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**TURKEY'S MILITARY AND POLITICAL COOPERATION
WITH CENTRAL ASIAN STATES**

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Abstract. In the framework of multipolarity, the paper analyzes Turkey's political and military collaboration with Central Asian nations as a crucial component of contemporary regional security and the establishment of new centers of influence. The growing rivalry between global and regional countries over vital locations in Central Asia determines the topic's importance, making the examination of Turkish foreign policy action especially pertinent. The study's goal is to pinpoint the main trends, contributing elements, and outcomes of Turkey's expanding relations with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan.

The analysis of official papers, agreements, joint defense projects, arms transfer statistics, and military training programs in Turkish academies for the years 2020–2025 served as the basis for this work. The provision of Bayraktar TB2 unmanned aerial vehicles, joint production projects for armored vehicles and communication system modernization, the creation of a UAV operator training center, and Turkey's role in institutionalizing military-political interaction within the Organization of Turkic States are just a few of the topics covered in the article.

The study's findings demonstrate that Turkey is effectively utilizing both the ideological components of Turkic unity and the practical interests of Central Asian nations in modernizing its military. Potential hazards are also noted, including the necessity to maintain a strategic balance, the complexity of ties with other external actors in the region, and technological dependency on Turkey. In summary, it is emphasized that in order to advance military-political cooperation, Central Asian nations must actively handle new issues and take the shifting global environment into consideration.

Key words: Turkey, Central Asia, political-military cooperation, Bayraktar TB2, Organisation of Turkic States, regional security, international relations, defence industry

Introduction

High levels of volatility, escalating competition for influence in strategically significant parts of the world, and the expanding involvement of middle powers are characteristics of contemporary international relations. Due to its advantageous geographic location and abundant natural resources, Central Asia is increasingly becoming a battleground for major regional and international players. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is the strengthening of Turkey's military and political ties with Central Asian nations, which has recently taken on new forms and become more institutionalized.

Analysis of new forms of Turkey's foreign policy activity, identification of mechanisms and factors for strengthening its relationship with the Turkic-speaking states of the region, and evaluation of the effects of these processes on regional security and the international system at large are necessary conditions for the topic's relevance. In light of the evolving global political landscape, this study aims to pinpoint the unique characteristics, contributing elements, and future potential of Turkey's military-political cooperation with Central Asia. The study's subject is the manifestations, processes, and outcomes of Turkey's military-political ties with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan.

Materials and methods

The study's methodology is based on the international relations theories of regionalism, constructivism, and political realism. The study's analysis of political and defense processes is founded on the ideas of comprehensiveness and interdisciplinarity. The study looks at specific instances of military-political interaction using the case study approach, comparative analysis, systemic and structural analysis, and content analysis of official documents.

The study's empirical foundation consists of publications in peer-reviewed scientific journals, materials from the Organization of Turkic States, analytical reports from international research centers, and official documents from the ministries of foreign affairs and defense of Turkey and Central Asian nations. The study's 2020–2025 timeframe allows for consideration of current international relations trends as well as the dynamics of regional processes.

Results

The analysis has demonstrated that Turkey's political and military cooperation with Central Asian nations is evolving along a number of important axes, representing Ankara's cultural and identity ambitions as well as pragmatic interests.

The institutionalization of interaction within the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) framework is one of the key components. The creation of the Turkic Military Committee, defense minister meetings, and the creation of cooperative

security projects have all contributed to the recent escalation in defense-related activity. Within the OTS, combating cyber threats, transnational crime, and terrorism has taken center stage, indicating Turkey's and the states' aim to develop a coordinated security strategy.

In bilateral ties, military-technical cooperation plays a significant role. Modern weapons, particularly the Bayraktar TB2 unmanned aerial vehicles, which are effectively employed in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan's defense systems, are being actively supplied by Turkey to Central Asian nations. Promising possibilities also include cooperative projects on modernizing communication and troop control systems and producing light armored vehicles. The region's nations are more reliant on Turkish technology as a result of Turkey's provision of maintenance services, expert training, and infrastructure development in addition to equipment delivery.

Regular joint exercises help to test operational cooperation mechanisms between the armed forces in a real-world setting. Along with other bilateral maneuvers, the TurAz Qartalı exercises between Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan help to improve military compatibility, share current battle expertise, and foster trust among military leaders.

In Turkey, military training is highly valued. Central Asian nations are able to train officers with contemporary standards of warfare and defense organization thanks to the allocation of quotas for training at Turkish military colleges. Short-term training in demining, information security, and counterterrorism is a crucial component that satisfies the regional countries' demands for the development of pertinent competencies.

Promoting the concepts of Turkic peoples' solidarity internationally is one way that Turkey engages in political and diplomatic activities. Central Asian nations' foreign policy endeavors are actively coordinated by Ankara, which also supports their actions at the UN, OIC, and other international organizations. Turkey presents itself as a protector of the region's nations' independence and sovereignty, which is crucial given the escalating rivalry for influence in Central Asia between China, Russia, and the West.

Discussion

Ankara's comprehensive strategy, which harmoniously integrates elements of both hard and soft power, underpins the steady expansion of Turkey's military and political cooperation with the Central Asian republics [1]. By employing a combination of economic incentives, military-technical collaboration, and appeals to a shared Turkic identity, Turkey systematically strengthens its regional influence [2]. This multifaceted approach facilitates the establishment of institutionalized and enduring partnerships, with the diversity of interaction mechanisms playing a crucial role in ensuring their sustainability.

One of the most prominent dimensions of this cooperation is Turkey's supply of advanced weaponry to Central Asian states. Between 2021 and 2024, a total of 56 Bayraktar TB2 unmanned aerial vehicles were delivered to the region: Uzbekistan acquired 30 units, Kyrgyzstan received 6, and Kazakhstan purchased 20 [3][4]. These deliveries aimed to enhance national armed forces' capabilities in intelligence gathering, surveillance, and precision strikes. The integration of Bayraktar TB2 drones into the military structures of these states has significantly improved their capacity for conducting combat operations in challenging terrains and for reinforcing border security. Additionally, the procurement of these systems has facilitated the development of training infrastructures necessary for operating unmanned aerial platforms.

The expansion of Turkish arms exports, particularly in the unmanned systems sector, should be contextualized within broader global political dynamics. During the presidency of Donald Trump (2017–2021), the United States introduced stricter export controls on high-technology weapons, including attack drones [5]. This tightening of regulations created a window of opportunity for Turkey to position itself as an alternative supplier on the international arms market. Exploiting this niche, Ankara was able to offer effective and competitively priced systems to Central Asian states without the stringent political conditionalities typically associated with Western suppliers. Consequently, Turkey not only filled a strategic void but also solidified its role as a key partner for Central Asian militaries in modernizing their defense capabilities.

Alongside the expansion of bilateral military-technical cooperation, a series of official summits played a pivotal role in institutionalizing Turkey's strategic partnerships with the Central Asian republics. These high-level meetings not only formalized defense collaboration but also laid the groundwork for sustained and coordinated military initiatives.

The first significant event occurred in May 2022, when the President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, paid a formal visit to Turkey. During this meeting, the two sides signed a Protocol on Military-Technical Cooperation and an Agreement on Strategic Security Partnership [6]. The primary focus of these agreements was to deepen bilateral cooperation in the defense industry, enhance joint training programs, and facilitate coordinated military exercises. To ensure systematic implementation, a joint working group was subsequently established to oversee defense-related initiatives.

The second major development took place in March 2022, during the combined session of the Supreme Council of Strategic Partnership between Uzbekistan and Turkey, held in Ankara [7]. At this summit, a Memorandum of Understanding on military cooperation and the licensed development of defense products was signed. One of the tangible outcomes was the launch of the TuranTech project, aimed at modernizing digital communication systems within Uzbekistan's armed forces. By 2024, the first upgraded complexes had already

been delivered and integrated into military operations.

Third, collective security and military-technical cooperation reached a new level of prominence during the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) Summit in Samarkand in November 2022 [8]. For the first time, these issues were prioritized at the regional level, resulting in the endorsement of the Action Plan for the Development of Defense Cooperation until 2026. This comprehensive plan envisages coordinated measures to combat transnational threats, the harmonization of weapons standards among member states, and the conduct of joint military exercises.

Finally, the bilateral summit between the presidents of Kyrgyzstan and Turkey in June 2023 further demonstrated the growing depth of defense collaboration [9]. During the meeting in Ankara, an agreement was signed on technology transfer and the establishment of a UAV operator training center in Bishkek. This initiative is intended to strengthen Kyrgyzstan's defense capabilities while reducing its dependence on foreign technological suppliers, thereby promoting greater strategic autonomy in the security sector.

In addition to the supply of military equipment, Turkey has actively initiated a number of cooperative defense-related projects aimed at deepening its strategic ties with Central Asian states. One of the most significant initiatives in this regard is the "KazTürkArmored" project launched in Kazakhstan in 2021, in partnership with Turkish defense firms Otokar and Aselsan [10]. This project goes beyond mere equipment delivery by encompassing the licensed production of Arma 8x8 armored vehicles and the integration of advanced communication and troop management technologies. By the end of 2024, the project had successfully produced and delivered 24 armored vehicles to the Kazakh Armed Forces, representing a tangible step toward enhancing Kazakhstan's defense industrial capacity and technological self-sufficiency.

An equally crucial pillar of Turkey's military-political cooperation with Central Asian countries is the sphere of military education and training. Between 2020 and 2024, Turkey allocated 380 placements for military professionals from Central Asia to study at its prestigious military academies [11]. The distribution of these placements reflects a balanced regional approach: Kazakhstan accounted for 140 slots, Uzbekistan for 110, Kyrgyzstan for 80, and Turkmenistan for 50. Training was conducted in leading institutions such as the Turkish Air Force Academy and the Army Academy in Ankara, covering a broad spectrum of strategic disciplines including cybersecurity, communications engineering, counterterrorism operations, and tactical officer training.

Graduates of these programs have returned to their home countries equipped with modern military knowledge and skills, actively contributing to the development of new doctrinal approaches, the reform of national armed forces, and the strengthening of their states' overall combat readiness. Through the combination of joint production initiatives and comprehensive training

programs, Turkey has thus established a multifaceted model of military-political cooperation with Central Asian republics, simultaneously promoting regional security and expanding its strategic influence.

It is important to emphasize that these areas of cooperation not only improve Central Asian nations' defense capabilities but also increase their institutional and technological reliance on Turkey. The region's nations have greater access to contemporary technologies, training, and assistance, but they are also becoming more involved in projects started by Ankara, necessitating strategic adaptability in the face of escalating rivalry among foreign players.

Even with the accomplishments, there are still risks. Turkey must strike a balance between its aspirations in Central Asia and those of China and Russia, who have historically seen the area as their sphere of influence [12]. These states may become concerned about increased military cooperation, which could have an impact on regional stability. Central Asian nations should also diversify their military-technical alliances and take into account the dangers of technological reliance.

By expanding cooperative projects, increasing personnel training, and developing a joint defense industry, we may anticipate further strengthening military-political cooperation between Turkey and the Central Asian republics in the future. Both the independence of the Central Asian states in areas of national security and Ankara's standing as one of the region's major foreign policy actors would be strengthened as a result.

Conclusion

In light of the political unrest around the world, Turkey's current military and political collaboration with Central Asian nations is a major factor in the evolution of the regional security framework. Turkey is actively pursuing a strategy of comprehensive cooperation based on the provision of modern weapons, the creation of cooperative defense projects, the training of skilled military personnel, and the institutionalization of cooperation through the mechanisms of the Organization of Turkic States in an effort to increase its geopolitical presence.

As a counterbalance to conventional centers of influence, the study's findings show that Turkey is effectively assimilating into the Central Asian security system and providing the nations in the region with alternative models of defense cooperation and foreign policy. The states in the region are finding the Turkish approach, which combines pragmatism and ideological affinity, appealing when it comes to strengthening national sovereignty and diversifying their foreign policy relationships. The risks of technological dependence, shifting foreign alignments, and heightened struggle for control over energy and transportation routes are just a few of the new geopolitical problems that both parties must acknowledge if this relationship is to continue to grow.

Strengthening military and political ties between Turkey and the Central Asian republics may be crucial to regional stabilization in the face of rising global instability and growing hostility between superpowers. Such a partnership might support a more independent, sustainable, and balanced development model in Central Asia, founded on the ideas of political autonomy and mutual benefit, provided it is accompanied by strategic foresight, efficient risk management, and a flexible multi-vector policy.

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ТҮРКИЯНЫҢ ОРТАЛЫҚ АЗИЯ МЕМЛЕКЕТТЕРІМЕН ӘСКЕРИ-САЯСИ ҰНТЫМАҚТАСТЫҒЫ

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Аңдатпа. Мақалада Түркияның Орталық Азия мемлекеттерімен әскери-саяси ынтымақтастығы қазіргі аймақтық қауіпсіздіктің және көпполярлылық жағдайында жаңа ықпал ету орталықтарын қалыптастырудың маңызды элементі ретінде қарастырылады. Тақырыптың өзектілігі Орталық Азиядағы стратегиялық позициялар үшін әлемдік және аймақтық державалардың бәсекелестігінің күшеюімен анықталады, бұл түріктің сыртқы саяси белсенділігін талдауды ерекше сұранысқа ие етеді. Зерттеудің мақсаты Түркияның Қазақстанмен, Қырғызстанмен, Өзбекстанмен, Түрікменстанмен және Тәжікстанмен өзара іс-қимылын тереңдетудің негізгі бағыттарын, даму факторлары мен салдарын анықтау болып табылады.

Жұмыс 2020-2025 жылдар аралығындағы түрік академияларында ресми құжаттарды, келісімдерді, бірлескен қорғаныс жобаларын, қару-жаракты жеткізу статистикасын және әскери кадрларды даярлау бағдарламаларын талдауға негізделген. Мақалада Bayraktar tb2 ұшқышсыз ұшу аппараттарын жеткізу, броньды техниканы бірлесіп өндіру және байланыс жүйелерін жаңғырту жобалары, ҰҰА операторларын даярлау орталығын ұйымдастыру, сондай-ақ Түркі мемлекеттері Ұйымы аясындағы әскери-саяси өзара іс-қимылды институционализациялаудағы Түркияның рөлі сияқты аспектілер егжей-тегжейлі қарастырылады.

Зерттеу нәтижелері Түркия өзінің Қарулы Күштерін жаңғыртуда Орталық Азия елдерінің прагмаТүркия, Орталық Азия, әскери-саяси

ынтымақтастық, Bayraktar TB2, түркі мемлекеттерінің ұйымы, өңірлік қауіпсіздік, халықаралық қатынастар, қорғаныс өнеркәсібі, әскери білім, стратегиялық әріптестіктікалық мүдделерін де, түркі ынтымақтастығының идеологиялық элементтерін де табысты пайдаланатынын көрсетеді. Бұл ретте ықтимал тәуекелдер анықталды: Түркияға технологиялық тәуелділік, өңірдің басқа сыртқы актерлерімен қарым-қатынастың күрделенуі және стратегиялық тепе-теңдікті сақтау қажеттілігі. Қорытындылай келе, әскери-саяси ынтымақтастықты одан әрі дамыту Орталық Азия елдерінен туындайтын сын-қатерлерді белсенді басқаруды және өзгеріп отырған Халықаралық конъюнктураны ескеруді талап ететіні атап өтілді.

Тірек сөздер: Түркия, Орталық Азия, әскери-саяси ынтымақтастық, Bayraktar TB2, Түркі мемлекеттерінің ұйымы, аймақтық қауіпсіздік, халықаралық қатынастар, қорғаныс өнеркәсібі

ВОЕННО-ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЕ СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВО ТУРЦИИ С ГОСУДАРСТВАМИ ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ

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Аннотация. В статье рассматривается военно-политическое сотрудничество Турции с государствами Центральной Азии как важный элемент современной региональной безопасности и формирования новых центров влияния в условиях многополярности. Актуальность темы определяется усилением конкуренции мировых и региональных держав за стратегические позиции в Центральной Азии, что делает анализ турецкой внешнеполитической активности особенно востребованным. Цель исследования заключается в выявлении ключевых направлений, факторов развития и последствий углубления взаимодействия Турции с Казахстаном, Кыргызстаном, Узбекистаном, Туркменистаном и Таджикистаном.

Работа опирается на анализ официальных документов, соглашений, совместных оборонных проектов, статистики поставок вооружений и программ подготовки военных кадров в турецких академиях за период 2020–2025 годов. В статье подробно рассматриваются такие аспекты, как поставки беспилотных летательных аппаратов Bayraktar TB2, проекты совместного производства бронетехники и модернизации систем связи, организация центра подготовки операторов БПЛА, а также роль Турции в институционализации военно-политического взаимодействия в рамках Организации тюркских государств.

Результаты исследования показывают, что Турция успешно использует как прагматические интересы стран Центральной Азии в модернизации своих вооружённых сил, так и идеологические элементы

тюркской солидарности. При этом выявлены потенциальные риски: технологическая зависимость от Турции, осложнение отношений с другими внешними акторами региона и необходимость сохранения стратегического баланса. В заключение подчеркивается, что дальнейшее развитие военно-политического сотрудничества требует от стран Центральной Азии активного управления возникающими вызовами и учета меняющейся международной конъюнктуры.

Ключевые слова: Турция, Центральная Азия, военно-политическое сотрудничество, Bayraktar TB2, Организация тюркских государств, региональная безопасность, международные отношения, оборонная промышленность

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