

Organization of Turkic States: Development Prospects and Risks for the EAEU

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Abstract

The article analyses the stages of development of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) as an international organization. The active consolidation measures taken by Turkey to establish economic relations with the independent states of Central Asia are examined, and the main directions of development of the international economic relations of the OTS states are studied. On the basis of the collected and analyzed data, it is concluded that the interest of the OTS countries in expanding their spheres of influence is evident at the present time. The current state

of international economic relations of the new Eurasian regional integration associations, the OTS and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which emerged after the destruction of the common economic space of the USSR, is examined. The article reveals promising directions of economic development of the OTS, which allow us to consider it as a specific risk factor for the EAEU.

Foreword

An obvious reality of today's global economy is the shift in power from developed to developing countries. As a result of the rapid development of the economic power of developing countries, the world is undergoing a process of restructuring, leading to the emergence of new integration partnerships. In the last 30 years, Turkey's activities in the post-Soviet space, especially in the countries of Central Asia (CA), led to the creation of the international organization OTS. According to the political scientist Rais Suleymanov, "Turkey is trying to reorient the republics of the former Soviet Union toward itself, and all this fits into the doctrine of Pan-Turkism: many states—one Turkic nation."¹

The emergence of new states in the post-Soviet space, linked to the process of the collapse of the Soviet Union, has significantly reduced Russia's influence over these states. This has created a desire on the part of major world powers to engage in the geoeconomic space of the former Soviet Union. Turkey has seized the opportunity to rally around itself the states whose populations are predominantly Turkic, and is seeking to create a "Turkic world" with the support of the peoples united by cultural and linguistic commonalities in the post-Soviet space. Thanks to Turkey's initiative, the Turkish vector has become one of the most dynamic in Central Asia and certain regions of Russia where Turkic peoples live.

The process of establishing the OTS as an international organization, which began in the 1990s, went through several stages of development.

The first stage began after the collapse of the USSR with the Ankara Summit in 1992, which brought together the presidents of six states (Turkey was represented by President Turgut Ozal, Azerbaijan by Abulfaz Elchibey, Kazakhstan by Nursultan Nazarbayev, Kyrgyzstan by Askar Akayev, Uzbekistan by Islam Karimov, and Turkmenistan by Saparmurat Niyazov). Given the success of the meetings, the presidents continued the practice of organizing such summits. The meetings were held in Istanbul in 1994, 2001 and 2010, in Bishkek in 1995, in Tashkent in 1996, in Astana in 1998, in Baku in 2000 and in Antalya in 2006.

The second stage of cooperation was the legal formalization of the organization of Turkic states. In 2009, the Cooperation Council of Turkic-speaking States (CCTS, Turkic Council) was established in Nakhchivan. It was established as an intergovernmental organization with the main goal of promoting comprehensive cooperation among

¹ What is the threat to Russia from the "Union of Turkic States" created by Ankara? Available at: <https://news.rambler.ru/troops/47113017-chem-rossii-grozit-sozdavaemyy-ankaroy-soyuz-tyurkskih-go-sudarstv/?ysclid=19lgxp73h0270309235> (in Russian).

Turkic states. In the following years, the Council was able to institutionalize sectoral cooperation and establish subsidiary platforms such as the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic States (TURKPA), the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TÜRKSÖY), the International Turkic Academy and others. The final document of the Nakhchivan Summit expressed the aspiration of the Turkic states to promote peace, security and stability in the region and the world.

In November 2021, a historic summit was held in Istanbul. It marked the beginning of the third stage, during which the Turkic Council was transformed into the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). During the Summit, the Regulations on the Partners of the Organization of Turkic States were adopted. Using the potential of good neighborliness, solidarity and cooperation in the spirit of equality, mutual trust, mutual interest, mutual consultation and striving for development within the framework of cooperation became the main goal of the established organization. The concept of “Great Turan” envisages the unification of all Turkic-speaking peoples in a super-confederation (Gorokhov 2021). The structure is open to constructive cooperation with third countries and international organizations.

The most significant event after changing its name to the Organization of Turkic States was the adoption of the “Concept of the Turkic World until 2040.” According to experts, if the countries manage to implement it by 2040, the integration of the Turkic world will be achieved. According to Professor Cengiz Tomar of the International Turkish-Kazakh University, “the document in question contains points that will ensure cooperation and unity of the Turkic world in all spheres” (Tomar 2021). The Ninth Summit of the OTS (2022) in Samarkand was held under the theme “A New Era for Turkic Civilization: Towards Common Development and Prosperity” and is of great significance in terms of the decisions taken and the latest messages.

The official languages of the OTS are Azerbaijani, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Turkish, with English as an additional language. As new members join, their languages will also become official languages of the Organization.

Some fifteen countries have expressed a desire to establish various forms of international economic cooperation with the organization, a testament to its reputation and growing international influence (History... 2021).

In addition to Turkey and the Central Asian states, the multinational Turkic world formally includes the Turkic populations of some subjects of the Russian Federation (Chuvashia, Bashkortostan, Tatarstan, Yakutia, the Republic of Crimea, Tyva, etc.), Gagauzia (an autonomous territorial entity within the Republic of Moldova), and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People’s Republic of China. The region is located in northwestern China, was established in 1955 and is home to approximately 3,640,000 Uyghurs. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (recognized only by the Organization of the Islamic Conference) is also considered a Turkic state (Museibov 2004).

The OTS was established to consolidate the peoples of Turkic-majority countries in order to strengthen mutually beneficial economic cooperation. Turkey plays the most active role in the operation of this regional international organization in the Eurasian space. The OTS represents the unity of a number of states on an ethnic basis, abandoned by many peoples with common ethno-cultural (Slavic, Germanic) and linguistic (Spanish, Portuguese, Persian, etc.) roots.

In addition to Turkey and Azerbaijan, the founding members of the OTS are Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, members of another integration association, EAEU. Subsequently, other Central Asian states joined the organization. Uzbekistan became a full member in October 2019. Turkmenistan joined the organization at the summit in November 2021. Hungary and the partially recognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus were granted observer member status.²

The most important role in the OTS is played by Turkey, which seeks to unite peoples around the idea of recreating the prototype of the Ottoman Empire—the “Turkic World”—in modern historical conditions. The “Turkic World” was originally conceived as the backbone of a more spatial community, Turan, which should be interpreted as the totality of the Ural and Altai ethnic groups—Finno-Ugric, Tungus-Manchurian, Turkic, Mongolian, and sometimes even Korean and Japanese. The latter are expected to be attracted to the Turkic World project, but this is probably a matter for the future.

In Turkey, since the Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power, the question of establishing a collective armed force has been raised with apparent regularity, but as the second Karabakh war showed, only a military-political alliance between Turkey and Azerbaijan can become a reality. Although Turkish President Recep Erdogan has repeatedly said that he dreams of “the appearance on the map of six states of one nation” (Ivanov 2022).

The most important decision-making body in OTS states is the Council of Heads of State, which is chaired by the country holding the presidency (in alphabetical order). Other working bodies are the Council of Foreign Ministers, the Council of Elders, and the Committee of Senior Officials.

The foreign ministers of the member states meet regularly at summits to discuss issues of common interest. Informal meetings of OTS Foreign Ministers are held on the margins of the UN General Assembly.

The Committee of Senior Officials of the OTS is composed of senior officials from the foreign ministries and relevant government agencies of the member states. The Committee meets regularly, usually before meetings of the Council of Foreign Ministers. It is responsible for coordinating all Council activities, preparing official documents for signature, and doing the same for internal affairs matters. The Committee has met 30 times on a regular basis and 7 times on special occasions with a specific agenda.

Perspective of the Development of the OTS

With the aim of creating a Turkish identity, Turkey has initiated the establishment of a number of organizations, not only public, public-private but also private.

In order to develop and strengthen inter-parliamentary cooperation, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Turkic States (TURKPA) was established under the Istanbul Agreement on November 21, 2008. The organization’s mission is to develop political dialogue among member states through parliamentary diplomacy, to harmonize national legislation among member states, and to strengthen joint activities,

² Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) // <https://www.turkkon.org/en>.

including expanding foreign economic relations, implementing joint business projects, and finding solutions to various economic issues facing the Turkic world.

An important milestone in the development of Turkic identity was the establishment of the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TÜRKSÖY), which emerged from the 1992 meetings. The organization is an alliance of Turkic-speaking countries whose main purpose is “to establish cooperation among Turkic-speaking peoples for the preservation, development and transmission to future generations of the common material values and cultural monuments of the Turkic peoples.” On May 3, 2023, an international round table “TÜRKSÖY – 30 years: Results and Prospects” was held in the library of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, organized jointly with the International Organization of Turkic Culture.³

A very special place in the organization of the Turkic world is occupied by the International Turkic Academy, which has been operating in Kazakhstan since 2010. During these years, close cooperation has been established with TÜRKSÖY, TURKPA, Turkic Council, and IRCICA (Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture). Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey are members of the Academy, while Hungary has observer status. The Academy is dedicated to research, publishing books and journals, organizing international forums and conferences with renowned scholars, and publishing scientific works on Turkology.⁴

The Union of Turkic Universities, founded in 2013, promotes various forms of cooperation between universities in the countries. The number of its member universities has increased from 14 to 22 between 2014 and today. The Union is involved in many activities, including Orhun Exchange Program, Union Spartakiade, and Student Council. As part of the development and implementation of these programs, five meetings at the level of rectors and vice-rectors and three general meetings have been organized since 2014. In 2019, during the Fourth General Assembly of the Union of Turkic Universities organized by Khoja Ahmed Yasawi International Kazakh-Turkish University (Ahmed Yasawi University), Gazi Turkish University, Nigde Ömer Halisdemir University, Cappadocia University and Szeged University of Hungary were accepted as new members of the Union.⁵

The Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation, based in Baku, was established at the Summit of the Turkic Council in Bishkek in August 2012. The Foundation’s activities focus on research, protection, propaganda, and promotion of the culture and heritage of Turkic-speaking peoples. In its work, the Foundation uses the experience of other Turkic-speaking and international organizations and establishes cooperation with them.⁶

³ TÜRKSÖY - 30 years: results and prospects. Available at: <https://dknews.kz/ru/politika/286994-tyurksoy-30-let-itogi-i-perspektivy> (in Russian).

⁴ Tokaev ratified the agreement on the conditions for hosting the Turkic Academy in Kazakhstan. Available at: <https://informburo-kz.turbopages.org/informburo.kz/s/novosti/tokaev-ratificiroval-soglashenie-ob-usloviyah-razmesheniya-tyurksoj-akademii-v-kazakhstan> (in Russian).

⁵ Union of Turkic Universities // https://www.turkkon.org/en/isbirligi-alanlari/education_4/turkic-university-union_14

⁶ Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation // <https://www.trend.az/tags/45715/>

The Turkic Business Council was established by special agreement on October 20, 2011 in Almaty. The aim of the Business Council is to initiate and monitor multilateral activities within the framework of international economic cooperation based on the principle of mutual assistance and support in accordance with the priorities described in the Agreement, and to institutionalize existing cooperation mechanisms in the field of mutual investment and trade. Six meetings and 10 international business forums have been held under the auspices of the Business Council, with the participation of more than 500 entrepreneurs. Technical visits for investors, round tables for entrepreneurs from member states and exchange programs between national chambers of commerce and industry have been organized.⁷

The Turkic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI), headquartered in Istanbul, was officially established in 2019 and consists of chambers of commerce and business communities of member and observer states. The TCCI is an important mechanism for international economic cooperation, as well as the implementation of sustainable business programs and projects to increase international trade performance among member states. A legal framework is also planned for the Trabzon Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which includes automotive and transport companies, in order to guide and embed its representatives in a permanent structure that will continuously work to further develop the international economic relations of the private sector of the Turkic world.

In the short time since its establishment, the TCCI has managed to organize large-scale business forums in Tashkent and Baku, with the participation of government officials and more than 500 businessmen. For example, in 2020, as part of the efforts of the Turkic Council countries, TCCI prepared proposals aimed at preventing undesirable consequences of the COVID-19 epidemic. The Kyrgyz Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) and the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey have agreed to cooperate on technical assistance to strengthen the KCCI. A large-scale business forum is being prepared.⁸

The education and culture sectors play an important role in this integration process. Specially created organizations such as the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, the International Organization of Turkic Culture, and the Yunus Emre Institute can be highlighted. The list of their activities and various programs is impressive: holding Pan-Turkic festivals, building mosques and hospitals, providing scholarships to students, developing unified textbooks in literature, geography, and history. At the same time, Turkey is consciously maintaining its reputation as a progressive, pro-Western state, thus shaping the world view of the younger generation of the Turkic population.

Turkey's involvement in areas such as trade and economics, transport and logistics is evident. Its involvement in the construction of pipeline routes, international motorways and railways is particularly significant. Turkey ensures the transit through its territory

⁷ Turkic Business Council // https://www.turkkon.org/en/isbirligi-alanlari/economic-cooperation_2/turkic-business-council-and-business-forums_9

⁸ Turkic countries have created new mechanisms for the growth of trade turnover // <https://www.aa.com.tr/ru5>

of all kinds of fuel and energy resources and various types of raw materials consumed by modern production to the countries of the Mediterranean basin and the EU. This serves the economic interests of East Asian countries such as China, South Asian countries such as India, as well as the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia, and is actively supported by Western European countries and the United States.

The OTS should be seen as Turkey's attempt to create a new alliance, an alternative to the Eurasian Economic Union. Over the next decade, OTS countries, with a combined population of 173 million, are expected to develop a market for investment, labor, goods and services.

A modern feature of the development of the OTS is Turkey's attempts to involve the Turkic states not only in foreign policy, but also in military-political activities. For example, the Turkish Foreign Minister has expressed the view that the Turkic countries are obliged to initiate the development of new military-political processes and not only to react to them. Thus, at present the issue of establishing a Turkish military base in Azerbaijan is pressing, further expansion of cooperation in the military-technical sphere is being discussed, military maneuvers and exercises are being planned. For about 10 years now, the idea of creating a separate internal armed forces organization with military status, subordinate to the Turkic Council, has been nurtured.

However, according to Kirill Semenov, an Orientalist and RIAC expert: "Turkey's ambitions are undoubted, but there is still no talk of a unified Turkic army" (Semenov 2022).

The OTS Summit in Uzbekistan in 2022 demonstrated the confidence of OTS member states in further strengthening and developing international cooperation not only in the economic sphere, but also in the cultural sphere, taking into account the language and folk traditions of the Turkic peoples.

Within the framework of the OTS, the Development Bank, the Turkic Investment Fund and an agreement on the simplification of customs procedures have been established. A venture capital initiative fund has been proposed to develop modern high technologies, digitalization, and education. The construction of the Uzbekistan – Kyrgyzstan – China and Termez – Mazar-i-Sharif – Kabul – Peshawar railways has been supported, which will significantly increase the capacity of the Baku – Tbilisi – Kars railway. There are plans to develop transport links between Europe and Asia and to diversify the infrastructure of the entire transport corridor.

In order to achieve closer coordination and cooperation on security issues, OTS member states have agreed to hold regular meetings to develop deeper defence industry and military relations.

Turkey's favorable strategic location as a transit country in the new East–West and North–South transport corridors makes it the main beneficiary, acquiring low-cost energy from Russia and Central Asian countries and advanced technologies from the EU. There is a chance for Turkey to receive preferential investment from China and, accordingly, some loyalty from the United States and the EU in developing its relations with the Central Asian countries.

However, there are still obstacles to the revival of the Turkic world. In Turkey, for example, Kurds make up a significant part of the population, more than

23%; in Kazakhstan, almost 20% of citizens are Russians, Kurds, Ukrainians, and representatives of other nationalities. In post-Soviet states, there are ethnic groups that have nothing to do with the Turkic group.

Central Asian states are very cautious about involving their countries in other foreign policy alliances. Moreover, their interests in the OTS are limited to trade and economic interaction, logistical solutions, and cooperation in the humanitarian sphere, including cultural and religious issues. The OTS has many intraregional problems with the Central Asian countries, with not only domestic political but also economic instability. There are also many problems in the social sector, with quite high levels of unemployment. Society is affected by interclan conflict and corruption, and there are real threats related to border security, drug trafficking, and Islamic radicalization. The Central Asian countries are in turmoil not only because of intrastate disputes over competition for energy and water resources, but also because of ongoing ethno-territorial incidents in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. According to experts, a serious external threat to the CA countries is the “Afghan factor,” which could become a source of support for radical Islamism.

EAEU and OTS

Currently, two Eurasian alliances, the OTS and the EAEU, have been formed on vast territories and exist along the conventional border between Europe and Asia. Formally, the OTS is not an alliance, as the organization lacks the traditional formalization of relations. Of the EAEU members, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are present in the OTS, which is an important factor that can both generate contradictions and restrain any “sharp actions” of all EAEU and OTS participants.

Obviously, the prospects for interaction between the EAEU and the OTS will depend on Russian-Turkish relations, as Russia and Turkey are the largest countries in these organizations. Russia is the backbone of the EAEU, while Turkey dominates the OTS, both organizationally and in the production and military context. It should also be noted that Kazakhstan was one of the main initiators of Eurasian and Turkic integration. Since the establishment of the EAEU in 2015, the participation of the first persons of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in the summits of Turkic-speaking states has been constant.

In September 2015, the fifth summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-speaking states was attended by the President of Kyrgyzstan Almazbek Atambayev and the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev. The sixth summit, held in September 2018, was attended by the President of Kazakhstan Nazarbayev and the President of Kyrgyzstan S. Jeenbekov. The seventh summit will be held in Baku in October 2019 and will be attended by the President of Kazakhstan N. Nazarbayev and the President of Kyrgyzstan Sooronbay Jeenbekov. The Istanbul Summit on November 12, 2021 has already been held with the participation of President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and President of Kyrgyzstan Sadyr Zhaparov.

All the activities of the OTS indicate that Turkey is thoroughly and systematically trying to implement ideas to expand the scope of its own national idea of consolidation

of Turkic peoples and the penetration of the neo-Ottoman ideology, which is opposed to Eurasian culture, and thus trying to compete vigorously with Russia's integration initiative.

According to political scientist and expert Mikhail Burda, "the experience of the OTS could certainly be used within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union. ... Unlike the Turkic world, where there are ethnic and religious forms of identity, the Eurasian partnership has practically no such ties. That is why there are no conditions for starting common processes within the framework of the EAEU" (Krek 2022).

According to experts, "Turkey is actively using the full arsenal of soft power weapons against Russia, including in the spheres of culture and education, as well as a vigorous presence in the Russian-language Internet space" (Avatkov and Badranov 2013). It also became noticeably active within Russia in the 1990s, immediately after the collapse of the USSR, in the midst of cultural, humanitarian and scientific projects. For example, the Assembly of Turkic Peoples was established in Tatarstan and actively promoted the separation of national autonomies from the Russian Federation. "Yakutia, Tatarstan, and Bashkiria openly claimed the status of national independent states, and Yakutia even prepared to create its own army and introduce a visa regime for other Russian citizens" (Gorokhov 2021).

Expert research suggests that it is Turkey that is proposing new ideas, if not to separate these autonomies from Russia, then at least to reach the borders of the post-Soviet Turkic republics. As an example, they cite the idea of creating a "Turkic corridor," for which part of the Orenburg region would be transferred to Tatarstan or Bashkiria, putting these republics directly on the border with the Kazakhs, "brothers in language and faith." "This is fully in line with the plans of the ideologists of the "Great Turan," who see as part of this empire not only the Turkic autonomies of the Russian Federation, but also the entire North Caucasus, Kalmykia, Crimea, Dagestan, Astrakhan, Volgograd, Kurgan, Rostov, Saratov, Samara, parts of the Sverdlovsk, Orenburg and Chelyabinsk regions, the Krasnodar, Krasnoyarsk and Stavropol territories, and almost all of Siberia" (Gorokhov 2021).

For Russia and consequently for the EAEU, the creation of the OTS represents a certain danger. If so far the emphasis has been on the cultural and humanitarian sphere, the new title is a step toward an even more binding structure, whose members could be bound by "operational decision-making mechanisms," as Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu stressed at the summit.⁹ Asked why Turkey needs the organization's new status, Turkish political scientist Kerim Has replied: "Recep Erdogan is very interested in expanding Turkey's influence sphere. The easiest and most natural place to do this is in Central Asia, where Turkic peoples who are fraternal to the Turks live. Secondly, he needs as many leverage points as possible against Russia. By increasing its influence in the countries bordering Russia, Turkey will gain strong positions in any negotiations on all issues. The number of such issues is growing. For example, Syria and Libya, various economic projects, and the situation in the South Caucasus" (Gorokhov 2021).

⁹ Savelyev, A., 2022. Will Erdogan succeed in Great Turan? Does Russia agree with this? Regnum, May 26. Available at: <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/3602083.html> (in Russian).

Although a number of Central Asian Turkic states are skeptical about the issue, the new position of the organization's members is not so much cultural as political. Especially as Turkey may soon have an ally in the OTS. It was President Erdogan who proposed to make the partially recognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus a full member of the organization, which will automatically lead to its recognition by all OTS member states.

According to Aleksandr Savelyev, an Orientalist, advisor to the Russian National Economic Security Service (RNSEB) and member of the Council of Experts of the State Duma Committee on CIS Affairs, Eurasian Integration and Relations with Compatriots, "Russian officials' indulgence of Ankara's immense ambitions and nationalism, combined with Pan-Turkism in the former Soviet republics, may not only lead to the collapse of the already sluggish integration structures, but also create another hotbed of tension on Russia's borders... The time of empty phrases and complacency is over for Russia..." (Savelyev 2022).

According to some experts, Turkey, despite being the main bearer of the idea of ethno-geographical, cultural, economic, political and military unification, will inevitably clash with the interests of Russia and China. Russia, for its part, has already declared that the center of the Turkic world is in the Russian Altai, i.e. outside Turkey. According to Victor Nadein-Raevskiy, a senior researcher at the National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Russian Academy of Sciences, "China's attitude to the consolidation of the Turkic world is categorically negative. Official Beijing has repeatedly complained about Turkey's 'interference in the affairs of others.' Ankara claims to be the defender of the interests of all Turks: both the Crimean Tatars and the inhabitants of China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region."¹⁰

According to Aleksey Chekryzhov, head of the department for the study of the world economy and Eurasian integration processes at the Berlek-Unity Center for Geopolitical Studies, "the inclusion of Russia, China, and even both countries in the OTS is still considered unlikely. Ankara can singlehandedly determine the vectors of development of the OTS based on its own interests, but the inclusion of Russia or China in this system would disrupt the status quo, and any decisions would have to be made based on the consensus of all parties. In this respect, a choice will have to be made between two vectors of the organization's development. The first is to ignore the Turkic peoples of Russia and China, which are 'disadvantageous' for Turkey. In this case, the organization will reach its maximum result rather quickly. The maximum will be expressed in joint cultural and humanitarian projects of the participating countries and in the increase of trade and economic cooperation. The second development option is based on rapprochement and integration of the project with Russia and China. In this case, Turkey will lose its hegemony, but will open the door to Greater Eurasia, taking into account the conjugation of the OTS with the SCO, the EAEU, and China's transport projects. Of course, such a scenario does not seem realistic today, but times are changing" (Chekryzhov 2022).

¹⁰ Turkic NATO will become a problem for Russia and China. Available at: <https://rosbalt-ru.turbopages.org/rosbalt.ru/s/world/2021/11/23/1932327.html> (in Russian).

EAEU Trade and Economic Cooperation with the OTS

The OTS integration project, implemented by Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan (as well as Hungary and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus as observers) together with Turkey, poses certain risks for the EAEU in general and Russia in particular. For example, Turkic-speaking CIS countries are taking advantage of various opportunities to increase their competitiveness and diversify their trade and economic relations, including through cooperation within the OTS. It is possible that the growing integration in the subregion will be used to weaken Russia's (and China's) political and economic influence.

In 2016, the value of EAEU's merchandise exports to OTS countries (Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan) decreased significantly from \$26.8 billion in the previous year to \$19.4 billion. In general, positive dynamics were observed in the second half of the 2010s up to and including 2019, when the indicator reached \$32.8 billion. In 2020, it fell by 15.2% to \$27.8 billion. In 2022, there was a sharp increase in merchandise exports from EAEU to OTS countries, up to \$80 billion.

In 2015–2016, the value of the EAEU's merchandise imports from OTS countries decreased from \$7.5 billion to \$5.8 billion. In 2016–2019, it steadily increased and in 2020 it decreased by 3.2%. In 2021–2022 imports were at \$13.4 billion and \$18.4 billion, respectively (see Figure 1, p. 98).

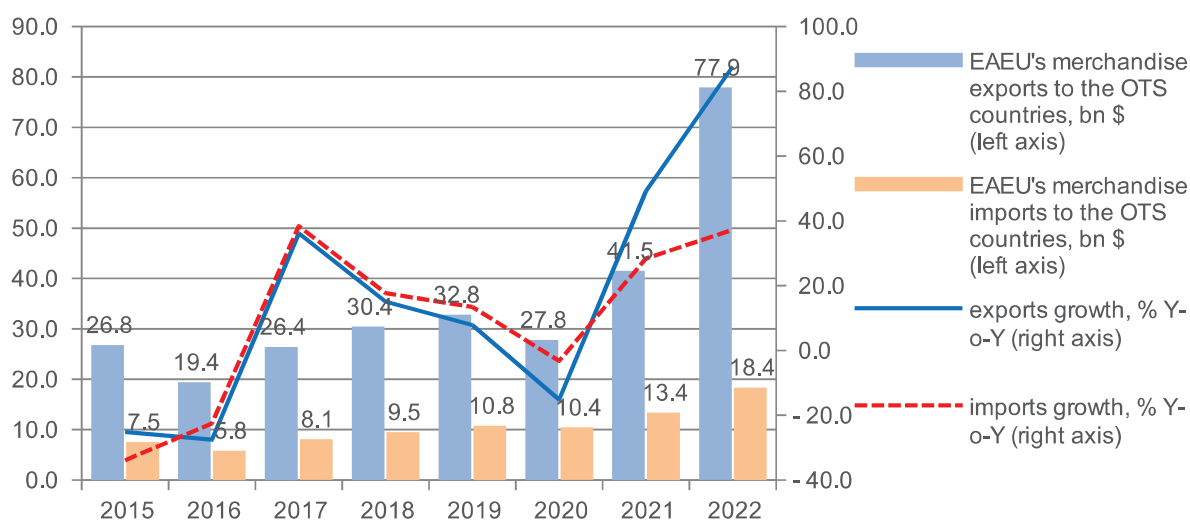


Figure 1. Dynamics of the EAEU's merchandise trade with the OTS countries¹¹

Note: * - Excluding EAEU members (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) within the OTS.

Sources: EEC, ITC Trade Map.

The EAEU's merchandise exports to OTS countries are based on fuel and energy products, metals and metal products, food and agricultural raw materials. The EAEU's imports from the OTS countries largely constitute agricultural products, textiles, textile

¹¹ Compiled using data from national statistical agencies and IMF data // <https://www.imf.org/>

products and footwear, as well as chemical products, machinery, equipment and vehicles (see Table 1, p. 99).

Table 1. Commodity structure of the EAEU's foreign trade with the OTS countries in 2015, 2019 and 2022 (in % of the total)¹²

HS codes	Commodity group	EAEU's exports to OTS countries			EAEU's imports from OTS countries		
		2015	2019	2022	2015	2019	2022
01-24	Foodstuffs and agricultural raw materials (except textile)	12.5	14.1	12.1	30.9	26.8	22.1
25-27	Mineral products	21.4	35.2	61.0	5.6	4.0	3.7
27	Fuel and energy products	20.6	33.9	60.2	4.4	2.7	2.8
28-40	Chemical industry products, rubber	5.0	5.3	4.5	10.9	12.0	15.1
41-43	Raw leather, fur and fur products	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.6	0.5
44-49	Wood and pulp and paper products	3.1	3.2	2.6	1.2	0.8	1.5
50-67	Textiles, textile products and footwear	0.3	0.4	0.2	19.5	23.9	22.4
71	Precious stones, metals and their products	0.1	0.2	1.3	0.5	0.3	0.5
72-83	Metals and metal products	21.7	16.7	14.8	6.1	6.6	6.7
84-85	Machinery and equipment	2.0	4.5	2.0	12.5	12.4	17.5
86-89	Transport vehicles	1.9	2.7	0.9	5.5	8.3	6.2
90-92	Technical tools and apparatus	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.9	0.4	0.5
68-70, 93-97, 99	Other goods	31.8	17.2	0.4	5.8	4.0	3.3

Note: * - Excluding EAEU members (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) within the OTS.

Sources: ITC Trade Map.

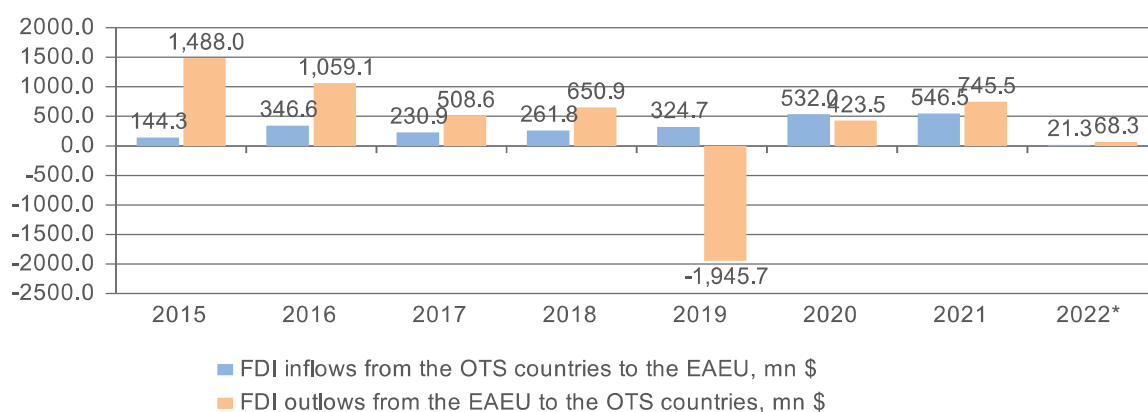


Figure 2. EAEU – OTS investment interaction in 2015–2022 (FDI flows)

Notes: * - excluding data on Russia; ** - excluding EAEU members (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) within the OTS.

Source: EEC¹³.

¹² Compiled using data from national statistical agencies and IMF data // <https://www.imf.org/>

¹³ Eurasian Economic Commission. Department of Statistics // https://eec.eaeunion.org/commission/departments/dep_stat/tradestat/analytics/

According to the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) data, inflows of FDI from the OTS countries to the EAEU peaked in 2020, when they value exceeded \$0.5 billion. The FDI outflows from the EAEU to OTS countries were significant in 2015–2016, amounting to \$1.5 billion and \$1.1 billion, respectively (see Figure 2, p. 99).

FDI inward stock in the EAEU from the OTS countries increased from \$1.5 billion in 2015 to \$5.3 billion in 2021, while accumulated FDI outflows from the EAEU to OTS countries changed from \$7.9 billion to \$7.8 billion. In 2022, excluding data for Kyrgyzstan and Russia, the values of these indicators were \$1.8 billion and \$0.5 billion, respectively (see Figure 3, p. 100).

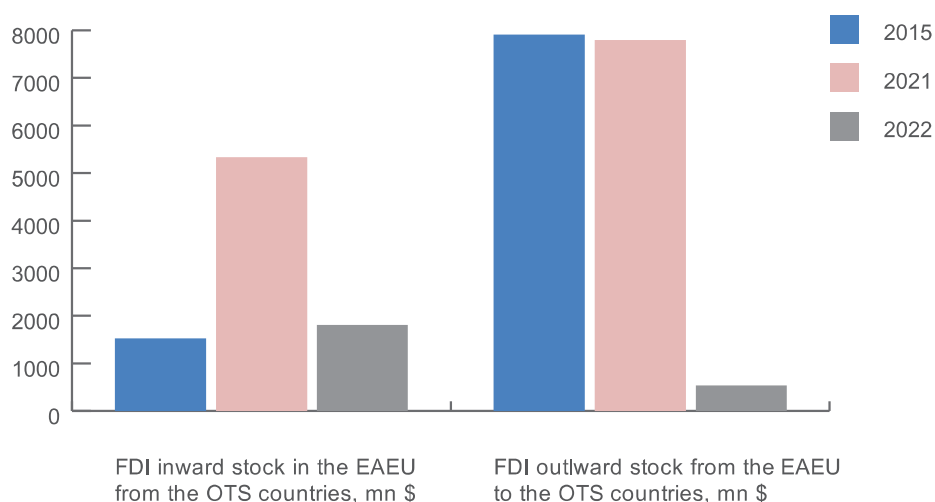


Figure 3. EAEU – OTS investment interaction in 2015–2022 (FDI stock)

Notes: * - excluding data for Kyrgyzstan (in 2022, excluding data for Kyrgyzstan and Russia);

** -excluding EAEU members (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) in the OTS.

Source: IMF.¹⁴

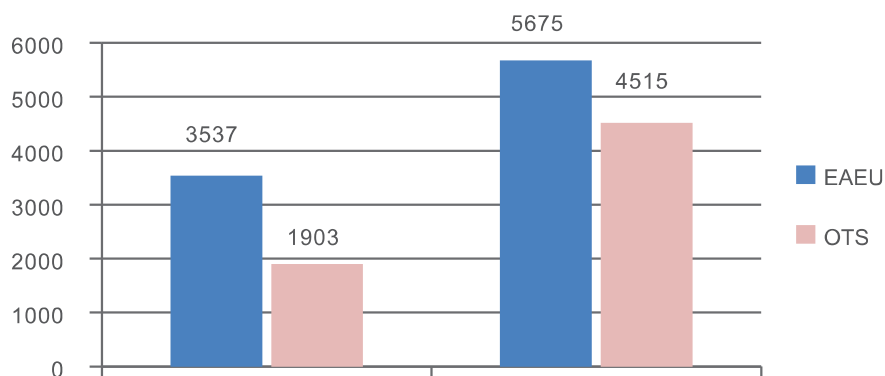


Figure 4. GDP (PPP) of EAEU and OTS countries in 2010 and 2022, in \$ billion¹⁵

Source: IMF.

¹⁴ Eurasian Economic Commission. Department of Statistics // https://eec.eaeunion.org/commission/departments/dep_stat/tradestat/analytics/

¹⁵ Compiled by the authors using data from national statistical agencies and IMF data // <https://www.imf.org/>

The size of the OTS member states' economy has grown significantly. Between 2010 and 2022, their aggregate GDP in PPP terms increased from \$1.9 trillion to \$4.5 trillion. In relation to the EAEU's GDP the indicator increased from 54% to 80%, i.e. there is a noticeable convergence of the economic potentials of the two integration associations (see Figure 4, p. 100).

The trade and economic potential of the OTS is primarily shaped by the leading player in the subregion, Turkey. Thanks to structural reforms implemented since the early 2000s, accompanied by large-scale domestic investment in infrastructure and qualitative restructuring of industry, an improved domestic investment climate, and increased external borrowing, Turkey has leapfrogged its socio-economic development. Over the past decade, the Turkish economy has been one of the fastest growing in the world, significantly outpacing the growth rate of the Russian economy. Over the period 2010–2022, Turkey's average GDP growth rate was 6.0% per year, while Russia's was 1.7% (see Figure 5, p. 101). For all their objective differences, the Russian and Turkish economies are becoming comparable. Turkey is rightly claiming the role of a geopolitical leader in the Middle East region, drawing the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia into its sphere of economic interest.

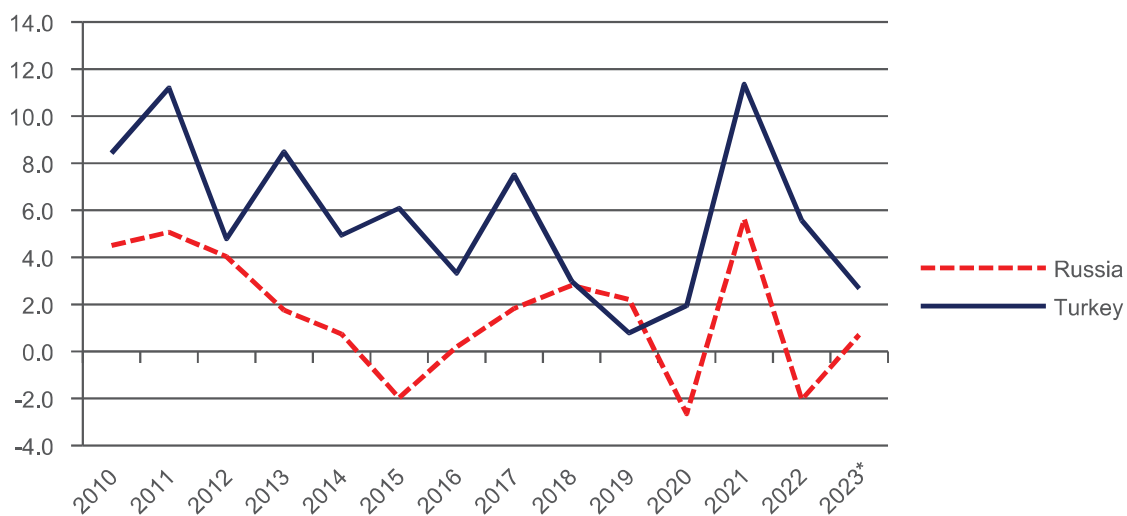


Figure 5. Russia's and Turkey's real GDP growth rates, 2010–2023, in % to previous year¹⁶

Note: * – IMF forecast.

Source: Rosstat and IMF.

The OTS is preparing to launch its Investment Fund to provide financial support to small and medium-sized enterprises in the Turkic-speaking states. The establishment of the fund was first considered by the OTS economy ministers in Baku in 2012. The fund's activities will help boost investment in the region, including the expansion of Turkey's capital into the Turkic-speaking CIS countries with relatively low-cost labor force.

¹⁶ Compiled by the authors using data from national statistical agencies and IMF data // <https://www.imf.org/>

So far, the level of investment cooperation between Turkey and these countries is insignificant. For example, as of April 1, 2023, the Turkey's accumulated investment in Kazakhstan amounted to \$1.74 billion or only 0.7% Kazakhstan's FDI inward stock.¹⁷

In December 2022, the customs services of the two countries successfully carried out a multimodal eTIR shipment by an Uzbek carrier from Uzbekistan (customs post Ark Buloq/Aviayuklar) to Azerbaijan (customs post Baku Airport/Baku Cargo Terminal) using the eTIR electronic guarantee on the UNECE platform. Earlier, a "digital TIR" project between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan was launched under the OTS in cooperation with the International Road Transport Union (IRU) and extended to Kyrgyzstan in March 2022. All this demonstrates the member states' commitment to practical cooperation and to promoting the digitalization of transport and transit procedures.

In order to facilitate the exchange of information not only on the movement of vehicles, but also on the movement of goods, the customs structures of the OTS member states signed an agreement "On the establishment of a simplified customs corridor between the governments of the Organization of Turkic States" at the Samarkand Summit in 2022.

Through transport communications, there are opportunities to organize a direct route for the transit of goods from Europe to China and vice versa through the territories of the OTS countries, which can compete with some projects on the formation of transport corridors in the Eurasia space.

OTS countries are actively continuing joint activities to strengthen regional integration through simplification, modernization, standardization and harmonization of customs procedures, further application of digital tools in customs, exchange of best practices and implementation of capacity building programs in areas of mutual interest. It is planned to continue the implementation of the Caravanserai project, which will enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of the Trans-Caspian International Middle East–West Corridor by ensuring the smooth operation of customs and border crossing points.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the interaction between the Turkic-speaking states has developed quite successfully over the past thirty years. The OTS seeks to participate actively in both the economic and other spheres of activity of the CA countries. The organization is becoming a serious competitor to the EAEU, the CSTO and the SCO, which goes against the interests of Eurasian economic integration and, first and foremost, Russia. The influence of the OTS on the CA countries and the competition between the EAEU and the OTS can be expected to grow. The OTS is capable of countering the foreign economic interests of the EAEU with its own economic interests, but it is unlikely to be able to withstand such competition, mainly because the economic ties between the EAEU countries, such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, are in many respects much deeper with Russia than with the other OTS countries. The deepening integration of the OTS and the strengthening of Turkish

¹⁷ National Bank of Kazakhstan, section "Statistics of the external sector - International investment position" // <https://www.nationalbank.kz/ru/news/mezhdunarodnaya-investicionnaya-poziciya>

influence in the CA countries may lead to a conflict of integration processes of these countries in the EAEU. At the same time, contradictions arising from the membership of the OTS states in other blocs are unlikely. Strengthening trade and economic relations between OTS member states through the use of the simplified customs corridor and transit potential remains a serious risk for the prospects of Eurasian integration.

However, the OTS and the EAEU can find common ground and fruitfully cooperate on many issues, both economic and political. It is important to find a certain balance of interests between the OTS and the EAEU in the system of organizing customs regulation and foreign economic activity in general, and possibly in politics in the future. All this requires regular negotiations between the participants of the two organizations in a full format in order to reconcile the foreign economic interests of each member state. The ongoing integration processes in the OTS raise the question for the EAEU of the advisability of creating a unified program to ensure economic security in order to reduce emerging risks.

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