ISLAM IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

KSENIA ATAMALI. TÜRKIYE: INTENSIFYING COOPERATION WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION OF TURKIC STATES (ON THE EXAMPLE OF KYRGYZSTAN, UZBEKISTAN AND TURKMENISTAN)

Keywords: Central Asia; Türkiye; Kyrgyzstan; Uzbekistan; Turkmenistan; Organization of Turkic States; OTS; Pan-Turkism; "Turkic unity"; international relations; trade; economy; energy cooperation; military-industrial complex.

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Abstract. In the 2020s, Türkiye began actively expanding cooperation with the Turkic states within the framework of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). Ankara has shown particular interest in the idea of "Turkic unity," and Türkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan aims to establish himself as a regional leader. In 2019, he first voiced the principle of "One nation, six states," which implies a union of six Turkic states, i.e. Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. While strengthening economic, cultural, and social ties with the countries in Central Asia, Türkiye is also actively expanding military and technical cooperation.

The spread of Türkiye's influence goes against the geopolitical objectives of other political actors in the region. The competition for a dominant position in the region between Türkiye and, primarily, Russia and China, is only expected to intensify, leading to new disagreements. This article examines

Türkiye's growing cooperation with Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan in the 2020s and makes an attempt to assess the extent of its influence in these countries in comparison with other key regional players.

Introduction

Since the collapse of the USSR, and even before that, Türkiye has always been supportive of the Turkic-speaking republics. In recent years, however, Ankara has indicated particular interest in the concept of "Turkic unity" and cooperation with the countries of Central Asia. Trying to establish Türkiye as the leader of the Islamic world, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan used to be focused primarily on Arab countries, but now his attention is increasingly turning to fraternal Turkic-speaking peoples. Thus, in 2019, at the 7th Summit of the Turkic Council, President Erdoğan stated that there were "six states, but one nation" (Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan), including Turkmenistan, which was not a member of the Turkic Council at the time. The phrase "Five States, One Nation" can be heard as well, and previously, Türkiye used the slogan "Two States, One Nation" (Türkiye and Azerbaijan). In his speech, Erdoğan called Turkestan an "ancestral heartland" and all the people a "big family" who "speak the same language, believe in the same religion, and share the same history, the same culture, and the same civilization" [1]. In Türkiye, the term 'Turkestan' has been increasingly used to refer to Central Asia, emphasizing that it is a "shared historical and civilizational space of the Turkic peoples." Turks view Turkestan, which includes Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan, as the land of their forefathers, thus strengthening a "common cultural identity and spiritual connection" in the people's minds [2].

In 2021, the Turkic Council was renamed the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). It comprises Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan; while Turkmenistan, Hungary, and Northern Cyprus remain observers. Türkiye is actively expanding trade, economic, cultural, and social ties with the countries of Central Asia, as well as working on intensifying cooperation in the military-industrial sphere. The media in Türkiye speculates about the potential creation of a "pan-Turkic army". According to Turkish political analyst Kerim Has, the OTS is a political project for Türkiye, designed to expand its sphere of influence and spreading pan-Turkic ideas in Central Asia, as the region is home to Turkic-speaking peoples. Türkiye is working to reconcile its neo-Ottoman ambitions with modern realities by