

The Role of Turksoy in The Cultural Relations of Azerbaijan with The Turkish World

Azerbaycan'ın Türk Dünyası ile Kültürel İlişkilerinde Türksoy'un Rolü

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ABSTRACT

The end of the Cold War led to significant changes in the system of international relations. Central Asia has been one of the most affected regions among these changes. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Turkic republics, which were former Soviet republics, declared their independence and began to operate as independent states in the international arena. The Turkic world, which has been under the influence of the Soviet administration for many years, has entered the stage of national state building and reshaping of its identity. In this context, it is necessary to evaluate the unity in the Turkic world not only on the basis of cultural identity, but also from a broader perspective, where political and economic interests are taken into account. The social constructivist approach has significant potential in terms of explaining the unity among Turkic states in the context of identity. However, it is important to take into account the specific national interests of each Turkic state. Thus, the neofunctionalist approach provides an important analytical framework to better understand the depth of the issue. Neofunctionalist theory suggests that cooperation in various fields can expand over time and create conditions for deeper political integration. The formation and development of the European Union is the most obvious example of this approach. With the same logic, the strengthening of cultural and economic cooperation between the Turkish states can form the basis of political integration in the future. **Purpose of the study:** The purpose of this study is to analyze the process of organizing Azerbaijan's relations with the countries of the Turkic world and the role of TURKSOY in this process. The main goal is to assess the impact of cultural cooperation between the Turkic states on political integration and determine the position of Azerbaijan in this process. **The methodology:** Within the framework of the research, the available scientific literature was analyzed, statistical data was examined, and concrete examples related to the activity of TURKSOY were analyzed. **Subject of the study:** The main subject of the study is the development of cultural and political relations between Azerbaijan and the countries of the Turkic world and the role played by TURKSOY in this process. **Results of the study:** Azerbaijan, by actively participating in the framework of TURKSOY, has strengthened its relations with the Turkic world and taken significant steps towards the protection and promotion of its common cultural heritage. This cooperation process has not only protected national interests, but also created conditions for the establishment of closer relations based on common identity and values.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

*Azerbaycan,
TURKSOY, Türk
devletleri, kültür.*

ÖZET

Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesi, uluslararası ilişkiler sisteminde önemli değişimlere yol açmıştır. Bu değişimlerden en çok etkilenen bölgelerden biri de Orta Asya olmuştur. Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasıyla birlikte, eski Sovyet cumhuriyetleri olan Türk devletleri bağımsızlıklarını ilan ederek uluslararası arenada bağımsız devletler olarak faaliyet göstermeye başlamışlardır. Uzun yıllar Sovyet yönetiminin etkisi altında kalan Türk dünyası, ulusal devlet inşası ve kimliklerini yeniden şekillendirme sürecine girmiştir. Bu bağlamda, Türk dünyasında birliğin sadece kültürel kimlik temelinde değil, aynı zamanda siyasi ve ekonomik çıkarların göz önüne alındığı daha geniş bir perspektiften ele alınması gereklidir. Sosyal inşacı yaklaşım, Türk devletleri arasındaki birliği kimlik bağlamında açıklama açısından önemli bir potansiyele sahiptir. Ancak, her bir Türk devletinin kendine özgü ulusal çıkarlarını dikkate almak büyük bir önem taşır. Bu nedenle, konunun derinlemesine anlaşılabilmesi için neofonksiyonalist yaklaşım önemli bir analitik çerçeve sunmaktadır. Neofonksiyonalist teori, farklı alanlarda iş birliğinin zamanla genişleyerek daha derin bir siyasi entegrasyona zemin hazırlayabileceğini öne sürer. Avrupa Birliği'nin oluşumu ve gelişimi bu yaklaşımın en somut örneğidir. Aynı mantıkla, Türk devletleri arasında kültürel ve ekonomik iş birliğinin güçlendirilmesi, gelecekte siyasi entegrasyonun temelini oluşturabilir. **Araştırmanın Amacı:** Bu araştırmanın amacı, Azerbaycan'ın Türk dünyası ülkeleriyle ilişkilerinde örgütlenme sürecini ve bu süreçte TÜRKSOY'un rolünü analiz etmektir. Temel hedef, Türk devletleri arasındaki kültürel iş birliğinin siyasi entegrasyona etkisini değerlendirmek ve Azerbaycan'ın bu süreçteki konumunu belirlemektir. **Yöntem:** Araştırma kapsamında mevcut bilimsel literatür incelenmiş, istatistiksel veriler değerlendirilmiş ve TÜRKSOY'un faaliyetlerine ilişkin somut örnekler analiz edilmiştir. **Araştırmanın Konusu:** Araştırmanın temel konusu, Azerbaycan ile Türk dünyası ülkeleri arasındaki kültürel ve siyasi ilişkilerin gelişimi ve bu süreçte TÜRKSOY'un oynadığı roldür. **Araştırmanın Sonuçları:** Azerbaycan, TÜRKSOY çerçevesinde aktif bir rol üstlenerek Türk dünyasıyla ilişkilerini güçlendirmiş, ortak kültürel mirasın korunması ve tanıtılması yönünde önemli adımlar atmıştır. Bu iş birliği süreci, yalnızca ulusal çıkarların korunmasını sağlamakla kalmamış, aynı zamanda ortak kimlik ve değerler temelinde daha sıkı bağların kurulmasına olanak tanımıştır.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the second half and the end of the 20th century, world history was marked by important changes. During this period, scientific and technical progress took place, the policy of colonization was weakened and the process of formation of national states was accelerated. These changes have created significant effects in the Turkic world as well. Initially, the international representation of the Turkic world was carried out only by the Republic of Turkey, but with the collapse of the USSR, this situation changed, and five new Turkic states in Central Asia and the Caucasus regions - Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan - gained independence. As a result of these events, the geography of the Turkic world has expanded, opportunities for political, cultural and economic cooperation between nations have emerged.

The gaining of independence of the Turkish states has led to the revival of pan-Turkist ideas. Pan-Turkism was formed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as an ideology that promoted cultural, political and ideological unity among the Turkic peoples living in the territories of the Ottoman Empire and Tsarist Russia. Although this ideology, which initially manifested itself in the cultural and literary fields, weakened in the second half of the 20th century, it gained new dynamism after the collapse of the USSR. The idea of pan-Turkism aimed to make the Turkic peoples act as a strong actor in the international arena by emphasizing the unity based on common language, culture, history and geography.

During this period, organizations were established for the purpose of cultural, political and economic cooperation between the Turkish states. One of the most important initiatives was the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY), established in 1993. TURKSOY operated to promote cultural integration among the Turkic peoples and to preserve their common heritage. As a result of the activity of the organization, the historical and cultural heritage of the Turkish peoples has been recognized at the international level, and continuous work has been done to transfer it to future generations.

Alongside these initiatives in the cultural sphere, political and economic cooperation formats such as the Organization of Turkic States (formerly known as the Cooperation Council of Turkic States - Turkic Council) have been established. Within the framework of these structures, transport corridors, joint economic projects and educational programs have been implemented, which has strengthened relations between the Turkic states. Such initiatives have played an important role in ensuring both the cultural unity and the economic and political integration of the Turkic world.

2. THE PURPOSE AND PROJECTS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TURKSOY

The International Organization of Turkish Culture - TURKSOY is one of the important international organizations established in order to strengthen cultural cooperation between Turkic-speaking countries, to protect common cultural heritage and to pass it on to future generations. The idea of establishing the organization was put forward by the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Turkey in 1992 and officially began its activities with the agreement signed by the Ministers of Culture of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Turkey in Almaty, Kazakhstan in 1993 (Mukerremoglu, 2018). The establishment of TURKSOY was an important step in terms of further strengthening of historical and cultural relations between Turkic-speaking peoples and implementation of joint cultural strategies.

According to the Charter regulating the activities of TURKSOY, the organization operates on the basis of decisions of the Permanent Council of Ministers of Culture of Turkic-speaking countries. The Permanent Council, being the supreme governing body of the organization, makes strategic decisions to promote cultural integration among the member states. Later, autonomous republics such as Bashkortostan, Tatarstan, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Khakassia, Tuva, Chuvashia and the Gagauz Territory joined the organization as observer members. This expanded representation shows that TURKSOY has created a platform for joint activities not only among the member states, but also among the Turkic-speaking autonomous republics (Mukhtarov, 2012, p.13).

The structure of TURKSOY is based on two main committees, divided into two for the effective implementation of the organization's work: the Committee for Joint Cultural and Artistic Events and the Committee for Administrative and Legal Representatives. Both committees operate to promote cooperation in the field of protection, research and promotion of cultural heritage. The general management of the organization is carried out by the Director General. The Director General represents TURKSOY at international events, develops plans to implement the organization's strategic goals and has the right to conclude contracts. The first Director General was Polad Bulbuloglu, a well-known figure of culture and Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1993-2008. With his leadership, the basic principles of TURKSOY were formed and the directions of the organization's activities were defined. Later, Dusen Kaseinov held the position of general director in 2008-2022. Currently, the Secretary General of the organization is Sultan Raev.

The headquarters of TURKSOY is located in Ankara, the capital of the Republic of Turkey, and the official language of the organization is Turkish. The organization not only organizes cultural events among member countries, but also investigates and recognizes the historical heritage of Turkic-speaking peoples and implements continuous projects for the transmission of this heritage to future generations. In addition, TURKSOY organizes international festivals, exhibitions, conferences and cultural days in order to strengthen solidarity and cultural unity among the Turkic-speaking countries. Cultural integration among Turkic-speaking peoples is deepened and recognition of these peoples in the world is ensured through these events.

TURKSOY's activities are not limited to preserving cultural heritage. The organization also creates a platform for promoting the common Turkic culture on an international scale and conveying the cultural and historical wealth of the Turkic-speaking peoples to the world community. These activities strengthen the sharing of common values among the Turkic-speaking peoples and increase the potential for joint action of these peoples on a global scale. TURKSOY is an organization that performs unparalleled activities in the direction of developing cultural relations between Turkic-speaking peoples, protecting common Turkish culture and introducing it to the world. Its main mission is to study, preserve and promote the cultural values of Turkic-speaking peoples at the international level. In addition to proving that Turkic culture is common and shared, TURKSOY also highlights the contributions of this culture to universal values. The organization's initiatives in this direction aim to strengthen the cultural integration of Turkic-speaking peoples among themselves, as well as to increase their influence on the global cultural system (Amrahov, 2018).

The cooperation agreement signed with UNESCO in 1996 was one of the important steps taken by TURKSOY in the direction of expanding its sphere of influence in the international cultural field. Within the framework of this cooperation, the organization organized a number of grand events to introduce the ancient and rich cultural heritage of the Turkic world to the world community. With the joint efforts of TURKSOY and UNESCO, the celebration of the 1300th anniversary of the rare pearl of Turkic literature, “Kitabi-Dada Gorgud”, in 1999, acquired special significance. For this purpose, that year was declared the “Year of Dada Gorgud” and the 1500th anniversary of the city of Turkestan, one of the historical and cultural centers of the Turkic world, was included in the UNESCO program of activities (Hüseynova, 2006, pp. 8-9). In accordance with this cooperation, the 3000th anniversary of the city of Osh, the 725th anniversary of Mahammad bey Karamanoglu's declaration of the Turkish language as the state language, the 900th anniversary of Ahmad Yasavi and the 925th anniversary of

Mahmud Kashgarli's "Divani-Lügəti Türk" (Amrahov, 2018), as well as the anniversaries of the Kazakh poets Jambul and Abay, and other similar events were solemnly celebrated with the support of TURKSOY, promoting the richness of Turkic culture internationally and strengthening cultural integration among Turkic-speaking peoples.

The political and cultural relations of the Turkic-speaking states have entered a new qualitative stage since the period of independence. The Turkic Council (Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking Countries - TCSC), established at the summit held in Nakhchivan in 2009, was an important step in structuring these relations. The establishment of the Council aimed to further strengthen cooperation between Turkic-speaking countries in the fields of language, history and culture, as well as to deepen economic and social relations. The Council has acquired strategic importance in representing the joint position of the Turkic-speaking states at the global level and has increased coordination in the fields of foreign policy and economic cooperation. The change of the name of the organization to the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) in 2021 has given impetus to the expansion of its scope of activity and the creation of new cooperation formats. These expanded goals of the TTS have also manifested themselves in the activities of TURKSOY, strengthening the organization's role as a mediator for closer cultural integration between the Turkic states.

Since 2012, TURKSOY has declared one city as the "Cultural Capital of the Turkic World" every year in order to promote the cultural heritage of Turkic-speaking peoples. This initiative has been important in terms of bringing Turkic states closer together, creating new traditions of mutual relations between peoples, and promoting a common culture. The initiative of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev to establish the "TURKSOY Foundation" was an important step taken to further strengthen the activities of the organization and ensure its sustainability. This fund, in addition to creating new resources for the protection and promotion of the cultural heritage of Turkic-speaking countries, has prepared the ground for TURKSOY to operate on a larger scale in the future.

3. FORMS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN AZERBAIJAN AND TURKSOY

Azerbaijan's cooperation with TURKSOY has made significant contributions to the preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage of the Turkic world. This cooperation has become more intensive, especially after the return to power of the National Leader of the Azerbaijani people Heydar Aliyev, and Azerbaijan has actively participated in events held within the framework of TURKSOY. Various cultural events held within the framework of

the organization have played an important role in strengthening unity among the Turkic peoples and sharing cultural values (Amrahov, 2018).

Azerbaijan's cooperation with TURKSOY was not only limited to general events, but also special projects dedicated to Azerbaijan's great personalities and their cultural heritage were implemented. In 1993, holding a night dedicated to the memory of genius composer Niyazi within the framework of TURKSOY, in 1996, with the support of UNESCO, the solemn celebration of the 500th anniversary of Muhammad Fuzuli, and in 1999, the events dedicated to the 1300th anniversary of the epic "Dada Gorgud" are special in this direction. has become important. Through these events, the cultural heritage of Azerbaijan was promoted in the Turkic world and at the global level (Aliyev, 2023).

Since 2010, TURKSOY has organized special events to promote the cultural heritage of prominent personalities of the Turkish world. In this framework, 2012 was declared as "Mirza Fatali Akhundzade year" and the 200th anniversary of his birth was solemnly celebrated. The year 2017 was declared "the year of Molla Panah Vagif", the poet's works were translated into twelve languages and published. These initiatives served to ensure the proper recognition and promotion of Azerbaijani cultural heritage in the Turkic world.

One of the important projects implemented by TURKSOY in relation to Azerbaijan was the events dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Uzeyir Hajibeyli's operetta "Arshin mal alan". The performance of the concert version of the operetta on the UNESCO stage and the performance of the opera "Koroglu" in five cities of four countries were important steps for the promotion of Azerbaijani music at the international level. These events not only served to preserve the cultural heritage, but also served to strengthen cultural ties between the Turkic peoples.

In 2016, the events organized in the city of Sheki, declared the cultural capital of TURKSOY, created an opportunity to introduce the rich culture of one of the historical cities of Azerbaijan at the international level. The events held in Sheki brought together artists and cultural representatives from different regions of the Turkish world and strengthened mutual cultural relations (Kılavuz, 2019).

In 2018, the declaration of Gara Garayev by TURKSOY as the "Year of Remembrance" was of particular importance in terms of promoting Azerbaijan's musical heritage at the global level. In the same year, TURKSOY organized events dedicated to the 100th anniversary of

the Caucasian Islamic Army and the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. These initiatives served to properly promote the history and culture of Azerbaijan in the Turkic world.

TURKSOY has played the role of an important platform in the direction of deepening and strengthening cultural relations between the Turkic peoples and has made invaluable contributions to the cultural integration of Turkic-speaking countries during its more than 30 years of activity. As the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev stated in his letter addressed to the participants of the ceremonial event dedicated to the 30th anniversary of TURKSOY, the projects implemented at the initiative of the organization, regularly held culture days, art festivals and the celebration of significant events, strengthen the mutual relations between the Turkic peoples, and the common culture. gave impetus to its development (President.az, 2013). The events organized by TURKSOY have not only promoted cultural integration, but also strengthened the position of Turkic-speaking countries in the global cultural space.

As we noted above, Azerbaijan has provided special support to the organization since the establishment of TURKSOY and has actively contributed to its activities. Azerbaijan's large-scale projects in the direction of protecting and promoting the common Turkish heritage are among the important steps taken to strengthen the cultural integration of Turkic-speaking countries. Azerbaijan's efforts in this direction have ensured that its cooperation with TURKSOY is at the highest level. One of the most striking examples of this cooperation is the declaration of the city of Shusha, the cultural and historical center of Azerbaijan, as the “Cultural Capital of the Turkic World” in 2023 and the organization of the I Turkic World Cultural Forum and “TURKSOY” “Culture Days” dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the National Leader Heydar Aliyev (President.az, 2013). These events are among the cultural projects of great importance not only for Azerbaijan, but also for the Turkic world as a whole.

Continuous and fruitful cooperation between TURKSOY and Azerbaijan has played an important role in the cultural development of the Turkic world. Summit meetings and meetings at the level of heads of state have laid the foundation for the implementation of specific projects for the international promotion of the historical heritage and culture of the Turkic-speaking peoples. Within this framework, many events dedicated to outstanding figures of literature and art of Azerbaijan have been organized. For example, on the occasion of the declaration of 2021 by President Ilham Aliyev as the “Year of Nizami Ganjavi” in Azerbaijan, various events were organized by TURKSOY. Among these events dedicated to the 880th anniversary of the great poet, the book and art exhibitions on the theme “The Great

Azerbaijani Poet Nizami Ganjavi” at the TURKSOY headquarters in Ankara attracted particular attention (Aliyev, 2023).

With the support of TURKSOY, the works of Azerbaijani artists have been recognized at the international level. In 2023, the exhibition of the works of famous Azerbaijani artist Mikayil Abdullayev dedicated to Nizami heritage is an example of the work done in the direction of promoting the rich cultural heritage of Azerbaijan. These initiatives, in addition to deepening mutual cooperation between Azerbaijan and TURKSOY, have served to bring the heritage of cultural figures of the Turkic world to the general public.

One of the important decisions of TURKSOY for Azerbaijan was the declaration of the city of Shusha as the “Cultural Capital of the Turkic World” for 2023 by the Permanent Council of Ministers of Culture of the organization. This decision once again confirmed that Azerbaijani culture has a special place in the Turkic world and that the historical and cultural heritage of the city of Shusha is recognized at the international level. The selection of Shusha as the cultural capital served to further strengthen cultural relations between Azerbaijan and TURKSOY and contributed to the deepening of cultural integration between the Turkic peoples. In addition, the awarding of the honorary diploma of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Secretary General of TURKSOY, Dusen Kasseinov, reflected the high importance attached to the organization in our country and demonstrated the strategic importance of this cooperation for both parties (Aliyev, 2023).

However, the TURKSOY Union of Writers, which was founded on March 6, 2023 at the initiative of TURKSOY, aimed to strengthen the mutual relations of literature and writers among Turkic-speaking peoples. This union has played an important role in the direction of writers living in Turkish geography getting to know each other, promoting their works and solving common problems. The election of the Chairman of the Azerbaijan Writers' Union, People's Writer Anar, as the honorary president of the union was a clear example of the great value that TURKSOY places on Azerbaijan. This decision has further strengthened the position of Azerbaijani literature in the Turkic world and created new opportunities for the development of a common Turkic literature.

4. CONCLUSION

As a result of the research, it was determined that the role of TURKSOY is of great importance in the development of Azerbaijan's relations with Turkic-speaking states and in promoting cultural integration. After the collapse of the USSR, the Turkic republics that

gained independence took strategic steps to reshape their national identities and strengthen their positions in the international arena. In this context, the Republic of Azerbaijan has pursued an active policy to deepen cooperation with Turkic-speaking states, especially establishing close ties with international organizations such as TURKSOY.

The creation of TURKSOY has been an invaluable platform in the direction of strengthening cultural integration among Turkic-speaking peoples, protecting and promoting common cultural heritage. The projects and events implemented by the organization have served to promote the culture of the Turkic world at the international level and to strengthen mutual understanding and solidarity between these peoples. Azerbaijan took an active part in the activities of TURKSOY and made important contributions to the unity and integration of the Turkic peoples in addition to the protection and promotion of its cultural heritage.

Based on a neofunctionalist approach, the study shows that cooperation in the cultural sphere can create conditions for deeper political and economic integration over time. Strengthening cultural ties, ensuring the sharing of common values and identity among Turkic-speaking states, creates a favorable environment for closer political and economic cooperation. In this regard, TURKSOY's activities are not limited to the cultural sphere, but lay the foundation for possible political integration in the future.

Numerous projects and events implemented within the framework of Azerbaijan's cooperation with TURKSOY have made significant contributions to the international promotion and protection of our country's cultural heritage. The celebration of the anniversaries of prominent literary and artistic figures, the selection of cultural capitals and the organization of joint cultural events have served to promote Azerbaijani culture in the Turkic world and in the international arena, and in particular, the declaration of the city of Shusha as the “Cultural Capital of the Turkic World” in 2023 has once again proven that Azerbaijan's culture and historical heritage have a special place in the Turkic world.

At the same time, the fact that the Honorary President of the TURKSOY Writers' Union, established at the initiative of TURKSOY, is an Azerbaijani representative, emphasizes the important role played by our country in the cultural life of the Turkic world. Such initiatives serve to deepen cultural ties and mutual understanding between Turkic-speaking peoples.

Acting as an effective tool of cultural diplomacy, TURKSOY plays the role of a sustainable platform for the implementation of common cultural strategies between Turkic-speaking

countries. This platform ensures a more active participation of the Turkic peoples in the global cultural system, creating conditions for increasing their international prestige.

This study analyzed the role of TURKSOY in the development of cultural relations between Azerbaijan and Turkic-speaking countries and emphasized the influence of cultural cooperation on political integration. At the same time, Azerbaijan's position and activities in this process have been significantly evaluated in terms of protecting our country's national interests and increasing its international reputation. Thus, further increasing the role of cultural diplomacy and international organizations emerged as an important factor for strengthening cooperation between Turkic-speaking states.

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