

# 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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\* Independent Researcher, University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Tashkent, Uzbekistan.  
E-mail: murodlawyer@gmail.com. ORCID: 0000-0002-1784-2365.

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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

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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.

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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.

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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, re-

garding 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

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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 perspec-

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.

## Endnotes

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