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I N T E R N A T I O N A L



Principles of Publication

At a time when U.S. ambitions for a unipolar world order have lost their appeal, a new order is taking shape thanks to the multipolarization of world politics and the acceleration of cooperation between developing countries, rejecting the globalism of imperialist states. Under these conditions, the new agenda of global cooperation should respond to the needs and aspirations of developing countries seeking joint development and solidarity under the guidance of public-driven projects. In particular, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) -put forward in 2013 by Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China- provides a suitable opportunity and a sound foundation for the implementation of this new agenda of global cooperation.

BRI is an epoch-making move to re-implement the concept of the Silk Road, which dates back 2,000 years, to a time when China was immensely contributing to global prosperity and the development of trade and cooperation. The revival of this concept entails a much more comprehensive approach that also incorporates rail and sea transport, and digital systems.

BRI proposes to bring together over 60 countries across Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America –together accounting for nearly half of the world's gross domestic product– for prosperity and development at the initiative of China. Unlike the Western-centered world order, BRI seeks peaceful collaboration for improving global trade and production towards common goals for humanity. It firmly rejects crude imperialist exploitation. Two thousand years ago, the Silk Road was a conduit for the flow of gunpowder, spices, silk, compasses and paper to the world. Today, it offers artificial intelligence, quantum computers, new energy and material technologies, and space-age visions to developing countries. In addition, the New Silk Road provides incentives and opportunities for the development and implementation of bio-economic schemes in stakeholder countries against the threat of climate change and other environmental threats that bring the entire ecosystem to the brink of extinction.

Türkiye has a significant role –real and potential– in accelerating South-South cooperation. Türkiye is conveniently located as Asia's farthest outpost to the West. It assumes a critical position as a pivotal country on BRI's North-South and East-West axes. However, China's development and BRI's contribution to the future of humanity have remained to a large extent underrecognized and superficially evaluated in Turkish academia, media, and politics. This is mainly because Türkiye's academics, media professionals, and policy makers have been observing China using Western sources. In the same manner, China and BRI's other potential partners have been viewing Türkiye through a Western lens.

BRIQ has committed itself to developing an in-depth understanding of the present era, with a particular emphasis on the new opportunities and obstacles on the road to the New Asian Century.

BRIQ assumes the task of providing direct exchange of views and information among Chinese and Turkish academics, intellectuals, and policy makers. In the meantime, this journal will serve as a platform to bring together the intellectual accumulation of the whole world, especially developing countries, on the basis of the Belt and Road Initiative, which presents a historic opportunity for the common future of humanity.

BRIQ is also devoted to publishing research and other intellectual contributions that underline the transformative power of public-driven economies, where popular interests are upheld as the basic principle, ahead of individual profit. The fundamental tasks of BRIQ are to demonstrate how BRI can contribute to the implementation of this public-driven model, and to help potential BRI partners –including Türkiye- to realize their real potential.

BRIQ stands for the unity of humanity and a fair world order. It will therefore be a publication for the world's distinguished intellectuals, especially those from Eurasia, Africa, and the Americas: the defenders of a new civilization rising from Asia on the basis of peace, fraternity, cooperation, prosperity, social benefit and common development.



Submission Guidelines

BRIQ features a broad range of content, from academic articles to book reviews, review essays, interviews, news reports, and feature articles.

The Editorial Board can issue calls for papers for special issues and invite authors to contribute manuscripts; however, it also welcomes unsolicited submissions.

Submissions are invited in English or Turkish. All submissions are to include a short biography (150-word limit) and should be sent as Microsoft Word attachments to briq@briqjournal.com Articles or other content that have been previously published or are under review by other journals will not be considered for publication.

BRIQ follows American Psychology Association (APA style, 7th edition, <https://www.apastyle.org>) and uses American English spelling.

BRIQ applies a double-blind review process for all academic articles.

Academic articles should be between 5000 and 9000 words in length, including abstracts, notes, references, and all other content. Please supply a cover page that includes complete author information, and a fully anonymized manuscript that also contains an abstract (200-word limit) and five keywords.

Book reviews should not exceed 1,000 words; review essays covering two or more works can be up to 3,000 words.

News reports consisting of brief analyses of news developments should not exceed 1,500 words; feature articles combining reporting and analysis can be up to 3,500 words.

Please contact the Editorial Board for interview proposals.

EDITORIAL

The BRI and the Organization of Turkic States in a Multipolar World

One might argue that a defining characteristic of the multipolar world is the rise of regional cooperation platforms that are increasingly gaining strength and extending their influence from the regional to the global level. Certainly, regional organizations where countries convened based on economic, political, or military ties existed even prior to the onset of multipolarity. However, it is widely recognized that during this period, Atlantic hegemonism was capable of steering these organizations, either through direct involvement or via proxy states. In contrast, the current decline in Atlantic supremacy, particularly in the realms of economics and high technology, has fostered an environment that has contributed to the retreat of hegemonism. This new multipolar context has paved the way for regional cooperation platforms that enable developing nations to more effectively pursue their own interests. On a global scale, organizations such as BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)—which extends not only across Asia but also reaches Europe via Belarus—alongside the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) in Latin America, and more recently the Sahel States Alliance in Africa, have gained significant momentum. Concurrently, earlier regional platforms, as they increasingly extricate themselves from hegemonic dominance, have provided nations within these regions with the opportunity to focus on their own interests. The establishment of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) in 2019 is a further development that has emerged within the framework of a multipolar world.

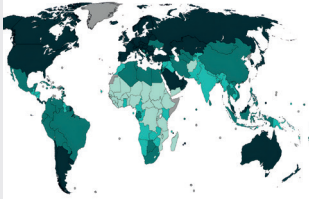
At the present time, the nation-states of Asia, Africa, and Latin America find themselves objectively positioned in opposition to the US-led Atlantic front, within the broader context of the global confrontation that has emerged. In this global struggle, the Atlantic bloc's most significant objective is to halt the rise of Asia, a rise that plays a pivotal role in undermining global hegemony. In this endeavor, two critical focal areas have emerged: West Asia and Central Asia. Conversely, both regions hold strategic importance for the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a multilateral cooperation platform proposed by China that seeks to foster shared development and prosperity among developing nations.

As the BRI approaches its 11th anniversary, it is evident that the transportation and energy corridors under this initiative will traverse the member states of the OTS in this region. The effective participation of the OTS and its members within the BRI holds the potential to precipitate significant shifts on the international stage.

Türkiye, alongside the Turkic republics of Central Asia, aligns itself within both the SCO, where it holds Dialogue Partner status, and the OTS. These republics also maintain partnerships with Russia, China, Iran, and India within the SCO, cooperate with Russia through the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union, and collaborate with China within the framework of the BRI.

Türkiye, which is both a target of the Atlantic bloc and a state it seeks to retain as an ally, finds its fate increasingly intertwined with that of Russia, China, and Iran—not only in economic matters but also in international politics. This alignment has the potential to transform the OTS into a bridge within Asia. Strengthening the OTS through policies that are aligned with the interests of regional states would further weaken Atlantic hegemonism. Consequently, this would not only bolster Türkiye's position but also enhance the strategic standing of Russia, China, and Iran. This potential will be realized by making the OTS an organization that is embraced by all the nations of Asia that share a common destiny.

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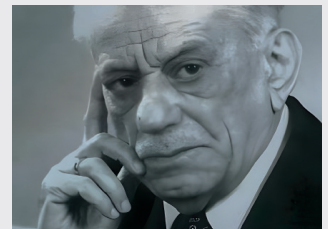
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ERZURUM STREET, 1916

**View of Erzurum street
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MOLLA NASRADDIN, 1906

**The first cover of Molla
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China's Greater Periphery Diplomacy in the New Era of the Emerging "Global East"



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ABSTRACT

With the prolonged Russia-Ukraine war in Europe and the Israel-Hamas conflict in the Middle East, the "Global East" is rising in the shifting world order. The East Asian countries (represented by China, Japan and South Korea), the Southeast Asian countries (represented by Indonesia), the South Asian countries (represented by India and Pakistan), the Central Asian countries (represented by Kazakhstan), the West Asian countries (represented by Saudi Arabia, Iran and Türkiye), and the North Asian countries (represented by Russia) have formed a complex of security, politics, economics, and civilization. In the current global climate, China conducts its greater periphery diplomacy in the "Global East" to consolidate its security and development. In the transition from US hegemony to multipolarity, the politics of historical self-definition has been on the rise, while Asian countries have awakened to nationalism and strategic autonomy. The stagnation of globalization and the lack of liberal economic growth made neighborhood diplomacy a top priority for Asian countries. Thus, the countries of the "Global East" moved from the periphery and semi-periphery to the center of the world stage by adopting bottom-up economic development instead of top-down democratic transformation as the main path to modernization.

Keywords: Central Asia, China, Global East, Global West, Global South.

Introduction

AFTER THE RISE OF WESTERN COLONIAL powers in the 18th century, European countries conquered and colonized China and other parts of Asia. In the following three centuries, Asia was marginalized. In the new era, world power is dispersing, with the Atlantic and the Pacific being the two power hubs. In the backdrop of the prolonged Russia-Ukraine war and Israel-Hamas hostility, the Western liberal order is giving way to multiple orders. Asia is rising on

the world stage, generating system transformation and power rebalance.

With the accelerated pace of multi-polarity, China, Russia, India, Kazakhstan, Iran, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, and other non-Western countries have rediscovered their historical affinities and legacies and have built closer political and economic ties. These countries are regrouping, making full use of their respective geographical advantages and carrying out a new strategic layout in the process of the rising "Global East", a grey zone between Global North and Global South.

Current research on the “Global East” is sparse. Some scholars argue that the Global North and Global South dichotomy is problematic because it has neglected the “middle ground” of “Greater Asia”. In thinking of the world as divided into a Global North and a Global South, the East has ended up in some sort of netherworld. Its interstitial position – not quite rich or poor, not a colony or colonizer – has made it difficult to categorize (Müller, 2020, 748). In the face of the Global South’s diversification and Greater Asia’s emergence, Professor G. John Ikenberry of Princeton University divides the current world into three groupings: the Global West, the Global East, and the Global South. The first is led by the US and Europe, the second by China and Russia, and the third by an amorphous grouping of non-western developing states led by India, Brazil and others. Each ‘world’ offers grand narratives of what is at stake in the Ukraine conflict and how it fits into the larger problems and prospects for twenty-first-century world order (Ikenberry, 2024). This paper probes the origins, dynamics, features, and hurdles of the “Global East” and its implication for China’s greater periphery diplomacy in the new era.

The Concepts of “East” and the “Global East”: A Historical Survey

“East” is not only a geographical concept but also political and cultural terminology. The concept of “East” differs greatly in historical and sociological contexts. “East” and “West” have different connotations in different historical periods. In the wars between Persia and Greece in the 5th century BC, “East” referred to Persia and “West” to Greece. After the rise

and fragmentation of Western Christian civilization, “East” referred to the Orthodox world and “West” to the Catholic world.

With the rise of Western maritime powers, colonies in the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia were called the “East”, and European colonial powers were called the “West”.

In the 7th century, religion was the determinant of East-West division. With the rise of the Arab Empire and the spread of Islam, the connotation of “East” and “West” changed again. During the medieval “Crusades”, the “East” referred to the Islamic world in West Asia and North Africa, and the “West” referred to the Christian world in Europe. In modern times, colonization determined the boundary of East and West. With the rise of Western maritime powers, colonies in the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia were called the “East”, and European colonial powers were called the “West” (Yongbin, 2017). In the 20th century, “East” was understood as Asia, the cradle of Babylon, Indian, Chinese, Persian, Islamic, and Slavic civilizations, while “West” was understood as European and North American countries.

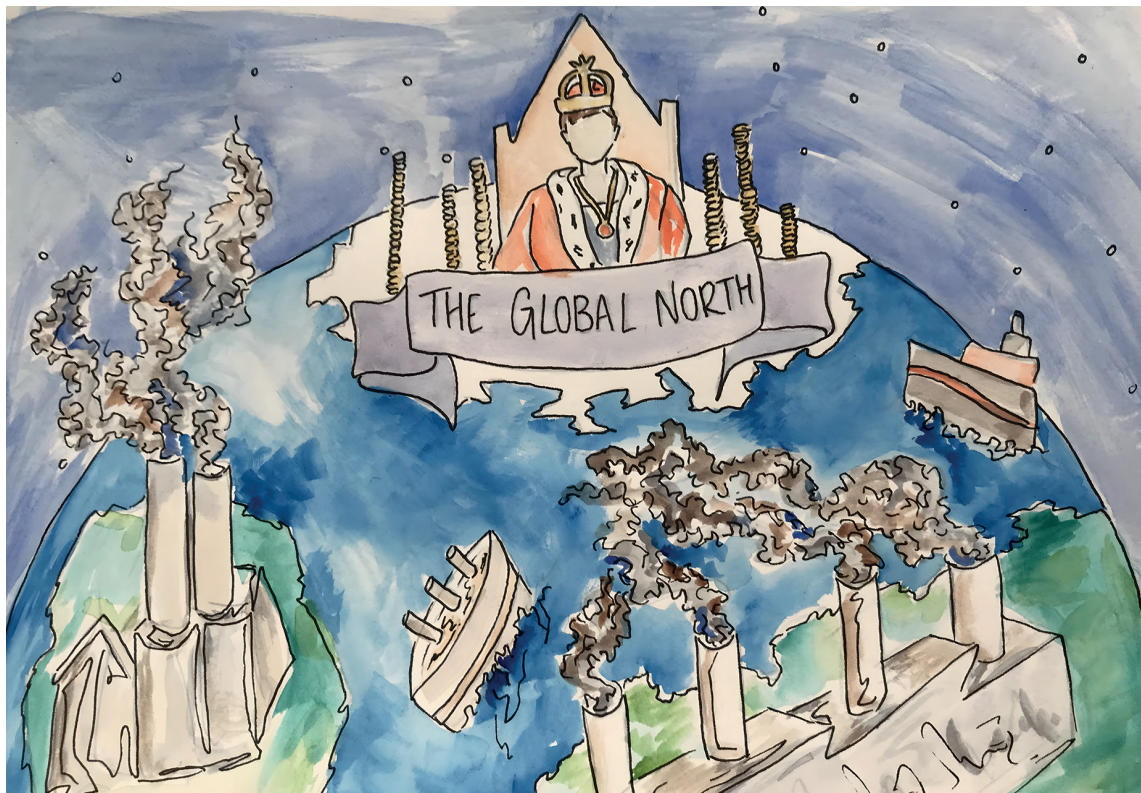
After World War II, political ideology became the key to the East-West division. The socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union belonged to the “East”, while the capitalist camp headed by the US belonged to the “West”; ideological competition resulted in the distincti-

on between East and West. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the boundary of "East" faded away. Seeking to capture the new "regimes of historicity" created by late 1980s/early 1990s transformations, various terms have appeared, such as "post-communist," "post-Soviet," "post-totalitarian," "ex-communist," and "transition countries," among others (Chelcea, 2023). These are similar to the terminology of the "Global East".

In the current era of transformations and conflicts, "East" and "West" have been endowed with new connotations. The geographical location of "East", in the context of Russian scholars, includes Russia, Central Asia, and Central and

Eastern Europe, i.e. the "socialist camp" during the Cold War (Trubina, 2020, 628). Swiss scholars believe the "Global East" includes the Middle East, Central and Eastern Europe and Asia, which is the eastern world vis-à-vis Western European countries (Müller & Trubina, 2020: 628)

The rise of the "Global East" is the outcome of world power transformation. In the new era of great power competition, the US is reconstructing its global alliance system, forging a hybrid of security, politics, economy, science, and technology. The US sticks to institutional hegemony and prevents non-Western powers from challenging the US-led international order.



Based on the idea that the world is divided into the Global North and the Global South, the situation of the East remains undefined (Figure: Newqq, 2024).

The U.S., the U.K., and the E.U. have a sense of crisis. On the pretext of “defending the civilization and its political values”, Western countries have politicized economic issues, weaponized mutual dependence, and securitized scientific and technological cooperation with non-Western markets, which has posed new challenges to Eurasian non-Western countries.

The global economic system is shifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and world economic growth is shifting from the West to the East.

The current world order faces vicissitude. The global economic system is shifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and world economic growth is shifting from the West to the East. The third industrial revolution, represented by information technology, is giving way to the fourth industrial revolution, which merges the physical, digital, and biological worlds. Rivalry among great powers is extending from geopolitics to identity politics. Russia, Kazakhstan, Iran, Türkiye, and Saudi Arabia, which were not regarded as “Asia”, are now looking east and are rediscovering their Asian identities.

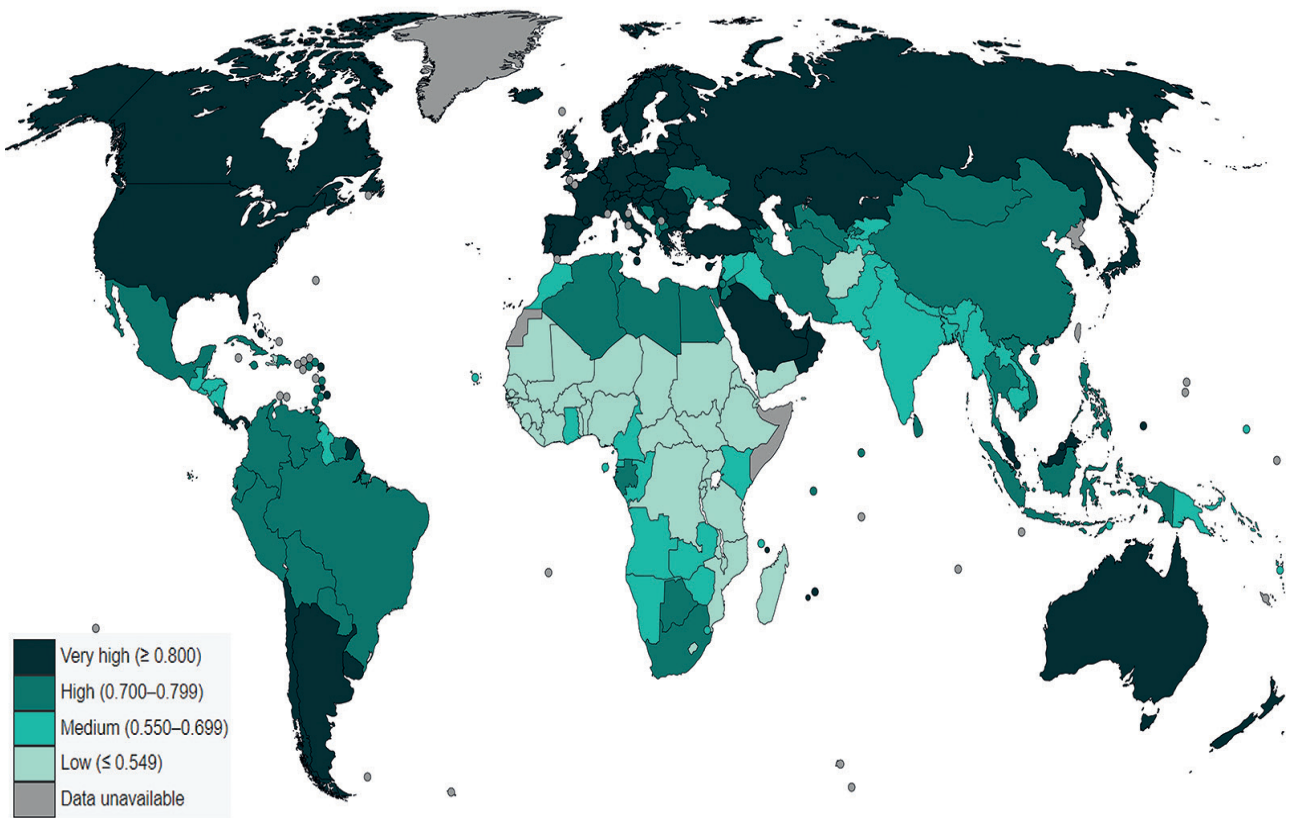
After the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine War in 2022, the US, the UK, and the European Union countries collectively sanctioned Russia, and Moscow’s strategy of keeping an equilibrium between the East and the West has fallen apart. President Putin’s strategy of pivoting to the East is to develop Siberia and the Russian Far East and use East Asia’s dynamism to spur that development. In the rapidly chan-

ging environment, Beijing came to be seen by Moscow as a source of money, investment, and even technology (Trenin, 2015). Modernizations, which had only a Western model, now have diverse versions. The flow of energy, commodities, and personnel was mostly between Western and non-Western powers in the old times, but now it is shifting inside the Oriental countries.

China’s conception of the “Global East” differs from Russia’s or Europe’s. The Chinese version of the “Global East” refers to the geographical part of Pan-Asia or Greater Asia, including the five sub-regions of East Asia, West Asia, South Asia, North Asia, and Central Asia, consisting of both developed economies such as Japan, South Korea, the UAE, and Qatar, as well as developing economies such as Central Asian and South Asian countries.

With the changing international environment, China’s periphery diplomacy is expanding, aiming to integrate all Asian countries and economies into one through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China’s diplomacy strives to promote infrastructure connectivity, use strategic resources, practice good-neighborly diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, increase cross-regional ties, and cope with uncertainties and instability brought about by the changing international order.

Although countries of the “Global East” differ greatly in their political systems, economic development, and resource endowments, they all geographically identify as Eastern countries in terms of their cultural mindset. From China to India, from Kazakhstan to Türkiye, from Russia to Saudi Arabia, these “Global East” countries are no longer second-class citizens but the major players in the Asian arena.



World map representing Human Development Index categories published in 2020, based on 2019 data (Figure: Encyclopedia, 2024).

The “East” and the “West” belong to two different worlds. The “Global West” is a political grouping defined as much by its political principles and affinities as its geographic location (Ikenberry, 2024). Represented by Europe and North America, the “West” sharply contrasts the “Global East” dominated by Asian states politically and culturally. The former advocates individualism, freedom and democracy, while the latter emphasizes collectivism, order, and justice. The former belongs to the Christian world and developed capitalist countries, while most of the

latter belong to multi-ethnic and civilizational countries with a long history and splendid culture; Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Confucianism, Taoism, and other religions coexist.

Rising from the victims of modern Western colonialism to the masters of their own land, the “Global East” countries have moved from the margins of world power to the center of the world stage. It arouses the collective historical memory of ancient oriental civilizations and profoundly impacts the world order (Lim, 2022).

Dynamics of the “Global East” Renaissance

The “Global East” has different values to the “Global West”. The former emphasizes collectivism while the latter focuses on individualism; the former underlines civilizations while the latter focuses on nation-states; the former underscores sovereignty while the latter on human rights. However, it does not necessarily mean that the “Global East” will race with the “Global West”. In fact, most countries in the “Global East” are development-oriented and have no intention of engaging in political or military confrontation with the “Global West”. They do not seek “Asia-centrism” or “Asian Monroe Doctrine,” nor do they seek to build a “parallel system” to the Western liberal world. Although China and Russia claim their relations have no limits, they are unwilling to form a bloc to oppose the West militarily (Trubina, Gogishvili, Imhof, & Müller, 2020).

With increasingly frequent political, economic, trade, and cultural exchanges among North, East, Southeast, South, Central, and West Asia, Asia’s regional integration has achieved great headway, the cross-regional linkage has been enhanced, and the consciousness of the “Global East” has been consolidated.

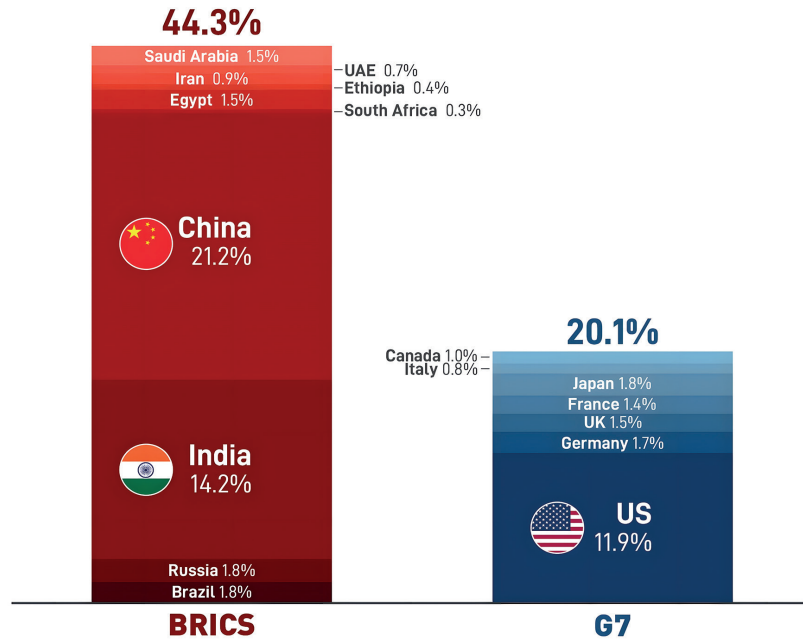
That being said, some Western scholars are skeptical about the rise of the “Global East”. They view Asian powers’ economic and cultural revitalization as a threat to Western values and democra-

cies and underscore that the US seeks an international order that protects and advances the interests of liberal democracy. “In their own way, China and Russia seek an international order that protects authoritarian rule from the threatening forces of liberal modernity” (Ikenberry, 2024). This is an exaggeration of the “Global East” ambition.

The “Global East” is not offering an alternative governmental or political mode; these countries do not come up with a new ideology to supplant Western liberal democracy. Some argue that Beijing and Moscow will seek to provide an alternative to the existing Western-designed systems governing global finance, regional security systems, and Internet freedom (Trenin, 2015), but in fact, they are too weak to offer a new mode. Rather, they seek to build a more balanced world against the backdrop of Western hegemony and monopoly; they aim to build a multiple world with political de-colonization, economic de-centralization and cultural diversification. Since the rise of the Western marine powers, the “Global West” has built a “core-periphery” order, and most Asian countries belonged to the periphery or semi-periphery blocs. In the new epoch, countries of the “Global East” crave to be respected by the West, stressing that Asian countries’ sovereignty and the right to development should not be denied.

The “Global East”, a combination of power, geography and ideas, is not a monolithic military alliance but a political-economic-civilizational complex formed by the interplay of different sub-regions of Asia. With increasingly frequent political, economic, trade, and cultural exchanges among North, East, Southeast, South, Central, and West Asia, Asia’s regional integration has achieved great headway, the cross-regional linkage has been enhanced, and the consciousness of the “Global East” has been consolidated.

Figure 1. BRICS and G7 Contribution to World Economic Growth (2024-2029)



Over the next five years, BRICS countries are expected to contribute twice as much to the world economy as G7 countries (Figure: Global Times, 2024).

First, countries of the “Global East” will seize the dividends of the fourth industrial revolution. Since modern times, the Industrial Revolution has gone through three historical stages: the age of the steam engine, the age of electricity, and the age of computer science. In the first three industrial revolutions, the Oriental societies prioritized their relations with the West; Japan, Russia, Israel and Türkiye walked away from “Asia” and re-identified themselves as Western countries. West Asian countries formed an inner circle of the “Middle East”; South Asian countries formed their local “subcontinental” identities; Central Asia was regarded as part of “Eurasia”; the so-called “Asia” was understood as East Asia and Southeast Asia.

In the context of the fourth industrial revolution, Asian countries such as China, India, Vietnam,

Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Iran have become new growth engines. Their largest trading partners are no longer the US or European countries but their immediate neighbors of China or India. Instead of the US or UK, China is the largest trading partner of most Asian countries.

At present, the “Global East” accounts for approximately the same share of the world economy as the “Global West”, and its contribution to world economic growth will constantly increase in the future. The “Global East” is increasingly dependent on intra-Asia trade. Countries in East and Southeast Asia are “looking west”, countries in West Asia are “looking east”, and Russia in North Asia is reconnecting countries in the South Asian subcontinent. Central Asian countries are striding at the corridors of the “Global East”, enhancing the cohesion of Asia.

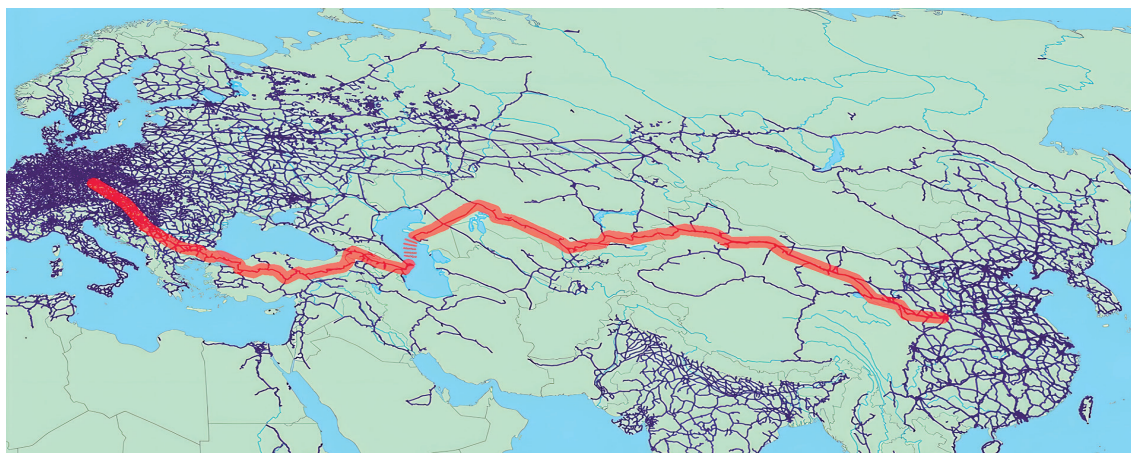
Since the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in 2022, Russia has left Europe and entered Asia due to the US, UK and European sanctions. Moscow's pivot to Asia predates the Ukraine crisis, and the Russia-Ukraine war has accelerated Moscow's "looking east" process. What was originally Moscow's "marriage of convenience" with Beijing has become a much closer partnership that includes cooperation on energy trade, infrastructure development, and defense. Putin's vision of a "Greater Europe" from Lisbon to Vladivostok, comprised of the European Union and the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union, is being replaced by a "Greater Asia" from Shanghai to St. Petersburg (Trenin, 2015). Russia-China solidarity has further consolidated the "Global East".

Likewise, Iran, Türkiye, and Arab countries have slowly but surely regained their Asian identities, and these countries have actively integrated into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS, further promoting the awareness of the "Global East".

Second, countries of the "Global East" strive to promote logistical connectivity. Asian countries were geographically adjacent in history but were blocked and isolated due to their natural environment. Ha-

ving been long cut off by mountains, the Gobi, deserts and rivers, and with time-consuming and costly land transport, historically, Asian countries had to rely on the Western maritime powers of Europe and the US, which were their main economic and trade partners. Under the new circumstances, the construction of highways, railways, power grids, and information networks has accelerated, enhancing connectivity among Asian countries. This effort has overcome the natural disadvantage of land power in the past two centuries.

In the past three centuries, land power was inferior to sea power because maritime traffic was cheaper; currently, land power is increasingly important due to logistical interconnectivity through highways, railways, bridges, and air routes. As June Wang puts it, the unbounded geographies of the Global East foreground topics of (im)mobility of people, ideas and materials, capital and commodities, information and technology; the agency of networking, infrastructure development and bordering that unpin, coordinate and control these flows, and the new social, economic and political landscape in the forming (Wang, 2021).



Map showing the Eurasian Land Bridge Corridor to strengthen coordination and cooperation in China's global projects such as the Belt and Road and Global Security initiatives (Map: Valdai Club, 2023).

Railways, in particular, are significant geo-economically and geo-politically. The China-Europe Express and China-Laos Railway have promoted economic and trade exchanges in East, Central, West, North, and Southeast Asia. The Russia-Turkmenistan-Iran-India "North-South Transport Corridor" will promote economic integration in South Asia, Central Asia, and the Eurasian hinterland. In recent years, conflicts among South Asian and Central Asian countries have de-escalated, and the peace dividend has been translated into a development dividend, promoting regional economic integration in Asia. The "Global East" countries have formed a network by exchanging people, ideas, goods, capital, commodities, information, and technology (Wang, 2021).

The "Global East" countries have strengthened the rejuvenation of Oriental civilizations and cultural consciousness.

Finally, the "Global East" countries have strengthened the rejuvenation of Oriental civilizations and cultural consciousness. In recent years, the ebb of global democracy, the rise of populism and nationalism, the emergence of new authoritarianism on the stage of history, and the prominent problem of social polarization brought about by Western democratization have compelled Greater Asian countries to reflect on their respective modernization paths (Chan, Gentile, Kinossian, Oakes, & Young, 2018). Initiated by the US, the "Greater Middle East Initiative" and the democratic reforms in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other Central Asian and West Asian countries failed to have a good outcome; strategic autonomy of the "Global East" is on the rise.

Economic rise gives birth to identity politics. In

the 21st century, the consciousness of strategic autonomy of Asian countries has increased, and identity politics has played an important role in the political life of each country. Türkiye's change of its English name to "Türkiye" and India's intention to change its name to the Hindi word "Bharat" are just two examples. In the process of civilization interactions and value reconstruction, Asian countries are actively seeking their own collective identities and traditional values.

For thousands of years before the Industrial Revolution, which began in modern Europe in the 18th century, the world's empires were concentrated in the Oriental territories, and so was the center of world power. With the rise of modern European maritime powers, these Oriental empires gradually declined and were replaced by the modern sovereign state system. Under the new circumstances, the cultural revival of the "Global East" has enhanced the sense of strategic autonomy of Asian countries so that these countries have transformed from "looking up to the West and learning from the West" to "re-evaluating the West and even criticizing the West", and have changed from junior partners to equal partners of the West.

China's Greater Periphery Diplomacy in the "Global East"

The rise of the "Global East" has transformed the international architecture. First, trade, energy, and investment dependence between the "Global West" and the "Global East" has faded away, while the internal trade relations among the "Global East" countries have increased; neighbors are becoming primary stakeholders and promoters of regional integration. China, for instance, is the largest trading partner of Central Asia, Russia, Iran, the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) countries, and Pakistan.

Second, peace dividends give birth to development dividends. Competitors in the “Global East” have seen a de-escalation of internal conflicts, and their regional integration is speeding up. Conflicts between India and Pakistan, between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and between Saudi Arabia and Iran are decreasing, terrorism is receding, and development has become a priority for many states. The “Global East” countries seek mutual trust and steadily build an economic and security community with their neighborhood.

As the largest developing country in the world, China is a natural member of the “developing world”. However, the US does not recognize China’s status as a “developing country” and has tried to cut off the natural ties between China and the vast number of developing countries.

Third, as aforementioned, the advancement of science and technology has enabled the “Global East” countries to overcome natural barriers, and the connectivity of Asian infrastructure has reduced the political mistrust among the “Global East” countries. While American interest has waned since the Biden administration decided to pull out forces from Afghanistan and the Middle East, other Asian powers are more engaged with each other. Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Iran all entered into agreements with the new Taliban government of Afghanistan to link their railroad networks. Joined by Azerbaijan and Afghanistan, Turkmenistan dubbed its new railroad line the “Lapis Lazuli Corridor,” which would link Türkiye, the Caucasus, Pakistan, and India via

Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) Gas Pipeline project connecting Turkmenistan with Pakistan and India was advancing. Electricity projects were also proliferating, with Uzbekistan working to provide Kabul with electricity and the World Bank developing a large project to transmit electricity from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan via Afghanistan to Pakistan (Starr, 2022, 5). The “Global East” countries are investing in each other’s mega projects, which are conducive to reducing security deficits.

China welcomes the “Global East” revitalization. As the largest developing country in the world, China is a natural member of the “developing world”. However, the US’s does not recognize China’s status as a “developing country” and has tried to cut off the natural ties between China and the vast number of developing countries. In March 2023, the US House of Representatives passed an act denying China’s status as a developing country (Minghao, 2023).

In June 2023, the US Senate also passed a similar bill, demanding the US executive department to develop a project to terminate China’s developing country status in many international organizations. However, the US endeavors do not change the fact that China is both a member of the “Global South” and “Global East”. In 2013, China launched the BRI. From 2021 to 2023, China put forward the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative respectively to offer China’s proposals for global governance. These concepts aim to foster national economic growths and promote progressive common prosperity. Beijing strives to sketch a regional security community of common interest and diverse civilizations, prioritizing the “Global East”.

In the context of great power competition and the looming "Global East", China has seized the opportunity to actively carry out its greater periphery diplomacy, provide international public goods, participate in regional integration, promote infrastructure connectivity among Asian countries, and advocate dialogue among civilizations and modernization of governance systems. China actively promotes the institutionalization of the "Global East". The core mechanism is represented by the SCO, the key mechanisms are represented by the "regional organizations", and the extended mechanism is represented by the "multilateral organizations + China". The three rings constitute the three arenas for China to shape its surrounding environment for peace, development, and prosperity.

First of all, based on the above cooperation mechanisms, the SCO acts as the core mechanism for the "Global East" integration. From the "Shanghai Five" to the establishment of the SCO,

from Indian and Pakistani memberships to Iranian entry into the SCO, the number of SCO members has increased in integrated and multi-track ways, changing the architecture and patterns of the Eurasian continent. The strengthening of ties between West Asian countries and the SCO has contributed to the rise of the "Global East".

As of 2024, the SCO consists of nine member states (China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan), three observers (Afghanistan, Belarus, and Mongolia) and 14 partners for dialogue (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Bahrain, Egypt, Cambodia, Qatar, Kuwait, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Sri Lanka). The regional organization accounts for 25% of the world's land and 45% of the world's population, with the world's most populous countries and huge market potential. The SCO members constitute the core force for the non-Western group to have a bigger voice (Pron, 2021).



Foreign ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states ahead of their meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan, May 21, 2024 (Photo: CGTN, 2024).

As the most important political organization established by non-Western powers, the SCO includes four nuclear powers (China, Russia, India, and Pakistan) and holds two permanent seats in the UN Security Council. The formal members and the observers have used the SCO as a platform to integrate and embed themselves in the four major fields of security, politics, economy, and culture (Sun & He, 2023). This has promoted the interdependence of maritime, land, and amphibious states in the Asian subregions and has created a favorable surrounding environment for the security and development of Asian countries.

With increasing economic and political engagement with other parts of Asia, West Asian countries have gradually strengthened their sense of “Global East” identities.

Secondly, based on the “1+ more” cooperation mechanism, the key areas of the “Global East” cooperation are coming into being. In Central Asia, the successful holding of the first China-Central Asia Summit in 2023 has pushed the cooperation between China and the five Central Asian countries to a new level. In North Asia, the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor is an important economic and trade route to promote the “Steppe Silk Road”. In East Asia, China, Japan, and South Korea try to overcome political obstacles. These three countries have sought common ground while shelving differences and have promoted pragmatic cooperation.

In Southeast Asia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is currently China’s

largest trading partner and the “10+1” cooperation mechanism between China and ASEAN has undergone an upgrade from a “golden decade” to a “diamond decade”. In South Asia, China is the largest trading partner of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Maldives, and the China-South Asia Expo has promoted economic and trade cooperation between the two sides.

In July 2023, Iran joined the SCO as a full member; Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Bahrain, and Qatar are SCO partners for dialogue. In August 2023, BRICS approved five countries as its new members, three of whom (Saudi Arabia, Iran, and UAE) are from West Asia. With increasing economic and political engagement with other parts of Asia, West Asian countries have gradually strengthened their sense of “Global East” identities.

Finally, based on the “many +1” cooperation mechanisms, more arenas have become zones of the “Global East” cooperation. Beijing has actively engaged in dialogue and consultation with multilateral organizations formed by small and medium-sized countries in the “Global East” to seek strength through unity. The small and medium-sized countries of the “Global East” have launched various regional mechanisms, such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), D-8 Organization, GCC, Organization of Central Asian Cooperation (CAC), Organization of Turkic States (OTS), ASEAN, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and more. China plays a constructive role in various Asia-related multilateral mechanisms dominated by small and medium-sized countries and is an steadfast supporter of regional organizations.



"Global East" is a structure composed of countries of the North and South (Figure: Xu Xiujun/China Daily, 2023).

The Prospect of the "Global East" and its Implication to China

In the new era, the collective rise of Asian countries has changed the global geopolitical and geo-economic landscape. Although these countries are not as advanced as the "Global North" in terms of economic and social development indicators, they have surpassed most countries of the "Global South" and become a "middle ground" and inde-

pendent political bloc between the North and the South (Müller, 2020).

The "Global East" is a complex of North and South countries, the former being Japan, Russia, and South Korea; the latter being India, Pakistan and so on. While seizing the key grouping of the "Global South", Asian countries' diplomacy also aims to seize the strategic opportunity of the rise of the "Global East", give play to their respective geographical advantages, and take the "Global East" as a breakthrough.

Regarding China's overall diplomatic layout, academic circles at home and abroad often start from the dichotomy of "Global South" and "Global North" and propose China's agendas for South-South cooperation, North-South dialogue and global governance initiated by the BRI. In fact, China is both a Southern and Eastern country. While seeing the rise of the "Global South", Beijing is also paying attention to the rise of the "Global East".

With the rise of the "Global East", China has upgraded its neighborhood diplomacy to "greater periphery diplomacy", expanded its strategic depth in the Eurasian hinterland, and integrated the diplomacy of major powers, neighboring countries, developing countries and multilateral diplomacy.

With the rise of the "Global East", China has upgraded its neighborhood diplomacy to "greater periphery diplomacy", expanded its strategic depth in the Eurasian hinterland, and integrated the diplomacy of major powers, neighboring countries, developing countries and multilateral diplomacy. With the "Global East" at its centerpiece, China strives to serve as a bridge and bond, connecting countries in the North and the South, actively cultivating a strategic in-depth for its peace and development.

Since Xi Jinping took the presidency in 2012, the Chinese administration's dual tasks have been overcoming the "middle-income trap" at home and the "middle-technology trap" internationally.

The "Global East" is the strategic zone for China's peaceful development. However, the "Global East" is volatile and fragile. The move away from the widely criticized First/Second/Third World perspective and toward the equally problematic North-South distinction shifted the perception of global geography and its divisions. Once "East" melted into North and South, its distinct modernization project and experience of modernity fell into oblivion (Zysiak & Marzec, 2020).

In fact, the "Global East" countries greatly differ in political systems, religions and industrial structures. They need to overcome multiple obstacles in the process of reconstructing Asian political, security, economic and cultural architecture, such as the local geopolitical rivalries of ethnic, sectarian, and territorial disputes, the spillover of regional hot issues, the homogenization of industrial structures and competition of development models of various countries, and the geo-economic rivalry such as disputes over cross-border river resources.

The first is to manage institutional competition within the countries of the "Global East". The SCO, CICA, BRICS, and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) all have different priorities. Russia relies on the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to build a Eurasian buffer zone. By relying on the "Indo-Pacific Quartet", the "Middle East Quartet", and the SCO, India attempts to become the spokesperson of the "Global South" and "Global East" simultaneously. Türkiye builds a "Turkic world" based on the OTS. Iran actively builds an anti-Israeli coalition of resistance. Under the GCC-Central Asia engagement framework, Saudi Arabia launched the summit mechanism of the six GCC countries and the five Central Asian countries to consolidate Arab-Is-

lamic linkage. Eight Islamic countries, including Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Malaysia, established the D-8 organization to build an Oriental Islamic club. Institutional competition within the countries of the "Global East" is prone to "institutional excess"; institutional competition should be avoided in case they might dilute each other.

The "Global East" countries are diverse, with multiple political and cultural orientations. Russia and Iran are revolutionaries against the US-led liberal order, Japan and South Korea are adaptors, and Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, the UAE, and India are improvers. By raising the banner of building a community with a shared future for mankind, China, together with other Asian countries, up-

holds multilateralism with the United Nations as its core and defends the rights of Asian countries to development. The "Global East" countries are reformers and followers of the Western-led international order.

The "Global East" is not monolithic; it can be divided into several sub-regions. These countries have established different cooperation trajectories based on the characteristics and strengths of their Asian counterparts. For example, China, Japan, and South Korea manage political differences and focus on economic, trade, and cultural cooperation. China's cooperation with South Asian countries is mainly bilateral. China's cooperation with GCC countries mainly focuses on energy.



The countries of the "Global East" have a wide range of political and cultural orientations (Illustration: China Daily, 2023).

Secondly, the “Global East” countries should address the West’s “divide-and-rule” tactics. Under the profound changes of the new era, the contradictions between Western and non-Western powers are on the rise, and the interaction paradigm between the Western and Eastern powers is shifting from strategic coordination to strategic competition. Geographical rivalry, scientific and technological contest, and institutional competition are the three key areas of great power competitions (Degang & Jieying, 2023, 29-30). The game between the US and Russia features geopolitical competition, the game between the US and China is dominated by scientific and technological competition, and the game between the US and the middle powers of the “Global East” is characterized by institutional competition.

In the Middle East, the US implemented a “divide and rule” strategy and established the “Negev Forum” with Israel, the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, Egypt, and other countries, and held the “US-Arab summit” with the leaders of nine Arab countries, including the six GCC countries, Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq.

If the “Global East” is to make any difference, it should become a collective endeavor between multiple Easts – of all those currently not represented or misrepresented in the current literature. The West does not agree that West Asia is part of Asia or “Global East”. In the Middle East, the US implemented a “divide and rule” strategy and established the “Negev Forum” with Israel, the UAE, Bahrain,

Morocco, Egypt, and other countries, and held the “US-Arab summit” with the leaders of nine Arab countries, including the six GCC countries, Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq. The Biden administration hopes to build a “Middle Eastern Air Defense Alliance” to form a “strategic triangle” between the US, Israel and the Arab allies, linking the European allies with the Middle Eastern partners and the Indo-Pacific fellows.

In East Asia and Southeast Asia, the US has seized Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines, the three “swing states” in the Global East, to drive a wedge between maritime and continental Asian countries. In South Asia, the US takes advantage of the contradiction between India and Pakistan to adopt a dual-track strategy. In the Middle East, the US is dependent on the “moderate allies” (Israel, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, etc.) to contain the “resistance alliance” led by Iran. America’s divide-and-rule has undermined the centripetal forces of the “Global East”.

Thirdly, the “Global East” should uphold the principle of “open regionalism”. No country is an isolated island. Unlike the highly homogenous “Global West,” the countries of the “Global East” differ greatly in their political systems, ideologies, and development strategies. The “Global East” is currently nothing but an “imagined community”, fluid and fragile. As the Romanian scholar Liviu Chelcea pointed out, the “Global East” is held together by a logical possibility, not a fait accompli. Asia’s sub-regional integration and inter-regional connectivity face various internal and external, political, and economic hurdles, such as external interference, hedging strategies of the members, and separatism (Chelcea, 2023, 4). Countries of the “Global East” should transcend the old zero-sum mentality and form an Asian community in the process of interacting with the “Global West”.

Thus, the "Global East" still has a long way to go before it becomes a coherent entity. Japan, South Korea, Israel, and others put relations with the West first. Türkiye, India, Saudi Arabia, etc., seek an East-West equilibrium. Small and medium-sized Asian countries generally adhere to the "hedging policy" of "geopolitical reliance on the West and geo-economic dependence on the East". Russia, Iran, Syria, and North Korea are sticking to a policy of confrontation with the West. The diverse strategies make the "Global East" countries lack a common policy orientation. Besides, the multilateral cooperation mechanisms in the "Global East" are mostly "soft laws", which are fairly inclusive and open; the internal competition and confrontation in the "Global East" may be as

fierce as their competition and confrontation with the outsiders.

Finally, academia should avoid falling into the discourse trap of cultural imperialism and West-centrism in probing the "Global East". As Edward Said explained in his book *Orientalism*, the West creates and describes the Orient as part of imperial self/other relations. The West becomes strong, masculine, rational, and scientific only when it is contrasted with the East as weak, feminine, mysterious, and exotic (Callahan, 2023, 2084). After 30 years, post-socialism is still the standard moniker to refer to the former socialist countries of the East, and it reflects some of this uneven power relationship (Trubina, Gogishvili, Imhof, & Müller, 2020).



The Middle East nomenclature is an Orientalist creation (Figure: Syed, 2021).

The rise of the “Global East” signifies the “Asian Renaissance”. Compared to Western countries, the “Global East” countries have heterogeneous political systems, multicultural values, and lifestyles. They are reshaping the Western discourse about world politics, breaking out of the discourse trap of “the democratic West versus the authoritarian and aristocratic East”, and forming an “oriental narrative” of political modernizations to help build an Asian community of common destiny and provide intellectual discourse for regional integration. Despite scholarship which has pushed knowledge and perspectives from the “Global South,” often within the lens of postcolonial theory, into the midst of contemporary academic debate, it seems increasingly important to actively argue the same for knowledge and theory from the “Global East” (for want of a better term), a region which strangely remains at times somewhat marginalized in geographical knowledge and debates (Chan, Gentile, Kinossian, Oakes, & Young, 2018, 1-2).

Conclusion

For thousands of years before the rise of European sea powers in the 18th century, Asian civilizations were the center of world politics. In the new era, these civilizations have rediscovered their historical linkage and are shifting from “back-to-back” to “face-to-face”. Since the outbreak of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and between Israel and Palestine, the concept of the “Global East” has caught more and more attention from international studies scholars. The “Global East”, with Asian countries as its main body and Central Asia as its heart, has stood up to the pressure of the US and

the West on the Ukraine crisis and generally adopted a position of not taking sides, forming a distinctive feature (Qinqsong, 2023). The Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Israel-Palestinian hostility have been protracted, and the US has increased sanctions on Russia and Iran-led resistance factions, strengthening the determination of the two countries to “leave Europe and enter Asia” and “leave the Middle East and enter Asia” respectively.

In great power competition in the Middle East, the Biden administration wants to take advantage of Türkiye and its Arab allies, using them as “pawns” in strategic contests with China and Russia. It has boosted the resolve of these countries to “look east” among great power competition. They choose the US for security cooperation but rely on Asian countries for economic affairs. Asian countries have actively participated in the Ancient Civilizations Forum, which has fostered the rejuvenation of ancient Asian civilizations and strengthened their ambition to revive their own cultures.

Under the transformation from US hegemony to multi-polarity, identity politics is ascending, and Asian countries are awakening to nationalism and strategic autonomy. The ebb of globalization and the lack of liberal economic growth has made neighborhood diplomacy a top priority for Asian countries. Thus, the “Global East” countries have moved from the periphery and semi-periphery to the center of the world stage, taking bottom-up economic development rather than top-down democratic transformation as the basic path to modernization (Zysiak & Marzec, 2020). Most of these countries insist on “looking for friends” rather than “looking for foes”. They are seeking “partnership” rather than “alliance” and are recons-

trusting their Asian identities in the regional integration process.

In prospect, the US "divide-and-rule" strategy and China's "integration" strategy will become the major contradiction in the Greater Asia. For the US, it would be for the "Global East" and "Global South" to combine in a way that left the "Global West" on the outside, weaker and smaller in its global position. For China, the nightmare coalition would be for the West and the Global South to swing into alignment (Ikenberry, 2024). Under the concept of open regionalism, the flow of goods, people, and knowledge among Asian countries has increased, and the "Global East" has become a key region in China's greater periphery diplomacy and for China's partnership network. In the future, the "Global South" and "Global East" may become the "two wings" of China's diplomacy in the developing world. 🌸

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Organization of Turkic States in the Context of New Asian Geopolitics



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ABSTRACT

The article discusses the increased geopolitical importance of Central Asia following the collapse of the Soviet Union and its impact on the roles of newly independent states (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan) in the region, as well as Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia in the Caucasus. These states face conflicts of interest with major powers over energy resources, trade routes, and security issues. The Organization of Turkic States (OTS) is examined as a new actor in this geopolitical landscape, focusing on its influence on economic cooperation, cultural unity, security alliances, and strategic partnerships in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Türkiye's leadership role and the potential future role of the OTS are also highlighted. The main goals of the OTS include strengthening political and security cooperation, enhancing collaboration in economic and energy sectors, combating terrorism, and sharing information. Projects like the Middle Corridor and TANAP support trade and energy flow in the region. The organization's alignment with China's Belt and Road Initiative enhances its economic power. However, the OTS faces challenges such as being a young organization with a lack of international recognition, and dealing with economic and political disparities among its member states. The question of how the OTS will balance with other major powers in the region remains significant for its future.

Keywords: Asia, geopolitics, Organization of Turkic States, Turkish Identity, Türkiye.

Giriş

CENTRAL ASIA HAS GAINED GREATER geopolitical importance, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which resulted in the independence of the former Soviet republics in the region. The early 1990s independence of Central Asian states led to a re-evaluation of their domestic and international roles. During the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the region's transitional phase, marked by significant sociopolitical tensions and compounded by instability in Afghanistan, was perceived as highly securitised within international Relations. New independent states, Uzbekistan, Kirgizstan,

Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, as well as Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia in the Caucasus region turned out to be new actors in post-colonial geography that still suffer under various conflictual issues. The evolving political landscape in Asia makes the continent a strategic region that draws increasing attention from the global and regional powers. Central Asian political processes are closely connected to new and conflict-oriented interest relations between the big powers that strive to acquire and protect the values that they believe to be theirs. Semi-conductors, energy resources, trade transport routes and security issues dominate the diplomatic efforts of the region's states and others from outside.

The term geopolitics, first coined by Rudolf Kjellen (1864-1922) and then Frederic Ratzel (1864-1922), a thinker, who served as one of the intellectual brains of the NAZI ideology, consolidated the concept that shaped the political geography-related power relations. Robert Strausz-Hupé (1903- 2002) and Karl Haushofer (1869-1946) were prominent supporters of Hitler's Lebensraum ideology (Dodds, 2007) (İlhan, 2019). Geopolitics is still fundamental to international relations (Brzezinski, 2016). Geopolitical consent is part of national identity. Events, narratives and policies continuously reproduce it. For nations, landscapes and sites are considered sacred and iconic of their heritage. However, the persistent identity imagination may also be modified under the influence of current power constellations.

Geopolitical elements such as security, foreign policy, trade, culture, education, environmental issues, energy, other natural resources, and transportation routes provide a closer overview of the current situation.

In the following, the pivotal role of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) as a new actor in the shifting landscape of Asian geopolitics, considering the evolving conditions and power relations in this highly distressed region that still carries the footprints of its colonial past, is discussed. Within this framework, the impacts of regional or global powers and former and future hotspots like Afghanistan and conflicts in the Chinese Sea have to be considered. Geopolitical elements such

as security, foreign policy, trade, culture, education, environmental issues, energy, other natural resources, and transportation routes provide a closer overview of the current situation. Historical context and partnerships in different fields, as well as the cultural ties that bind the OTS States together, are explored.

In this study, one of the primary questions is the capacity of the OTS to accomplish regional cooperation that may have definitive impacts on the region's geopolitics. The neo-functional approach tells that the regional dimension could downplay global influences, considering the European case (Ünver, 2022). Despite similarities, the OTS's development cannot be compared with the European Union's vast experience with different backgrounds – at least for the time being (Ünver, 2023).

This article delves into the OTS's geopolitical influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus, examining its impact on economic collaboration, cultural unity, security alliances, and strategic partnerships while also addressing its challenges.

Playground of Multilateral Geopolitical Interests

Geopolitics, as a crucial factor and acknowledged political and academic discipline in making foreign policy, influences the interaction between the states and shapes and addresses regional and relevant global challenges. Beyond the nation-states, new geopolitical actors such as multinational companies and civil society impact the political processes on regional and global levels. Former unemancipated spectators of foreign policy, such as ordinary citizens, seem more interested in international relations and reluctant to stay beyond the fence of political theatre. Politi-



According to Brzezinski, the United States, as the non-dominant power in the region, is the most important actor in the region, and America's global supremacy is directly dependent on how long its dominance in the Eurasian continent will last and how effective it will be (Figure: GovBr, 2019).

cal decision-making became consequently more complicated in the light of new influential actors representing their interests in a noisy marketplace of multilateral interests. Those interests are mainly in the broad context of strategic locations, natural resources, regional and global conflicts, and economic, cultural and ideological factors. Rivalries between the geopolitical players, i.e. primarily regional states and global powers that intervene in regional affairs, shape strategies and interactions in the political arena (Marshall, 2021).

Suat İlhan discusses the power-related geopo-

litics induced by excellent power rivalry under the theory of locus of power (İlhan, 2019). Beyond this classical geopolitical understanding, there is a shift to image-building processes of nations that judge their patria as sacred and emblematic of their heritage. Geopolitical consent is part of national identities, and image-building enjoys a broad revival globally. So, identities and political and social ideologies are also credible factors in geopolitical understanding. Social constructivism seems to contain acceptable views for forming identity-based geopolitics (Demir, 2022).

Foreign policies, although evolved rapidly in the last 30 years, still carry the features of the past. A nation-state system supported by established orders that resist radical change dominates the world. The current world order is deeply geopolitical, i.e. connected to geographical locations and political connotations as before. However, new instruments and technological improvements have directed the development of geopolitics; Mackinder, Mahan, and others have suggested different power relations within their geopolitical frameworks. Hence, they were predominantly based on power politics initiated in the 20th Century, inherited from the 19th. Century. New political and military alliances and other multi- and bilateral cooperations in the Asian power swing address multidimensional parameters (Dodds, 2007).

Central Asia is one of the regions with the most

conflicting geopolitical interests, regional powers, and global actors, and it significantly influences political, strategic, and economic issues. Some of these impacts can be traced back to the legacy of history. Current needs and factors shape others, and the emerging dynamics constitute a basis for multilateral political conflicts. The involvement of the US in Afghanistan after the 9/11 terror attacks trembled the power balances in the region. Zbigniew Brzezinski's standpoints in this respect cannot be underestimated. For Brzezinski, the US, as the predominant non-Eurasian power, is preeminent in the region – "...and America's global primacy is directly dependent on how long and how effectively its preponderance on the Eurasian continent is sustained" (Brzezinski, 2016: 30). The aftermath of the takeover of power by the Taliban in Afghanistan must have impacted this rather pretentious opinion to some extent.



May 21, 1978, Beijing, a still from Zbigniew Brzezinski's meeting with Deng Xiaoping (Photo: SCMP, 2017).

Although more attentive to the Russian-Ukrainian War currently, Russia is still the leading geopolitical actor in Central Asia today. Its political, economic, and cultural influence in the former Soviet Republics strengthened Russia's position, which the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and China consolidated. China's geopolitical transportation initiative, "One Belt One Road" (OBOR), should enhance the trade frequency between the countries of the region and accelerate the exports to the West is one of the most significant geopolitical steps (Barman, 2023).

SCO has a set of objectives, with security cooperation at the top of the list. Economic and developmental cooperation among the members and encouragement of cultural, technological and educational interaction.

China's recent global economic advances impact Central Asia and the neighbouring countries in the region in a multifaceted way. How China geopolitically influences the region should be discussed in consideration of its technological precedence and economic priorities. The region has rich natural resources such as oil, natural gas, and rare earth elements, which attract China.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a significant intergovernmental organization founded in Shanghai, China, on June 15, 2001. The founding members were China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The Organization has expanded to include India and Pakistan as full members in 2017, and Iran became a full member in 2023. Observer States include Afghanistan, Be-

larus, and Mongolia and Dialogue Partners Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Türkiye (Bailes et al., 2007).

SCO has a set of objectives, with security cooperation at the top of the list. Economic and developmental cooperation among the members and encouragement of cultural, technological and educational interaction. The formation of the SCO caused some anxiety in the West because of the global rivalry structures. The position of the SCO with central Asian countries reflects the regional powers' geopolitical intentions and interests. The alliances tell us that the interplay of those powers, whatever their interests, makes Central Asia with its neighbouring areas extend even to western Eurasian territories.

Organization of Turkic States: A New Geopolitical Actor in Asia

The formation of the OTS is rooted in the Turkic-speaking nations' shared historical and cultural heritage. The idea of Turkic unity dates back to the early 20th Century. The dissolution of the Soviet Union made it possible to forge closer ties between Türkiye and the Turkic-speaking countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus. After the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, Türkiye enthusiastically welcomed the independence of Central Asian Turkic states and Azerbaijan. It was a reunion with kids under a foreign power's dominance. Türkiye was the first country to recognize the independence of every single Turkic state in the region. This was a sign of perceived proximity for the kins whose contacts were interrupted during the colonial times. The step forward to establish a cooperation council based upon common heritage and ethno-identity of Turkic nations of Central Asia and Caucasus became a primary diplomatic goal of Türkiye.

However, it took almost eight years to establish a council. The Turkic Council was accepted only by Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kirgizstan. Turkmenistan was not eager to participate in the first hour to create a unified “Turkic world” with an emphasis on cultural identity. Those initial attempts were valuable, for they initiated the thoughts on the practicability of such a cooperation body. Russian Federation, as the successor of the Soviet Union, was not strong enough to intervene in any geopolitical developments in the region in recent years.

Today’s Organization of Turkic States, previously known as the Turkic Council, was established in

2009 in Nakhichevan to enhance comprehensive cooperation among Turkic-speaking countries. Comprising member states such as Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan (founding members), and Uzbekistan (2019), the OTS has been a pivotal player in fostering economic, cultural, and strategic ties within the Turkic world. The Organization’s goals are the following as exposed by itself:

“Organization is committed to the purpose and principles of the Charter of the United Nations (UN) and other universally recognized principles and norms of international law, including sovereign equality, territorial integrity and inviolability of internationally recognized borders of states, as well



November 11, Uzbekistan-Samarkand, Heads of State at the 9th Summit of the Organization of Turkic States: (from left to right) President of the Kyrgyz Republic Sadyr Japarov, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym Javert Tokayev, President of the Republic of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shevket Mirziyoyev, Chairman of the People’s Assembly of the National Council of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orban (Photo: CIS, 2022).

as the maintenance of international peace, security and development of good-neighbourly and friendly relations” (Turkic States, 2024).

The OTS comprises currently Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Türkiye, and Uzbekistan as member states, with Hungary (2018), Turkmenistan (2021) and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (2022) with observer status. The Organization aims to promote comprehensive cooperation among Turkic-speaking countries. The OTS encompasses a vast geography that stretches from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China. The primary target of the OTS is to constitute a network of shared cultures and cooperation in different fields. It builds a platform that should eliminate the effects caused and be caused by ‘geopolitical schisms’ and ‘layered imbalances’ caused by the intensifying tensions between the ‘power centres’ in and outside of the region. The OTS holds significant potential for influencing regional stability, economic development, and cultural cohesion in the contemporary geopolitical arena. This paper assesses the OTS’s role against new Asian geopolitics, focusing on its strategic importance and potential future developments. The OTS offers significant chances for further strengthening ties and, therefore, presents a decent opportunity for peace.

The Turkic Council, renamed to OTS (2021), has organized 2009 11 Summits of Heads of State. At the Istanbul Summit, November 12, 2021, the breaking point of the history of OTS, declared that the Turkic world would, in compliance with the Nakhichevan Declaration principles, continue its development path as an effective intergovernmental organization (D. Ünver, 2021). The Turkic World Vision, as adopted in this Summit, constitutes the first strategic document of the Organization established in 2009 with the Nakhichevan Agreement (Baki, 2022).

The Turkic World Vision’s content is multifaceted and multidimensional. It addresses a broad spectrum of regional and global issues, raising it to the level of a pivotal actor in the region. The objectives of the Vision Document comprise, first, intra-organizational interactions between the member states and, second, all-encompassing issues with suggestions and intentions for future relations.

Political and security cooperation is at the top of the list of suggested interactions of the OTS political agenda. Political cooperation should be introduced to strengthen mechanisms of multilateral political consultations on policy issues of common interest. Furthermore, institutional cooperation and coordination with related Turkic institutions such as Türksoy, Turkic Academy, Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation, and TURKPA (Turkish Parliamentary Union) should empower Turkic efforts for coherent action. Those initiatives should also enhance closer relations and common projects with relevant UN entities.

Enhancing economic collaboration and connectivity among its members is one of the primary objectives of the OTS. Trans-Caspian Transport Route (Middle Corridor) is outstanding in this respect. Middle Corridor connects Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Central Asian countries, providing an essential link between China and Europe. It aligns simultaneously with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This connectivity opportunity is a significant instrument for the economic empowerment of related countries. In the same context, energy cooperation is critical to the OTS’s economic influence. The Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan and its prolongation Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP), as well as the proposed Trans Adriatic Pipeline to convey Central Asian natural gas to Europe, are geopolitically essential projects (Demir, 2022).

Member states of the OTS should cooperate on common grounds to combat radicalization and terrorism and share information about different security threats, such as transborder criminality, cyber threats, money laundering, irregular migration, and human smuggling.

An important area is the military cooperation. Türkiye's active military support to Azerbaijan in its dispute on Karadağ against Armenia showed that the military cooperation among the members could be part of the vision of alliance within the framework of the OTS. However, a broad range of military cooperation is still far from being a reality. Türkiye's support to Azerbaijan had somewhat different dynamics that could not be carried to an OTS strategy that is primarily not a military alliance. Large-scale military engagement would also disturb other alignments, such as the SCO and major individual powers of the region, such as Iran, India, and Russia.

Challenges and Limitations

The geopolitical landscape of Central Asia and the Caucasus is marked by the interplay of multiple powers, especially by global geostrategic players, each trying to achieve more influence over the region. Although the OTS's geopolitical influence today is more extensive than before, leveraging historical, economic, cultural, and strategic ties among its member states, there still needs to be more consistency as regards unity with its multifaceted collaboration options. Strategic autonomy provided by the OTS to its member states and the emergence of a counterbalance against great powers allows the member states to exercise their interests. However, changing geopolitical interests, both regional and global, forcing the OTS and its member states to adopt more cautious progress is one of the most severe challenges for the future of the OTS.



Map showing transportation corridors between CIS member states and China-Europe (Map: OBOREurope, 2024).

Disparities in the economic development levels and differing political landscapes between the member states influence the understanding of national interest in individual member states. Past and future inconsistencies between member states, Uzbekistan vs. Kirgizstan, and Kirgizstan vs. Tajikistan—a non-member state—are significant political issues that should be solved within the OTS. This situation may complicate collective decision-making, which could slow down effective cooperation. Over time, decisive behaviours of the OTS states' consent leaderships may overcome those challenges.

The OTS is a young intergovernmental organization that must enjoy more international political recognition. Hungary's inclusion into the OTS with observer status is an opening to a region outside Central Asia and the Caucasus. Although Hungarian membership was considered very unusual by Europeans who were not familiar with the ethnic identity of Hungarians, it should be seen as a significant achievement for the OTS's expanding to EU-region. However, it does not change that this development has not yet been subjected to an international organization, which is broadly perceived as an efficient actor.

The late joining of Turkmenistan only with observer status was a concern for the institutional development of the OTS. Turkmenistan's posture in this respect was initially justified by its political neutrality. Turkmenistan should not be part of any alliance and keep its impartial foreign policy. Anyhow, this policy was modified in the 2021 Summit in Istanbul, and Turkmenistan joined the OTS as an observer state.

The rivalries and conflicts of interest of global powers in different regions currently overshadow the strategic position and power of the OTS. However, this situation will likely change within the US-China and Russian relations framework. The-

refore, it may not be surprising to see the OTS in different roles in the future. The power vacuum that was predominant in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union could be filled with the OTS and its member states as a pivotal geopolitical player in the region. In this respect, emphasis should be put on deeper strategic cooperation of a political nature beyond economy and culture. Security and military cooperation could pave the path for an efficient strategic alliance. However, there is still a long way to go.

Türkiye's Possible Role in the Future

Türkiye is aware of its geopolitical role and reflects it in its diplomatic doctrine marked by geopolitical realism (Dönmez, 2024: 256-259). Türkiye took the lead in the formation of the OTS. Newly independent Turkic states joined the former Turkic Council, which was renamed OTS under the informal leadership of Türkiye. Türkiye, as the most developed country in the Turkic world, displayed a decisive will to reach greater unity in the Turkic world. The Turkic World Vision 2040 document outlines this political will, particularly in cooperation fields like security, military, economy, trade, culture, education and strategic partnership. The sensitive geopolitical situation in the region compels the OTS to be a one-of-a-kind Organization, taking the competing interests of other actors into account, both regional and global. Navigating these tensions and ensuring that the OTS can effectively promote its agenda without alienating other influential players in the region is a significant objective of the OTS at the highest level. In consensus with the member states, Turkish diplomacy pays attention to delicate relations in the region.

Türkiye's leading role certainly does not aim to establish hegemony over the member states of the OTS. The responsible political figures of Turkish diplomacy have repeatedly revealed this stand.

There is no doubt among the member states that the joint working methods and aims of the OTS should enhance internal unity. Leader summits and the close interaction of different ministerial-level technical committees at all levels promote and encourage the OTS and its member states. Those activities construct a proper leverage for the effectiveness of the OTS. With the OTS, member and observer states started to demonstrate a collective identity conducive to solving various intra-group problems. Türkiye has always tried to defuse these problems. The solidarity of member states in the Karabagh conflict and the riots in Kazakhstan (2022) demonstrates the common will and the shared position of the OTS in general.

Conclusion

Political geography today remains a critical consideration in international affairs. New technological improvements have broadened the geopolitics from lands

and seas to air space and cyber world. Nonetheless, geographic location is still the primary asset of a nation. Robin Niblett states in his recent book that, in the light of the “New Cold War”, the ideological division between the West and China is geopolitical and ideological simultaneously (Niblett, 2024:163). The level of ideological clash, whether it can endure in the shadow of changing geostrategic interests, is currently challenging to envisage.

The Organization’s mission is to promote comprehensive cooperation among Turkic-speaking countries in various fields, including politics, economics, culture, education, and more. Among others, the list of cooperation contains expanding free trade agreements among member states that can boost economic cooperation and increase intra-regional trade. Furthermore, investing in transnational infrastructure projects like transportation networks, energy pipelines, and digital connectivity will enhance the region’s development. Joint business ventures and cross-border investments



A frame from the construction phase of the Zengezur Corridor, an important initiative for transportation between Turkic States (Photo: Aayda, 2022).

in crucial sectors such as energy, tourism and agriculture will contribute to the principal establishment aims of the OTS.

Collective security measures and defence cooperation to ensure regional stability are anticipated in the context of political and diplomatic cooperation. Foreign policy stances on international issues to increase diplomatic influence are also on the agenda of the OTS. The Organization should play a proactive role in mediating and solving regional conflicts.

Promoting cultural heritage and implementing education measures should serve as a unified cultural basis for the Turkic world. The OTS's major task since the very beginning has always been introducing culture-based projects. In this respect, transitioning from the Cyrillic alphabet to the Latin alphabet and fostering the Turkish language have been priorities.

Further activities focus on technological and scientific cooperation, environment, expansion and inclusion of new members, healthcare, human assistance, social welfare programs and tourism. The success of these initiatives will depend on the commitment of the member states to work together, allocate resources, and navigate the complexities of regional and global politics. All these initiatives can contribute to the geopolitical power of the member states of the OTS.

One of the significant questions of the geopolitical weight of the OTS in the future can be tested in its relations with major world powers like China and Russia. Whether the OTS can counterbalance through its region-based cooperation in every possible field remains to be observed. Rapid changes in global political conflict-oriented behaviours, emerging conflict sources, recently in the Middle East and western Eurasia, and an upcoming clash between China and Taiwan make almost every part of the world anxious. Central Asia's transition from a power vacuum to a more balanced regional relation must be evaluated as an asset. The OTS endeavours to establish a region labelled with

its serenity, serving Central Asia and our globe that is tired of conflicts.

Establishing OTS has been an assertive undertaking, especially as an initiative driven by Türkiye. During that time, member and observer states joined the OTS without hesitation. It was a geopolitical overhaul in the region to fill the vacuum that emerged with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. A strong OTS could be a balancing power in the region, an intergovernmental organization that would avoid intervention by non-regional powers. The capacity to protect the member states' economic and political interests will boost the OTS's further development. 🌸

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“Organization of Turkic States should include Russia, China, and Iran”



**Aleksandr Sotnichenko was born on February 1, 1977. In 1998, he graduated from the Eastern Faculty of Saint Petersburg State University, and in 2002, he defended his doctoral thesis, “The Development of the Geopolitical Space of the Ottoman Empire, 1839–1908.” From 2000 to 2017, he was a lecturer at the Faculty of International Relations at Saint Petersburg State University. He has published many articles on Turkish history, Russian-Turkish relations, and Middle Eastern politics. Between 2017 and 2021, he worked as an undersecretary at the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Ankara. Since 2021, he has been the President of the Russian Cultural and Scientific Center (Rus Evi Ankara).*

“Over the past 20 years, Türkiye has adeptly balanced the interests of the West and various Eurasian power centers. However, with growing international tensions, Türkiye will inevitably have to make a strategic choice. The West has repeatedly shown an unwillingness to consider Türkiye’s interests as an independent state in major strategic areas. In Syria, the U.S. and several European countries openly support separatists in the country’s northeast. Regarding Middle East, U.S. unequivocally sides with Israel. Cyprus issue remains unresolved within the context of the EU integration, with the West taking an anti-Turkish stance. To date, neither Russia nor China is assured of the OTS’s friendly stance. There are concerns that Türkiye, as a military-political ally of U.S., might facilitate U.S. influence in the OTS countries, potentially transforming the OTS from a cultural-economic entity into a military-political organization. This apprehension is heightened by numerous Turkish and Turkic world experts advocating for such a transformation. However, this issue could be mitigated if the OTS takes steps to address the concerns of Russia, Iran, and China regarding the growing integration of Turkic states. Involving the leadership of these states in the OTS’s activities would be a significant step. In the near future, will Türkiye become a sovereign center of power or a tool of Western policy in Eurasia? The future of the OTS and its relations with other Eurasian integration projects depend on this decision.”

Director of the Russian Culture House, Historian Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aleksandr Sotnichenko answered Işıkgün Akfırat’s questions.

In the past 10-15 years, there has been a noticeable “trend of Eastern nations increasingly resisting” the globalist neoliberal ideology of the West. Countries such as Russia and Türkiye, which straddle Europe and Asia, along with Iran and China, are at the forefront of this movement. These nations appear to be forming closer regional collaborations, both within their own spheres of influence and with each other, to counter Western hegemonic pressures.

How would you evaluate the Organization of Turkic States, which brings together Türkiye and the Turkic republics of Central Asia, in light of this new global trend?

Aleksandr Sotnichenko: I concur that integration processes are currently unfolding in Eurasia. These processes have two main objectives: one is indeed to counter Western neoliberal dominance.

However, this is not the primary goal for the key players in this integration - China, Iran, Russia, and Türkiye. Until recently, these states have primarily focused on strengthening their own sovereignty and security through political, economic, and cultural alliances.

In this context, the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) exemplifies a structure designed to bolster Türkiye's sovereignty and influence in Eurasia. According to its foundational documents, the OTS does not aim to confront the West in any specific way. Unlike Western criticism towards other alliances and integration programs such as the Shanghai Cooperation Or-

ganization (SCO), the Belt and Road Initiative, and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the activities of the OTS have not been similarly targeted.

Which Strategic Course Will Türkiye Follow?

Russia is one of the primary opponents of a unipolar world based on the Atlantic consensus. What role do you think the Organization of Turkic States can play in a multipolar world?

Aleksandr Sotnichenko: The role of the OTS in a multipolar world depends largely



Map showing the countries of Central Asia (Map: Picryl, 2024).

on Türkiye's position as the central figure of the organization. The growth of Türkiye's influence and the strengthening of its sovereignty in Eurasia, facilitated by the OTS, can have both positive and negative implications for the development of a multipolar world. If Türkiye establishes itself as an independent and autonomous power center, it will inevitably oppose U.S.-led global order. In this scenario, the OTS's development would occur through dialogue and consideration of the interests of other geopolitical centers on the continent, particularly Russia, China, and Iran.

Simultaneously, Türkiye remains a military and political ally of United States as a member of NATO and an EU candidate. These institutions are adversaries of a multipolar world. Türkiye's foreign policy, which delicately balances pro-Western and Eurasian orientations, is inherently unstable and could shift at any moment. Currently, Türkiye's stance in the global confrontation between Russia and the West cannot be deemed impartial. Ankara supplies weapons to Ukraine, which are used against Russian soldiers in a conflict driven by U.S. ambitions for global dominance. Furthermore, Türkiye has repeatedly expressed support for Ukraine's NATO membership. A pivotal moment in Russian-Turkish relations was Türkiye's unilateral decision to withdraw from an agreement to hold captured commanders of the Ukrainian neo-Nazi group Azov on its territory, allowing their return to Kiev where they continue to fight against Russia.

Both China and Iran have grievances regarding Türkiye's regional policies. Ankara aligns with Washington in criticizing Bei-

jing's policy in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. There are also significant disagreements with Iran concerning Syria, Iraq, and other areas.

Given these circumstances, many in Russia question whether Türkiye and its supported institutions, such as the OTS, will become agents of neoliberal globalization in Eurasia. Will the activities of the OTS contribute to the disintegration of Eurasian peoples?

The Way to Overcome Insecurities

The Central Asian states that are members of the Organization of Turkic States have historical ties and deep relations with Russia, both individually and collectively. These states, which opened to the West following Soviet Union's collapse in 1991 and experienced the adverse effects of globalization, also hold strategic positions within China's Belt and Road Initiative. How will Türkiye's involvement in the OTS with the Turkic Republics of Central Asia affect its relations with Russia and China?

Aleksandr Sotnichenko: The states that constitute the OTS have not only profound historical and cultural connections with Russia. For instance, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are military and political allies of Russia within the CSTO and members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Millions of citizens from these member states live and work in Russia, while millions of Russians reside in these countries. For security reasons, neither Russia nor China would welcome unfriendly political regimes in the OTS countries.

To date, neither Russia nor China is assured of the OTS's friendly stance. There are concerns that Türkiye, as a military-political ally of U.S., might facilitate U.S. influence in the OTS countries, potentially transforming the OTS from a cultural-economic entity into a military-political organization. This apprehension is heightened by numerous Turkish and Turkic world experts advocating for such a transformation.

However, this issue could be mitigated if the OTS takes steps to address the concerns of Russia, Iran, and China regarding the growing integration of Turkic states. Involving the leadership of these states in the OTS's activities would be a significant step. In 2019, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov indicated Moscow's willingness to consider joining the Cooperation Council of Turkic-speaking States if the organization is open to accepting states where Turkic-speaking populations are present but not dominant. The OTS has

an observer institution that could involve Russia, Iran, and China, thereby reducing mistrust significantly.

OTS Should Establish Dialogue with SCO

Most members of the Organization of Turkic States are also members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which includes Russia, China, and Iran. What impact do you think the establishment and strengthening of the Organization of Turkic States will have on the SCO?

Aleksandr Sotnichenko: The impact of the OTS on the SCO largely depends on Türkiye's stance towards the SCO. Currently, Türkiye holds only a partner status and has not applied for membership. Not only Russian but also American officials recognize that Türkiye's membership in NATO, whose goals are fundamentally at odds



Flags and heads of state of OTS members Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Türkiye, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and OTS observers Turkmenistan, Hungary (Photo: OTS website, 2023).

with those of the SCO, is the main obstacle to its accession to the alliance.

The SCO is known for its active cooperation with other regional institutions in Eurasia, including partnership agreements with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), CSTO, EAEU, and ASEAN. Representatives of these organizations participate in SCO summits. However, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is not among its partners. To advance integration, the OTS should initiate dialogue with the SCO leadership to align organizational goals.

Will Türkiye become a sovereign center of power or a tool of Western policy in Eurasia?

Some circles in Russia, China, and Iran perceive the establishment of the Organization of Turkic States as a threat, believing that United States is behind it. Do you think this is a realistic concern given the current circumstances where U.S. and Türkiye's strategic interests are largely conflicting?

Aleksandr Sotnichenko: Russia, Iran, and China closely monitor the evolving interactions between U.S. and Türkiye, as well as Türkiye's participation in various Western integration institutions. Unfortunately, we observe a fairly successful development of Türkiye's dialogue with the West, particularly within NATO, including discussions on the alliance's expansion, Ukrainian issues, and participation in the EU customs union. Türkiye's involvement in institutions aimed at strengthening Western political and economic dominance complicates its participation in Eurasian structures such as the SCO and EAEU, especially amid rising interna-

tional tensions. This is the root of the mistrust that Russia, China, and Iran harbor towards Türkiye-led integration projects.

The U.S. and several European countries explicitly support separatist in the northeast of Syria. Regarding Middle East, U.S. unequivocally sides with Israel.

Over the past 20 years, Türkiye has adeptly balanced the interests of the West and various Eurasian power centers. However, with growing international tensions, Türkiye will inevitably have to make a strategic choice. The West has repeatedly shown an unwillingness to consider Türkiye's interests as an independent state in major strategic areas. In Syria, U.S. and several European countries openly support separatists in the country's northeast. Regarding Middle East, U.S. unequivocally sides with Israel. Cyprus issue remains unresolved within the context of EU integration, with the West taking an anti-Turkish stance.

Equally critical is the issue of values propagated by the West. Values of alienation, liberalism, disregard for tradition, and open encouragement of LGBT rights are unacceptable to Turkish society. These issues continually push Türkiye to reconsider its geopolitical alignment. In the near future, will Türkiye become a sovereign center of power or a tool of Western policy in Eurasia? The future of the OTS and its relations with other Eurasian integration projects depend on this decision. 🌸

The Function of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus's Participation in Organization of Turkic States



ERSİN TATAR*

President of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

**Ersin Tatar was born in 1960 in Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus. He completed his primary and secondary education in Cyprus and his high school and university education in England. After graduating from Cambridge University in 1982, he worked in the UK Headquarters of Price Waterhouse, the most important auditing and financial consultancy company in the world, until 1986. He worked as the Finance Manager at Polly Peck Company in England between 1986-1990, at FMC-Nurol Defense Industry Inc. in Ankara between 1990-1992, and as Financial Affairs Coordinator at Show TV between 1992-2001. In 1996, he founded "Kanal T", the first private television channel of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. In the 2009 general elections, he was elected as a deputy from the UBP and entered the parliament. Ersin Tatar, who served as the Minister of Finance in 2009, was elected as the Chairman at the UBP Congress held in 2018. He became the Prime Minister of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus on May 22, 2019. He became the 5th President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus by winning the first round on October 11 and the second round on October 18, 2020.*

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ABSTRACT

A just, realistic, practical and sustainable solution in Cyprus can be achieved not through the virtual status granted to the Greek Cypriot leadership by the international community over the years, overstepping its authority, sovereignty and power, but through the current realities on the island, namely the establishment of a structured cooperative relationship between the two sovereign states. This “win-win” situation will not only bring many political and economic gains to the Greek and Turkish sides of the island, but will also serve as a catalyst for the resolution of the problems in the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond. Thanks to the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), it has become possible to reinforce cooperation in areas such as politics, security, trade and energy, which have been longed for and needed in the Turkic World for years. TRNC, with all its institutions and organizations, wishes to take part in all areas where the OTS operates and to develop relations. We think that the internationally renowned Famagusta Port, Gemikonağı Port, and Ercan Airport of the TRNC offer the OTS a number of advantages. Our ultimate objective in this domain is to establish the TRNC as a dependable transit nation for maritime transportation and as a regional center for civil aviation. With the membership of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus to the OTS, the connection between the Turkic world and the Mediterranean was established. It is also of great importance to us that the OTS takes an active role in the development of the Middle Corridor.

Keywords: Middle Corridor, Organization of Turkic States, Sister Ports Program, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Turkic World Vision - 2040.

Introduction

THE ISLAND OF CYPRUS, ON WHICH the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, the southernmost independent Turkish Republic of the Turkic World, is located, is the third largest island in the Mediterranean, situated at the intersection of three continents. The island has a unique strategic and geographical position and

importance in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Turkish Cypriots took ownership of their own destiny by waging great struggles on the island, gained their freedom as a result of the 1974 Happy Peace Operation, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which we established in 1983, became the second Turkish state in the Turkic World, after the Republic of Türkiye, to gain its independence by waging a war of liberation.

The Path to a Solution: Two Sovereign States with Equal Rights on the Island

The Turkish Cypriot people are one of the signatories of the 1960 treaties and have an inherent right to sovereign equality and equal status with the Greek Cypriot side. This is not a new or demanded right, but a fundamental right that the Greek Cypriot side has been trying to usurp and forget for years. The TRNC, a state with all its democratic institutions, is at least as legitimate a state as the so-called Republic of Cyprus, which has turned into a Greek Cypriot state.

A just, realistic, practical and sustainable solution in Cyprus can be reached not with the virtual status granted to the Greek Cypriot leadership by the international community for all these years by exceeding its authority, sovereignty and power, but with the current realities on the island, namely the establishment of a structured cooperative relationship between the two sovereign states. This “win-win” situation will not only bring many political and economic gains to both the Greek and Turkish sides of the island, but will also serve as a catalyst for the resolution of issues in the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond.

Participation of TRNC in OTS

On November 11, 2022, at the Samarkand Summit, the Turkish family assembly made a historic decision by unanimously granting observer member status to the TRNC. For the first time, TRNC became a member of an international organization under its constitutional name. I would like to take this oppor-

tunity to thank once again the President of the Republic of Türkiye, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, Mr. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu,

Thanks to the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), which has now turned into an international organization and at the same time laid the foundation for a unique and effective structure, it has become possible to strengthen cooperation in areas such as politics, security, trade and energy, which the Turkic World has longed for and needed for years.

the Turkish diplomacy who worked hard to bring us this happiness, and the heads of state and government of all member states who supported us.

Thanks to the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), which has now turned into an international organization and at the same time laid the foundation for a unique and effective structure, it has become possible to strengthen cooperation in areas such as politics, security, trade and energy, which the Turkic World has longed for and needed for years. This union will not only reinforce the existing fraternal ties, but will also constitute the main part of the bridge from the Eastern Mediterranean to Central Asia as a collective defense mechanism to protect the Turkic World from common dangers. The OTS, which has the



potential to make the 21st century the Turkic century and at the same time to profoundly affect all political balances, has become even stronger with the accession of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

As the President of the Republic of Türkiye, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan himself stated, with the participation of the TRNC, the family picture of the Turkic world has been completed. With the participation of the TRNC, the OTS has become much stronger.

Unfair isolation on the TRNC

Unfortunately, after all these developments, the Greek Cypriot mentality, which has been going on for years, has been on alert and they have increased their efforts to continue the unjust and unlawful isolation imposed on the TRNC before all international organizations and countries they are members of in violation of international law, including the European Union.

In response to these unjust and unlawful moves, it is imperative that we, as the Turkic World, act in unity. In this context, it is very important that the President of Azerbaijan, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, officially invited the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus to the informal Summit meeting of the OTS held in Shusha, Azerbaijan in July. Mr. Aliyev had previously made an official statement that “from now on, the flag of the TRNC will fly in Azerbaijan”. Following this statement, during my official visit to Baku, I was welcomed with an official sta-

te ceremony and had an official meeting with Mr. Aliyev at the presidential palace.

TRNC is ready to contribute to the Middle Corridor

In my speech at the Shusha Summit, I underlined the following points:

Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which is an integral part of the Turkic world and the guardian of the Turkish presence in the Eastern Mediterranean, wishes to take part



It is also of great importance for TRNC that Organization of Turkic States plays an active role in the development of the Middle Corridor (Figure: UAB, 2021).

and develop relations with all its institutions and organizations in all areas where the OTS operates. We think that the internationally renowned Famagusta Port, Gemikonağı Port, and Ercan Airport of the TRNC offer the OTS a number of advantages. Our ultimate objective in this domain is to establish the TRNC as a dependable transit nation for maritime transportation and as a regional center for civil aviation. An application has been made to the Secretariat of the OTS by our relevant Ministry for the inclusion of the Famagusta Port in the 'Sister Ports' Program of the OTS. The expectation of the Turkish Cypriot people is that the request of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus to be included in the Sister Ports Memorandum of Understanding will be met positively. The inclusion of the Famagusta Port in the Sister Ports project of the OTS will be a very important support and message against the unjust and unlawful isolation and oppression imposed on the Turkish Cypriot people. With the membership of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus to the OTS, the connection between the Turkic world and the Mediterranean was established. It is of great importance for us that the OTS also takes an active role in the development of the Middle Corridor. It is also of great importance to us that the OTS takes an active role in the development of the Middle Corridor. In the document of Organization's "Turkic World 2040 Vision", special importance is given to the development of economic relations between our family councils, and within this framework, it is emphasized that cooperation in the fields of transportation and logistics should be strengthened. In the Vision Document, I salute our determination to strengthen cooperation in

transportation, especially in the International East-West Middle Transportation Corridor Crossing the Caspian Sea and the Zangezur Corridor, and I would like to express that we are ready to make every contribution that falls upon us.

TRNC is ready to Increase Relations with OTS

All these historical steps are examples of what the member states of the OTS should do against the TRNC as children of the same nation. As the TRNC, we are ready to increase our relations with the brother countries that are members of the OTS. I hope that we can bring our relations with other member states of the OTS to the same level we brought with Azerbaijan in the near future.

With the acceptance of the TRNC to the OTS, the message that the Turkish Cypriots are not alone has been given to the whole world once again. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is slowly and gradually gaining acceptance from the international community. This year, as we celebrate the 41st anniversary of our Republic, we will continue our honorable struggle without slowing down, taking even more courage from these positive developments that carry our status forward. 🌸

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Türkiye's Promotion of the Integration of Turkic States: Context, Practice, and Influence



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ABSTRACT

In the context of the “New Great Game” in Central Asia, Türkiye has taken advantage of the image of “Turkic leadership” created by the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, seized the opportunity of U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war, and actively promoted and led the integration of Turkic-speaking States. Türkiye’s enthusiasm is a manifestation of its strategic adjustment that puts greater emphasis on strategic autonomy. In this process, Türkiye’s primary advantage lies in its soft power; its main approach is to foster multilateral cooperation alongside bilateral partnerships. The core focus remains on energy and trade collaboration. Pan-Turkic cooperation is subject to varying considerations regarding extraterritorial powers by Russia, China, and Iran. The impact of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) on Eurasian geopolitical dynamics will depend on its ability to avoid being manipulated as a pawn in the great powers’ geopolitical competition.

Keywords: Central Asia, multilateral cooperation, regional integration, Organization of Turkic States, Türkiye.

Introduction

THE TURKIC STATES ARE COUNTRIES where the majority of the population speaks Turkic languages, including Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan. The leaders of the aforementioned six countries announced at the 8th Heads of State Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (CCTS) in Istanbul on November 12, 2021, that they have decided to elevate the CCTS to the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), with Turkmenistan joining as an observer. This signified a significant shift from a loose cooperation mechanism to a formal international organization fostering collaboration among Turkic-speaking states.

Türkiye, as the driving force behind the integration movement of Turkic-speaking countries, has been actively engaged in regional affairs in Central Asia in recent years. Simultaneously, Türkiye’s policy towards the South Caucasus and Central Asia has shifted from economic pragmatism to a growing emphasis on political and military cooperation. In this regard, domestic and foreign scholars have extensively analyzed Türkiye from various perspectives, including the historical evolution of Pan-Turkism, soft power diplomacy, identity politics, geopolitics, and the Middle Corridor Project. This paper examines the background, implementation, and impact of Türkiye’s efforts in advancing Turkic state integration within the context of intense great power competition.

The Context of Türkiye's Efforts in Promoting the Integration of Turkic States

In the latter half of the 19th century, Ottoman intellectuals developed a profound interest in the ethnic and cultural heritage of Central Asia, aiming to establish a connection between Türkiye and the Turkic peoples residing in Central Asia. This endeavor contributed to the emergence of (pan-) Turkism (Jeong, 2018).

Influenced by the narrative of ethnic origins in Central Asia, Türkiye has always aspired to assume a leadership role in the regional integration of Turkic-speaking states.

Historically, Türkiye's pan-Turkic practice has experienced three brief upsurges, which occurred after the Russian October Revolution (1917), the Soviet-German War (1941), and the conclusion of the Cold War (1991). These occurrences were all directly linked to the erosion of Russian power. Influenced by the narrative of ethnic origins in Central Asia, Türkiye has always aspired to assume a leadership role in the regional integration of Turkic-speaking states. However, while pan-Turkism possesses a certain social foundation as an ideological trend, its practical implementation as a foreign policy orientation exhibits oscillating developments. In fact, pan-Turkism can only enter the policy sphere and shape Turkish diplomacy under favorable external circumstances. This is because the motivation of a state does not necessarily translate into corresponding diplomatic beha-

avior. Implementing national ideas depends on whether the international system provides the necessary conditions.

Systemic Factors: Pluralistic Power Dynamics in Central Asia and the Contemporary "New Great Game"

Central Asia, as the pivotal point of the Eurasian continent, has facilitated the convergence and mutual influence between extraterritorial powers and internal political and cultural elements in the region, serving as a catalyst for shaping the Eurasian geopolitical landscape. Historically, the Greeks, Romans, Huns, Turks, Arabs, and Mongols have all played significant roles in Central Asia and beyond (Tao, 2016). In recent years, with the strategic contraction of the United States from Central Asia, the region has entered an era of order reconstruction. Key actors involved in Central Asian affairs include Russia, China, the United States, the European Union, India, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and more. The contemporary involvement of major powers in Central Asia has been referred to as the "New Great Game" to distinguish it from the 19th-century rivalry between the British Empire and the Russian Empire in the region.

Different actors pursue different interests in Central Asia for various reasons. Since the onset of the Ukraine crisis, Western sanctions have expedited Russia's integration efforts in Central Asia. For Russia, Central Asia serves as a strategically significant sphere of influence, a pivotal hub for constructing the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and a crucial component in shaping the regional security hierarchy (Ping, 2022). China, driven by the imperative to advance the Belt and Road Initiative and bolster



its security, has placed heightened emphasis on fostering trade cooperation, intensifying counter-terrorism endeavors, ensuring stability in Afghanistan, and facilitating regional connectivity (Feng, 2020). The Central Asia strategy of the United States aims to uphold its global hegemony, encompassing key objectives such as exerting influence over the political systems of Central Asian countries through “color revolutions”, promoting American values, containing Russian sway, and constraining China’s progress (Cai & Yi, 2020). The European Union, in addition to aligning with the United States, is prioritizing energy development in the region. It aims to establish robust energy supply routes between Central Asia and Europe while also seeking to reduce Russia’s dominant position in the Euro-

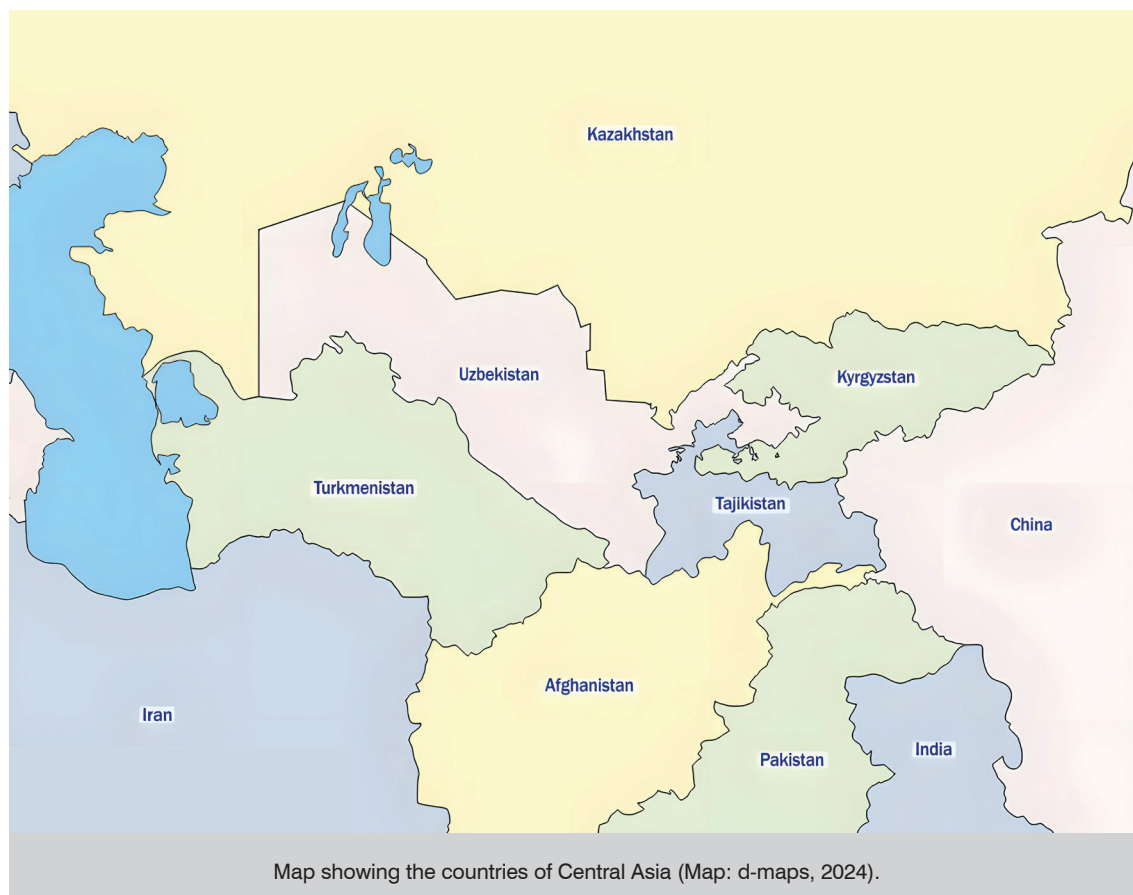
pean energy market.

In addition to global powers, regional powers have presented their strategies for Central Asia. The approach of India towards Central Asia has gradually evolved from the initial “Look North” policy to an “extended neighborhood” policy and subsequently to a more comprehensive “Connect Central Asia” Policy (Li, 2019). Pakistan is actively pursuing strategic depth in Central Asia, alongside the acquisition of energy resources to drive its economic development. In the context of the enduring rivalry between India and Pakistan, both countries maintain a competitive relationship in Central Asia. India perceives Central Asia as a strategically significant rear area, while Pakistan endeavors to impede India’s connectivity with Central Asia.

In West Asian countries, Saudi Arabia's influence in Central Asia primarily lies within the religious domain. This includes the establishment of mosques, the provision of Arabic language courses, and the initiation of charitable funds. These efforts are aimed at disseminating Wahhabism and employing "mosque diplomacy" to counteract Iranian influence (Berdikeeva, 2020). Iran shares a rich cultural and historical heritage with Central Asia and the Caucasus, actively promotes the proliferation of Persian language and culture, and strives to disseminate its religious model in Tajikistan (Dehshiri, 2020).

The interplay of US-Russia, India-Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia-Iran contradictions is intri-

cately intertwined in Central Asia, with global and regional actors actively intervening in regional affairs. The power competition within the framework of the New Great Game hinders the effectiveness of the interaction mechanism. At the same time, divergent interest demands pose challenges for major powers to achieve consensus on Central Asian affairs. So far, Central Asia does not have a multilateral cooperation mechanism covering the United States, Russia, China, India, Europe, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye. Various actors strategically align their policies through diverse mechanisms and platforms. For example, China and Russia effectively coordinate their policies within the framework of the Shanghai



Cooperation Organization, while the United States and Europe synergize their policies through NATO.

Moreover, Saudi Arabia and Iran are trying to expand their influence through the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), respectively. Consequently, despite the relative abundance of public goods in Central Asia, the regional governance mechanism tends to be personalized and instrumentalized. Central Asian countries, however, embrace the coexistence of diverse cooperation platforms, as the mutual containment of mechanisms allows for the preservation of their strategic autonomy (Hong, 2022).

The institutionalization of cooperation platforms among Turkic-speaking countries has positioned Türkiye as a significant player in the New Great Game. The Central Asian countries generally pursue a pluralistic and balanced approach to diplomacy, and cooperation platforms based on ethnic identity serve as a means to showcase their autonomy.

To enhance their autonomy and mitigate the exclusive influence of regional hegemony, Central Asian countries employ a “balancing regionalism” strategy in managing their relationships with cooperation platforms. This balance is not a “hard balance” in military and economic terms but rather a “soft balance” against potential revisionist states by forming a complex network with major powers through different coopera-

tion platforms. From the perspective of Central Asian states, diverse organizational relationships (such as those based on culture, language, religion, and geography) can expand the geographical boundaries of Central Asia and pose challenges in establishing dominant spheres of influence (Tskhay, 2020).

Establishing a cooperative platform among Turkic-speaking countries is justified and logical within this specific power structure. Although the notion of fostering a “Turkic Community” based on linguistic affinities overlooks the significant variations within the Turkic language family (Cinar, 2013), and the very concept of “Turkic” itself is contentious and constructivist, the alignment with “Turkic identity” serves to meet the demand of Turkic states for bolstering their autonomy, thereby constituting a crucial catalyst for the transformation of the CCTS.

In summary, Central Asia lacks indigenous security public goods, and the interaction between Central Asian states and major powers has resulted in a decentralized and multi-tiered power structure. Simultaneously, the ongoing New Great Game among major powers in Central Asia offers diversified choices to the countries in this region. The institutionalization of cooperation platforms among Turkic-speaking countries has positioned Türkiye as a significant player in the New Great Game. The Central Asian countries generally pursue a pluralistic and balanced approach to diplomacy, and cooperation platforms based on ethnic identity serve as a means to showcase their autonomy. While major powers are developing their versions of the Central Asia initiatives to seek influence, Türkiye, which positions itself as a global actor, endeavors to shape a favorable regional subsystem by spearheading the regional integration of Turkic states.



July 1, 2015, a freight train departs for Central Asia from CRIntermodal's hub station in Qingdao, a port city in East China's Shandong Province (Photo: CGTN, 2018).

Unit Factors: Türkiye's Strategic Autonomy and Global Actor Positioning

The formulation of foreign policy is a complex outcome resulting from the intricate interplay between systemic and unit-level dynamics. While the power of a state and its position within the international system significantly influence foreign policy formation, domestic factors such as perceptions and values also assume pivotal roles. After the establishment of the Republic, Türkiye pursued a policy of peace-oriented diplomacy, rejecting the adventurist policies associated with pan-Islamism, pan-Turkism,

and irredentism. It strictly confined its foreign policy within the framework of nation states (Kürkçüoğlu, 1980; Göl, 2012; Güçlü, 2000). However, as Turkish nationalism constructed a narrative of Central Asian ethnic origins that idealized ancient Turkic traditions as the source of national culture, Türkiye's sovereignty border and identity border became mismatched, resulting in tension between the transnational characteristics of cultural nationalism and the territorial characteristics of territorial nationalism (Tao, 2011).

Following the conclusion of the Cold War, Türkiye endeavored to enhance its position within

the Atlantic Alliance and the Western world by taking a leading role in facilitating the economic, political, and religious transformation of Turkic-speaking states. At the time, Turkish policymakers widely believed that Türkiye, as a secular, democratic, pro-Western Islamic country with a market economy, had the potential to serve as a “bridge” between Central Asia and the West (Bal, 2017). Therefore, the pan-Turkic practice pursued by Türkiye in the 1990s was essentially aligned with Western interests. Exerting influence in the “Turkic world” was perceived as a means to join the European integration process.

In the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) era, persistent frustration with E.U.

membership sharply contrasts with the surging tide of Turkish nationalism. Since the Arab Spring, Türkiye’s pro-Western diplomacy has shifted towards a more proactive and comprehensive approach due to NATO Allies’ continued disregard for its security interests. “Looking East” has become the new norm, and developing relations with Russia, Iran, and China has emerged as an important method to balance Europe and the United States’ influence. Türkiye’s traditional geopolitical view has been to make a fundamental distinction between the “East and West” or “Europe and Asia”, aligning itself with the “Civilized Western World” within a dualistic framework.



March 16, 2023, President Erdoğan: Organization of Turkic States is the new synergy center of the international system that can no longer produce solutions (Photo: TCCB, 2023).

During the AK Party era, Türkiye's sense of autonomy evolved into a complex geopolitical identity wherein the West ceased to be the exclusive normative source. In a multipolar world, Türkiye has three origins: imperial, national, and religious, corresponding to three political ideologies (neo-Ottomanism, Turkism, and Islamism) and three state roles, i.e. the "successor" of the Ottoman Empire, "bellwether" of the Turkic States, and the "bastion" of the Islamic world (Hui, 2024). The ethnic and religious identities in Türkiye have converged within the realm of party politics and ideology. In 2018, the pro-Western forces experienced a setback as AK Party (with an Islamist background) forged an electoral alliance with MHP (with a nationalist background).

Leading the integration of Turkic-speaking states would demonstrate Türkiye's independence and counterbalance its historical reliance on the West.

Leading the integration of Turkic-speaking states would demonstrate Türkiye's independence and counterbalance its historical reliance on the West. As a global actor, Türkiye's position within the Atlantic Alliance and OTS is functionally complementary. While NATO is highly institutionalized, Türkiye can only be integrated into the European military circle due to its geographic location, but it cannot gain recognition for its ethnic, religious, and cultural identity. In contrast, although less institutionalized than NATO, OTS can highlight Türkiye's status and increase its voice in Central Asian affairs. Under the concept of strategic autonomy, Türkiye seeks to assert its position as an equal player in in-

ternational relations rather than being relegated to a subordinate role by Western powers. One aspect of this self-centered strategic reorientation involves fostering closer integration with Turkic-speaking states.

Trigger Factors: The Nagorno-Karabakh war, the Afghanistan Upheaval, and the Russian Invasion of Ukraine

In addition to the systemic and unit-level factors, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 2020, the United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, and the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022 have significantly propelled Türkiye's efforts towards promoting the integration process.

Among the Turkic states, Azerbaijan has been aligned with Türkiye and serves as a strategic partner for Turkish influence in Central Asia. The bilateral relationship between these two countries is often summarized by "Bir millet, iki devlet" (One nation, two states). According to the Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Support concluded between the two countries in 2010, both Türkiye and Azerbaijan will support each other "using all possibilities" in the case of a military attack or aggression against either of the countries.

In September 2020, when conflict erupted between Azerbaijan and Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, Türkiye provided complete backing to Azerbaijan through various measures such as supplying drones and deploying military advisors (Isachenko, 2020). Russia has demonstrated significant restraint in the conflict for strategic purposes, giving Türkiye ample opportunity to exert its influential power. With the support of Türkiye, Azerbaijan achieved a victory, reclaiming significant portions of territory and reshaping the geopolitical landscape of the South Caucasus.



In September 2020, when conflict broke out between Azerbaijan and Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, Türkiye provided full support to Azerbaijan, supplying drones and sending military advisors (Photo: Metbuat, 2023).

The Nagorno-Karabakh War solidified the Turkish-Azerbaijani alliance and enhanced Türkiye's prestige in the Turkic-speaking countries. Hüseyin Bağcı, the president of the Foreign Policy Institute, said: "Azerbaijan's victory of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict during its chairmanship of the Turkic Council has had a significant impact on the regional landscape, bolstered the morale of the Turkic world, established a solid foundation for Turkic integration, and paved the way for this year's successful convening of the Turkic Council summit. Now, as Türkiye assumes the rotating presidency of the Turkic Council, it will continue to capitalize on the resilience demonstrated in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and effectively lead the whole Turkic world (Yuan, 2021)".

Türkiye proclaimed the victory in the Nagorno-Karabakh War as a triumph for Turkic-speaking states, strategically utilizing it to garner support from

Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Shortly after the war, Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar led a delegation to Central Asia and received a warm reception. During the visit, Türkiye entered into military cooperation agreements with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Furthermore, the OTS Heads of State Summits of 2021, 2022, and 2023 expressed unwavering support for Azerbaijan's cause while characterizing the Nagorno-Karabakh War as an embodiment of the indissoluble brotherhood among Turkic-speaking states.

The turmoil caused by NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 has provided a new incentive for Türkiye to lead the integration of Turkic-speaking countries. Two factors have influenced Türkiye's focus on Afghanistan. The first is ethnic identity. In Türkiye's view, the Uzbeks and Turkmen of northern and central Afghanistan are "Turks beyond the borders", and their homeland, "South Turkestan", has historical ties with Türkiye (The Arab Weekly, 2021).

Based on this understanding, Türkiye established consulates in Kabul, Herat, Kandahar, and other locations while founding educational and training institutions to enhance its influence among Turkic ethnic groups. The second is religious identity. Türkiye and the countries of Central Asia, which are predominantly Sunni Islamic nations, have witnessed the emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan. This serves as a significant indication of the resurgence of radical Islam. Against this backdrop, there is an opportunity for Türkiye's moderate form of Islam to exert greater influence.

In light of the turmoil in Afghanistan, the Turkic-speaking states of Central Asia recognize the imperative to coordinate their policies to effectively address potential instability, thereby presenting an opportunity for Türkiye.

In light of the turmoil in Afghanistan, the Turkic-speaking states of Central Asia recognize the imperative to coordinate their policies to effectively address potential instability, thereby presenting an opportunity for Türkiye. On September 27, 2021, Türkiye convened a meeting of foreign ministers of the Turkic Council to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu stressed that the “Turkic world” should be united and make its voice heard, as millions of Turkic relatives live in Afghanistan, a fact that was of direct relevance to Turkic-speaking countries (Yüzbaşıoğlu, 2021). The expeditious withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan has been characterized by disorder, leading to extensive dissatisfaction among

its allies. The Central Asian countries have to seek an external balance of power amidst the “unpredictability” of the United States and the “assertiveness” of Russia. At the same time, Türkiye has successfully expanded its influence (Zhi, 2022).

The 2022 invasion of Ukraine by Russia has somewhat diminished Russia's influence in Central Asia, prompting Turkic-speaking countries in the region to place greater emphasis on the subjectivity of their own national culture and bolster their Turkic identity. The Central Asian countries value their independence at a practical level. Yet, they rely on Russia in the economic and security domains, placing them in a delicate position amidst the Russia-Ukraine war.

Broadly speaking, the attitudes of the Turkic countries can be categorized into three distinct approaches: Türkiye adopts a policy of strategic balance and hedging; Azerbaijan perceives the Russo-Ukrainian war as an opportunity to expand its gains, aiming for territorial integrity; The Turkic states in Central Asia are both reliant on and concerned about Russia, with their primary objective being risk avoidance and safeguarding sovereignty. Prior to the invasion of Ukraine, Putin approached Kazakhstan in an attempt to seek collaborative action. However, Kazakhstan remained unswayed and declined to acknowledge the legitimacy of Crimea's situation and the self-proclaimed “independence” of Donetsk and Luhansk (Umarov, 2022).

Moreover, Putin's remarks on the history of the Soviet Union and Central Asia have raised concerns in Central Asian countries, prompting them to promote cultural de-Russification further. Cultural cooperation is precisely the focal point of collaboration within the OTS, distinguishing it from the SCO and CSTO. Since the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, Turkic-speaking countries have witnessed a surge in their level of engagement. The visit of Kazakh President

Tokayev to Türkiye in May 2022 elevated bilateral relations to a strengthened strategic partnership, with both influential powers within the “Turkic world” actively pursuing an expansion of the OTS’s influence.

Türkiye’s efforts to facilitate the integration of Turkic States

Türkiye actively promotes the concept of a “Turkic World” and fosters cooperation mechanisms among Turkic-speaking countries. Historically, Türkiye’s pan-Turkic policy has focused on cultural, economic, and educational domains. Within the framework of the Turkic Council and OTS, Türkiye actively promotes the exploration and dissemination of Turkic heritage through institutions such as the International Organization of Turkic Culture (Türksoy, renowned as the “UNESCO of the Turkic World”), the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic States (TÜRKPA), the Turkic Academy, the Turkic Culture and Heritage

Foundation, and other organizations.

In the field of education, various institutions, including the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), the Maarif Vakfi Foundation, and Yunus Emre Enstitüsü Institute, among others, offer a plethora of exchange opportunities for students from Central Asian countries. The 8th Summit of the Turkic Council in 2021 has resolved to establish a Turkic Investment Fund, establish a television channel dedicated to Turkic-speaking countries, foster a unified higher education area, and compile comprehensive works on Turkic World Geography and Turkic Literature.

According to Türkiye, integration in the low-political spheres of education, culture, and economy is necessary for realizing the vision of a “Turkic century” (Tomar, 2021). At the same time, based on soft power, Türkiye has also sought breakthroughs at the institutional level in recent years.



At the 8th Summit of the Turkic Council in 2021, it was decided to establish a Turkic Investment Fund, establish a television channel for Turkic-speaking countries, create a unified higher education area, and compile comprehensive works on Turkic World Geography and Turkic Literature (Photo: TCCB, 2021).

First, cooperation with Kazakhstan should be promoted through a high-level strategic partnership. During the era of Nursultan Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan became the most developed country in Central Asia by virtue of its geographical and economic advantages (Yılmaz, 2017). Kazakhstan is home to the second-largest number of Turkish expatriates. The two countries established a strategic partnership in 2009 and formed a High-level Strategic Cooperation Committee (HLSCC) in 2012 to institutionalize the strategic partnership. In addition, the two countries have maintained cooperation in multilateral platforms such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA).

After Türkiye downed a Russian warplane in 2015, Nazarbayev assumed the role of a mediator in Türkiye-Russia relations, and he became the first head of state to visit Türkiye following the coup at-

tempt on July 15, 2016. In 2017, Türkiye joined the Astana Process on the Syria issue. When Kasim-Jomart Tokayev came to power in 2019, he continued his predecessor's foreign policy. Against the backdrop of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, President Tokayev embarked on a state visit to Türkiye in May 2022, during which the two nations solidified their strategic partnership by signing a joint statement. The memorandum of military-technical cooperation grants authorization to Kazakhstan Engineering to establish an ANKA UAV assembly line. Scholars in Kazakhstan and Türkiye commonly assert that the two nations serve as indispensable pillars of the "Turkic World" and that their collaboration epitomizes a profound sense of brotherhood.

Second, improve relations with Uzbekistan, persuade it to join the Turkic Council, and bridge the gaps in cooperation among Turkic-speaking countries. Uzbekistan's strategic location, amidst Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, presents Türkiye with a unique



In April 2018, Erdoğan visited Uzbek President Mirziyoyev, following which Uzbekistan decided to join the Turkic Council (Photo: TCCB, 2018).

opportunity to exert its influence in Central Asia (Cornell, 2000). However, Uzbekistan has historically shown limited interest in Türkiye's regional cooperation initiatives. Throughout the İslam Karimov era, the two countries experienced tensions regarding religious schools, extremism, and human rights issues (Yalinkiliçli, 2018). Relations between the two countries underwent a positive transformation following Şavkat Mirziyoyev's assumption of power in 2016, as the new government adopted a more inclusive foreign policy that was warmly received by Türkiye.

In 2017, Mirziyoyev made history by becoming the first Uzbek president to visit Türkiye in over two decades. Subsequently, in April 2018, Erdoğan paid a return visit, and the two countries signed several agreements. It was after this visit that Uzbekistan decided to join the Turkic Council. In addition, Mirziyoyev put forward the New Uzbekistan Strategy, believing that the development model of Türkiye can be used for reference (Kemaloğlu, 2020).

Third, strengthen the "blood alliance" with Azerbaijan, facilitate direct land connections with Central Asia through the Zengezur corridor pro-

ject, and promote transport inter-connectivity. The Şuşa Declaration of June 15 2021, facilitates extensive collaboration between the two nations in politics, economics, and security. Furthermore, Türkiye and Azerbaijan actively promote the Zengezur Corridor project, which aims to establish direct transportation connections between the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and Azerbaijan. If the project is realized, Türkiye could establish direct links with Azerbaijan and Central Asia. Therefore, some scholars refer to the Zengezur Corridor as the "Turan corridor", envisioning it as a catalyst for fostering unity within the "Turkic World".

Fourth, facilitate the enhancement of Turkmenistan-Azerbaijan relations and establish an energy transportation hub by implementing a trilateral mechanism. For Türkiye, Azerbaijan serves as a "springboard" to Central Asia, while Turkmenistan acts as a "bridgehead" across the Caspian Sea into Central Asia. However, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan have long been in constant conflict over the development of Caspian Sea resources, which has hindered the progress of Türkiye's Middle Corridor project.



Map of the Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline Project (TANAP) (Figure: TANAP, 2024).

Another consequence of the ongoing dispute between the two nations is that Turkmenistan, despite possessing vast reserves of natural gas (ranking as the fourth largest in the world), faces limitations in supplying the European market, resulting in a deficiency within the Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline Project (TANAP). In January 2021, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan reached an agreement on developing oil and gas resources in the Caspian Sea with the mediation of Türkiye (Rehimov, 2021). The agreement removes obstacles to the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline project and can support Türkiye's goal of diversifying its energy sources and establishing itself as an energy hub.

The tripartite mechanism established in 2014 by Türkiye, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan has evolved into a comprehensive partnership and become a significant driving force for multilateral cooperation among Turkic-speaking countries.

As a result, the tripartite mechanism established in 2014 by Türkiye, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan has evolved into a comprehensive partnership and become a significant driving force for multilateral cooperation among Turkic-speaking countries. The first Trilateral Summit of the Heads of the three countries was held in Turkmenbashi on December 14 2022. In April 2024, Erdogan signed a decree approving the intergovernmental agreement "On Trade and Economic Cooperation between Azerbaijan, Türkiye and Turkmenistan".

As seen from the aforementioned developments, the transformation of the Cooperation Council of

Turkic Speaking States into an Organization of Turkic States is closely linked to the international environment, regional dynamics, and Türkiye's active efforts in recent years. In light of the 30th anniversary of Central Asian countries' independence, Türkiye capitalized on its advantageous position as the president of the Turkic Council to actively promote pan-Turkic cooperation, foster integration among Turkic-speaking states, and assert its leadership role in the "Turkic world".

Cultural soft power is Türkiye's advantage in promoting the integration of Turkic-speaking countries. In international relations, hard power refers to the ability to coerce other countries into altering their behavior, typically through economic and military means. Soft power, on the other hand, represents an intangible source of influence that shapes others' preferences. In Central Asia, Türkiye has established a competitive field of cultural soft power, with its main initiatives including the promotion and dissemination of Turkic culture, advocacy for the Latinization of Turkic languages, attracting students from Central Asia through educational collaborations, and developing textbooks to enhance the allure of Turkic culture.

Bilateral relations are fundamental to Türkiye's efforts to integrate Turkic-speaking countries, and promoting multilateral relations through bilateral ties is the main method by which Türkiye can enhance its level of cooperation. Türkiye has institutionalized strategic cooperation with Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. Compared to the unrealistic pan-Turkic goals of the 1990s, Türkiye in the AKP era has demonstrated a more balanced and pragmatic approach to bilateral relations and multilateral cooperative mechanisms. Since the OTS has been unable to meet diversified demands, Türkiye has favored issue-based cooperation in different areas. In the economic sphere, it focuses on energy co-



Shymkent oil refinery in Kazakhstan (Photo: CGTN, 2023).

operation with Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan based on the Trilateral Mechanism to create an energy hub. In the security sphere, it focuses on strengthening the construction of a security community with Azerbaijan and Northern Cyprus. Regarding the Afghanistan issue, it maintains interaction and coordination with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

The Implications of Türkiye's Promotion of Integration of Turkic States

Türkiye's institutionalization of cooperation among Turkic-speaking countries partly caters to the need for Central Asian countries to "keep warm together", but Türkiye's goals are not limited to the lower political sphere, and it is also attempting to expand its influence in the broader region through pan-Turkic cooperation. In the South Caucasus, Türkiye utilizes the Nagorno-Karabakh War to compete with Russia for influence in the post-Soviet

space. In the Eastern Mediterranean, Türkiye seeks to integrate Northern Cyprus into the pan-Turkic agenda by persuading OTS member states to recognize the independent status of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, thereby easing its isolation in the region. In the Black Sea region, Türkiye defends the rights of Crimean Tatars (considered a Turkic people) and opposes Russia's annexation of Crimea.

First, the Nagorno-Karabakh war bolstered the separatist sentiments among Azerbaijanis residing in northern Iran, thereby raising concerns within Iran. Azerbaijanis constitute 20% of Iran's total population and primarily reside in the northern region adjacent to Azerbaijan. During his visit to Azerbaijan on December 10, 2020, Erdogan recited a poem that mourned the separation of Azerbaijani people in both Azerbaijan and Iran by the Aras River. This poem is perceived as a representation of pan-Turkism and "Whole Azerbaijan" in Iran, thus provoking widespread indignation in Iran.



Leaders of CSTO member states at a summit meeting in the Kremlin on May 16, 2022 (Photo: CGTN, 2022).

There is also economic competition between Iran and Türkiye in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Iran is concerned that the Turkish-promoted Trans-Caspian Middle Corridor initiative and the Lapis Lazuli Corridor Agreement risk excluding itself from regional networks, limiting its trade relations with Central Asian countries (Vatanka, 2022).

In the north-south direction, regarding the Zengezur Corridor project initiated by Türkiye and Azerbaijan to connect “300 million Turkic people”, Iran has emphasized that it will not tolerate any attempt to seal the Iran-Armenian border, as this is a “red line” in its Caucasus policy (Sargsyan, 2022). Iran has enhanced its cooperation with Russia and Armenia in response to the changes. The South Caucasus region has witnessed the emergence of two delicate alignments: Türkiye, Azerbaijan, and Georgia on one side and Russia, Armenia, and Iran on the other. These two alignments are intricately intertwined with multiple alliances or adversarial relationships involving Iran and Israel, Türkiye and Turkic-speaking countries, as well as Armenia and Russia.

Second, Russia is concerned about its strategic in-

terests in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Russia has always been the dominant power in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Militarily, Russia maintains military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Following the Taliban’s rise to power in Afghanistan, the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) reinforced its “alliance responsibility” by conducting a series of joint military exercises with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. These exercises aimed to alleviate the security concerns of Afghanistan’s neighboring countries while enhancing their reliance on Russia for security assistance (Pannier, 2021). However, while Russia plays an important political and security role in Central Asia, its influence is declining. This is due to a growing sense of subjectivity and a trend towards linguistic and cultural de-Russification in Central Asian countries. In this regard, the cultural pressure exerted by Türkiye on the “post-Soviet space” contributes to Russia’s negative attitude towards the Organization of Turkic States.

Third, China is concerned that Pan-Turkism may fuel separatism and result in them becoming geopo-

litical pawns for the U.S. and the West. Northwest China is home to a significant Turkic-speaking population, primarily residing in the Xinjiang region. In recent years, certain right-wing factions in Türkiye have leveled accusations and criticisms against China regarding ethnic and religious issues related to Xinjiang. China is concerned that violent terrorist forces, ethnic separatist forces, and religious extremist forces may use the platform of cooperation among Turkic-speaking countries to launch anti-China activities. In addition, given Türkiye's NATO membership and within the context of the United States' strategic containment of China, China is concerned that the OTS could potentially be utilized as a geopolitical tool by the United States.

In recent years, the normal cooperation between China, Russia, and Iran is considered by some American scholars as the "Eurasian Triangle Axis". Coincidentally, the Organization of Turkic States also has the potential to exert a negative influence on these three countries. Therefore, China's stance towards OTS largely depends on its perception of the China-US strategic competition.

Conclusion

The institutionalization of cooperation platforms among Turkic-speaking countries is one of the many manifestations of order adjustment in Central Asia. Central Asia and the South Caucasus lie at the heart of Eurasia and are hubs of trade and cultural exchange between Russia and India, China and Europe, and the Caspian and Black Seas. The region's geographical crossroads character determines the diversity of cultural sources (Slavic, Western, tribal, and Islamic), shaping the complex nature of national identity in these regional countries.

Amidst significant transformations, Turkic-spe-

aking states strive to mitigate risks through regional cooperation, avoiding being confined to binary choices, becoming entangled in incompatible interest disputes, or being manipulated as pawns in power dynamics. As a countermeasure, the Central Asian countries employ the summit meeting mechanism to mitigate their contradictions and enhance regional coordination. Simultaneously, they maintain multi-level, multidirectional, and multifunctional cooperative relations with major countries, serving as ties that accommodate their diverse national identities. Cooperation based on cultural and linguistic similarities provides ample space for imagination in such an environment.

Türkiye's enthusiasm for integrating Turkic-speaking countries expresses its strategic realignment. In the AKP era, Türkiye's national strategy has shifted towards a more Eurasian orientation, with the objective of European Union membership being superseded by a focus on revitalizing Türkiye's greatness. To this end, Türkiye has embraced identity politics and promoted the integration of Turkic-speaking countries. In the new era, great powers engage in "soft competition" in Central Asia, encompassing competition in mechanisms, efficiency, and identity, which serves as a litmus test for their capacity to provide public goods.

Türkiye's promotion of the expansion, renaming, and institutionalization of the cooperation platform of Turkic-speaking states has a twofold objective: firstly, to promote internal integration within the "Turkic world", and secondly, to play a greater role in various issues such as South Caucasus issue, the Tajik-Kyrgyzstan conflict, Afghanistan reconstruction, and the recognition of Northern Cyprus. To avoid misunderstanding, both Erdogan and Nazarbayev emphasized that the Organization of Turkic States does not have any specific targets against third parties.

However, the impact of OTS on Eurasian geopolitical dynamics will depend on its ability to avoid being manipulated as a pawn in the great powers' geopolitical competition while simultaneously promoting regional multilateral cooperation. 

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Türkiye's Active Playmaker in the Agricultural Development and Trade of Central Asia



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ABSTRACT

Türkiye, which has 0.8% of the world's agricultural land, produces more than 1.2% of the total global agricultural production. Like all ambitious countries in agriculture, Türkiye is increasing agricultural production by using technology and knowledge more. Agricultural product trade is also gaining importance and all countries see agriculture as a strategic area for the future. Türkiye, which is one of the important actors in the global agricultural economy with its product diversity, productivity, soil structure, production capacity and food processing industry, continues to carry this claim even further. As the 10th largest agricultural country in the world, Türkiye is right in the center of global and regional problems and opportunities due to its geopolitical location. While this situation primarily reveals sufficiency in agriculture, it also reveals the mission of being a pioneer in the region, especially in the Turkic States World geography. Türkiye, which aims to increase its agricultural production, which is close to 50 billion dollars as of 2020, to around 270 billion dollars in 2050, displays a potential to rise to the seventh place in global agriculture. These developments may increase even more due to the synergy that will emerge when the member countries of the Turkic World come together. With regional cooperation in agriculture, a great global power can emerge and every country will win. Türkiye will strive to fulfill its role as an active playmaker here.

Keywords: agriculture, agricultural development, Central Asia, Türkiye, Turkic States.

Introduction

AGRICULTURE IS ONE OF THE MOST TALKED about sectors in the world in recent years. Climate change, hunger, wars, chaos and food prices have made agriculture more talked about. Agricultural production is important not only for feeding and improving nutrition, but also because it is one of the main economic resources of many countries. Agricultural production not only ends hunger but also plays an important role as a key to economic and social development. With this in mind, agri-

cultural production has become much more internationalized in the last 15-20 years. Agriculture and food trade has become more internationalized due to increasing logistics and diversity of diets, as well as increasing problems. Much higher quantities and values of agriculture and food are now traded. In this situation, on the one hand, the search for international integration in agriculture in the world is increasing, and on the other hand, countries are looking for ways to trade more. Advances in trade have made countries grow in the agricultural field and have almost become playmakers.

The agriculture of the Turkic World, which has a great potential, can play an important role in world agriculture by joining forces. Türkiye can play a leading role in the regional agricultural economy and trade by bringing its knowledge and technology to this geography. Türkiye, which ranks 10th in agricultural production in the world, will be able to have more say in the world together with its member countries through agricultural trade with the Turkic World countries.

Basic Dynamics of Turkish Agriculture

Türkiye has a significant competitive advantage with its rich biodiversity, the presence of an agriculture-based industry, natural structure, climatic characteristics, geographical location and ranking in the top 10 in the world in the production of nearly 55 crops (FAO, 2022). Türkiye is an important player in agriculture as it connects Asia and Europe and is close to a rich demand center such as the European continent. On the other hand, the fact that Central Asia is on the path of developing cooperation with countries with fertile natural resources and lands offers important opportunities for Central Asian countries as well as for Türkiye in the future. Rational and sustainable utilization of these opportunities will increase the economic, agricultural and commercial capacity of the countries according to the win-win principle.

Although the relative importance of the agricultural sector in gross domestic product (GDP) has declined over the years, production in real terms has shown a steady upward trend. In 1980, the agricultural sector accounted for 25.8% of national income, but this share started to decline due to the economic policies pursued in the 1980s, and the contribution of the agricultural sector to GDP was realized as 4.8% in 2022. In

2022, the agricultural sector grew by 0.6% and its contribution to the economic growth of 5.4% was limited.

Looking at the general state of agriculture in Türkiye, it can be seen that it has reached an important position in the global agricultural and food economy. In particular, vegetable, fruit, cereal and animal production has more than tripled.

Looking at the general state of agriculture in Türkiye, it can be seen that it has reached an important position in the global agricultural and food economy. In particular, vegetable, fruit, cereal and animal production has more than tripled. For example, in the 2002-2020 period, milk production increased from 8.4 million tons to 22.96 million tons; meat production from 420 thousand tons to 1.2 million tons; seed production from 145 thousand tons to 1.24 million tons; fodder crop production from 758 thousand tons to 2.46 million tons; fruit production from 14.5 million tons to 23.6 million tons; vegetable production from 25.8 million tons to 31.2 million tons; and grain production from 30.83 million tons to 37.2 million tons (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and FAO data). Sunflower, maize, potato, onion, banana, pomegranate, tea and strawberry production has generally increased consistently over the last 20 years. Wheat, sugar beet, apricot, pistachio, fig, apricot, pistachio, pistachio, fig and red meat production has fluctuated.

World Agriculture and the Position of Türkiye-Turkic States

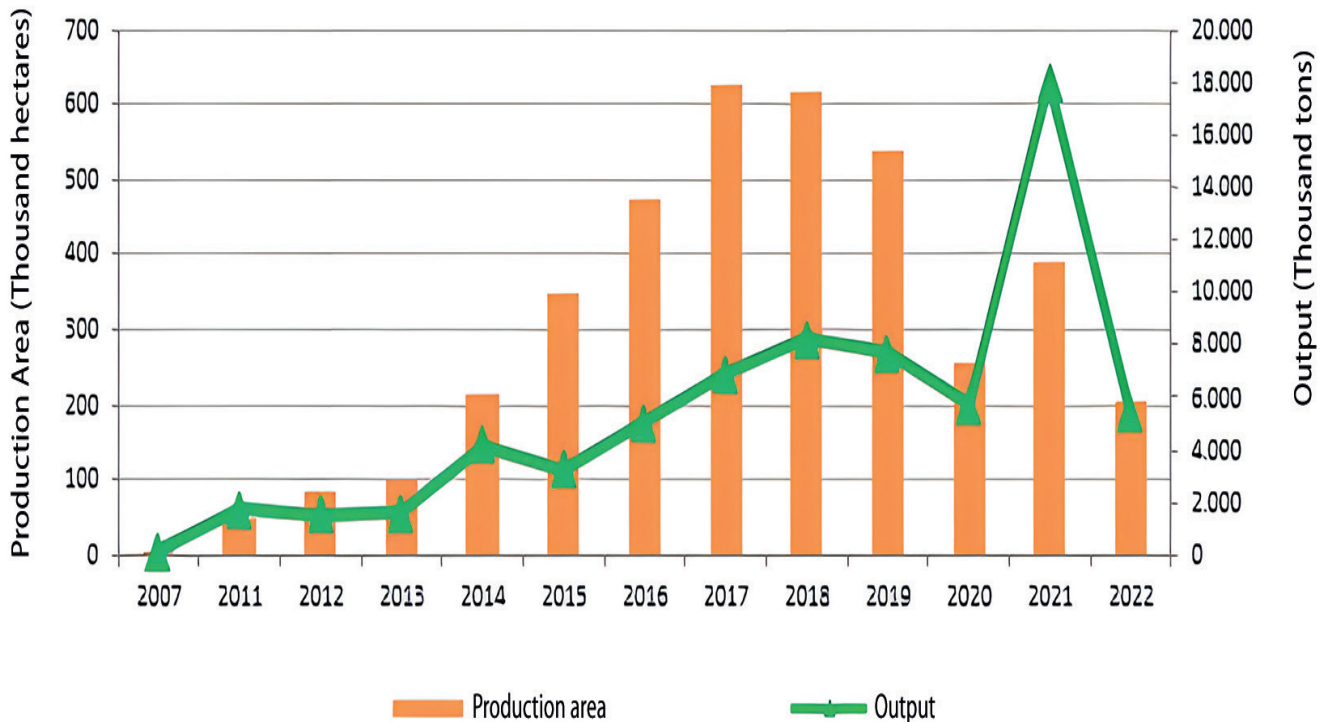
As of 2023, the top 10 countries that produce the most agricultural products and shape world agriculture are China, the United States of America, Brazil, India, Russia, France, Mexico, Japan, Germany and Türkiye. These top 10 agricultural producing countries play an important role in the global agricultural sector, both with their production and their contribution to feeding the world's population. These countries produce and export a variety of agricultural products such as cereals, fru-

its, vegetables, meat and meat products, milk and dairy products, aquaculture products and undertake important missions in the global agricultural economy.

As can be seen in Table 1, the country with the highest agricultural production in the world is China with 1 billion 095 million tons. Türkiye ranks 10th with 107 million tons of production.

As can be seen in the table, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, which are members of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) and observer members Hungary, Turkmenistan and KKTC are not included in this list, while only Türkiye is included.

Figure 1. Production Area and Amount of Good Agricultural Practices in Türkiye (2007-2022)



Good agricultural practices are an agricultural production that aims to protect natural resources, ensure sustainability and traceability in agriculture and does not harm the environment, human and animal health
(Figure: Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı, 2023).

Figure 2. List of the World's Top 10 Agricultural Producing Countries

Countries	Agricultural Production - Tons
1. China	1 billion 095 million
2. United States of America	605 million
3. Brezil	522 million
4. India	319 million
5. Russia	262 million
6. France	184 million
7. Mexico	158 million
8. Japan	150 million
9. Germany	124 million
10. Türkiye	107 million

These top 10 agricultural producing countries play an important role in the global agricultural sector, both through their production and their contribution to feeding the world's population (Figure: geeksforgeeks, 2024).

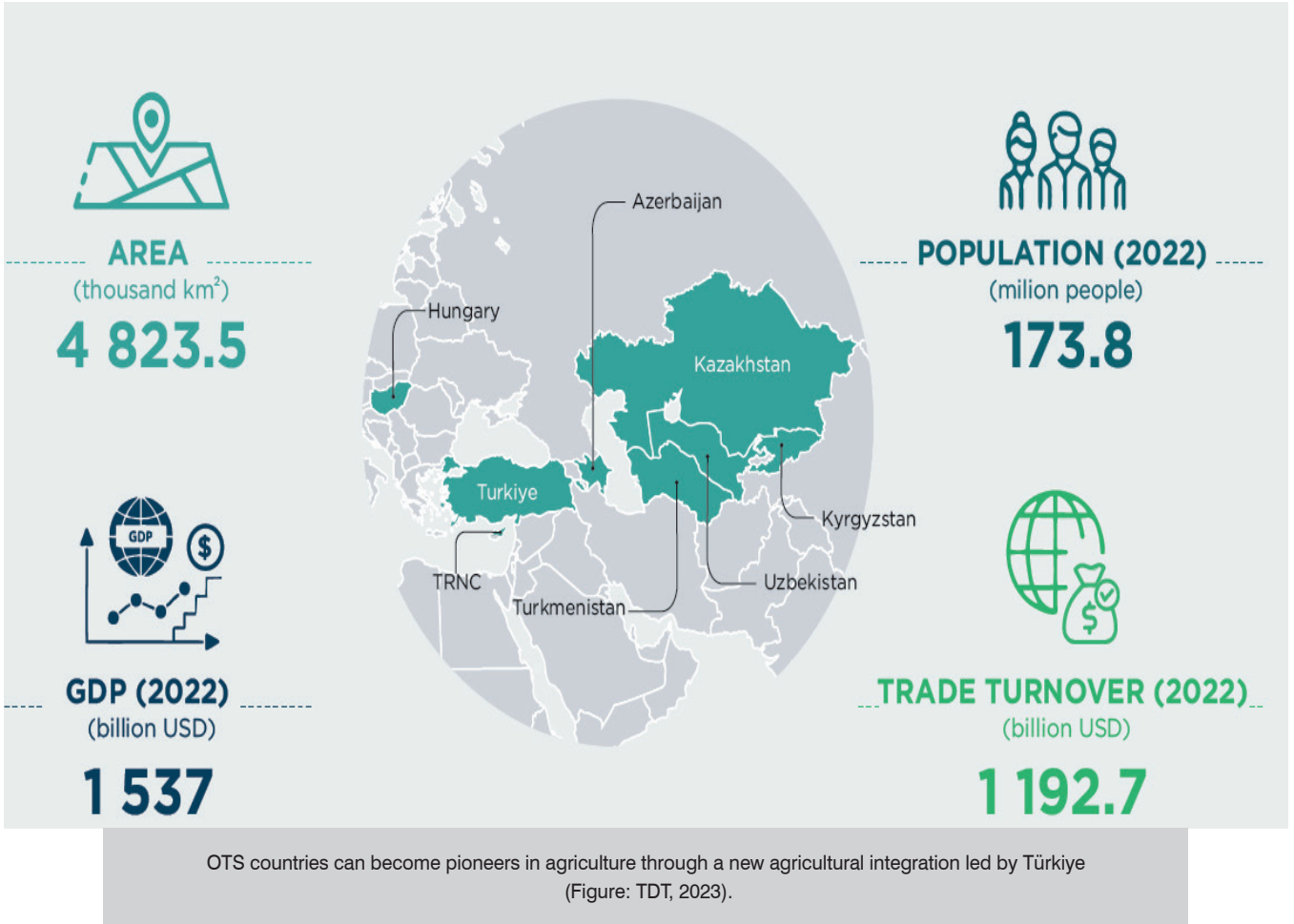
This situation is important both in terms of Türkiye's position in the world and its place in the OTS. OTS countries can become pioneers in agriculture through a new agricultural integration under the leadership of Türkiye.

When the agricultural situation of the countries with the highest agricultural production in the world is analyzed, the following come to the fore (geeksforgeeks, 2024):

The World's Largest Producer – China

China is a major contributor to the world's food supply. It produces 1,095 million tons of agricultural products, making it the world's largest producer. China is driving global improvements in production, prices and productivity. With 10.6% of the world's agricultural land, China accounts for more than 30%

Figure 3. Overview of the Organization of Turkic States Members and Observers (January-December 2023)



of global output. Seeking to maintain security of food supply, China is making great efforts to strengthen its hand in global agricultural production by acquiring agricultural land and global agricultural companies in different geographies such as Asia, Europe and Africa.

- China is a leading producer of main crops such as rice, wheat and corn. It also specializes in growing fruits, vegetables and specific crops such as tea, cotton and tobacco.

- China feeds 22% of the world's population

despite having 7% of arable land. In the twentieth century, China struggled to feed its large population.

- China has a large cattle industry and the most popular meat is pork. It also produces large amounts of chicken, beef and dairy products to meet domestic demand.

- China has invested in agricultural research and development, advanced farming techniques and mechanization to increase sector output and productivity.

The World's 2nd Largest Producer Country - United States of America

The United States of America is the world's second largest agricultural producer, producing 605 million tons of agricultural products.

- The United States is a major producer of main crops such as corn, soybeans, wheat and cotton. It also specializes in the production of specialty crops such as almonds, citrus fruits and grapes.
- The United States of America has a thriving livestock industry, with cattle, poultry and pork making a major contribution to agricultural production. It also produces significant quantities of dairy products.
- The United States of America is one of the world's leading exporters of agricultural products,

including grain, meat, dairy, fruits and vegetables. It is important for global food security and trade.

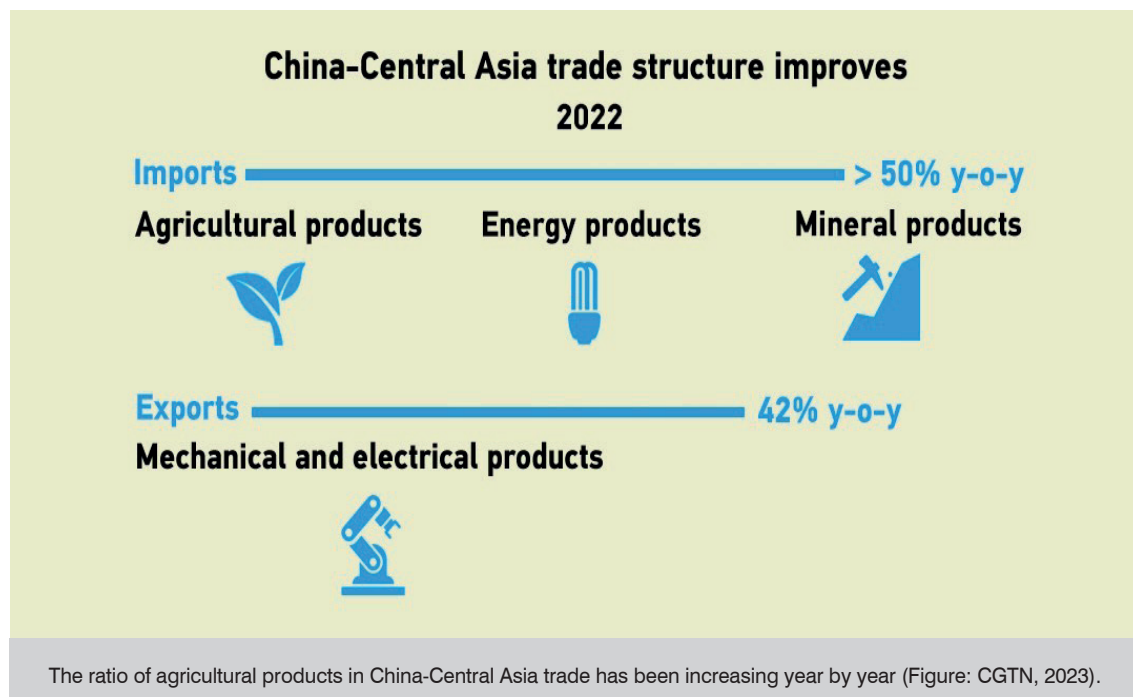
- In the United States, of America corn was the largest crop, with production of 247.882.000 tons. Soybeans ranked second with 74.598.000 tons.

The World's 3rd Largest Producer Country – Brazil

Brazil is the world's third largest agricultural producer, producing 522 million tons of agricultural products.

- Brazil is endowed with vast agricultural resources, such as fertile soils, good climate and abundant water, which allow the production of many different types of crops.
- Brazil is a major producer of soybeans, sugar cane, corn, coffee and oranges. It is the wor-

Figure 4. China-Central Asia Trade Structure Development (2022)



ld's largest supplier of soybeans and meat.

- Brazil's livestock sector is growing, with cattle, poultry and pork production contributing a large share of agricultural production and export earnings.
- Brazil has 2,1 billion decares of land, of which 867.4 million decares are used for cultivation.

The World's 4th Largest Producer Country – India

India is the world's fourth largest agricultural producer, producing 319 million tons of agricultural products.

- India's diverse geographical and climatic conditions favor many different crops, including cereals such as rice, wheat and millet, as well as legumes, oilseeds, fruits and vegetables.
- Rice and wheat are main crops in India, one of the world's largest producers. India is also a major producer of pulses such as chickpeas, lentils and beans.
- India has a large livestock sector, with cattle, buffaloes, poultry and goats making a major contribution to agricultural production. Milk production is particularly important as India is the world's largest milk producer.
- Indian agriculture provides about 58% of Indians' livelihoods. According to the latest data, agriculture is the main source of income for half of the population and accounts for 17% to 18% of GDP.

World's 5th Largest Producer Country – Russia

Russia is a major contributor to the world's food supply and is the world's fifth largest agricultural producer, producing 262 million tons of

agricultural products.

- Russia's vast land area, covering multiple climate zones, provides many opportunities for agricultural production, including cereals, oilseeds and livestock.
- Grains such as wheat, barley and corn are widely grown in Russia and the country is one of the world's leading wheat exporters. Oilseeds such as sunflowers and soybeans also contribute significantly to agricultural productivity.
- Russia's livestock sector is expanding; production of cows, pigs and poultry is growing steadily to meet domestic demand and support export markets.
- Cereal agriculture accounts for about half of the total cultivated area.

The World's 6th Largest Producer Country – France

France is the 6th largest contributor to the world's food supply, producing 184 million tons of agricultural products.

- France is characterized by the cultivation of wheat, barley, corn and sugar beet, all of which are mains of agriculture. France is also famous for its wine production with vineyards spread over a large part of the country.
- Another important aspect of French agriculture is that cattle, sheep, poultry and dairy production contribute significantly to the country's agricultural production.
- France is a major exporter of agricultural products, including wine, dairy products, cereals and luxury foods.
- There are more than 730,000 farms in France. Around 7% of the population earn a living from agriculture, fishing or related sectors such as forestry.

The World's 7th Largest Producer Country – Mexico

With an agricultural production of 158 million tons, Mexico is the world's seventh largest producer and a major contributor to the food supply.

- Maize, beans and chile peppers are the main crops of Mexican agriculture and represent the country's diverse culinary and cultural background.

- Mexico has a large livestock sector, with the production of cattle, poultry and pork contributing significantly to the country's agricultural production.

- Mexico is an important agricultural exporter, exporting fruits, vegetables, avocados, strawberries and beer. Its proximity to the United States and important trade links help boost its export potential.

- In Mexico, fodder crops cover about 15% of the agricultural land and contribute about 50% to livestock production.

The World's 8th Largest Producer Country – Japan

Japan is the eighth largest agricultural producer in the world, producing 150 million tons of agricultural products.

- Due to land constraints, Japan focuses on high-value commodities such as rice, vegetables and fruit, as well as specialty crops such as tea and flowers.

- Japan is famous for applying modern agricultural technologies such as precision farming, robotics and vertical farming to increase productivity while working on limited land.

- While agriculture accounts for only 2% of

GDP in Japan, about 10% of the population lives on farms.

- Rice is the most important agricultural product. Rice is one of the most important products in traditional Japanese culinary culture, which combines rice with grains, seafood, vegetables, mountain herbs and other ingredients.

The World's 9th Largest Producer Country – Germany

Germany is a major contributor to the world's food supply, ranking 9th, producing 124 million tons of agricultural products.

- Germany's leading agricultural products include wheat, sugar beet, cabbage, barley, pork, chicken, potatoes, milk, cereals and in some regions fruit vegetables and wine.

- Forestry and agriculture cover about 80% of the country's surface area. In 1997, the former western states were dominated by family farms. They were the dominant players in agriculture.

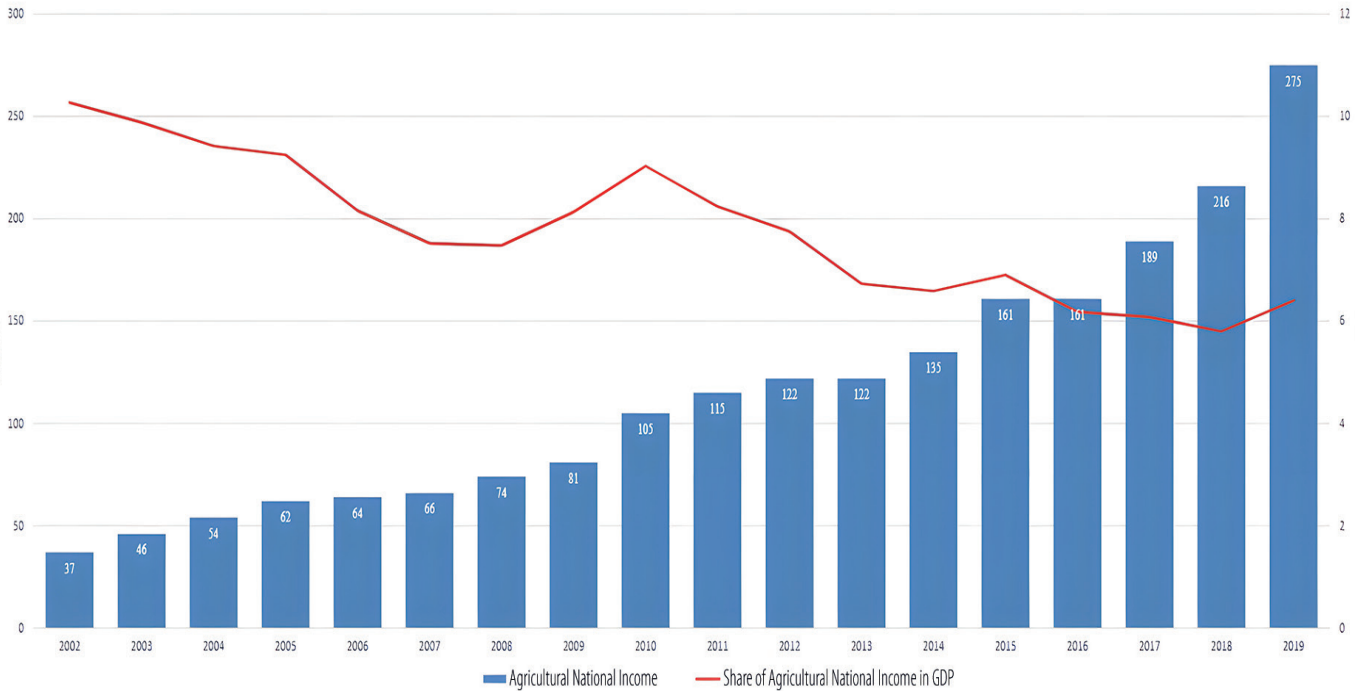
- Around 87% of German farmers farm less than 12 decares.

- In Germany, vineyards cover the southern and western parts of the river valleys.

- Germany is a major exporter of agriculture, including dairy products, meat, fruit and vegetables.

The World's 10th Largest Producer Country – Türkiye

Türkiye makes a major contribution to the world's food supply. With 107 million tons of agricultural production, it is the world's tenth largest agricultural producer. As a major agricul-

Figure 5. Agricultural National Income in Türkiye (Billion/Percent)

Graph showing the increase in agricultural national income in Türkiye between 2002-2019 (Figure: SBB, 2020).

tural producer, Türkiye grows a variety of crops and is characterized by the production of cereals, fruits, vegetables and livestock. Türkiye has a highly favorable agricultural geography, including fertile plains, coastal areas and hilly terrain, which allows for the production of various crops.

- Türkiye specializes in the production of various crops, including cereals such as wheat, barley and maize, as well as fruits such as citrus fruits, grapes, hazelnuts, apricots, pistachios and figs.

- Türkiye also has a large livestock sector producing meat, dairy and poultry products for both domestic and international markets.

- Agriculture is vital to the Turkish economy, contributing around 5-6% of GDP and employing around 20% of the population.

Turkish agriculture has grown by 94% in USD terms over the last two decades. Compared to Türkiye in terms of production value, countries such as China (477.20%), India (377.63%), Indonesia (354.27%), Thailand (271.72%), Bangladesh (264.12%), Egypt (218.44%), Brazil (206.79%) and Malaysia (204.96%) have experienced higher growth. These countries differ from Türkiye both in terms of geographical size and population. However, Turkish agriculture (94.11%) has also made more progress than that of countries such as the US (81.11%), Spain (64.28%), France (48.91%), South Korea (42.56%) and Italy (24.62%). Türkiye produces more than 1.29% of global agricultural output compared to its 0.8% share of world agricultural area.

Compared to Kazakhstan and Argentina, Türkiye has less agricultural land but produces more output. In terms of international trade, it accounts for 1.57% of global agricultural exports and 1.14% of imports (Merdan, 2024 and İstikbal, 2022).

In 2020, the US ranked first in world agricultural exports with a share of \$139.6 billion and 9.57%. Other major exporters of agricultural products are the Netherlands, Brazil, Germany, China, France and Spain. Türkiye ranks 23rd with \$20.7 billion.

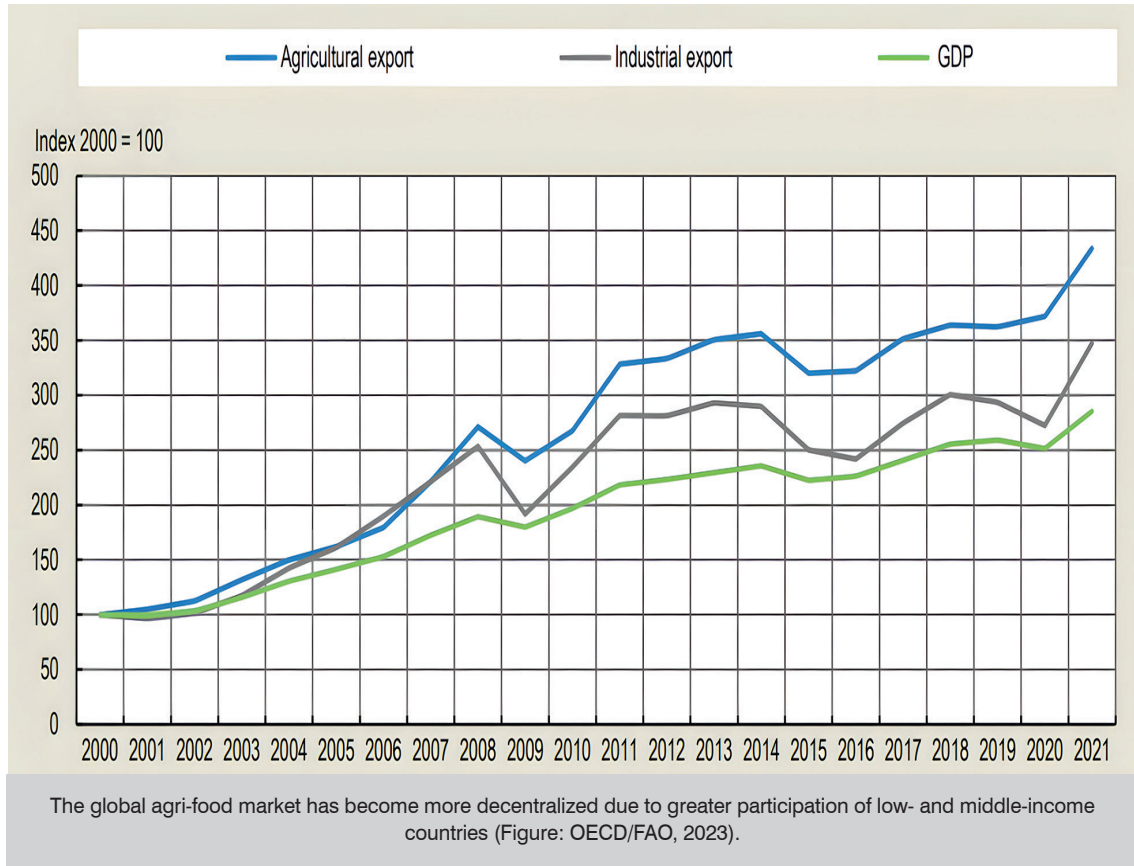
According to FAO 2020 data, the volume of agricultural foreign trade in the world is 2.92 trillion (\$). Approximately 73% of the agricultural production value of \$4.0 trillion is subject to export/import between countries. In 2020, the US ranked first in world agricultural exports with a share of \$139.6 billion and 9.57%. Other major exporters of agricultural products are the Netherlands, Brazil, Germany, China, France, and Spain. Türkiye ranks 23rd with \$20.7 billion. China ranks first in agricultural imports with \$172.46 billion and 11.31% share. The US, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, Japan, the UK and France are among the other major importing countries. Türkiye ranks 23rd in imports as well as exports with \$15.2 billion. In 2020, the share of Türkiye's agricultural

exports in total exports was 12.21% and the share of agricultural imports in total imports was 6.93% (FAO, 2021 and TAGEM, 2021).

According to the results obtained from the projections made for Türkiye's agricultural foreign trade, exports, which were \$20.7 billion in 2020, are expected to be \$21.5 billion with the average values obtained for 2021 and \$25.1 billion on average in 2025 with the increases in the following years, and imports, which were \$15.2 billion in 2020, are expected to be \$15.7 billion with the average values obtained for 2021 and \$18.4 billion on average in 2025 with the increases in the following years (FAO, 2021 and TAGEM, 2021).

Agricultural Exports in the World

Exports of agricultural products, which were \$702 billion in 2005, reached \$1.15 trillion in 2010 and \$1.39 trillion in 2015. As of 2020 data, total world exports of agricultural products amounted to \$1.6 trillion. "Meats and edible offal" ranks first in world agricultural product exports with \$134.1 billion. With \$130.7 billion, "Pome fruits and nuts" is the next most important export chapter. "Soft drinks, spirits and vinegar", "Grain", "Fish, crustaceans and molluscs" are other important export items. In 2020, the US ranked first in world agricultural exports with a share of \$139.6 billion and 9.57%. Other major exporters of agricultural products are the Netherlands, Brazil, Germany, China, France and Spain. Türkiye ranks 23rd with \$20.71 billion (FAO, 2021 and TAGEM, 2021).

Figure 6. Growth in Agricultural and Industrial Trade

Agricultural Imports in the World

Agricultural product imports, which were \$740.3 billion in 2005, reached \$1.18 trillion in 2010 and \$1.42 trillion in 2015. As of 2020 data, total world agricultural product imports were \$1.6 trillion. “Edible fruits and nuts” rank first in world agricultural product imports with \$139.1 billion. “Meats and edible offal” are the other most important import products with \$135.1 billion. Cereals, soft drinks, alcoholic beverages and vinegar, oilseeds, and fruits; various grains, seeds, fish, crustaceans, mollusks and others constitute important import items. China

ranks first in agricultural product imports with \$172.46 billion and a share of 11.31%. The US, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, the UK and France are among other important importing countries. Türkiye ranks 23rd in imports as well as exports with a share of \$ 16.0 billion (FAO, 2021 and TAGEM, 2021).

While the world agricultural foreign trade volume was \$ 940.03 billion in 2001, this value increased over the years and approached \$ 3 trillion in 2020. As a result of both export and import increases, the world agricultural foreign trade volume has approximately tripled by 2020 compared to 2001 (TAGEM, 2021).

Türkiye's Agricultural Exports

In 2001, Türkiye's exports of agricultural products amounted to \$4.07 billion, but increased significantly over the years, reaching \$20.71 billion in 2020 5-fold increase over 2001. In 2001, the share of exports of agricultural products in general exports was 12.99%, and in 2008, it had the lowest share with 8.21%. There have been increases over time and the share of agricultural exports in overall exports was 12.21% in 2020.

US, Netherlands, Germany and France are important export markets for Turkish agricultural exports. According to 2020 data, "Pome fruits and nuts" ranked first in Türkiye's agricultural product exports with \$4.83 billion.

US, Netherlands, Germany and France are important export markets for Turkish agricultural exports. According to 2020 data, "Pome fruits and nuts" ranked first in Türkiye's agricultural product exports with \$4.83 billion. With \$2.36 billion, "Vegetables, fruits, nuts and other parts" are the next most important export products. "Cereals, flour, starch or milk preparations, pastry products", "Edible vegetables and some roots and tubers", "Animal and vegetable fats and oils", "Milling products, malt; starch, inulin, wheat gluten" are Türkiye's other major export items, respectively. Türkiye's agricultural exports increased by 165% between

2005-2020 and 24% between 2015-2020 (TAGEM, 2021).

When the export developments by countries are analyzed, it is seen that the countries in the first ranks are generally the same over the years. In 2020, the US is the leading country with exports of \$193 billion and a share of 9.5%. The US was followed by Brazil with \$135.1 billion (6.7%), the Netherlands with \$121.8 billion (6%), Germany with \$87.4 billion (4.3%) and China with \$95.8 billion (4.8%). Türkiye ranked 21st with nearly \$30 billion in agricultural exports, accounting for 1.5% of global exports.

Türkiye's Agricultural Imports

In 2001, Türkiye's imports of agricultural products amounted to \$1.55 billion, increasing significantly over the years and reaching \$15.2 billion in 2020. In 2020, imports increased approximately 9 times compared to 2001. In 2001, the share of agricultural imports in overall imports was 3.75%. As a result of the increases in the imports of agricultural products, the share of agricultural imports was realized as 6.93% in 2020. Among the countries that import the most agricultural products, the US, China, Germany and the Netherlands are in the first place. In 2005, imports of agricultural products amounted to 3.46 billion dollars, reaching 7.68 billion dollars in 2010 and 11.24 billion dollars in 2015. As of 2020 data, Türkiye's total agricultural product imports amounted to \$15.21 billion. According to 2020 data, "Cereals" ranked first with \$3.28 billion and "Oilseeds and fruits; miscellaneous grains, seeds" ranked second with \$2.38 billion in Türkiye's agricultural product imports. Remains and debris of the food industry and animal and vegetable fats and oils constitute

Figure 7. Total Foreign Trade in Agricultural and Food Products in Türkiye (2002-2019)

Graph showing the change in Türkiye's imports and exports of agricultural and food products over the years (Figure: SBB, 2020).

the other important import items, respectively (TAGEM, 2021).

Agricultural Trade of the Turkic States

The amount of value added created in agriculture in the countries is \$94 billion. Azerbaijan accounts for \$3.8 billion, Kazakhstan \$11.5 billion, Kyrgyzstan \$1.3 billion, Türkiye \$58.5 billion, Uzbekistan \$18.9 billion. Agricultural trade among the Turkic States is \$5 billion. The total agricultural exports of the Turkic States are \$43.3 billion. In this case, the share of the Turkic States in world agricultural exports can be expressed as 2-3%.

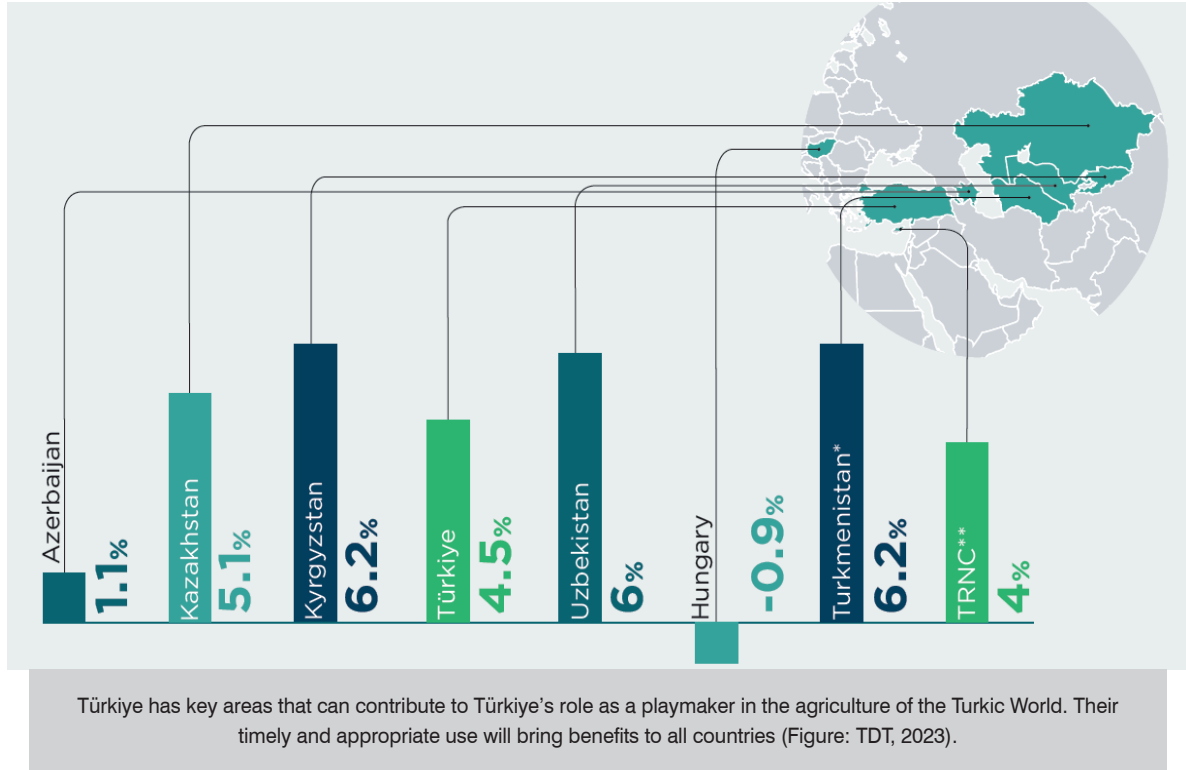
It is predicted that this increase in demand will be reflected in prices through an increase in value added and will increase Türkiye's export volume at the global level, especially in

European and American markets. This is where cooperation with the Turkic States in these products can lead to both product increase and more economic gains.

In Conclusion: Keys for Türkiye's Playmaking in Turkish World Agriculture

Türkiye's agricultural trade with Central Asian countries is of strategic importance due to its central location. Türkiye, the world's 10th largest agricultural producer, has a strong position and advantage in agricultural product trade with Central Asian and therefore Turkic World states and exports various agricultural products to this region. Türkiye exports products such as information, technology, wheat, barley, cotton, vegetables, fruits and vegetable oils to this geography, although it varies from country to country.

Figure 8. Comparison of GDP Growth of Member and Observer Member Countries of the Organization of Turkic States (January-December 2023)



Türkiye's high-quality food processing technologies and agricultural machinery are also attractive to these countries.

A significant part of Türkiye's agricultural trade with Central Asia is supported by international cooperation and transportation projects such as the Organization of Turkic States and the Middle Corridor Project. These initiatives further strengthen Türkiye's trade and economic relations with Central Asian countries. The Middle Corridor Project also contributes to increasing trade in agricultural products by improving Türkiye's road and rail connections with Central Asia. At this point, Türkiye can take and strengthen its position as a playmaker in the agriculture of the Turkic World thanks to its know-how, te-

chnological potential and agricultural trade with Central Asian countries. Türkiye's knowledge sharing and capacity building projects in the field of agricultural research and innovation, and the presence of university education and publication activities in the field of agriculture will further contribute to the sustainable trade between the countries. In other words, thanks to its geographical location, diversity of agricultural products, agricultural education, R&D and extension activities and international cooperation, Türkiye can successfully fulfill its role of increasing its trade volume and weight in this geography in line with the common interest of the Turkic States.

Türkiye can realize a wide range of agri-food trade with Central Asian countries, especially the

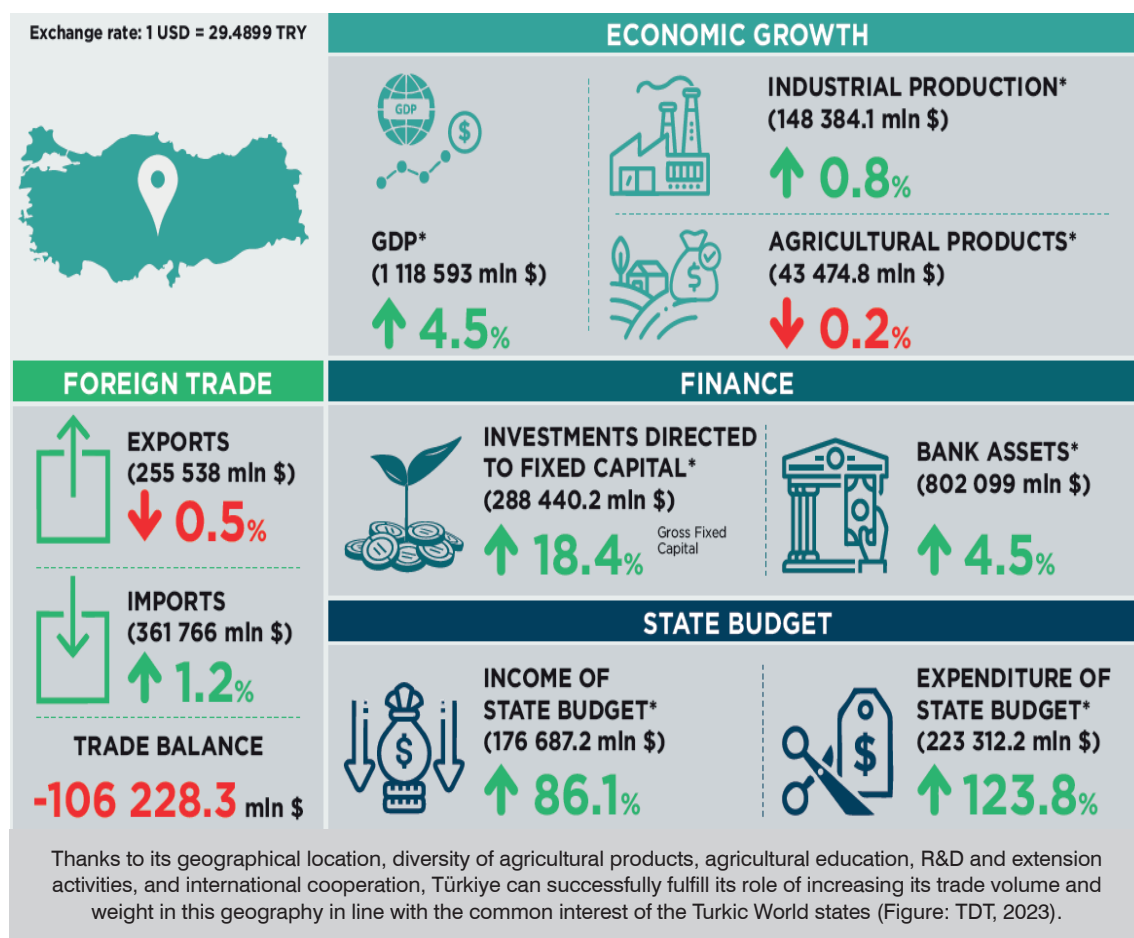
Turkic States, with its diversity and production potential and opportunities in agriculture and food. The products that Türkiye can export to this geography and develop trade can be as follows:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Cereals and legumes
- Nuts and oilseeds
- Olives and olive oil, Pistachios
- Spices and medicinal and aromatic plants
- Tea
- Animal products
- Eggs and poultry products

- Prepared foods and processed products
- Food additives and processed agricultural products

Undoubtedly, these agri-food products that Türkiye can sell can be both fresh and processed. These products, which have export potential, can gain more competitive chances in these markets with their quality and availability advantages. Moreover, thanks to Türkiye's advanced logistics and transportation networks, these products can be delivered to the target markets quickly and safely, and can also contribute to the utilization of the products of the Turkic States.

Figure 9. Key Macroeconomic Indicators for Türkiye (January-December 2023)



Türkiye has key areas that can contribute to this geography and are key to Türkiye's role as a playmaker in the agriculture of the Turkic World. Their proper and timely utilization will bring gains to all countries. Türkiye's potential role in these key areas can both strengthen its own economy and contribute to the development of the agri-food sector of countries with the same interests. Some of these keys include:

- Strategic location and logistics
- Trade agreements, strengthening trade relations and strong agri-food diplomacy
- Advanced agri-food technologies, know-how accumulation and knowledge-experience sharing
- High value investments and joint ventures
- Market research, creating target markets and accessing world markets
- High standards of food safety, quality product-certification, quality control on-site and at the border
- Education-publication programs, academic working environment and capacity building
- A qualified and experienced workforce integrated with the World

In conclusion, Türkiye has an important geopolitical position as a strategic bridge between Asia and Europe. This position makes Türkiye important in terms of agri-food corridors, energy corridors and trade routes. At this point, Türkiye is turning towards multilateral economic cooperation and different trade agreements. Türkiye's participation in China's Belt and Road Initiative and increasing trade ties with Africa, as well as talks with BRICS countries, will increase its economic diversity and effectiveness in agricultural production and foreign trade in the multipolar world order. 

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The Urgency of A New Carbon Market for Turkic States and the Belt & Road



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ABSTRACT

Until 2053, various measures are being taken to keep global warming below 1.5°C by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and to reduce the concentration of CO₂ gas in the atmosphere to 280 ppm (parts per million). The West is trying to impose impositions such as carbon tax at the border and carbon trade, which are not based on real foundations and will not yield results, on all countries, including our country, the Turkic Republics and all eastern countries. The inconsistencies in the European Union's decarbonization initiatives are reaching significant dimensions. The biggest threat from the West lies in the fact that the main economies of Asian countries, with the exception of the Turkic Republics and large developed countries (such as China and India, the Russian Federation is already being subjected to disproportionate sanctions), are based on agriculture, animal husbandry, mining and semi-finished goods production. In fact, EU countries are in need of us as intermediate products. This is a trump card. We need to optimize this as we move to the final product industry. To overcome all these challenges, a series of sustainable measures must be taken and the beltway borders must be protected.

Keywords: carbon emissions, carbon market, decarbonization, green transformation, Turkic Republics.

Introduction

THE EUROPEAN UNION HAS TAKEN A SERIES of measures and released directives and restrictions concerning global warming (Ersen, 2024). Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). In this context, the European Union declared a comprehensive policy and strategy package in 2019. The most important section is the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which will virtually affect all the countries, worldwide, with direct or indirect trade connections with the EU Countries (T.C. Avrupa Birliği Başkanlığı, 2024). Aligning with the Paris Agreement, the objective is to keep the global warming temperature below 1.5°C until 2053 by reducing

greenhouse gas emissions. Accordingly, the concentration of CO₂ gas in the atmosphere is expected to decrease to about 280 ppm (parts per million). Human-induced greenhouse gas emissions cause global warming leading to several global challenges, such as ozone layer depletion (Kılış, 2019), wide climatic and meteorological disasters of unusual magnitude, deterioration in ecosystems, decline in agriculture and animal husbandry, decrease in clean water resources, air quality, and increase in magnitude and frequency of pandemics (Kılış, 2020; Kılış, 2021). Causes for all such problems include CO₂ emissions due to fossil fuel use, inefficiencies, and primarily but most often ignored quality mismatches among different energy sources, equipment, and systems.

The latter, two to five times more than direct missions at the source is often ignored as shown in Figure 1. Every thousand Gton of CO₂ released into the atmosphere causes the global average temperature to increase by 0.45°C, and an average of 37 Gton of CO₂ gas continues to be released every year because of energy use alone (IPCC, 2023; Architecture2030, 2024).

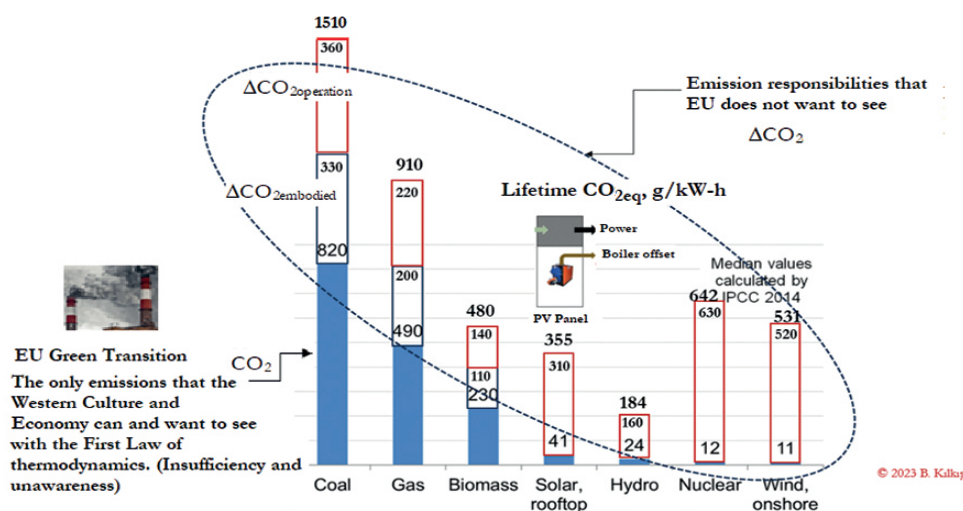
The total annual global CO₂ emission is around 60 Gton CO₂/year. Among the root causes that have the ability to explain most of these emissions measured in the air, it is the ignorance of the fundamental fact that all energy sources and applications are not equal on earth, and they have different qualities, which means ability to do useful work and to add value. Humanity must duly respect all energy sources and the environment In Asian and Near Eastern cultures, respect for energy and water resources are among these. Western culture, on the other hand, lacks this quality awareness and views energy as a commodity that can only be bought and sold on the stock exchange. In addition, the current Western culture depends on the Pareto principle and the free market rules (linear economy) and tries to solve global warming in

a narrow mold. However, global warming is a three-dimensionally complex problem. In this respect, although the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere can be measured accurately (Visible), many root causes on earth remain ignored and unaccounted for. Consequently, adequate, and sustainable solutions cannot be implemented. Figure 1 clarifies this problem. In essence, only the Eastern culture can solve the unawareness issue and sustainably develop and implement realistic solutions by giving attention to the quality of energy rather than the quantity of energy (Figure 2). Emissions due to quality mismatches are invisible to us on Earth.

Assessment of Carbon Emissions and Green Transformation from the Perspective of Turkic Republics

Within the framework of the EU's Green Transformation Strategy, it is aimed to reduce carbon emissions by 55% compared to 1990 levels in 2030 and to become the first climate-neutral continent in 2050. The tools and measures to achieve these limited targets, however, are con-

Figure 1. Root Causes of Total CO₂ Emissions



Visible and Invisible Emission Responsibilities of Different Energy Sources (Figure: Kılıç, 2024).

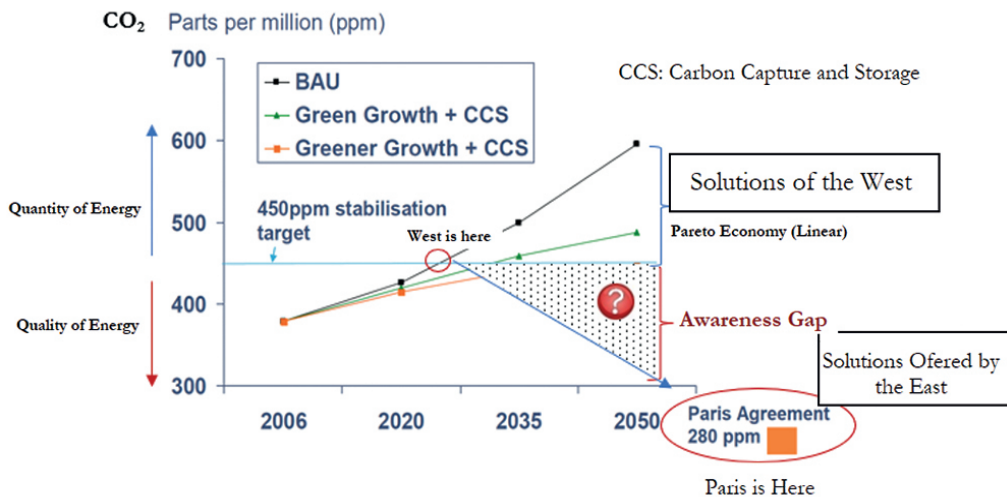
cerned with direct emissions only, as seen in Figure 1. In recent years, it has been observed that even these modest goals will not be achieved with today's technology. Unless wide awareness of CO₂ emissions due to quality mismatches is established and implemented, it will not be possible to satisfy the Paris Agreement.

Despite the importance of recognizing the quality mismatches and trying to solve them with sustainable and fair measures, the West keeps frantically striving to reach the Paris Agreement by 2050, by simply activating impositions such as carbon tax at the border and carbon trading rules, all based on linear economy only. Without solid scientific foundations, these measures are grossly insufficient, unfair, and unpractical. Yet they are trying to enforce their rules to all countries, including Türkiye, the Turkic States, and all Asian and far Eastern countries, and collect tax money.

Among the Western solutions in agriculture and animal husbandry, only agricultural insurances and limited financial supports within the linear economy rules and interest stand out. These are far from being permanent solutions to global warming and, in fact, confine agri-

culture and animal husbandry in a vicious circle sokmaktadır (Kılış, 2020a; Aydınlık Gazetesi, 2020; Kılış, 2020b). In a proper response by the East with effective and sustainable solutions against such ineffectiveness and inconveniences across the globe, integrated farming cooperatives along the Belt and Road must be established in close coordination and integration of light agricultural industry and rural communities, attached to these cooperatives, which generate and share their own energy (Kılış, 2022). Inconsistencies and insufficiencies in the European Union's decarbonization initiatives are reaching significantly unreasonable levels. For example, according to a law that is on the agenda to be implemented in Denmark, animal owners will be charged a carbon tax of one hundred Euros for one cow, for every year. Farm animals existed throughout history and their global warming effects were not an issue until the Industrial Revolution, but now the blame is being put on them. This bill shows the West's inadequacy against global warming. If this tax is implemented in a broader sense, such an irrational tax may be demanded from animal owners when exporting meat or live animals to the West.

Figure 2. Measures to Reduce CO₂ Concentration in the Atmosphere



Existing and Necessary Measures to Reduce CO₂ Concentration in the Atmosphere (Figure: Kılış, 2024).

Moreover, animal husbandry is at the forefront in all Turkic States and other Eastern countries and grossly supports their economies.

A cow owner may not get free by just paying 100 Euros every year for the same cow. If a farmer collects the manure and utilizes it to generate heat and electricity in a biogas facility as an effective remedy against global warming, the farmer may have to pay a second tax for the CO₂ coming out from the exhaust of the biogas facility (cogeneration), since the positive energy flow chain is not foreseen in the tax law and the anthropogenicity is not considered. The Danish bill does not look at the continuation of the energy chain by saying the tax is per cow, whatever you do, and does not take into account positive appraisal stages. It looks at each system one by one. On the contrary, the same farmer when selling a product produced by using his electricity and heat to the EU countries, another carbon tax will be collected at the border. Electricity and fertilizer products are at the top of the border carbon tax list. While the EU struggles with such inconsistencies, we should focus on realistic, innovative, and rational solutions with cultural fairness and greater respect for our future and environment and create our own carbon market against their impositions. There must be a regional carbon trading at the border system with Belt Road alternatives. Only with these methods can we eliminate the dangers that the West will bring to the Turkic States and all Belt Road countries.

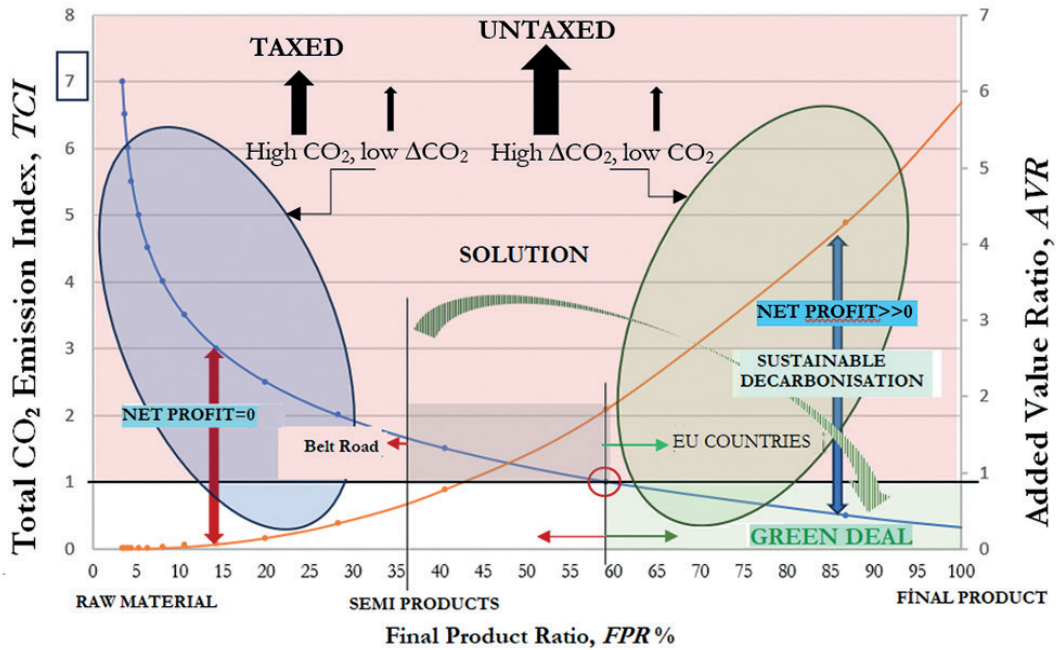
If this tax is considered scientifically consistent by some circles in the EU, then it is necessary to look at the environmental footprint of an F-35 jet aircraft belonging to the Royal Danish Air Force in proportion to this tax. This single aircraft will emit 3.5 tons of CO₂ from its turbine exhausts by spending fossil fuel in just 15 minutes in a hovering position over the ground. This emission is equivalent to the cumulative CO₂ emissions of three cows for a complete year. As a result, if this aircraft repeats this vertical take-off hovering and landing action 15 times in a year, it will have to pay a tax of 4500 Euros. This amount

excludes the tax liability of the same aircraft during level flights during the year. In the same context, since Afşin-Elbistan-A lignite thermal power plant generates approximately 4 billion kW-h of electricity annually, it may have to pay 0.2 billion Euros in taxes- equivalent to two million cows annually. If this electrical energy is exported to neighboring countries (bordering EU countries such as Greece and Bulgaria), a tax will be imposed at the border in proportion to the portion exported.

As a result, while EU countries keep themselves busy by taking precautions against global warming with such inconsistencies, particularly important opportunities arise for us. By conducting algorithmic studies about new carbon market models, we should reach a position that enables us to collect carbon taxes, instead of them at the new border against the EU impositions, as opposed by the Belt Road and the Turkic States. This will be possible because the new model will recognize and respect the virtues of energy quality, of which the EU does not want to see. With such a realistic and fair approach, the East will protect their trade rights and all sectors, including livestock and agriculture, from unfair carbon competition, and will set a role model for Western countries by achieving the Paris Agreement targets on time and will ahead of them. This leadership will also reflect on political power. It is obvious that the goals of the Paris Agreement cannot be achieved as long as the so-called linear, or circular, one-dimensional economy, which ties everything to money, continues to be in force.

Among these problems, the biggest threat from the West will apply to Turkic States and all Belt Road countries, except certain developed countries (such as China and India, the Russian Federation is already subject to disproportionate sanctions.) Figure 3 shows the major threat. The basic economy of Asian countries is based on agriculture, animal husbandry, mining, and semi-finished goods. According to Figure 3, which represents today's conflict between West and East, EU countries dominantly practice extended R&D activities and novel en-

Figure 3. Impacts of a Carbon Tax on the Border on Industry



Negative impact of carbon tax on the border for the Belt & Road industries and agriculture and the solution with final products (Figure: Kılış, 2024).

gineering designs. These activities have low CO₂ emission responsibilities and high DCO₂ responsibilities due to the nature of such practices. Despite this controversy, they generate exceedingly high added values and high selling prices. In essence, the EU countries simply assemble and touch them up the semi-finished products with high DCO₂ emissions that they conceal and keep untaxed, yet unfairly attribute CO₂ emissions to other countries and charge high carbon taxes at their border. Other countries, on the other hand, mostly sell their semi-finished products to EU countries with a small profit margin, consuming much energy, practicing some production line developments, and emitting larger amount of CO₂, thus facing large carbon taxes. As a result, these counties will not have a net profit, as shown on the left-hand-side of Figure 3. In fact, the fundamental problem is not limited to CO₂. Factors such as water (such as cotton production), labor, land, and environment (such as toxic waste)

should also be considered cumulatively. The Final Production Ratio, FPR of Turkic states and Belt Rad countries must reach to at least 60% in their industry and farming, from today's average ratio of approximately 35%. Only if this gap is closed, then these countries may achieve sustainable decarbonization and net profitability targets in accordance with the Paris Agreement.

Otherwise, commodities produced along the Belt Road, including Turkic states, will face carbon taxes at the EU border. The EU will sell back finished products with minimal emissions but with high revenues. For example, if a cow is exported and returns as a meat product, cow tax will be charged on departure and little or no tax will be charged upon arrival at the border. EU countries need us as intermediate producers to keep their advantage and maintain their large profits. In fact, this is an opportunity to close the gap by leaping to finished products rather than keeping on semi-finished products or raw material.

A new and joint Belt Road customs line must be drawn. According to Figure 3, EU countries have low CO₂ emissions but high and hidden (Untaxed) DCO₂ emissions. Because DCO₂ emissions are recorded somewhere else, or even by some other countries, which offset the quality mismatches of the original location face unfair taxes. This is another issue that must be taken care of to eliminate this taxing problem. The new Belt and Road customs line must be drawn flexible enough to recognize the origin of DCO₂, not the final offset point. To overcome all these difficulties, a series of sustainable measures must be taken, and Belt Road boundaries must be adaptively protected. Recommendations are summarized below:

Recommendations

- Creation of a Joint Scientific and Technological Strategy Center
- Development and implementation of cross-country coordinated state farms based on renewable and waste energy (Kılış, 2022; Kılış, 2024).
- Making the Common Central Bank functional (competing with the EU Central Bank)
- Establishing a competing fund to the IMF
- Creation and introduction of a common currency (such as the Euro)
- Developing and implementing a common carbon market model
- Developing a carbon tax algorithm at the Belt Road border for imports from the West and collecting taxes on emissions that the EU countries in Figure 1 do not want to see and keep concealing.
- Implementation of a banking system competing with the World Bank (WB)
- Expanding and coordinating Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Belt Road initiative
- Establishment of a new and protectionist customs union between the Belt Road and the Turkic Republics

- Preparation and implementation of new criteria for carbon markets (based on the value of energy), realistic laws and directives
- Preparation of scientifically valid and fair CO₂ emission accounting standards challenging the ISO standards
- Accelerating and supporting the transition of all Eastern countries from semi-finished products to finished products (Figure 3)
- Establishment of customs exemptions specific to Belt Road
- New location adaptive carbon taxes at the Belt Road customs line should include DCO₂ and CO₂, thus be higher for EU countries
- Issuing standards specific to Belt Road countries in the field of Green Building and Green Industry certification 

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Türkiye's multidimensional strategy for Africa: characteristics, motivations and prospects



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ABSTRACT

As Africa's position in the international strategic landscape gradually rises, the participation and competition of traditional and emerging African powers are also rising. In recent years, Türkiye's strategic investment in Africa has been increasing. Türkiye's relations with Africa have made important progress in many dimensions, such as political exchanges, economic trade, military security cooperation, and soft power diplomacy, which have attracted extensive attention from the international community. The main motivations of Türkiye's multidimensional strategy for Africa include seeking economic interests, pursuing diplomatic and military strategic autonomy, and highlighting Türkiye's emerging power status and influence. In the future, Türkiye's Africa strategy has both opportunities and challenges. Unlike Western countries, Türkiye's multidimensional strategy towards Africa is more economic and non-interference, emphasizing equality and paying more attention to details, which has won the support and recognition of many African countries from the official to the public. This advantage and the uniqueness of Türkiye's Africa strategy also laid a good foundation for the sustainable development of Türkiye-Africa relations. However, Türkiye's Africa strategy also faces many challenges at the domestic and international levels, including Türkiye's domestic economic support capacity, strategic firmness, the limit of participation, and competition and pressure from major powers outside the region.

Keywords: Africa, motivations, Multidimensional strategy, prospects, Türkiye

Introduction

SINCE TÜRKİYE'S JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT Party (AK Party) came into power in 2002, Türkiye's investment in Africa has increased significantly. In the past twenty years, the relationship between Türkiye and Africa has become increasingly close. Türkiye's strategy towards Africa presents a more multidimensional feature.

The earliest connection between Türkiye and the African continent can be traced back several centuries. From the founding of Türkiye in 1923 to 1998, Türkiye had little interaction with

Africa. The reason is that Türkiye, on the one hand, lacked the economic resources to implement its African policy in the early days of its founding. On the other hand, Türkiye pursued a Western-oriented foreign policy and did not attach importance to developing relations with Africa. In the 1950s and 1960s, the countries on the African continent became independent one after another. Türkiye recognized the newly established African countries and set up consulates or embassies in these countries. The relationship between Türkiye and Africa began to increase.

Since the 1980s, with the onset of globalization and the diversified development of Türkiye's foreign policy, the connections between Türkiye and Africa have continued to increase. Türkiye launched its foreign official development assistance program for the first time in the mid-1980s, and its aid target was African countries. At that time, Türkiye organized and formulated a comprehensive assistance plan worth 10 million dollars aimed at institutional capacity-building in Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal, Somalia, and Sudan. In 1998, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye released the first "Action Plan for Africa" for opening up to the African continent. The plan emphasizes strengthening Türkiye's political, economic, and cultural relations with Africa and suggests strengthening Türkiye's diplomatic representation in Africa. It proposed that Türkiye's diplomatic representation in Africa be enhanced, and new embassies were opened in Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, and Zimbabwe, in addition

Türkiye's multidimensional strategy towards Africa has gradually become more prominent, and Türkiye's relations with Africa have become more focused on practical interests.

to twelve existing embassies (Kaya, 2021).

The AK Party government led by the current Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan came to power in 2002, marking an important turning point in Türkiye-Africa relations. The connection between Türkiye and Africa has greatly deepened since then. Throughout the last two decades, relations with Africa have become one of the prime

orientations of Turkish foreign policy (TABEF, 2024). Türkiye's Africa policy since the AK Party came to power can be divided into two stages. From 2002 to 2014, Türkiye introduced itself to Africa through the Africa Initiative policy. Since 2014, Türkiye has strengthened its multi-faceted institutional and institutional ties with Africa. Türkiye's multidimensional strategic strategy towards Africa has gradually become more prominent, and Türkiye's relations with Africa have become more focused on practical interests. 2023 marks the centenary of Türkiye's founding, and Türkiye also held parliamentary and presidential elections. After the election, Türkiye's new Foreign Minister, Hakan Feidan, elaborated Türkiye's foreign policy vision at the centennial of its founding, which stated: "Our African Partnership Policy is a showcase of our multidimensional, enterprising, and humanitarian foreign policy." (Feidan, 2023).

Africa is now increasingly important in Türkiye's global military, economic and energy strategy. It is becoming an important region for Türkiye to expand its military influence and develop new economic growth points and energy suppliers. Therefore, Africa has become a "new continent" for Türkiye to pursue great power status and highlight its leadership. Also, Türkiye's growing engagement in Africa appears to be complementary to Ankara's relations with the West or the Global North and a strategic threshold point in its relations with the rest of the world, particularly the Global South (Bayram, 2020).

At present, the research and analysis on Türkiye's African strategy is gradually increasing. Many scholars have analyzed the progress of Türkiye's African policy from political, economic, and security perspectives. Asli Ilgit (2023) interpreted the transformation of Türkiye's African policy



from the perspective of emotion and ontological security and indicated that the change in Türkiye-Africa relations is the manifestation of the transformation of Türkiye's identity and foreign policy, and humanitarianism and Africa have also become the two hallmarks of Türkiye's "new" foreign policy. Mürsel Bayram (2020) suggested that Türkiye considers SSC as a way of reframing its relations with its African nations and strengthening the cooperation between rising powers, underdeveloped nations, and Islamic political-economic institutions. Ibrahim Bachir Abdoulaye

and Zainul Abideen Jibril (2021) analyzed Türkiye's multidimensional strategy, suggesting that Türkiye is determined to make Türkiye a major player in Africa. Nebahat Tanrıverdi Yaşar (2022) pointed out that Türkiye added security and defence cooperation to its existing soft power instruments and laid the foundations for long-term strategic cooperation with African countries. Abdurrahim Siradag (2022) analyzed the rise of Türkiye's soft power in Africa, noting that Türkiye's African approach has shifted from an ideological approach to a strategic one.

Academics have mostly described the changes in Türkiye's African policy, believing that the changes in Türkiye-Africa relations reflect the changes in Türkiye's identity and foreign policy. The above scholars have analyzed Türkiye's African policy from different angles. However, there is still a lack of a more objective and comprehensive analysis of Türkiye's multidimensional motives for African policy and the positive prospects and challenges of Türkiye's African policy development. Therefore, this paper intends to analyze the main motivation of Türkiye's African policy evolution by assessing Türkiye's multidimensional African strategy. Ultimately, it analyzes the prospects for developing Türkiye's African policy.

Progress of Türkiye's multidimensional strategy towards Africa since the AK Party came to power

Türkiye's multidimensional strategy for Africa has made rapid progress, mainly reflected in political and diplomatic exchanges, economic and trade cooperation, military and security cooperation, and soft power diplomacy. In each dimension, cooperation between Türkiye and Africa has made remarkable achievements.

The deepening of political and diplomatic ties between Türkiye and Africa has laid the foundation for the comprehensive development of bilateral relations

Since 2002, political and diplomatic ties between Türkiye and Africa have been greatly strengthened. The year 2005 was declared as the "Year of Africa" in Türkiye. In the same year, Türkiye obtained "observer status" in the

African Union. In 2008, the African Union declared Türkiye a strategic partner, and the first Türkiye-Africa Summit was also held. On May 26, 2010, Türkiye announced its "Africa Strategy". The Africa Strategy aims to strengthen Türkiye's partnership with the African Union and the countries in the continent by considering their peculiarities (TABEF, 2024). In 2010, with the support of African countries, Türkiye was elected as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the first time. In 2014, the second Türkiye-Africa Summit was held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, and in 2021, the third Türkiye-Africa Summit was held in Istanbul. The Türkiye-Africa series of summits has formulated a policy framework for Türkiye-Africa political and economic cooperation.

Today, Türkiye has 43 active embassies across Africa, a significant increase from just 12 two decades ago. Türkiye is the fourth largest representative country in Africa, after the United States, China, and France.

In addition, since 2003, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has visited 27 African countries, more than any other non-African leader (TABEF, 2024). Opening new diplomatic missions has also strengthened Türkiye's relations with the African continent. Today, Türkiye has 43 active embassies across Africa, a significant increase from just 12 two decades ago. Türkiye is the fourth largest representative country

Table 1: Chronology of Türkiye's Political and Diplomatic Relations with Africa

Year	Event
2005	Türkiye declared the “Year of Africa”
	Türkiye was granted observer status by the African Union (AU)
2008	AU Declares Türkiye as a Strategic Partner
	The First Türkiye-Africa Summit held
2010	Türkiye Announces “Africa Strategy”
	Türkiye was elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the first time with the support of African countries
2014	The Second Türkiye-Africa Summit held
2021	The Third Türkiye-Africa Summit held
Cooperation between Türkiye and Africa has achieved remarkable successes (Figure: Yu, 2024).	

in Africa, after the United States, China, and France (Orakçı, 2022). With the establishment of many new embassies, Turkish-African bilateral relations have become more institutionalized.

The economic ties between Türkiye and Africa have gradually expanded from North Africa to sub-Saharan Africa, becoming the core orientation of Türkiye Africa relations

In 2003, Türkiye formulated the “Strategy for the Development of Commercial and Economic Relations with African Countries”, mainly promoting trade and direct investment, provi-

ding technical assistance, technology transfer, and sharing knowledge and experience (TABEF, 2024). The bilateral trade between Türkiye and the African continent increased from 5,4 billion USD in 2003 to 40,7 billion USD in 2022, while the contract value of construction projects undertaken by Türkiye's contractors in Africa increased to 85 billion USD. The market value of Türkiye's investment in Africa reached 6 billion USD, and Turkish Airlines serves no less than 62 destinations in Africa (TABEF, 2024).

At the national level, Türkiye has signed free trade agreements with five African countries: Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritius, Sudan, and Egypt. From 1980 to 2017, the trade volume between Türkiye and several African countries increased significantly.

For example, the trade volume between Türkiye and Algeria tripled, and the trade volume between Türkiye and Egypt quintupled (Orakçi, 2022).

At the enterprise level, several Turkish conglomerates have established themselves in key economic fields of the African continent, including construction giants such as Summa, Limak, and AlBayrak. Summa, a well-known Turkish construction company, has gradually expanded its business to sub-Saharan Africa since it un-

dertook projects in Libya in 2007. Since 2010, it has undertaken 18 projects in 8 African countries (SUMMA, 2024). Türkiye's deputy trade minister, Ozgur Volkan Agar, also stated that Türkiye's goal is to improve economic and commercial relations with African countries, enable companies to establish new cooperative relations, and evaluate new business and investment opportunities (Aktas & Ergocun, 2024). According to the data released by Türkiye's Foreign Economic Relations Commission, by the end

Table 2: Chronology of Economic Relations between Türkiye and Africa

Year	Event
2003	Türkiye formulated the “Strategy for the Development of Commercial and Economic Relations with African Countries”
2013	Türkiye joined the African Development Bank
2016	The first Türkiye-Africa Economic and Business Forum
2017	Türkiye-Africa 1 st Agriculture Ministers Meeting and Agribusiness Forum
2018	The Second Türkiye-Africa Economic and Business Forum
	Türkiye-ECOWAS Economic and Business Forum (2018)
2020	Türkiye-Africa Economic and Business Forum Online Edition
2021	The Third Türkiye-Africa Economic and Business Forum
2023	The Fourth Türkiye-Africa Economic and Business Forum

Türkiye has strengthened its ties with multilateral economic regional organizations in Africa (Figure: Yu, 2024).

of 2023, Turkish enterprises had implemented 1864 infrastructure projects in Africa, with a total of 85.4 billion USD, and the amount of direct investment in Africa reached 10 billion USD (Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, 2024). Türkiye's Foreign Economic Relations Commission (DEİK) has 45 business councils in African countries to promote bilateral trade and mutual investment. In addition, DEİK has regularly held the "Türkiye Africa Business Forum" since 2016.

Türkiye has also strengthened its ties with multilateral economic regional organizations in Africa. Türkiye has established partnerships with African regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and expressed its support for the new African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) (Dal & Dipama, 2023). Türkiye joined the African Development Bank in 2013, making it the 78th member of the African Development Bank.

The progress in security and military cooperation between Türkiye and Africa is most prominent and reflects strong economic benefits

Türkiye has also made outstanding progress in military and security cooperation with Africa in recent years. Türkiye has greatly deepened its ties with Africa in terms of arms exports, military deployment, and counter-terrorism cooperation.

Firstly, Türkiye has exported a large number of armored vehicles, drones and other weapons to African countries in recent years. More and more African countries, including Niger and Ethiopia, are deploying Türkiye's drone systems. Türkiye's arms

export market in Africa only included two countries (Tunisia and Rwanda) in 2017, and its partners increased to 12 countries from 2017 to 2021 (Parlar Dal & Dipama, 2023).

Secondly, Türkiye has deployed many military bases in Africa. In 2017, Türkiye established its first military base in Somalia. Türkiye has established military attaches in 19 African countries. The joint task force command established between Türkiye and Somalia in 2017 is Türkiye's largest overseas military training center (Kavak & Aktas, 2021). In addition, Türkiye also established a defense university, Camp TURKSOM, in Mogadishu, Somalia, to train Somalia's military (Özkaraşahin, 2023). By 2022, Türkiye has signed security and defense-related agreements with 30 African countries, including Niger, Togo, and Senegal (Aksoy et al., 2022).

Thirdly, Türkiye has carried out anti-terrorism cooperation with African countries and actively participated in the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations and other international organizations in Africa. Türkiye has also sent personnel to UN Peacekeeping missions in Africa, including the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in DR Congo (MONUSCO).

The rise of Türkiye's soft power in Africa has greatly enhanced Türkiye's influence in Africa

Based on its strategy for Africa, Türkiye has fully mobilized its official and civilian forces, focusing on religious and humanitarian affairs to promote the recovery and upgrading of its soft power in Africa and promote the comprehensive development of Türkiye's political, economic, and social relations with Africa.

On the one hand, Türkiye has provided substantial development assistance to Africa. Türkiye's important foreign aid agency, Türkiye Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), has 62 offices in the world, including 22 offices in Africa. In 2005, TIKA opened its first office in Africa. TIKA conducts its activities in the African continent through various ways, such as providing capacity-building assistance, dispatching experts, donating equipment, financing infrastructure projects, and providing humanitarian assistance. In addition, Türkiye also provides non-governmental humanitarian, health, education, and other assistance to the African continent through Diyant, Maarif Foundation, Yunus Emre, the Turk Kizilay, Hudayi Foundation, and other non-governmental organizations. Health is also an important area where Türkiye provides humanitarian assistance to African countries. Türkiye has signed health cooperation agreements with 17 African countries.

Erdogan has repeatedly accused Western countries of being indifferent to African development and advocated “solving African problems with African solutions”.

On the other hand, Türkiye has expanded its efforts to promote Türkiye's language and culture on the African continent. By financing cultural and educational institutions in African Muslim countries to carry out soft power diplomacy, Türkiye has gradually gained influence in Africa. Türkiye is trying to provide an example for African Islamic countries to combine Western democracy, free market, and Muslim faith. Türkiye has introduced a plan to train imams for African countries, and the Türkiye government provides full scholarships. The

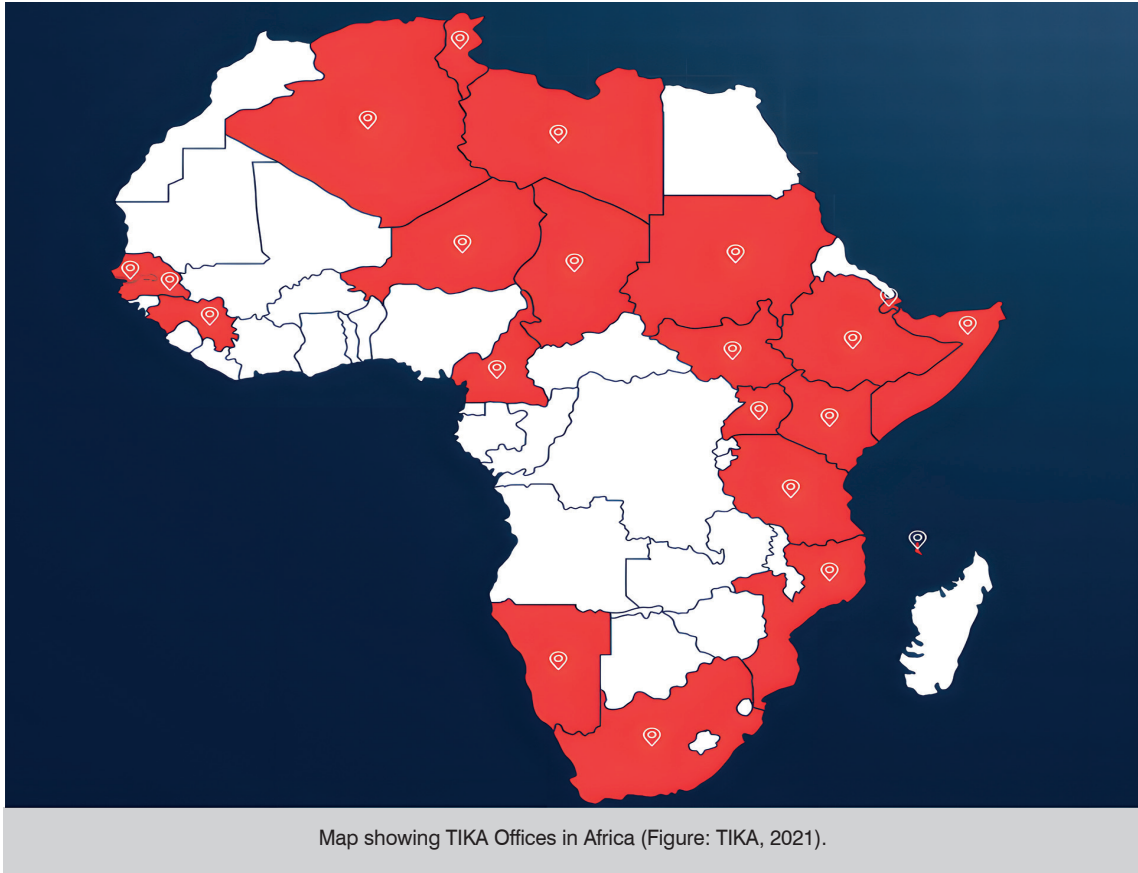
program was launched in 2009, with 300 Muslim students from Mozambique, Togo, Mauritania, Sudan, Uganda, and Côte d'Ivoire participating. At the level of higher education exchange, thousands of African students currently study in universities or communities in Türkiye with the help of Turkish scholarships. Türkiye's Maarif School provides Turkish language education to around 20,000 students in 24 African countries. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Türkiye said that the people of Türkiye and the people of Africa have established a “heart-to-heart” relationship (Özkaraşahin, 2023). In addition, Türkiye's “African perspective narrative” has also narrowed the psychological and cultural distance between Türkiye and Africa. For example, Erdogan has repeatedly accused Western countries of being indifferent to African development and advocated “solving African problems with African solutions”.

Motivations of Türkiye's multidimensional strategy for Africa

In general, the rapid development of Türkiye-Africa relations is driven by changes in the international environment and the needs of Türkiye's internal and external interests.

The driving force of economic interests is the fundamental reason for Türkiye to strengthen its ties with Africa

In the current international financial crisis and global economic recession, Africa has become an important alternative to Türkiye's foreign economic relations. The Government of Türkiye attaches great importance to developing economic and trade relations with African countries. For example, in the delegation of Türkiye's government leaders to Africa in March 2010, there were more than 140 Türkiye



entrepreneurs. By expanding economic cooperation with Africa, Türkiye aims to alleviate domestic economic difficulties and expand sources of energy imports.

On the one hand, strengthening ties between Türkiye and Africa can win more overseas markets for Turkish companies, thereby promoting Türkiye's economic development. Türkiye is relatively short of domestic resources and has a limited market scale, while the African continent has rich resources and economic development potential. Türkiye and Africa are highly complementary regarding resource endowment and economic structure. In addition, there is often a positive correlation between the location of Türkiye's foreign development aid and the

expansion of overseas trade (TİKA, 2020). Groups seeking interests through overseas trade and investment in Türkiye often pay close attention to the geographical location of Türkiye's TİKA overseas offices. They leverage Türkiye's established ties with recipient countries to expand economic ties with the country. This practice of seeking economic returns from development assistance is evident in Türkiye's African policy (Tüyoğlu, 2021).

On the other hand, in recent years, Türkiye has fallen into a sustained economic crisis. Erdogan has attempted to minimize the impact of the economic crisis by implementing new economic policies. The main purpose of the new policy is to promote economic development by promoting exports.

The development of export-oriented new economic policies requires Türkiye to expand overseas export markets and boosts Türkiye's demand for energy and raw material imports. Africa has diverse resources, vast export markets, and investment space. Expanding energy and trade exchanges with Africa can also help Türkiye reduce its trade dependence on Europe and Russia. Therefore, strengthening Türkiye-Africa relations can help expand Türkiye's overseas export and energy and raw material import markets. Türkiye imports oil and LNG from the African market. Algeria has become Türkiye's fourth largest natural gas exporter, and Türkiye's imports of liquefied natural gas from Nigeria account for 90% of Nigeria-Türkiye bilateral trade (Özkaraşahin, 2023).

Türkiye's diplomatic and military strategic autonomy has increased, and Africa has become an important destination for Türkiye to expand its influence

Firstly, in the first phase of the AK Party era (2002-2008), with the steady growth of Türkiye's economy and national strength, Türkiye's foreign policy became more confident. Following the Arab Spring in 2010 and changes in Türkiye's internal and external environment, Türkiye's diplomatic strategy entered a period of profound adjustment. Türkiye's foreign policy has experienced a transformation from radicalism to moderation, and Türkiye's strategic autonomy has continued to strengthen. Around 2015, Türkiye constantly emphasized the "humanitarian diplomacy" policy, which aims to protect Türkiye's interests in the turbulent regional and global environment, while creating conditions for the sustainable peace and development of its neighbors and surrounding areas, which reflects the entrepreneurial spirit and humanitarian values of the nation. Türkiye uses humanitari-

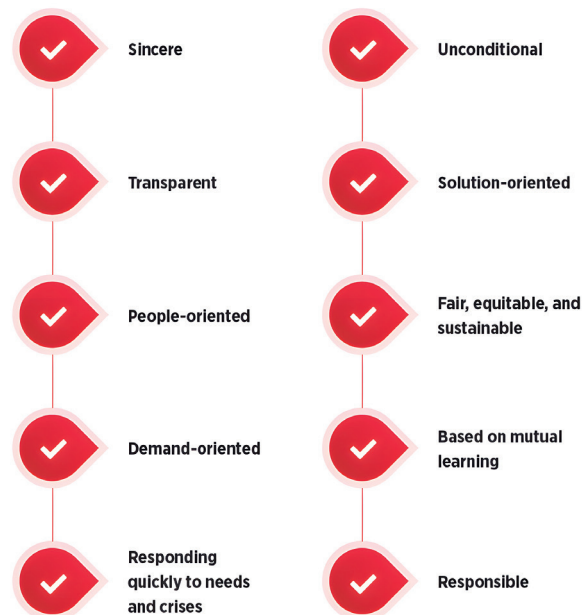
an diplomacy to describe Türkiye as a compassionate and powerful country, and Africa has become an important area for Türkiye to carry out its humanitarian diplomacy.

Many African countries favor Türkiye's drones because they are as efficient as Western-made drones but cheaper and have no political strings attached.

Secondly, developing relations with Africa will not only help Türkiye enhance its strategic autonomy but also help Türkiye overcome its current diplomatic isolation. The relationship between Türkiye and its traditional Western allies has deteriorated in recent years. Türkiye and the United States have been in constant friction over the separatist Kurdish armed forces, and Türkiye's procurement of Russian S-400 air defense missile systems. Especially since the failed military coup in 2016 and the arms embargo imposed on Türkiye by some Western allies, Türkiye has been more committed to developing its defense industry to reduce its military dependence on Western powers.

The most prominent of these developments are the Bayraktar TB-2 combat and surveillance drones, which have become more popular in African countries. Many African countries favor Türkiye's drones because they are as efficient as Western-made drones but cheaper and have no political strings attached. By strengthening military and security cooperation and ties with Africa, Türkiye has increased its arms export revenue and greatly expanded Türkiye's hard power influence in Africa.

In addition, as more and more Middle Eastern countries become involved in Africa. The strategic



Türkiye adopts the "Type of Development Cooperation Model" in its Africa strategy (Figure: TİKA, 2021).

competition between Türkiye and Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in Africa has also increased. The Horn of Africa has become an important part of Türkiye's "southward strategy". Türkiye is trying to expand its military strategic influence in the Horn of Africa by participating in the safety protection of the Red Sea sea lanes, thus forming a deterrent to the Gulf States.

Türkiye seeks to become an emerging power and expand its global leadership by strengthening its ties with African countries

Under the AK Party government, Türkiye's foreign policy has always emphasized that it should be based on its geographical advantages and establish a foreign policy with Türkiye as the central country and occupying the central position in the world. Around 2011, Türkiye proposed Vision 2023, aiming to become one of the top ten

economies in the world by 2023. To welcome the centennial founding of Türkiye in 2023, Erdogan announced the vision of the "Türkiye Century". The "Türkiye Century" is based on Türkiye's century-long history as a secular republic and the glorious history of the former Ottoman Empire. Facing the new century, Türkiye will become great again and become a world leader.

When Türkiye celebrated the centennial of its founding in 2023, it announced the vision of building a new foreign policy with Türkiye as the axis. The vision represents a "new world order" manifesto that defines Türkiye as a regional leader and an influential player globally. The new vision also emphasizes that Türkiye should pursue to become a global power and expand Türkiye's foreign policy on a global scale. The newly developed partnership model between Türkiye and African countries is regarded as the most successful endeavors in Türkiye's pursuit of global power (Ataman, 2023).

Türkiye's African policy constitutes a foreign policy tool for Türkiye to seek status in world politics. Türkiye's strategy towards Africa shows the characteristics of an emerging power in practice, highlighting Türkiye's pragmatism in foreign policy. The AK Party has always used anti-Western and anti-colonial rhetoric to explain its policy towards Africa, particularly in its speeches to countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Türkiye's Africa strategy is also regarded as an important tool for Türkiye to highlight the vision of a world power and Türkiye's international influence. Erdogan has repeatedly emphasized that the world is greater than five. Türkiye regards strengthening its relations with Africa and winning the support and recognition of African countries as an important manifestation of Türkiye's status as a world power. Türkiye has provided a large amount of development assistance to Africa and has also received returns from Africa. Due to the support of many African countries, Türkiye successfully ran for a non-permanent member of the United Nations from 2009-2010 in 2008. In the future, Türkiye also hopes that African countries can support Türkiye on the issue of "joining the permanent members of the United Nations" in the future.

The prospects of Türkiye's multidimensional strategy for Africa

Türkiye has strengthened its strategy towards Africa based on multiple internal and external motivations, which, to some extent, helps Türkiye expand its external economic interests, enhance its diplomatic and military autonomy, and expand Türkiye's influence and reputation as an emerging country in the world. Türkiye's Africa policy has won recognition from many African countries because of its neutrality, pragmatism, and emphasis on equality and win-win. These unique advantages ensure the sustainability of Türkiye's African policy. However, Türkiye's strategic development

towards Africa still faces many pressures and challenges, such as domestic funds and competition from external powers. Türkiye's strategic development in Africa will face opportunities and challenges in the future.

Türkiye's multidimensional strategy for Africa reflects many advantages and uniqueness, which makes Türkiye's policy towards Africa more sustainable

Türkiye's Africa strategy reflects certain uniqueness and advantages in each dimension. These characteristics not only help Türkiye win the recognition and support of African countries but also enable Türkiye to occupy a favorable position in the competition of major African powers.

At the diplomatic and policy level, one of the characteristics of Türkiye's Africa policy is that it does not seek to interfere in the internal affairs of African countries. For African countries with internal political turmoil, Türkiye is more inclined to cooperate with the actual government than with opposition groups. For example, it has chosen to support the Ethiopian and Libyan governments in the civil war in Tigray, Ethiopia, and Libya (Emel Parlar Dal & Samiratou Dipama, 2023). Türkiye's non-interference stance is conducive to stability and peace in Africa to a certain extent and protects Ankara's long-term investment and cooperation.

At the level of military and security cooperation with Africa, Türkiye has helped Africa strengthen its counter-terrorism capacity and military capacity building. Compared with other extraterritorial countries involved in military cooperation with Africa, Türkiye's military weapons exported to Africa have strong performance and price advantages. Türkiye's military policy involves high cooperation, after-sales support, and other forms of assistance. The statements of Türkiye's leaders and the improvement of Türkiye's relations with Africa indicate that the footprint of Türkiye's defense in-



Türkiye's cultural and educational cooperation with African countries has made good progress (Photo: TIKKA, 2021).

dustry in the African continent may be deepened in the future. Regarding cultural and educational exchanges, Türkiye benefits from its non-colonial history of Africa and its religious and historical ties with African Muslim countries. Türkiye's cultural and educational cooperation with African countries has made good progress.

Regarding economic and trade cooperation between Türkiye and Africa, Türkiye's enterprises, such as construction companies and Türkiye Airlines, are rapidly winning more African markets with better services and prices. In terms of development assistance to Africa, Türkiye only provides grants, not loans, to African countries. This uniqueness of Türkiye's development assistance consolidates Türkiye's identity as an African humanitarian actor. In addition, Türkiye tends to use bilateral official development assistance rather than assistance to African countries through multilateral international organizations, making it easier to align assistance with Türkiye's foreign policy interests and priorities.

Africa's support for Türkiye's policy and the common ground between Türkiye and Africa are conducive to the in-depth promotion of Türkiye's African multidimensional strategy

Türkiye's policies and practices in Africa have been recognized and supported by Africa from the official to the private level.

An important feature of Türkiye's strategic road map in Africa is based on pragmatic discourse and win-win bilateral relations. As the leaders of Türkiye once stated, it takes a multi-level approach in Africa. It establishes close political relations by strengthening bilateral high-level visits and advocating for the rights and positions of African countries in bilateral and multilateral forums by acting as spokespersons for Africa (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). The emphasis on "ownership" and "equality" has strengthened Africa's recognition and support for Türkiye's policies.

In addition, Türkiye and African countries have similar positions and voices in international affairs, such as South-South cooperation and global governance reform. These common points have helped to close the gap between Türkiye and Africa and strengthen the communication and cooperation between Türkiye and Africa on the international stage. Türkiye's criticism of the major international institutions' unjust decision-making mechanisms and the non-representation of the African continent in the UNSC has also been commonly shared by some African countries (Dal & Dipama, 2023).

Türkiye's soft power diplomacy towards Africa has received good responses from African people. Although Türkiye's aid to Africa is not as large as that of other major donors, Türkiye directly and obviously impacts Africa's aid to Africans' daily life at the micro level. Through bilateral assistance, Türkiye distributed food packages to people experiencing poverty in Africa during Ramadan, built schools in poor and neglected areas in Africa, and organized collective cataract surgery for African people. Türkiye's independent activities in Africa have met the small but urgent needs of African people and deepened Türkiye's influence in Africa.



Türkiye's aid to Africa has a direct and significant impact on the daily lives of Africans
(Photo: TIKa, 2021).

Türkiye's Africa policy faces sustainability challenges in terms of economic support and strategic robustness

First, Türkiye's African policy faces challenges from Türkiye's economic support. Although Türkiye's main motivation for expanding economic and diplomatic ties to the African continent is to seek new markets and opportunities for domestic economic growth, the uncertainty of Türkiye's domestic economic crisis and the increase of fiscal expenditure will put pressure on the sustainability of Türkiye's future African policies. The sustained and rapid economic development of Türkiye in the early years of the AK Party's administration provided important support for Türkiye to expand its policy investment in Africa continuously.

Türkiye's economy has entered a downward phase, and since 2018, it has fallen into a persistent economic crisis.

However, since 2014, Türkiye's economy has entered a downward phase, and since 2018, it has fallen into a persistent economic crisis. The financial difficulties caused by the economic crisis have been reflected in the scale of Türkiye's foreign development assistance. The recovery of the world economy is still difficult, global inflation has not yet been fundamentally reversed, and the Turkish economy, which is highly dependent on foreign countries, is still facing a difficult situation. Türkiye's government is not only faced with balancing the contradiction between curbing inflation and maintaining growth but also faces the challenge of extricating itself from economic difficulties and avoiding national econo-

mic collapse. The first "Action Plan for Africa" for opening up to the African continent in 1998 was not effectively implemented within seven years after its proposal. The reasons included not only the political instability of the three-party coalition government in Türkiye before the AK Party came to power but also the financial crisis in Türkiye since 1999, which made the domestic economy difficult and lacked available resources to implement the policy (Zhang, 2011).

Secondly, Türkiye's Africa policy will be challenged by Türkiye's strategic firmness towards Africa. Looking back at several changes in Türkiye's Africa policy, Türkiye has tried to use its Africa strategy to complement and hedge Türkiye's diplomacy with European and American powers. When Türkiye's European and American diplomacy encounters setbacks, Türkiye will strengthen its relations with Africa more actively. For example, the policy of opening up to Africa in 1998 was promulgated by Türkiye after it failed to join the European Union at that time. Türkiye also seems to lack pioneering ideas and a higher positioning for its future African strategy.

Moreover, Türkiye still needs to promote its domestic institutions and African partners to improve the shortcomings of existing cooperation. For example, the Türkiye-Africa Summit is held every six years but lacks a clear implementation framework. In contrast, the China-Africa Cooperation Forum is held every three years, with a follow-up mechanism. In addition, the instability of Africa's security and development environment will also affect Türkiye's willingness to invest in Africa. The spillover effect caused by civil wars in African countries such as Mali has led to the deterioration of the security situation in Africa and the turbulence of the environment, which has become an important challenge for Türkiye in effectively promoting its African policies in the future.

Türkiye's Africa strategy faces the challenge of balancing the limits of engagement and coping with the competition of great powers outside the region

Firstly, when developing military and economic relations with Africa, Türkiye has the problem of adjusting its participation at different levels. On the one hand, with the deepening of Türkiye's ties with African countries regarding arms sales and security cooperation, can Türkiye avoid the political risk of interfering in its internal affairs and the moral risk of leading to war? Given the complexity of terrorism, ethnic conflict, and political faction conflict in Africa, Türkiye's continued deepening of arms sales to Africa may cause Türkiye to lose its reputation as a neutral country to African participants. On the other hand, can the economic and trade

volume between Türkiye and Africa make a big breakthrough? Although the trade volume between Türkiye and Africa has increased sharply in the past decade, Africa's share in the total trade volume between Türkiye and the world is still very small. Türkiye currently accounts for only 0.5 percent of Africa's arms imports from outside the African continent.

Although Türkiye's trade, investment, and aid to Africa have all grown rapidly, the policy effect of Türkiye's participation in constructing African regional mechanisms and platforms has not yet fully emerged. In addition, with the closer economic and trade ties between Türkiye and Africa, economic and trade frictions between Türkiye and Africa may increase.

Therefore, there is still great room for improvement in the future economic and trade cooperation



Türkiye's largest military base in Africa opened in Somalia (Photo: CGTN, 2023).

between Türkiye and Africa. In the future, Türkiye needs to determine more carefully which aspects of Africa its enterprises are interested in and achieve the so-called “win-win” cooperation. Türkiye should give more active support and even subsidies to these enterprises and fields to increase the effectiveness of its policies towards Africa.

Secondly, there are also many imbalances in the relationship between Türkiye and Africa. Türkiye's trade with Africa is also unbalanced. Africa is not among Türkiye's major trading partners. Türkiye's export to Africa accounts for three times its import to Africa. Türkiye has concluded fewer free trade agreements with African countries. So far, Türkiye has only concluded free trade agreements with Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, and Mauritius. There are also differences in the economic, trade and policy relations between Türkiye, North Africa, and sub-Sa-

haran Africa. Due to religious, historical and geographical ties, Türkiye has deeper ties with North African countries. Türkiye's enterprises have more business in North Africa.

Thirdly, Türkiye's expansion in Africa has inevitably caused the anxiety of the traditional and emerging powers participating in Africa. Western countries, represented by France, have a long history of colonizing Africa and still have significant influence in Africa today. These countries regard Africa as their “backyard” and are dissatisfied with the participation and activities of Türkiye and other emerging countries in African countries. In addition, Middle Eastern countries represented by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are also increasing their participation in Africa. At the level of carrying out activities in Africa, these countries regard Türkiye as their competitor.



Türkiye has increased its investment and infrastructure construction in Africa, which has improved the infrastructure conditions and economic development of countries in the region. (Photo: TIKA, 2021).

Conclusion

With the continuous growth of Türkiye's interests and influence in Africa, the African continent has become increasingly important in Türkiye's foreign policy. Türkiye's foreign strategy towards various African regions also varies. North Africa, a region of the former Ottoman Empire with a large Muslim population, has strong religious and historical ties with Türkiye and, therefore, has a longer history of cultural and economic ties with Türkiye. However, Türkiye has been strengthening its ties with sub-Saharan Africa in recent years. With its energy and resource advantages and industrial complementarities with Türkiye, Sub-Saharan Africa is important for Türkiye to explore overseas markets economically and seek more energy suppliers. Historically, Türkiye has not been a colonial power in the region and has advocated non-interference in internal affairs, drawing Türkiye closer to the emotional ties between sub-Saharan African countries. In addition, the Horn of Africa region is becoming the most critical region for Türkiye's military investment in Africa because of its strategic geography linking the Red Sea and the Middle East.

Türkiye's strengthened participation in Africa has had a dual impact on peace and development in Africa. From a positive perspective, Türkiye has increased its investment and infrastructure construction in Africa, which is conducive to improving regional countries' infrastructure conditions and economic development. Türkiye has provided military assistance and training to African countries, improving their security and defense capabilities. Türkiye has also actively mediated conflicts and disputes among countries in the Horn of Africa, promoting the improvement and normalization of relations among relevant countries,

as well as regional peace and stability. Türkiye's development assistance to Africa has improved the medical and educational conditions of many African people.

From a negative perspective, the increased involvement of foreign powers, including Türkiye, in African military affairs may also accelerate the risk of militarization in some parts of Africa. The intervention of foreign powers in Somalia has intensified internal factional struggles and weakened the capacity of Somalia's national development. Türkiye's increased strategic investment in Africa has not helped Africa solve the problems of frequent violence and terrorism, nor has it fundamentally helped Africa find a way out of poverty and unbalanced socio-economic development.

At present, the Western-centered international order is difficult to adapt to the new changes in Africa's geographical pattern and the establishment of international multilateral cooperation related to Africa's peace and development should be accepted and practiced by new African participants, including Türkiye. Türkiye should help Africa improve its capacity building in the future, such as helping African countries accelerate their own economic construction and social development capacity, enhance their ability to independently maintain peace and security, and fundamentally solve Africa's security and development dilemma. The future of Türkiye-Africa relations will be more likely to continue developing around key issues such as peace, security and justice, people-oriented development, and strong and sustainable growth.

The development of Türkiye-Africa relations not only provides new connotations for current South-South cooperation but also inspires the development of relations between emerging powers and developing countries, especially how emer-

ging powers can drive the development of other developing countries when they rise in groups and how to strengthen cooperation on the international stage to shape the future international system jointly. In addition, given the increasingly fierce competition between major powers in Africa, Türkiye should be more proactive in communicating with countries such as China, the United States, European countries, and India and jointly explore new cooperation models such as third-party cooperation in Africa, to transform competition between major powers in Africa into cooperation between major powers and Africa, and jointly promote the development of Africa. 🌸

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The Birth of A New World - Is The End of History?



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ABSTRACT

The era of “Western universalism” or “Western liberal supremacy”, as articulated by Francis Fukuyama, appears to be faltering. For nearly 30 years, global affairs were largely dictated by U.S. and multinational corporations. The prospect of U.S. losing its dominance in economics, finance, and technology, much like the decline of Pax Britannica in the 20th century, is becoming more tangible. Both SCO and BRICS share similar goals, though SCO focuses on Eurasia, while BRICS operates on a global scale. These organizations, alongside entities like EAEU, SCO-10, BRICS-10, China’s One Belt, One Road project, CICA, and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, emphasize the importance of UN Charter and international law. Collectively, they contribute to the formation of a united Eurasia. The creation of OTS, which arose on the basis of Nakhichevan Declaration in 2009, is a great idea of uniting Turkic peoples for interaction in common projects of the economic, customs and transport cooperation, healthcare, education, tourism, agriculture, energy, humanitarian sphere, interaction between Muslim religious institutions and migration policy. And the goals of OTS are officially proclaimed already: strengthening friendship and good neighborliness between Turkic countries, peace and security in the region and around the world. In this capacity, the organization can really bring a lot of benefits to the region.

Keywords: China, OTS, regional integration, Russia, Türkiye.

Introduction

AT THE CLOSE OF THE 20TH CENTURY, powerful governments, whether right-wing military dictatorships or left-wing communist regimes, crumbled. In this context, American political scientist Francis Fukuyama published his book *The End of History* and *The Last Man* in 1992. For three decades, his idea of the victory of the liberal democratic model and the end of ideological evolution has served as a political guide for Western elites,

promoting the global embrace of universalism and globalism.

This ideology is strikingly similar to Marxism-Leninism, which also declared communism to be the ultimate social system and believed in its inevitable global triumph. Like the Communists, Fukuyama assumed that economic progress would lead to increasing homogeneity among human societies (Fukuyama, 1992). However, in an ideal liberal society, ownership is capitalistic rather than socialistic.

According to Fukuyama's (1992) new concept, all societies, regardless of their historical roots or cultural heritage, would have to abandon traditional forms of organization, achieve national unity through a centralized state, urbanize, and provide universal education to their citizens. The interconnectedness of liberal democratic societies, similar to one another and free of fundamental internal contradictions, would be maintained through global markets and a universal consumer culture. Today, we can observe with some regret how monotonous European capitals have become, their central streets lined with identical shops and billboards of global brands instead of unique Italian, French, and Spanish boutiques offering traditional products crafted by local artisans.

The military actions in Ukraine represent just one of many battlefields in the global hybrid struggle for influence and resources, yet it is among the most significant.

The American political scientist noted that the success of liberal politics and economics is often rooted in religion and nationalism, although he deemed them irrational and obstructive to the establishment of democratic political institutions. Interestingly, to dismantle and exploit traditional societies for their raw materials and markets, global liberalism ideologists have employed religion and nationalism as political tools. Examples include the use of international jihadism in Syria, support for neo-Nazi forces in Ukraine, attempts to spark a "revolution of headscarves" in Iran, and the religious belief that one chosen people can destroy another because it is divinely sanctioned.

This strategy primarily serves economic expansion and the colonization of new markets, but first, it was essential to convince the world of the benefits of the Western way of life. Societies willing to adopt it were promised the advantages of a "higher civilization." Following the collapse of the socialist bloc and the ensuing chaos, it seemed the Old World had found a "golden mean" between a market economy and socialism, achieving the ideal of a prosperous society. Many countries aspired to join this prosperous state.

However, events such as the bombing and fragmentation of Yugoslavia, the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the 2008 financial crisis, the Arab Spring (or rather, the externally orchestrated regime changes in the Middle East), the global lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, a new wave of decolonization in Africa, and the unpunished genocide of Palestinians- all these occurrences during the years of liberalism's triumph have shattered the notion of Western civilization's universality. We are all witnessing the disintegration of the old order and participating in the emergence of a new world. History is continuing.

The war in Ukraine is a catalyst for global transformation

The conflict in the heart of Europe, which erupted shortly after the global pandemic disrupted supply chains, has become a critical impetus for the tectonic shifts in the established world order. The military actions in Ukraine represent just one of many battlefields in the global hybrid struggle for influence and resources, yet it is among the most significant. The shape of the new world order will be heavily influenced by the outcome of this conflict.

Therefore, it is crucial to understand and not overlook the reasons behind the war and the efforts to sustain it. Those orchestrating and conducting this war are using the media and social networks as weapons, creating myths designed to instill fear, confusion, and division.

Myths about the War in Ukraine **Has Russia started an unprovoked war?**

One prevalent myth is that on February 24, 2022, Russia suddenly attacked Ukraine and initiated an unprovoked war to seize its territory. However, like any conflict, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has deeply rooted historical, ethical, and geopolitical dimensions. After the collapse

of the USSR, there was a clear agreement between Mikhail Gorbachev and President Bush Sr., documented and available in the U.S. National Security Archive. This agreement recorded an unequivocal promise from the American president that if Moscow allowed Germany to reunite and join NATO, North Atlantic Alliance “would not move an inch east towards Russia” (Nsarc-hieve, 2017).

However, upon becoming president, Bill Clinton broke this promise by inviting former Soviet allies to join NATO, bringing the alliance to Russia’s borders. Kremlin reluctantly accepted this, but made it clear that Georgia and Ukraine were central to Russia’s geostrategic interests, marking them as “red lines.”



Map showing the line of conflict and the Donbas region in the Russian-Ukrainian War (Map: CGTN, 2022).

By 1994, members of National Security Council, including Alexander Vershbow and Nicholas Burns, along with other American officials, had written a memorandum on the secret preparation of Ukraine and other former Soviet republics for NATO membership. The declassified documents published by the U.S. National Security Journalistic Archive state:

In 2023, former German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko confirmed that the West never intended to implement the Minsk agreements, which aimed to end the civil war, but used the time to rearm and strengthen the Ukrainian army.

“The possibility of membership of Ukraine, Baltic and southern states should be supported. We should not leave them in the gray zone of Russian influence... at the moment, we should not voice this idea publicly or privately within NATO, given the sensitivity of Russians” (National Security Council, 1994: 2).

For nearly 30 years, the American establishment, including analysts, military personnel, and diplomats familiar with Russia, warned White House that attempting to cross Russia’s “red lines” was reckless and dangerous. William Perry, Clinton’s Secretary of Defense, even threatened to resign when the president broke his promise to Moscow. Other notable figures, such as CIA Director William Burns and Bush’s Secretary of

Defense Robert Gates, unanimously warned Washington about the dangers of NATO’s eastward expansion.

Despite these warnings, NATO has steadily expanded towards Russia’s borders since 1999, despite the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of Warsaw Pact. Over 30 years, NATO absorbed 16 countries that were once part of Russia’s security belt in five stages of expansion.

In Ukraine, since 2014, a series of events unfolded: Maidan protests and a CIA-organized coup d’état; the creation of neo-Nazi battalions infiltrating Ukraine’s army and government; the adoption of a state law banning Russian as a regional language; and attempts by Ukrainian army to suppress Russian-speaking regions in Donbass, leading to bombings and civil war.

In 2023, former German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko confirmed that the West never intended to implement the Minsk agreements, which aimed to end the civil war, but used the time to rearm and strengthen the Ukrainian army (Politico, 2023). Until 2020, United States trained five Ukrainian Armed Forces battalions annually at a training center near Lviv (7atc, 2024).

In 2017, James Cardin, a columnist for *The Nation*, drew parallels between a Ukrainian army offensive in Donbas and a visit by U.S. Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham to Ukraine shortly before. During a meeting with Ukrainian military, they said, “Your battle is our battle,” with McCain adding, “I believe that you will win. I am convinced that you will win, and we will do everything in our power to provide you with everything you need to win.” According to Cardin, these statements incited Ukrainian side to violate Minsk agreements and provoked violence in Ukraine (Thenation, 2017).

Amid external influences, the split between the two Slavic peoples was exacerbated by internal destructive forces on both sides: Ukrainian and Russian oligarchs concerned only with profits, unscrupulous politicians and propagandists, and radical nationalists and chauvinists pursuing their own selfish goals.

As a result, Kiev began to view Kremlin as its enemy, and Moscow, in turn, began to perceive Ukraine as a NATO-created threat to its existence.

The Architecture of Indivisible Security in Europe

For Russia, victory in Ukraine is crucial for its continued existence as a sovereign state. This sovereignty requires a security zone along its bor-

ders. Since his Munich speech in 2007 titled “Why do you want to turn us into vassals?” President of Russia has consistently proposed creating an architecture of indivisible and equal security in Europe through negotiations.

Before the outbreak of war, on November 18, 2021, Vladimir Putin emphasized in a speech at the Russian Foreign Ministry that Russia needed reliable legal guarantees to prevent NATO’s eastward expansion and the deployment of offensive weapons in neighboring states.

“We need to raise the issue of seeking to provide Russia with serious long-term guarantees to ensure our security in this area, because Russia cannot exist like this and constantly think about what might happen there tomorrow,” Putin explained.



Until 2020, U.S. had trained five Ukrainian Armed Forces battalions a year at its training center near Lviv (Figure: Liu Rui/GT, 2023).

Security guarantees were further discussed during the December 7, 2021, video negotiations between the presidents of Russia and the United States. Kremlin's proposals for an indivisible security zone in Europe were published on the Russian Foreign Ministry's website on December 10, 2021. Moscow handed over the draft Treaty on security guarantees and the Agreement on security measures between Russia and NATO countries to White House administration on December 15, 2021 (MFARF, 2021).

Was the fratricidal bloodshed in Ukraine unprovoked and sudden? Are Ukrainians fighting for their land?

Another common myth is that free Ukrainians are bravely defending their land from imperial Russia's aggressive seizure. Ukrainians are indeed courageously fighting for the land they consider their own.

However, the country was critically dependent on Western financial support for decades, particularly through International Financial Institutions (IFIs), which has been conditioned on drastic structural adjustment programmes, including austerity measures, cuts in social safety nets, and the privatisation of key sectors of the economy. One of the key structural adjustments initiated by IFIs in Ukraine was the creation of a land market and deregulation of the agricultural sector to improve the sector's productivity and access to finance.

Those corporations are protecting their investments in land that was originally considered Russian but was transferred to Kiev by Soviet leaders who assumed Russia and Ukraine would always be part of USSR.

It has become clear that this conflict is a comprehensive economic, financial, and armed war between the West and Russia, led by the United States and

Great Britain, with Ukraine used as a "proxy." The West has imposed more than 18,000 sanctions against Russia, aiming to cripple its economy. Meanwhile, over the past two and a half years, U.S. and E.U. have provided Ukraine with extensive financial and military assistance.

NATO supports Ukrainian army with battlefield intelligence, satellite surveillance, and Starlink communications from Elon Musk. The West has supplied Ukraine with tanks, combat vehicles, Patriot air defense systems, anti-tank weapons, cruise missiles, and millions of rounds of ammunition. Western special forces are present on the ground.

An intercepted recording from February 19, 2024, of a conversation between General Ingo Gerhardt, commander-in-chief of German Luftwaffe, and four officers discussing plans to destroy Kerch Bridge in Crimea with Taurus missiles, further proves the close collaboration between Western armies and Ukraine. NATO views the war in Ukraine as an opportunity to inflict a "strategic defeat" on Russia and weaken it, as U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin has stated.

A recent New York Times article, confirmed that American intelligence agencies provide information for targeted missile strikes, which have resulted in casualties not only in Donbas but also among civilians in Russia. Foreign instructors are also aiding Ukrainian forces by monitoring Russian troop movements and maintaining spy networks (NYT, 2024).

However, this partnership predates the current conflict. The article provided evidence that after 2014, CIA established 12 secret bases along the Russian border to train Ukrainian soldiers and neo-Nazi battalions for a future war with Russia. Today, Ukraine has become one of Washington's most important intelligence and military partners in the conflict with Russia. So, who is the real aggressor?

Will Russia lose the war?

Another myth is that the situation on the battlefield is at an impasse and that Russia will ultimately lose the war. This is also not true. After the failure of Ukrainian counteroffensive in the summer of 2023, Russian forces have been advancing along the front line. According to the Russian Ministry of Defense, Ukrainian Armed Forces are losing 800 to 1,000 soldiers daily, along with over 100 units of weapons and equipment. While official data on Russian casualties are not reported, estimates based on obituaries and publicly available information suggest that around 45,000 Russian soldiers have died in the two years of the war. In contrast, Ukraine has lost approximately 450,000 to 500,000 soldiers. No army can sustain such losses. Russia is winning this war.

Is Russia Unwilling to Negotiate?

The fourth myth claims that Russia is not ready to negotiate. However, one must ask: What was Boris Johnson doing in Kiev? In March 2022, just a month after the war began, a bilateral agreement was initialed in Istanbul between the warring parties, potentially ending the conflict on very favorable terms for Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin confirmed this in an interview with Tucker Carlson in February 2024.

An article in *New York Times* on June 15, 2024, published a 17-page draft of the Treaty on Permanent Neutrality and Security Guarantees of Ukraine (NYT, 2024a). This draft, prepared during negotiations between Kiev and Moscow, was confirmed authentic by negotiators and people close to them.



Vladimir Putin visits Western Military District training ground in Ryazan region on October 20, 2022 (Photo: Xinhua, 2023).

The document outlined that if Ukraine agreed to permanent neutrality, it could still join E.U. The treaty's guarantors would include the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, including Russia, who would provide security and neutrality guarantees to Ukraine.

The NYT publication indicated that Moscow sought consensus from all guarantors, including Russia, before providing assistance to Ukraine in case of aggression. This demand reportedly disrupted the agreement, as mentioned by a member of Ukrainian delegation. Another negotiator, Denis Kireev, was killed in Kiev by Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) in March 2022, suspected of betrayal. An anonymous former American official told *Foreign Affairs* magazine that Ukraine did not consult U.S. before reaching preliminary agreements with Russia in Istanbul in March 2022.

Ukrainian politician David Arakhamia revealed in November 2023 that former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson played a role in Kiev's decision to end negotiations with Russia. Arakhamia, who led Ukrainian delegation in the spring of 2022, recounted that Johnson visited Kiev after Istanbul talks and advised against signing any agreement with Russia, urging instead to continue fighting (TASS, 2024). Johnson later dismissed claims of his involvement in breaking down negotiations as "Russian propaganda" (Kyivpost, 2024).

Following Johnson's departure from Kiev, a bloody provocation in Bucha, organized by mercenaries of private foreign military companies under Western and Ukrainian special services' leadership, led to Kiev's refusal to sign a peace agreement with Russia. After Bucha, Zelensky signed a decree banning peace talks with Russia. So, who is really unwilling to negotiate?

Does Russia Want to Start a Nuclear War?

The fifth myth is that Russia wants to start a nuclear war. At the onset of the special military operation, Russia's three goals were clearly stated: the protecti-

on of Russian-speaking population of Donbass, the demilitarization, and the denazification of Ukraine. Despite this, Western politicians and corporate media portray the Kremlin as an aggressor with ambitions beyond Ukraine, threatening Europe with nuclear weapons.

To understand the reality, one must analyze strategic documents related to the nuclear doctrines of United States and Russia. The publicly available parts of these documents reveal significant differences. Russia's nuclear doctrine, outlined in Presidential Decree №355 on 06/02/2020, defines the specific conditions under which it would use nuclear weapons:

- If Russia receives reliable information about ballistic missile launches targeting its territory and/or that of its allies.
- If an enemy uses nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction against Russia and/or its allies.
- If the enemy attacks Russia's critical state or military facilities, potentially triggering retaliatory actions by Russian nuclear forces (Kremlin, 2020).

This clear and specific policy contrasts with the narrative that Russia is eager to initiate a nuclear conflict. The document does not specify which states Russia might target with nuclear weapons, leaving that decision to the president, who may inform other countries or international organizations if necessary.

In contrast, U.S. nuclear doctrine, as outlined in Nuclear Posture Review published by the Pentagon on October 27, 2022, focuses on Russia, China, and North Korea (NPR, 2023). The document states that U.S. has led efforts to reduce the role and number of nuclear weapons for decades, citing treaties such as the 1991 Strategic Offensive Arms Reduction Treaty (START) and New START Treaty of 2010. These treaties have significantly reduced the number of nuclear warheads and eliminated shorter-range nuclear weapons from U.S. arsenal.

Despite initial cooperation, U.S. is now concer-

ned about Russia's modernization of its strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons, attributing this shift to NATO's continuous expansion toward Russia's borders, which Moscow sees as a threat to its national security.

U.S. strategic documents do not clearly indicate the conditions under which U.S. would use nuclear weapons. In contrast, Russia's nuclear doctrine explicitly states that nuclear weapons can be used in response to an attack with nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction or a conventional attack threatening the state's existence.

Five Critical Mistakes by the West

Due to these misconceptions surrounding Ukrainian crisis, Western countries have made five critical mistakes:

1. Ignoring the 2014 Ukrainian Coup: The West did not respond to the coup in Ukraine, despite France, Germany, and Poland acting as guarantors of agreements between the Ukrainian government and the opposition.

2. Not Recognizing Crimea's Change in Status: The West refused to acknowledge Crimea and Sevastopol's change in status following the 2014 coup. The regions' fates were decided by residents through a referendum, not by Russian authorities.

3. Ignoring Civil War in Southern Ukraine: The West overlooked the civil war and its casualties in southern Ukraine. Many countries refused to acknowledge the conflict, mirroring the stance of many Russian liberals since 2014.

4. Dismissing Russia's Concerns in 2021: The West ignored Russia's list of "red lines" provided by the Russian Foreign Ministry, missing the last chance to prevent the war.

5. Rejecting Putin's Peace Plan: The most significant mistake was the West's refusal to accept Putin's

peace plan for resolving the Ukrainian conflict. Announced on June 14, before the summit on Ukraine in Switzerland, the plan called for the withdrawal of Ukrainian troops from certain regions and Kiev's rejection of NATO membership.

In summary, the West's actions and missteps have fueled the ongoing conflict and economic tensions, rather than fostering peace and stability.

Is Russia Ready to Negotiate?

According to many Russian commentators, adopting Russia's peace plan would completely end the conflict in Ukraine, not just lead to a temporary truce. However, White House dismissed the plan as lacking common sense, and Ukrainian President Zelensky called it an untrustworthy ultimatum.

A definitive resolution to the war in Ukraine seems possible only when the collective West agrees to Russia's proposal for a new European security system, including guarantees to halt NATO expansion, and engages in negotiations.

In early July, Kiev expressed dissatisfaction with the promises made at NATO summit in Vilnius in 2023, seeking firm confirmation of its inevitable NATO membership. Despite this, the declaration from the crucial NATO summit in Washington from July 9 to 11, while affirming Ukraine's "irreversible path" to NATO, stated that an invitation to join would only be extended once all necessary conditions are met. These conditions are not expected to be fulfilled soon, meaning Ukraine will likely continue its conflict with Russia for the promise of eventual NATO membership.

Bill Evers from Independent Institute shared his opinion with RIA Novosti on the sidelines of the Republican congress, that if Donald Trump were to become U.S. president, Ukraine would not join NATO, citing the ongoing conflict and the implications of NATO's collective defense agreement (RA, 2024).

NATO's Stance on Russia

NATO summit's declaration identified Russia as the main threat to alliance members, stating the conflict in Ukraine has undermined global security (NATO, 2024). NATO remains open to communication with Moscow to minimize risks and prevent escalation. The alliance announced new support measures for Ukraine, including 40 billion euros by 2025, a mission to train Ukrainian military personnel, and the appointment of a senior NATO civilian representative for Kiev. Aegis Ashore base in Poland will also enhance air and missile defense efforts.

At the summit, NATO leaders condemned Russia's "irresponsible nuclear rhetoric," including its deployment of nuclear weapons in Belarus, as strategic intimidation. However, Russia's actions mirror NATO's longstanding practices. Christensen Foundation reports that approximately 200 B-61 nuclear bombs are stationed at seven NATO airbases, including Türkiye's Incirlik Air Base (CACN, 2023). U.S. has consistently withdrawn from European arms control treaties and has yet to ratify Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which Russia ratified in 2000 but withdrew from last year in response to U.S. inaction.

The final declaration of NATO summit highlighted the alliance's plans to expand cooperation in the Balkans and the Black Sea and to strengthen its presence in Middle East and Africa. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg emphasized that the alliance is intensifying collaboration with Indo-Pacific partners and European Union in response to the growing influence of Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea. However, this approach is based on the rules established by a diminishing world hegemon rather than international law.

Stoltenberg also noted that China plays a significant role in Russia's war against Ukraine. It is worth noting that the position of NATO Secretary General, which Stoltenberg will soon vacate, was created to facilitate political dialogue and cooperation among member states,

a role that military leaders could not adequately fulfill. Despite the prominence of many past Secretaries General, the role lacks voting power in North Atlantic Council and is limited to fostering cooperation and representing the alliance's statements.

Lord Peter Carrington, who led NATO from 1984 to 1988, expressed disappointment with the role due to its lack of real authority. Interestingly, any EU citizen can be appointed as NATO Secretary General, while the position of NATO Commander-in-Chief of Allied Forces in Europe is reserved for a U.S. military officer.

Another notable detail is that B-61 nuclear bomb storage facilities in NATO countries are guarded exclusively by U.S. special forces, with only American personnel having access. This raises questions about the sovereignty of NATO member states regarding the deployment and use of nuclear weapons.

Taiwan and Ukraine: Parallels and U.S. Actions

NATO summit's declaration expressed deep concern over the strategic partnership between Moscow and Beijing (NATO, 2024). This partnership has roots in historical and geopolitical factors, similar to the situation in Taiwan. Taiwan, historically part of China, was occupied by Japan in 1895 but was returned to China after World War II. The international community recognizes Taiwan as part of China, with 161 countries acknowledging People's Republic of China as the sole legitimate government.

The Taiwan issue emerged from Chinese civil war and U.S. intervention. In 1950, President Truman declared that U.S. would prevent any attack on Taiwan, leading to U.S. military support for the island. Despite U.S.'s recognition of only one China in diplomatic agreements after 1972, recent U.S. actions, such as increased arms supplies to Taiwan and legislative moves to elevate its diplomatic status, mirror the provocative actions taken before Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In mid-July, China's Foreign Ministry criticized a U.S. bill signed by President Biden that addresses Tibetan-Chinese dispute. The bill, which recognizes the concept of "Greater Tibet" and urges U.S. government to counter misinformation about Tibet, was deemed by China as undermining its national interests and violating U.S. obligations. Chinese government views the bill as a serious interference in its internal affairs and has formally protested against it, asserting that it sends a problematic signal to Tibetan independence advocates.

Chinese Foreign Ministry has called on United States to adhere to its commitment to recognize Tibet as part of China and to refrain from supporting Tibetan independence (PRC Embassy, 2024). A Ministry representative warned that continued U.S. actions seen as arbitrary could prompt China to take decisive steps to protect its sovereignty, security, and developmental interests. National People's Congress and Tibet Autonomous Region's regional legislature have also issued strong condemnations of U.S. actions.

U.S. Economic Strategy Against China

United States has launched an economic offensive against China, aiming to hinder its technological progress by pressuring European, South Korean, and Japanese companies to halt investments in China. Meanwhile, Washington plans to shift microchip production from Taiwan to U.S., with a \$20 billion investment in Intel to build chip manufacturing facilities in Arizona, Ohio, New Mexico, and Oregon.

However, challenges abound. U.S. lacks the technical infrastructure and skilled workforce needed for chip production. This has led to delays and criticism, as seen with TSMC's difficulties in Arizona. The opening of Samsung's factory in Texas has also been postponed to 2025, with South Korean and Taiwanese firms bringing their own engineers, which has sparked protests from American trade unions.

A blockade of Taiwan could trigger a severe global chip shortage and impact the world economy. U.S. is also implementing a strategy to encircle China with allied states, including Japan, Australia, Guam, and South Korea, equipping them with advanced weapons similar to those provided to Ukraine.

China's military exercises have grown increasingly extensive in response to U.S. policies. Analysts from *The Rand Corporation* predict that a naval blockade of Taiwan could be a likely outcome if tensions escalate. China has demonstrated its capability to rapidly deploy ships and bombers to Taiwan, potentially leaving U.S. unable to respond in time. Taiwan's dependence on energy imports and Democratic Progressive Party's green agenda, which includes closing nuclear power plants, could leave the island vulnerable in a major conflict.

China is aware that any military action against Taiwan could lead to economic sanctions similar to those imposed on Russia, which could severely impact its economy and potentially trigger a global economic downturn.

Despite these challenges, Washington anticipates that China may initiate conflict over Taiwan by 2027. Pentagon, however, recognizes its unpreparedness for direct confrontation with China, given China's rapid military advancements. U.S. might risk its entire Pacific fleet to break a blockade militarily, and there are plans to use Japan as a strategic asset against China, though this raises concerns about Japan's role.

U.S.-China Relations and BRICS

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping have emphasized the strength of their bilateral relationship, describing it as the best in history. Xi has called for greater influence from developing countries in global affairs and highlighted the importance of Russian-Chinese relations. Putin invited Xi to BRICS summit in Kazan this October, and China was the first country visited by Russia's President after his re-election.



After the start of Russian military operation, China provided Russia with the unprecedented for any of its neighbor's level of support at the mass media and in the social networks. The conclusion, that Beijing recognizes Russia's victory in Ukraine as its own, could be made only from this incredible fact.

In the economic sphere, the trade turnover between China and Ukraine has fallen since 2021, not to mention the multi-fold increase in the supply of dual-use products from China to Russia.

"The political interaction between Russia and China is solid and constantly evolving. In the current difficult international conditions of external interference and resistance, China is ready for cooperation between the two countries to be aimed at striving for permanent good-neighborliness and friendship, to support and protect each other's basic interests,"- said Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi (Ws China-Embassy, 2024).

In July, China and Russia began joint military exercises, with further exercises taking place in Belarus. Bloomberg reported that the strengthening ties between Russia and China are leading more Asian countries to

seek BRICS membership. Xi Jinping has urged developing countries to take a more prominent role in international affairs and to counteract U.S. influence globally.

On July 8, Speaker of U.S. House of Representatives Mike Johnson announced that Congress is set to enact a substantial legislative package aimed at countering China by the end of 2024. Johnson described China as "the greatest threat to global peace," emphasizing the need for Congress to use "all available tools" to address this challenge.

Johnson characterized China as leading an "axis of adversaries" that includes Russia, Iran, North Korea, Venezuela, and Cuba, alleging that Beijing exerts influence over these nations to undermine U.S. global influence. This marks the first time in U.S. doctrinal documents that specific countries have been labeled as primary adversaries.

Iran's Foreign Policy Vision

Iranian President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian has outlined his foreign policy vision in an article titled

“My Message to the New World” (Parstoday, 2024).

Pezeshkian emphasized Iran’s commitment to fostering a “strong region” without any single country dominating others. He highlighted the enduring support from China and Russia during challenging times, and expressed Iran’s intention to prioritize cooperation with these nations, particularly within the frameworks of BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

Regional Integration and International Cooperation

The Belt and Road Initiative

After a long break, on October 18, 2023, Beijing hosted the 3rd Forum dedicated to the 10th anniversary of Chinese One Belt, One Road initiative, which means connecting Asia with Africa and Europe through land and sea routes in order to deepen regional integration, develop trade and stimulate economic growth. In his keynote speech, Chinese President Xi Jinping outlined new measures to further develop the integration initiative (Belt and Road Forum, 2023).

He said that to support this initiative, the Chinese Development Bank and Eximbank of China will open new financing lines worth 350 billion yuan (about \$48.5 billion) each. Silk Road Fund will be replenished by another 80 billion yuan. According to the State Administration of Financial Regulation of People’s Republic of China, over the past 10 years, China’s financial structures have allocated more than five trillion yuan (about \$690 billion) for lending to projects under the Belt and Road. At the same time, it is emphasized that the vast majority of loans are commercial, not government. This refutes popular claims in the West that China is trying to lure sovereign partners in the program into a debt trap.

According to Xi Jinping, China will continue to actively promote the expansion of infrastructure connectivity

in Eurasia and beyond. Chinese President stressed that infrastructural interconnectedness is one of the pillars of the development of an open international economy. He confirmed that China will continue to open up more to international trade and investment. According to Chinese head of state, in 2024-2028, the total volume of China’s foreign trade turnover will exceed \$32 trillion dollars, and cross-border trade in services - \$5 trillion.

Summing up the development of Belt and Road over the past decade, Chinese President noted: “The sketch of the painting has already been done - we are moving on to carefully writing out its details... the initiative is filled with both practical projects and institutional components.”

Xi Jinping also outlined five areas of work:

- Political coordination
- construction of a unified road network
- Elimination of trade barriers to stimulate trade
- switching to settlement in national currencies to increase foreign exchange flows
- Strengthening direct ties between peoples.

Speaking about the upcoming “golden decade” of OBOR, Xi confirmed that the initiative will continue to develop on the unchanging principles of joint planning, joint construction and joint use. Chinese leader noted, -

“There will be no place for block confrontation and geopolitical games, unilateral sanctions, economic blackmail and attempts at separation”.

Xi added that the ancient Silk Road has proved that development and prosperity were achieved “not by war horses and long spears, but by camel caravans and goods; not by warships, but by merchant ships and friendship”.

Eurasian Economic Union

EAEU (Eurasian Economic Union), along with SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) and BRICS, is pivotal in shaping a new multipolar world amid global fragmentation. These organizations are key in establishing a comprehensive framework for regional integration.

In Eurasian region, EAEU represents the first tier of integration. Comprising Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia, EAEU operates within a complex and turbulent environment marked by issues such as resource distribution, radicalism, terrorism, drug trafficking, and corruption. Progress in integration is slow due to these complexities. Nevertheless, the leaders of Central Asian countries and Russia recognize that collaborative efforts are essential for survival and influence in the global arena. They also view Ukraine's role as a proxy for NATO under U.S. influence and are keen to avoid becoming a tool in a conflict against Russia.

Trade and economic cooperation are central to EAEU's agenda, with synchronized legislation and developing regional logistics. Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which includes EAEU member states along with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, plays a role in regional security. Member states are committed to resolving disputes peacefully and avoiding military alliances or actions against each other. In the event of a collective security system being established in Europe and Asia, member states will engage in immediate consultations.

The Role of the SCO as a Power Center

The second level of regional integration is represented by Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which includes India, Iran, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The recent SCO summit in Astana on July 3-4, 2024 marked a significant geopolitical moment, as Belarus became the first European country to join the organization, expanding its membership to ten.

The summit was characterized by strict adherence to protocol, with no English signage, as the SCO uses Russian and Chinese as its official languages. The decision to exclude English was explained as a reflection of SCO's serious and rule-bound nature, symbolizing the end of unipolarity, as noted by a French journalist.

SCO, despite its diverse and sometimes contradictory membership, serves as a forum to address differences, conflicts, and modern challenges. Key discussions at the summit included:

1. Security and Stability: Emphasis on countering terrorism, extremism, organized crime, drug trafficking, and cybercrimes.

2. Eurasian Security Architecture: Adoption of Russia's proposal for a unified Eurasian security framework, echoing earlier proposals that were ignored by Washington and Brussels.

3. Economic Cooperation: Expansion of trade, removal of trade barriers, and establishment of joint ventures, including the creation of an SCO Investment Fund.

4. Energy Collaboration: Strengthening energy cooperation, advancing green economy initiatives, and ensuring energy security.

5. Digital Sphere: Enhancing cooperation in digital technologies.

6. Ecology: Designation of 2024 as SCO Year of Ecology, with a focus on environmental cooperation.

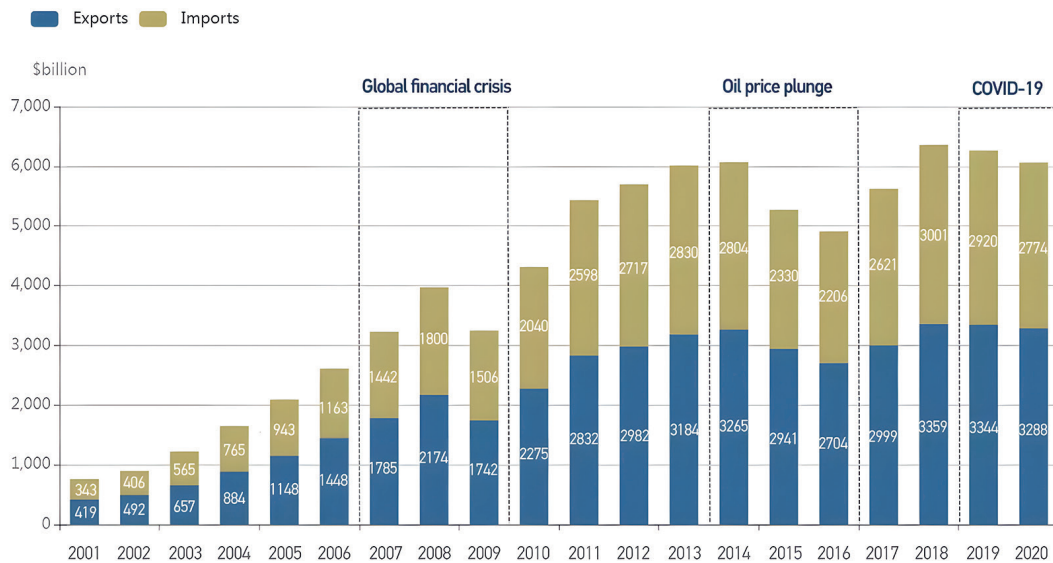
7. Cultural and Humanitarian Ties: Promotion of cultural and humanitarian connections, reflecting the region's rich history and traditions.

8. Organizational Improvements: Efforts to refine the SCO's structure and activities.

The potential for integrating SCO economies into a unified market depends on balancing common goals with individual member interests. All SCO members and their dialogue partners agree on the need for a new security system extending from Europe to Eurasia.

Astana summit was attended by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. For the first time, an SCO-plus meeting was held, including heads of observer states (Mongolia) and dialogue partners (Azerbaijan, Qatar, UAE, Türkiye), along with representatives from international organizations such as UN, CICA, ECO, and CIS.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan participated in all major sessions of Astana summit as a dialogue

Figure 1. Global Trade of SCO Member Countries (2001-2020)

Overall trend of SCO global trade has shown steady growth, although fluctuations in some years due to the impact of various crisis periods (Figure: Yu Peng/CGTN, 2022).

partner and held bilateral meetings with various leaders. Although Türkiye is a NATO member and not part of SCO, Erdogan showed significant interest in the SCO's vision of a pan-Eurasian security framework.

Following the summit, Dmitry Peskov, the press secretary for President of Russia, commented on Türkiye's potential accession to SCO. He noted that Türkiye's commitments and position as a NATO member present contradictions with the principles outlined in SCO's core documents.

Some observers label SCO as "Asian NATO," but this characterization misrepresents the organization. Unlike NATO, SCO is not a military alliance; it was founded to combat terrorism, separatism, and extremism and has evolved into a geo-economic cooperation body. At the summit, significant time was devoted to discussing transportation corridors, highlighting the importance of logistical integration from a geo-economic perspective.

SCO members condemned the situation in Gaza and affirmed the necessity of establishing a Palestinian

state. However, they avoided using the term "genocide," in contrast to the official statements of Russia, Iran, and China. SCO's stance reflects a broader critique of an international order manipulated by dominant powers to justify actions contrary to UN Charter and international law.

Key Outcomes of Astana Summit

1. Establishment of SCO Anti-Drug Center: Located in Dushanbe, this center will focus on combating drug trafficking.

2. Support for Kazakhstan's Initiatives: Endorsement of Kazakhstan's proposal for a UN Regional Center for Sustainable Development Goals for Central Asia and Afghanistan, to be based in Almaty.

3. Proposal for Biological Safety: Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev proposed the creation of an International Agency for Biological Safety in Almaty, accountable to UN Security Council.

4. Rejection of Protectionism: SCO and its members opposed protectionist measures, unilateral sanctions, and trade restrictions, advocating for a fair, inclusive, and multilateral trading system.

5. Adoption of Astana Declaration: The summit saw the adoption of 25 documents, including Astana Declaration “On World Unity for Just Peace and Harmony,” initiated by Kazakhstan. Nurlan Yermekbayev was appointed as SCO Secretary General for 2025–2027, and China will assume SCO presidency for 2024–2025. Chinese President Xi Jinping’s visit to Kazakhstan coincided with the summit, resulting in over 30 cooperation agreements between China and Kazakhstan.

Central Asia’s growing prominence within SCO highlights the region’s increasing importance in the organization’s activities and future development.

Organization of Turkic States

For sure, for someone who knows that Central Asian countries, which are members of both - Organization of Turkic States (OTS) and Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), it is clear that those countries are also experiencing some doubts when it comes to idea of creating a unified “Turkic army”.

The question immediately arises, how quickly, for example, Türkiye, which does not direct borders with Central Asian countries, would react in the event of some enemy invasion of this region?

Indeed, for example, in January 2022, during the coup attempted in Kazakhstan, it took for Ankara several days to make an official statement only to support the governance of legitimate President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and condemn the looting and killing the soldiers of National Guard, committed by “peaceful protesters”.

While CSTO, from the moment when Kazakh Head of State’s officially appealed to the organization for the military assistance, has managed to transfer more than two thousand military personnel and 250 pieces of mili-

tary technical equipment from Russia, Belarus, Tadjikistan and Kyrgyzstan to Almaty within 6 hours.

And the second question is follows – against which state is the formation of the so-called “Turkic army” directed? After all, according to CSTO Charter, the participating states, including the members of OTS, will not join military alliances or take part in any groupings of states, as well as in actions directed against another participating state.

Another sensitive topic of OTS, which raises more questions, is the adoption of a common alphabet. Is a common alphabet imply the adoption of a common language? In this case, which of Turkic languages exactly will be unified into the one common? Which alphabet will be used? Latin, Cyrillic or ancient Runic? Or Turkish, which is Atatürk-modified version of the Old Ottoman language? Or Kazakh, which is the ancestor of all Turkic languages, including the language of the Seljuks and Oguzes, who migrated from Great Steppe to Anatolia in the result of tribal wars? Or the language of one of the peoples of Altai, the ancestral homeland of all Turks, and which is currently part of Russian Federation?

And, are other Turkic peoples ready to add to or remove from their alphabets the letters and sounds, which do not exist in theirs, but without which is impossible to express themselves in other languages? Such as, Ә, Ө, Ғ, Ү, Ұ, Қ, Ө, for example, in Kazakh language?

So, it seems, that the creation of OTS, which arose on the basis of Nakhichevan Declaration in 2009, is a great idea of uniting Turkic peoples for interaction in common projects of the economic, customs and transport cooperation, healthcare, education, tourism, agriculture, energy, humanitarian sphere, interaction between Muslim religious institutions and migration policy. And the goals of OTS are officially proclaimed already: strengthening friendship and good neighborliness between Turkic countries, peace and security in the region and around the world. In this capacity, the organization can really bring a lot of benefits to the region.

Global Integration and BRICS

BRICS alliance represents the third stage in the global integration of the “world majority,” initially established in June 2006 during St. Petersburg Economic Forum with Brazil, Russia, India, and China participating. South Africa later joined the group. As of January 1, 2024, the BRICS has expanded to include United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Iran.

BRICS membership is growing, with 40 countries expressing interest and over 20 submitting official applications. However, the process of admitting new members is currently on hold until a clearer procedure is defined. Meanwhile, two new categories, “Partner States” and “BRICS-Plus,” have been introduced for prospective members. The organization lacks a permanent leadership structure, rotating its presidency annually among member states.

In 2024, BRICS+ bloc encompasses approximately 3.5 billion people, or 46% of the global population, and holds 45% of the world’s land area. The group represents about 46% of global GDP, 25% of global trade, 32% of global natural gas production, 43% of crude oil reserves, and 38% of oil imports. Recognizing the challenges of acting unilaterally against globalist agendas, member states are uniting within various multilateral frameworks to establish new norms based on mutual respect.

Both SCO and BRICS share similar goals, though the SCO focuses on Eurasia, while BRICS operates on a global scale. These organizations, alongside entities like EAEU, SCO-10, BRICS-10, China’s One Belt, One Road project, CICA, and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, emphasize the importance of UN Charter and international law. Collectively, they contribute to the formation of a united Eurasia.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Russia was a significant event. India, part of Global South along with countries such as Türkiye, Iran, Yemen, and Indonesia, engaged in discussions with President Vladimir Putin on three key issues: establishing a payment system alternative to SWIFT for bilateral transactions, enhancing mi-

litary-technical cooperation with potential joint production of weapons, and advancing International North-South Transport Corridor. Contrary to some expectations, Modi also actively discussed the development of Eurasian security system, underscoring India’s role as an independent actor in the new multipolar world.

Managing BRICS, which lacks a clear structure, presents its own challenges. However, member countries are moving towards creating their own parliament and payment system. The outdated Bretton Woods financial system faces pressures from rising economic costs linked to climate change, high interest rates, U.S. protectionism, and global debt. According to *Foreign Policy*, G7’s actions, including the transfer of \$50 billion in aid and the seizure of Russian assets, are undermining the international financial system’s legitimacy. This move may prompt Global South countries to reconsider their reliance on the dollar and euro.

The European banking sector, concerned about potential investor backlash, was initially resistant to transferring profits from frozen Russian assets. Nevertheless, the recent EU summit decision to allocate 90% of these proceeds to Ukraine for weapons, with 10% reserved for unforeseen expenses and taxes, has proceeded. This shift further pressures BRICS nations to strengthen their financial institutions and macroeconomic cooperation. In response, BRICS countries are developing an alternative payment system to challenge the dominance of U.S. dollar. For example, Iran has integrated its payment systems with Russia’s, and India plans to link its RuPay system with the same Russian network.

Alternative Perspectives on Global Integration

Countries rich in mineral resources are increasingly hesitant to accept unsecured American currency for their goods. Historical events, such as the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi—of whom proposed selling oil for a “gold dinar”—served as stark warnings.

Their subsequent downfall and the devastation of their nations have prompted others to unite in resistance against what they perceive as dollar dominance.

Financial analysts point out that BRICS nations face significant challenges in establishing a new payment system. These challenges include the relatively weak and non-convertible currencies of member states, which have depreciated against the dollar over the past five years. However, proponents of de-dollarization argue that the primary goal is to enhance the convertibility of these currencies. Hence, BRICS countries are increasing their trade in national currencies to boost this effort.

BRICS bloc asserts that its aim is not to eliminate the dollar but to level the playing field, making it just one of many global currencies rather than a dominant force. U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has acknowledged that the dollar's global appeal is diminishing due to sanctions against Russia. She expressed concern over de-dollarization, noting that the aggressive measures taken against Russia have unsettled major reserve-holding nations. Although Global South has not entirely abandoned the dollar, many countries are seeking alternatives for international transactions. Yellen also highlighted that while the dollar currently maintains its dominance, its future is uncertain (Globaltimes, 2024).

Evaluating BRICS and U.S. Relations

American researchers have developed a BRICS Convergence Index to gauge the alignment of BRICS countries' policies. This index assesses three main areas: institutional efficiency, interstate and transnational communication, and intra-block intergovernmental cooperation. The study, which analyzed joint declarations, expert reports, and official statements, revealed that convergence among BRICS nations has increased significantly since 2009, with institutional efficiency rising from 6% to 48.6%, and interethnic communication reaching 93.7% by 2021.

Comparisons between BRICS and U.S. policy posi-

tions show that while there is broad agreement on many issues, differences have emerged, especially during Donald Trump's presidency, which saw a shift in U.S. policies on WTO and climate change that diverged from BRICS priorities.

Some view BRICS as a "counter-hegemonic bloc" opposing a unipolar US-led world, but this characterization might be premature. Nonetheless, the organization is making notable progress and demonstrating positive development dynamics.

While SCO and BRICS have different histories, economies, and objectives, they share a common goal: to build a new, fair, and secure world based on sovereignty and mutual respect. Future consolidation of these two organizations might be possible, given their similar objectives to provide alternatives to Western economic systems.

Conclusion

The era of "Western universalism" or "Western liberal supremacy," as articulated by Francis Fukuyama, appears to be faltering. For nearly 30 years, global affairs were largely dictated by the U.S. and multinational corporations. The prospect of U.S. losing its dominance in economics, finance, and technology, much like the decline of Pax Britannica in the 20th century, is becoming more tangible.

We are witnessing a transformative period where technological advancements are leading to greater global interconnectedness. This shift is challenging the traditional unipolar model and questioning the role of Western-led globalization. The pandemic highlighted the efficacy of centralized state management compared to liberal democratic systems, with countries demonstrating greater resilience and social justice through mutual aid.

The so-called autocracies, such as Russia, China, and Iran, have adapted more effectively to crises, developing new transport corridors and navigating the logistics

challenges exacerbated by the pandemic and Western sanctions. The global focus on human rights, often criticized as overly intrusive and driven by ideological agendas, has sparked ethical concerns in traditional societies.

The ongoing global confrontation, driven by Western interests in resource control and geopolitical influence, has shifted from what was once seen as a path to liberation towards a broader conflict. This evolving dynamic suggests that the pursuit of global dominance may be leading us closer to a larger-scale confrontation, rather than achieving the liberation promised by Western ideals.

Amidst these shifts, populations previously influenced by neoliberalism—for about 30 years aligned their national identities with Western ideals and sought to emulate foreign values and cultures—now reevaluating their perspectives. Being part of the neoliberal world is increasingly seen not as a privilege but as an imposed burden that undermines their national identity.

Countries in Global South are recognizing the need to establish new frameworks in this emerging world order. They are eager to collaborate on the basis of principles such as openness, inclusivity, equality, mutual respect, solidarity, consensus, and mutually beneficial cooperation.

Furthermore, few acknowledge the key figures driving these historical transformations. These are individuals who stand out as true national elites—independent thinkers, dedicated military personnel, insightful state and religious leaders, members of intelligence and special services, scientists, social activists, humanists, and philanthropists. They possess critical thinking, a deep sense of responsibility for their societies and the world, and a strong commitment to social justice, combined with kindness and compassion.

These individuals form a global network of influence, akin to a vast, interconnected lattice across the planet. Their efforts are pushing back against the notion of the end of history, offering humanity a chance to continue evolving and thriving. 🌸

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FAZIL HÜSNÜ DAĞLARCA*



*(August 26, 1914, Istanbul; October 15, 2008, Istanbul)

Turkish poet. He is one of Türkiye's most prolific poets, with more than 60 books of poetry published during his lifetime. Dağlarca was awarded the Golden Wreath Award at the Struga Poetry Evenings. In 1971, he was one of the candidates on the list for the Nobel Prize in Literature, which was awarded to Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. He adopted a socialist understanding of poetry. He supported his homeland, his nation and the struggles of oppressed peoples. Dağlarca remained true to his own interpretation of poetry, unaffected by any literary movement or individual. As a prolific poet, he maintained his independence, did not draw inspiration from other poets, and composed his poetry independently of any particular movement. It is summed up his understanding of art that: "The work of art should point both to the time we are in, like a clock, and to the direction we need to go, like a compass." Awards: 1946: Republican People's Party Poetry Competition Third Prize, 1956: Yeditepe Poetry Prize, 1958: Turkish Language Association Poetry Prize, 1966: Turkish National Student Federation Turhan Emeksiz Prize, 1967: International Poetry Forum Best Living Turkish Poet (US), 1973: Arkin Children's Literature Outstanding Honor Award, 1974: Struga 13. Poetry Festival Golden Wreath Award (Yugoslavia), 1974: Milliyet Art Magazine Artist of the Year, 1977 Sedat Simavi Foundation Literature Award, 2005: Vehbi Koç Award, 2008: Culture and Arts Service Award.

OUR VIETNAM WAR

Those Who Burn

Themselves for the Common Good**

"When leaving home, always assume

You will encounter an honest man"

A Vietnamese proverb

Burning is the denial of darkness,

Mindfully, brighter than all thought,

In action, swifter than bird or beast.

Pour on the girl all your light.

Find life in a flame out of night

Burning is the denial of darkness,

A mad plunge into eyes, inward but remote

From the shepherd's fire to the sky's pyre.

Pour on the girl all your light.

Sleep stirs with stars shining briht.

Burning is the denial of darkness,

To the end of truth, our long and naked budies gloat-

Don't we come alive as we blaze and glow?

Pour on the girl all your light,

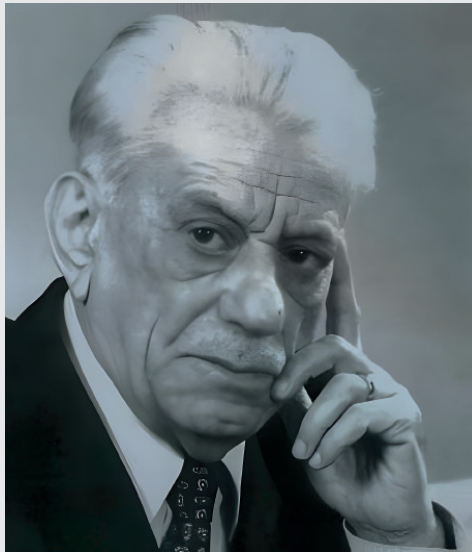
So the day may arrive before daylight.



**Translated by Talât Sait Halman

Dağlarca, F. H. (1969). Our Vietnam War-Those Who Burn Themselves for the Common Good. Selected Poems, p.171. University of Pittsburgh Press.

BAKHTIYAR VAHABZADEH*



*(August 16, 1925 - February 13, 2009)

In 1942, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh entered the Faculty of Philology at Baku State University and graduated in 1947. In 1980, Vahabzadeh was elected a member of the Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences. He was one of the pioneers of the freedom movements that began in the 1960s. He ensured the publication of many works addressing the struggles of the Azerbaijani people by smuggling them abroad. Vahabzadeh, who paid great attention to using Azerbaijani Turkic in its purest form and articulating the feelings of his people, is known as the People's Poet in Azerbaijan. Between 1980 and 2000, he was elected as a member of parliament five times. In addition to poetry, Vahabzadeh wrote numerous narrative poems and plays, and he also did translations. His work "Yollar-Oğulları" is dedicated to the Algerian independence movement, and "Mugam" is dedicated to the composer Uzeyir Hajibeyov. In 2002, he was awarded the Commander Medal by the Romanian Ministry of Culture for his book "Benim Garibim". Translations into Other Languages: Turkish: 15 books, Russian: 14 books, Azerbaijani in Iran: 5 books, Armenian: 3 books, Uzbek: 2 books, German: 2 books, English: 2 books, Turkmen: 1 book.

Two Blind Men**

There's a blind man I know: His eyes have no sight,
But he is not blind.
Though he sometimes gets scorched in the fire of sorrows,
He does not turn a cold shoulder to his passion and his
mind.
He reads and writes day and night,
In his mind's eye he sees, feels, knows.

But . . . There is someone else . . . Although he is not blind,
He cannot see nonetheless.
His bosom friend might get killed before his very eyes,
"I saw nothing," he says.
He claims whatever is good as his, but fails to see the bad;
Looks at the clock, but can't tell what time it is.
Nothing noble visits his thoughts and feelings;
Often he denies he saw something though he really did.

A man is hardly blind if his eyes have no sight;
Blind is he who does not want to see.
To such an ignorant troglodyte,
Life itself is a grave, if you ask me.



ERZURUM STREET, 1916



View of Erzurum street occupied by Russian troops during 1st World War in 1916.*

* *Moscow Multimedia Art Museum / Moscow Photo House Archive*

SULEYMAN KARAKUL



Harvest, 2022.*

Continuing his art career for over 50 years, Turkish painter Suleyman Karakul highlights Anatolian peasant, human relations and social life in rural areas in his paintings. Masterfully combining nature with humans, colours and forms, the artist's paintings feature a horizontal linearity. Focusing particularly on concepts such as family, cooperation and solidarity, the artist says in his own words that he "interprets nature by trying to construct that nature cannot be without humans and humans cannot be without nature" and says "I am particularly trying to describe the soil and terrain structure with my own linear method. I am trying to convey the holes, roughnesses, distance and closeness there with tones".

* Oil on canvas. 100 x 80 cm.

MOLLA NASRADDIN, 1906



The first cover of Molla Nasraddin magazine dated April 7, 1906.*

***Molla Nasraddin was an eight-page Azerbaijani satirical periodical published in Tiflis (from 1906–14 and in 1917), Tabriz (in 1921) and Baku (from 1922–31) in the Azerbaijani and occasionally Russian languages. The magazine was read across the Muslim world from Morocco to East Asia. It was founded by Jalil Mammadguluzadeh (1869–1932) and Omar Faig Nemanzadeh (1872–1937), and named after Nasreddin, the legendary Sufi wise man-cum-fool of the Middle Ages. The magazine, on behalf of the sage Molla Nasreddin, expressed the ideas of the revolution of 1905–1907, as well as the ideas of the labour movement in Transcaucasia. It was widespread throughout the Near and Middle East and influenced the development of the democratic press. The magazine denounced patriarchal and feudal customs, called on ordinary people to fight for freedom, and also spoke out against imperialism and despotic regimes in the countries of the East.*

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