

NELLI MINASYAN

## **TURKISH INITIATIVES IN THE DIRECTION OF TURKIC INTEGRATION: PREREQUISITES AND TENDENCIES**

**Abstract:** *The main purpose of the research is to analyze the main document of Turkic integration, "Vision--2040", the directions of integration, Turkish President R. T. Erdogan's initiatives in the direction of Turkic integration and the approaches of Turkic republics. The Turkic integration process is a reality and it is a complete program which includes the political, economic, cultural, security spheres. The research is conducted using the historical analytical method.*

*The research demonstrates that the key structure of Turkic integration is the Organization of Turkic States, and Turkey's goal is not only economic, political and cultural integration, but also strategic and military.*

*Under the leadership of R. T. Erdogan, a lot of work is being done in the direction of Turkic integration and there are some results. The Turkic republics of Central Asia are currently interested in Turkic integration and are participating in that process to some extent.*

**Keywords:** *Turkic Integration, Organization of Turkic States, "Vision-2040", Turkic World, R. T. Erdogan.*

### **Introduction**

The Central Asian direction of Turkey's foreign policy was formed after the collapse of the USSR, when Turkey got the opportunity to establish direct relations with the Turkic republics. The leadership of Turkey established cooperation with the Turkic republics in the political, economic, and cultural spheres. Turkey's goal was to gain influence in the post-Soviet Central Asian region, but it did not have the necessary economic and financial resources, so Turkey primarily devoted a lot of space to ideological propaganda (Neo-Pan-Turkism or Turkic unity) and educational-cultural activities. Turkey used linguistic, historical, and cultural commonalities with Turkic countries for propaganda purposes, which also became the basis of Turkey's educational policy. The goal of this policy was to achieve the creation of a common spiritual and cultural environment, towards which Turkey has been actively working to this day. Basically, this was the basis of Turkic integration, based on which Turkey has started integration processes in the political, economic, and security spheres as well.

The idea of integration in Turkey's Central Asian policy has gained importance in the last two years, which is primarily due to the current geopolitical processes. During the previous decades, Turkey was able to establish strategic relations with Azerbaijan, as a result of which military-political treaties were signed between the two countries. After the 44-Day War, Turkey and Azerbaijan began talking about integration and taking practical steps in this direction.

In order to understand the goals of the Turkic integration policy implemented by Turkey, the research set out to answer the following questions: 1) What are the issues faced by the OTS as a key structure of Turkic integration? 2) What role does Turkish President Erdogan play in Turkic integration processes? 3) What is the attitude of Central Asian Turkic republics towards Turkic integration?

The hypotheses worked out to test are the following: 1) The Turkic integration as a political process is mainly conditioned by geopolitical processes, which at the moment give Turkey the opportunity to be more active, and the realization of the complete Turkic integration process or one of its spheres will again be conditioned by further geopolitical developments; 2) cultural and identity factors play a key role for Turkic integration; and 3) first of all, Turkey is trying to achieve integration in the educational, cultural, and economic fields, but its main goal is to achieve political integration and the establishment of collective security mechanisms.

Thus, Turkey's primary goal is to achieve cultural and economic integration with Turkic republics, and the long-term goal is to develop a unified foreign policy course and sign strategic agreements.

## **Organization of Turkic States as a key structure of Turkic Integration**

### *Organization of Turkic States and the "Vision-2040"*

In the beginning of the 1990s, Turkey established relations with the Turkic republics of Central Asia. Turkey started to establish various structures, funds, and organizations, even schools and universities, in these republics, the purpose of which was to establish cooperation with Turkic countries in the political, economic, educational, cultural, and security spheres. During this time, Turkey's security actions mostly fell under the purview of NATO programs, particularly "Cooperation for Peace." It should be noted that Turkey has been able to ensure its presence in the mentioned fields during the previous decades and is currently striving to gain influence.

One of Turkey's first steps was the organization of summits of Turkic-speaking countries starting in 1992. The summits were organized in this format until 2011, when on October 20–21 of the same year, the Turkic Council was founded during the summit held in Nakhichevan (Nakhichevan Agreement 2011). At the 8th Summit of the Turkic Council, which took place on November 12, 2021, in Istanbul, the

organization was renamed the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) (TRT World 2021). The OTS members are Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan; Turkmenistan and Hungary have observer status. The OTS has the following structure: Organizational Chart, Presidential summits, and Chairman. The organizational structure includes the following principal organs: the Council of Heads of State, the Council of Foreign Ministers, the Council of Elders, the Senior Officials Committee, and the Secretariat. The main organ of the organization is the Council of Heads of State, whose office is located in Istanbul and from where all the activities of the organization are coordinated (Organization of Turkic States, 2021). It is also worth highlighting the activities of the Secretariat, whose head office is also located in Istanbul. The Secretariat is mainly engaged in the implementation of the agreements reached as a result of the meetings of the heads of Turkic states. Turkey's role in this regard is very big, because it initiates and coordinates all kinds of actions, although the principle of equality of the member states is mentioned within the framework of the organization.

The OTS also sponsors and coordinates the activities of existing organizations and structures in the political, economic, cultural, and scientific-educational spheres, such as the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TÜRKSOY), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Turkic Speaking Countries (TÜRKPA), the International Turkic Academy, the Turkic Business Council, the Turkic University Union, the Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation, and the Turkic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Organization of Turkic States 2021). All these structures were founded by Turkey, and they aim to strengthen cooperation between Turkey and the Turkic republics in the political, economic, cultural, and scientific-educational spheres. In other words, these structures are managed by Turkey and implement its political plans. On the other hand, when Turkey initiated Turkic integration, it united all the mentioned structures under the umbrella of the OTS. So we can conclude that Turkey's goal is to turn the OTS into a key integration structure. In such conditions, the organization is using regular dialogue, consultation, and cooperation platform for the Turkic countries, whose main goal is to develop common projects for member states and coordinate their activities. The OTS, with the problems it faces, stands out from all the previous mechanisms. The structures and mechanisms established by Turkey in previous decades were related to separate fields, such as economic, cultural, educational, etc. However, OTS not only includes all these mechanisms, but its task is to reach the highest level of integration, namely, political integration. On the other hand, we are dealing with a new level of political regionalization. It is primarily manifested on the basis of local identity. Thus, the emphasis here is on local identity, namely Turkic identity and culture, and it includes two regions: the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Turkey represents the need for local development in

economic, political, and security terms under Turkic integration.

In order to understand the essence of the OTS as an integration structure, it is necessary to refer to an important document, namely "Vision 2040." This document was adopted on November 12, 2021. This document differs from similar ones adopted in the past as it clearly states the main content, nature, and directions of activities that the organization plans for the next two decades<sup>1</sup>. This document states: "Turkic cooperation has been providing added value for the Member States, both strategically and politically," and in another place, "Commending the achievements of the Organization of Turkic States to enhance cooperation and solidarity among Turkic States and their people since its establishment based on historical ties, common language, culture, and traditions" (Turkic World Vision – 2040 2021). In fact, the basis of Turkic integration is primarily linguistic, cultural, historical, and ethnic commonalities, with which Turkey has done a lot of work in previous decades. Another important basis for Turkic integration is the creation of a common Turkic identity, which is also one of the main goals of Ankara's policy in Turkic countries. In our view, the most important element of common identity is ethnicity. Essentially, the creation of ethnic-based integration (if it becomes a reality) will create serious challenges in the future, both for the regions of the South Caucasus and Central Asia and their neighboring countries. In this case, there will be a transition from integration to an ethnically homogeneous state. The Turkic ethnic group will dominate in the Eurasian region, which will control the geopolitical and geo-economic nodes and strive for the Turkification of the South Caucasus, Central Asia, and their neighboring territories.

In general, the "Vision-2040" document states the general provisions of cooperation in the fields of strategy, politics, economics, culture, and education for the next two decades. Now we try to briefly present the activities done in the mentioned fields recently and their prospects.

#### *Initiatives of economic integration*

Turkey began to carry out economic activities in the Turkic republics at the beginning of the 1990s. Turkey gradually began to invest in various sectors of the economies of these republics, and economic councils were established, which are still active today. Turkey's economic interests in Turkic countries are conditioned by two circumstances: 1) with the energy resources that Turkey needs, it seeks to participate in the process of exporting energy resources to Europe; and 2) Turkic countries are a market and a source of raw materials for her and where Turkish goods are sold. In our

---

<sup>1</sup> Since the summits of the Turkic-speaking countries, also within the framework of the Turkic Council, as a result of all the meetings with the participation of the Turkic leaders, some documents were signed, but they mostly indicated general provisions rather than presenting specific programs.

view, Turkey attaches primary importance to these two circumstances for Turkic economic integration, especially since the developing Turkish economy needs both energy resources and markets (moreover, the latter is also important for the Turkish economy, which is currently in crisis; N. M.). On the other hand, economic relations between Turkey and the Turkic republics of Central Asia have significantly developed in the last two decades. Currently, Turkey has established closer relations with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. More than 80 bilateral cooperation agreements have been signed between Turkey and Kazakhstan in several fields, including economics and trade. The volume of Turkish–Kazakh trade doubled between 2005 and 2020, from US\$1 billion to US\$2.1 billion (International Trade Centre 2020). According to the statistics of 2019, 2000 Turkish companies operated in Kazakhstan with investments totaling US\$25 billion and implemented approximately 487 projects (Daily Sabah 2018). Turkish-Uzbek relations began to develop after 2016, when Shavkat Mirziyoyev became president. From this period on, Uzbekistan joined the Turkic Council and began to actively work with other Turkic structures. Turkish-Uzbek economic and trade relations began to develop. Between two countries bilateral trade has increased from US\$ 412 million in 2005 and reaching US\$ 2.1 billion in 2020 (International Trade Centre 2021). The total number of Turkish companies in Uzbekistan has reached 1,300. During the mentioned period, Turkey has been able to establish good relations with Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. Bilateral trade with Turkmenistan has also grown, from US\$ 341 million in 2005 to US\$ 1.5 billion in 2010, peaking at US\$ 2.4 billion in 2015 before dropping back to US\$ 1.1 billion in 2020 (International Trade Centre 2021). More than 600 Turkish companies have implemented construction projects in Turkmenistan valued at US\$50 billion (Alrmizan 2022, 26). Turkish-Kyrgyz relations are limited, which is primarily due to Russia's influence. But trade has grown here as well from about US\$ 94 million in 2005 to US\$ 508 million in 2020 (International Trade Centre 2021). These facts show that trade relations between Turkey and the Turkic republics of Central Asia are developing steadily. However, for economic integration, Turkey must implement major economic and investment projects, as well as create the necessary infrastructure and legislative framework. So, the "Vision-2040" document considers these projects.

When we study the "Vision-2040" document, it presents the perspective of creating a unified economic system in the Turkic world, which can be said to be taken from the Soviet economic model, when different branches of the common economic system were located in different Soviet republics. This project is also attractive to Turkic republics because they need investment. For the formation of such a large economic system, some serious financial investments are needed, so under the structure of OTS, an attempt is made to coordinate the existing capital in the Turkic world. OTS is working towards the creation of the Turkic Investment Fund, which

should contribute to the economic and social development of the member countries (Turkic Investment Fund 2021). On May 3, 2022, a meeting of the representatives of the ministries of economics and finance of the member states of the OTS was held in Istanbul, where the issue of the creation of the Turkic Investment Fund was discussed. During this meeting, the functions, powers, financial resources, organization issues, and activities of the Investment Fund were discussed (yuz.uz 2022). At the meeting, OTS General Secretary Baghdat Amreyev noted that it is necessary to finish the process of creating the fund on time and expressed hope that it will work by the end of the year, as planned (Dunyo 2022). It should be noted that the decision to create such a structure was made at the 8th summit of the organization, which was held on November 12, 2021.

During the 9th summit of the OTS, which took place on November 11 of this year in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, the heads of member states signed a special decision on the establishment of the Turkic Investment Fund, and according to this decision, Baghdad Amreyev, who has completed his office as the Secretary General of the OTS, was appointed as the President of the Turkic Investment Fund (Daily Sabah 2022)<sup>1</sup>. The statement of OTS states: "The Turkic Investment Fund will be the first and main joint financial institution established by Turkic States and aims to mobilize the economic potential of Member States of the Organization of Turkic States to strengthen the trade and economic cooperation between them and to implement joint projects" (Organization of Turkic States 2022). This fund will mainly support small and medium-sized businesses by providing them with finance through the fund's assets as well as those of other competent financial institutions. The Fund shall support the following areas: agriculture, logistics and transport, energy efficiency, renewable and alternative energy, industrial projects in manufacturing, information and communication technologies, infrastructure projects, tourism, etc (Organization of Turkic States 2022). Thus, the Turkic Investment Fund will initially aim to centralize finances in the Turkic world and, in the future, will try to achieve the adoption of a common currency.

#### *Educational and cultural integration*

OTS also takes active steps in the fields of education and culture. Activities in the field of culture are mainly coordinated and initiated by TÜRKSOY, which has done significant work in this regard, implements common Turkic cultural events, and publishes books and journals. According to our observation, in the process of Turkic integration, Turkey pays more attention to education, which has been one of the

---

<sup>1</sup> During the 9th Summit of the Organization of Turkic States, Kubanychbek Omuraliev was appointed Secretary General of the Secretariat of the Organization of Turkic States by the Council of Heads of State. He was the ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Turkey.

important directions of Turkish politics since the 1990s. (Yanik 2004, 294-302). Turkey has established state and non-state schools and universities in Turkic republics, which are the basis of its educational policy. On the other hand, it is obvious that one of the important targets of Turkey's policy is the adoption of a unified alphabet and the creation of a common education system. The last one implies the development and implementation of a uniform curriculum in all Turkic republics, especially in subjects related to Turkic history, literature, language, and culture. Turkic history, literature, and geography textbooks have already been prepared for this academic year (for now, for electives, but actually with an experimental meaning) (24.kg 2022). Basically, these three subjects are the best means of forming a common identity among any people or ethnic group. Of course, language is of primary importance for the creation of a common identity and a unified educational system, and in this case, that means having a common alphabet. It should be noted that Turkey has been working on the creation of a unified alphabet since the beginning of the 1990s, but until now has not reached its final goal, which is the adoption of a unified alphabet based on the Turkish Latin alphabet. Under the auspices of the OTS, this issue was given prime importance again. On October 20, 2022, during the meeting of the representatives of the OTS member countries in Bursa, a decision was made to create a "Commission for the creation of a unified alphabet" within the structure of the OTS, the first session of which is scheduled to be held in Kyrgyzstan (Özdener; Ekberova 2022). The goal of the commission is to "achieve linguistic unity among the Turkic states and accept a common alphabet" (Yermolov 2022). We consider this step very serious because it is part of Turkey's far-reaching strategic policy. Following these processes, we can note that the next step will be the creation of the concept of "common Turkic history".

#### *Initiatives of political integration*

The ultimate goal of the Turkic integration vision is the establishment of political integration between Turkey and the Turkic republics. The political integration requires cooperation and coordination of activities at the political and state levels, which is reflected in the "Vision-2040" document. Turkey seeks to establish strategic cooperation with the Turkic republics, which should be considered the first stage. In the second stage, Turkey will try to unite all the Turkic republics (including the unrecognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus) around one strategic structure or agreement. In the last 10 years, the relations between Turkey and the Turkic republics have gradually gained a strategic character. A strategic partnership between Turkey and Kazakhstan was established in 2009, and the High-Level Strategic Council (HLSC) was formed in 2012 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey). A strategic cooperation agreement was also signed between Turkey and

Uzbekistan, and the HLSC was established. The first meeting of the HLSC took place in February 2020 (Dauren n.d.). The Turkish-Kyrgyz HLSC was founded in 2012 but has been more active recently. Currently, a strategic partnership has been established between Turkey and Azerbaijan, which Turkey presents as an example for other Turkic states (Minasyan 2021, 45-47). Turkey does not have such cooperation only with Turkmenistan, as it has recently started to participate in the processes taking place in the Turkic world. Thus, Turkey establishes the basis for strategic cooperation, and the results in this regard will not be visible in the near future.

The cooperation between Turkey and Turkic states in the political field should be considered in the fields of domestic and foreign policy. The structures included in the organization (in this regard, the activities of various funds and non-governmental organizations should also be noted) participate in some ways in the internal political processes in Turkic republics. We believe that the main goal in this area is to strengthen Turkey's positions in these republics.

In our view, foreign policy is more important. The Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs is one of the important structures of OTS. The Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs prepares the meetings of the leaders of the member states of OTS as well as the documents or agreements to be signed. The last meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers took place on October 17 of this year in Istanbul (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey 2022). It is stated in the published statement that they discussed the most important issues planned for the upcoming meeting of the leaders of the member countries of OTS and prepared the documents for signing. Besides, they discussed the OTS strategy for 2022–2026 as well as the draft protocol for making changes to the Nakhichevan Agreement (Organization of Turkic States 2022). In essence, work is being carried out in the direction of the development and submission of joint decisions related to various regional and international issues. The result of such activities implies the development of a unified foreign policy course under the OTS and then being guided by it, which is one of the most important elements of the integration process.

Articulation of common problems and challenges is important for political integration. Currently, Turkey and Azerbaijan are doing a lot of work in this direction. Turkey provides political, diplomatic, and military support to Azerbaijan in connection with a number of issues, especially the Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) issue. During the previous decades, Turkey conditioned the establishment of diplomatic relations with Armenia on the Artsakh issue, and after the 44-Day War, it conditioned the signing of a peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan. It should be noted that since the 1990s, Turkey and Azerbaijan have tried to form a common position regarding the Artsakh problem on various Turkic platforms. They continue this policy to this day, but have not achieved significant success. In connection with



the events taking place in Kazakhstan in January of this year, Turkey tried to form a common position within the OTS and even tried to intervene in those events. However, the OTS had neither the resources nor the mechanisms to intervene in those events. We can conclude that Turkey has not been able to achieve serious achievements in the direction of political integration, and the level of political integration has been low so far.

### *Security integration*

Finally, one of the important areas is security, which consists of several dimensions and ultimately aims to establish military-strategic cooperation under the auspices of the OTS. Turkey has also been working in this field since the beginning of the 1990s. Turkey started cooperation in two spheres: the first refers to the organization of military education, and the second is cooperation in the field of military industry, which has become more noticeable in recent years. The Turkic republics of Central Asia have recently been mainly interested in Turkish drones (Turkish drones became more popular after the 44-Day War), and they have bought drones, except Uzbekistan, which bought other Turkish weapons (Blue Domes 2022). A more strategic step by Turkey is the establishment of the production of drones in Kazakhstan (Kumenov, Eurasianet 2022), which is already talking about cooperation in the field of military industry. In this context, it is expected that production of both drones and other Turkish weapons will be organized in other Turkic republics as well. Of course, one of Turkey's goals is to sign military or military-political agreements with Turkic republics. This would be seen not only as integration but as military-political cooperation. In this matter, Turkey is more careful, and in the "Vision-2040" document, it is mentioned about the creation of the police and other joint groups to establish internal order, which can be the basis for the creation of a joint military contingent in the future (Turkic World Vision – 2040, 2021). This is seen by many analysts as the basis of the so-called "Turanian army". Thus, military cooperation between Turkey and Turkic republics is developing. On the other hand, some preliminary steps are taken towards the creation of collective security mechanisms, which are to be created under the aegis of OTS. It should be noted that, currently, the creation of a military alliance is not realistic. There are a number of obstacles to this project in Turkey. First of all, we should mention Russia and its military-political alliance, the CSTO. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are members of this organization. In addition, Russia has military influence in the Central Asian (and South Caucasus) region and holds many levers in its hands. Basically, the creation of opportunities for Turkey's activity in this field is primarily due to the weakening of Russia's military and political positions. It should be noted that in this case, Turkey's opportunities are also limited because the influence of the USA, EU, China, and India is increasing in the region.

In connection with the Turkic integration, the issue of forming a cooperation platform among the special services of the Turkic states is important. This is evidenced by the meetings of the leaders of the power institute. On July 26 of this year, the 24th conference of the Special Services of Turkic-speaking republics was held in Cholpon-Ata, a town in Kyrgyzstan's Issyk-Kul region<sup>1</sup>. The representatives of the special services of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Turkey took part in the meeting, as did the delegations of Russia and Hungary's participants as observers (according to press reports, the Russian side was invited by the Central Asian countries to show that they are not carrying out anti-Russian actions) (Turan 2022). The countering of terroristic activity and religious extremism in the Middle East and Afghanistan was the main topic of discussion during the meeting (Kazinform 2022). Obviously, the cooperation between the security services has important meaning and subtext. Perhaps most importantly, the event was organized under the auspices of OTS and thus highly sponsored and coordinated by Ankara. From the point of view of the implementation of integration processes in Turkey, the activity of security services is an important and necessary step, particularly for collecting information, developing operations, and preparing political events. On the other hand, it is logical that Turkey should also try to organize the integration of the security services of Turkic-speaking countries around a common structure. Thus, we are not only talking about the "Turanian army" but also the "Turanian special services". The proof of this is the fact that Turkey and Kazakhstan signed a protocol on the exchange of military intelligence information, which was approved by the Parliament of Kazakhstan on August 5, 2022 (Haidar 2022). In general, Turkey is expected to try to sign similar protocols with other Central Asian Turkic republics in the near future.

Analyzing Turkey's recent actions, we can say that its ultimate goal is to create a strategic union or alliance with Turkic republics. The establishment of strategic cooperation between Turkey and Turkic republics was mentioned in the "Vision-2040" document, and currently is working more actively with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

In summary, we can conclude that the core of the creation of a Turkic integration is the OTS, and the "Vision-2040" document is the road map of the organization's actions in the next two decades. Under OTS, Turkey initiated political, economic, cultural, and security integration processes, with the goal of uniting the Turkic world around a single structure, in fact led by Turkey.

---

<sup>1</sup> The first meeting of the Special Services of Turkic-speaking republics took place in 1998 at the initiative of Turkey. According to press reports, during those meetings, issues of cooperation in the fight against international crime, terrorism, and other crimes were discussed.

## **Recep Tayyip Erdogan's role in the activation processes of Turkic integration**

When the Justice and Development Party (Adaletve Kalkınma Partisi-AKP) came to power in 2002, it began to pursue a more realistic policy with the Turkic countries. In the first two periods of the governance of the AKP, the issue of EU membership was the main focus, but the development of relations with Turkic countries continued. It should be noted that the AKP, under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, gave an important place to the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. In the 2010s, important transformations took place in international relations. Transformations in post-Soviet regions have also continued, despite increased Russia-West competition. On the other hand, active processes are taking place in the Middle East, and the Syrian crisis that started in 2011 is causing new challenges for the region, including Turkey. In such conditions, the EU puts forward new requirements for Turkey's European integration (in addition to economic and political issues, issues of cultural identity are also presented), but Turkey tries to use the issue of refugees. China is also starting to play an important role in the international system. In fact, the multifaceted transformations taking place in the system of international relations had their impact on Turkey's foreign policy as well. In such conditions, after 2015, when the EU refused to approve Turkey's application for membership (the attempted coup of 2016 was also important; N. M.), some changes took place in Turkey's foreign policy at the initiative of President Erdogan. He and his regime began to give greater prominence to Turkic republics and the Muslim world. Starting from this period, the gradual activation of Turkey's policy in Turkic republics is becoming noticeable, which is also due to the ongoing geopolitical processes. In general, Erdogan's role and personal ambitions as a politician and head of state have a big impact on Turkey's foreign policy. We can give as an example the Turkey-Russia relations (which can be described more as a cooperation between the leaders of the two states, V. Putin and R. T. Erdogan), the Turkey-West relations, etc.

Erdogan openly started talking about Turkic integration after the 44-Day War in 2020, when Azerbaijan achieved victory in Artsakh with the direct help and support of Turkey. This victory was used by the Turkish leadership in two ways. First, it raised the image of Turkey, especially President Erdogan, in Turkic countries. Propaganda has begun that Turkey can not only be an effective partner in educational, cultural, and socio-economic issues, but can also be a strategic ally for the Turkic countries, including providing them with modern weapons, primarily Turkish drones. In addition, Turkey presents itself as the defender of the Turkic world and is currently doing so in the context of the Tajik-Kyrgyz conflict, supporting Kyrgyzstan. Secondly, Turkey-Azerbaijan relations were presented as an example of integration between two brotherly states, which was confirmed by the Shushi Declaration signed

in June 2021 (The declaration of Shushi 2021). In addition, the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, also actively participates in the processes of Turkic integration.

According to our observation, Erdogan's policy regarding the activation of Turkic integration is conditioned by two important circumstances. First of all, the processes of Turkic integration should be considered in the context of the current geopolitical developments, which have created favorable conditions for them. Currently, the process of forming a new world order is taking place, where Erdogan is trying to turn Turkey into a regional power (although he is talking about a world power; N. M.). It is improbable that Turkey will be able to achieve such a status given its current resources and capacities. But the integrated Turkic world will create a completely different geopolitical situation, demographically, economically, and geographically. The other circumstance refers to the processes taking place in the post-Soviet regions, which are part of the current geopolitical processes. Russia has begun to lose its spheres of influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, which is more felt due to the Russian-Ukrainian war. There is a noticeable vacuum in these two regions, which Turkey is trying to fill (possibly with the support of the West; N. M.). From this point of view, an opportunity has been created for Turkey, not only at the ideological level but also practically, to embark on the creation of a Turkic world.

It should be noted that internal factors and transformations have an important influence on Turkey's foreign policy. The political parties guided by secular and Islamic ideas play an important role in the domestic political life of Turkey. It should be noted that both secular and Islamic ideologies have undergone transformations in recent decades. The AKP, which has Islamic-conservative ideas, has also undergone ideological transformations during the 20 years of its rule, which essentially had their influence on both domestic and foreign politics, for example, in relations with Russia, Turkic republics, actions in the Middle East, activity in Africa, etc (Kara 2022, 1-25). The ideological narratives of Erdogan and his environment also play an important role and have undergone transformations. At the beginning of the AKP's rule, a great deal of attention was devoted to European integration, so the ideas of westernization were paramount. In the second period of government, a great place is given to the ideas of neo-Ottomanism and, currently, Turkish nationalism and pan-Turkism. In this context, Erdogan emphasizes the strengthening of cooperation with Turkic republics. In other words, he is guided by the ideas of pan-Turkism, because Turkic integration is the concept of creating the same Turkic world.

In fact, observing the current geopolitical developments, Erdogan took more active steps in the direction of turning Turkic integration into a real process. In this regard, the first step should be the transformation of the Turkic Council into the Organization of Turkic States and the adoption of the "Vision-2040" program

document. General Secretary Baghdad Amreyev of the OTS expressed interesting thoughts in one of his last speeches: "Due to his leadership qualities, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has not only turned Turkey into one of the world's strongest powers but has also managed to unite the entire Turkic world... If four years ago, four states were part of the Organization of Turkic States; now there are seven. Today, for the first time in history, Turkic states are acting on a united front. The Turkic world is becoming real. We are united, we are strong, and this is a new paradigm... A high-level summit will be held in Samarkand (he means the summit held on November 11, 2022), which will complete the implementation of the historic decisions that were taken during the last summit held in Istanbul. The emphasis will be on economics and trade. We have an intention to achieve progress in the cooperation in the fields of politics and security, according to the "Vision-2040" adopted in Istanbul" (Muhammet Mutaf 2022).

In essence, one has to agree with some of Amreyev's thoughts, particularly regarding the unification of the Turkic world, because the Turkic countries have never cooperated so closely in history. On the other hand, he emphasizes the role of Turkish President Erdogan, with which we also must agree. First of all, it should be noted that Erdogan has created a personalist or autocratic system in Turkey, which also includes foreign policy issues and Turkic integration. On the other hand, he managed to establish good personal relations with the heads of Turkic republics (he has more cordial relations with the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, and recently with the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, and the President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev), which he uses for political purposes. As a result, he was able to form a common conversation or environment with the presidents of the Turkic countries, which we can consider an achievement.

### **The position of the Turkic republics of Central Asia regarding Turkic integration**

The attitude of the Turkic-speaking countries of Central Asia towards Turkic integration was formed during the previous decades and is related to the ongoing geopolitical developments. It is known that after the collapse of the USSR, the Turkic-speaking countries of Central Asia showed great interest in Turkey and began to establish relations with great enthusiasm. But soon they became disillusioned and began to pursue a more realistic policy. On the other hand, Turkic republics continued cooperation with Turkey in various fields, and over time some coordination of actions took place. It should be noted that the Turkic Cooperation Council has done a lot of work in terms of the rapprochement of the Turkic states. On the other hand, the structures implementing the Turkish soft power policy played no less an important role (the TURKSOY and the TIKA (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency)

play a big role in this regard). As a result, Turkey was able to establish at least a presence in the region, which served as the foundation for Turkish integration.

Serious changes in the position of Turkic republics towards Turkic integration took place during the last two years, which are evident both in the press and even in social networks. In our opinion, this is primarily due to the current geopolitical processes, in particular two events: the withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan and the Russian-Ukrainian War. After leaving Afghanistan, NATO has no intention of leaving the region, and it is trying to locate its military bases in one of the countries of Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan versions are circulating in the media, but both republics have not officially confirmed this information). On the other hand, since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian War, the West has activated its policy in Central Asia as well, with the goal of weakening Russia's position in this region. Under these conditions, a great interest in Central Asia has begun again; one can even say that a new struggle for influence has begun, which can already be described as a "New Great Game"<sup>1</sup> (i.e. Third Great Game) (Rashid 2002, 143-156). It should be noted that the NATO is trying to locate its military bases in Turkic countries after leaving Afghanistan (according to press reports in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan), on which no country has yet given consent (Warsaw Institute 2021). The US has great interests in the Central Asian region and has intensified its policy in this region especially after leaving Afghanistan (Mackinnon 2021). In the current situation, the Turkic republics of Central Asia have faced security problems. Besides, they also need investment, which is also an important issue. Regional security issues are mainly under responsibility of Russia. But here too, Russia's position has somewhat weakened, which is best seen in the case of Tajik-Kyrgyz border clashes (these two countries are not only Russia's allies, but also members of the same military-political alliance, the CSTO) (TACC 2022). Another more serious issue is the threats from Afghanistan, particularly radical Islam and terrorism. No less important are actions provoked by various external powers, such as the one that took place in Kazakhstan

---

<sup>1</sup> In the 19th century, a political and diplomatic confrontation began between the British and Russian Empires over Afghanistan and Central and South Asia, which continued until the beginning of the 20th century. Britain began the conquest of India and Russia, one of the countries of Central Asia. Under such conditions, Britain feared that Russia was planning to invade India. According to one of the major views, the Great Game began on January 12, 1830, when the president of the Board of Control of India, Lord Ellenborough, tasked the governor-general, Lord William Bentinck, with establishing a new trade route to the Emirate of Bukhara (Yapp Malcolm (2000), *The Legend of the Great Game*, Proceedings of the British Academy: Lectures and Memoirs, Vol. 11, Oxford University Press, pp. 179–198). In the 1980s, there was talk about the Great Game again when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. The countries of Central Asia have energy resources, so after their independence, a competition began for influence in that region. From this period, some journalists began to use the term "New Great Game," which described the geopolitical competition that started in Central Asia. One view of the New Great Game is a shift to geo-economics compared to geopolitical competition. Since the beginning of the 21st century, two major powers, Russia and China, have become dominant players in Central Asia. Currently, a new competition has started in Central Asia amid the confrontation between Russia and the West.

earlier this year and which has a high probability of being repeated in other Turkic republics.

The conflict between Russia and the West has intensified due to the Ukrainian crisis, which is also manifested in Central Asia. The West is engaged in extensive activities in Turkic republics to move the region out of the Russian sphere of influence. Basically, the same policy is followed by Turkey. In the case of existing challenges, Turkic countries should logically look for new forms of cooperation and try to form new security environments. In such conditions, the Central Asian republics have started to cooperate with other states and power centers. In our view, Turkic integration is part of the existing processes in the region because the EU, the USA, China, and other states are also active there.

Turkic integration is not a priority in the politics of Turkic republics at the moment, but, on the other hand, they are also working in that direction, essentially considering it a political process with a future. However, their aspirations to strengthen bilateral cooperation with Turkey are more noticeable, as is evident in the cases of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and even Turkmenistan. There are also supporters of Turkic integration in Turkic republics who believe that it will give the Turkic-speaking countries the opportunity to work together and, accordingly, the Turkic world will become a factor in international relations. Turkey also carries out a lot of propaganda about this, which is accepted by some of the Central Asian societies. In fact, the extent to which Turkic states will continue this integration will depend on further geopolitical developments and the power balance established in the region as a result of them.

## **Conclusion**

The projects for the creation of a Turkic world or pan-Turkism are the basis for Turkic integration, which is represented by the characteristics of the 21st century, and the European one is considered an example. Such integration gives Turkey a wide range of possibilities to operate in Turkic countries from economic, political, cultural, security, and geopolitical perspectives.

Under the OTS, Turkey has united all the structures created in the previous decades and accordingly initiated the processes of cultural, economic, political, and security integration. The OTS adopted the "Vision-2040" document, which presents the planned activities in the direction of Turkic integration in the next two decades. On the basis of this document, the "Strategic Roadmap of the OTS 2022–2026" was developed, and work is being done towards its realization. Currently, Turkey is mainly focused on educational, cultural, and economic integration, but her main goals are political integration, the development of a common foreign policy course, and creating collective security mechanisms or forming a military-political axis with

Turkic republics.

It should be noted that Turkish President Erdogan plays an important role in the processes of Turkic integration. His personal aspirations and ambitions have greatly influenced Turkey's foreign policy, which is also evident in the case of Turkic integration. On his initiative, the name of the organization was changed, and the main document and action plan were approved. In addition, he strengthens cooperation with Turkic republics in various fields, using both geopolitical developments and personal relations.

Currently, Turkic republics are also showing interest in Turkic integration, but in our opinion, it is not a priority in their politics. On the other hand, it is obvious that recently all Turkic republics actively cooperate with Turkey in various fields, including security. Perhaps, first of all, this should be connected with the ongoing geopolitical developments because there is an active competition for influence between the major powers and regional states in Central Asia.

## **Bibliography**

Alrmizan, Mohammed. *Turkish Foreign Policy in Central Asia in the era of Erdoğan: The Convergence of Pan-Turkism, Pragmatism, and Islamism*. Riyadh: King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies, 2022.

"Cholpon-Ata hosts 24th meeting of Conference of Special Services of Turkic States". Kazinform. 27.07.2022, [https://www.inform.kz/en/cholpon-ata-hosts-24th-meeting-of-conference-of-special-services-of-turkic-states\\_a3959774](https://www.inform.kz/en/cholpon-ata-hosts-24th-meeting-of-conference-of-special-services-of-turkic-states_a3959774) (Accessed 10.10.2022).

Dauren, Aben. "New Stage in Turkey-Uzbekistan Strategic Partnership". Eurasian Research Institute, <https://www.eurasian-research.org/publication/new-stage-in-turkey-uzbekistan-strategic-partnership/> (Accessed 10.10.2022).

Haidar, Aida. "Kazakhstan and Türkiye Expand Cooperation in Military Intelligence Information Sharing". The Astana Times. 10.08.2022, <https://astanatimes.com/-2022/08/kazakhstan-and-turkiye-expand-cooperation-in-military-intelligence-information-sharing/> (Accessed 20.09.2022).

"History, geography and literature textbooks for Turkic world developed". 24.kg. 28.06.2022, [https://24.kg/english/238384\\_History\\_geography\\_and\\_literature\\_textbooks\\_for\\_Turkic\\_world\\_developed/](https://24.kg/english/238384_History_geography_and_literature_textbooks_for_Turkic_world_developed/) (Accessed 23.10.2022).

International Trade Centre, Bilateral trade between Türkiye and Kazakhstan, Product: TOTAL All products, [https://www.trademap.org/Bilateral\\_TS.aspx?nvpm=1%7c792%7c%7c-398%7c%7cTOTAL%7c%7c%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c3%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c1%7c1%7c1](https://www.trademap.org/Bilateral_TS.aspx?nvpm=1%7c792%7c%7c-398%7c%7cTOTAL%7c%7c%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c3%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c1%7c1%7c1) (Accessed 10.11.2022).

International Trade Centre, Bilateral trade between Türkiye and Uzbekistan, Product: TOTAL All products, [https://www.trademap.org/Bilateral\\_TS.aspx?nvpm=1%7c792%7c%7c8-60%7c%7cTOTAL%7c%7c%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c3%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c1%7c1%7c1](https://www.trademap.org/Bilateral_TS.aspx?nvpm=1%7c792%7c%7c8-60%7c%7cTOTAL%7c%7c%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c3%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c1%7c1%7c1) (Accessed 10.11.2022).

International Trade Centre, Bilateral trade between Türkiye and Turkmenistan,

Product: TOTAL All products, [https://www.trademap.org/Bilateral\\_TS.aspx?nvpm=1%7c79-2%7c%7c795%7c%7cTOTAL%7c%7c%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c3%7c2%7c](https://www.trademap.org/Bilateral_TS.aspx?nvpm=1%7c79-2%7c%7c795%7c%7cTOTAL%7c%7c%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c3%7c2%7c)



- c1%7c1%7c1%7c1%7c1 (Accessed 10.11.2022).
- International Trade Centre, Bilateral trade between Türkiye and Kyrgyzstan, Product: TOTAL All products, [https://www.trademap.org/Bilateral\\_TS.aspx?nvpm=1%7c-792%7c%7c417%7c%7cTOTAL%7c%7c%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c3%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c1%7c1](https://www.trademap.org/Bilateral_TS.aspx?nvpm=1%7c-792%7c%7c417%7c%7cTOTAL%7c%7c%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c3%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c1%7c1) (Accessed 10.11.2022).
- Kara, Mehtap. "Linking Turkey's domestic politics and foreign policy: the Justice and Development Party's political strategies and their divergent foreign policy effects." *Turkish Studies*. Vol. 23, No. (3):1, (2022): 1-25.
- Kumenov, Almaz. Kazakhstan seals deal to produce Turkish drones under license. 13.05.2022, <https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstan-seals-deal-to-produce-turkish-drones-under-license> (Accessed October 26.08.2022).
- Mackinnon, Amy. *Foreign Policy Magazine*. 16.07.2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021-07/16/central-asia-us-afghanistan-withdrawal-impact/> (Accessed 10.08.2022).
- "Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Turkic States convened in Istanbul". 18.10.2022, [https://www.turkkon.org/en/haberler/meeting-of-foreign-ministers-of-the-organization-of-turkic-states-convened-in-istanbul\\_2648](https://www.turkkon.org/en/haberler/meeting-of-foreign-ministers-of-the-organization-of-turkic-states-convened-in-istanbul_2648) (Accessed 26.10.2022).
- Minasyan, Nelli. "Pan-Turkism Manifestations of Turkey-Azerbaijan military-political cooperation." *Scientific Artsakh*, Vol. 4, No. 11 (2021): 44-53.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey. Participation of Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu in the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Turkic States, 17.11.2022, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sayin-bakanimizin-turk-devletleri-teskilati-disisleri-bakanlari-konseyi-olaganustu-toplantisi-na-katilimi--17-ekim-2022.en.mfa> (Accessed 26.11.2022).
- Muhammet, Mutaf; Kemal, Özdemir; Aynur, Asgarli; Ekip. Anadolu Ajansı. 10.10.2022, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/pg/foto-galeri/-cumhurbaskanligi-kabine-toplantisi-sona-erdi> (Accessed 11.10.2022).
- "Nakhchivan Agreement: On the establishment of the cooperation council of Turkic speaking states", [https://www.turkkon.org/assets/pdf/temel\\_belgeler/nakhchivan-agreement-on-the-establishment-of-the-copperation-council-of-turkic-speaking-states-1-en.pdf](https://www.turkkon.org/assets/pdf/temel_belgeler/nakhchivan-agreement-on-the-establishment-of-the-copperation-council-of-turkic-speaking-states-1-en.pdf) (Accessed 10.09.2022).
- Organization of Turkic States. <https://www.turkkon.org/en/turk-konseyi-hakkinda> (Accessed 12.10.2022).
- "Organization of Turkic States establishes its investment fund". [Organizacija tjurkskih gosudarstv sozdaet svoj investicionnyj fond], <https://yuz.uz/ru/news/organizatsiya-tyurkskix-gosudarstv-sozdaet-svoy-investitsionny-fond?view=rasshiraetsya-uzbeksko-kitayskoe-mejregionalnoe-sotrudnichestvo> (Accessed 23.11. 2022).
- "Organization of Turkic States establishes its investment fund". Duniyo. [Organizacija tjurkskih gosudarstv sozdaet svoj investicionnyj fond], [https://dunyo.info/ru/-site/inner/organizatsiya\\_tyurkskih\\_gosudarstv\\_sozdaet\\_svoy\\_investitsionny\\_fond-9rd](https://dunyo.info/ru/-site/inner/organizatsiya_tyurkskih_gosudarstv_sozdaet_svoy_investitsionny_fond-9rd) (Accessed 28.11.2022).
- Özdener, Eda; Elmira, Ekberova. "Turkic states discuss creation of a single alphabet". Anadolu. 20.10.2022, [Tjurkskie gosudarstva obsuzhdajut sozdanie edinogo alfavita].
- Rashid, Ahmed. *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia*. London-New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2002.
- "Relations between Türkiye and Kazakhstan". Republic of Türkiye MFA,

- <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/reasons-between-turkiye-and-kazakhstan.en.mfa> (Accessed 25.09.2022).
- "Special services of Turkic states discuss issues of concerted fight against terrorism". Turan. 26.07.2022, [https://www.turan.az/ext/news/2022/7/free/politics\\_news/en/7560.htm](https://www.turan.az/ext/news/2022/7/free/politics_news/en/7560.htm) (Accessed 29.10.2022).
- "The Shushi Declaration between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Azerbaijan about Allied Relations", 15.07.2021, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/assets/dosya/2021-06-15-Azərbaycan-SusaBeyannamesi.pdf> (Accessed 10.09.2022). (in Turkish)
- "Turkic Council reforms into Organization of Turkic States". TRT World. 13.11.2021, <https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/turkic-council-reforms-into-organization-of-turkic-states-51608> (Accessed 20.10.2022).
- "Turkey and Central Asian military cooperation: more than just drones". Blue Domes. 22.05.2022, <https://bluedomes.net/2022/05/25/turkey-and-central-asian-military-cooperation-more-than-just-drones/> (Accessed 26.08.2022).
- Turkic Investment Fund, [https://www.turkkon.org/en/isbirligi-alanlari/economic-cooperation\\_2/turkic-investment-fund\\_39](https://www.turkkon.org/en/isbirligi-alanlari/economic-cooperation_2/turkic-investment-fund_39) (Accessed 23.10.2022).
- "Turkic World Vision – 2040". 12.11.2021, <https://www.turkkon.org/assets/pdf/haberler/turkic-world-vision-2040-2396-97.pdf> (Accessed 10.11.2022).
- "Turkey's cooperation with Kazakhstan to broaden after new set of deals". Daily Sabah. 14.09.2018, <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/2018/09/14/turkeys-cooperation-with-kazakhstan-to-broaden-after-new-set-of-deals> (Accessed 11.11.2022).
- "U.S. Bases in Central Asia? Russia Calls On Afghanistan's Neighbors". Warsaw Institute. 31.09.2021, <https://warsawinstitute.org/u-s-bases-central-asia-russia-calls-afghanistans-neighbors/> (Accessed 30.09.2022).
- Yanik, Lerna K. "The Politics of educational exchange: Turkish education in Eurasia". *Europe-AsiaStudies*. Vol. 56, No. 2, (2004): 293-307.
- Yapp, Malcolm. "The Legend of the Great Game". *Proceedings of the British Academy: Lectures and Memoirs*, Vol. 11, (2000): 179-198.
- Yermolov, Maksim. "Anadolu: Turkic countries to create a single alphabet". [Anadolu: strany Organizacii tjurkskih gosudarstv sozdadut edinyj alfavit] 21.10.2022, <https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/news/2022/10/21/18847705.shtml> (Accessed 22.11.2022).
- "What is known about the armed conflicts on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border since 2014?". TACC. [Chto izvestno o vooruzhennyh konfliktah na kirgizsko-tadzhikskoj granice s 2014 goda?] [https://tass.ru/info/15770985?utm\\_source=google.com&utm\\_medium=organic&utm\\_campaign=google.com&utm\\_referrer=google.com](https://tass.ru/info/15770985?utm_source=google.com&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=google.com&utm_referrer=google.com) (Accessed 18.09.2022).