



UDC: 5503.02

<https://doi.org/10.59849/2409-4838.2026.3.96>

TURKSOY: AS A KEY FACTOR OF CULTURAL COOPERATION IN THE TURKIC WORLD

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TURKSOY is one of the key international institutions playing an important role in the development of cultural cooperation across the Turkic world. Established in 1993, the organization operates to preserve, develop, and promote shared cultural values among Turkic states and peoples on the international stage. International festivals, conferences, exhibitions, and cultural days organized within the framework of TURKSOY strengthen cultural dialogue among Turkic states and communities. The organization's activities such as the international commemoration of prominent figures of the Turkic world, the implementation of the "Cultural Capital of the Turkic World" project, and the promotion of shared cultural heritage at the UNESCO level make a significant contribution to reinforcing cultural cooperation.

The article emphasizes that, in the contemporary period, TURKSOY's activities are closely linked to the processes of cooperation developing within the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). The cultural projects implemented by TURKSOY, as well as its efforts to preserve and promote common heritage, provide moral and cultural support to the objectives of the OTS. In this regard, TURKSOY functions as the cultural pillar of the Organization of Turkic States, ensuring long-term cooperation among Turkic states and peoples.

Keywords: cultural diplomacy, organization, cultural projects, common cultural heritage, integration

INTRODUCTION

Culture is precisely one of the most fundamental indicators reflecting the identity and history of any nation. In the contemporary era, marked by the rapid intensification of international integration, the preservation and development of cultural heritage carry strategic importance at both national and regional levels. From this perspective, the Turkic world occupies a distinct position. This is because Turkic states and peoples residing in various geographical regions are bound to one another by a common language, history, traditions, and cultural values.

Following the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, the Republic of Azerbaijan, which gained its independence, engaged in extensive international activities for the successful implementation of cultural relations, as in all other fields of engagement, and signed crucial agreements on the development of cultural cooperation with various states. From this perspective, the new stage of relations with the Turkic world played a vital role in foreign policy. With the emergence of independent Turkic states after the fall of the USSR, the initial steps for cooperation were taken, extensive work was carried out in the humanitarian and cultural spheres, and simultaneously, congresses of the Turkic states were convened.

In this direction, TURKSOY, which was established with the purpose of promoting cultural cooperation among Turkic states and peoples, is considered one of the primary platforms. The organization's activities are not limited solely to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage; at the same time, they serve to strengthen mutual cooperation and friendship within the Turkic world. Through various events, exhibitions, festivals, and projects, TURKSOY creates opportunities for



Turkic states and peoples to share their cultures with one another and strengthens their common cultural identity.

MAIN PART

The Establishment of TURKSOY and Its Fields of Activity

TURKSOY (initially named the “Joint Administration of Turkic Culture and Arts” and later called the International Organization of Turkic Culture) has played a major role in the development of Azerbaijan’s cultural relations with Turkic states and peoples. TURKSOY acts as a coordinator of the spiritual and cultural relations among the independent Turkic states of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Türkiye, as well as semi-autonomous Turkic entities in other countries. The agreement to establish TURKSOY, the first cooperation organization founded in the Turkic world, was reached during negotiations held between representatives of the Turkic peoples in Istanbul and Baku in 1992. On July 12, 1993, at a meeting held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, the agreement “On the Operating Principles and Establishment of TURKSOY” was signed among the independent Turkic states [3, p. 1]. The republics of Bashkortostan, Tatarstan, Khakassia, Tuva, and Chuvashia of the Russian Federation, the autonomous region of Gagauz-Yeri, as well as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus joined this agreement as observer countries [8, p. 720]. Following this, TURKSOY officially commenced its activities, and the foundation for the development of friendship and cultural unity relations among all Turkic peoples was laid.

It should be noted that TURKSOY draws upon the shared languages, cultures, histories, and arts of the Turkic-speaking countries. Operating to introduce these shared elements to the world, TURKSOY continues its activities by drawing strength from Ismail bey Gasprinsky’s ideology of “Unity in tongue, deed, and thought,” aiming to unite Turkic states and peoples on a single platform [17, p. 3]. In particular, TURKSOY annually brings together painters, photographers, artists, composers, poets, scholars, media representatives, theater troupes, and music groups from the Turkic world. At this point, it is necessary to recall the instructive counsel of Dede Korkut: “First, you must cultivate this land. Second, you must protect the land from enemies. If you do not cultivate the land, there is no need to protect it. If you do not protect the land, it is not worth cultivating!” [16, p. 21]. Indeed, this is precisely what culture is. To possess it, one must protect it, and at the same time, pay attention to it. If you do not introduce your culture, it is not worth protecting. If you do not protect it, it is not worth introducing.

The foreign policy course formulated by the National Leader Heydar Aliyev played a decisive role in the process of expanding the activities of TURKSOY as a cultural cooperation platform of the Turkic world. Heydar Aliyev consistently supported the preservation of the history, native languages, literature, culture and art, and traditions of the Turkic peoples. From this perspective, he always paid special attention to Azerbaijan’s active participation in the work of the TURKSOY organization. Thus, the respect shown toward national culture and spiritual heritage by H. Aliyev, who played a major role in the comprehensive development of Azerbaijani culture, manifested itself in all areas he addressed. In one of his speeches, H. Aliyev stated: “A nation is recognized, respected, and distinguished among the peoples of the world by many characteristics. The highest and greatest of these characteristics is culture” [5, p. 40]. It should be noted that throughout all his periods in power, H. Aliyev always kept the development of our culture at the center of attention.

As a logical continuation of the strategic line formulated at the state level, TURKSOY, by cooperating with international organizations, particularly with UNESCO, has ensured the promotion of the shared cultural heritage of the Turkic peoples on a global scale. The signing of the agreement “On Mutual Cooperation” between TURKSOY and UNESCO in Istanbul on June 8, 1996, carried special significance in this direction. Thus, the agreement included provisions reflecting broad principles of cooperation between both organizations in the fields of culture, art, science, and education



for the preservation of the historical and cultural heritage of Turkic-speaking countries and peoples [9, p. 265].

During the IV Summit of the Heads of Turkic States held on October 21-22, 1996, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, when the Tashkent Declaration was signed among the presidents, TURKSOY was tasked with preparing a calendar of historical days related to Turkic civilization, and exploring the possibility of involving international organizations in the field of culture, particularly UNESCO, in holiday celebrations. It was also instructed to prepare an action plan for the joint commemoration of the 1450th anniversary of the Great Turkic Khaganate [14, p. 170]. Considered the UNESCO of the Turkic world, TURKSOY cooperates not only with UNESCO but also with international organizations such as the UN, CoE, ICESCO, and CIS.

It should be noted that alongside the scope of TURKSOY's activities, Azerbaijan's literary and artistic cooperation with Turkic states and peoples also developed rapidly. Congresses also played a special role in expanding the relations of cooperation. At the III Congress of Writers of the Turkic World held in Baku on November 6, 1996, the National Leader Heydar Aliyev stated the following: "Today, very remarkable events are taking place in the life of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In the first half of the day, the III Congress of Writers of the Turkic World opened in Baku, and in the second half, the next meeting of the TURKSOY International Organization begins its work. Over the past period, TURKSOY has come a long way, achieved good results, and demonstrated to both Turkic-speaking states and the world that it has a very vital and grand future" [7, p. 23]. As can be seen, Heydar Aliyev attached special importance to the cultural and literary unity of the Turkic world. His high appraisal of TURKSOY's activities is a clear indicator of Azerbaijan's active and initiative-taking position within the Turkic world.

In particular, the holding of the VII Congress of Friendship, Brotherhood, and Cooperation of Turkic States and Peoples on July 2, 1999, in Denizli, Türkiye, acted as a logical continuation of the previous congresses and distinguished itself from the earlier ones. During the speeches at this congress, which was dedicated to the scientific and cultural integration of the Turkic world, it was especially emphasized that with the dissolution of the USSR, the newly emerged Turkic states and their historical relations of friendship among brotherly states and peoples had entered a significant stage.

In the final document adopted at the last session of the congress held on June 4, the importance of further intensifying scientific relations, student exchanges, and cultural ties among Turkic states, training highly qualified personnel, continuously organizing annual olympiads in the fields of culture and sports, and establishing the Academy of Sciences of the Turkic World was explicitly noted. In addition, it was decided at the congress to effectively utilize joint capabilities for the international protection of the rights of Turkic peoples in Mountainous Karabakh, Northern Iraq, Western Thrace, Syria, Kosovo, and Eastern Turkestan, and for a fair resolution [18, p. 84]. This document demonstrates that the adopted decisions were aimed both at strengthening scientific-cultural integration and at defending the rights of Turkic states and peoples at the international level.

It should be noted that studying the culture, history, and literature of the Turkic peoples and promoting them globally is one of the primary directions of TURKSOY's activity. In this direction, as a result of TURKSOY's activities, the adoption of the decision regarding the celebration of the Novruz holiday as a common holiday of the Turkic peoples plays a special role. The holding of the VIII Congress of Friendship, Brotherhood, and Cooperation of Turkic States and Communities on March 24, 2000, in Samsun, Türkiye, was of great assistance in this field. More than 500 delegations from 33 Turkic states, autonomous republics, autonomous regions, and communities participated in the congress [19, p. 147]. Cultural problems of a regional scale, as well as crucial issues related to cooperation in all fields, were discussed at the congress.

Alongside the state policy directed toward the preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage of the Turkic world, the "Heydar Aliyev Foundation" also plays a vital role in this field. Today, the "Heydar Aliyev Foundation" has rendering immense services toward the realization of Heydar



Aliyev's cultural policy. Thus, under the leadership of the President of the "Heydar Aliyev Foundation," Member of Parliament, and Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO and ISESCO, Mrs. Mehriban Aliyeva, action programs for the development of culture and art are being implemented. The events dedicated by the Foundation to the global recognition of Azerbaijani culture and the promotion of our national-spiritual values are highly significant. As a result of the Foundation's services, our cultural pearls such as "Mugham," "The Art of Azerbaijani Ashiq," and the "Novruz" holiday have been inscribed by UNESCO onto the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity [5, p. 68]. In this regard, the celebration of the Novruz holiday by TURKSOY in 2010 in Paris, the capital of France, at the headquarters of UNESCO, carries special significance [5, p. 39]. These facts demonstrate that Heydar Aliyev's policy in the field of culture is being systematically continued today. The activities of the "Heydar Aliyev Foundation" contribute significantly to the international promotion of Azerbaijani culture and the preservation of our national-spiritual heritage.

Cultural Projects and Initiatives Implemented Within the Framework of TURKSOY

Since the inception of TURKSOY, the organization of various traditional events among Turkic states and peoples has carried special significance. This includes the joint celebration of pan-Turkic holidays, the anniversaries of prominent figures bestowed upon world culture by the Turkic peoples, the milestones of national epics, key historical events that occurred in the lives of our nations, and other events. For example, in the late 1990s, major cultural events were held to commemorate the 1,300th anniversary of the *Book of Dede Korkut*, the ancient heroic epic of the Turkic peoples, the 1,000th anniversary of the *Manas* epic, the 150th anniversary of the Ashig Alasgar, and the 100th anniversary of *Leyli and Majnun*, the first mugham opera of the East composed by the great Azerbaijani composer Uzeyir Hajibeyov. These celebrations demonstrated that the cultures of the Turkic peoples share common roots [11, p. 202]. The joint celebration of these anniversaries and the shared cultural heritage reflects the strength of the spiritual unity among the Turkic peoples.

It should be noted that following the organization of TURKSOY, very crucial literary and cultural events took place in the lives of the Turkic states and peoples. The holding of the Summits of the Heads of State of Turkic-Speaking Countries has made great contributions to the work of TURKSOY and to the preservation and further strengthening of pan-Turkic culture. Over this past period, both bilateral and multilateral cultural relations among Turkic states have been strengthened. At the VIII Summit of the Heads of State of Turkic-Speaking Countries held on November 17, 2006, in Antalya, Türkiye, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, delivered a speech and highly appraised the activities of TURKSOY in bringing Turkic peoples closer to one another [6, p. 66].

The establishment of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States (CCTS) at the initiative of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, has been one of the crucial steps taken toward the integration of the Turkic world. According to the Nakhchivan Agreement signed at the IX Summit of the Heads of State of Turkic-Speaking Countries held on October 3, 2009, in the city of Nakhchivan, the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States (Turkic Council) was established by Azerbaijan, Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. The primary objective of the Council consisted of promoting comprehensive cooperation among Turkic states [12, p. 74]. According to Article 4 of the Nakhchivan Agreement, the Organization of Turkic States, as its affiliated institution, cooperates within the framework of TURKSOY for the purpose of developing cooperation in the fields of science, education, culture, and art, achieving international recognition of the common values of the Turkic world, and strengthening cultural integration among Turkic states [1].

During the summit, President Ilham Aliyev stated in his speech: "I am confident that the result of the summit will be excellent... We are united by a shared history and historical cultural roots... Since our cultures are closely interconnected, cooperation in the humanitarian field must deve-



lop even more rapidly. In this field, I would like to highly appraise the activities of the TURKSOY organization. In the coming years, we must further strengthen the activities of TURKSOY. We propose the creation of a TURKSOY fund. Its financial security should be ensured, and this fund should be engaged in the restoration of historical monuments and the development of intercultural relations throughout all Turkic lands. In short, the fund should bring our peoples even closer together through practically effective works. There are many Turkic-speaking peoples in the world, and friendship and brotherhood among Turkic-speaking peoples will also strengthen our countries” [10, p. 7]. The speech of President Ilham Aliyev demonstrates that cooperation among Turkic states and peoples, based on a shared history and culture, must be strengthened, and this unity must be further reinforced with practical steps.

The primary objectives of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States, as defined by the Nakhchivan Agreement, included such matters as strengthening mutual trust among the parties, maintaining peace in the region and the world, achieving economic growth, social and cultural development, as well as expanding mutual relations in the fields of science, education, and culture. The activities carried out in this direction manifested themselves clearly in the work of a number of organs and organizations affiliated with the Turkic Council. It should be noted that the direct integration of TURKSOY, which is one of those organizations, into the Turkic Council on the very day of the council’s establishment carried special significance.

Following the establishment of the Turkic Council, Azerbaijan’s international cultural prestige was further strengthened. The holding of the XXVI meeting of the TURKSOY Permanent Council in Baku on October 16-17 of that year, within the framework of the proclamation of Baku as the Capital of Islamic Culture in 2009, is a clear manifestation of this. At the meeting, decisions were adopted regarding the implementation of a general program for the preservation and development of the cultural values of Turkic states, and the renaming of TURKSOY as the International Organization of Turkic Culture [2].

Starting from 2010, based on the practice of UNESCO, TURKSOY laid the foundation for the tradition of celebrating the anniversaries of prominent literary, cultural, and artistic figures of the Turkic world and, accordingly, declaring commemorative years dedicated to these personalities [13, p. 79]. Thus, 2010 was declared as the “Year of Ahmed Zeki Validi Togan” on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Bashkortostan historian, Turkologist, and leader of the Bashkir independence movement Ahmed Zeki; 2011 as the “Year of Abdullah Tukay” (Tatarstan, RF); 2012 as the “Year of Mirza Fatali Akhundzade” (Azerbaijan) and the “Year of Nikolai Katanov” (Khakassia, RF); 2014 as the “Year of Magtymguly Pyragy” (Turkmenistan); 2015 as the “Year of Haldun Tanner” (Türkiye) and the “Year of Semen Kadyshchev” (Khakassia, RF); 2017 as the “Year of Molla Panah Vagif” (Azerbaijan); 2018 as the “Year of Gara Garayev” (Azerbaijan), the “Year of Chingiz Aitmatov” (Kyrgyzstan), and the “Year of Magjan Jumabayev” (Kazakhstan); 2019 as the “Year of Ashik Veysel” (Türkiye) and the “Year of Imadaddin Nasimi” (Azerbaijan); 2020 as the “Year of Abai Kunanbayev” (Kazakhstan); 2021 as the “Year of Nizami Ganjavi” (Azerbaijan) and the “Year of Yunus Emre” (Türkiye); 2022 as the “Year of Toktogul Satylganov” (Kyrgyzstan), the “Year of Fikret Amirov” (Azerbaijan), and the “Year of Suleyman Celebi” (Türkiye); 2024 as the “Year of Magtymguly Pyragy” (Turkmenistan); and 2026 as the “Year of Ziya Gokalp” (Türkiye), and solemn anniversary events for the mentioned personalities were held [16, p. 66]. Thereby, their creative works are promoted throughout the entire Turkic world.

One of TURKSOY’s most acclaimed initiatives, the “Cultural Capital of the Turkic World” project, has been a highly remarkable event for the Turkic world. Aimed at promoting our countries and cities possessing rich cultural heritage to the world, this project was supported at the Summit of the Heads of State of Turkic-Speaking Countries held in Istanbul in 2011 [4, p. 302]. Within this framework, Astana (Kazakhstan) in 2012, Eskisehir (Türkiye) in 2013, Kazan (Tatarstan) in 2014, Merv (Turkmenistan) in 2015, Sheki (Azerbaijan) in 2016, Turkistan (Kazakhstan) in 2017, Kasta-



monu (Türkiye) in 2018, Osh (Kyrgyzstan) in 2019, Khiva (Uzbekistan) in 2020, Bursa (Türkiye) in 2022, Shusha (Azerbaijan) in 2023, Anau (Turkmenistan) in 2024, Aktau (Kazakhstan) in 2025, and Andijan (Uzbekistan) for 2026 were selected as the cultural capitals of the Turkic world [16, p. 32]. This project carries great significance in terms of promoting our cities at the international level, as well as further strengthening cultural relations among Turkic states and peoples.

The International Organization of Turkic Culture has also achieved significant accomplishments in the fields of science and education. From this perspective, TURKSOY's cooperation strategy with higher education institutions carries special significance. Thus, the cooperation documents signed by TURKSOY with the Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University, the Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University, the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, and the Girne, Girne American, Eastern Mediterranean, and Near East Universities of Northern Cyprus create great opportunities for the activities of this organization [15, p. 97]. In addition, the organization of prestigious events by TURKSOY, such as the Photographers' Meeting, Painters' Meeting, Opera Days, Press Awards, Congress of Literary Magazines of the Turkic World, Sculptors' Meeting, Silk Road Festival, Silk Road Poets' Meeting, Turkic World Museums Forum, and the Leathercraft Festival of the Turkic World, also carries special significance [15, p. 130]. These activities demonstrate that TURKSOY systematically develops mutual relations in the field of education, just as it does in the fields of culture and art, among Turkic states and peoples.

The establishment and activity of TURKSOY once again confirm that multilateral literary and cultural cooperation among our peoples and countries has yielded significant results, primarily in the direction of the restoration, preservation, and further development of our shared culture, history, and national-spiritual values. From this perspective, the creation of TURKSOY has been highly successful for the purpose of studying, preserving, and interconnecting the national-cultural heritage of Turkic states and peoples.

CONCLUSION

Consequently, TURKSOY is one of the primary institutions playing a vital role in terms of the preservation, development, and international promotion of shared cultural values in the Turkic world. The festivals, conferences, anniversary events, and scholarly publications organized by the institution, together with the commemoration of prominent figures in the literature, culture, and arts of the Turkic world, the designation of commemorative years in their honor, and cultural initiatives such as the *Cultural Capital of the Turkic World*, further strengthen the spiritual unity among the Turkic states and peoples. TURKSOY's activities demonstrate that a shared language, literature, art, and historical heritage are among the strongest factors uniting the Turkic states and peoples. At the same time, cultural cooperation creates a reliable foundation for political and economic relations, strengthening friendship and strategic partnership among states. In the modern era, the activity of TURKSOY serves to ensure long-term cultural integration among Turkic states and peoples by strengthening the cooperation processes shaped within the framework of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). From this perspective, the activity of the TURKSOY organization carries vital importance not only for today but also for the future development prospects of Turkic states and peoples.

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TÜRKSÖY: TÜRK DÜNYASINDA MƏDƏNİ ƏMƏKDAŞLIĞIN ƏSAS FAKTORU KİMİ

F.N. Şahmaliyeva

TÜRKSÖY türk dünyasında mədəni əməkdaşlığın inkişafında mühüm rol oynayan beynəlxalq təşkilatlardan biridir. 1993-cü ildə yaradılmış təşkilat türk dövlətləri və xalqları arasında ortaq mədəni dəyərlərin qorunması, inkişafı və dünyaya tanıtılması istiqamətində fəaliyyət göstərir. TÜRKSÖY çərçivəsində keçirilən beynəlxalq festivallar, konfranslar, sərgilər və mədəniyyət günləri türk dövlətləri və xalqları arasında mədəni dialoqu gücləndirir. Təşkilat tərəfindən türk dünyasının görkəmli şəxsiyyətlərinin yubileylərinin beynəlxalq səviyyədə qeyd edilməsi, “Türk Dünyasının Mədəniyyət Paytaxtı” layihəsinin həyata keçirilməsi və ortaq mədəni irsin UNESCO səviyyəsində tanıtılması mədəni əməkdaşlığın möhkəmlənməsinə böyük töhfə verir.

Məqalədə vurğulanır ki, müasir dövrdə TÜRKSÖY-un fəaliyyəti Türk Dövlətləri Təşkilatı (TDT) daxilində formalaşan əməkdaşlıq prosesləri ilə sıx bağlıdır. TÜRKSÖY tərəfindən həyata keçirilən mədəni layihələr, ortaq irsin qorunması və tanıtılması istiqamətində görülən işlər TDT-nin məqsədlərinə mənəvi dəstək verir. Bu baxımdan TÜRKSÖY Türk Dövlətləri Təşkilatının mədəni dayacağı kimi türk dövlətləri və xalqları arasında uzunmüddətli əməkdaşlığı təmin edir.

Açar sözlər: *mədəni diplomatiya, təşkilat, mədəni layihələr, ortaq mədəni irs, integrasiya.*



ТЮРКСОЙ: КАК ОСНОВНОЙ ФАКТОР КУЛЬТУРНОГО СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА В ТЮРКСКОМ МИРЕ

Ф.Н. Шахмалиева

ТЮРКСОЙ является одной из международных организаций, играющих важную роль в развитии культурного сотрудничества в тюркском мире. Основанная в 1993 году, организация осуществляет деятельность, направленную на сохранение, развитие и продвижение общих культурных ценностей тюркских государств и народов на международном уровне. Международные фестивали, конференции, выставки и дни культуры, проводимые в рамках ТЮРКСОЙ, способствуют укреплению культурного диалога между тюркскими государствами и народами. Отмечание на международном уровне юбилеев выдающихся деятелей тюркского мира, реализация проекта “Культурная столица тюркского мира”, а также продвижение общего культурного наследия на уровне ЮНЕСКО вносят значительный вклад в укрепление культурного сотрудничества.

В статье подчёркивается, что в современный период деятельность ТЮРКСОЙ тесно связана с процессами сотрудничества, формирующимися в рамках Организации тюркских государств (ОТГ). Культурные проекты, реализуемые ТЮРКСОЙ, а также работа по сохранению и популяризации общего наследия оказывают духовную поддержку целям ОТГ. В этом контексте ТЮРКСОЙ выступает культурной опорой Организации тюркских государств, обеспечивая долгосрочное сотрудничество между тюркскими государствами и народами.

Ключевые слова: *культурная дипломатия, организация, культурные проекты, общее культурное наследие, интеграция.*