

UDC 327

IRSTI 11.25.67

<https://doi.org/10.48371/ISMO.2026.64.2.004>

**FROM KIN-STATE RHETORIC TO IMPLEMENTATION:
ASSESSING TURKEY'S NEW TÜRK-SOYLU MIGRATION REGIME**

* Mukash A.E.¹, Koblandin K.I.², Kushkumbayev S.K.³

^{1,2} L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan

³ Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies, Astana, Kazakhstan

Abstract. This paper focuses on Turkey's 2025 amending Law no. 2527 that retroactively changes the co-ethnic preferential migration regime reserved for foreigners (yabancı) of Turkic origin (Türk soylu). As part of the historical legacy of migration policy and diaspora governance in Turkey, this article examines how the new presidential decree refines eligibility requirements and introduces administrative hurdles including forms of credentialing and professional registration. With cites to literature and specific case studies regarding Turkic diasporas such as Meskhetian Turks (Ahıska Türkleri), Crimean Tatars, and Uyghurs the paper emphasizes that the communities are heterogeneous and confront implementation challenges. It also delves into the politics of kin-state preferential policies, labor market discrimination and inter-state rivalry that shape selective inclusion, most notably, securitization and its implications for Uyghurs in Turkey. Evidence from post-Soviet ethnic return regimes demonstrates the complicated relationship of privileged exclusion. Results suggest that despite formal expansions of co-ethnic protection, the structural bureaucratic and political filters constrain mass access to protections, with uneven results across ethno-political lines and gender. This study synthesizes legal-institutional analysis, comparative case material, and secondary literature on co-ethnic migration regimes. This study adds to our knowledge of the dynamics between kin-state rhetoric and conditional implementation in migration governance.

Keywords: Turkey, Türk soylu, migration policy, kin-state, co-ethnic preference, labor market, diaspora, credential recognition, Meskhetian Turks, Uyghurs, geopolitics, post-Soviet return migration

Introduction

Historical and Policy Context of Turkey's Migration Regime

Turkey's 2025 amendment to Law No. 2527's implementation regulation must be viewed in the context of a longer history of Turkish migration, settlement, and diaspora policies that have continuously favored "persons of Turkish origin and culture" while concurrently restricting non-European and non-co-ethnic entrants. Subject to stringent administrative requirements, Law 2527, which was initially enacted in 1981, allowed foreigners of Türk/Turkic descent to work in occupations, trades, and professions that are normally only available to Turkish

nationals. The 2025 Presidential Decision No. 10476 narrows and recalibrates this preferential regime, transforming a loosely defined co-ethnic advantage into a strictly conditional labor-migration channel for particular Turkic minorities.

Turkish migration policies have historically alternated between two logics: an increasingly stringent immigration and asylum policy, particularly for non-European and non-co-ethnic migrants, and a nation-building initiative centered on integrating “Turkish origin and culture” communities. Four major periods are identified by İçduygu’s critical historical retrospective: early republican two-way mobility; labor emigration to Europe after the 1950s; diversification of migration patterns in the 1980s; and the emergence since the 2000s of governance frameworks more closely aligned with global migration regimes and European Union norms. [1, p.167-190] The 1934 Law on Settlement and associated citizenship laws solidified a preference for immigrants “of Turkish origin and culture” in the early republic, allowing Balkan and Caucasian Muslims to be admitted and naturalized while directing non-co-ethnics into much more precarious categories.

From the 1980s onward, Turkey’s migration regime became more explicitly selective and instrumental. On the one hand, the state consolidated its geographical limitation to the 1951 Geneva Convention, thereby restricting non-European asylum seekers to temporary protection and onward resettlement. On the other, it developed targeted tools to mobilize Turkish emigrants abroad as foreign-policy resources. This duality-restriction toward non-co-ethnics and activism toward co-ethnics and citizens abroad-prefigures Law 2527’s co-ethnic labor preferences.

MIPEX findings, along with OSCE assessments, point to several structural weaknesses in Turkey’s current approach to migrant integration. Existing measures remain highly centralized yet still lack a coherent overall strategy, which has resulted in what Rottmann describes as “differential inclusion.” [2] In practice, this means that although legal rights exist on paper, many migrants still struggle to obtain stable employment, access services, or secure their status. Non-European refugees, especially Syrians under temporary protection, often find themselves in a prolonged state of legal uncertainty, working informally and receiving inconsistent access to social rights. These implementation gaps form the broader context for the 2025 reform. Without addressing the underlying administrative and labor-market limitations, expanding or specifying eligibility for co-ethnic groups risks reinforcing the same disconnect between formal entitlements and real inclusion. [3]

The 2025 Presidential Decision No. 10476 amends the regulation implementing Law 2527 by (i) delegating to the President the authority to designate, through a separate decision, which foreign communities qualify as “Türk/Türkic origin” (new Article 2/A); and (ii) adding three additional conditions (Article 3, points 8–10) to an already demanding list of requirements for co-ethnic foreigners seeking access to professions normally reserved for citizens. The reform is framed as a response to existing “application gaps,” aiming to clarify

both the categories of groups that qualify and the circumstances under which they may be permitted to work in otherwise restricted fields. Yet this clarification also introduces a form of narrowing. Article 3(9) now obliges applicants to show that they cannot practice their profession in their home country “for reasons beyond their control” and that they are effectively compelled to remain in Turkey. Article 3(10) further requires that applicants belong to an ethnic and cultural identity distinct from the dominant majority in their state of citizenship. In practice, these conditions are likely to exclude titular Turkic majorities in post-Soviet states, for example, ethnic Kazakhs in Kazakhstan, and instead channel eligibility toward Turkic minorities such as Meskhetian Turks, Crimean Tatars, Gagauz, Uyghurs, and Turkoman communities from Syria and Iraq.

Taken together, both the historical trajectory and contemporary assessments of Turkey’s integration framework point to a central conclusion: the 2025 amendment is not merely a technical update but part of a longer pattern in which co-ethnic ties are strategically mobilized for foreign-policy positioning and labor-market management. Law 2527, as revised in 2025, marks a shift away from broad and somewhat ambiguous notions of co-ethnic solidarity toward a more selective, presidentially defined system. This system opens specific segments of the Turkish labor market to carefully targeted Turkic minority groups while embedding those openings within a dense set of administrative filters.

This article advances three interrelated hypotheses. First, despite formally expanding eligibility, the 2025 amendment is likely to widen the gap between legal entitlement and practical access due to layered administrative requirements (“implementation gap”). Second, the expansion of presidential discretion may produce selective inclusion favoring politically strategic or institutionally organized Turkic communities. Third, geopolitical considerations and securitization dynamics may override co-ethnic solidarity in practice, particularly in cases involving politically sensitive populations such as Uyghurs.

Description of Materials and Methods

This article adopts a legal-institutional approach combined with comparative case-study analysis and process-tracing methodology. The research design is built around three complementary analytical strategies:

Legal-Institutional Analysis: The study analyzes the formal regulatory framework governing Law 2527 and Presidential Decision No. 10476, with careful differentiation between statutory provisions, subsequent regulatory amendments, and administrative implementation practices. Particular attention is given to the retroactive application of legal norms and to the cumulative effects of multi-stage bureaucratic procedures on access to rights and their actual uptake.

Comparative Case Methodology: The article situates the Turkish Türk soylu framework within a broader comparative perspective by examining post-Soviet ethnic return and co-ethnic citizenship regimes, especially those of Kazakhstan and selected Central European states. Drawing on empirical evidence related

to credential recognition barriers, labor-market integration outcomes, and the phenomenon of “privileged exclusion,” these comparisons highlight recurring patterns in which formal inclusion coexists with substantive exclusion across different legal and institutional settings.

Process Tracing and Secondary Literature Synthesis: Process tracing is used to map how specific administrative pathways, such as nostrification procedures, professional licensing, security vetting, and presidential designation, operate as filtering mechanisms that shape real-world access to legal rights. This analysis relies on a synthesis of secondary scholarly literature, policy documents, human rights reports, and empirical studies focusing on Turkic diaspora communities.

The operationalization of the three hypotheses (detailed in Section 8) proceeds through the examination of observable indicators, including procedural timelines for credential recognition, documented refusal rates across different community categories, sectoral employment clustering and patterns of occupational downgrading, gender-differentiated integration outcomes, and recorded instances of administrative denial or securitized restrictions. The analysis draws on MIPEX assessments, OSCE working papers, academic research on Meskhetian Turks and Uyghurs, and comparative studies of post-Soviet repatriation regimes to establish baseline patterns and to generate expectations regarding uneven implementation across communities and regions.

Regulatory Changes in Law 2527: A Comparative Overview

The following table illustrates the substantive changes introduced by Presidential Decision No. 10476 (October 2025) to the 2025 Implementation Regulation of Law 2527:

Table 1. Comparison of before and after 2025 amendments.

Dimension	Before Amendment	After Amendment (Oct. 2025)
Eligibility Definition	Generic reference to «Türk soylu» persons	Presidentially designated list of specific communities (Article 2/A); scope limited to ethnic and cultural minorities in their states of origin (Article 3/10)
Locus of Authority	Statute (Law 2527)	Presidential Decision (delegated authority via Article 2/A)
Requirement: Origin-State Practice	Not explicitly addressed	Article 3(9): Applicant must prove inability to practice profession in home country «for reasons beyond their control»
Requirement: Minority Status	Not addressed	Article 3(10): Applicant must belong to ethnic/cultural identity distinct from dominant population in country of citizenship
Credential Recognition	General reference to «professional qualifications»	Reinforced requirement for nostrification and/or foreign credential equivalency (Denklik Belgesi via YÖK)
Retroactive Application	Not applicable	Presidential Decision applies retroactively to pending applications (implications for vested rights status contested)
Discretionary Gatekeeping	Limited executive discretion	Expanded: Presidential list-making, individualized assessments at multiple administrative tiers

This table clarifies that the 2025 amendment represents not a simple technical clarification but a recalibration of both the substantive scope of eligibility and the procedural modality of gatekeeping. The shift from statutory definition to presidential designation, combined with the addition of origin-state-practice and minority-status requirements, narrows the formal category while simultaneously increasing administrative discretion.

Results

Turkic Diasporas and the Heterogeneity of “Türk Soylu” Communities

The category Türk soylu encompasses a wide range of diasporic and minority groups whose historical experiences, legal circumstances, and socio-economic conditions differ markedly. This diversity is not simply a matter of description; it shapes how the revised framework is likely to operate and helps explain why a single legal mechanism may generate uneven results across communities.

Meskhetian Turks illustrate the layered and often fragmented nature of co-ethnic histories. Deported from Georgia’s Meskheta region to Central Asia during the Second World War, they faced decades of statelessness, discrimination, and insecure settlement across various post-Soviet states. Pentikäinen’s OSCE working paper documents how Meskhetian Turks in southern Russia encountered persistent bureaucratic barriers to residence, employment, and property rights, with many effectively rendered stateless through the routine denial of citizenship and residence permits. [4] In Krasnodar Krai, local authorities and xenophobic practices subjected them to targeted discrimination and occasional forced removals. Within this context, Turkey emerged both as an imagined homeland and a realistic migration option. By the mid-2000s, approximately 25,000 Meskhetian Turks had resettled in Turkey, and around 12,000 received recognition as “national refugees,” which granted access to employment, education, health services, and a route toward citizenship.

Micro-level studies of Meskhetian Turks’ labor-market integration in Turkey indicate that co-ethnic affinity and prior cultural familiarity do not automatically translate into stable or appropriately matched employment. [5, p.37-43] A case study from the province of Bitlis illustrates a recurring pattern of under-employment and occupational downgrading: despite language abilities and vocational skills, many individuals work in roles such as cleaning staff, village guards, construction laborers, or waiters, with only a portion able to use their multilingual competencies in call centers or language teaching. Additional research on skilled migration among Meskhetian Turks reinforces this picture, pointing to credential under-utilization, informality, and clustering in low-skill services and small-scale trade even where educational backgrounds are relatively strong. A phenomenological study of Meskhetian Turkish women working in fields like beauty and personal care also highlights gendered constraints, including unstable contracts, limited social protection, and the dual pressures

of paid employment and domestic responsibilities. Collectively, these findings suggest a broader implementation issue: legal preferences for Türk soylu migrants are filtered through domestic labor segmentation, gender norms, and professional-recognition systems that often contribute to the deskilling of co-ethnic newcomers.

Uyghurs, another population likely to fall within the presidentially designated Türk soylu category, exhibit a different set of vulnerabilities [12]. Uyghur migration to Turkey has occurred in several waves since the 1950s, with Turkey functioning both as a political refuge and as a central hub for the transnational East Turkestan movement. Historical, linguistic, and religious ties have long made Turkey an attractive destination, and by the early twenty-first century an estimated 35,000–45,000 Uyghurs were residing in the country, including roughly 10,000 refugees. Qualitative studies of Uyghur refugees in Istanbul document significant legal and humanitarian obstacles: many struggle to acquire or renew residence permits, lack stable legal status, and face substantial barriers to entering formal employment or securing access to education and health services. Their community life is characterized by active associative networks and forms of digital activism, but also by heightened precarity as Turkey–China relations evolve and security-oriented narratives become more prominent.

The new Türk soylu framework therefore brings together at least three distinct constituencies: long-established diasporic groups such as Uyghurs with transnational political engagements; historically deported and partially resettled communities like Meskhetian Turks; and post-Soviet Turkic minorities (e.g., Crimean Tatars, Gagauz, certain Turkoman and Azeri groups) whose claims sit at the intersection of post-imperial legacies and contemporary labor-market dynamics. Each carries a different legal status, ranging from statelessness and refugeehood to precarious temporary protection or foreign citizenship with minority designation, which interacts in varied ways with Turkey’s residence and work-permit regimes. A single statutory framework, even when adjusted through presidential listings, is thus inherently susceptible to uneven outcomes and contested interpretations.

Crucially, the 2025 amendment draws a deliberate line between Turkic minorities and titular majorities in their states of origin through Article 3(10), which requires applicants to belong to an ethnic and cultural identity distinct from the dominant population of their country of citizenship. In effect, this design will likely favor communities with established histories of marginalization or displacement, such as Meskhetian Turks in Russia, Uyghurs from China, or Crimean Tatars in Ukraine, while leaving out groups like ethnic Kazakhs or Uzbeks who constitute national majorities. The result is a tiered structure within the broader category of “Turkic peoples,” where legal access to protected professions may come to reflect, and potentially deepen, intra-Turkic hierarchies, especially in cases where political visibility and community organization differ significantly.

In sum, the Türk soylu designation works as a legal umbrella that gathers together groups whose historical experiences, current legal situations, and socio-economic positions vary widely. This heterogeneity supports two central expectations. First, the implementation of Law 2527's revised framework is likely to differ across communities, sectors, and regions. Second, the system of selective recognition, mediated through presidential listings and individualized administrative assessments, will intersect with the particular histories and vulnerabilities of each community in ways that both broaden and limit the law's intended protection for co-ethnic groups.

Credential Recognition, Occupational Licensing, and Barriers for Skilled Co-Ethnic Migrants

Law 2527, in both its original form and its 2025 revision, ties access to citizen-reserved professions to an extensive set of bureaucratic criteria. Article 3 lays out ten cumulative requirements, including possession of a residence permit; proof of the professional qualifications mandated under Turkish sectoral regulations; recognition of foreign diplomas and vocational certificates; security clearance; registration in designated foreigner databases; and, where applicable, membership in relevant professional associations. Following the 2025 amendment, applicants must also appear on the presidential Türk soylu list, demonstrate that they cannot practice their profession in their country of origin, and show that they belong to a minority community relative to that country's majority population. Taken together, these conditions mirror, and intensify, the broader administrative framework that governs foreign labor in Turkey, particularly for refugees under temporary protection.

Legal analyses of work-permit procedures for foreigners under temporary protection indicate that formal eligibility often conceals substantial practical barriers to obtaining authorization. Nostrification, the recognition of foreign educational credentials, is especially burdensome. In Kazakhstan, for example, nostrification procedures involve multi-step verification: institutional accreditation checks, detailed evaluations of curriculum content and study duration, and in some cases additional conditions related to practical experience. Processing timelines may stretch from several weeks to several months, with different application categories carrying distinct deadlines and documentation burdens. Applicants must provide authenticated and notarized translations, obtain apostille certification from their country of origin, undergo individual assessments for content equivalency, and pay application fees that may vary depending on the origin country. The Kazakhstani process, administered through the National Accreditation Center of the Ministry of Education and Science, illustrates a general pattern: recognition systems tend to be resource-intensive, slow, and opaque, imposing high opportunity costs on individuals seeking timely entry into the labor market.

Turkey's Credential Recognition Framework: In Turkey, credential recognition follows analogous procedures under the authority of the Council

of Higher Education (YÖK). The Turkish process similarly requires applicants to obtain a Denklik Belgesi (diploma equivalency certificate), involving authentication of foreign diplomas through Turkish embassies or consulates, translation by sworn Turkish translators, notarization, and submission of detailed curriculum vitae. Processing timelines for university-level diplomas typically range from one to one and a half months, though complex cases may extend longer. YÖK must verify institutional accreditation of the foreign educational institution, assess curriculum content against Turkish national standards, and cross-check the authenticity of documents. Sectoral-specific licensing adds further requirements: engineers, physicians, lawyers, and other regulated professions must clear additional examinations, professional chamber membership requirements, and sector-specific competency assessments. The combination of these procedural layers mirrors the barriers documented in other post-Soviet contexts and reflects what scholars identify as “indirect closure”, the use of complex bureaucratic pathways to filter entrants rather than outright legal denial.

In Turkey, the combination of nostrification procedures, sector-specific licensing rules, and the requirement to join professional bodies functions as a significant structural barrier for skilled migrants. Research on the labor-market integration of Meskhetian Turks shows that even those with higher-education credentials or specialized vocational backgrounds frequently face obstacles in diploma recognition and in accessing the exams or equivalence processes tied to regulated professions. As a result, many experience occupational downgrading and end up concentrated in lower-skill sectors. Legal commentary on work permits for foreigners under temporary protection similarly notes that administrative criteria, documentary burdens, and employer-initiated application procedures suppress utilization rates, pushing a substantial share of applicants into informal or unregulated employment despite their nominal legal access.

The broader migration–citizenship literature describes these dynamics as forms of “indirect closure”: instead of denying rights outright, states embed them in complex bureaucratic pathways that filter entrants according to their resources, networks, and available time. [6] Within this perspective, professional recognition and licensing are not simply technical requirements but mechanisms through which states shape labor-market composition and delineate the boundaries of membership. Russian scholars such as Vladimir Mukomel, analyzing labor mobility of CIS migrants, have documented how administrative and documentary requirements suppress actual utilization of nominally available work-permit channels, effectively producing de-facto exclusion through bureaucratic layering. [7, p.187-209]

Applied to the 2025 revision of Law 2527, this scholarship supports an “implementation gap” interpretation. While the amendment broadens and clarifies the categories of Türk soylu applicants, the combined weight of conditions 1–10 risks turning these formal rights into de-facto exclusion for many potential beneficiaries. Applicants must hold a valid residence permit,

obtain nostrification decisions from YÖK, gain membership in professional associations, and demonstrate both their inclusion in a presidentially defined Turkic-minority category and their inability to practice their profession in their country of citizenship for reasons beyond their control. Each step creates room for delays, discretionary refusals, or self-selection effects, particularly for refugees and minority applicants whose documentation may be fragmented, disputed, or risky to acquire.

Viewed this way, the 2025 reform is less an act of liberalization and more an administrative recalibration. It shifts co-ethnic preference from broad, somewhat vague statutory language into a finely detailed regulatory system in which the real gatekeeping power lies with credential-recognition authorities, professional chambers, and executive discretion. The structural outcome resembles patterns already documented in other areas of Turkish migration governance, where extensive rights on paper, such as Syrians' eligibility for work permits, have yielded limited practical uptake due to administrative and market-based constraints [2].

Co-Ethnic Preferential Policies and the Politics of Membership

Law 2527 is, at its core, a kin-state instrument: it extends preferential treatment to co-ethnics, defined through shared "Turkish/Türkic" origin and culture, by granting them access to labor-market sectors otherwise closed to foreign nationals. Political-theory and comparative-citizenship scholarship offers a useful conceptual lens here, framing such arrangements as part of a broader politics of membership that draws on familial or club-based analogies. Bauböck and others note that states often justify co-ethnic preferences through narratives of historical responsibility, cultural proximity, or demographic concerns, presenting the nation as a transgenerational community that includes external "members" whose (re)integration carries a normative priority [4].

Comparative research on kin-state practices in Central and Eastern Europe, such as Romania's and Hungary's co-ethnic citizenship frameworks or Greece's preferential naturalization rules for ethnic Greeks abroad, highlights several recurring tensions. On one hand, these policies serve as instruments of soft power, allowing states to shape cross-border networks and cultivate aligned diasporas. They may also function as a form of symbolic or practical restitution for historical displacements, border shifts, or earlier episodes of exclusion by restoring status and facilitating mobility. At the same time, such measures frequently provoke domestic controversy: resident minorities may interpret them as unequal treatment, while non-co-ethnic migrants and refugees remain excluded from comparable opportunities [8, p.958-974].

Turkey's own co-ethnic preferences are deeply embedded in earlier settlement and nation-building legislation, particularly the Law on Settlement, which reserved the right to settle and fully integrate for individuals deemed of "Turkish descent and culture." Viewed in this light, Law 2527 represents a functional extension of this logic into the employment sphere, creating a pathway

through which co-ethnics can bypass the general rules that restrict foreigners from entering certain professions [1, p.167-190]. The 2025 amendment reinforces this kin-state orientation but adds a significant layer of executive discretion: the President now determines, through separate decisions, which foreign communities qualify as Türk soylu, effectively transforming co-ethnic preference into a flexible instrument of foreign-policy strategy.

This design points toward a “selective inclusion” hypothesis: co-ethnic groups with stronger lobbying capacity, clearer geopolitical relevance, or closer alignment with the incumbent government’s ideological and foreign-policy agenda are more likely to be formally listed and to have their applications processed more smoothly. Others, despite historical ties or cultural proximity, may remain acknowledged in principle but receive little practical access in practice. This potential gap between formal eligibility and real inclusion mirrors patterns seen in several Central and Eastern European kin-state citizenship regimes, where co-ethnic naturalization has at times served more as a symbolic or strategic instrument than as a universal right for all nominally eligible populations [8, p.958-974].

Research on Turkey’s evolving diaspora governance demonstrates how, particularly since the 2000s, Ankara has institutionalized its engagement with external populations through dedicated state bodies and coordinated policy frameworks. These initiatives frame diaspora communities not merely as emigrant populations, but as extensions of the national community and instruments of foreign-policy strategy. Rather than operating as a purely symbolic outreach mechanism, diaspora governance has become embedded in broader political, economic, and ideological agendas, linking questions of membership to strategic state interests.

Labor-Market Discrimination, Ethnic Inequality, and Integration Outcomes in Turkey

The effectiveness of any legal preference granted to Türk soylu migrants ultimately depends on the realities of Turkey’s labor market and on persistent patterns of ethnic discrimination. Even when co-ethnics secure recognition under Law 2527 and successfully navigate the administrative steps, they still confront a labor environment marked by high informality, strong sectoral divides, and well-documented ethnic biases.

Balkan and colleagues’ survey-based analysis of ethnic discrimination provides clear evidence that applicants from stigmatized groups, most notably Kurds, receive fewer callbacks and face weaker employment prospects compared to otherwise similar majority applicants [11]. Their results are consistent with broader experimental and survey research across Europe, where minority names and identities continue to face penalties despite the existence of formal equality norms. In Turkey, perception-of-discrimination surveys similarly show that respondents frequently identify ethnicity, religion, and refugee or migrant status as key factors shaping unequal treatment in workplaces, schools, and in

interactions with state institutions. Taken together, these patterns indicate that co-ethnic migrants, especially those whose accents, racialized features, or refugee backgrounds make them visibly distinguishable, are unlikely to experience seamless integration simply because they hold a nominal Turkish or Turkic identity.

Studies of refugees and migrants under temporary protection reinforce this broader pattern. Legal and policy assessments repeatedly note that work-permit mechanisms for Syrians have seen limited use, with most continuing to work in informal and low-wage sectors such as agriculture, construction, and small-scale services. Integration reports for Turkey describe this as a form of “differential inclusion”: refugees and migrants are part of the economy, but under conditions that leave them vulnerable, offer little mobility, and expose them to exploitation. Meskhetian Turks, despite their co-ethnic status, face similar challenges, often experiencing high informality and under-employment, as previously noted [2].

These dynamics strengthen two related points about the emerging Türk soylu framework. First, legal advantages alone do not ensure equal footing in the labor market. Even if Türk soylu applicants gain access to professions normally closed to foreigners, they may still encounter employer prejudices, limited professional networks, or sectoral barriers that direct them toward lower-status positions. Second, uneven treatment within the umbrella category of “Turks/Turkic peoples” is likely. Groups perceived as culturally closer to the national mainstream, such as Balkan-origin migrants, may encounter fewer obstacles than more racialized, securitized, or politically sensitive communities, including Uyghurs or certain Central Asian minorities.

For these reasons, the 2025 amendment’s promise of increased opportunities for Türk soylu migrants should be analytically distinguished from its likely effects on real labor-market outcomes. Without targeted anti-discrimination mechanisms, active support for credential recognition, and oversight of employer practices, the new preferential regime may primarily benefit those who already have the resources and networks to navigate Turkish labor markets successfully. More vulnerable co-ethnic groups may remain confined to precarious or informal work despite the formal expansion of their legal rights.

Human Rights, Geopolitics, and the Securitization of Diaspora Policy: The Uyghur Case

Uyghurs occupy a central position at the intersection of Turkey’s co-ethnic discourse and its geopolitical constraints. On paper, they represent the ideal Türk soylu category, Turkic, Muslim, and historically embraced by segments of Turkey’s political elite and public as kin facing repression in China. In practice, however, Turkey’s approach to Uyghurs has shifted considerably, tracking broader changes in Turkish–Chinese relations and emerging forms of authoritarian cooperation [12].

Earlier periods were marked by a relatively permissive environment for Uyghur activism, with prominent nationalist figures openly supporting their

cause and framing their struggle within a wider pan-Turkic narrative. Scholars note that for much of the twentieth century Turkey functioned as the “most influential node” of the Uyghur diaspora, hosting key leaders and facilitating transnational mobilization [13]. As Ankara’s economic and strategic ties with China expanded, driven by trade, defense partnerships, and diplomatic priorities, it increasingly worked to balance public expressions of solidarity with the need to avoid jeopardizing the relationship with Beijing.

More recent research on transnational repression shows that Turkey has, in practice, narrowed the political space available to Uyghur communities and engaged with Chinese security concerns, sometimes portraying Uyghur activism as a potential national-security issue [14]. Human-rights reports point to growing barriers in obtaining or renewing residence permits, a rise in detentions within deportation facilities, and cases in which legal status has been revoked, leaving individuals newly exposed to risk. Investigative work published in late 2025 goes so far as to state that “Uyghurs are no longer welcome in Turkey,” outlining patterns of crackdowns, permit refusals, and heightened fear within Uyghur communities as Ankara continues to strengthen its rapprochement with China.

This trajectory supports what can be described as a “geopolitical override” dynamic: even when legal frameworks appear to prioritize co-ethnic groups, whether through broad nation-building provisions or more specific tools such as Law 2527, their implementation is ultimately shaped by foreign-policy considerations and prevailing security narratives. For Uyghurs, this means that potential inclusion in the presidential Türk soylu list may coexist with, or even be overshadowed by, securitized practices that restrict mobility, political engagement, and access to durable legal status.

From a policy perspective, any evaluation of the 2025 amendment therefore needs to account for geopolitics as a central explanatory factor. The same legal category, Türk soylu, can be applied expansively in some cases (for instance, to Meskhetian Turks in moments of tension with Russia) and far more cautiously in others (such as Uyghurs when relations with China require restraint). This asymmetry is not incidental; it reflects the nature of kin-state policies, which sit at the intersection of domestic membership politics and the constraints imposed by external diplomatic realities.

Regional Comparative Perspectives: Post-Soviet Ethnic Return and “Privileged Exclusion”

The 2025 amendments to Law 2527 affect several populations whose historical trajectories trace back to the post-Soviet region: Meskhetian Turks originating from Georgia and various successor states, Crimean Tatars, Turkic minorities across Central Asia, and potentially other groups such as the Gagauz. Comparative scholarship on ethnic return and co-ethnic citizenship in post-Soviet settings offers useful parallels for understanding how Turkey’s revised framework may function in practice.

The phenomenon of “privileged exclusion” in post-Soviet Kazakhstan

demonstrates how repatriation policies may simultaneously provide formal benefits while generating new forms of social stratification. Ethnic Kazakh returnees may receive citizenship or certain rights on paper, yet still face burdensome administrative procedures, social stigma from long-settled populations, and barriers within the labor market. This creates a paradox in which formal inclusion coexists with informal exclusion. Issues such as credential recognition, access to documentation from countries of origin, and the discretionary authority of local administrators often determine how these disparities emerge. Russian scholars such as Vladimir Mukomel and Irina Ivakhnyuk have documented how post-Soviet migration regimes, despite nominal rights guarantees, often suppress actual utilization through administrative complexity and procedural barriers, a pattern that extends across Russia, Kazakhstan, and other CIS states [15].

Comparable research on co-ethnic citizenship regimes in Central and Eastern Europe shows similarly uneven outcomes. While some states integrate substantial co-ethnic populations, others experience low uptake, unintended political effects such as sizable external electorates, or diplomatic frictions with neighboring countries. [8, p.958-974] Meanwhile, work on Turkey's diaspora policies highlights how the definition of the national community is continually reshaped through initiatives aimed at both external citizens and culturally affiliated groups abroad.

Within this regional context, Turkey's Türk soylu framework shares similarities with other post-Soviet and post-imperial mechanisms designed for ethnic return, but it diverges in a key respect: instead of centering on citizenship acquisition, it focuses on opening access to professions normally restricted to citizens, functioning alongside existing residence and work-permit systems. The addition of Article 3(10), which requires applicants to be minorities in their state of origin, parallels practices in several post-Soviet states, where titular majorities are distinguished from diaspora-type minorities through eligibility criteria, often leading to contested debates over who is considered "truly" part of the national community.

For Turkic minorities in Central Asia and the Caucasus, the Turkish approach may therefore reproduce regional patterns of what scholars describe as "privileged exclusion": frameworks that symbolically acknowledge co-ethnic ties and offer certain tailored opportunities, but whose stringent conditions and reliance on executive discretion sharply limit real participation, creating internal hierarchies within co-ethnic groups. The comparative evidence suggests that the architectural similarities across post-Soviet repatriation regimes, presidential discretion, multi-layered administrative requirements, credential recognition barriers, and distinction between titular majorities and diaspora minorities, are likely to produce convergent outcomes: a gap between formal rights and substantive access.

Discussion

Synthesis of the hypotheses:

The implementation gap hypothesis is supported by evidence of (a) extended procedural timelines from application submission to final work authorization (measured in months and compared to statutory targets); (b) high documented refusal rates at credential-recognition stages, particularly for applicants from economically disadvantaged or geopolitically sensitive communities; (c) sectoral clustering of Türk soylu applicants in lower-wage and informal employment despite nominal access to protected professions; (d) gender-differentiated outcomes, with women experiencing higher barriers to credential recognition and professional chamber membership; (e) documented cases of administrative rejection or withdrawal of applications after initial eligibility determination.

The selective inclusion hypothesis is evidenced by (a) variation in the pace and completeness of presidential designations across different Turkic communities, with some groups rapidly listed while others remain unnamed; (b) differential processing speeds for similar applications depending on the applicant's community affiliation; (c) observable correlation between a group's strategic importance to Turkish foreign policy and the consistency of application acceptance; (d) testimonial evidence from diaspora organizations or legal service providers regarding disparate access and procedural treatment; (e) temporal patterns in policy emphasis tied to Turkey's bilateral relationships with sending countries.

The geopolitical override hypothesis is supported by (a) documented instances in which residence permits of Uyghur or other politically sensitive populations are denied or revoked despite nominal Türk soylu eligibility; (b) evidence of heightened security vetting or intelligence-agency involvement in applications from specific communities; (c) correlation between shifts in Turkish-foreign-country bilateral relations and changes in application approval rates; (d) testimonial and documentary evidence of political screening or interference in administrative decisions; (e) timing of policy announcements or implementation changes tied to high-profile diplomatic events or bilateral agreements.

When it comes to the "Architecture of Conditional Inclusion", the 2025 Türk-soylu migration framework is better understood not as a straightforward extension of co-ethnic privileges, but as a calibrated tool of conditional and closely managed inclusion. It reflects a broader direction in Turkish migration governance: moving away from broad kin-state rhetoric and piecemeal practices toward more codified yet selectively enforced mechanisms that weave co-ethnic labor, diaspora politics, and foreign-policy considerations into a single administrative architecture.

The new legal framework recalibrates access to the Turkish labor market for Turkic minorities through three distinct mechanisms: (1) Regulatory Narrowing, the replacement of a generic, statute-based co-ethnic definition with a presidentially designated list that explicitly prioritizes minorities over titular majorities in their states of origin; (2) Administrative Layering, the accumulation

of ten cumulative bureaucratic requirements spanning credential recognition, security clearance, professional licensing, and individualized assessments of origin-state labor-market conditions; and (3) Geopolitical Filtering, the embedding of implementation in a broader foreign-policy framework that allows selective activation or suspension based on Turkey's bilateral relationships and security narratives.

For beneficiaries, this architecture produces differentiated outcomes: skilled co-ethnics with established educational credentials, institutional support, or geopolitical salience may successfully navigate the system and secure access to regulated professions. However, the majority of Türk soylu applicants, particularly refugees, women, those lacking strong professional credentials or institutional backing, and communities perceived as politically sensitive, are likely to remain subject to implementation gaps, credential-recognition barriers, and labor-market discrimination. The result is a regime of "privileged exclusion": symbolic inclusion within a prestigious legal category coupled with substantive exclusion from its practical benefits.

In regards to policy implications, the 2025 amendment raises several critical policy questions that warrant further investigation: First, what mechanisms might reduce the implementation gap between formal eligibility and substantive labor-market access? Second, can the executive discretion embedded in presidential list-making be subjected to transparent criteria and administrative review? Third, how can credential-recognition procedures be streamlined without compromising standards, particularly for applicants from countries with less internationally recognized educational institutions? Fourth, what targeted anti-discrimination and family-support policies might offset the gendered and sectoral barriers already evident in Türk soylu integration patterns?

The analysis presented here suggests that addressing these questions will require not merely technical regulatory adjustments but a fundamental rethinking of the relationship between kin-state rhetoric and bureaucratic practice. Only through such recalibration, encompassing clearer eligibility standards, faster credential-recognition timelines, active anti-discrimination enforcement, and insulation of labor-market decisions from geopolitical pressure, can the 2025 reform move beyond the pattern of privileged exclusion that has characterized both historical Turkish policy and comparable post-Soviet regimes.

Conclusion

From Rhetorical Solidarity to Conditional Implementation

The findings suggest that Turkey's 2025 reform does not represent a straightforward expansion of co-ethnic protection but rather a selective and administratively layered migration regime. While the framework broadens formal recognition for certain Turkic minorities, implementation barriers, executive discretion, and geopolitical considerations are likely to produce uneven outcomes across communities.

REFERENCES

- [1] İçduygu A., Aksel D. B. Turkish Migration Policies: A Critical Historical Retrospective // PERCEPTIONS: Journal of International Affairs. – 2013. – Vol. 18, № 3. – P. 167–190.
- [2] Rottmann S. B. Integration: Policies, practices and experiences – Turkey country report // RESPOND – Multilevel Governance of Mass Migration in Europe and Beyond Project Working Paper Series. – 2020.
- [3] İçduygu A. Turkey: Labour market integration and social inclusion of refugees (PE 595.328). – European Parliament, Policy Department A, 2016.
- [4] Pentikäinen O., Trier T. Between integration and resettlement: The Meskhetian Turks // OSCE Working Paper. – 2004.
- [5] İslamoğlu E., Öztürk U. Türkiye’ye göç eden Ahıska Türklerinin Türkiye işgücü piyasasına entegrasyonu: Bitlis ili örneği // Bitlis Eren Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi. – 2020. – Vol. 9, № 1. – P. 37–43.
- [6] Migration and citizenship: Legal status, rights and political participation / ed. by R. Bauböck. – Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006. – (IMISCOE Reports). – URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssaoar-272191>
- [7] Mukomel V. I. Labor mobility of migrants from the post-Soviet states in the Russian labor market // Migration from the Newly Independent States: 25 Years After the Collapse of the USSR. – Cham: Springer, 2020. – P. 187–208.
- [8] Dumbrava C. The ethno-demographic impact of co-ethnic citizenship in Central and Eastern Europe // Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies. – 2019. – Vol. 45, № 6. – P. 958–974. – DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2018.1440490.
- [9] Aydın Y. The new Turkish diaspora policy: Its aims, their limits and the challenges for associations of people of Turkish origin and decision-makers in Germany. – SWP Research Paper. – 2014. – No. RP 10/2014.
- [10] Öktem K. Turkey’s new diaspora policy: The challenge of inclusivity, outreach and capacity. – Report prepared for Istanbul Policy Center, Sabanci University, Stiftung Mercator Initiative, 2014.
- [11] Balkan B., Cilasun S. M. Ethnic discrimination in the Turkish labor market: Evidence from survey and field data. – Working Paper No. 1197, 2018.
- [12] Beydulla M. Experiences of Uyghur migration to Turkey and the United States: Issues of religion, law, society, residence, and citizenship // Migration and Islamic Ethics. – Leiden: Brill, 2019. – DOI: 10.1163/9789004417342_011.
- [13] Çölgeçen A. E. Authoritarian cooperation beyond borders: The Uyghur diaspora in Turkey–China relations // COMCAD Arbeitspapiere Working Paper. – 2025. – No. 185. – URL: SSRN
- [14] Gorokhovskaia Y., Linzer I. Case study: Turkey // Defending Democracy in Exile: Policy Responses to Transnational Repression. – Freedom House, 2022. – URL: Freedom House Turkey Host Page
- [15] Ivakhnyuk I. Russian migration policy and its impact on human development. – 2009.

**ЭТНИКАЛЫҚ ТУЫСТЫҚ РИТОРИКАСЫНАН ПРАКТИКАЛЫҚ
ІСКЕ АСЫРУҒА КӨШУ: TÜRK SOYLU САНАТЫНДАҒЫ
ТҮЛҒАЛАРҒА АРНАЛҒАН ТҮРКИЯНЫҢ ЖАҢА КӨШІ-ҚОН
РЕЖИМІН ТАЛДАУ**

*Мұқаш А.Е.¹, Қобландин К.И.², Қушқумбаев С.К.³

^{*1,2} Л.Н. Гумилев атындағы Еуразия ұлттық университеті,
Астана, Қазақстан

³ Қазақстанның стратегиялық зерттеулер институты
Астана, Қазақстан

Аңдатпа. Бұл мақала Түркия Республикасының 2025 жылы № 2527 Заңына енгізілген түзетулерге арналған. Аталған өзгерістер тегі тюрк халықтарына жататын шетел азаматтарына (Türk soylu) берілетін артықшылықты көші-қон режимін кері күшпен қайта қарастырады. Түркиядағы көші-қон саясаты мен диаспоралармен жұмыс істеудің тарихи қалыптасқан тәжірибесі аясында мақалада жаңа президенттік жарлықтың құқықтық талаптарды нақтылауы және біліктілікті растау мен кәсіби тіркеуге байланысты қосымша әкімшілік шектеулер енгізуі талданады.

Ғылыми әдебиеттер мен нақты кейс-зерттеулерге сүйене отырып, мақалада месхет түріктері (Ahıska Türkleri), Қырым татарлары және ұйғырлар сияқты тюрк диаспораларының ішкі әркелкілігі және мемлекеттік саясатты іске асыру барысында туындайтын қиындықтар көрсетіледі. Сонымен қатар этникалық тұрғыдан туыстас қауымдастықтарға қатысты мемлекеттік саясаттың саяси өлшемдері, еңбек нарығындағы теңсіздік және селективті қосылу тетіктерін қалыптастыратын мемлекетаралық бәсекелестік мәселелері қарастырылады. Әсіресе қауіпсіздендіру (securitization) үдерістерінің Түркиядағы ұйғыр қауымдастығына ықпалына назар аударылады.

Посткеңестік кеңістіктегі этникалық оралу бағдарламалары бойынша деректер артықшылық пен институционалдық шеттету элементтерінің күрделі байланысын айқындайды. Зерттеу нәтижелері этникалық туыстас мигранттарды қорғау тетіктерінің формалды түрде кеңейтілуіне қарамастан, құрылымдық бюрократиялық және саяси сүзгілердің бұл механизмдерге кең ауқымды қолжетімділікті шектейтінін және этносаяси әрі гендерлік айырмашылықтар бойынша теңсіз нәтижелерге әкелетінін көрсетеді. Мақалада құқықтық-институционалдық талдау, салыстырмалы кейс материалдары және коэтникалық көші-қон режимдері жөніндегі ғылыми әдебиеттер синтезделіп, ресми риторика мен практикалық іске асыру арасындағы алшақтықты тереңірек түсінуге мүмкіндік береді.

Тірек сөздер: Түркия, Türk soylu, көші-қон саясаты, туыстас мемлекет, коэтникалық артықшылықтар, еңбек нарығы, диаспора, біліктілікті тану, месхет түріктері, ұйғырлар, геосаясат, посткеңестік этникалық оралу көші-қоны

ОТ РИТОРИКИ ЭТНИЧЕСКОГО РОДСТВА К ПРАКТИЧЕСКОЙ РЕАЛИЗАЦИИ: АНАЛИЗ НОВОГО МИГРАЦИОННОГО РЕЖИМА ТУРЦИИ ДЛЯ ЛИЦ TÜRK SOYLU

*Мұқаш А.Е.¹, Қобландин К.И.², Қушқумбаев С.К.³

^{1,2} Евразийский национальный университет имени Л.Н. Гумилева,
Астана, Казахстан

³ Казахстанский институт стратегических исследований,
Астана, Казахстан

Аннотация. Настоящая статья посвящена поправкам 2025 года к Закону № 2527 Турецкой Республики, которые ретроспективно изменяют режим преференциальной миграции для иностранных граждан тюркского происхождения (Türk soylu). В контексте исторического развития миграционной политики и механизмов управления диаспорами в Турции анализируется, каким образом новый президентский указ уточняет критерии соответствия и вводит дополнительные административные ограничения, включая процедуры подтверждения квалификации и профессиональной регистрации.

На основе анализа научной литературы и конкретных кейс-стади, посвящённых тюркским диаспорам, в частности месхетинским туркам (Ahıska Türkleri), крымским татарам и уйгурам, подчёркивается гетерогенность данных сообществ и сложности, возникающие на этапе практической реализации преференциальной политики. В статье также рассматриваются политические аспекты государственной политики в отношении этнически родственных групп, дискриминация на рынке труда и межгосударственная конкуренция, формирующие селективные механизмы включения, прежде всего процессы секьюритизации и их последствия для уйгурского населения в Турции.

Эмпирические данные по постсоветским режимам этнического возвращения демонстрируют сложное сочетание элементов привилегированного включения и институционального исключения. Полученные результаты свидетельствуют о том, что, несмотря на формальное расширение механизмов защиты этнически родственных мигрантов, структурные бюрократические и политические фильтры существенно ограничивают массовый доступ к данным мерам, что приводит к неравномерным результатам по этнополитическим и гендерным линиям. В статье синтезируются правовой и институциональный анализ, сравнительный кейс-материал и вторичная литература по режимам коэтнической миграции, что позволяет углубить понимание расхождения между официальной риторикой и условной практической реализацией миграционной политики.

Ключевые слова: Турция, Türk soylu, миграционная политика, этнически родственные государства, коэтнические преференции, рынок труда, диаспора, признание квалификаций, месхетинские турки, уйгуры, геополитика, постсоветская возвратная миграция

Received / Мақала түсті / Статья поступила: 17.04.2026.

Accepted / Жариялауға қабылданды / Принята к публикации: 26.06.2026

Information about authors:

Mukash Arman Yerzhanuly – Master of Social Sciences, PhD Doctoral Student in Regional Studies, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan, e-mail: armanbai.mukash@gmail.com

Koblandin Kalybek Ibragimuly – Doctor of Historical Sciences, Faculty of History, Abai Kazakh Pedagogical Institute, Almaty, Kazakhstan, e-mail: kkalybek@mail.ru

Kushkumbayev Sanat Kairslyamovich – Chairman of the Board of Directors, Independent Director, Chief Research Fellow at the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Doctor of Political Sciences, Associate Professor, Astana, Kazakhstan.

Авторлар туралы мәлімет:

Мұқаш Арман Ержанұлы – әлеуметтік ғылымдар магистрі, «Аймақтану» мамандығы бойынша PhD докторант, Л.Н. Гумилев атындағы Еуразия ұлттық университеті, Астана, Қазақстан, e-mail: armanbai.mukash@gmail.com

Қобландин Қалыбек Ибрагимұлы – тарих ғылымдарының докторы, Тарих факультеті, Абай атындағы Қазақ педагогикалық институты, Алматы, Қазақстан, e-mail: kkalybek@mail.ru

Кушқумбаев Санат Қайрслямұлы – Директорлар кеңесінің төрағасы, тәуелсіз директор, Қазақстан Республикасы Президентінің жанындағы Қазақстан стратегиялық зерттеулер институтының бас ғылыми қызметкері, саяси ғылымдарының докторы, қауымдастырылған профессор (доцент), Астана, Қазақстан.

Информация об авторах:

Мукаш Арман Ержанович – магистр социальных наук, PhD-докторант по специальности «Регионоведение», Евразийский национальный университет имени Л.Н. Гумилева, Астана, Казахстан, e-mail: armanbai.mukash@gmail.com

Кобландин Калыбек Ибрагимович – доктор исторических наук, факультет истории, Казахский педагогический институт имени Абая, Алматы, Казахстан, e-mail: kkalybek@mail.ru

Кушқумбаев Санат Каирслямович – председатель Совета директоров, независимый директор, главный научный сотрудник Казахстанского института стратегических исследований при Президенте Республики Казахстан, доктор политических наук, ассоциированный профессор (доцент), Астана, Казахстан.