

<https://doi.org/10.53277/2519-2442-2025.2-07>

IRSTI 11.25.15

ISSN 2519-2442, KAZAKHSTAN

Book Review

## GEOPOLITICS OF THE TURKIC WORLD

Zhuldyz KANAPIYANOVA <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eurasian Research Institute of the Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International

Kazakh-Turkish University, 050004, Kazakhstan

juldyz777@hotmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0002-2992-7390

Received: 17.12.2024

Accepted: 19.04.2025

**For citation:** Kanapiyanova, Zh. (2025). [Review of the *Geopolitics of the Turkic World*, by F. Karaman]. *Eurasian Research Journal*, 7(2), 243-245.

The geopolitical importance of the Turkic world has grown significantly in recent years due to its strategic location, abundant natural resources, cultural influence, and its role as a bridge between major global powers. The Turkic world spans Central Asia, the Caucasus, and parts of Eastern Europe and the Middle East, sitting at the crossroads of major continents (Asia, Europe, and the Middle East). This region acts as a critical land bridge for trade, energy, and transportation corridors like the Middle Corridor and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), connecting East Asia to Europe through Central Asia and Türkiye. The Caspian Sea is a critical hub for energy exports, with pipelines like the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline Project (TANAP) ensuring energy transit from the region to Europe. The Turkic world shares deep linguistic, cultural, and historical ties, fostering a sense of unity that can translate into coordinated political and economic initiatives. Organizations like the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) are enhancing cooperation in trade, security, and culture, creating a platform for regional influence. In this context, the book titled "The Geopolitics of the Turkic World", edited by Karaman and published in December 2023, seeks to establish its place in the literature by addressing significant developments and topics in the Turkic world. The book aims to analyse key issues such as Turkmenistan's neutrality policy, the OTS, the Karabakh issue, Kyrgyzstan's water problem, and similar critical topics in the countries of the Turkic world. The book consists of four sections—Turkic World, Geopolitics, Central Asia, and Caucasus—and includes 17 chapters.

The section on Turkmenistan examines the following topics: "Turkmenistan in the Independence Process: Challenges and Search for Policies", "Turkmenistan's International Relations and Security Policy in the Context of the Principle of Positive Neutrality", and "History Education and National Consciousness in Turkmenistan". This section highlights that Turkmenistan was one of the countries most affected by the structural problems stemming from the dependency

relationship established during the Soviet Union era. It discusses how the country's landlocked geography significantly limited its ability to develop alternatives after the disintegration of the integrated structure it was part of during the Soviet period. Despite these challenges, the section examines Turkmenistan's efforts to implement policy options such as transforming its monocultural production structure, transporting natural gas and oil to global markets via alternative routes, and achieving permanent neutrality status. These measures aim to enable the country to act autonomously in the face of regional and global challenges that could directly impact it. Thus, it is noted that Turkmenistan continues to formulate policies that balance its goals with the realities of the post-independence period. Additionally, it is mentioned that Turkmenistan's international relations and security policies are conducted within the framework defined by the principles of Permanent Neutrality, Open Door Policy, and Positive Neutrality, alongside the universal standards of international law. These principles have been incorporated into the country's constitution, making them key elements in shaping its strategic policies. Furthermore, Turkmen youth are taught through history education that they belong to a people with a proud past. They are shown that they were not "uncivilized nomads" but rather a nation that contributed to world civilization through the states they established, their advancements in science, and their mastery of governance—leaving an indelible mark both in their homeland and beyond.

The section on Azerbaijan discusses how the relationships established with other powers in the region before the Nagorno-Karabakh war directly affected the outcome of the conflict. It is stated that Russia, which viewed the region as part of its sphere of influence, had favoured the unresolved status of the issue until 2020. The section also highlights that the shift in Armenian leadership following the Velvet Revolution of 2018 led to the adoption of pro-Western policies, which resulted in Armenia losing its role as Russia's loyal ally and led to Russia refraining from intervening on Armenia's behalf. The article emphasizes that Azerbaijan's growth in both military and economic terms, as well as its strategic cooperation with other regional powers, contributed to its victory in the war. Specifically, it points out that the Russia-Türkiye partnership in recent years played a significant role in changing Russia's stance towards Azerbaijan. Additionally, it is noted that, unlike Armenia, Azerbaijan possesses gas and oil resources, which reduced its dependency on Russia and allowed it to find its place in the new power balance.

The section on Uzbekistan highlights that while there are no exact statistics on the total number of Uzbekistan's diaspora abroad, research indicates that the most concentrated regions of the Uzbek diaspora are its neighbouring countries: Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. In addition, significant Uzbek diasporas, with populations exceeding one hundred thousand, are also found in countries such as Russia, the United States, South Korea, Germany, and Türkiye. The idea is expressed that the diaspora activities of member countries of the Turkic States Organization should be studied, and through this, information sharing should be facilitated to enable joint efforts for Turks living in different parts of the world.

The section on Kyrgyzstan mentions that the Fergana Valley, due to its fertile land, is considered one of the most important agricultural centres in Central Asia. It is shared by Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, with 60% of the

valley belonging to Uzbekistan, 25% to Tajikistan, and 15% to Kyrgyzstan. It is also noted that tensions arising from border and water-sharing disputes between the Central Asian republics sharing the Fergana Valley have been increasing in recent years. These border tensions point to the difficulties of the post-Soviet nation-state-building process in Central Asia. Consequently, the growing discourse around “ethnic lands” and mutual territorial claims is seen as fueling national identities based on negative prejudices, which in turn escalates the existing tensions in the region. In this context, the author suggests that border negotiations should be concluded, and the demarcation and marking of borders between countries should be finalized. Additionally, it is recommended that water usage should no longer be a source of imbalance and conflict and that water should be used more rationally and systematically within the region.

The section also highlights that the U.S. military presence in Kyrgyzstan, within the framework of the American base, has caused political tensions within Kyrgyzstan’s domestic politics and diplomatic crises in its foreign policy, which has relatively harmed Kyrgyzstan’s international relations. This is because Kyrgyzstan’s political stance and indecisiveness in its foreign policy, particularly in its relationships with the U.S. and Russia, have created an image of Kyrgyzstan as an unreliable partner in the eyes of the countries it engages with.

The most important point in the section on Kazakhstan is that, with the 9th largest land area in the world, Kazakhstan is located at the heart of Eurasia, as indicated by Mackinder, and holds significant geopolitical importance in connecting China to the West and Russia to the East. The section notes that Kazakhstan, with 99 elements from the Mendeleev table found within its borders, has attracted global attention due to its rich natural resources, expanding its capacity for reciprocal trade, and highlighting Central Asia’s geopolitical importance. The country’s pursuit of a multilateral foreign policy, allowing it to establish pragmatic relations not only with neighbouring states like Russia and China but also with the U.S. and Western countries, has provided Astana with an extra advantage in conducting international diplomacy. In this context, the country’s position and importance in Central Asia’s geopolitics are considered invaluable. Due to its abundant natural resources, Kazakhstan has emerged as a reliable supplier for the West in managing the energy crisis, serving as an alternative to Russia, thus strengthening its position in the international arena. Additionally, by hosting various corridors and becoming a transit country, Kazakhstan has managed to make its mark in the international trade and shipping sectors.

The book “Geopolitics of the Turkic World” can be considered a distinctive work, as it not only discusses the conventional positive developments but also addresses the problems, issues, and historical developments in the region alongside them. It is evident that the book provides extensive information, particularly offering a close and alternative perspective on the countries of the Turkic world. The fact that the chapter authors come from different regions of the Turkic world allows for a deeper analysis of the subject. In this context, while not all aspects of the Turkic world may be covered, it undoubtedly serves as a valuable resource for literature and readers, especially university students, by addressing key topics in general.