrification. People will always eat, so this direction of the economy is practically unlimited.

Agro-industry in Kazakhstan has enormous potential. 220 million hectares are available for agribusiness which is open land ready for farming. In terms of arable land per capita, Kazakhstan ranks second globally.<sup>33</sup> For comparison, the U.S., the largest food exporter, has 240 million hectares, and Ukraine has 40 million hectares. The development of agricultural land in Kazakhstan can open up new horizons for cooperation between the peoples of the Great Turan. It will undoubtedly lead to an increase in the competitiveness of the entire region of Central Asia and the restoration and development of rural areas, which will result in improved social stability. Investing in human capital is essential under current conditions. With a suitable investment in infrastructure and technology, the agro-industry could become the backbone of the Turkic union.

Price and supply shocks related to the war in Ukraine are being compounded by climate-related events, including severe drought affecting Central Asia for five years in a row. Therefore, the rational use of water resources is directly related to the success of the food sector. Water resources determine various aspects of national and regional security. The OTS can become an important platform for forming a new regional policy for managing water and energy

resources in Central Asia. As a consolidating structure of the Turkic states, the OTS can conduct a “water dialogue” among the Central Asian countries. Efficient and equitable use of transboundary water resources is the key to the stability and prosperity of the region. It can be facilitated by automation of the system for managing, distributing, recording and monitoring the water resources of the Aral Sea basin, including their quality. It will ensure transparency in states’ water use and strengthen mutual trust between neighbors.

## Conclusion

By launching internal renewal processes, the authorities of Kazakhstan have put people at the center of their domestic and foreign policy. In the article “Turbulence across Eurasia Will Not Slow Kazakhstan’s Progress,” President Tokayev writes, “our government has listened carefully to civil society and public opinion in the design of the reforms. Economically, our system must work for all people. Growth that is not inclusive is not sustainable.” Speaking about the international situation, he emphasizes, “Eurasia has always been a dynamic region, but concerted efforts must be made to keep it peaceful, open, and prosperous. We still have far to go. Both domestically and internationally, partnership is still the only way to build a better common future of peace and prosperity.”<sup>34</sup>

Sustainable growth and equal partnership are included in the leading goals and principles of the OTS. Since its establishment as a regional inter-governmental organization, the Turkic Council has proved that decisions and actions taken within the organization are comprehensive and inclusive.<sup>35</sup> The OTS has also confirmed that it can handle various challenges. It is noteworthy that during the global COVID-19 pandemic, the OTS did not halt its collaboration, but instead expanded into new essential sectors such as health and migration.<sup>36</sup> Strengthening economic ties is especially important during a geopolitical storm when the world economy is in crisis and all countries are looking for the best ways out.

The Turkic states strive for an honest partnership and are driven by pragmatic interests. The member states of the OTS have converged politically on several themes, including sustainable development, climate change, energy security and other contemporary challenges. The OTS engages actively in the international agenda and confirms its role as a promoter of global development issues.

**Sustainable growth and equal partnership are included in the leading goals and principles of the OTS.**

Today, many experts and researchers are heralding the return to a bipolar world order and the growing confrontation between the two superpowers: the

U.S. and China. However, there is another, opposite point of view, in which the primary trend of the global system, across economic, demographic and technological dimensions, is one in which centrifugal—not centripetal—dynamics prevail. In other words, the world is increasingly striving for multipolarity and multicentricity. The nature of these processes lies not only in the much-speculated ‘balance of power’, but rather in the diversity of civilizations that explore the world differently, and in which important centers of world civilizations—Europe, America, China, India, Russia, the Arab world—declare their interests and visions in a rich plurality of perspectives and voices.

One such center is the Turkic world, which represents both a vibrant path forward and the deep roots of an ancient civilization. In this sense, the institutionalization of cooperation and brotherhood of the Turkic peoples, expressed in the creation of the OTS, is an attempt to determine its own vector of civilizational development. The process of strengthening Turkic civilization has powerful and basic impulses. The association of the Turkic countries, based initially on linguistic and cultural community, has broad prospects for becoming a solid and stable alliance whose multifaceted agenda includes security in the broadest sense of the word.

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# The Paradigm of Soft Power and the Importance of the Organization of Turkic States: Perspective from Kyrgyzstan

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### Abstract

*The concept of soft power, which has been introduced to International Relations studies by Joseph S. Nye Jr., has become an integral element of states' foreign policies, particularly since the end of the bipolar system. Türkiye has made significant use of soft power in its foreign policy since the 1990s. The Turkic states of the Caucasus and Central Asia have particularly benefited from Türkiye's soft power approach, which was instrumental in the foundation of the Turkic Council in 2009 – renamed as the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) in 2021. The cooperation among the Turkic states dates back to the voluntary disintegration of the Soviet Union which resulted in the peaceful resolution of the Cold War as one of the major international conflicts. The collapse of the Soviet Union also prepared the ground for the restoration of the links between the Turkic-speaking peoples who share common cultural, linguistic and religious roots. However, the geopolitical climate in the initial period was not conducive to reach this long awaited goal. As a result, the cooperation in the Turkic world has had ups and downs. In other words, it took some time to foster collaboration among the Turkic-speaking states and unleash their true potential even after the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, the institutionalization of the Turkic cooperation through the establishment of the OTS was a turning point. Against this background, this article seeks to understand Türkiye's policies toward the Turkic states from a soft power perspective. After reviewing the vision put forward by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk with regard to*

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*the Turkic world, the article discusses the significance of Türkiye's approach in the post-Cold War period. It also highlights the use of soft power by the OTS to boost the regional cooperation in the Turkic world. Finally, the article draws attention to the contribution of Kyrgyzstan to the soft power dimension of the OTS.*

## Keywords

Turkic world, Organization of Turkic States, soft power, regional cooperation, Kyrgyzstan.

## Introduction

In international relations, whereas hard power has been traditionally used to refer to a state's military and economic capabilities in coercing other states, soft power is usually associated with positive attraction and persuasion in order to achieve foreign policy objectives.<sup>1</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., who first introduced the concept of soft power to International Relations (IR) studies, identified three main pillars of soft power that are important for a state in achieving its national objectives: political values, culture and foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> As time passed, it was understood that each category included other sources that could be utilized as soft power instruments in a state's foreign policy. This inspired growing interest in the origins and vectors of development of the theory on soft power. Today, a number of special agencies even prepare periodical and internationally recognized publications that are in high demand on the issue of soft power.

In July 2015, the international consulting company Portland Communications published a global rating of states' soft power in a publication titled *Soft Power 30*, which supplements earlier attempts to measure and compare the soft power of various countries.<sup>3</sup> The leader of this initiative, Jonathan McClory, a specialist in soft power, public diplomacy and socio-humanitarian technologies, created the first combined rating—the soft power index—which has been published annually since 2010 by a nonprofit institute in partnership with the British magazine *Monocle*.<sup>4</sup> The index is compiled by looking at 75 indicators across six sub-indices (government, culture, education, global interaction, enterprises and digital technologies) and seven categories of international survey data.

Türkiye is naturally not isolated from these developments. Indeed, it has become one of the key players in the modern world as a state that makes active



efforts to take its place in the soft power rankings. The first decade of the post-bipolar period posed serious military, socio-economic and political problems to the governments of Türkiye. However, a comprehension of the true essence and potential of Türkiye's soft power is associated with the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) in 2002. Paying particular attention to the issues of security in foreign policy, the AK Party leaders have not ignored the task of rethinking Türkiye's position and perception in the international arena. Subsequently, Türkiye was included twice in the *Soft Power 30* index, although its ranking was unexpectedly low in both instances. Türkiye has many resources that constitute its soft power, such as its unique geography, rich culture and glorious history, and the effective utilization of these resources is important to enhance its influence in its neighborhood.

One of the earliest examples of Türkiye's soft power is its foreign policy activism in the post-Soviet space in the early 1990s. The independence of five Turkic-speaking republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia allowed Türkiye to highlight the factor of ethnicity for the very first time in its foreign policy. Despite Türkiye's efforts, however, Turkic cooperation developed very slowly in the 1990s. As a result, Türkiye chose a strategy of establishing long-term and consistent influence in the Turkic world through the formation of future elites in the Turkic states. Türkiye's official institutions have significantly contributed to the development of the Turkic states' educational systems and institutions through the opening of many schools, lyceums and universities, providing education in Turkish, English and native languages. The Istanbul Summit Declaration of the OTS indicates the success of these programs, stating that the heads of state "take note of the useful activities of the Turkish Maarif Foundation (TMF) schools in the Turkic World."<sup>5</sup>

**One of the earliest examples of Türkiye's soft power is its foreign policy activism in the post-Soviet space in the early 1990s.**

A large volume of grants and scholarship programs have been allocated annually by the Turkish government to Turkic students who want to receive higher education in Türkiye since the early 1990s. The "Great Student Project" (*Büyük Öğrenci Projesi*), which was initiated for this specific reason, later became the "Türkiye Scholarship" (*Türkiye Bursları*) program, which has been implemented by the Presidency of Turks Abroad and Associated Communities (YTB) with the contribution of other relevant agencies since 2012. In addition, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) has been carrying out significant projects such as the restoration of monuments related

to Turkic history and the opening of hospitals in the Turkic states since the 1990s. Türkiye has been playing a leading role in fostering cooperation among the Turkic states in a multilateral format. Hence, many regional platforms have been created, such as TURKSOY, TURKPA, the Turkic Academy and the Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation, to systematize the cooperation and coordination between the Turkic-speaking states.

In short, soft power has become a key factor in the implementation of Türkiye's foreign policy priorities in the Turkic world. Initially, Türkiye's soft power was mainly based on its historical, cultural and linguistic ties with the Turkic states. More recently, Türkiye has begun to actively strengthen its business ties in the region and pursue a policy to promote economic cooperation among these countries. The bilateral and multilateral business councils that were established through the Turkish initiative have become the key mechanisms for developing business ties in the region.

Türkiye's experience in using soft power in its foreign policy is arguably relatively new. During the first ten years that followed the end of the Cold War, Türkiye mainly tried to find its way in a radically changed international environment. However, that period also enabled Türkiye to take remarkable steps for rapprochement with the Turkic states. This article will therefore focus on Türkiye's activities toward the Turkic states from a soft power perspective. After reviewing the vision put forward by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk with regard to the Turkic world, the article discusses the significance of Türkiye's approach in the post-Cold War period. It also highlights the use of soft power by the OTS to boost the regional cooperation in the Turkic world. Finally, the article draws attention to the contribution of Kyrgyzstan to the soft power dimension of the OTS.

## Origins and Vectors of the Concept of Soft Power

Although the concept of soft power was introduced by Joseph Nye Jr., an IR scholar from Harvard University, in the U.S. in 1990, it first became popular in IR studies in the 2000s and 2010s.<sup>6</sup> Its rise in popularity was mainly due to the dire consequences caused by the "hard power" approach that was then extensively used in various regions, including the Middle East, which inevitably led to growing threats of terrorism and extremism and the increasingly negative attitude of the international community toward the military operations of a number of countries.

Soft power can be regarded as both a theoretical and practical concept, since it is implemented by states in line with their socio-political resources. Yet it

should be mentioned that Nye originally proposed the concept to explain U.S. foreign policy. He later had to revise the concept as “smart power” in order to analyze Washington’s changing foreign policy priorities. However, using foreign cultural policy as an instrument of influence at the international level is not a new phenomenon, since these methods were utilized in earlier periods. Nye himself indicates that the use of soft power dates back to many centuries ago and includes ancient cultures. For instance, Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu says, “a leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves.”<sup>7</sup>

It could be argued that the prototype of soft power in the modern sense was developed during the colonial era, when the imperial powers faced the long-term challenge of forming loyal elites in the conquered territories. For this reason, a whole range of measures was developed and implemented, including the export of educational standards, cultural norms, language, principles and models of public administration.

Some researchers believe that contemporary foreign cultural policy is an invention and prerogative of France, which sought to preserve, support and promote its cultural and linguistic heritage in a remarkable way.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the 19<sup>th</sup> century was marked by the recognition of French high culture as the world standard. French became the language of official diplomacy and one of the leading means of communication in Europe until the beginning of the First World War. The non-governmental organization “Alliance Française” was created back in 1883 to spread French culture abroad.<sup>9</sup> France retained its status as the cultural hegemon of Europe until Britain and Germany began to create serious competition in the international arena. The rivalry between France and Britain in the field of culture in particular led to the development of the external dimension of cultural policy. The first English cultural institute abroad appeared almost half a century later than the French one. The British Committee for Relations with Other Countries (now the British Council) was established in 1934 to create a basis abroad for building acquaintance and fostering understanding of British philosophy and way of life, and thus the adoption and support of British foreign policy.

Germany joined the process of promoting its image in the world only after its unification in 1871. However, over the next 30 years, it managed to take a leading position in the international scientific community on the basis of its achievements in the field of education and science. Alexander Humboldt’s idea of combining teaching and research has become a model for many countries, and the Kaiser Wilhelm Society was founded in 1911 as a system of specialized scientific research institutions wherein the state played a decisive role and the participation of industrialists was encouraged. Thus, education

and science became the main components of German soft power at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Although states had used cultural tools to create a positive image in the international arena in support of their foreign policy for centuries, Nye's theory became popular because he managed to systematically describe the basic principles and approaches of foreign policy as soft power.<sup>10</sup> Nye emphasizes that

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soft power is opposed to the methods of forceful pressure inherent in hard power. After all, attractiveness means a conscious and voluntary choice. Nonetheless, as McClory rightly notes, soft power may seem like the best and less risky option compared to economic or military power, but it is often difficult to use, easy to lose and expensive to restore.<sup>11</sup>

In 2004, Nye published *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, in which he interestingly suggests using

the concept of sensible (smart) power.<sup>12</sup> He coined this term to correct the misperception that only soft power can ensure the effectiveness of foreign policy, defining sensible power "as the ability to combine hard and soft power resources."<sup>13</sup> Thus, the concept of soft power acquired a more complex, nuanced and multi-faceted definition.<sup>14</sup>

## Türkiye's Soft Power Approach and the Evolution of Turkic Cooperation

Last year marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the declaration of independence of the former Soviet republics. Since their independence, these states have sought to strengthen their sovereignty and increase their active involvement in regional and global processes, while continuing to transition away from the socialist system. After the collapse of the bipolar world, the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus found themselves at the center of the geopolitical interests of other countries. This included, among other things, the geopolitical confrontation that has existed between the "sea" powers and the "land" powers.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, they were involved in the globalization process leaving a significant impact on the needs of Turkic people. However, most of them lacked the material basis, tools or the personnel corps required to conduct for-

eign policy and diplomacy. Türkiye was a very crucial actor in this regard, as it was the first country to recognize the independence of these states. Türkiye also opened embassies in the capitals of all the Turkic-speaking countries as early as 1992.

It was during this initial period that the words of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Türkiye, acquired a new meaning for the Turkic states. In a meeting held following celebrations for the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the Republic of Türkiye in 1933, Atatürk described the ideal that could be transferred from generation to generation for the Turkic peoples: “Undoubtedly, every nation should have its ideals. States cannot talk openly about them. Ideal lives in the hearts of the people. Just as we cannot see our eyes, with which we see everything around us, we cannot notice the ideal that lives in our hearts, but we do everything by it.”<sup>16</sup> Atatürk was making reference to the fact that there were people living in the Soviet Union who shared the same language, religion and history as Türkiye, and indicating that this was a solid bridge between Türkiye and the Turkic peoples.

Atatürk’s vision for the Turkic world is best exemplified by the creation of language and history councils in Türkiye. On this issue, he said:

“We are trying to bring our language closer to their [Turkic] languages; we are making efforts to restore our shared history with them. It will allow us to easily understand each other, have friendly relations and be together in joy and peace. Our goal is to learn and apply a common language and a shared history. We have a shared past, and it needs to be known and understood. Therefore, the study of history in our schools begins with Central Asia. Our children must be aware of the people living there. Now their children should know about us too. For these purposes, the Institute of Turkology has been established. We intend to integrate our cultures.”<sup>17</sup>

This is how Atatürk concluded his clarification as to how any ideals regarding the Turkic cooperation could be transferred from generation to generation. As a result, despite all the difficulties, Türkiye tried to maintain its links with the Turkic world by focusing on activities in three main spheres: a) activities for the formation of a common Turkic language by purifying it of words borrowed from other languages and enriching the vernacular, b) activities for bridging the 5000-year common history of the Turkic peoples with the history of the Ottoman Empire and constructing a common continuous history; c) efforts to turn the unity of the Turkic peoples into a factor that is capable of ensuring the balance in world politics. To these ends, the Language Councils (*Dil Encümeni*) were later transformed into the Institute of Turkic Studies

(*Türkiyat Enstitüsü*). Ankara University's Faculty of Language, History and Geography emerged on this solid base. The activities of specialized institutions for language (*Dil Kurumu*), history (*Tarih Kurumu*) and culture (*Kültür Merkezi*) were coordinated by the Council for Language, History and Culture at the Office of the Prime Minister. All these activities contributed to the systematic formation of an institutional framework for the rapprochement of the Turkic peoples on the basis of language, culture and history. At the same time, this may be regarded as an indication of the use of soft power in Turkish foreign policy.

During the Soviet era, it was not easy for Ankara to highlight the soft power dimension of Turkic cooperation while remaining tactful in order not to damage its official relations with Moscow. However, the vision put forward by Atatürk became a powerful slogan after the collapse of the Soviet Union, as Türkiye started to hold annual *kurultays* (gatherings) of Turkic-speaking communities, as well as other festivals and symposiums, conferences and official meetings. Türkiye's foreign policy activities in the post-Soviet space at that time centered on the concept of Turkic unity and solidarity.

The budding sovereignty of the former Soviet republics coincided with the presidency of Turgut Özal, which marked an era of unprecedented growth in Türkiye's international activities. Özal made reference to the transformation of the Turkic world and asserted that "the twenty-first century will belong to the Turks."<sup>18</sup> He was responsible for the launch of special summits between the heads of states of the Turkic states in 1992, believing that Turkish foreign policy had to be proactive and pragmatic. As a result, Özal became the first Turkish leader to conduct telephone diplomacy with the heads of other states. He also emphasized the importance of economic diplomacy, since he correctly assessed global trends and the transformation of geopolitics into geo-economics. During his period, a large group of entrepreneurs and journalists began to accompany the president on his foreign trips. For example, in addition to many high-ranking officials, around 220 businesspeople and 40 journalists joined his visit to Central Asia in 1993. More importantly, Türkiye opened 22 new embassies and five consulates-general under Özal's leadership, including the embassies opened in all Turkic-speaking countries in 1992.

Türkiye's proactive approach toward the Turkic states continued in subsequent periods under the leadership of presidents Süleyman Demirel (1993–2000), Ahmet Necdet Sezer (2000–2007) and Abdullah Gül (2007–2014). Owing to Türkiye's intense diplomatic efforts in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, there is now an extensive network of cooperation among the Turkic-speaking countries. The most notable institution in this sense is

the former Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, also known as the “Turkic Council”, which was established with the signing of Nakhchivan Agreement on 3 October 2009 as a regional cooperation mechanism. This was actually the fruit of the “Summit Process” that endured from 1992 to 2012. During this period, ten summits of the Turkic-speaking countries at the level of heads of state were organized – the first of which was held in Ankara in 1992. These summit meetings were crucial for Turkic cooperation, as they provided a consistent platform for diplomatic consultations between the Turkic states which eventually led to the formal establishment of the Turkic Council in October 2009. In November 2021, at the eighth summit meeting of the Turkic Council, this regional institution was officially renamed the Organization of Turkic States (OTS).<sup>19</sup> The same summit was also remarkable because the first strategic document for Turkic cooperation, “Turkic World Vision–2040” was adopted, and Turkmenistan gained the status of an observer state in the OTS.<sup>20</sup>

In 2021, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan underlined the importance Türkiye attributes to the OTS by stating,

“We are changing the name of our Council, which has developed its institutional structure and boosted its prestige in its region and beyond, to the Organization of Turkic States. Obviously, this historic change should not remain limited to rhetoric; it should be put into action as well. The structure and the operating procedure of the secretariat as well as our political, economic and social solidarity must reflect the institutional quality of our family assembly.”<sup>21</sup>

Today, the OTS not only represents the ideal that has been transferred from generation to generation in the Turkic world in accordance with Atatürk’s vision—it is also a very clear example of Türkiye’s expanding soft power in international relations.

## Soft Power Aspect of Turkic Cooperation and Kyrgyzstan

The OTS, which has become the umbrella organization for Turkic cooperation, can be regarded as a very effective soft power instrument for all the member states. It is an intergovernmental organization aimed at integrated

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and harmonious development in all areas of interaction in the Turkic world on the most topical issues of the regional and global agenda. Its cornerstone is the need for cooperation between the Turkic-speaking peoples, who share common ancestral roots, history, culture and language. Moreover, the OTS is based on the principle of equality among its member states which provides further impetus to enhance regional cooperation.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the decisions are based on consensus and each member state has an equal voice in the decision-making process.

As a multilateral platform, the scope of the activities of the OTS cover many areas ranging from political, economic, educational and cultural issues to specific collaboration fields such as tourism, youth, diaspora, media, agriculture and environmental protection. In each cooperation area, both the public and

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private sectors are quite active and well-engaged.<sup>23</sup> The project-based approach of the OTS in particular yields remarkable benefits for the citizens of the Turkic states. For instance, projects related to the younger population and education are very significant for enhancing quality of life and social standards in the Turkic world.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, with a comprehensive approach, the OTS also supports the activities of the other official Turkic cooperation organizations regarding the educational, cul-

tural and parliamentary dimensions of the Turkic solidarity. This multi-dimensional perspective strengthens the soft power of the OTS and its member states. In this regard, it touches the “hearts and minds” of the Turkic-speaking people in a wide range of areas through its activities and projects. Meanwhile, the OTS is also active at the international level.<sup>25</sup> It cooperates with other regional and international organizations starting from the UN and its special agencies to ASEAN. This cooperation is instrumental in raising awareness on the joint soft power of the Turkic states in the international arena.

The OTS is also active in the resolution of regional conflicts. An extraordinary meeting initiated by Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, held in Istanbul in September 2021 on the issue of Afghanistan, is a significant example. The joint statement issued at the end of the meeting contributed to the soft power agenda of Turkic cooperation, as the member states declared their “support to the stabilization and humanitar-



ian efforts of the international community in Afghanistan.” Collectively, they pledged to “stand ready to contribute to all efforts to assist the Afghan people in their endeavor to achieve lasting peace, national reconciliation, stability and development.”<sup>26</sup>

Kyrgyzstan is one of the founding members of the OTS. It maintains close ties with the other Turkic-speaking states and intends to further deepen these ties both in a bilateral and multilateral framework. The participation of Kyrgyzstan in the activities of the OTS is quite natural, as the Kyrgyz government prioritizes political and economic cooperation with the Turkic states in addition to tending their common historical, cultural, and linguistic bonds. Kyrgyzstan’s interactions with other Turkic states within the framework of the OTS is in line with the multi-vector character of its foreign policy, which aims to foster the country’s regional and international influence by taking active part in such regional platforms. Reciprocally, the OTS also supports the economic and financial interests of Kyrgyzstan.

Kyrgyzstan has a number of advantages in terms of enhancing the soft power aspects of the OTS. For example, modern Kyrgyzstan inherited the unique contribution of the Kyrgyz as an ancient people to the treasury of world folklore—a trilogy of the heroic epic *Manas*, which is regarded as an encyclopedia of the life by dozens of generations. Furthermore, Kyrgyzstan launched and hosted the first World Nomad Games in 2014, 2016 and 2018. These games later became a regular landmark sports event that continues to bring together the Turkic peoples. The next round of the games is expected to take place in Türkiye in 2022.

Overall, the OTS has a significant soft power potential and taps this potential through its activities in relevant fields of cooperation. Furthermore, its dynamic approach towards the resolution of regional conflicts as well as its relations with regional and international actors play a significant role to boost its soft power. As a founding member state, Kyrgyzstan certainly makes substantial contribution to the enhancement of the soft power dimension of the OTS.

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## Conclusion

Soft power retains its place among the key instruments of states in international politics. By its nature, soft power is much more flexible and sensitive to changes in the environment compared with hard power. Soft power is also an important component of Turkish foreign policy from a historical perspective. It has become even more visible in the post-Cold War period in Türkiye's approach to the Turkic states of the Caucasus and Central Asia. Atatürk's ideal of strengthening Turkic unity and solidarity has provided the basis for Türkiye's soft power activities in the region following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Türkiye's main objective is to build strong bridges between the Turkic states to strengthen the common ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural bonds of the Turkic-speaking peoples. Thus, it could be argued that Atatürk's vision has become the guiding star of Türkiye's soft power approach toward the Turkic world in the post-Cold War era.

The establishment of the Turkic Council in 2009, which was renamed as the OTS in 2021 is one of the most significant products of the collective efforts of the Turkic-speaking states. Today, the OTS is well-equipped with the necessary tools and adequate mechanisms to jointly promote soft power. The "Turkic World Vision-2040" document adopted at the Istanbul Summit in 2021 is expected to provide further momentum in this direction. The role of the member states in the adoption of such an important strategic vision document is very crucial as this document includes many elements promoting a much more sophisticated soft power dimension. The document is also important as the future success of the OTS in fostering cooperation among the Turkic-speaking states will be determined by the efforts of the member states in advancing the soft power dimension of this organization. The projects that have been launched within the framework of the OTS in many issue areas seem to be quite promising in this regard.

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# ARTICLE

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## The Organization of Turkic States: A New Approach to Global and Regional Challenges

Murodjon MUSTOFAEV\*

### Abstract

This article approaches the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) through the lens of Samuel P. Huntington's civilizational approach. It discusses the outcomes of the Istanbul Summit held in 2021, including important changes in the activities of the organization and the historical decisions adopted by the heads of states. Additionally, it makes prognoses on the future of security cooperation among the Turkic states by assessing the current status of their cooperation and the likelihood of future development in this area. Next, it focuses on the role of the Secretary-General in the development and formation of the OTS. Finally, the article explores the main directions of the organization's future development in an increasingly globalized world.

### Keywords

Organization of Turkic States, Istanbul Summit, civilizational approach, security, globalization.

### Introduction

Nakhchivan is one of the oldest cities in Azerbaijan. Founded by the Prophet Noah, according to legend, and originally mentioned in Ptolemy's Geography as Naksuana, it was the residence of the Seljuk sultans in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. In

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the 21<sup>st</sup> century, on October 3, 2009, Nakhchivan witnessed the signing of an important agreement in the Turkic World, when Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Türkiye signed the Nakhchivan Agreement on the establishment of the Cooperation Council of Turkic States. As a result of this agreement, a mechanism of cooperation among the Turkic states emerged, uniting these states today on the basis of their historical roots, common language, religion, culture and traditions. Today, the Council is known as the Organization of Turkic States (OTS).

International organizations and structures are studied within the system of international relations (IR) through theories of regionalism, institutionalism and functionalism and via a historical approach. It is expedient to study the OTS, which is developing its modes of cooperation under the umbrella of the common civilization of its member nations, through the civilizational approach put forward by American political scientist Samuel P. Huntington. According to Huntington's theory, after the end of the Cold War, states sought to form alliances with countries that shared elements of a common culture, and the politicians and public figures of these countries tended to trust each other precisely because of their closeness and kinship in language, religion and mutual values.<sup>1</sup>

The idea put forward by Huntington is not new, as the scholar himself noted. Ethnic, social and cultural commonalities played an important role in the formation of the Peloponnesian Union, which united the Greek city-states in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC under Sparta and Athens.<sup>2</sup> Common historic and cultural ties are a key factor not only in developing relations among the Turkic people, but also in the cooperation of other nations that share kinship ties throughout the modern world. The statements of numerous world politicians refer to common historical roots and cultural ties in tough situations, which proves the viability of Huntington's theory once again. In February 2022, for instance, addressing the Russian people, U.S. President Joe Biden said, "I do not believe you want a bloody, destructive war against Ukraine—a country and a people with whom you share such deep ties of family, history and culture."<sup>3</sup>

The existence of the OTS as a regional mechanism has institutionalized cooperative relations between the Turkic States within a multilateral framework. This institutionalization was achieved as an outcome of efforts dating back to the 1990s, and constitutes a perfect tool with which to set the rules of collaboration in the Turkic region, secure the terms of its management, avoiding any regression, and take measures for its deepening and diversification. Relying on the continuous political will of its member states, this solid framework has enabled them to score significant achievements in various cooperation areas within the organization in a short period of time. The keys of this successful performance are embedded in the principles and structure of the organization, and in its result-oriented approach in political, economic, cultural-educational and human fields. Furthermore, its role as an umbrella organization

with other Turkic cooperation organizations, such as the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic Speaking States (TURKPA), the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY), the Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation and the Turkic Academy, has contributed to the enhancement of Turkic cooperation at the parliamentary, cultural, academic and scientific levels.<sup>4</sup>

Nowadays, more than 150 million people live in the territories of the member and observer states of the OTS. These countries are located in a large and significant geopolitical region that covers a total area of 4,242,362 square kilometers, and their GDP exceeds 1 trillion US dollars. In this regard, the OTS plays an important role in the world economy.

## The Istanbul Summit and Three Historic Decisions

The 8<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (Turkic Council) was hosted by Türkiye under the theme of “Green Technologies and Smart Cities in the Digital Age” at the Democracy and Freedom Island which is not far from Istanbul on November 12, 2021. This Summit was marked by the adoption of important decisions in the history of the organization, three of which are appropriate to highlight.

First, the Turkic Council was renamed the Organization of Turkic States. The decision was hotly debated in political and scientific circles and was ultimately warmly welcomed. At a press conference on the sidelines of the Summit, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated, “We have decided to rename our Council. From now on, it is called the Organization of Turkic States. Thanks to the new name and structure, the Organization of Turkic States will develop, strengthen and increase more actively.” Commenting on this decision, Professor Cengiz Tomar of Ahmet Yesevi University stated that beyond a doubt, the main event of the Istanbul Summit was the renaming of the Turkic Council, since the change represents a historic and fundamental transformation.<sup>5</sup>

From a legal point of view, the absence of the word “organization” in the name of an international structure does not prevent it from operating as an international organization. For the past 12 years, the Turkic Council has been working to develop mechanisms for cooperation among member states in various fields and involve non-member Turkic-speaking states in its structure. With the full membership of Uzbekistan in 2019 and the inclusion of Turkmenistan as an observer in the Turkic Council at

**With the full membership of Uzbekistan in 2019 and the inclusion of Turkmenistan as an observer in the Turkic Council at the Istanbul Summit, the institutional phase of cooperation among the Turkic states has been finalized.**

the Istanbul Summit, the institutional phase of cooperation among the Turkic states has been finalized. In this regard, the official renaming of the Council, which has so far served as a dialogue platform, as a full-fledged organization was a timely and logical decision.

Second, the Istanbul Summit has, in a sense, officially completed the process of unification of all the Turkic states around a single organization. Turkmenistan, which had so far been an honorary guest at the organization's summits, was officially granted observer status. While the Turkic states have made no secret of their interest in Turkmenistan's joining the organization as a member, Turkmenistan's status as a neutral state prevents it from becoming a full member of the organization. Nevertheless, in recent years, Turkmenistan has actively mobilized its observer status in multilateral diplomacy. It received observer status in the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2020 and in the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in 2021.<sup>6</sup>

The legal basis for obtaining observer status in the OTS is detailed in Article 16 of the Nakhchivan Agreement, according to which observer status can be granted to states, international organizations and international fora. As the Secretary-General of the OTS Baghdad Amreyev said,

“As a rule, they (observers) are represented in practice in all our forms of interaction, starting with expert meetings and including Summits of the Heads of States. The only significant difference is that the observer does not participate in the decision-making process of the Organization, that is, in voting.”<sup>7</sup>

The current participation of Hungary in the OTS, which received observer status in 2018, is a vivid example of using this status in all formats of the organization. The opening of the European Representative Office of the OTS in Budapest in 2019 is full proof of Hungary's active involvement as an observer state in the activities of the organization.

In a recent interview, the Secretary-General Amreyev noted that “the nature of the OTS will not allow an unlimited expansion of the Organization, and only those countries that have one of the Turkic languages as one of the official languages can be observers.”<sup>8</sup>

Based on this criterion, it can be said that the Istanbul Summit was able to fully unite the sovereign Turkic states. During the press conference after the Istanbul Summit, President Erdoğan made the following announcement:

“The Turkic countries have been the center of culture and civilization for thousands of years. I am sure that this will continue to be the case. The Organization of Turkic States should not bother anyone. The Organization is a platform for the development of interstate relations. I sincerely hope that the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus



(TRNC) will be among us in the coming period, and our Organization will be more prosperous.”<sup>9</sup>

During Türkiye’s chairmanship of the OTS from 2021–2022, it is not difficult to predict that the issue of the TRNC’s membership will be included in the agenda of the organization’s activities and various events. However, the TRNC will likely face

a number of obstacles in joining the organization. First and foremost among these, only Türkiye recognizes the TRNC today. The other member and observer states of the OTS have not officially recognized it, have not established diplomatic relations and therefore may not support the accession of TRNC to the OTS as a full member. However, TRNC currently has observer status in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). In this respect, the TRNC can apply for obtaining observer status in the OTS. In an important move, in the Istanbul Declaration, the OTS member states expressed their solidarity with the Turkish Cypriot people in their aspirations to secure their equal, inherent rights, and recognized Türkiye’s request to invite the Turkish Cypriots to participate in relevant activities of the OTS.<sup>10</sup>

Based on these factors, the expansion of the OTS to include future states will be relatively slow. Although the Nakhchivan Agreement provides for the granting of observer status to international organizations and forums in addition to states, this practice has not yet been reflected in the activities of the organization.

During the Istanbul Summit, the “Regulation of Partners of the Organization of Turkic States” was also signed. This important document defines the future cooperation instruments of the organization with third parties and creates a legal basis for the further establishment and expansion of cooperation between the organization and third countries. As noted by the OTS Secretary-General, now almost any state can become a partner, provided it is ready to make a real contribution to the development of mutually beneficial cooperation in a particular area.<sup>11</sup> For this reason, the OTS is expected to enlarge in terms of partner states rather than member or observer states.

A third important outcome of the Istanbul Summit was that the organization officially adopted its long-term development strategy: “Turkic World Vision–2040”.<sup>12</sup> The document is divided into four areas of cooperation: political and security cooperation, economic and sectoral cooperation, people-to-people cooperation and cooperation with external parties. It outlines the priorities of the organization’s long-term cooperation among member and

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observer states. In particular, in the political sphere, it highlights the importance of strengthening the regular mechanism of multilateral political consultations among the member states on international and regional foreign policy issues of common interest.

In addition, by adopting this document, the parties agreed to ensure effective cooperation and coordination with other organizations such as TURKSOY, TURKPA, Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation and the Turkic Academy for advancing collaboration in cultural, academic and parliamentary spheres. These organizations are partners and affiliates of the OTS. Simultaneously, these organizations are independent international organizations that engage in specific areas of cooperation. It is important to coordinate the relationship between these partner organizations and the OTS, first of all, with the aim of raising the level of cooperation and developing relations among the Turkic states—which is considered the main goal of the OTS. Second, not all the member or observer states in the OTS today participate in the activities of the above-mentioned partner organizations. In this regard, it is important that the activities of these partner organizations be coordinated within a single structure, namely the OTS.

In addition, “Turkic World Vision–2040” provides for strengthening the representation office of the OTS in Budapest as a hub for developing multilayered cooperation with European institutions including the Visegrád Group. Although Hungary is currently an observer in the organization, its status does not prevent it from intensely participating in all the activities of the organization. The Budapest-based office of the secretariat of the OTS is a solid bridge for the development of relations between member and observer states and the EU. Hungary emphasizes that its relations with the Turkic world are based on the closeness of fraternal ties between the ancient Huns and the Turkic people. Speaking at the Istanbul Summit on November 12, 2021, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said the Hungarians were proud to be descendants of the ancient Huns and Attila.<sup>13</sup> During the event, Orban also noted that Hungary’s relations with Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, member states of the OTS,

had reached a strategic level. It is expected that in future Budapest will play an important bridging role between the Turkic world and the EU.

**“Turkic World Vision–2040 focuses on expanding economic and sectoral cooperation in transport; in particular, wider use of the Trans-Caspian East-West Corridor, simplification of customs regulations and the joint building of the new Zangezur Corridor.**

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As the Vision indicates, there is a wide range of opportunities for people-to-people cooperation among the Turkic states. First of all, the similar culture, language, religion and common traditions of the Turkic states are the basis for the development of their cooperation. In this vein, the OTS plans to hold forums among young people, entrepreneurs and representatives of the diaspora to attend for the development of cooperation in sports and education. The activities of TURKSOY, which has been operating since 1993, deserve special attention. It is important to establish cooperation among other partner organizations in this field, such as the Turkish Academy and the Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation.

## Emerging Global Challenges and Security Issues in the Turkic World

Today, the world is facing unprecedented challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, climate change and other regional and global cataclysms that have shocked the global health system in the last two years have not bypassed the Turkic states. The OTS was one of the first international organizations in the world to hold an extraordinary online meeting at the level of heads of member and observer states to combat the pandemic. This online event was organized by the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, on April 10, 2020, during Azerbaijan's chairmanship of the organization. At this high-level online event, "Solidarity and Cooperation in the Fight against the COVID-19 Pandemic", the leaders of the Turkic states outlined measures to combat COVID-19.<sup>14</sup> These measures addressed important considerations such as health, transport, trade and migration issues. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), who attended the Summit, stated that it was important for everyone to work together to overcome the pandemic and that the Turkic states could come together.<sup>15</sup> A number of measures were taken to provide mutual humanitarian assistance among the member and observer states, and to extend the visas of citizens residing in the territories of these countries.

However, after the creation of vaccines during the later stages of the pandemic, the process of mutually recognizing other countries' vaccination certificates was not conducted within the organization. In this context, the bilateral agreements on the recognition of vaccine certificates signed by Hungary with Turkic countries, in particular Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, were significant. Hungary was the first EU country to recognize Kazakhstan's certificate of vaccination.<sup>16</sup> This process was not continued with the other parties within the organization, however, and each state preferred to limit itself to its own anti-COVID rules. Taking PCR tests for citizens on interstate trips is still practiced among the member states of the organization.

The Turkic world region comes under the close attention of the world community when security issues are concerned. According to Al-Kashghari, famous scholar and lexicographer of the Turkic languages, the Turkic people understand that nothing in the world is achieved without struggle: “He who collects honey must endure the stings of bees. They [the Turkic people] were fighters, but they understood the price of the conflict: In the fight between two camels, a flying fly between them dies.”<sup>17</sup>

It should be noted that all countries have their own Achilles’ heel when it comes to security. During the Istanbul Summit on November 12, 2021, in his opening speech, President Erdoğan referred to the PKK terrorist organization’s Syrian affiliate, the YPG, as well as Daesh and the Gülenist Terror Organization (FETÖ), stating: “We are determined to continue our fight against all forms of terrorism. We must increase our cooperation in this regard.”<sup>18</sup> Examples of security challenges in the region include the Nagorno-Karabakh war between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the recent internal political tensions in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan’s border problems with Tajikistan, which are accompanied by periodic exchanges of fire. Although Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are relatively politically stable at present, their proximity to Afghanistan in the south is considered one of the key parameters in measuring regional security.<sup>19</sup>

According to Zbigniew Brzezinski, two countries of Central Asia—Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan—play the most important role.<sup>20</sup> Kazakhstan is a shield in the region, and Uzbekistan is the soul of the awakening of diverse national feelings. It is clear that stability in Central Asia mostly relies on these two Turkic-speaking countries.

Two approaches have emerged concerning security issues within the OTS.

**One of the first statements of the organization on security issues was made on September 28, 2020, regarding the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh between Azerbaijan and Armenia.**

The first approach is to issue an official statement on behalf of the organization or the Secretary-General regarding any situation involving member states, calling on the parties to resolve it by mutual agreement, a negotiation process or other diplomatic means.

One of the first statements of the organization on security issues was made on September 28, 2020, regarding the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh between Azerbaijan and Armenia. By means of this statement, the Turkic countries reaffirmed their commitment to the norms and principles of international law and reiterated the importance of an early resolution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict on the basis of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Turkic Council recalled the resolutions of the UN Security Council adopted in 1993, which demanded

an immediate, unconditional and full withdrawal of Armenia's armed forces from all occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan.<sup>21</sup>

The OTS reacted to the unrest in Kazakhstan in early 2022, expressing confidence in the establishment of peace and stability in Kazakhstan and acknowledging its solidarity with Kazakhstan as a member state.<sup>22</sup> Following an incident of crossfire on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border on January 27–28, 2022, the Secretary-General of the OTS issued a statement and called on the parties to resolve the situation through diplomatic negotiations. The Secretary-General stated:

“The Organization of Turkic States condemns the use of military weapons against civilians and urges [the parties] to take necessary measures for refraining from further escalation of tension at the state border of the two neighboring countries. We express support to the efforts of the Kyrgyz Republic to find a peaceful solution to the situation and welcome dialogue between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan based on mutual understanding, mutual respect, good neighborliness and coexistence.”<sup>23</sup>

In this statement, the Turkic states expressed their support for the Kyrgyz side's efforts to resolve the conflict.

The second approach to addressing security issues within the organization is to convene the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (CFM) in appropriate cases or situations. We can predict that the organization in future will hold meetings of the CFM on security issues with the aim of adopting final documents that reflect the common position of the parties. This approach is a step closer to practical security cooperation among the Turkic states. As a proof of this, one of the extraordinary meetings of the foreign ministers of the OTS was held on September 27, 2021 in Istanbul at the initiative of Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Türkiye's Minister of Foreign Affairs. The ministers exchanged views on the situation in Afghanistan and its regional and global ramifications. They also shared their assessments regarding the various dimensions of stabilization and the humanitarian efforts of the international community in Afghanistan, including processes aiming for the establishment of an administration that is inclusive and representative, coordination on preventing Afghanistan from becoming once again a safe haven for terrorism, measures against the risk of increased flows of irregular migration from Afghanistan and ensuring respect for human rights for all.<sup>24</sup>

Another extraordinary online meeting of foreign ministers was held on January 11, 2022 regarding the riots in Kazakhstan and the events aimed at over-

throwing constitutional order there. Speaking at the event, Çavuşoğlu stressed the importance of accelerating the steps taken for political and economic integration within the OTS. In this context, he referred to the “Turkic World Vision–2040” and stressed that the most basic conditions for development and cooperation are security and stability; therefore cooperation between security and intelligence units should be more organized and institutional within the OTS. He highlighted the need to further strengthen security cooperation within the organization. Attending this event, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mukhtar Tileuberdi, emphasized that Kazakhstan was facing an armed aggression from terrorist groups trained outside the country that have used violence against the civil population, public and private property; attacked businesses, mass media outlets and law enforcement personnel; and have caused multiple injuries and deaths. He added that over eight law enforcement officers had been killed, and that more than 700 people had been injured, including more than 130 women and elderly people. The minister indicated that, considering the sharp aggravation of the situation, President Tokayev had assumed the office of the Chairman of the Security Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan and called upon the member states of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to provide military assistance in the conduct of a counter-terrorist operation based on Articles 2 and 4 of the Collective Security Treaty.<sup>25</sup>

These events indicate that security cooperation among the member states of the organization has not yet evolved into a fully multilateral format. Rather, member states prefer bilateral security cooperation with each other, with widely varying levels of cooperation. For instance, security cooperation between Türkiye and Azerbaijan cannot be compared with relations between Türkiye and Kazakhstan or Kyrgyzstan. The high level of security cooperation between Türkiye and Azerbaijan was fully reflected in the 44-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh, in which Türkiye and Azerbaijan acted together as allies. According to Çavuşoğlu, Türkiye supported Azerbaijan “on the field and at the table” (*sahada ve masada*).<sup>26</sup> It is safe to say that security and military cooperation between Türkiye and Azerbaijan has reached the level of a strategic alliance. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are currently CSTO members and rely more on Russia in the field of military cooperation. This is evidenced by the events in Kazakhstan. Among the member states, Uzbekistan is not a member of any military cooperation structure, but has taken practical steps toward coordination with Türkiye. On October 27, 2020, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev received the Minister of National Defense of the Republic of Türkiye Hulusi Akar. During the meeting, they discussed important areas of practical cooperation established between the de-

fense ministries of Uzbekistan and Türkiye, and defined the implementation of programs in the field of training military personnel, establishing contacts between specialized universities and exchanging experience in the training of military units.<sup>27</sup>

Security issues will clearly remain on the regular agenda of the OTS. Perhaps in the future, security cooperation mechanisms will be discussed at the level of Heads of States from the level of the Meeting of CFM to develop a common position. In this regard, it is worth recalling the various positions of the member states regarding current events taking place in the international arena. At the extraordinary session of the UN General Assembly convened on March 1, 2022, the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine was supported by Türkiye, while the other OTS member states maintained their neutral position.<sup>28</sup> Considering that among the OTS, only Türkiye is a member of NATO and that Russia is the main military and economic partner of the other member states, efforts to develop a common position on foreign policy and security issues will likely take some time.

## The Role of the Secretary-General in the Unification of the Turkic World

Today, the OTS has become a full-fledged international organization bringing together all the Turkic states. Since its establishment, the OTS has adopted a result-oriented approach with a practical decision-making process and empowered collaboration in the Turkic world. The founding Secretary-General Halil Akıncı, a former Turkish ambassador, emphasized the aim, mission and vision of this regional platform for cooperation frequently and played a very important role in the shaping of the structure of the OTS Secretariat accordingly.<sup>29</sup> The well-established and project-oriented structure of the organization has provided significant momentum to the cooperation potential among the Turkic States. It is also notable that the member states have put forward their willingness to deepen their cooperation within the OTS in a constant manner. As a result, despite the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, active cooperation among the OTS member and observer states has been maintained. Between 2019–2021, for instance, four meetings of the OTS heads of state took place – two of them via video conference.

The current Secretary-General Amreyev has made a significant contribution to the organization of such high-level events for the past three years. As a representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Amreyev has shown himself to be an experienced diplomat with an acute strategic vision. Through Amreyev's



initiative, many important events have been held and necessary steps have been taken to implement the initiatives put forward by the Heads of State of the OTS. During the period of Amreyev, Uzbekistan became a full member of the organization and Turkmenistan was granted observer status. In this process, it is impossible not to mention the active diplomatic efforts of the Secretary-General. Despite the difficulties of the pandemic period, Amreyev was able to hold regular meetings and establish dialogue with the Presidents, heads of ministries and departments of the member and observer states.

It should be noted that the authority to appoint the next Secretary-General of the OTS will be transferred to Kyrgyzstan. The organization's future development and active efforts directly

**The organization's future development and active efforts directly depend on the experience and diplomatic potential of the Secretary-General.**

depend on the experience and diplomatic potential of the Secretary-General. During Amreyev's period, the unification of all the Turkic states under the umbrella of the OTS was finalized, and the organization entered its next period of development.

Hopefully, the representative selected by Kyrgyzstan will serve as a model for other member states when it is their turn to appoint their representatives as Secretary-General of the OTS.

### Future Perspectives

Following the 2021 Istanbul Summit, the chairmanship of the OTS passed to the Republic of Türkiye. The activities carried out within the OTS show that the Turkish side is actively engaging in its chairmanship.

In this context, it is appropriate to mention the permanent consultative body of the OTS: the Council of Elders. It should be noted that the activity of the Council of Elders began to develop during Türkiye's chairmanship. Former Prime Minister of the Republic of Türkiye Binali Yıldırım, an experienced statesman, currently chairs the Council of Elders. The 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Elders convened on February 9–11, 2022 in Istanbul. During the meeting, the Elders were received by Turkish President Erdoğan.<sup>30</sup> Shortly after the Istanbul Summit, Yıldırım held bilateral meetings with the presidents of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, observer Turkmenistan and other states, and discussed issues related to the organization's activities.



Institutions similar to the Council of Elders do not exist in other international and regional structures. Respect for and consultation with elders has long been a tradition of the Turkic people. Historically, in almost all Turkic nations, in addition to the tribal chief or head of state, there were elders who held a special authority and influence, who were consulted in resolving important issues and at times sent as ambassadors to other countries. The inclusion of this institution in the OTS and its effective use is a symbol of ancient Turkic diplomacy. Judging from Yıldırım's active efforts, the activities of the Council of Elders are expected to develop in the future.

In recent years, the OTS has emphasized the development of economic, trade and investment facilities. Within the organization, plans are under way to establish an Investment Fund and Turkic Development Bank, which would be a breakthrough step in the transition from dialogue to practical investment and financial cooperation within the OTS.<sup>31</sup> The establishment of these two financial mechanisms within the framework of the organization will serve to further increase its attractiveness.

In the near future, one of the main areas of cooperation facing the Turkic states will be the effective use and diversification of existing transport corridors. In particular, the consequences of the military actions between Russia and Ukraine and the resulting Western sanctions have created a number of difficulties for Turkic-speaking states. In this tough period and in the future, the importance of the International Trans-Caspian Corridor is expected to increase. There will also be an opportunity to launch the Zangezur transport corridor proposed by Azerbaijan. The opening of the Zangezur corridor is very important, as it will connect Nakhchivan with other Azerbaijani territories, and restore transport and rail links between Türkiye and Azerbaijan and other Turkic republics.<sup>32</sup> The corridor is also vital in terms of reviving the historic Silk Road, China's Belt and Road Initiative, and in stimulating regional cooperation and trade development. The interests of Russia, Türkiye and Azerbaijan intersect in this issue. Through this corridor, Russia can further strengthen its ties with Armenia, Iran and Türkiye.<sup>33</sup> In addition to the issue of transportation, issues of cultural and humanitarian cooperation, tourism, education and youth policy will remain on the organization's agenda.

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The creator of the theory of functionalism in international relations, David Mitrany, stated that an international organization can be functional when its activities are commensurate with the conditions under which it has to operate, and when these activities meet the needs of the moment.<sup>34</sup> This spec-

tive is certainly supportive of the development of multilateral cooperation and multilateralism. The achievements of the OTS in various areas since its establishment run in parallel with this understanding. The organization catches the spirit of the times, and shapes its agenda and carries out its functions accordingly. This is the main cause of the dynamic development and enhancement process of the OTS today. The future adaptation of the organization to global contingencies, internal political turbulence and changes within member states is considered a key factor of its success as a “Common Turkic Family”.

## Conclusion

The unification of the Turkic states under a single international organization, the intensification of the current multilateral cooperation, as well as the prospects for the future development of the organization can be explained by the following processes:

*Historical-civilizational process.* From ancient times, the Turkic people have affirmed that they were descended from a single nation whose fraternal relations are rooted in religion, culture and traditions. Even under the rule of the Arabs, Mongols and Russians, the Turkic people managed to preserve their indigenous civilization. As the historical-civilizational process unfolded in the Turkic world, the Turkic people retained their distinctive cultural features while benefiting from interactions with other civilizations. Huntington may have had the Turkic people in mind as a culture able to withstand the “merciless strikes” of history when he developed his civilizational approach. After all, Huntington’s theory has not lost its relevance today.

*Political process.* This is an important process for all the Turkic states. The end of the Cold War in the 1990s, and the independence of the Turkic-speaking states of Central Asia and the Caucasus, paved the way for the revival of the centuries-old Turkic civilization, ensuring the emergence of the Turkic international organization. The words of the famous Turkic ruler, Bilge Khan, “oh, my Turkic people return to yourself and you will be more prosperous,” emphasize the continuity and stability of this political process.<sup>35</sup>

*Global process.* Globalization is an inevitable reality that is occurring today and dictating rules of order, from which international relations are not exempt. States and international organizations alike must take into account the events and situations set in motion by the forces of globalization. At the same time, globalization is pushing all international structures, including the OTS, to reach consensus on global matters and settle issues in solidarity.

In summary, the quest to find suitable solutions to global issues, based on the historical civilizational roots of the Turkic people and the continuation of the existing political will of the Turkic states, will remain a key factor in determining the future destiny of the OTS.

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## ARTICLE

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# Hungary's Role in the Organization of Turkic States as an Observer State: Limitations and Opportunities

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### Abstract

*This article seeks to analyze the evolution of Hungary's relations with the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). In the first part, the challenges and opportunities of cooperation within the OTS is evaluated from a Hungarian perspective. The second part focuses on the Hungarian approach to international cooperation, the emergence of Hungary's "Eastern Opening" policy and Hungary's specific relations with the Turkic states. The third part elaborates on Hungary's role as an observer country in the OTS. Finally, in the conclusion, the article provides some practical recommendations as to how Hungary could further contribute to the development of regional cooperation among the Turkic states, and to cooperation between Europe and the Turkic world.*

### Keywords

Organization of Turkic States, Hungary, regional cooperation, Eastern Opening, Turkic world.

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## Introduction

There is a growing Hungarian-language literature about the nations of the OTS and their cooperation, although a comprehensive volume in any language is still missing.<sup>1</sup> Literature on the workings of observer states in international organizations is also very scarce, although the topic is becoming more important; organizations in the international arena are thriving, and both full-fledged and observer states are increasing in numbers, as are their interactions. The present study tries to contribute to this latter question as well.

This study has three main objectives: it seeks to portray the OTS as a distinctly new international organization from a Hungarian perspective; it discusses Hungary's pattern of participation in international organizations and explores how the OTS fits into this pattern; and it proposes ideas as to how Hungary might develop its cooperation with the OTS as an observer member. Even though there is a shortage of scholarly literature about the OTS in English-language academia, the existing material and noted achievements of the organization provide for a sound analysis against which a Hungarian assessment can be formulated.<sup>2</sup> A short overview of the identifiable problems facing the OTS and the organization's potential is thus followed by an overall presentation of Hungarian participation in the international arena and its relation to the Turkic states. The study concludes with some practical remarks about Hungary's role in the organization as an observer state.

## Problems and Potential of the OTS

When it comes to assessing the performance of the OTS as an enhanced regional economic cooperation model, three distinct problems must be kept in mind. First, the region in which the OTS members are situated is not

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geographically contiguous, which makes it harder to establish some of the elements necessary for successful and enhanced economic cooperation.<sup>3</sup> Second, the Turkic states are quite diverse in their political structure, geography and foreign policy traditions. The third hindrance of collaboration facing the OTS is the role of outside actors in the regions involving OTS members, especially Central Asia. In the section below,

this study highlights those hindrances and evaluates the development of the OTS against this background.

The OTS consists of a diverse set of countries: founding members Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are located in Central Asia, like Uzbekistan which joined a decade later in 2019; Azerbaijan is located in the South Caucasus region; and Türkiye stretches across Anatolia and Southeastern Europe. These countries are separated by the Caspian Sea and Armenia, thus not making a unified bloc that would enhance trade, logistics and other forms of cooperation. Yet the OTS members are not completely disconnected either. Since the Azerbaijani victory in the 44-day war in 2021, plans have been formulated to develop the Zangezur corridor and other interconnections in the Caucasus region. The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway has been operational since 2017, which greatly enhances the connection between this region and Türkiye. Nonetheless, the connection between Central Asia and the Caucasus entails crossing the Caspian Sea, which requires extra investments to develop ports and logistical facilities in the coastal countries.<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that most forms of global economic cooperation do not involve countries so far apart. Yet even though the geographical divisions among the OTS members are quite significant, efforts to overcome these differences are making progress in the region.

The reason these countries seek to cooperate lies in the cultural dimension of the Turkic nations—the basis of their cooperation is their shared cultural background, rather than geographical proximity or easily interfacing economies. In this sense, the European parallel is not the EU, nor even the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) at its high time of significance, both of which have to do with geographical proximity, but rather international alignments of countries based on shared cultural heritage, like Francophonie or Lusophonia. If international significance beyond cultural cooperation is taken into account, it can safely be said that the OTS has much higher aims and more elaborate cooperative structures than any of the aforementioned culturally defined organizations. In short, given its geographical hindrances, the OTS is progressing quite well and strives to resolve problems of distance through infrastructural investments.

The second major obstacle to cooperation among the Turkic states has to do with the different political and foreign policy traditions of the participating members. Türkiye is a nation that has long been part of the European state system and is even militarily integrated into NATO. Other OTS members were part of the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union, and thus have a distinctly Russian-influenced state structure. Azerbaijan differs even further, since it is not a Central Asian but a Caucasian country with strong cultural



ties to the Persian-speaking world. The Central Asian members and Azerbaijan gained their independence from the Soviet Union recently in 1991, and thus they legitimately guard their sovereignty even against the lure of regional cooperation.<sup>5</sup> Although these countries are protective of their national sovereignty, some are ensnared in the economic gravity of their major neighbors: Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and thus can be considered part of a Russia-dominated economic space, while Türkiye is in a customs union with the EU. Such a diverse situation in trade makes the establishment of a free trade area cumbersome, and creates hurdles even for any seriously aligned trade policy. A heavily coordinated trade policy, let alone a customs regime, would inevitably increase tensions within the already established economic cooperation agreements by which these countries are bound.<sup>6</sup>

Nonetheless, the OTS is still a major driving force for enhancing international trade, logistics and infrastructure investments in its member countries. The hindrances mentioned above do not render the OTS a superfluous organization. On the contrary, they highlight the importance of this cooperation as a way to enhance trade and logistics. These countries have great potential. For example, the ancient Silk Road ran through their territory and, since 1993, the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) program has operated there with several railway and ferry routes.<sup>7</sup> The Chinese-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is centered on the idea of reviving a transcontinental trade route that could rival existing patterns of maritime trade and transport goods from China and East Asia to Europe through Central Asia, bypassing Russia. The present Russian-Ukrainian conflict makes the relevance of the Central Asia-Caucasus-Anatolia route all the more important, and these geographical regions are precisely where the OTS nations are situated.

A third problem facing Turkic cooperation is the role of external powers. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a power vacuum emerged in Central Asia, since the outgoing great power lacked both the capacity and the will to act as an economic and political hub. Türkiye was the first country to try to fill this void, but its initial success was rather limited. In the 2000s, however, a more pragmatic Turkish political outreach yielded better results.<sup>8</sup>

The old/new external actors are indeed Russia and China, and specifically for integration, their respective projects, the EAEU and the BRI deserve attention. Central Asian states tend to see the EAEU as the more restrictive organization, with its rigid structure and its proposals to transform the entity to a real supranational organization with a (possibly) common currency, while the BRI is more flexible, and participation does not require any loss or pooling of



sovereignty. So far, China's presence has been mostly confined to the economic domain, while Russia tends to play an important political as well as economic role in the region (see for example Russia's intervention in Kazakhstan in January 2022). While great power logic would dictate increasing competition between Beijing and Moscow, the larger political context (deteriorating relations between Europe and Russia due to the war in Ukraine) and economic necessities rather push for cooperation between the EAEU and the BRI. Such cooperation could be advantageous for the Central Asian countries, as they try to minimize unwanted influence while maximizing economic benefits.<sup>9</sup> In this respect, under the present circumstances, great power proximity and their competition do not hinder, but rather support the economic development of Central Asia. The rest of the OTS members are further removed from this competition and their pragmatic relationship with both major external actors could contribute to the economic and infrastructural development of the whole organization.

## Hungary's Attitude toward International Cooperation

Hungary is a middle-sized country in European terms and one of the most open economies in Europe, which makes the issue of economic cooperation key to the country's foreign policy. The country lost roughly two-thirds of its territory and one-third of its Hungarian-language population with the Treaty of Trianon, which concluded the First World War in this part of Europe. After a brief interval of independence, the country was dragged into the next world war, and was occupied first by Germany and then by the Soviet Union. Though never a part of the Soviet Union, Hungary became embedded in the so-called Socialist Eastern Bloc, which defined the country's position in the international system for many years to come. In this sense, the country's position is quite unique: Hungary was part of the military (Warsaw Pact) and economic integration (COMECON) of the Eastern bloc, but its economic ties were increasingly strong with Western Europe. Given its limited room for maneuver, Hungary's position was to maintain loyalty to Eastern integrational models and develop a social and political fabric that was as far as possible from the Russian-designed Soviet type. Hungary's participation in COMECON, specifically, where it supported market-orient-

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ed reforms and close cooperation in trade with Western Europe, is a case in point.<sup>10</sup>

After the collapse of Communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Central European countries felt that they were now free to develop ties with Western countries. There was considerable optimism at the prospect of European integration, which went hand in hand with increased security and prosperity.<sup>11</sup> In the 1990s, basically every Central European country, and Hungary in particular, downgraded their foreign policy interests in a global sense, and concentrated almost exclusively on the development of European relations with the aim of joining the EU. This exclusive interest in Western integration was viewed by some with caution, but it was said that no country was wholly independent in a globalized world, thus a pooling of sovereignty was critical for the functioning of a modern state in Europe.<sup>12</sup> Hungary's admission to the EU was ultimately successful in 2004, but by this time, over-dependence on Western Europe was already identified as a problem. Since 2003, an opening to China has been started with rather moderate results, but a global Hungarian foreign policy was not in sight. Although European integration brought great results, it did not bring about a radical shift from the periphery to the core in terms of economic progress. Disillusionment was quite widespread across the whole Central European region, and was further exacerbated by the global financial crisis of 2008–2009.<sup>13</sup>

Hungary's new foreign policy from 2010 on emphasized the importance of two global trends: a weakening of the neoliberal consensus, especially in its Western-inspired form throughout the globe, and the strengthening of Asia in international relations. The 2010s highlighted many of the EU's shortcomings while stressing the importance of a global opening.<sup>14</sup> According to the official policies of the newly elected government of Viktor Orbán, a diversification of external relations, with a special emphasis on foreign trade, was essential in achieving economic growth. The direction of such diversification was toward

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the fast-growing countries in the East; the policy thus became known as the "Eastern Opening." This opening was not only supported by the general disillusionment with the EU as a panacea to all economic problems; it supported an old reflex in Hungarian political discourse, so-called Turanism, which emphasized the Eastern origins of the Hungarians. Besides all that, the compelling

rise of China and its ambitious foreign policy ideas related to the BRI gave additional backing to the concept of the Eastern Opening. This Eurasia narrative even reverberated with old Hungarian concepts of getting past its peripheral position in Europe by becoming a bridge between East and West.<sup>15</sup>

An Eastern Opening is of course not an abandonment, or even drop in interest vis-à-vis the EU: in fact, without strong embeddedness in the European structure, Hungary could not serve as a bridge between East and West. The country's commitment to the values of Europe and the integrational structures of the EU are indeed strong; its renewed interest in the East is rather dictated by economic pragmatism. Hungarian foreign policy has been complemented by a very strong foreign economic dimension that permeated the whole structure of the country's foreign relations—the Ministry for Foreign Affairs was even renamed the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade in 2014. The establishment of the Hungarian Investment Promotion Agency (HIPA), the network of commercial attachés and the dual effort to draw investments and enhance exports were all visible expressions of this new strategy.<sup>16</sup>

In this new policy, all sorts of new foreign policy directions that have a potential for economic benefits are welcome. In the case of the OTS, both the rich resources of the participating countries and their economic freedom provide fertile ground for cooperation. What is lacking is their logistical capacity for trade: The Logistical Performance Index (LPI), which measures countries' logistical trade capacity on a scale of 1–167 (1 being the best), ranks Kazakhstan at 71, Uzbekistan at 99, Azerbaijan at 125 and Hungary at 31.<sup>17</sup> However, the relatively underdeveloped logistical infrastructure of the Turkic states is deemed a good field of future cooperation in the region. Added to this fact are the very ambitious plans on the part of the Turkic nations to improve precisely those areas with foreign direct investment (FDI). These countries are also very much keen on diversifying their economies and their foreign relations. One highly promising field of cooperation is agriculture, if only considering the fact that the area of Kazakhstan's wheat-producing lands are 150% larger than Hungary's entire territory. However, as Kazakhstan's yields are lower than the Hungarian average, this indicates the need for agrotechnical know-how that Hungary could export in the long term.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the OTS members, especially the Central Asian nations of the organization, represent fruitful directions for Hungary's Eastern Opening policy. Not to mention the fact that Hungary has much deeper and essential foreign economic ties with Türkiye and Azerbaijan.

Hungary's policy of Eastern Opening is not confined exclusively to the area of economy. As the world grows increasingly multipolar and power competition returns as a defining trait of the international system, Central Asia is yet again a major field of international politics,<sup>19</sup> and some OTS countries, most

notably Türkiye and Azerbaijan, have proven to be rising middle powers in their respective regions.<sup>20</sup> As foreign economic relations are always supported by trustworthy and active foreign political relations, it is interesting to see the diplomatic representation of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries in the OTS nations.

**Table 1: Diplomatic Representation of CEE countries in OTS member states**

	HU	PL	CZ	SK	BG	RO	CR	A	SRB
Azerbaijan	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Kazakhstan	E, CG	E, CG	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Kyrgyzstan	E								
Uzbekistan	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E

Source: László Vasa, “A Türk Tanács közép-ázsiai és kaukázusi országai a magyar külgazdaság perspektívájából (The Countries of the Turkish Council in Central Asia and the Caucasus from the Perspective of the Hungarian Foreign Economy),” KKI-elemzések, No. 8 (2021), p. 9.

Note: HU – Hungary, PL – Poland, CZ – Czech Republic, SK – Slovakia, BG – Bulgaria, RO – Romania, A – Austria, SRB – Serbia, E – Embassy, CG – Consulate General

As Table 1 indicates, Hungary is the only Central European country to have a full-fledged diplomatic representation in OTS countries. This could amount to a serious potential, but it is not yet fully implemented. Foreign economic data show that traditional trading partners and great economic powers (China, Russia, Korea, Germany, etc.) come first in most OTS member states as the largest trade partners, and even some Central European countries come before Hungary.

**Table 2: Largest import partners of OTS member states by ranking**

	Poland	Czech Republic	Hungary	Slovakia
Azerbaijan	20	24	29	41
Kazakhstan	17	20	31	44
Kyrgyzstan	16	30	25	49
Uzbekistan	21	22	32	50

Source: László Vasa, “A Türk Tanács közép-ázsiai és kaukázusi országai a magyar külgazdaság perspektívájából (The Countries of the Turkish Council in Central Asia and the Caucasus from the Perspective of the Hungarian Foreign Economy),” KKI-elemzések, No. 8 (2021), p. 9.

These data practically mean that political relations might enhance economic ties, but further work needs to be done to fully implement the potential evident in the positive cultural attitudes and positive political attitude be-

tween OTS members, including Hungary. Hungary's interest in enhancing ties with the OTS members is thus clearly in line with its general policy of Eastern Opening as well as its cultural ties with Turkic-speaking countries. This renewed interest also has its roots in the recognition of a global shift in economic preferences, with countries striving to diversify and the political environment becoming increasingly multipolar. Given the potential fields of cooperation and immense richness of the OTS countries, combined with Hungary as a bridgehead to the EU, this cooperation has great potential that is not yet fully exploited, and traditional trade ties are still very strong.

## Hungary's Role as an Observer State in the OTS

In international organizations, full membership procures full rights and obligations within the organization. In most cases, it involves the right to vote and, by extension, the right to block decisions. In situations in which certain obstacles prevent a country from fully joining an international organization, observer status can often be offered and accepted. Such a status can derive from international disputes, i.e., not every member recognizes the prospective member country to the same degree; or it can derive from the fact that the specific country cannot or does not wish to fully join the organization. In this respect, observer status as such differs radically from international organization to international organization and from observer state to observer state.<sup>21</sup> An observer can never vote, but is usually present at every session of a given international organization. Its role is thus largely informal, but nonetheless has great significance.<sup>22</sup> Observer status can be an antechamber to full membership in some cases; in others, it is a special status with limited rights and obligations and a very distinctive role in the life of the organization.<sup>23</sup>

Hungary's place as an observer state in the OTS is appropriate, since the country is further away geographically than the rest of the states. Moreover, its membership in a set of other international organizations would render it difficult to effectively work together with other states in very different circumstances and a different geographical and international environment. The other observer state of the OTS, Turkmenistan, is situated in an ideal trajectory toward full membership, since it is situated in one of the regions the OTS covers, and shares

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a common history and largely similar political and economic structures with the rest of the Central Asian OTS member states.

From the point of view of international cooperation, an observer status can have multiple benefits at different levels. Those levels are identifiable as the organization level and the state-to-state level. At this latter level, Hungary's participation at the meetings and projects of the OTS is beneficial, as semi-institutional ties can be developed at these fora. Indeed, some of the higher education cooperation and think-tank level meetings were inspired by and originated at OTS meetings, not between individual member-states, and the whole community benefits from those types of relations. Yet another field of enhancing member-to-member relationship could be foreign economic policy, since some of the sectors of the economy have a high degree of state incentives in many OTS member states; thus, political decision made at the OTS level have a deep influence on the future directions of the economy. A great example of this could be the Uzbek-Hungarian Potato Research Institute in Tashkent.<sup>24</sup> This initiative resulted from a state visit of Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán to Uzbekistan within the framework of the cooperation of Turkic states. Overall, as a direct meeting point between countries that otherwise have no strong cooperative structures through which to interact on a day-to-day basis, such an institutional framework is very useful to identify and initiate projects to enhance foreign economic relations.

As noted in the previous section, there are many steps to be taken on the grounds of good political relations, but without them, these developments

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are not viable at all; a special and permanent body that facilitates dialogue among full OTS members and Hungary is the Representation Office in Budapest opened in 2021. This office connects the cultural and economic activities of the full OTS members and Hungary, and is a hub for further cooperation.

At the organization level, observer states increase the status of an organization, as they effectively convey the message that this specific organization

has the potential to reach out beyond its actual membership with an already identified common set of interests. This is clearly observable in the history of many established international organizations; as they grew, more states

became interested in their developments and activities. Even if they were not in the same geographical region, nor at the same level of development, were not eligible for or could not see the exact benefits of full memberships, such states could opt to become observer states.

Another very important field where the benefits of the observer status can be seen is agenda-shaping. It is not by chance that the term 'agenda-setting' is used more commonly, as it remains the purview of the more influential full members, but even an observer state, through its right to speak at the organization's fora, has a great role in shaping its agenda. A demonstrating example could be the Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade in Hungary (IFAT), which is part of the think-tank cooperation of the OTS member states. IFAT takes part in international conferences through this framework, and regularly contributes to academic and policy discussions. It was through an IFAT initiative that a major conference was held in Budapest in November 2021 regarding economic cooperation.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, it is highly valuable to have a long-range view of an organization's cooperation; the perspective of an observer state is at the same time within the context of the organization and also presents the view of the "outside world". Hungarian participants in OTS fora thus try to shed light on topics that could enhance the coordinated action of the OTS members in the international system. A positive example is the support given by OTS members to Azerbaijan in the 44-day war, which made Turkic cooperation visible on the world stage and enhanced the prestige of the OTS as a working platform.

Still at the institutional level, international connections are essential in this period of development for the OTS. Practically, this means that the more institutional cooperative frameworks the OTS has with other organizations, the more embedded it becomes in the international arena. In this context, a member state, and even an observer state, brings to the table the added value of those other organizations in which it takes part as a member. For Hungary, the most important points of contact are obviously NATO and the EU. Official connections with these organizations through Hungary as an observer state could be very important to the OTS, through informal networking and in the future potentially through inter-institutional working groups. The EU, due to its sheer economic importance, is a very important place of cooperation, as is NATO.

Hungary's other participations, for instance in the Lusophonia, could serve as an inventory of know-how, as the association of those countries in the Portuguese cultural sphere could provide useful best practices for the OTS as an organization also founded on shared cultural values. Access to the successful



workings of already established international organizations could help develop the cooperation of Turkic nations at higher speed, as the OTS could then bypass some of the early problems those institutions have already overcome. In this sense, the international embeddedness of the OTS is a point where an observer state could play a very significant role.

## Conclusion

In light of the factors underlined in the previous sections of this study, there are some practical recommendations to consider for the future regarding the development of the OTS framework and for deepening relations between Hungary and the Turkic world.

*Enhancing cooperation in twinning and other technical issues.* As the regions of the OTS member states are at the doorstep of major changes in their urban life, there could be a broad avenue of cooperation between cities from Hungary and Central Asia and the Caucasus. Given the increasing need for enhancing public transport, initiating smart city solutions and planning more sustainable cities with higher living conditions, sharing the experiences of city planning, urbanization and the implementation of new technologies could provide fertile ground for cooperation. Twin city programs and other kinds of technical cooperation would require limited investment, and could potentially yield great results. In November 2021, the core topic at the OTS summit was indeed green technologies and smart cities, so important work has already begun in this direction.

*Enhancing higher education cooperation.* Due to different models in education and science transfer, Turkic countries have a limited number of programs and only a narrow scope of cooperation in this field. Hungary brings added value to its participation in the OTS through its access to those mechanisms in the EU and Europe more broadly, which it could channel fruitfully into OTS cooperation. Hungary has always been a leading partner in higher education cooperation, for instance with the *Stipendium Hungaricum* program, which not only provides training for talented students, but also serves as a gateway to European institutions of higher learning. In a broader sense, all sorts of academic and educational cooperation programs are useful in furthering people-to-people contact. This would benefit both Hungary and the full OTS members, because although there is a deep cultural affinity and affection between Hungary and the OTS member states, in the broader society, there is very little close contact between peoples.



*Supporting connections between OTS and EU members.* Deriving from the theoretical approach provided above, one key element of cooperation with members of other organizations is that they can facilitate contacts with states of other organizational backgrounds. Hungary, as member of the EU, could play a key role in bringing the outlook of the Turkic nations and the European states closer together. A breakthrough in this sense was Prime Minister Orbán's proposal to hold a summit between OTS members and the Visegrád Group (V4) members at some point during the Hungarian presidency of the V4.<sup>26</sup> Although the limelight of the 2022 V4 Summit was taken away by the war in Ukraine and the idea is yet to be accomplished, it is well worth pursuing and bringing to fruition. Such an event could be the first European-Turkic meeting, which would definitely enhance the legitimacy of the OTS in the non-Turkic world and facilitate better understanding among those participating. Pursuant to such a first step, a series of further consultations could be called to action.

*Supporting action in the EU in areas of common interest.* In spite of their geographical distance, there are many issues of common interest among Hungary and different groupings of the OTS members. Since Hungary is a member of the EU and takes part in its decision-making processes, it could use its leverage to shape the EU agenda in a direction beneficial to a better understanding of the Turkic nations. In fact, there are a set of issues that could be addressed to the benefit of the OTS, the EU and Hungary, most prominently in the fields of security, migration and energy. In terms of security, an outstanding issue is the collapse of Afghanistan and its consequences. Consultations between states that actually neighbor Afghanistan and key donor countries would be beneficial for a better understanding of the problems the country faces and how to address them.

Similarly, Türkiye's unique location gives it a perspective on regional security that would greatly benefit the EU. In one recent example, Hungary supported Türkiye when Ankara shared its concerns over the proposed NATO membership of Sweden and Finland regarding the lenient policies of those countries toward certain terrorist organizations that Ankara deems a security threat.<sup>27</sup> Yet another field is migration, especially irregular mass migration. Even though this problem has been temporarily alleviated by the COVID-19 pandemic, it still looms large, especially given the collapse of Afghanistan and the ongoing instability in the Middle East. Türkiye, an OTS member, is already the main country bearing the burden of illegal migration, and the 2015 deal between the EU and Türkiye should be updated. This point is often supported by Hungary in the EU.

Hungary could also serve as a bridge between the EU and the Turkic nations in the field of energy. Due to the Russian war in Ukraine, the EU initiated a series of sanctions vis-à-vis Russia that started with the financial sector; the question of oil imports has been broached, and sanctions may eventually extend to natural gas as well. European economies and industries would have a very hard time without Russian hydrocarbons, so Hungary is not inclined to support a full-scale embargo on Russian gas and oil, but it does have a

**Hungary could also serve as a bridge between the EU and the Turkic nations in the field of energy.**

long-stated policy to help diversify Europe's hydrocarbon supply. In this sense, new opportunities will open in the long run in the field of energy transport and trade, in which Central Asia and the Caucasus could play a central role. Although serious in-

vestments need to be made in this field, the OTS could be a safe and sustainable partner in helping to secure European demand, especially in the wake of a devastating war and very uncertain Russian-European relations in the coming year(s). There are other contenders trying to fill some of the gaps left by the Russians, so imports from OTS members will need additional advocacy from within the EU, which can be facilitated by Hungary.

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# Turkmenistan's Neutral Foreign Policy: Peace, Security and Sustainable Development

Amangeldi RAHMANOV\*

### Abstract

*The resolution on the “Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan” adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 12, 1995 brought about Turkmenistan’s official recognition as a neutral state by the world community, and gave the country’s foreign policy and diplomatic work additional impetus. Turkmenistan’s policy of permanent neutrality has a peacekeeping dimension; it places great importance on preventive diplomacy, i.e., diplomatic actions aimed at preventing disagreements between parties from arising and preventing existing differences from escalating into conflict, and limiting the spread of an already existing conflict. The experience of the development of neutral Turkmenistan during its years of independence has convincingly shown that the Turkmen model of neutrality supports Turkmenistan’s long-term national interests, and has become an effective tool for mutual understanding and cooperation among peoples. The Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly in February 2017, proclaiming December 12 as the “International Day of Neutrality” was another significant contribution of Turkmenistan’s neutral foreign policy and diplomacy to the global strengthening of peace, security and sustainable development. Lastly, the accession of Turkmenistan to the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) as an observer at the 8th Summit of Organization of Turkic States in November 2021 is another important step for the foreign policy framework of this Turkic-speaking country, which aims to contribute to sustainable development in its region.*

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## Introduction

The great Turkmen poet and thinker Magtymguly Pyragy dreamed of building a secular, legal and democratic state for the Turkmen. When Turkmenistan gained its independence in 1991 as a result of the collapse of the totalitarian Soviet state, the Turkmen people chose the path of neutrality, with its roots in the centuries-old traditions and way of life of the Turkmen people, as the basis of their country's domestic and foreign policies. Turkmenistan's policy of neutrality is characterized by such principles as good neighborliness, desire for mutual understanding, natural peacefulness, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, non-participation in military alliances and blocs, and the resolution of international issues through political and diplomatic means.

The end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s went down in history as a period of great events that profoundly changed the political face of the world. The "Cold War" between the West and the East, primarily between the USSR and the USA, which lasted for decades, came to an end. The East European peoples abandoned socialism, and each chose its own path of development, embarking on the path of democracy. With the collapse of the USSR, a number of states in Europe and Asia, including Turkmenistan, gained their independence in the autumn of 1991 and seized the opportunity to create their own national state.

After Turkmenistan gained its independence, the Turkmen people chose a policy of permanent, "positive neutrality" as the basis of their country's domestic and foreign policies.<sup>1</sup> This policy became the basis of Turkmenistan's national development, and the experience of its progress over the years of in-

**After Turkmenistan gained its independence, the Turkmen people chose a policy of permanent, "positive neutrality" as the basis of their country's domestic and foreign policies.**

dependence has convincingly shown the full alignment of the Turkmen model of neutrality with Turkmenistan's long-term national interests. This policy stemmed from the centuries-old traditions and way of life of the Turkmen people, characterized by openness, hospitality and good neighborliness; humanity; the desire for mutual understanding; religious tolerance; natural peaceful-

ness; non-interference in the internal affairs of other states; respect for their independence, territorial integrity and culture, non-participation in military

unions and blocs; and the solution of international issues by political and diplomatic means.

This article will first examine the main objectives of Turkmenistan's "positive neutrality" foreign policy. It will then focus on the peculiarities of the Turkmen model of neutrality. After taking up Turkmenistan's relations with the UN and its contribution to preventive diplomacy, it will discuss the economic and cultural aspects of its foreign policy. Lastly, the article will touch upon Turkmenistan's accession to the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) as an observer country in 2021, and the effects of its participation in the OTS for sustainable development at the regional level.

## Main Objectives of Turkmenistan's "Positive Neutrality"

The main objectives of Turkmenistan's foreign policy of "positive neutrality" were determined after it gained independence. These are the preservation and strengthening of Turkmenistan's state sovereignty; the growth of its role and importance in the system of international relations; the maintenance of the most favorable foreign policy conditions for the internal development of the state; the proper identification, protection and provision of Turkmenistan's national interests; ensuring the country's security by political and diplomatic means; and the development of constructive, mutually beneficial cooperation with all foreign partners on the basis of equality and mutual respect.<sup>2</sup> These principles fully correspond to the universally recognized norms of international law and the UN Charter.

Having proclaimed its principles of neutrality and open doors in international relations, the Turkmen state began to put them into practice. Receiving recognition of its neutral status from the entire international community was the second step Turkmenistan took in this area. To achieve this goal at the state level, a large number of foreign policy and diplomatic activities were carried out over a considerable time. For example, on July 10, 1992, the capital of Finland, Helsinki, hosted a meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the countries participating in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). During the meeting, Turkmenistan officially announced its neutral policy for the first time. The CSCE member states supported Turkmenistan's policy of neutrality based on the fact that the Turkmen people have the right to choose and have indeed already chosen the policy of neutrality.

On March 15, 1995, Turkmenistan participated in the third meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the countries of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) held in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. At the summit, Turkmenistan informed the participants of the meeting about its assumption of all obligations arising from the legal status of a permanent neutral state at the constitutional level. In the Islamabad Declaration, adopted at

the meeting, the ECO member states again supported Turkmenistan's neutral policy.

On October 20, 1995, Turkmenistan participated in the 11<sup>th</sup> conference of the Heads of State and Government of the countries participating in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), held in Cartagena, Colombia, and became the 114<sup>th</sup> member of this political association. Since its establishment in 1961, NAM has advocated the creation of a more just world order; it eschews the use of force or the threat of force in international affairs. Turkmenistan fully supports the noble goals and humane principles of NAM. The participating states of the conference supported Turkmenistan's neutral policy.<sup>3</sup>

Active diplomatic work aimed at obtaining recognition from the international community regarding the legal neutral status of Turkmenistan was also carried out at the level of diplomatic missions abroad, including the Embassy of Turkmenistan in the People's Republic of China (PRC), led by myself as Turkmenistan's first Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the PRC. During my official meetings with the leaders of China and the Heads of Diplomatic Missions in Beijing, I familiarized them in detail with the essence of the Turkmen model of neutrality. These efforts were supported through publications distributed by the embassy, together with the publishing houses of the host country of books about Turkmenistan's policy, my speeches at institutions, on the radio, on television and in the pages of newspapers and magazines in the host country. All this undoubtedly was of great importance in promoting our neutral policy, and gaining the recognition and support of the Chinese public and representatives of the world community. Over time, the support of many states of the world community, including the top leadership of China, for the policy of permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan, allowed our state to bring the issue to the level of the UN.

On December 12, 1995, upon Turkmenistan's initiative, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution on the "Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan".<sup>4</sup> The General Assembly first recognized and supported the status of permanent neutrality proclaimed by Turkmenistan; second, it called on the

**On December 12, 1995, upon Turkmenistan's initiative, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution on the "Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan"**

member states of the UN to respect and support this status, and to respect Turkmenistan's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The adoption of this historic resolution by the UN General Assembly meant the recognition of Turkmenistan as a neutral state by the world community. It also set new tasks for

the diplomatic service of our country related to filling this policy with new content, strengthening the neutral status of the country as a whole and developing steps toward its implementation.



Because of my official role, I was witness to numerous outpourings of support in response to the decision in official, business and humanitarian circles in China. The Chinese public expressed its full support for the UN General Assembly resolution, in the belief that the resolution would help improve the political situation not only in Asia, but in the world as a whole. Sun Yiming, Chairman of the Academic Council of the Institute of International Relations of the PRC, stated,

“The neutral status of Turkmenistan, officially recognized by the UN, will contribute to strengthening peace, security and stability in Asia. Positive neutrality in politics and openness in the economy as the main principles of Turkmenistan’s foreign policy are in tune with the positions of the PRC; they are approved by official Beijing, which advocates that in the international space all states have equal rights regarding their own views and choice of development paths.”<sup>5</sup>

“The countries of the Asian continent, including China, which have embarked on the path of modernization, need a peaceful and stable life,” said Chen Gen-tao, Editor-in-chief of *China Features Bulletin*. “Thus, the first peacekeeping efforts of Ashgabat serve as confirmation of the full justification of its desire to assume the role of a regional peacekeeping center.”<sup>6</sup> The UN recognition of Turkmenistan’s neutrality was all the more timely as, on the eve of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the task of restoring the Silk Road as a bridge between the basins of the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans had arisen. Therefore, as the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Chinese Association of Entrepreneurs Zhang Pein emphasized, “The neutral status of Turkmenistan, recognized by the UN, corresponds not only to the political, but also to the economic interests of China and therefore deserves its support.”<sup>7</sup> Chinese writer Gao Mana stated,

“The Parthian kingdom, stretching from the Amu Darya to the Tigris and Euphrates, was not only the historical crossroads of Europe and Asia, it also imbued the best traditions of the ancient civilization of the East and the West. The Particularly revered historical values of Parthia are an inspiring example of the restoration of the Silk Road—the guarantor of the future prosperity of our peoples. The neutral status of Turkmenistan, being an important step along this path and a factor of regional stability, will also make it possible to intensify our cultural interaction.”<sup>8</sup>

## Peculiarities of the Turkmen Model of Neutrality

The Turkmen model of neutrality has some peculiarities that should be noted here. According to international law, Turkmenistan’s neutrality is *recognized* by origin, as confirmed by the resolution of the UN General Assembly on the “Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan”; *permanent* in form, i.e., not limited in time and acting both in wartime and in peacetime; *positive* in content,

which implies the active policy of the state in matters of maintaining peace and stability, and developing relations of friendship and cooperation between states.<sup>9</sup>

The UN General Assembly resolution on Turkmenistan's policy of neutrality gave the country's diplomatic service an additional impetus to intensify the implementation of its foreign policy. As of 2022, Turkmenistan has established and maintained diplomatic relations with almost 150 states, became a member of about 50 international organizations and participated in more than 150 international conventions, treaties and multilateral documents. Turkmenistan's foreign policy is implemented based on the State Foreign Policy Concept or "Concept" for short, which is an analytical and prognostic document developed from a scientific point of view, designed for a certain period and taking into account the global situation. When forming the Concept, our state proceeds from the objective fact that Turkmenistan develops civilized relations with all states, and does not have hostile relations with any foreign state. The implementation of Turkmenistan's foreign policy tasks can in no way infringe on the interests of any other state.

Turkmenistan's policy of neutrality also has a peacekeeping dimension. Turkmenistan provides its territory for international dialogue on issues of peace, security, cooperation and development, and the capital of Turkmenistan, the city of Ashgabat, is now a peacekeeping center for solving regional and global problems, identifying and eliminating potential sources of tension, responding to internal and transnational challenges and threats to peace and security, and supporting the sustainable development of the region. Even in the 1990s, Ashgabat was already becoming more and more famous as a peacekeeping center. This is evidenced by the good offices rendered to the Tajik people in resolving the difficult socio-political situation in Tajikistan in 1995–1996, as well as the active participation of Turkmenistan in the late 1990s in UN efforts to peacefully resolve the civil confrontation in Afghanistan. In recent years, the peacekeeping work of our country has significantly intensified.

At present, Turkmenistan's diplomatic service is implementing the State Foreign Policy Concept for 2017–2023.<sup>10</sup> In accordance with the Concept, Turkmenistan pays great attention to the development of cooperation with the states of the Asia-Pacific region, the countries of the Near and Middle East, Europe and America, and with many international and regional organizations—in particular, the UN, the EU and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

## Turkmenistan's Relations with the UN and its Contribution to Preventive Diplomacy

On March 2, 1992, after gaining its independence, Turkmenistan became a member of the UN; Turkmenistan's permanent mission, established under this organization, became its first diplomatic mission established abroad. I was appointed as the first permanent representative of Turkmenistan to the UN in the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary. I was further instructed by the President of Turkmenistan to head the Turkmen delegation at the 46<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly, where Turkmenistan was admitted as a member of the UN. As a member state of the UN, Turkmenistan recognizes its priority in resolving any issues within its competence. The adoption by our country of the legal status of permanent neutrality does not affect the fulfilment of its obligations arising from the UN Charter or its contributions to achieving the goals of the UN. Today, cooperation between Turkmenistan and the UN is of a strategic nature. At the sessions of the UN General Assembly, our country constantly puts forward more and more large-scale foreign policy initiatives aimed at strengthening peace, security and sustainable development. In recent years, the UN General Assembly has adopted about ten resolutions authored by Turkmenistan, including those on the development of international trade and economic relations, ensuring environmental and energy security, creating international transport corridors, resolving the situation in Afghanistan, etc. These proposals and resolutions have found wide recognition in the world community and are making a significant contribution to the solution of the regional and global problems facing humanity.<sup>11</sup>

In the framework of its foreign policy, neutral Turkmenistan pays great attention to preventive diplomacy. We understand preventive diploma-

cy as diplomatic actions aimed at preventing the emergence of disagreements between parties, preventing the escalation of existing disagreements into conflict and limiting the spread of already existing conflicts. On issues of preventive diplomacy, Turkmenistan began to establish cooperation with the UN in the first years of its participation in the UN's activities. In the early 1990s, one of the priorities of the sessions of the UN General Assembly was the strengthening of peace. Thus, in June 1992, at the request of the UN Security Council, UN Secretary-General Boutros-Boutros Ghali prepared for the 47<sup>th</sup> session a report titled "An Agenda for Peace", in which the concept of preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping was formulated in an expanded form. This

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report attracted great attention from all UN member states. The resolution, adopted at the 47<sup>th</sup> session by consensus, contained a number of measures to strengthen the role of the UN in expanding and supporting preventive diplomacy.<sup>12</sup>

In order to intensify work in the field of preventive diplomacy under the UN Secretary-General, in early 1992, the Department of Political Affairs of the UN Secretariat was created, as were the positions of Ambassadors at Large. In March 1992, UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Raymond Sommerins was appointed Head of the Political Affairs Department of the UN Secretariat, and began to perform the duties of Ambassador at Large. The personal duties of this high-ranking UN diplomat included monitoring the political situation in the Asia-Pacific Region, including the states of Central Asia, and preparing appropriate recommendations to the Secretary-General on resolving emerging conflict situations.

Secretary-General Ghali prioritized strengthening regional peace and stability in the young independent states that had recently become members of the UN. He highly appreciated Turkmenistan's policy, noting it as an important stabilizing factor in the region. At the same time, he was seriously concerned about the situation in some parts of Central Asia. In this regard, the UN Secretary-General considered with particular interest the experience of those few states of the region, including Turkmenistan, which were islands of stability. At the suggestion of the Department of Political Affairs of the UN Secretariat, working contacts were established between the Department and the Permanent Mission of Turkmenistan to the UN, during which an exchange of views took place on the situation in the Central Asian region. During the first such meeting, as the Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan to the UN, I informed Under-Secretary Sommerins and the staff of the department of the stable socio-political situation in Turkmenistan, and outlined the country's policy in relation to neighboring Afghanistan. In my speech, I particularly stated that in its policy towards Afghanistan, Turkmenistan follows the policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of the neighboring country, stands for the preservation of its integrity, against the escalation of bloodshed on an interethnic basis, and proceeds from the fact that the resolution of the Afghan crisis is in the hands of the Afghan people themselves. Stressing that Turkmenistan would like to see the achievement of national accord in Afghanistan and the resolution of all problems on this basis, I also noted that Turkmenistan gives priority to the UN in achieving peace in Afghanistan, and that Turkmenistan will continue to provide the UN with all possible support in its work in Afghanistan.

In the second half of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, relations and cooperation between Turkmenistan and the outside world intensified significantly, and an effectively functioning system of foreign policy and diplomacy was formed in the country. Turkmenistan has become capable of putting forward and im-

plementing a multifaceted, comprehensive foreign policy aimed at solving the regional and global problems facing humanity. At the same time, the opening of the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) with headquarters in Ashgabat on December 10, 2007 was an important event, and its functioning has allowed Turkmenistan to significantly strengthen the preventive direction of its foreign policy and diplomacy.<sup>13</sup>

**In the second half of the first decade of the 21st century, relations and cooperation between Turkmenistan and the outside world intensified significantly, and an effectively functioning system of foreign policy and diplomacy was formed in the country.**

The UNRCCA mandate covers issues such as preventive diplomacy, situational analysis, coordination with regional organizations and ensuring an integrated UN approach in the region at large. Since its establishment, the UNRCCA has become a venue for negotiations that are relevant for establishing and developing close relations between the UN and the countries of Central Asia. Energy security; general disarmament; settlement of the situation in Afghanistan by peaceful means; the fight against international terrorism, illicit drug trafficking and other threats and challenges of our time; and seeking solutions to socio-economic and environmental problems have become the main areas of its activity. The significant results of the Center's activities and the unanimous adoption of the resolution "Role of the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia" at the 72<sup>nd</sup> session of the UN General Assembly on November 17, 2017, testify to the effectiveness of this political structure, which can help the countries of Central Asia resist emerging threats and challenges in the region, transfer disputes and contradictions into channels of negotiation and garner the comprehensive support of the world community for the practice of preventive diplomacy as an effective tool for peace-making.<sup>14</sup>

Over the years, Turkmenistan has maintained an effective partnership with the UNRCCA on such issues as exchanging experience, monitoring and evaluating regional development, developing and implementing preventive diplomacy, and maintaining peace and security. From the very beginning, Turkmenistan has assisted the UNRCCA in its activities aimed at developing regional cooperation and ensuring peace and security in the region. In terms of the cooperation between Turkmenistan and the UNRCCA, it should be noted that Turkmenistan's foreign policy initiatives and proposals are to a certain extent related to the powers of this Center; they highlight the tasks facing it and give impetus to the continued development of their effective cooperation. Adherence to the principle of neutrality is important in the work of the UNRCCA, as it is for Turkmenistan. The mutual combination of the principles of neutrality and preventive diplomacy in foreign policy work con-

tributes to strengthening trust between peoples and states, and is a guarantee of success in foreign policy in the interests of peace, security and stability in general. Yet, as practice shows, it is under the auspices of the UN that the levers of preventive diplomacy can work most effectively and bring about real results. Therefore, Turkmenistan attaches particular importance to its well-established, high-level cooperation with the UN, and makes efforts to strengthen and expand its fruitful cooperation with this world organization in various fields.

In February 2017, at the initiative of Turkmenistan, the UN General Assembly at its 71<sup>st</sup> session adopted a resolution declaring December 12 the “International Day of Neutrality”.<sup>15</sup> This was an event of historical and global significance because it testifies to the important role of the institution of neutrality at the present stage of world development. The adoption of this important document also points to the high efficiency of the contribution of Turkmenistan’s neutral foreign policy and diplomacy to the strengthening of peace, security and sustainable development, as well as the ever-increasing importance of the international experience of the Turkmen model of neutrality for improving the modern system of international relations.

The resolution establishing the International Day of Neutrality drew intensive attention at the regional and international level as well. Many organizations, starting with the UN, have acknowledged this important day and its profound meaning. For instance, the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), previously called the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (Turkic Council), issued a statement appreciating Turkmenistan’s important initiative and putting forward the will to increase cooperation with Turkmenistan on the terms the country prefers.<sup>16</sup>

To ensure the effectiveness of Turkmenistan’s policy of neutrality, it is very important that all employees of its diplomatic corps concentrate their efforts on consistent protection, ensuring the national interests of our country, and developing and strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation with various states around the world. These priority tasks are of great importance for those who are directly involved in the training of diplomatic personnel. First of all, we are talking about the Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan. The truth is simple: today, without new knowledge and approaches, it is impossible to teach a future diplomat how to creatively comprehend the upcoming realities of this century. We, lecturers of the national school of diplomacy, see our main task in making our students well aware of the new geopolitical picture of the world and Turkmenistan’s place in it, and develop knowledge about the major issues of our time—and the necessary skills to address them—at an expert level. Future specialists should master the methods and techniques of specific diplomatic work, be able to see the economic side of any major issue, skillfully use modern information technologies and analyze all these issues from the point of view of the national interests of our country.

## Economic and Cultural Aspects of Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy

Turkmenistan attaches special importance to its relations with neighboring countries, with which it has historical, political, economic and cultural ties. Our country considers relations of friendship, goodwill and broad cooperation in all spheres as the most important guarantee of maintaining its sovereignty and neutral legal status, and successfully achieving its foreign policy goals.

Turkmenistan attributes great importance to the economic aspect of its foreign policy. Thus, one of the priority areas in the context of its bilateral relations with other countries is trade and economics. Turkmenistan considers the development of international economic cooperation based on equal partnership and mutual benefit as the most important tool for establishing interaction between states and regions, and maintaining peace and stability. To this end, Turkmenistan has developed cooperation with dozens of countries around the world. On July 22, 2020, Turkmenistan became an observer in the World Trade Organization (WTO). As former President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov stressed, “This will ensure the harmonious development of the national economy, strengthening our positions in foreign trade relations, developing multilateral cooperation and attracting more foreign investment.”<sup>17</sup>

**Turkmenistan attaches special importance to its relations with neighboring countries, with which it has historical, political, economic and cultural ties.**

The energy sector is of utmost significance for Turkmenistan's economic cooperation with other countries. Over the past few decades, the role of interstate interaction in the energy sector has noticeably increased. At present, approximately 80% of the world's electricity is still generated from extracted energy sources (oil, gas, peat, coal). Today, global explored reserves of natural gas amount to approximately 140–145 trillion cubic meters; about 2.2 trillion cubic meters are produced annually. Turkmenistan's natural gas reserves amount to 50 trillion cubic meters and our country ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in the world in terms of its reserves. Given the continued relevance of non-renewable fuel sources, Turkmenistan is expanding ways of exporting its energy wealth to world markets. For example, on December 14, 2009, the Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline, called the “Project of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, was put into operation. In November 2011, an agreement was reached between Turkmenistan and China to increase the annual volume of Turkmen natural gas exported to China to 65 billion cubic meters.<sup>18</sup>



It should also be noted that as of 2015, about 19.3% of the world's energy needs were met by renewable energy. In 2018, in Germany, renewable energy provided 38% of the electricity produced in the country. Turkmenistan began to develop in renewable energy in the 1960s, and engages in the use of renewable energy sources in industry and in everyday life. For example, in the first half of the 1970s, scientists from the Physical and Technical Institute of the Academy of Sciences of Turkmenistan carried out scientific communications on the use of solar energy by scientists from a number of countries, including the U.S. According to the Decree of the President of Turkmenistan, since January 29, 2019, today the Institute of Solar Energy of the Academy of Sciences of Turkmenistan operates in the system of the State Energy Institute of the country.<sup>19</sup>

The cultural aspect of Turkmenistan's foreign policy is also significant. Turkmenistan builds its relations with other states on the basis of respect for the culture, traditions and customs of their peoples. Turkmenistan considers cultural and humanitarian contacts as one of the most important means of bringing peoples closer together, deepening mutual understanding between them and developing relations of friendship and cooperation. Our country encourages the exchange of spiritual values between peoples, the processes of interpenetration and the mutual enrichment of cultures.

## Turkmenistan's Observer Status in the OTS and its Contribution to Sustainable Development

As part of its positive neutrality foreign policy, Turkmenistan became an observer to the OTS during the organization's 8<sup>th</sup> Summit held on November 12, 2021 in Istanbul. The theme of this summit, "green technologies and smart cities," was carefully determined as another important step for this organization's further contribution to sustainable development at the regional level. As a result of this high-level meeting, the decision on Turkmenistan's accession as an observer country was approved, and the statuses of partner and observer countries were specified. "Turkic World Vision-2040" and the Istanbul Declaration were also adopted at this annual summit, with numerous references to different aspects of sustainable development.

Sustainable development is an important element of Turkmenistan's positive neutrality foreign policy.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, Turkmenistan has regularly taken part in OTS dialogues as a guest of honor. The Istanbul Summit was historical in the sense that Turkmenistan became an official observer to the OTS, thereby assuming important responsibilities to enhance regional cooperation. "This is literally a historic event of paramount importance, marking the beginning of a qualitatively new stage in Turkmenistan's interaction with the Turkic Speaking States," said the previous leader of the nation.<sup>21</sup> Taking the floor at the Summit, then President of Turkmenistan noted the special importance



of this meeting. He underlined that “Turkmenistan considers the systematic and targeted strengthening of economic and trade relations within the OTS, particularly in the strategic areas as energy and transport.” He expressed the need to expand relations and cooperation of the member states within the framework of the UN, the ECO, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and other international and regional structures. He proposed to intensify cooperation and begin the implementation of the Caspian Sea-Türkiye-Europe power grid system project and transport and logistics corridors to revive the Great Silk Road, and to develop a common strategy among the Turkic States in this direction. These important steps toward empowering sustainable development at the regional level are introduced in the “Turkic World Vision–2040” document.<sup>22</sup>

**The Istanbul Summit was historical in the sense that Turkmenistan became an official observer to the OTS, thereby assuming important responsibilities to enhance regional cooperation.**

## Conclusion

Turkmenistan's status of positive neutrality yields beneficial outcomes not only for the country itself but also for peace and development at the regional and global levels. The UN General Assembly resolution made during its 50<sup>th</sup> session on December 12, 1995, on the “Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan” is bringing about constructive and comprehensive results today in many ways. Thus, the decision to establish UNRCCA in Ashgabat, turning the city into a hub for preventive diplomacy, significantly contributes to regional peace and development. Moreover, the economic and cultural aspects of the Turkmenistan's foreign policy generate a spirit of building good relations with regional and international actors on the basis of mutual interests. Last but not least, Turkmenistan's achievement of observer status in the OTS in 2021 during the historical Istanbul Summit opens a qualitatively new stage in Turkmenistan's interaction with the Turkic-speaking states while providing ample room to enhance cooperation between the OTS in a variety of different fields, including sustainable development. The “Turkic World Vision–2040” document adopted at the Istanbul Summit is a strategic road map to this end.

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## BOOK REVIEW

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### The New Silk Roads: The Present and Future of the World

By Peter Frankopan

New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019, 301 pages, ISBN: 9780525656418

In *The New Silk Roads*, Peter Frankopan, Professor of Global History at Oxford University, defines the notion of Silk Roads as a network of globalization in which people, cultures and continents interact. This conceptualization provides an understanding of the spread of religions and languages throughout history. The kind of globalization Silk Roads represent allows us to comprehend history as a whole, not in pieces, by emphasizing the bigger picture of the interactions between actors throughout the territory of Silk Roads. Frankopan connects the past, present and future of the Silk Roads; he argues that the notion explains the proliferation of actors and other entities like walnut trees throughout history, earning Silk Roads the nickname 'gene corridors'.

Frankopan argues that the twenty-first century is the century of the countries of the Silk Roads. Just as the phenomena that shaped the past occurred around Silk Roads, the future will also be shaped around Silk Roads. Silk Roads criss-cross a territory that includes countries from Türkiye to China, from Israel and India to Russia. *The New Silk Roads* aims to update recent history and re-interpret it. For example, Frankopan accepts the year 2015 as a turning point due to the Brexit vote, the election of Donald Trump, bold moves in Russian foreign policy, issues in Afghanistan and Syria, problems between Iran and Saudi Arabia, issues between India and Pakistan, and a coup attempt in Türkiye. Apart from the problematic issues, the intensifying economic cooperation among the Silk Roads countries, the agricultural and resource-based wealth of the states of the Silk Roads, and the use of the phenomenon of the Silk Roads by different actors and institutions are also crucial for recent history. Concerning all of the positive and negative issues, Frankopan claims that 'we are living in the Asian century already' and heralds the rising of the Silk Roads by emphasizing the decline of the West, especially the U.S. Geopolitically, he refers to the area of the countries of the Silk Roads as 'the heart of the world'.

Regarding the timing and context of the book, Frankopan had previously published another book on the topic, titled *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World*, in 2015. Amid the feedback he received, he gathered that readers desired to learn more about the ‘other’ part of the world—the story of Asia and the East—rather than Europe and the West. Thus, he decided to write *The New Silk Roads* to present a more comprehensive view.

The book consists of five chapters. In the first chapter, Frankopan examines the problematic issues and improvements taking place in the countries of the Silk Roads from the 1990s to the present, and the impact of Asian-led globalization, i.e., the rise of Asia, especially from an economic perspective. In addition to the positive aspects of this trend, Frankopan also mentions the instability, democratic deficiencies and failed states in this region. In the second chapter, Frankopan analyzes the speeches, acts and policies of Trump, former President of the U.S.; the rise of far-right parties and movements in Europe and the questioning of the EU’s reason for existence as proof of the West’s decline. In contrast, he points out the developments in the region of the Silk Roads in terms of working institutions, resource-rich states, increased cooperation among states, especially in the energy field, and the wide-ranging contributions of the new Silk Roads to the countries in the region in terms of energy pipelines, infrastructure projects, improving military relations and the resolution of border disputes. At the same time, Frankopan mentions the problematic relations of the countries in the region, the economic crises occurring in some states and democracy problems. He adds that he is heralding a *rising* new world from Asia—not a *free* new world.

Frankopan shapes the third chapter along axis of Xi Jinping’s speeches. Jinping has called upon the countries of the Silk Roads for friendship, cooperation and a new way of thinking under China’s facilitation and leadership against the hegemony of the U.S. by touting the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative. The early benefits, like the economic and geopolitical improvement of the Silk Roads, and the negative sides of the project—its ambiguity, the asymmetrical economic and territorial opportunities for China and Chinese businesses, and the poor business practices of the countries involved—are depicted. The fourth chapter addresses the business activities of the countries of the Silk Roads in more detail. According to Frankopan, the corporations of the Silk Roads countries are taking over Western companies. He claims that China and the U.S. are on opposite sides, and that they create a dichotomy. In his view, the rule-breaker and manipulator of this dichotomy is the U.S. The decline of the U.S. and the rise of China are proofs of the new world under the impact of the new Silk Roads.

In the fifth chapter, Frankopan evaluates the actors in the international system and their potential for cooperation with China, citing an economic center of gravity shift from West to East. The most prominent obstacle to the Silk Roads project, he notes, is China's economic growth and resulting credit boom; the countries interested in making an investment in OBOR do not have the money to do it. China supports those countries via loans, but they are not in a situation to repay the loans. Thus, these countries fall into a debt trap while expecting an improvement.

In conclusion, Frankopan claims that the changing world—or changing the world—is indispensable, and that no one can prevent this change. He envisions a new world in which liberal democracy and modernization in the Western sense are ending, and the Silk Roads countries cooperate against global problems such as poverty. This changing world is a bipolar one, with China at the helm. History repeats itself, and Asia is rising again like a phoenix.

The diversity of sources on which Frankopan draws are adequate to analyze the new phenomenon he depicts. He uses articles from journals and magazines, as well as news, reports and books in German, English, Turkish, Russian, French, Chinese and Azeri. Frankopan also benefits from the speeches of political leaders, especially those of Trump and Xi Jinping. He does a simple qualitative discourse and content analysis and a descriptive analysis as a historian. Furthermore, while the language of the book is quite simple and straightforward, the style of the book is literary and embellished with idioms. Frankopan evaluates the international system and its actors in a broad sense and presents the basic economic characteristics of the countries of the Silk Roads.

Although Frankopan underpins his assertions with reference to various phenomena and discourses, he repeats himself many times to prove the rightfulness of his argument. Yet this repetition has the opposite effect, diminishing the book's credibility. While emphasizing the economic aspects of the countries and their relations makes the book one-dimensional, getting stuck in the idea that Asia is rising and trying to validate this idea strengthens this one dimension and makes the book overly subjective. At the same time, using the speeches of Trump as an evaluation criterion for the foreign policy of the U.S. is not sufficient. Even though he was the President of the U.S., it is not right to take his speeches as the sole criterion due to his irrational remarks. Similarly, flatly considering China as the opponent of the U.S. creates a dichotomy, restricts the analysis and prevents the enrichment of other perspectives.

Nevertheless, the criticisms mentioned above cannot reduce the importance of this book. Frankopan's argument is clearly stated and constantly supported;

the sources are sufficient, and the wording is explicit and impressive. Therefore, *The New Silk Roads* can be considered an important contribution to the alternative historiography literature that sheds light on recent Asian history. The book is strongly recommended for students and academics of the Social Sciences who would like to broaden their way of thinking.

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## BOOK REVIEW

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### Conflict and Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific: New Geopolitical Realities

Edited by Ash Rossiter and Brendon J. Cannon

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It is clear that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are experiencing a paradigmatic shift from the West to the East, from Transatlantic to Pacific, as Asia has become the epicenter of global economics and politics. This century has brought profound challenges to the regional dynamics of the Asia-Pacific and to the existing international political structure, and China specifically has played a central role in changing regional and global politics with its swiftly growing economy and increasing military formation and activities, especially since 2008. In addition to changes in China's economic and military capabilities, many other factors, such as India's economic liberalization program and evolving security posture, the reorientation of Japan's foreign and security policy in a more assertive and hawkish direction, the United States' relative decline and the ambiguity of its stand in Asia have altered the balance of Asia-Pacific politics.

These changing international dynamics and new security orientations have led to a redefinition of the geopolitical terming of the region. The construction of the term 'Indo-Pacific' as a replacement for 'Asia-Pacific' reflects the new geopolitical structure, which is characterized by multipolarity and multiplexity, in contrast to the previous Cold War positioning and dynamics. The Asia-Pacific term, which was designed to integrate Japan and to a certain level Australia in the U.S. Cold War strategy, has become inadequate to reflect the current power changes. As a result, a more comprehensive conceptualization was required by the United States and its partners in Asia. The broader Indo-Pacific conceptualization signifies the importance of the Pacific and the Indian Ocean and the maritime routes, and it reflects critical geopolitical

changes such as the growing economic and political capabilities of China and India as well as the changing U.S. posture.

The edited volume, *Conflict and Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific: New Geopolitical Realities*, aims to analyze the possibilities of conflict and cooperation in the region by focusing on the different perspectives and strategies of the actors involved in the Indo-Pacific discussions. As the authors argue, the examples and different perspectives presented in various chapters are analyzed through this lens of cooperation and conflict. Rossiter and Cannon argue that beyond the book's contribution to International Relations (IR) and Geopolitics Studies, it is an essential text for understanding the debates about China's growing ascendance and the relative decline of U.S. power.

The structure of the book is designed around nine chapters. After the brief introductory chapter, which focuses on the prospects of conflict and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, subsequent chapters deal with the different perspectives and approaches of regional actors regarding the concept of Indo-Pacific and its construction. The first four chapters mainly deal with the approaches of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) countries: India's policy toward the Quad, Japan's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) vision, the inclusion of Indo-Pacific in U.S. policies as a replacement for the Asia-Pacific concept and Australia's approach to the Indo-Pacific. Although there have been different interpretations of the term Indo-Pacific, the primary rationale behind its creation is the fact that the older term Asia-Pacific does not meet the strategic expectations of actors such as the United States, Japan, Australia or India. The new conceptualization has become an integral part of the national security strategies of the U.S., Japan and Australia, and has been frequently used in public speeches.

In the chapter titled "India's Approach to the "Quad" and the Saliency of China," Jagannath Panda deals with India's relations with the other Quad countries. India can be considered at the heart of this new conceptualization, since its main aim is to incorporate India and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) in these recent strategic calculations. Many analysts attribute the emergence of the Quad to growing anti-China sentiment in these countries. However, in this chapter, Panda explains India's involvement in this grouping as the result of the country's desire



to maintain equilibrium in the region, rather than strong anti-China sentiments.

In the following chapter, “Decoding Japan’s “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” Concept,” Teruaki Aizawa and Ash Rossiter examine Japan’s vision for the Indo-Pacific. The authors focus on the FOIP concept and how it gained prominence in Japan’s foreign and security policy vision for the region. Aizawa and Rossiter emphasize that even though the FOIP vision is mainly designed for economic purposes, its reflections on the security strategy are evident in Japan’s growing assertiveness in foreign and security policies. In the chapter “US Strategic Re-positioning to the “Indo-Pacific:” A Paradigm Shift, David Scott discusses the roots of the change in U.S. discourse from Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific and evaluates its effects on U.S. policies. Scott makes a comparison between the U.S. geoeconomic and geopolitical approach to the region, and argues that the U.S. geopolitical approach has been much more comprehensive and successful compared to its geoeconomic position. Miguel A. Hajar-Chiapa next discusses what the emerging Indo-Pacific concept means for another Quad country, Australia, and analyzes the effects of this new construction there.

*Conflict and Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific* covers not only the actors whose inclusion in the region is specifically important and who are more prominent, but also offers another perspective by introducing competing visions for the region. Moreover, it offers an in-depth analysis of the Indo-Pacific debate by looking at regional countries’ interactions, focusing on the relations between Japan and the Eastern African countries, and actors such as the Philippines, whose involvement and policies regarding the region are somehow understudied.

From the beginning, *Conflict and Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific* is well structured and contributes to the field of international politics and geopolitics by investigating approaches to the Indo-Pacific from cooperation and conflict perspectives. The presentation of different definitions by showing them on maps visually supports the lack of consensus on the definition of the concept. In the introductory section, the main framework of analysis that is used throughout the volume to present different actors and different cases is explained in detail. In the first four chapters, this framework is applied to the Quad countries, which

can be regarded as the major players in the Indo-Pacific. In the next three chapters, it is applied to the competing ideas. The detailed empirical analysis in the subsequent chapters validates the applicability of this framework to the issue and brings forward insights from different cases. While examples of different approaches are included, South Korean and Canadian perspectives are notably lacking as major regional powers. Their inclusion would have strengthened the book, but their absence points a direction for further study.

Since its (re)inception in the 2000s, the term Indo-Pacific has gradually entered the IR lexicon and has been used frequently by many actors, primarily the U.S., Japan and Australia. The term has become an integral part of international political debates. Therefore, the contribution made by *Conflict and Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific* is of critical importance. It sheds light on recent developments in the region while stressing the importance of the China-U.S. encounter. Ultimately, the volume argues that the dynamics of international order will be determined by the level of cooperation among the countries that share similar concerns about China and its activities.

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## Style and Format

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Manuscripts should be single-spaced written by Times New Roman regular font, 11 point throughout. Justified margins; top and bottom 3 cm, left and right 2.4 cm are required. Manuscripts should be numbered consecutively throughout the paper. Only the first letters of title words should be 'upper case'. Quotations should be placed within double quotation marks ("....."). Quotations larger than four lines should be indented at left margin and single-spaced. Use endnotes and avoid bibliography. British punctuation and spelling should be used throughout. Dates should be in the form 3 November 1996; 1995-1998; and 1990s. All diagrams, charts and graphs should be referred to as figures and consecutively numbered. Tables should be kept to a minimum and contain only essential data. Each figure and table must be given an Arabic numeral, followed by a heading, and be referred to in the text. Appropriate places of tables should be indicated in the text and tables should be submitted in a separate file. If copyrighted material is used in the article, it is the author's responsibility to obtain permission from the copyright holder.

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### Books

John Smith, *The Book Title*, New York, New York Publishing Co., 1999, p. 100.

John E. Smith (ed.), *The Book Title*, New York, New York Publishing Co., 1999, pp. 100-102.

John Smith and Mary Jones, *The Book Title*, New York, New York Publishing Co., 1999, p. 100. Subsequent references should appear as: Smith, *The Book Title*, p. 100. In endnotes 'Ibid.' should be used where possible, but it should not be used where the previous note contains more than one source.

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Türk Basımında Dış Habercilik (Foreign News Reporting in the Turkish Media), by M. Mücahit Küçükylil-maz and Hakan Çopur. Ankara: SETA, 2010, 168 pages, ISBN 9786054023073.



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