

COOPERATION AMONG TURKIC-SPEAKING COUNTRIES: ITS IMPORTANCE IN ENSURING INTERETHNIC HARMONY AND A NEW STAGE IN CULTURAL TIES

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Abstract

This article analyzes the formation, stages of development of the Turkic States Organization (TSO) and its place in the system of modern international relations. The importance of the organization in the development of cooperation in the political, economic, transport-logistics and cultural-humanitarian spheres is revealed. It also highlights the mutual integration of member states within the TSO, their role in ensuring global and regional security, and the prospects for innovative development. The article specifically recognizes the activity and initiatives of Uzbekistan in this organization. The results of the study indicate that the TSO's influence at the regional and global levels will further increase in the future.

Keywords

Turkic States Organization, regional integration, international cooperation, Central Asia, geopolitics, economic development, transport corridors, innovation, cultural cooperation, digital transformation, security, Turkic states.

In recent years, the international community has recognized that the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) is becoming an important model of cooperation in the region. Although this platform is relatively young in terms of its formation, it has begun to show itself as an international organization capable of implementing specific strategic goals in a short time with its successes. In a situation where fundamental changes are taking place in the world socio-political system, the question of how an important region in Asia should develop, who or what should determine its future prospects in the future, and what should be the political mood and social activity of the peoples of the Turkic states, which have a common past and present, should be. From this point of view, the establishment of an official organization that would determine the relations of countries based on mutual cooperation and solidarity was the need of the hour. In the process of developing comprehensive cooperation between countries, the organization planned, first of all, to connect reliable, safe and cooperative belts along the newly developing network of transport and energy corridors in the Caucasus and Central Asia. This, in turn, was necessary not only to expand trade relations between member states, but also to achieve economic independence and prosperity of the organization, but also as a factor in countering threats from global attacks, for example, from the territory of Afghanistan. Secondly, it is also relevant for the member states of the Organization to assist each other in resisting the pressure of other international powers involved in the activities of transnational projects with excessive geopolitical ambitions and the creation of new ones. Thirdly, this organization is also important from the point of view of preserving cultural identity.

As the WTO is increasingly recognized as an organization operating in the international arena effectively, constructively and on the basis of equality of interests, the number of countries wishing to join it is also increasing. For example, about 15 countries, including some constituent



entities of the Russian Federation (Chuvashia, Bashkortostan, Tatarstan, the Republic of Crimea, Tuva, etc.), Gagauzia (an autonomous territorial entity within the Republic of Moldova), and the Turkic peoples of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China, have also expressed their desire to cooperate through this platform.

Currently, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan are full members of the TEU, while Turkmenistan and Hungary have observer status.

In conclusion, it can be said that the potential of the TEU lies in the mutual solidarity of its member states. The organization has set itself a number of goals, including increasing its influence and capabilities in the international arena by expanding its ranks, intensifying political and economic integration between Turkic countries, implementing new projects in the fields of science, technology and innovation to help countries adapt to today's challenges, and strengthening cooperation in the cultural and humanitarian fields. Also, the organization's growing position is evidenced by the fact that it is able to unite the forces of member states in solving problems, including climate change, pandemics and economic crises.

The first summit of the heads of state of the Turkic States Organization is scheduled to be held in Samarkand on November 11, 2022.

As is known, in 1992, a high-level meeting of the presidents of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan was held in Ankara. In 1993, the Organization of the Culture of the Turkic-Speaking Peoples - Turksoy was established. This was the first stage of close cooperation between the Turkic states.

At the second stage - in 2009, the Cooperation Organization of the Turkic States was established in Nakhchivan. The goals and objectives of the organization are to strengthen mutual trust, friendship and close neighborliness among the Turkic-speaking countries, to support peace in the region and the world as a whole, and to ensure security.

The historic summit of the heads of state of the Turkic States in Istanbul in 2021 began the third stage of the formation of the Organization. This structure has brought all-round cooperation between the member states of the Turkic Council of States to a high level. Currently, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey and Uzbekistan are members of this organization. Turkmenistan and Hungary have received observer status in the organization. Another fifteen countries have expressed their intention to cooperate with the Turkic Council of States in various fields. In general, the history of the Turkic-speaking peoples covers thousands of years BC. Ancient Turkic states such as the Turkic Khaganate, the Karakhanids, the Ghaznavids, the Seljuks and the Khorezmshahs were considered the most powerful empires of their time. Great representatives of this region made a huge contribution to the development of universal culture and civilization. In particular, thinkers such as Muhammad Khorezm, Ahmad Ferghani, Abu Rayhan Beruni, Ibn Sina, Mirzo Ulugbek, and great scholars such as Imam Bukhari, Imam Maturidi, Imam Termizi, and Bahauddin Naqshband have written glorious pages in our common history. Allama Alisher Navoi said in his epic poem "Farhad and Shirin" that he considers all Turkic peoples to be his own:

“Agar bir qavm, gar yuz, yo‘qsa mingdur,
Muayyan turk ulusi xud meningdur”.

Turkic-speaking peoples have long established trade relations and cooperated with each other. The regions where they lived have served as transport and trade bridges between East and West, North and South for thousands of years. On the eve of the 21st century, the idea of forming a regional organization, adhering to historical traditions, was born.



The creation of this regional organization brought mutually beneficial cooperation between its member states to a qualitatively new level, increasing its role and influence in the international arena. The total number of peoples living in Turkic-speaking countries currently exceeds 160 million. The territory of the member states of this council is about 4 million square kilometers.

The Turkic Council of States is strengthening its relations with regional structures such as the United Nations and its structures, the European Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, the Economic Cooperation Organization, and the Visegrad Group.

The organization has structures such as the Council of Heads of State of the Turkic-Speaking States, the Secretariat of the Turkic Council, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Turkic States, the Council of Foreign Ministers, the Committee of Senior Officials, and the Council of Elders. Also, a number of structures have begun their activities, such as the Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation, which finances various festivals of Turkic-speaking peoples, supports traditional crafts, applied arts in the regions, and protects intellectual property rights, the Turkic Academy, which unites centers for history and ethnology, language, literature and terminology, art and culture, socio-economic studies, and international studies, and the Union of Turkic Universities. At the initiative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the Alisher Navoi International Prize was also established for his contribution to the unity of the Turkic world.

Within the framework of this organization, formed on the basis of a common language and common values, cooperation in the political, trade-economic, investment, transport-logistics, and cultural-humanitarian spheres is currently developing rapidly. In particular, there are important agreements on the development of investment, e-commerce, facilitating mutual trade, and improving transport and transit procedures.

This organization has also adopted the "Turkic World - 2040" plan. It envisages achieving free movement of goods, capital, services, and technologies between member states, systematically improving the investment climate, standardizing customs procedures, reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers, creating a single electronic trade space, and implementing cooperation programs in information technologies and technoparks. The organization is also creating relevant benefits for citizens of member states. For example, citizens of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan have the right to stay in Turkey without a visa for up to 90 days. Turkish citizens also have the right to stay in Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan for 90 days, and in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan for 30 days.

This integration creates an opportunity to further expand trade relations through a network of transport and energy corridors in the Caucasus and Central Asia. At the same time, measures are being taken to implement major transport and communication projects, enter the markets of Europe, China and South Asia, and effectively use the potential of the new Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway. In general, the total gross national product of the member states of the Turkic States Organization is \$ 1.5 trillion, their total imports exceed \$ 420 billion, and the volume of mutual product supplies is \$ 21 billion.

There are plans to establish a Turkic States structure for environmental protection in cooperation with the UN, exchange experience and transfer innovations in creating "smart" cities, and open a research center for studying the historical, scientific and cultural heritage of member states.



Uzbekistan's participation as a member of the Turkic States Organization is of particular importance in this structure. In a short period of time, our country has become one of the most active members of the organization. Our President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has put forward very important initiatives to further improve the activities of the Organization. In particular:

firstly, to create favorable and attractive conditions for expanding trade relations within the Organization, to compensate for products imported from third countries at the expense of goods that can be produced in member countries;

secondly, to develop the "Transport Interconnection Program of the Turkic States Organization" to further develop our trade and economic cooperation;

thirdly, to establish engineering and technology centers in order to strengthen industrial cooperation;

fourth, to create a permanent platform for experts and IT specialists to exchange experience and transfer innovations in building "smart" cities;

fifth, to solve climate change and environmental problems, achieve carbon neutrality and transition to a "green" economy;

sixth, to jointly develop a "roadmap" covering the implementation of the "Turkish World Tourism" and "Tabarruk Ziyorat" tourism projects, handicraft exhibitions and ethno-sports competitions, preservation and restoration of cultural heritage sites, and other areas;

seventh, to establish a "Research Center for the Study of the Historical, Scientific and Cultural Heritage of Turkic-Speaking States".

Important events of the Organization of Turkic States are being held in our country. In particular, a business conference of the Business Council of Turkic-speaking countries was held in Tashkent, which was attended by more than 500 entrepreneurs from Uzbekistan, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, and Hungary. Uzbekistan's total trade volume with fraternal countries doubled.

The adoption of the resolution of our President Shavkat Mirziyoyev "On measures to accelerate the development of cooperation in the field of tourism with Turkic countries" brought the development of tourism with fraternal countries to a new level. In the field of tourism with Turkic countries, the "Modern Great Silk Road" tourism program has been developed and is being consistently implemented. Currently, about 60 percent of tourists visiting our country come from three Turkic countries - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkey.

It is also planned to hold an exhibition and scientific conference on the topics of "Handicrafts of Turkic Peoples", "The Role of Samarkand Paper in World Science and the International Economy", "The Importance of Margilan Silk Fabrics in the International Market of the Middle Ages", "Do'mbir and Qo'biz", "Changovuz and Sibiz'ga", "International Festival of Turkic-Speaking Youth". It is expected that more than 5 million tourists from member states of this organization will come to our country, providing them with about 1.3 billion dollars in tourism services. The Organization of Turkic States declared Kokand the "Tourism Capital of the Turkic World", and Khiva the "Cultural Capital of the Turkic World". In this regard, international scientific conferences on the topics of "Central Asian World Civilization" were held in Khiva, and "The Role of the Kokand Khanate in the Formation of Statehood and Cultural Heritage of the Turkic Peoples" were held in Kokand. The 38th meeting of the Permanent Council of Ministers of Culture of the Turkic States Organization was also held in our country. At the initiative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the Alisher Navoi International Prize was established for his contribution to the unity of the Turkic world.

The organization also pays great attention to the protection and support of human rights, freedoms and legitimate interests. The Association of National Human Rights Institutions and Ombudsmen of Turkic States was established in Bursa, Turkey. This association introduces the



activities of ombudsmen of Turkic States and national human rights organizations. In this context, knowledge and experience in the field of human rights are exchanged, joint seminars are organized, and prepared projects are implemented. In particular, international conferences on the topics “The Role of Parliaments in the Protection of Human Rights” and “The Importance of Improving Legislation to Ensure the Effective Activity of Ombudsman Institutions” were held in Baku.

Based on the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the International Institute for Central Asian Studies was also established in order to develop international cooperation in the field of science and culture, disseminate cultural and scientific information, and expand Uzbekistan’s spiritual ties with the world community.

The holding of this logical conference in Samarkand will undoubtedly go down in history as the first summit of the newly named Organization of Turkic States of our brotherly peoples.

In conclusion, within the framework of this organization, along with strengthening the age-old brotherhood, the constant focus will be on strengthening political consultations on global and regional issues, raising economic and technical cooperation, cooperation in the fields of science, art and culture, as well as in the preservation and further development of the material and spiritual culture of the Turkic-speaking world to a high level.

\\The first direction is to expand economic ties and increase the volume of mutual trade. Strengthening the economy should include the implementation of joint projects, improving infrastructure and other important measures. This goal is also consistent with the strategic document “Vision of the Turkic World - 2040”, adopted at the 8th summit last year. This document indicates the importance of creating prosperous societies in the TEU countries, taking into account economic integration. Within this direction, the ideas of creating an Investment Fund and a Development Bank under the Organization are also considered promising. Such projects would allow countries to coordinate their efforts and manage investments more effectively.

From the point of view of trade cooperation, it is necessary to pay attention to the removal of economic barriers to trade along the East-West corridors through the Caspian Sea. In our opinion, the phased implementation of the “Turkistan Corridor” is important, and it is advisable to simplify and harmonize customs procedures. Work has begun in this direction. In November 2021, the “Digital TIR” pilot project was launched between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and in March this project also covered Kyrgyzstan.

For the first time in the world, the organization managed to launch the “ePermit” project in test mode between Uzbekistan and Turkey, and at the next stage there is an agreement with Kazakhstan to implement this project. In addition, work is underway to introduce the eCMR tool in the TEU countries together with the UN Economic Commission for Europe.

It is important to expand investment projects in this direction. In particular, the implementation of mutually beneficial investment activities is in the interests of the Organization's member states, including Uzbekistan. In 2017-2021, the TEU member states invested \$2.5 billion in foreign direct investment in the economy of Uzbekistan (which is 10 percent of the total volume of foreign investment in the relevant period). Of this, more than \$1 billion, or 41 percent, was invested in 2021. Since 2017, the growth of investments from TEU countries in Uzbekistan has been 30 percent. The second direction is digital transformation. Today, digitalization is becoming one of the priority areas of development for any state. Therefore, this issue is most relevant for the TEU. The goals in this direction were outlined in the strategic document “Vision of the Turkic World - 2040” in 2021. In particular, the document envisages the establishment of interregional digital communication, which will allow improving the telecommunications infrastructure.



It is also necessary to strengthen cooperation in the field of artificial intelligence. In particular, such technologies can be used both for the development of the economy and industry, and for improving urban infrastructure. According to many experts, artificial intelligence technologies can solve the issue of traffic management, logistics and public order.

The third area is the strengthening of cultural and humanitarian ties. The population of the Turkic states has historically common roots. Therefore, the expansion of cultural and humanitarian ties is of particular importance for the TEU countries. In particular, cooperation between educational and scientific institutions, academic exchanges, joint cultural events. In this regard, it is advisable to expand the points of cooperation within the framework of the Organization for the Joint Development of Turkic Culture and Arts.

In conclusion, it can be said that the TEU is a regional organization uniting Turkic-speaking countries, which has development prospects in many areas. For all member states, including Uzbekistan, strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation within the framework of the TPP can serve to ensure comprehensive development and stability, increase economic growth, and stimulate the development of countries.

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