

# Kazakhstan and the Turkic Integration

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## Abstract

*Since gaining independence in 1991, Kazakhstan has actively pursued friendly relations with other nations, particularly with fellow Turkic-speaking states. This paper examines Kazakhstan's role in Turkic integration, its current and future participation levels, and the potential benefits of Turkic unity for the country. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, including interviews with teachers and surveys among residents of Astana. Secondary research explores existing literature on Turkic integration and Kazakhstan's involvement.*

*The findings suggest that Kazakhstan plays a significant role in Turkic integration, with a majority of respondents viewing the level of integration as high and Kazakhstan's role as substantial. The economy emerges as a crucial sphere of cooperation, with many respondents favoring the development of economic ties. Additionally, there is notable interest in political-military cooperation, including the possibility of Kazakhstan leaving existing alliances to form a Turkic military alliance.*

*Overall, Turkic integration is seen as a valuable endeavor for Kazakhstan, offering geopolitical independence and economic benefits. However, the study acknowledges limitations, such as the sample size and geographic scope, and suggests future research to include a more diverse range of participants and explore Turkic integration from the perspectives of other Turkic nations.*

*The research aligns with existing studies and supports the notion that Kazakhstan's active participation in Turkic integration has strategic importance for the country. It underscores the significance of strengthening ties with fellow Turkic-speaking states and pursuing a deeper level of cooperation, especially in the economic and political-military spheres.*

## I. Introduction

Kazakhstan since gaining independence in 1991, has been actively developing friendly relations with other nations. One of the first countries with which

our country established diplomatic relations was Turkey. In 2009, the Turkish Council was formed, which later transformed into the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States during its 8th summit. Our country has established close

cooperation with Uzbekistan, and strong economic and political ties have been forged with other Turkic-speaking countries, such as Turkey, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan. This process of Turkic integration is often referred to as the "Turkic Council" formation, but its implications go beyond just political cooperation. However, in general, does this integration benefit our country?

Kazakhstan's foreign policy is multi-vector strategy, and thus, Turkic integration is important to be one of the core directions of this strategy. It is evident that Kazakhstan's foreign policy aims to enhance economic ties and military alliances through Turkic integration. This is evident from the establishment of diplomatic relations with Uzbekistan and the news of joint military exercises with Turkey in July 2023. Each step in Kazakhstan's geopolitical neutrality reflects the country's future aspirations. The Kazakh government pays close attention to strengthen its ties with Turkic-speaking countries, as it understands the potential benefits and changes this integration could bring.

This research will analyze about Kazakhstan being the leading country in Turkic integration process. This Turkic union fulfills strategic development of Kazakhstan's foreign policy and will benefit at least in terms of geopolitics.

Nowadays, Kazakhstan is actively participating in integrating Turkic nations and thus, the purpose of the research: To compare Kazakhstan's current and future participation levels in Turkic integration and determine the potential benefits of Turkic unity for our country.

There are some of the question that will be covered throughout the research:

1. The main aim of the research is to identify Kazakhstan's role in Turkic integration.

2. How will Kazakhstan's level of participation in Turkic integration change in the future?

3. Are there tangible benefits of Turkic unity for Kazakhstan?

## **II. Context**

[1] G.Telebayev in his research states that "the idea of Turkic integration in the modern format has at least one and half century long history. Even before gaining the independence, some steps of turkic integration were done in Kazakhstan." The new idea of Turkic integration has its roots in the 1920s. What is more, the author states that the Turkic integration "started to turn into a valuable political factor in international relationships, one reasons of it is the fact that The Turkic Council has obtained observer status in the United Nations Security Council.." Telebayev in his work totally agrees that the process of integration in Kazakhstan has a long history and strongly believes that a lot of steps were done, especially during the rule of its first president Nursultan Nazarbayev.

[2] M. Iembekova in her study states that in 2021, Turkic integration has been upgraded into a higher level. The Turkic Council was established in 2009 to promote cooperation among Turkic-speaking countries.The cooperation among Turkic countries has undergone three stages of development: 1992-2006, 2006-2021, 2021-present.The first stage laid the foundations for Turkic integration and the establishment of mutual relations.The second stage was characterized by the development of cooperation and the creation of new structures.The third stage is associated with the organization of Turkic states and a commitment to strengthening relations.Turkic countries are developing cooperation in the economic, political, and cultural spheres.The development of Turkic integration contributes to peace, the stability of international relations, and the

advancement of global civilization. Kazakhstan's president Tokayev [3] declared that Kazakhstan must enhance its Turkic identity with a slogan of "TURKTIME". There are 8 main directions: "Traditions, Unification, Reforms, Knowledge, Trust, Investments, Mediation, and Energy". These directions are not only the parts of culture, but also relate to the politics and economics. Also, in the summary she notes that "it is very important for turning Turkic world into a significant economic, cultural-humanitarian spaces in the XXI century. It is beneficial for every nation to develop Turkic integration.

[4] E. Turalin in his article wrote not only about the integration in sphere of economy and culture, but also in politics. At the beginning of the 20th century, Kazakhstan and Turkey established political, economic, and cultural ties. Turkey actively supported Kazakhstan during periods of political and economic change. Turkey and Kazakhstan are developing cooperation in the military, economic, and cultural spheres. Bilateral relations are beneficial for both countries, and their development will continue to strengthen. Turkey aims to enhance its status as a leading country in the "Turkic world." Kazakhstan and Turkey are fostering cooperation in the fields of education and cultural exchange. Strengthening bilateral ties contributes to regional economic development and political progress. What is more, he wrote that "cooperation between two countries [Kazakhstan and Turkey] in military was developed." This is the true evidence of wide range of the Kazakh-Turkish cooperation.

[5] S. Mukhamedzhanova and A. Shaldarbekova wrote a research about the importance of cultural cooperation for the preservation and development of the Turkic world. Turkic cultural integration is a part of Turkic integration focused on the sectoral aspect of collaboration. Motivational and procedural aspects of Turkic integration are interconnected and

interdependent. Also, they noted that Turkic integration has gone through three stages: institutionalization, transformation into the Turkic Council, and the Organization of Turkic States. This means that the cooperation between Turkic states has developed over a long period of time. At the end, the authors see the future of integrative cooperation among Turkic-speaking countries as linked to the enhancement of the effectiveness of existing institutions and mechanisms.

[6] Avdju in her research finalized that "Kazakhstan and Turkey are helping in developing the Turkic civilization dialogue and mutual security in the Eurasian region. Kazakhstan and Turkey are two Turkic wings of the Eurasia." Economic relations between Kazakhstan and Turkey are actively advancing. In 2022, 15 agreements and 21 contracts were signed, totaling 5.3 billion dollars. Cultural cooperation between Kazakhstan and Turkey is developing in the fields of education, science, and culture. Tourism is an important area of collaboration, with Turkey being a popular tourist destination. Kazakhstan and Turkey support each other in the reform process and aim to strengthen bilateral ties.

[7] S. Abzal states in the interview that the tendency of the idea of creating a Great Turan (a united states of Turkic nations) is increasing in Turkic states. Abzal stated that "Even if you want or do not want, the tendency will continue." There are many reasons for this: The rise of Turkey's power and economy and the upgrade of the economies of other Turkic nations into a new level. Also he noted that "There are many words are being spoken, but there are few real acts." The reasons of it: the agreements may not be signed by each government's parts (president, parliament, etc.). Now the integration does not fulfill the words spoken at summits, but in the future it will be more developed.

10-20 years is too small, 50-60 years the integration would reach European level of integration.

[8] M. Nazerke states that “We lost 30 years, being scared of Russia”. Now as a Turkic states, we should not lost another 30 more years. It was valued “The change of the alphabet is the first signs of cultural revolution. Turkey, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan had been using Latin alphabet, while Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan Cyrillic. But several years ago, the government of Kazakhstan decided to shift Kazakh language system from the Cyrillic to a new Latin one. What is more, the author states that the military alliance between the Turkic states must be created in order to keep stability and peace on their territories.

[9] B.S. Sarsenbayev in his research stated that integration in modern world is an act of participating in the globalization process. Turkey, in opinion of Sarsenbayev, plays a key role in integration process. The activity can be exemplified by a summit hold in 1992, a year after Post-Soviet nations got their independences, and the topic of the summit was about to create an economic union. Turkish TV started to occupy the television media in the post soviet Turkic states in order to show the Turkish model of development, which could make the integration process softer and easier. The author states that the water and political scandal problems are decreasing the integration temps, but believes that nations should work together.

### III. Methods

Secondary research method was about relying on academic articles related to the Turkic integration process and the role of Kazakhstan in it.

Primary research method includes a survey. One online survey to conduct this research was created on the platform Google Forms. Each participant was notified that the answers will be collected for this

research purpose only. The questions and answers were in both: Kazakh and English language versions. This study does not cause any risk to the participants, as it does not collect any personal data. The survey would be held among adults who live in Astana.

Necessary materials for the research are as following: Internet for surfing information and organizing the survey.

### IV. Results

Figure 1 shows that 57 adults who live in Astana were surveyed. The first question was about how strong do they think the relations between Kazakhstan and Turkic nations. Only 4 answered as low (1-3), 24 as average (4-7), and the majority 25 as high (8-10). The medium was 7 and mean 7.088.

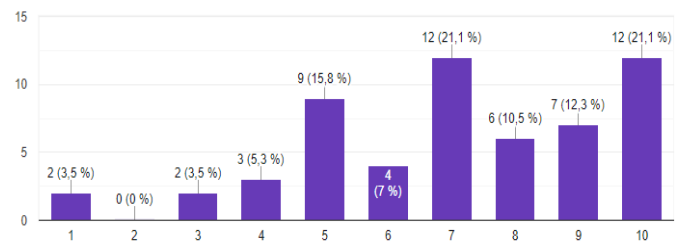


Figure 1: Result of how strong integration is.

The figure 2 shows that the far majority 73.7% want Kazakhstan to improve their relationships with these countries, and no one is against.

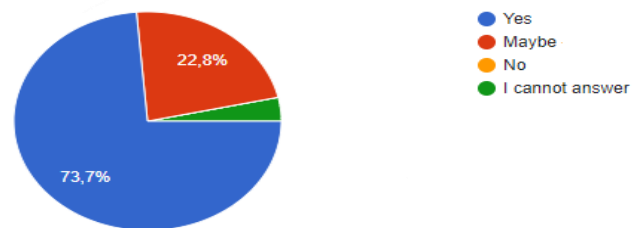


Figure 2: Result of do they want to integrate with Turkic states.

The figure 3 shows that the majority answered that the cooperation must be in the economy overall and tourism, one sector of

economy. Another major choices was the sphere of culture and science (42.1 and 38.6 percent respectively).

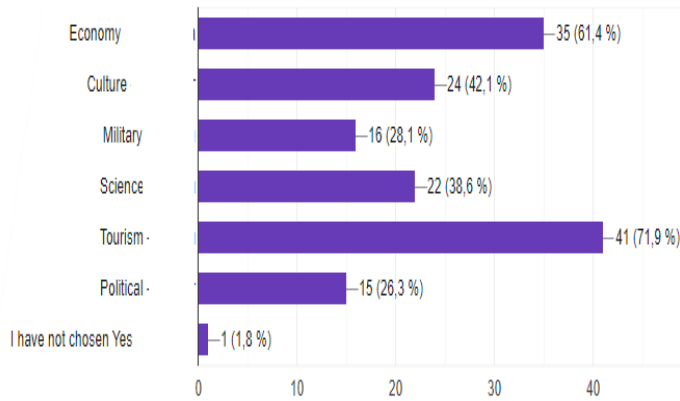


Figure 3: Result of in what spheres do you want Kazakhstan to cooperate with Turkic states.

The figure 4 shows that only 36.8 agree and 17.5 disagree for Kazakhstan to leave Eurasian economic block ruled by Russia to create own Turkic economic alliance. But the figure 5 shows that 41.8% of people are for and only 12.7% are against for Kazakhstan to leave Russia leading military alliance to create Turkic “Turan” alliance. However, still significant number of people cannot answer to these questions.

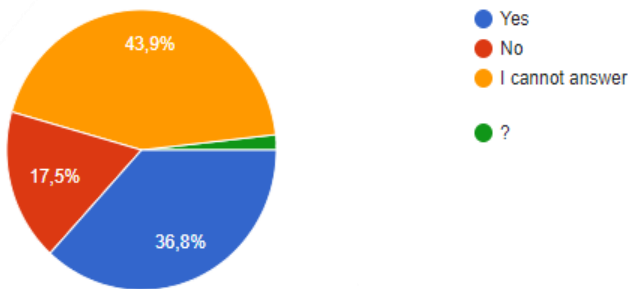


Figure 4: Result of do they want Kazakhstan to leave EAEU to create Turkic alternative.

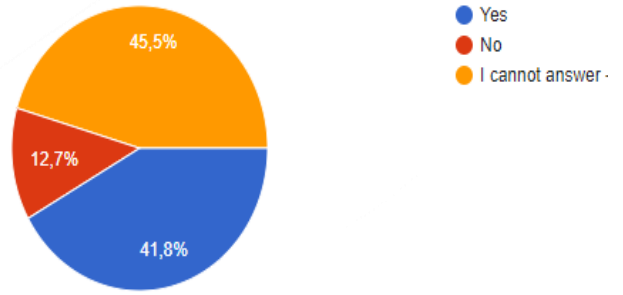


Figure 5: Result of do they want Kazakhstan to leave Russia's alliance to create Turkic alternative.

The figure 6 shows that in the integration process, 1/3 answered that Kazakhstan is the most significant player, the other 29.8% as one of key locomotives. Only 12.3% of people minimize the role of Kazakhstan.

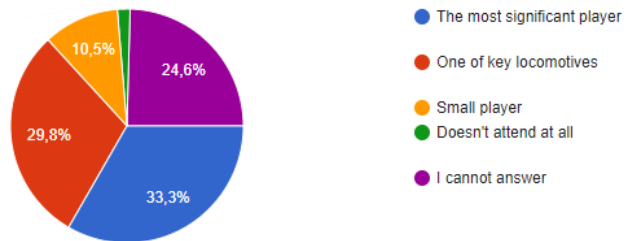


Figure 6: Result of they see the role of Kazakhstan in Turkic integration process

The figure 7 shows that 29.8% of respondents view the integration as beneficial to Kazakhstan, and 47.4% answered maybe yes.

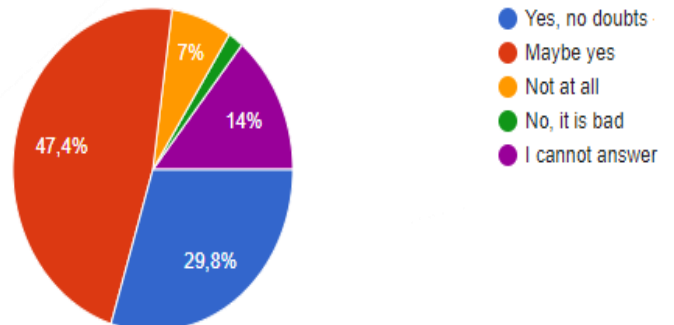


Figure 7: Result of do how they see the integration process as beneficial to Kazakhstan or not.

## V. Discussion

The research methodology employed a combination of primary and secondary research methods, including surveys among students, as well as a review of existing literature on Turkic integration. These methods provided a comprehensive understanding of the perspectives of educators and the general public in Kazakhstan, but also it is worthy to mention that not small amount of people provided their answers as “I cannot answer”. More people did not choose the particular answer, less accurate the results would be. For example, in the questions about should Kazakhstan leave the existing Russia leading economic and military-political alliances in order to create the alternative versions for Turkic states, 43.9% and 45.5% of people could not choose the either side of the answers: “Yes” or “No”.

The survey results indicate that a significant majority of respondents view Kazakhstan's relations with Turkic nations as strong and express a desire for further improvement. Economic cooperation, tourism, culture, and science are identified as key areas of collaboration. While there is some division on the issue of leaving existing alliances, a substantial portion of respondents are in favor of Kazakhstan pursuing a Turkic economic and military alliance.

Many people chose Tourism, Economy, Culture and Science as the top spheres, in which Kazakhstan must cooperate with other Turkic states. Since only 1 person chose the option “I have not chosen Yes”, it means that the majority is in favor of development of relationships in many spheres. It means that the cooperation is beneficial for Kazakhstan and Kazakhstan should continue to integrate.

It is also important to note that S. Abzal [7] stated that there might be a Crimean scenario of Russian invasion to Kazakhstan. Russia is an official ally of Kazakhstan but the latest geopolitical situations are

shaking the geopolitical stability of the Central Asia region, which Russia sees as its sphere of influence. At this geopolitical shake, Kazakhstan needs a strong ally that is comparable in power with other superpowers bordering Kazakhstan.

In the context of Turkic integration, one-third of respondents perceive Kazakhstan as the most significant player, while nearly 30% see it as one of the key locomotives in the process. A smaller percentage minimizes Kazakhstan's role. The research predicts that Kazakhstan's participation role in the integration of Turkic states will continue to develop.

Overall, approximately 30% of respondents view Turkic integration as beneficial to Kazakhstan, with an additional 47.4% expressing potential optimism. These findings underscore the importance of Turkic integration in Kazakhstan's foreign policy and suggest that the majority of respondents see potential benefits in this collaborative endeavor.

It's important to acknowledge the limitations of the survey, primarily its geographic scope, which was limited to Astana. To obtain a more comprehensive understanding of public sentiment on this topic, future research should include participants from various regions and backgrounds across Kazakhstan and experts from various institutions or governmental structures must be interviewed. Also, there is a lack of knowledge among the surveyed people since many of them answered to some questions as “I cannot answer”.

## VI. Conclusion

Overall, all three questions of this study were answered. The research supports already existing studies and the statement about what should be done by the government of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the context of the integration of the Turkic states.

Firstly, the survey and the secondary research have revealed that Kazakhstan actively participates in the integration process. So actively, that the majority of people see the level of integration as high and Kazakhstan's role as a significant state. Kazakhstan is the participant of many Turkic unions and even its city Turkistan became the cultural capital of the Turkic world.

[1] G. Telebayev's research highlights the long-standing history of Turkic integration, emphasizing its value as a political factor in international relations. The fact that the Turkic Council has obtained observer status in the United Nations Security Council underscores its growing importance on the global stage.

[2] M. Iembekova's study reveals that Turkic integration entered a new phase in 2021, with the establishment of the Turkic Council and a commitment to further strengthening relations among Turkic nations. This development is seen as crucial for advancing peace, stability, and global civilization.

[4] E. Turalin's research underscores the multidimensional nature of Kazakh-Turkish cooperation, spanning political, economic, military, and cultural domains. The active development of ties between the two countries reflects the significance of their partnership.

[5] S. Mukhamedzhanova and A. Shaldarbekova emphasize the importance of cultural cooperation in preserving and developing the Turkic world. They highlight the interdependence of motivational and procedural aspects of Turkic integration, which has evolved through stages of institutionalization and the formation of the Turkic Council and the Organization of Turkic States.

[6] Avdju's research underscores Kazakhstan and Turkey's role in promoting Turkic civilization

dialogue and mutual security in the Eurasian region, positioning them as key players in the Turkic world.

[7] S. Abzal sees the integration process as slow, but still inevitable and the future of it will be better than today's.

[8] M. Nazerke's article states that Kazakhstan needs to create military block with Turkic states to be more independent.

[9] Sarsenbayev's research highlights the importance of global integration. Turkey's key role is exemplified by a 1992 summit and the spread of its development model through Turkish TV in post-Soviet Turkic states. Despite challenges, Sarsenbayev emphasizes the need for continued collaboration among nations for integration.

Next, the future of Turkic integration has big potential and people as well as the experts want Kazakhstan to be one of its core and major states. Today, Kazakhstan role is huge and experts, as well as people, they want to see the rise of Kazakhstan's active participation in the Turkic integration process.

Finally, the most important benefit of Turkic cooperation is the geopolitical independence. The surveyed people want to see Kazakhstan as a member of Turkic military alliance rather than the otherwise. Kazakhstan should not fell under Russian sphere of influence and loose many years, instead, the military block must be created. The new military alliance will be crucial in the independent policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan to save the stability. The economic alliance and cooperation would be also beneficial.

In conclusion, the research highlights the historical, political, and practical significance of Turkic integration for Kazakhstan, underscoring its potential to contribute to regional and global stability and development. The study provides valuable insights into public perceptions of Turkic integration in Kazakhstan and offers a foundation for future

research and policy considerations in the realm of international cooperation.

## VII. Evaluation

The research was written to investigate the process of Turkic integration and, especially, the role of Kazakhstan in it and to determine the benefits of Turkic integration to Kazakhstan. The research conducted in this study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of Turkic integration and its implications for Kazakhstan. The results gathered from the survey and secondary research support the main idea of the research that Kazakhstan actively participates in the Turkic Integration.

Further research in the field of Turkic integration and Kazakhstan's role should encompass regional variations in attitudes, delve into policymakers' perspectives, conduct comparative analyses with other regional alliances, assess the impact of public awareness campaigns, and track evolving public opinion over time. Additionally, studies should investigate the influence of education on public perceptions, analyze the economic effects of integration, and include comparative case studies of other Turkic-speaking nations. Such research is vital for a comprehensive understanding of Kazakhstan's integration efforts and their implications, informing policy decisions and fostering informed public discourse. What is more, surveyed people must be provided with the information related to the topic that must not be biased, so that they would less choose the option "I cannot answer".

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